

# Clarion



  
CANADIAN REFORMED  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
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## **Is the Minister a Professional?**

**FORTY-SECOND CONVOCATION AT CRTS**

**CLARION KIDS**

**YOU ASKED**





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# Is the Minister a Professional?

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*Over the last two thousand years the fact that the Bible is a book has left an enormous imprint on the world*

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In this issue of *Clarion* that highlights the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS), I intend to interact with John Piper's excellent book, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry*. God blessed me through reading Piper's book for personal devotions lately, and I'm thankful for that. I want to write for all readers, but especially for my fellow pastors. Allow me to share just a little of the milk and honey with you, together with a couple of cautions. Is the minister a professional? No, but. . . .

## **Brothers, we are not professionals!**

For those who don't know John Piper, he is a Reformed Baptist who recently retired from being the pastor of preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis for over thirty years. His book is a cry of the heart to fellow pastors to be men of passion, not professionalism. In the introduction, he asks rhetorically,

Is there professional praying? Professional trusting in God's promises? Professional weeping over souls? Professional musing on the depths of revelation? Professional rejoicing in the truth? Professional praising God's name? Professional treasuring the riches of Christ? Professional walking by the Spirit? Professional exercise of spiritual gifts? Professional dealing with demons? Professional pleading with backsliders? (p. ix)

In his view professionalism is marginal to ministry, not central. The more central the minister's sense of being a professional is, the less spiritual and the less supernatural his ministry will be. A professionalized man, Piper

muses, could carry out all the work according to the canons of his professional guild, without any faith in Christ. No believer would want such a minister.

One might expect that next Piper will take the older popular American line, found especially among Pentecostals and Charismatics, and criticize education as something that puts a minister out of touch with the people and inhibits the work of the Holy Spirit (a false dilemma, of course). But that's not where he goes.

## **Bitzer was a banker**

Piper himself has modeled a healthy combination of a learned but deeply passionate Christian ministry. Piper's chapter wherein he pleads with pastors to know the biblical languages shows this. It has the title, "Brothers, Bitzer was a Banker." He pays tribute to Heinrich Bitzer, editor of a 1980 devotional for pastors that contained readings in Hebrew and Greek. Bitzer was not even a pastor, but he knew the importance of knowing the languages of God's revelation and knew them himself. According to Piper, churches that do not cherish "a useful knowledge of Greek and Hebrew" among their pastors end up with pastors who lack true confidence to determine what exactly the Bible means. They end up depending on translations, and perhaps choosing whichever one suits them best. They can't evaluate the positions taken by commentators. And, he adds, "exegetical imprecision is the mother of liberal theology." Pastors who can't say with reasonable certainty what the original text means either become "open-ended pluralists" or "close-minded traditionalists." These are great observations, but surely

we could characterize the work of handling the sacred text as “professional” in the sense that a set of learned skills need to be understood and applied.

He also bemoans the state of Doctor of Ministry programs in North America. Note to reader: these are particularly designed as a “professional degree,” to help working pastors think about and improve in all kinds of practical areas. Piper writes, “The theory is good: continuing education makes for better ministers. But where can you do a D.Min. in Hebrew language and exegesis? Yet what is more important and more deeply *practical* for the pastoral office

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

In your hands you have the annual CRTS Convocation issue.

Our thanks to Dr. Ted Van Raalte for writing a guest editorial on the topic of the office of minister. In addition he has pulled together most of the material for this issue so that our CRTS Convocation issue can reach our readers as soon as possible. This includes the Convocation Report from Rev. Richard Aasman, Dr. Jason Van Vliet’s keynote speech, and Dr. Gerhard H. Visscher’s Word from the Principal, as well as several other addresses.

On Friday, September 9, 2016 the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary presented the largest graduating class they have ever experienced. A tremendous blessing for our federation! Here at *Clarion* we send our congratulations to John Boeke, Iwan Borst, Jonathan Chase, Jeremy de Haan, William den Hollander, Hilmer Jagersma, Han Gil Lee, David Pol, and Jake Torenvliet.

Laura Veenendaal

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than advancing in Greek and Hebrew exegesis by which we mine God's treasures?" (p. 99-101) I understand what Piper means: if the *practice* of the pastor is to mine the treasures of God's Word, what could be more *practical* than improving his exegetical skills? But this criticism is not entirely fair, for the D.Min. degree is not designed for extensive language study. Different degrees, such as a Master of Theology, are designed for that. Nevertheless, it is true that the nature of the D.Min. degree betrays a lack of concern for working pastors to keep up their language skills. M.Th. degrees are not so obviously designed around working pastors as are D.Min. degrees.

