

Clarion



The calling of a candidate

SEMINARY CORNER
CHURCH SNAPSHOT
CLARION KIDS



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Of Candidates and Counsellors

A church should make good use of its counsellor

Several issues ago I wrote an editorial on the calling of ministers. Elsewhere in this issue you will see that Br. Spike Fokkema from Australia responded to this editorial and asked two questions, one about the calling of candidates and the other about the role of the counsellor. I am thankful for his questions and shall try my best to answer them.

The calling of a candidate

There is no doubt that the calling of a candidate for the ministry (or a student who has just completed his studies and has been declared eligible for call) is a somewhat different matter. As Br. Fokkema states, he has “no service record.” This means that you cannot really contact the elders in a church that he is serving and ask all sorts of pertinent questions.

Still, all is not lost. In the case of a candidate, calling committees have a number of options. They can contact various people and ask for information on a candidate. For one they can call the professor of diaconology at CRTS, Dr. A.J. de Visser. As the professor in charge of the pastoral proficiency program and as the teacher of preaching, teaching, counselling, and evangelism, he can give all sorts of insight into the candidate. Then too they can approach the minister with whom the candidate did his summer internship. Having worked side-by-side with the candidate for a number of months, he too will be an invaluable source of information and insight.

Somewhat further afield, calling committees can contact other faculty members at CRTS; they can inquire about where the candidate has taught catechism and preached sermons and obtain information from these sources; they can take up contact with office bearers and members in both the candidate’s church of origin and in his current church; they can listen to audio and/or watch

video recordings of his sermons in different churches (candidates preach around a lot and there are now plenty of churches with websites that include sermons); they can obtain feedback from members in the various churches who have heard the candidate preach. In short, there will be no shortage of information on the candidate. It just takes some creative thinking and a little extra effort to get hold of it.

Challenges

At the same time there will also be some challenges in all of this. What do I mean? It has to do with the fact that preaching will be the most visible and obvious source of information. Nevertheless, there is more to ministry than preaching. There is also teaching and counselling. There are interpersonal skills and organizational abilities. There are personality traits and human insight factors.

How does one discover whether the candidates has any or all of these? Again, his professors and mentors will be your best sources of information. Are they all knowing in their evaluation and analysis? No, but they can help you a great deal.

Improvements?

What about improvements to the current system? There are several that can be mentioned but they all have their pros and cons. One suggestion has been to lengthen the time of the current summer internship program. At present a student is required to intern with an experienced pastor after completing his third year of study. As such this has been a very beneficial development.

There are, however, two problems with the summer program. The first is that it is too short and the second is that it takes place in the summer. Let me explain.

Regarding the first problem, it is at best a three month program and that does not represent a great deal of time to fully grasp the nature of ministry or to evaluate adequately the suitability of the candidate. The second problem is that it takes place in the summer months when church life slumbers. There are no catechism classes. There are very few council/consistory meetings. People do better health wise in the summer and so fewer hospital and sick visits happen. A good

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

In a previous issue Dr. James Visscher wrote an editorial regarding the calling of ministers. This editorial has generated a fair bit of response, and more questions – and so in this issue you will find a follow-up editorial entitled, “Of Candidates and Counsellors.”

And speaking of calling a candidate... Dr. Gerhard H. Visscher, the principal of CRTS, writes in Seminary Corner that the need for new seminary students continues to grow. In fact, he writes, it really needs to double in order to fill the need for ministers in our federation. And there are things we can all do to recruit the right men for this necessary and important calling.

Issue 14 brings readers a Church Snapshot from Aldergrove, a report from Papua New Guinea on new minister ordinations, as well as a number of other columns and articles: Clippings on Politics and Religion, Treasures New and Old, You Asked, *Clarion* Kids, a letter to the editor, and a press release.

Laura Veenendaal

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proportion of the congregation is away on holidays. In short, summertime is not great internship time.

So what is the solution? Some have suggested that the internship should be lengthened. Personally I have always been in favour of an internship of at least six months, starting in the summer and going into the fall season. In that way the candidate starts when things are slow and moves into the really active and busy part of the church year.

Of course, I realize that a longer internship is not without its complications. It would require a re-organization of the current seminary program. It would create greater disruption in the lives of students and their families. It may also entail additional costs.

Another approach that sometimes appears on the radar screen has to do with delaying ordination. This would mean that a candidate would accept a call, work in a congregation for a year as an intern and then be ordained into office. The benefits of such an approach are that if after a year it appears that the candidate is not really suited for ministry, he could be released with a lot less fuss and bother. Or if the candidate himself comes to the conclusion that he is not suited for fulltime ministry, he can ask to be excused.

On the upside this approach could spare congregation and potential minister a lot of grief. On the downside, it may come at some complications in terms of moving candidate families and settlement costs.

In the end, we all need to realize that there is no perfect system for vetting candidates. There will always be setbacks and disappointments no matter what measures we take. As such the current approach may be the best achievable at this time, although we should not rest on our laurels but be willing to entertain suggestions for improvement as they come along.

Counsellors

Another matter that Br. Fokkema raises has to do with the role of the counsellor. For background information on this you need to turn to the Church Order. In Article 4 (D) it states, "When a vacant church extends a call, the advice of the counsellor shall be sought." In Article 45 there is a fuller description of the role of the counsellor. He is appointed to "assist the consistory in maintaining good order," to "lend his aid in the matter of the calling of a minister," and to "sign the letter of call."

Now there are two things here, namely what it says and how it works. The Church Order states that ordinar-

ily the advice or the aid of the counsellor shall be sought in the calling of a minister. As far as I am aware, in most cases this is what happens. A counsellor is usually consulted more or less. I say "more or less" because I am aware of any of number of cases where the counsellor was not really consulted at all. Rather the letter of call was shoved under his nose at the last minute and he was asked to sign it.