### **The Bible is a book**

Later in the book Piper quotes 2 Timothy 2:2, "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." We at CRTS often refer to this text as foundational to the view that seminaries should be under the oversight of the churches. When Piper uses this text, he is in the midst of laying out what follows from the fact that the Bible is a book with words and sentences. Piper begins: Because the Bible is a book, "there is a massive impulse unleashed in the world to teach people how to read." He then adds that if God made some parts of the Bible hard to understand, then he also established a great motivation for us to learn how to reason and think critically. After all, God meets his people through his Word in a book.

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***An enormous amount of learning  
has accompanied missionary and  
pastoral work. Rightly.***

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Over the last two thousand years the fact that the Bible is a book has left an enormous imprint on the world. Translation became the beginning of almost every Christian mission. This in turn encouraged literacy. As each generation had to teach the next to read the Bible, they formed schools and churches. The hard thinking involved in translating difficult passages and resolving interpretations gave rise to higher learning in colleges and universities. A commitment to scholarship emerged from the desire to write out one's insights into the difficult questions. Then came libraries, to preserve the writings. In all of this, accuracy and care in han-

dling the sacred texts has had to be maintained over the centuries. So, again, clearly Piper is supportive of such professional disciplines as linguistics, logic, and library science (p. 116-117).

We can add that God granted Christian missionaries success not because they merely gave their personal testimony. God gives his Spirit in the preaching of his Word. Thus, success came especially because missionaries invested themselves in the cultures and people they evangelized by inventing alphabets, recording languages, and writing grammars, as Wycliffe Bible Translators continue to do today. They did all this to communicate God's Word. An enormous amount of learning has accompanied missionary and pastoral work. Rightly.

### **Professional? No, but . . .**

So is the minister a professional, say, like a lawyer or a doctor? Yes, he undergoes at least seven years of post-secondary education, like they do. Yes, he must use the scientific tools of exegesis and interpretation to rightly know and apply God's Word. But just like there is a difference between true experience and experientialism (as I once heard Dr. Beeke preach), so there is a difference between being professional as needed and professionalism. Let ministers not think of themselves too highly, as though they need to earn what lawyers do, as though they deserve the august reputation of a medical doctor. No, brothers, we represent the Lord. Let him become greater and us lesser! Let us be humbled, if only he be glorified! Let his kingdom come, while our own is destroyed! No, we are not to think of ourselves as men entitled to this or that, as professionals who alone have the expertise and alone possess the Spirit. May it never be!

### **Yes, minister with passion**

Let pastors pray fervently, deeply trust in God's promises, profusely weep over souls, with amazement muse on the depths of revelation, greatly rejoice in the truth, joyfully praise God's name, publicly treasure the riches of Christ, faithfully walk by the Spirit, humbly exercise spiritual gifts, bravely deal with demons, and earnestly plead with backsliders. Let the pastor forget himself and think only of Christ and his sheep! Ministry is about pleading with tears, encouraging with hope, and steadfastly standing on the Word of God. We are servants of Christ, beholden to no other. Piper's book underlined these things for me.

### Yes, minister as one holding an office from God

I do wish, however, that he would have written more about the idea that the minister holds an “office” given by Christ. This aspect is underdeveloped in his book, but it is precisely the difference between being a “professional” and being a pastor. Christ established offices in his church and he wants these filled with godly men who honour him and care for his sheep. Pastors receive a divine “calling” to do their work in a way that goes beyond the calling that each Christian has to serve God in their daily occupation. Office bearers are held accountable for the souls of the sheep, accountable to the Christ who has “sent” them (Rom 10:15). Piper writes about the pastor’s duties, but doesn’t use the concept of the pastoral office beyond a few mentions in the pages 99–102.

### Yes, minister with integrity

What other caution would I offer? This: being professional also has the connotation of keeping proper boundaries, emotionally, sexually, and physically. I’m certain that just as Piper deeply desires a learned ministry so he also deeply desires professional conduct on the part of the minister, with all holiness and integrity. In that sense, the

minister had better act in a professional manner! He is expected to follow a professional code of conduct. Congregations and church councils should expect nothing less. But still, Piper would no doubt – and rightly! – say that the pastor’s code of conduct is not based upon mere professional standards. Rather, it goes beyond such things, for it grows out of the love of Christ, is governed by the Word of God, and is adhered to only in the power of the Holy Spirit. Professionalism is just a bare minimum.

Thus Paul wrote to Timothy in essence to treat older men as fathers, “Younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity” (1 Tim 5:1–2). We are all in the one family of God. We answer to our Father for how we conduct ourselves and how we treat his children, the ones for whom Jesus laid down his life. So, keeping these things in mind, we can join Piper’s prayer in the preface.

Banish professionalism from our midst, O God, and in its place put passionate prayer, poverty of spirit, hunger for God, rigorous study of holy things, white-hot devotion to Jesus Christ, utter indifference to all material gain, and unrelenting labor to rescue the perishing, perfect the saints, and glorify our Sovereign Lord. In Jesus’ great and powerful name. Amen (p. xi).

C



*Senate and Students: David Pol, John Boekee, Dr. J. Van Vliet, Dr. T. Van Raalte, Dr. J. Smith, Dr. A.J. de Visser, Dr. G.H. Visscher, Hilmer Jagersma, Jake Torenvliet, Jonathan Chase, Han Gill Lee, Iwan Borst, Dr. William den Hollander (not pictured: Jeremy de Haan)*





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# Seven Things that are Detestable

**Proverbs 6:16-19**

We may not fully appreciate just how much God hates sin, but we know that he does. So when we read that there are six things the LORD hates, that doesn't surprise to us. We also know that there are certain sins that God calls "detestable." But we might be surprised to hear that in God's eyes, stirring up dissension among brothers is in the same category as homosexuality and child sacrifice.

These seven things that are detestable to God are sins against commandments that come from the second table of the law, the commandments that have to do with our life together as brothers and sisters in the congregation.

We need each other. The Preacher says in Ecclesiastes 4, two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might pre-

vail against one who is alone, two will withstand him – a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

This is what God gives us in our life together. And this is why these seven things are detestable to him. God hates haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies, and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers because of what these sins say about us, and because they destroy the holy unity of the congregation of his people.

These are the sins of a judgemental and critical spirit, of slander and gossip, of anger and hatred, of selfishness, of delighting in the setbacks and failures of others, of unwholesome talk. God surely hates them when he sees them in the world, but they are detestable to him among his holy people.

When God tells us what he hates, he's also telling us what he loves. When

God tells us what he detests, he's also telling us what he delights in.

The LORD loves humble eyes, that look on their neighbours with compassion and kindness. The LORD loves a tongue that speaks healing words, words that are helpful for building others up. The LORD loves hands that look for opportunity to serve; hands that reach out to help the weak to carry their burdens. The LORD loves a heart that thinks of others, that's open and ready to forgive. The LORD loves feet that are quick to come to the aid of those who are grieving, those who are struggling. The LORD loves a tongue that defends and promotes its neighbour's honour and reputation.

The LORD loves these six things, because the seventh is a great delight to him. It gives God great pleasure to see his children serving each other, building one another up, in love. That is the holiness and the beauty of the church. It's the life we have in the Spirit, life forevermore.

## For Further Study

1. How is Solomon saying here in Proverbs 6 what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13?
2. Why is it so important to God that we serve each other in love?
3. How can we rebuke our neighbour (Luke 17:3) without being judgemental toward him? (See Luke 6:41-42)
4. Why do you think Solomon mentions lying twice (v. 17, v. 18)



# Report of the Forty-Seventh Anniversary Meeting and Forty-Second Convocation

## of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS), September 9, 2016



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The Hamilton area had just experienced a week of high temperatures and humidity, but this Friday evening there was some relief. It turned out to be a beautiful summer evening. People were arriving early and there were animated, cheerful greetings among people who hadn't seen each other for some time. The auditorium at Redeemer University College filled up to full capacity on the main level. No doubt the number of graduates brought in many families and friends. Live streaming meant people could participate in this evening from around the world.

The chairman of the Board, Rev. Richard Aasman, opened the evening by reading 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 and 2 Corinthians 4:5-7. These passages would prove to be fitting for the main address of the evening. The opening prayer remembered, among other things, the special needs of the widow of the late Dr. K. Deddens, Dr. J. De Jong and his wife Margaret, sister W. Faber, widow of the late Dr. J. Faber, Prof. J. Geertsema, Dr. N.H. Gootjes and his wife Dinie. Appreciation was also expressed for the continued work and health of Professor Emeritus Dr. C. Van Dam. After prayer a letter was read from the Free Reformed Church of West Albany, Australia. The chairman declared this Forty-Seventh Anniversary Meeting and Forty-Second Convocation of CRTS open. The floor was given to Rev. P.K.A. De Boer who spoke on behalf the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

The principal of the seminary, Dr. Gerhard H. Visscher, spoke briefly. You can read a fuller text elsewhere in this issue of *Clarion*. Dr. Visscher mentioned that this evening we were being presented with the largest graduating class that the CRTS had ever experienced. He welcomed the new students. Dr. Visscher gave some encouraging words to both the students and the churches. He

mentioned that students at seminary, many of whom are married and have children, should remember that they are husbands and fathers first. They cannot sacrifice this at the expense of being a student or minister.