I also know of one case in which the counsellor refused to sign the letter of call because he was convinced that the consistory had not followed proper procedure. In that case the matter went to classis for arbitration and resolution.

I also know of situations in which colleagues have been reluctant to sign letters of call because the salary and/or benefits offered the candidate or minister were deemed to be insufficient. In such cases some negotiations took place and a more fitting offer was made.

Related to all this Br. Fokkema also asks, "Must the counsellor's advice be sought regarding the suitability of the minister/candidate for this church?" He also asks whether a church or consistory is "required to seek that advice?" My reading of the Church Order is that, according to Article 4 and 45 the advice of the counsellor should be sought. Such is the ordinary and expected course of action.

At the same time, however, it does not say that the church or consistory has to follow the advice of the counsellor. Advice is advice. It is not an order that needs to be obeyed no matter what. Advice can be either accepted or rejected. Thus if a church wants to call a certain candidate and a counsellor disagrees, he does not have veto power. Neither should he think that by refusing to sign the letter of call he can stymie the church and have the last word. He is a counsellor, an advisor, a helper, and should avoid becoming a bossy bishop.

At the same time if the counsellor is of the opinion that something improper has taken place or he has been wronged, he can do one of two things. He can resign as counsellor for that particular church and ask classis to appoint someone else or he can launch an appeal against the church and ask classis to adjudicate it.

My advice to any church needing a counsellor is that they make sure that they know the man and can work with the man. They can then propose his name to classis for appointment. Also, once appointed, a church should make good use of its counsellor. He can aid you in many and various ways to find a good pastor and teacher for your congregation.





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Remember Your Leaders

***“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you.
Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.”***

(Hebrews 13:7)

The words of Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever,” seem to come out of the blue. But they have very much to do with what the author of Hebrews mentions in verse 7.

In verse 7 the author asks his readers there in the early Christian church in Rome to remember their former ministers who had laboured among them in the preaching of the Word. They were to consider their teaching and imitate their faith. Those leaders had been good men who lived holy lives. Also, those leaders likely had suffered for their faith and obedience, and may even have been put to death for their beliefs. That particularly they were to remember.

Those leaders remained faithful and obedient, even in the face of persecution, suffering, and death, only because of whom they believed in, whom they served, and from whom

they received their strength and encouragement – *their Lord Jesus Christ!* Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday and today and forever!” The phrase “yesterday and today and forever” is an expression attributed in the Bible *to God*. Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who came down from heaven and took upon himself our human nature, so that he could die for us in our place, and present us in holiness to God the Father for our salvation. Christ has died, has risen again, and has ascended to heaven, where he now reigns as eternal King over all things. Those preachers who have served well could only do so in the strength and power of the sovereign Christ, who has also now sent his Holy Spirit to his church.

God in Christ has provided faithful ministers of the gospel through the centuries since that time. Our ascended Lord Jesus Christ has used them through his Word and Spirit

to gather, defend, and preserve his church. By remembering them, we honour the Lord of the church. By imitating their faith and life, we ourselves by God’s grace are used to influence and bless the gathering of Christ’s church.

Why not use some of your time this summer for picking up and reading some biographies of Christian church leaders, in order to remember them? There is a wealth of material out there. *Banner of Truth Trust* has done a marvelous job producing good biographies of many faithful Reformed ministers of the gospel through the centuries.

This verse is a reminder and comfort for all of us who love, serve, and obey Jesus Christ. We live each day, serve Christ each day, in the strength of Christ, who is, who was, and who is to come! He alone in our strength and salvation.

For Further Study

1. What in particular about our past Christian leaders must we remember and imitate?
2. Who is the one unchanging leader whom we can fully and completely depend on?
3. Will you commit to reading one or more biographies of Christian leaders this year?



Seminary Corner

Wanted: You at Seminary...!?



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So do we need more ministerial students, or not? When one knows that six CRTS graduates were considered ready for call this spring, that there are two more who are eligible, plus two more who have graduated and will likely present themselves later, and about seventeen seminarians at CRTS as of this fall, one might get the *impression* that the need for more ministers is over. And hence, that the need for more seminary students is reduced, and, even more, that the need for *you* to consider seminary is negligible. I mean. . . why prepare for something for all those years only to find out later that there is no place for you in that profession? With this article, I would like to suggest that this conclusion is far from true.

The truth is that when we count every ministerial vacancy in the federations we service in Canada, USA, and Australia, including every mission church and mission post that is intent on calling a missionary or (second) pastor, as of June 2016, there are *twenty-six vacancies*. And if we add South Africa to the equation, as they begin to look to us for assistance, the number is actually *twenty-nine*. Doubt the accuracy of that? Here's the breakdown:

	Canada/ USA	Australia	South Africa	
Ministerial Vacancies	13	3	3	
2nd pastors sought	4	0	?	
Mission Vacancies	5	1	?	
	22	4	3	29

These numbers are really quite alarming. One should realize as well that at CRTS, we have no CanRC students

expected to graduate in 2017, and only two in 2018. Besides these factors, the fact is that there are many more ministers getting closer to retirement age, and churches are constantly creating new openings for new positions. In short, *there is an urgent need for many more young men to consider entering the ministry. Seminary enrollment really needs to double in the coming years.* Unless we consider this matter carefully, prayerfully, and do whatever is in our power as a federation, we will face a severe shortage of ministers in the decades to come.

What needs to happen?

We need to take action at many different levels. We really need a *recruitment campaign* in the federation.

Ministers need to consider whether they have been adequately on the alert for young, gifted men who are suitable for ministry.