The keynote speaker for the evening was Dr. Jason Van Vliet, professor of Dogmatics. His address was "Divine Treasure in Clay Pots: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Preaching." Dr. Van Vliet showed from 1 Corinthians 2 that Paul preached "in weakness and in fear and much trembling." Like Paul, every preacher must be aware of inherent weakness and blindness to comprehend the gospel. It is the Holy Spirit who transforms preachers and opens their eyes to see the glory of the gospel. Preachers are "jars of clay" but through the Holy Spirit they hold tremendous treasure. Understanding that we have this treasure, and holding great reverence for the gospel of Jesus Christ, we trust that the Holy Spirit will enable preachers who are weak in themselves to bring the gospel effectively to others. The entire speech can be found elsewhere in this issue of *Clarion*.

The climax of the evening was the graduation of nine students. We witnessed the conferring of the degree of Master of Divinity on Mr. Iwan Borst, Mr. Jonathan Chase, Dr. William den Hollander, Mr. Hilmer Jagersma, Mr. Han Gil Lee, Mr. David Pol, and Mr. Jake Torenvliet. The Master of Divinity degree was also conferred on Mr. Jeremy de Haan in absentia. The Bachelor of Theology Degree was conferred on Mr. John Boeke. The Selles Book Prize was presented to and shared by Iwan Borst and William den Hollander. A word of thanks was expressed by Jake Torenvliet on behalf of the graduating class. Afterwards, the entire graduating class presented a Gregorian chant that was a playful insight into some

### CALL DECLINED

Declined the call by the Aldergrove Canadian Reformed Church to serve as a third missionary for the work in Brazil:

**Rev. A. Witten**

of Vernon, B.C.


## CHURCH NEWS

unique characteristics of each student (go to the CRTS website>Resources>Videos if you want to hear it). It was clear to everyone present that there was a special, wonderful bond between these students. What a blessing to witness this in a special way!

The Women's Savings Action was represented by Mrs. Chris Nienhuis, Mrs. Joanne Van Dam, and Mrs. Janet Van Vliet. In their presentation they reminded the churches just how valuable the contribution of the WSA is to the library at CRTS. \$35,000 was presented for the upcoming year. Special thanks was expressed for the work of Chris Nienhuis and Joanne Van Dam, who were retiring from the WSA after many years of faithful service. They are being replaced by Mrs. Deb Alkema and

Mrs. Karen Schuurman. Dr. Visscher expressed CRTS's thanks for the faithful work and the amazing contribution by the sisters in the WSA.

The collection was for the CRTS Publication Foundation – a fund that provides money for the faculty to produce books. During the collection we listened to the able playing of our organist for the evening, Mr. John Van Iperen.

Rev. John Ludwig led in closing prayer. As is customary, the assembly concluded with the singing of "O Canada." After the program everyone had opportunity to congratulate the graduates. It was also a time of good fellowship, and of renewing friendships and acquaintances. You are welcome to view a video version of the College evening at [www.canadianreformedseminary.ca](http://www.canadianreformedseminary.ca). 







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# Divine Treasure in Clay Jars: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Preaching

Apparently the Apostle Paul was not such a great preacher. At least that is what some people in Corinth thought. They said, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and *his speech [is] of no account*” (2 Cor 10:10).

In fact, we might even have the impression that the apostle himself had a bit of an insecurity-and-inferiority complex as a preacher. Listen again to what he says in 1 Corinthians 2, “I was with you in weakness and in fear and *much* trembling, and my speech and my message were *not* in plausible words of wisdom” (vv. 3-4). Now, if these were the words of a seminary student going through the nerve-rattling experience of his first sermon session, we would understand. But this is a seasoned missionary. Why is *he* trembling in fear as he preaches the great news of salvation in Jesus Christ?

And while we’re asking questions, here is another one: “Does the Spirit of God do some of his best work through not-so-great public speakers?” That sounds a bit odd. Obviously it would be helpful if we looked more closely at two passages in which the Apostle Paul speaks about his preaching: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 and 2 Corinthians 4:5-7. As we do so, we want to focus specifically on how the Holy Spirit works powerfully to transform preachers – in who they are, in how they prepare in the study, and in how they preach from the pulpit. Added to that, this has everything to do with all of us, especially our expectations as we receive that gospel preaching Sunday after Sunday.

## The power of the Holy Spirit and the person of the preacher

First let’s consider how the Holy Spirit transforms the preacher. All pastors should have an accurate awareness of their own weaknesses. Preachers who look at themselves in the mirror through rose-coloured glasses usually run into problems, either sooner or later.

However, this whole matter of proper self-awareness reaches an entirely new level when the preacher asks himself this soul-searching question: “What would I be if I did *not* have the Spirit of Christ working in my heart?” And in part, the correct answer is: “I would be completely blind.” In 2 Corinthians 4:6 we hear about God who said, “Let light shine out of the darkness,” obviously alluding back to the first day of creation. But back in verse 4 we learn that this is a particular kind of darkness. It’s the darkness of someone who is blind: “The god of this world [referring to Satan] has *blinded* the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor 4:4).

Let that sink in for a moment. If the Holy Spirit had not shone the light of the gospel into our hearts, we would all be blind, whether we stand in a pulpit or sit in a pew. Added to that, consider the following facts:

- A blind person does not dwell in dimness, where people squint and strain their eyes because it’s hard to see. No, a blind person dwells in total darkness – blacker than the blackest midnight.
- Human willpower does not heal blindness. A blind person may *want* to see very badly, but the hard reality is that he *cannot* see, even if it he wants to.
- According to Scripture, this particular kind of spiritual blindness has a demonic and domineering disease aspect to it. Satan, the prince of “this present darkness” (Eph 6:12), has an aggressive grip on the hearts of unbelievers and he is loath to give it up (Col 1:13).

And as if all of this were not bad enough, the worst of it is that those who dwell in the blindness of unbelief can be completely self-deceived. Some even *think* that they actually can see. For example, the Pharisees thought that they were rather enlightened people, but they were sadly mistaken, and our Lord Jesus Christ reprimanded them, saying, “*Blind* guides! That’s what all of you are: the blind leading the blind” (Matt 15:14; Rom 2:17-21).

Lest we, too, be self-deceived, let us think soberly about ourselves (Rom 12:3). Let's be acutely aware that if it were not for the miraculous, illuminating work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we would all be totally blind – hopelessly unable to see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. Whether we have a M.Div., or a B.Th., or a B.A., or no degree or diploma at all, the truth is still the same: without the Spirit each and every one of us would be totally blind. That truth has a way of humbling every sincere disciple of Christ. And so it should.

But now, turning to the positive, the Spirit of God has the miraculous capacity to heal our spiritual blindness. With divine, re(creative) power, he declares, “Let light shine in the dark hearts of those poor, blind, miserable sinners.” And it was so. And it *is* so. “I once was blind, but now I see.”

What do we see? Please note: not just light, in general, but a very special kind of light. A light of *knowledge*. And again, not just knowledge in general because this is the light of the knowledge of *the glory of God*. Yes, you can see the glory of God when you look around at creation. But that's not what the Apostle Paul is speaking about here. It is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God *in the face of Jesus Christ*.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, it was especially *the face* of our Saviour that was transformed. As the Holy Spirit reveals to us in Matthew 17, “And [Jesus] was transfigured before them, *and his face shone like the sun*” (v. 2). Now that's bright light! You cannot even look directly at the sun without damaging your eyes. Just imagine: the face of Jesus shone like the sun. His face was entirely resplendent, not with sun-light but with glory-light.

Our Saviour is no longer on the Mount of Transfiguration. He is at the right hand of the Father, but by the power of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the holy gospel, the light of nothing less than this glory-light of Jesus Christ starts to shine in our hearts. His light also begins to *transform* us. Transformation is more than illumination, even as a growing plant is more than the sunlight that shines upon it. As the Apostle Paul writes at the end of 2 Corinthians 3, as we behold the glory of Christ, we “are being transformed into the same image *from one degree of glory to another*. For this comes from the Lord *who is the Spirit*.”

What manner of grace is this? That we, who by nature are nothing but blind, self-deceived guides, would now see the glory of Christ in the light of the gospel is certainly more than we deserve. But that the Spirit would

also transforms us so that we actually begin radiating that light of Christ, brighter and brighter, from one degree of glory to the next. This is surely more than we would have ever imagined!