Elders need to do the same with respect to their ward. Are there young men who are outstanding in terms of commitment to the gospel, to holy, Christian living with an ability to communicate and care?

Parents need to consider whether their sons are suited for such a vocation. No, parents should not be too pushy. But gentle encouragement can go a long way. There are many in the ministry today because from an early age parents spoke of ministry as a dear and necessary calling.

As *families* too we need to consider carefully how we speak about our officebearers. If you perchance have "roast pastor" for lunch every other Sunday, don't be surprised when your young men give no thought to ministry. . . small wonder that's the last occupation they will consider! Young people also draw conclusions from what is implicit in our actions and speech.

As *congregations*, we need to consider whether we hold our ministers high because of their work, and speak of them with appreciation. Is your congregation a place

of harmony and peace where young men can actually see themselves working fruitfully and joyfully? Or is it rife with controversy, strife, and division?

As *professors* at the seminary, we are doing what we can to encourage young men also by profiling the seminary to the churches. Every year one of us tours the Western provinces. We have started a campaign to visit all the Ontario churches within three years, and have already visited half of them in one year. On these trips we are always willing to sit down with possible future students. We are attempting to visit high schools throughout the land as well. But our main task of course lies elsewhere – we provide all the instruction and guidance that we can to help seminarians become the best possible pastors, under God’s blessings. Our intent is to form young men into the kind of delightful, sincere Christian men whom we all want to have as pastors of our churches.

Most importantly

Young men, *should you not be considering this?* While ministry is certainly not the only way to serve the Lord, I do believe that every suitably gifted young man in our federation needs to give this careful and prayerful consideration. God gifts every one of his children, no doubt, and we never want to be in a profession for which he has not given us the appropriate gifts. But those with gifts suitable for ministry certainly need to wrestle out with God whether they should be heading in this direction.

How will you know whether you should enter the ministry? Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I have a love for the Lord and the gospel of life in Christ?
- Do I care for people, and want to see them do well, not just for this life but also for the life to come?
- Do I have an interest and an ability to study?
- Do I particularly have an interest in studying the Word of God?
- Do I have some leadership qualities and a willingness to develop them?
- Have there been people who have told me that I should consider becoming a minister of the Word?
- Am I willing to use all the gifts, that God has given, for God and for the “benefit and well-being of other members” of the church (LD 21, Q/A 55)?
- And most importantly, do I believe that God would be pleased with my attempts to explore the possibility of entering the ministry?

It’s on that last question that I’d like yet to comment. Sometimes people begin to look for voices and “calls” from God, and they consider seminary because they’ve had some such experience, or they stay away because they have not. We believe, however, that one cannot wait upon signs or expect some obvious indication from God. “Calls” from God, we teach young men, come when a congregation actually extends a call; think of the Form for the Ordination of Ministers which asks of the new minister, “Do you feel in your heart that God himself, *through his congregation*, has called you to this holy ministry?” Up until that point, young men may have honourable desires and wonderful intentions that they and those around them want to bring to realization. But we don’t expect you to come with a “calling” – just a godly desire that we might be able to help you develop in such a way that a church might have confidence in really “calling” you as their minister of the Word.

Yes, the task is demanding and difficult at times. But I would not know of any federation in the world that looks after its ministers and missionaries more lovingly and caringly than ours. This extends even to students and their families upon admission to seminary. Others envy how our federation even supports students, financially and otherwise, during the years they are in seminary.

Want to explore this? Feel free to call one of us at CRTS, or email us so that we can have someone call you for a chat. Check out the Prospective Student section of our website (www.canadianreformedseminary.ca). Drop a note to Leanne (lkuizenga@crt.ca) and she’ll be happy to send you the newsletter designed for future students. She’ll also tell you about the two days scheduled for next year when it’s possible to attend lectures and get a taste of what CRTS is all about.

In another article, I plan to write about what has happened to our seminary over the last ten years. But it should be realized that at seminary today you will be challenged not just with respect to your intellectual abilities; the intent is to help you to be – also with respect to your character, disposition, and every part of your being – the best kind of person you can be. Alongside of lectures and seminars, for example, every semester there are even personal sessions with a mentor, one of the professors who wants to assist you to be that person. At CRTS, that’s our passion: to develop young men into the kind of men who can preach God’s Word, minister, lead, and love God’s people both collectively and individually. For God and his people.

Think about it. Pray about it. Talk to others about it. Should *you* be at seminary?



Aldergrove Canadian Reformed Church

As congregations go, we're relative newcomers to the scene here in British Columbia's Fraser Valley. We started out life as a new congregation by splitting off as a group from the Langley Canadian Reformed Church in 1994. It took us a while to grow up, but we are now a much more "mature" congregation in the early 20s with a membership hovering around the 380 mark. Our youngest member is about a month old and our oldest is eighty-nine, but the average member age is only 26.2, which should tell you that we're quite a young community indeed. The average communicant member is all of forty years old. So now you know a little bit of our demographic makeup – a congregation located between two bigger churches in the Valley, Langley and Abbotsford.

Since we completed our building project in 2010, though, we have become a veritable hub of activity in the Valley, being the favoured location for many church events held here such as rallies, speeches, lectures, musical programs, and so forth. We are indeed blessed with a beautiful facility which is getting good use by the wider community as well as our own congregation from week to week. Indeed, we're even looking at increasing the nursery facilities to accommodate the growing younger generation.

Many younger couples and families look to our community to get a start in the housing market, although that is rapidly changing as well since the prices keep getting higher and higher. Creative ways are found by many young families to make it possible though, but it does mean a fairly mobile constituency.

Like any other congregation, we consist of many different kinds of brothers and sisters that make up the body of Christ. Our members are engaged in a wide variety of vocations – medical practitioners, animal doctors, engineers and other technical people, educational practitioners, retailers, businessmen and women – both self-employed and employees, construction personnel, real estate sales, homemakers, office workers, to name just

the ones that come to mind. As a result, we have a variety of talents available to serve on the many committees, boards, and in other areas where these skills are needed.

Many of our young people after they graduate from high school are being educated at local community colleges, universities, or at Christian institutions such as Trinity Western. We also have a growing cohort of "retired" brothers and sisters who still (for the most part) stay active in many and varied ways both in the church community and in the wider community. Some of them even get to travel south during the rainy season to escape the winter "blahs." All in all, we are a community that has been greatly blessed by the Lord over the years we've been a congregation.

In terms of church activities, besides the regular worship services and societies, some of our members are involved in helping out at the local soup kitchen and food bank on a weekly basis; serving the needs of local moms in our Moms program; youth outreach program serving meals in a local hall; and so on and so forth. There are no shortages of places to serve be it in a Bibles for Missions store and other stores like it or in other capacities.

We have recently taken on responsibility as the sending church for the mission work carried out by the churches in Western Canada in Brazil. We work in cooperation with other churches to staff a Mission Board and other associated committees. This has proven to be a challenging but also very stimulating task that has resulted in a number of our members having an opportunity to visit the field either in an official capacity or as volunteers on a short-term mission trip. It also means that our council has more responsibility in dealing with mission personnel in the field and when they are on furlough. These are some of the blessings you may experience as you "mature and grow" as a congregation.

In the last couple of years we have also been co-operating with the Willoughby Heights church in an outreach

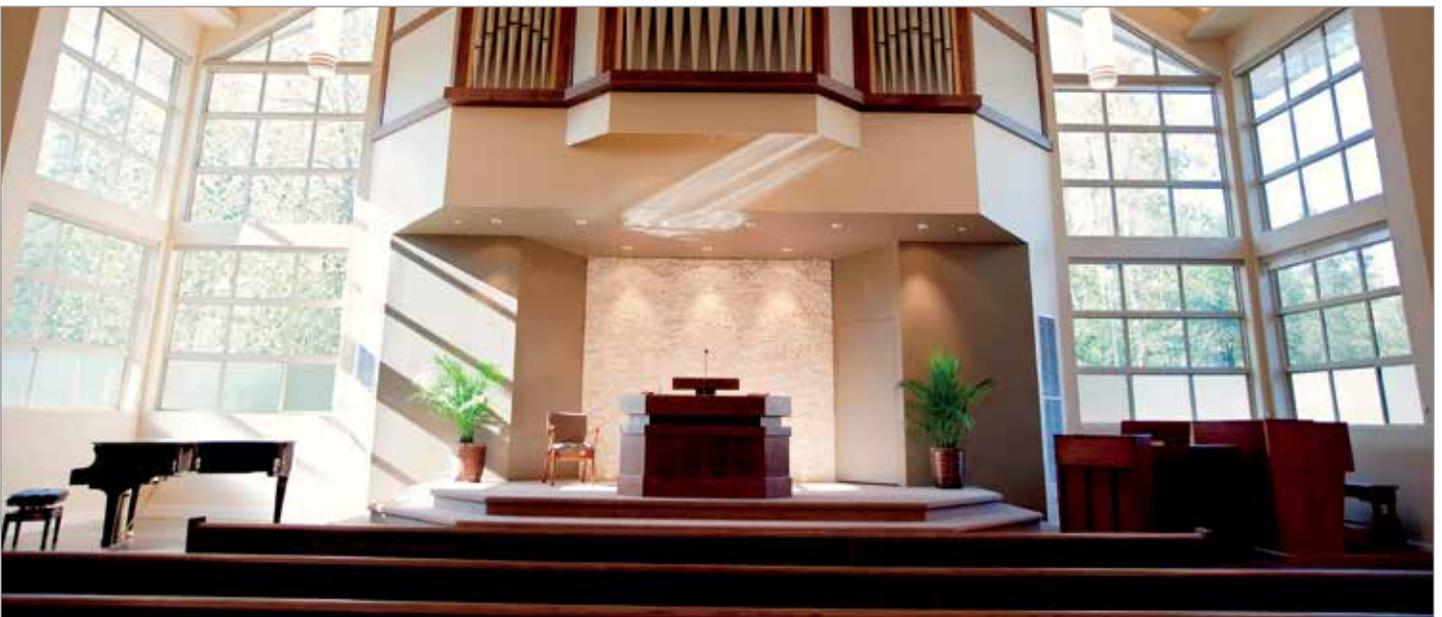


program in Burnaby, which is closer to the city of Vancouver. We have opened a Reading Room which is staffed by volunteers from both churches and seeks to engage people in the neighbourhood who might be attracted to become more familiar with the gospel and the Reformed faith. It is a work in progress which is being evaluated on an ongoing basis.

As we read more of these church snapshots, it's remarkable how each has its unique character but also how

similar they are in terms of the many activities they're engaged in and the desire that all have to be faithful in witnessing to the community and the nation which God has placed us in. I hope this snapshot has brought the congregation of Aldergrove a little closer to each of you. Come and visit us and receive a warm welcome, no matter what season we're in. Above all, give thanks to God for the fellowship we may enjoy as brothers and sisters, no matter where we are in this great country of ours.

C





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The Struggles of the Sudanese Reformed Churches

South Sudan has fallen off the radar of most news media today, and yet the trials and tribulations of that country have not diminished. I was reminded of that reality once again on receiving from Rev. Patrick Jok the 2015 Annual Report of the Sudanese Reformed Churches (SRC). The SRC started in 1992 and now number sixteen churches of which four are in Sudan and twelve in South Sudan with a total membership of about 4,000 members. This article on the state of these churches is composed of excerpts or summaries from this report.