So, behold the mighty deeds of the Holy Spirit! Recent converts and seasoned saints, preachers and preachers-to-be, all of us: if we have some sense of where we would be without the Spirit of Christ and some awareness of how much the Spirit is doing to transform us, then we are left with only one option: we must be humble, so very, very humble!

That's why the Apostle Paul does not hesitate to describe himself as a jar of clay. In and of itself, a clay pot is nothing special. It's made from dirt and in Paul's day, clay pots were a dime a dozen. Nevertheless, even the most common clay pot can hold a priceless treasure, like a jar full of sparkling gems. Likewise, a preacher – who is nothing more than a common redeemed sinner just like the rest of us – can carry up into the pulpit the resplendent glory of Christ: the sparkling ruby of redemption, the jasper of justification, and the sapphire of sanctification. But then remember: the sparkle is found in the treasure, *not* the clay pot. The centre of attention is the glory of God in the face of Christ, *not* the clay pot. And woe to the jar of clay who forgets who and what he really is. Woe to the jar of clay who slowly but surely, either intentionally or unintentionally, turns himself into the centre of attention – also up there on the pulpit on Sunday. When a clay jar in a pulpit starts to put on the glitz, the net result may very well be that people are fascinated with the style of the preacher rather than the glory of the Christ. And if that happens then gospel preaching degenerates into the trivial pursuit of stroking an over-inflated ego. That is detrimental to the congregation. That is detrimental to the preacher. But above all, it is entirely disrespectful to our Saviour. *He*, not *we*, is the Treasure.

### **The power of the Holy Spirit and the preparations of the preacher**

In order to avoid the ever-present temptation of preaching for the sake of popularity, every pastor needs to begin properly in his study. More often than not problems in the pulpit begin in the study.

So what will the preacher be busy with during the week as he prepares his sermons? He'll be reading Scripture in the original languages of Hebrew and Greek because he wants to understand every subtle nuance of the Spirit-inspired Word. He'll be looking carefully at the context, both the closer context in the surrounding

verses and the broader context in that book of the Bible and the Scriptures as a whole. He'll be organizing his exegetical discoveries, thinking about how to explain them in a clear way. Perhaps he'll land upon a good illustration that really drives home the point. And, of course, he'll carefully consider how the truth of the text applies in our lives today.

But if that is all that he does, he's still not finished. And whatever he may be ready for, he is not yet prepared to preach. Why? Because a scholar of Greek philosophy could go through exactly the same steps with a chapter in one of Plato's writing. That scholar could carefully read the original Greek text, consider the context, organize his thoughts, apply Plato's teaching to today, and then head into the classroom and deliver a wonderful lecture. But a sermon is not a lecture, and preachers are called to preach not to deliver a lecture.

So what is the difference? Of course, one big difference is that a sermon is based on the Word of God and not on the wisdom of this world. But there is more. Ultimately, the faithful preacher proclaims *Someone* rather than just speaking about *something*. Notice what the Apostle Paul says: "For I decided to know nothing among you *except Jesus Christ and him crucified*" (1 Cor 2:2) and "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but *Jesus Christ*

*as Lord*" (2 Cor 4:5). Jesus Christ – both as the Humbled One and the Exalted One – but nonetheless, Jesus Christ, *he* is the Someone that preachers must proclaim.

That can be more challenging than it might sound. It's one thing if the preacher is preaching from Matthew 27 concerning the crucifixion of Christ. Then proclaiming Christ is right there in front of his eyes. But what if he's preaching from 2 Kings 5 where Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, first gets greedy and then gets leprosy as a consequence? How do you preach Christ from 2 Kings 5? That's more challenging.

Yet even as the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3, the same Holy Spirit who can heal our spiritual blindness is more than able to lift the veil off of our eyes and show us Christ – in all the glorious facets of his person and work (vv. 14-16), both in the New Testament *and the Old*. But it is only the Spirit who can do that.

And it is of particular importance that the preacher is aware of this as he is *preparing* to preach in his study. He can have a solid M.Div., a wonderful library, and even some whiz-bang Bible software, too, but if he does not pray for the Spirit of God to show him the Saviour in the passage before him, how will he ever truly preach *Christ*, "who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor 1:30).





So brothers and sisters, if your minister is busy during the week *praying* that the Spirit of Christ would show him more of the glory of Christ in the passage that he is studying, then will you also please join him in that prayer? Your minister, or guest preacher as the case may be, needs and appreciate your prayers, not just on Sunday morning but also during the week.