The ongoing civil war in South Sudan

With South Sudan's independence in 2011, there was great optimism that the days of war, famine, and poverty were over. However, the ongoing current civil or tribal war that began in midDecember 2013 continues to affect millions of people. The insecurity and active hostilities have resulted in major humanitarian consequences such as many deaths, forced displacement of populations, malnutrition, poverty, widespread abductions, vulnerability to disease, burning of villages, massive use of rape, cattle raiding, the destruction of food and humanitarian supplies, disrupted livelihoods, and more than two million children without schools.

Although the exact number of deaths is still unknown, there is little doubt that this brutal civil war has left more than 80,000 people dead. According to United Nations data, there are 1.6 million internal displaced persons (IDPs), of which 191,253 are being protected by UN forces in their camps and 801,221 are refugees in neighbouring countries. Another four million are facing famine.

Although the government and the armed opposition signed a Compromise Agreement to end the hostilities last August, military confrontations continue to escalate. The situation in South Sudan remains desperate.

Economically, there is hyperinflation and massive food shortages. The economy which is on the verge of collapse is worsening every day and prices of goods and commodities are skyrocketing leaving people with less money to buy basic food items. Even if fighting stops, the humanitarian impact of what has already happened will continue to be felt throughout 2016 and beyond.

The church struggles on in the midst of trauma

This situation continues to affect the SRC and her members and particularly in Malakal, Bor, and Bentiu where major battles were fought. In those areas most of the SRC members are living inside UN camps for safety. Also in Juba, the capital city of South Sudan, some of the SRC members are living in two UN civilian protection camps. However, living conditions in these camps are miserable with respect to health, water, sanitation, and hygiene. Furthermore, those taking refuge there are entirely dependent on outside humanitarian assistance since they have lost all their property and jobs during the fighting. Others have fled the country.

Yet, in the midst of all this misery, the ten pastors and eighteen evangelists of the SRC are labouring





The newly rebuilt Juba SRC building

sacrificially in evangelism, pastoral care, and trauma counselling, trusting in the Lord's mercy, grace, and protection. Through their labour 832 souls have come to the Lord in the last twenty months and joined the churches in the camps. This shows that the Lord is in control and at work even in difficult and hopeless situations. There is true hope in him.

Furthermore, the SRC is engaged in diaconal work of mercy and compassion to the best of their ability. Since the war has dramatically increased the number of refugees, an orphanage centre has been started in Juba. Overseas help from churches and relief organizations has enabled the SRC to respond to the humanitarian needs and helped save many lives from certain death due to hunger and hunger-related diseases.

With respect to their material possessions, the SRC has lost all that she possessed in Bor, Malakal, Bentiu, and Juba. In Juba, the SRC made every effort to rebuild the destroyed worship centre that was used by the Juba Sudanese Reformed Church before the conflict. The main goal was to create a place of worship and a venue for counselling those who are deeply traumatized by the current violence.

In Sudan, the Islamic part of what used to be one Sudanese nation, four SRC congregations are facing two major challenges. First, like all Christians, they are persecuted and not allowed to acquire lands for the church. Furthermore, they are denied access to government employment. Only house churches work well and the number of believers that gather together has to be small in number to avoid suspicion and harassment. Secondly, the congregation in the Nuba Mountain region continues to labour in an active war zone. Their situation is similar

CALLED

Called by the St Albert, AB CanRC, the Flamborough, ON CanRC, and the Providence CanRC of Hamilton, ON:

Candidate Jake Torenvliet

Called by the Owen Sound, ON CanRC, the Denver, CO American Reformed Church, the the Hope Reformed Church (URCNA) of Brampton, ON and Blessings Christian Church of Hamilton, ON to serve as co-pastor:

Candidate Hilmer Jagersma

Called by the Free Reformed Church of Armadale, AU for the Papua New Guinea mission field:

Candidate David Pol

Called to serve as missionary for Lighthouse Ministries in London by the Pilgrim CanRC in London, ON:

Candidate HanGil Lee

CALL DECLINED

Declined the call to the Canadian Reformed Church of Elora, ON:

Rev. Joe Poppe

of the Redeemer CanRC of Winnipeg, MB

CHURCH NEWS

to the one in South Sudan. The SRC in South Sudan had hoped to help their brothers and sisters in Sudan, but this hope has been shattered by the conflict in South Sudan.

Ecclesiastical relations

The SRC are in ecclesiastical unity with the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA) and Rev. Patrick Jok attended their general synod in Potchefstroom last January as an official delegate of the SRC. These churches are also members of the World Reformed Fellowship and the International Conference of Reformed Churches. Rev. Jok is a member of the ICRC Mission Committee. Closer to home, in November 2015, the SRC officially joined the Sudan Council of Churches which is the national council of Sudanese Christian denominations. It was formed with the purpose of giving Christians one united voice in addressing all the issues that are facing them across the country. With this membership the SRC is officially recognized by all government institutions across South Sudan.

In closing

The needs of the SRC seem overwhelming. Yet, these churches carry on in the midst of enormous challenges due to much tribal violence and uncertainty for the future. But, they carry on in faith, knowing that God is in control and that also South Sudan and his people are ultimately in his care. Let us not forget to pray for these Christians. **C**

An Historic Moment

Ordination of the First Papua New Guinean Ministers of the Word in Papua New Guinea!

We look back over the past few months and years with deep gratitude to God for his guidance, blessings, and loving care over those who are his. The Reformed Churches in Papua New Guinea have reached an historic milestone with the ordination of the first two Diploma (seminary) graduates of the Reformed Churches Bible College into the Ministry of the Word!

These men have spent five-plus years in the benches of the RCBC and close to three years of practicum training as Candidate Ministers in these respective churches. The Lord has blessed them and blessed the churches through them as well! They are the “pioneers

of the Reformed Churches of PNG.” They experienced the ups and downs of us finding our way as the seminary courses were being written and taught and revised and rewritten; as we found our way in how to do evangelism in PNG, reaching out, mentoring, counselling, even disciplining in this cultural situation; and as we taught exegesis, sermon making, preaching, teaching in the churches, adapting lessons where necessary to a Papua New Guinean way of thinking. They have both sustained their preparatory and peremptory examinations at classis of the Reformed Churches of PNG over the past years.



Laying on of hands on Aisi Kosa by Revs. Douma, Kleyn, Versteeg, and elder Boboro Maika (Nine Mile)

Rev. Aisi Kosa

Aisi Kosa was ordained as Minister of the Word and Sacraments on Saturday, April 23, 2016 in the Covenant Reformed Church at Nine Mile where approximately 150 people had gathered. He was escorted from the house to the church by the members of the East Boroko Reformed Church (where he was a former member and elder), singing a song of praise to God in their village language. Rev. Cornelis Kleyn officiated the ordination service, leading the service with a sermon on 2 Corinthians 2:14-17, with a message on how, as church leaders, we are led as suffering slaves in God's triumphal procession to spread Christ's smell in the world and are to look to God for enabling.

Following the sermon and reading of the ordination form, the laying on of hands was administered by Rev. Kleyn, Rev. Douma, Rev. Versteeg, and elder Boboro Maika (Beretete). Rev. Douma led the final prayer. Many came forward after the service to thank the Lord and congratulate Pastor Aisi and the congregation of Nine Mile with this ordination. Congratulatory letters from churches abroad were also shared.

Members of Nine Mile and East Boroko congregations all contributed to serve a festive meal after the service. Because Aisi Kosa and many members of Nine Mile, East Boroko, and the Bible College are Highlanders, the meal included a roasted pig which signified the importance of

this occasion! It was a very special day with great rejoicing. Many people slept over to help set things up and also to help clean up. The individual initiative of various members was beautiful to observe and was of great encouragement to Aisi and Karo. God is good! Rev. Aisi Kosa preached his inaugural sermon on Sunday, April 24, 2016.

Rev. Nawai Renagi

Nawai Renagi was ordained as Minister of the Word and Sacraments on Saturday, April 7, in Bethel Reformed Church at Beretete. Since about seventy to eighty people planned to travel to Beretete for the service and the timing of public transport is unreliable as are road conditions with the regular afternoon rains, two buses were rented to help with the transport logistics. One bus could travel to Beretete but the other could not so missionaries helped shuttle people with their Land Cruisers from the end of the paved road to Beretete and back (ten kilometres one way).

About 220 people attended the ordination. After a time of pre-service singing, which included a number of hymns of praise in the Motu language, Nawai was escorted into the church by the Sunday School children singing, "I Will Enter His Gates with Thanksgiving in My Heart." Rev. Henry Versteeg officiated Nawai's ordination service and spoke the Word of the Lord from 2 Timothy 2:1, 2 and 4:1-5 with readings from 1 Kings 19



Laying on of hands on Nawai Renagi by Rev. Kleyn, elder Boboro Maika, Revs. Versteeg, Kosa, and Douma (Beretete)



and 2 Kings 2:1-14, preaching on how the prophet Elijah passed on the mantle to Elisha after a period of training and how the Apostle Paul passed on the duties of a servant of God to Timothy. So also Rev. Versteeg could pass on the mantle of Minister of the Word and Sacrament to Rev. Nawai Renagi.



All the ministers of the Word, Revs. Henry Versteeg, Aisi Kosa, Alan Douma, and Cornelis Kleyn, as well as elder Boboro Maika, administered the laying on of hands. Rev. Douma (co-instructor of Nawai in the Diploma program before Rev. Kleyn arrived on the field) led in the final prayer. After the final song, Rev. Renagi laid the blessings of the Lord on the congregation as newly ordained minister of the Word.

Much praise and thanksgiving was given to our heavenly Father for blessing the work at the Reformed

Churches Bible College, the lives of the students, particularly now Nawai Renagi (and Aisi Kosa), and the Reformed Churches of Papua New Guinea. Again speeches were given by almost every Reformed Church in PNG as well as congratulatory letters read from Toronto, New Zealand, Australia, and Lae. Rev. Renagi gave a moving response to the whole event, reflecting on how the Lord led him to this point, praising God and giving thanks to God and all those who were instrumental along the way.

Thereafter the sisters of Beretete served a delicious festive meal in adult and children portions. They did a magnificent job of cooking and dividing food for 220 people, with the last person receiving the same variety of food as the first!

The following day, Sunday, May 6, 2016, Rev. Nawai Renagi preached his inaugural sermon in Bethel Reformed Church at Beretete.

Conclusion

In conclusion, utmost thanksgiving and praise goes to our Father in heaven who has ordained these two men to become the pioneers of God's work in Papua New Guinea, to be the forerunners in establishing truly Papua New Guinean Reformed Churches which strives to preach and teach the true gospel of Jesus Christ in a country where people are confused as to what is the true gospel message. Please continue to pray for the true Word of God to change hearts and gather all true believers together!



Renagi family, Ralema, Nawai, Andreas, Manu, Talitha and Daiva Renagi (Bertete)



Clarion Kids

Moses (Part 1)

Exodus 2:1-10

Joseph's family continued to grow long after he and his brothers had died. A new pharaoh came into power who did not know about Joseph, and he was afraid of his large family. He tried making them slaves, but the family still got bigger. Then he said that every baby boy should be thrown into the Nile River so they would drown and the family would stop growing. One woman did not obey the pharaoh, and hid her baby boy near the river. One of pharaoh's daughters found him crying and alone, so she decided to adopt him. She needed help, and God made it so that the baby's mother could help to raise him. When he got older, Pharaoh's daughter took him and called him Moses.