## The power of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the preacher

But now, what about that initial question we asked? And what about the Apostle Paul's apparent insecurity-complex as a preacher? Does the Spirit of God really do his best work through not-so-great public speakers? More specifically, is the Apostle Paul suggesting that it is OK if a preacher is a boring, illogical public speaker who never stirs a soul? After all, someone might argue, the impact of preaching is all about a demonstration of the Spirit and his power, not the rhetorical skill of preacher (1 Cor 2:4).

Well, let's try to correct three possible misunderstandings.

First, in 1 Corinthians 2:1 the Apostle Paul says that he did not come with "*lofty* speech." This means that he did not use highfalutin language, with all kinds of big, expensive words and all kinds of fancy rhetorical flourish. Yes, the philosophers and orators of his day used that kind of lofty, highfalutin language to impress people, but the Apostle Paul did not jump on that rhetorical bandwagon. Instead, as his preaching in Athens demonstrates, he would use *clear* language. He would use *well-chosen* words, and even *apt* illustrations or quotes, but it was all quite straightforward and down-to-earth (Acts 17). That's the point of verse 1.

Second, in verse 3, the Apostle says that he came in *weakness*. But this does not mean that he came with a weak, badly organized, or illogical sermon. Rather this goes back to what he said earlier in chapter 1, "But God chose what is *weak in the world* to shame the strong" (v. 27). Like many big cities at that time, Corinth loved to have great public speakers in their auditoriums and lecture halls. Usually these men could only speak if they had been invited to speak, and in order to receive an invitation, they had to have an impressive résumé. They had to be powerful speakers who had great reputations for being able to persuade crowds all over Asia Minor. But the Apostle Paul didn't have that kind of résumé. He was weak in the eyes of the world. But he was not sloppy; he was still a well-organized, logical speaker.

And third, in the same verse, he also says that he came preaching with "fear and much trembling." But what kind of fear? Is this the hand-wringing, knee-knocking fear of an overly anxious public speaker? Not necessarily. This phrase "fear and trembling" is used three other times in the New Testament (2 Cor 7:15; Eph 6:5; Phil 2:2) and every time it means "filled with the deepest sense of respect and awe for the gracious work of God almighty." You see, *if* the Apostle Paul was just lecturing away on some religious topic, there would be no need for "fear and trembling," except perhaps for some of the regular nerves that all public speakers experience. But he came proclaiming no one less than Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, the crucified Saviour and Risen Lord! Every sermon he preached was ultimately about the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! And *that* is why he was filled with the deepest sense of respect and awe every time he preached.

He also knew that hearts and lives were not going to be truly transformed by the power of his logic or the force of his rhetoric. If any blind soul was going to be healed and see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, then it was going to take a lot more than logic and rhetoric to transform him. It would take nothing less than the power of the Spirit of Christ – the Spirit of Christ who uses the preaching of common, clay jars, like Paul and many preachers who have followed in his footsteps, including those who are trained at CRTS.

So, was the Apostle Paul a bad public speaker? No, he was not. True, he was not a top-notch, celebrity orator who excelled in lofty speech. But he could preach a well-organized sermon with genuine passion. Acts 17 proves that. And the Spirit uses this kind of clear, passionate, down-to-earth preaching to transform common sinners into children of God who reflect the image of Christ "from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18).

Graduates of CRTS, brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, in this world there are many powerful speakers and there are many brilliant minds. But no powerful speaker and no brilliant mind has ever managed to cause the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ to shine in any sinner's heart. For *that* to happen, we need a much more powerful power. For *that* to happen, we need the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Let us earnestly pray that our pulpits, and indeed pulpits everywhere, be filled with *Spirit*-empowered preaching.





*Gerhard H. Visscher*  
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# A Word from the Principal

## Seminary Evening 2016

If there is one thing that sets this evening apart, it is the fact that tonight we have the largest graduating class ever in the forty-seven-year history of CRTS. I will not rehearse for you the list of who they are and what they are going to do as the Dean of Students will do so later this evening. I'm sure I speak for all though as I wish them God's abundant blessing as they depart down roads of ministry and service of our King. Every professor will agree that this class has been an outstanding and memorable group of young men, and that there is no doubt that through God's blessing, they will make a difference in the federation in the future just as they have done so in the seminary in the past.

Looking forward though I would like to introduce to you four new students who will begin their study next week. (I would ask them to please rise as I mention them.)

Kelvin Dekker – comes to us all the way from Western Australia, from the Free Reformed Church at Baldi-vis. We welcome him and his wife, Amy Houweling, to the CRTS community.