Go to www.clarionmagazine.ca to print and colour this picture!

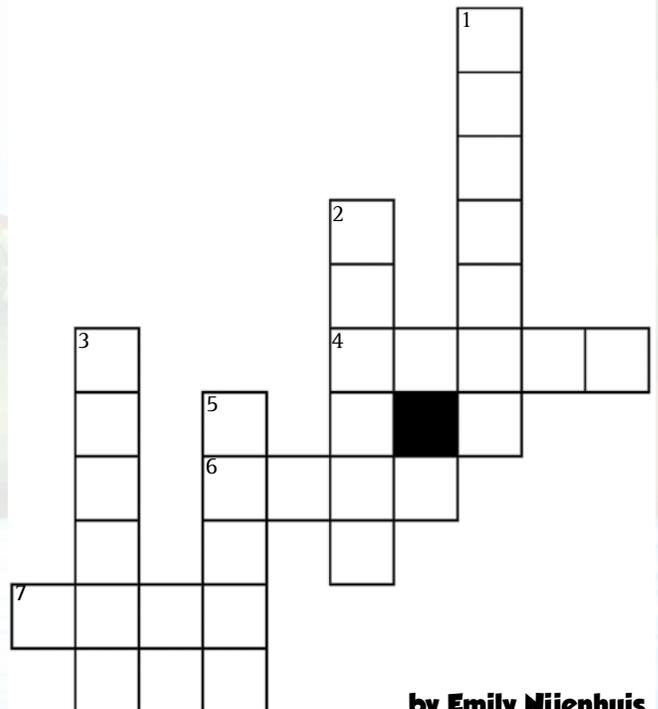


Across

4. What Pharaoh's daughter did for the baby boy she found.
6. One woman did not _____ Pharaoh's order.
7. The river where Pharaoh ordered baby boys to be drowned.

Down

1. The new _____ did not know about Joseph.
2. Pharaoh made Joseph's family into _____.
3. Pharaoh was _____ of Joseph's large family.
5. The name Pharaoh's daughter gave the baby.



by Emily Nijenhuis



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Q

How do you understand the souls under the altar as spoken about in Revelation? They are crying for vengeance on those still persecuting the saints on earth. These are saints who died, how is it that they still seem to see the unholy things of sinful men on earth? How can this be while they're in glory, in a state of perfect bliss? Will this be the condition for all who died, until the final judgment?

A

In Revelation 6:9-11 John sees the souls of the martyrs under the altar in heaven. These are the believers who left their life on earth behind them and now are longing for the completion of God's work of salvation, the gathering of his elect, and the day of Christ's return. Of these believers particularly those who have been killed are in view in this vision. Their blood was shed as they died a violent death, e.g. they were stoned, beheaded, hanged, sawn in two, burned as torches to illumine Nero's arena, thrown to the lions, etc., because they held to the Word of God and the testimony of Christ. These are people like Stephen, some of the apostles, Polycarp, Blandina, John Huss, William Tyndale, Guido de Brès, to mention a few; there have been hundreds of thousands in the course of church history who have been slaughtered like sheep!

John sees them "under the altar," the altar of burnt-offering most likely, since in the OT the blood of the slaughtered animals had to be poured out at the base of the altar (Lev 4:7). The altars in the OT were made after the images God showed Moses on the mountain of the temple *in heaven* (Heb 8:5-6). Now John sees a *symbolical vision* of heaven, and underneath the altar John sees the blood of slaughtered saints. He saw the souls, for "the soul is in the blood" (Lev 17:11). They had offered themselves a sacrifice, having held to the testimony concerning Christ.

They are crying for vengeance! These delivered souls in the presence of God long for the justice of God to be avenged. They call him "holy and true," and in his holiness and truth he must judge sinners, avenge the guilt of the wicked, and vindicate the children who remained faithful to him. He has said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay." For this judgment the souls under the altar cry out. Thus they present their case, their violent death in injustice, to the justice and truth of their just and almighty God! God's honour and glory were at stake in their lot; the shame done to his name must be wiped out! These are, therefore, no unholy cries and prayers, but petitions for the holy justice of God to be revealed. Their cry for vengeance is not a sinful call for revenge, but a cry for the holiness and truth of God's Word and name and glory to be vindicated!

What we see here as well, is that the unity of the church is not broken by death: the believers remain united in Christ. They continue to seek the completion of the work of Christ, the perfection of the plan of God! *They and we* pray, "How long, Sovereign Lord!" Also, "Come, Lord Jesus!" And, "Your kingdom come!" These saints remember their past, not as a cause of unhappiness but as a matter of engagement in this work of Christ, and of involvement in the justice, holiness, and glory of God! They remember their past, live in the rest and peace of the present, and long for the future completion of God's work of salvation. They remember, just as the rich man in the parable remembered that he had five brothers on

earth. The redeemed will remember God's acts of deliverance, though this memory will be purified of the stain of anger and resentment. Even now the spirits of the redeemed in heaven know that this is no more than the intermediate state. They are yearning for the time when they will inherit "the new heaven and the new earth," and when their Lord and they will be publicly vindicated.

These saints are given white robes and the command to rest. The white robe signifies the righteousness of Christ, the white of victory, of God's glory and holiness. They're given them to support and encourage them in their awaiting with anticipation the day of their vindication, the judgment of all men, and the full glory promised them. They may enjoy the eternal Sabbath, yet justice is delayed until the number of the martyrs is complete, the

number of the elect will be full. It is only a "little time" until that day that every elect has been brought into the fold, until the Christ, the Redeemer, appears. Although there is already the joy of heavenly bliss, of rest and peace, there also is the excitement and anticipation of the coming of Christ, the reunion of body and soul, and the restoration of all things! That's when the eternal glory and blessedness will be perfect and complete!

*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
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

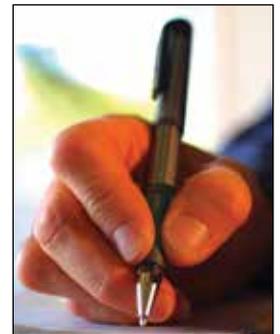
Dear Clarion Editor,

Very appreciative of the contribution of Dr. Visscher regarding the calling of ministers (Vol. 65, No. 10). Good advice indeed! Naturally most of his wise counsel relates to pastors that have served for a time elsewhere. However could he please also provide advice on the calling of candidates? There is often little information available other than hearsay, and naturally little "track record" to go by. How can a calling committee and consistory/ congregation be guided regarding students that have graduated from the college but have no "service record" yet?

Secondly, Dr. Visscher comments on the role of the counsellor (Art. 4, CO). Wise counsel from him once again. However, in terms of Article 4 I ask: Must the counsellor's advice be sought regarding *the suitability* of the minister/ candidate for this church? Indeed it would be wise. But is it *required* to seek that advice? And what if that advice is not positive and contrary to the majority consistory/ congregational view – then what? May a consistory/ congrega-

tion after due consideration of the counsellor's advice, reject that advice and proceed to the call? What then if the counsellor still refuses to sign the letter of call because his advice was not heeded? Sadly, then what? Unfortunately these things do happen.

A follow up from Dr. Visscher would be very welcome.



*Regards,
Spike Fokkema
Busselton FRCA, Australia*

Response

Dear Spike,

Thanks very much for your email and reaction to my editorial. For my response, please see my editorial in this issue entitled "Of Candidates and Counsellors."

Blessings, James Visscher

*Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication.
Submissions need to be less than one page in length.*

Press Release for Classis Central Ontario – June 9, 2016

Rev. J.L. van Popta, delegate of the convening church Burlington Fellowship, opened the meeting in a Christian manner.

The Ebenezer delegates inspected the credentials and reported that the churches were lawfully represented and that there was one instruction. Also present on behalf of Regional Synod were the Revs. P. Feenstra and J. Huigen.

Classis was then declared to be constituted.

The proposed officers were appointed: Chairman: Rev. C.J. Vandervelde, Vice-Chairman: Br. R. Jager (elder delegate of the convening church) and Clerk: Rev. J.L. van Popta.

The assembly adopted the provisional agenda with two changes.

At this point in the meeting the subscription form for Classis Central Ontario was read by the clerk and signed by Rev. Vandervelde. (The form was not available at a previous classis.)

Jubilee church requested concurring advice according to Article 13 of the CO regarding the honorable release of their minister Rev. G. Ph. van Popta due to declining health. His retirement is to begin on September 1, 2016 DV. This request was granted by Classis. The chairman spoke words of thankfulness for the work that Rev. van Popta has done in our federation for twenty-nine years and some words of encouragement regarding Rev. van Popta's declining health. Rev. van Popta was given the opportunity to respond with words of thanks.

The deputies of Regional Synod, Rev. P. Feenstra and Rev. J. Huigen, concurred with the request for early retirement, and Rev. Feenstra took the opportunity to thank Rev. van Popta for his work and read a few words from Scripture.

The clerk read the certificate of release which was duly signed and a copy was given to Rev. van Popta and to the Jubilee delegates.

The church at Burlington Fellowship was delegated to represent Classis at Rev. van Popta's farewell worship service.

Rev. Vandervelde closed this part of the meeting in a prayer of thanksgiving after which the delegates had

the opportunity to encourage Rev. van Popta and to thank him for his work.

The chairman noted that Flamborough and Jubilee (in September) were now vacant churches in Classis Central Ontario. Burlington Ebenezer was congratulated on Rev. A.B. Roukema accepting the call to their congregation. He will be installed in August. The chairman also remembered the retired ministers Revs. C. Bosch, D. de Jong, J. Mulder, J. DeGelder, G. Nederveen and W. Den Hollander in their circumstances.

In closed session, the six annual church visitation reports were read into the meeting. Thankfulness was expressed by the chairman for the spirit of cooperation during these visits.

Rev. J.L. van Popta reported on a visit to the URCNA classis held March 10 in Nobleton Emmanuel URC. Chairman requested prayer by churches in our classis for the upcoming URC synod.

Question Period according to Article 44 of the Church Order was held. The churches responded with their appropriate answers.

A letter from Br. Johan Brintjes requesting that the next classis normally to be held on September 14, 2016 be convened instead on October 21, 2016. This request was granted.

The following appointments were made:

Examination committee members to replace Rev. G.Ph. van Popta and G. Brintjes: Rev. C.J. Vandervelde and Rev. J.L. van Popta.

Alternate church visitor to replace Rev. G.Ph. van Popta: deferred until next classis.

Convening church of the next classis: Rehoboth and officers were suggested.

Date for the next classis: October 21, 2016 at 9 am at Ebenezer.

Counsellor for Ottawa Jubilee: Rev. J.L. van Popta.

Pulpit supply for Ottawa was scheduled for once per month during their vacancy.

The Chairman ruled that censure according to Article 34 was not necessary.

The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was read and approved and the clerk Rev. J.L. van Popta led in closing prayer.



Correction

In Volume 65, Issue 11 we printed the incorrect name as author of "ILPB: The Study of God's Word." The article should have been attributed to Elsa DeGelder.