Aidan Plug – also comes to us from Western Australia, from the Free Reformed Church at Byford. These two brothers are sure not to get too lonely here in Canada, as they are also brothers-in-law. We welcome Aidan and his wife, Claire Houweling, to the CRTS community.

Daniel Shin – comes to us from Toronto where he has spent the last number of years in university and attending Bethel Church. He grew up in South Korea, and was born – of all places – in Kampen, The Netherlands, when his father was studying there. A hearty welcome to Daniel.

Lastly, we welcome Robert Smith, who comes to us from Denver, Colorado. Robert has been a member of an OPC congregation for some years and now comes to us from the American Reformed Church of Denver, Colorado. Welcome, Robert.

Thinking about new students in seminary, and graduates in ministry, perhaps we can think for a moment about the matter of "integrity." Among the many changes at seminary in recent years is our spiritual formation program; one component of this is the reading and discussion of a book that has to do with such matters. The book that one of our professors will be discussing with the students this year has the novel title *"How to Stay Christian in Seminary."* At one point, on the basis of 1 Timothy 3:5, which says that men who can't lead their own households well shouldn't lead God's household, Jonathan Parnell takes a position which I think we have not always maintained adequately. He says: "Not every seminarian is a husband and dad. But if you are, there is something you must understand: it's not that you're in seminary and happen to have a wife and children, but rather that you're a husband and dad who happens to be in seminary."

In other words, in seminary and in ministry, priority must be given to our own hearts and homes. We are first of all husbands and fathers. This does not get put on hold for seminary or ministry years. Parnell goes on to say: "What you do at home is more pertinent to your future ministry than the best class you'll ever take. It is even more pertinent than the exegetical gold you dig up in your studies. Every bit of gospel growth you receive by means of your theological training is aimed by God to touch all of your life" (p. 58, 59).

Neither seminary training nor ministerial work justifies ignoring family responsibilities. The Word of God, in fact, encourages ministry with "integrity." Those involved in ministry are reminded repeatedly to apply the gospel to *their own hearts* first of all (1 Tim 4:7, 13, 15, 16; 5:22; 2 Tim 2:15, Titus 2:7). In the pastoral letters, the Apostle Paul is regularly telling young Timothy to look after *himself* in the face of God's grace first, and he's

telling others as well to put their ministry into practice in their own *homes* above all (1 Tim 3:5). It's a healthy emphasis. It's a scriptural emphasis that applies to us all, whatever we do. May God grant you then to be students and ministers who do your work with integrity before the face of God.

### Professors at CRTS

Alongside our teaching, as professors we are often found travelling to supporting churches, to conferences, and to other seminary-related gatherings. Last year, we also started to deliver intentional visits to each of the churches in Ontario. Our goal was to visit them all over a three year period, but half of them have already been visited. Our annual list of where we've been outside of Ontario follows.

#### Dr. Arjan J. de Visser

- travelled to Dallas, TX in September to attend the annual conference of the Evangelical Missiological Society
- to Louisville, KY in October to attend the annual conference of the Evangelical Homiletics Society
- to Seoul, South Korea, in February to teach at the seminary of the Independent Reformed Church in Korea

#### Dr. Jannes Smith

- to the churches in Manitoba and Colorado in 2015
- to many churches in Western Australia and Tasmania while on sabbatical in 2016

#### Dr. Jason Van Vliet

- Fraser Valley, Reformation Day Rally October 2015
- Atlanta, GA in November 2015 to attend the meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society on the theme of the Trinity
- Brazil for teaching and keynote at graduation of John Calvin Institute February 2016
- Denver Family Camp August 2016

#### Dr. Ted Van Raalte

- to the Sixteenth Century Conference in Vancouver in October 2015
- to Grand Rapids for a friend's dissertation defense and a Junius Institute presentation in May 2016

#### Dr. Gerhard H. Visscher

- to Atlanta, GA in November 2015 to attend the meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society on the theme of the Trinity
- to Florida in early January for the ATS Evangelical Seminary Presidents conference
- to St Louis, Missouri for the Association of Theological Schools' Biennial Meeting in June 2016.



*Senate: (L to R) Prof. J. Geertsema, Dr. J. Van Vliet, Dr. A.J. de Visser, Dr. G.H. Visscher, Dr. C. Van Dam, Dr. J. Smith and Dr. T. Van Raalte*








# Greetings from a delegate of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

## Brothers and sisters;

It is a real honour to be here in order to pass on greetings from the Australian churches. As Australian churches we consider it a privilege to support the seminary in Canada as well as reap benefits from it. As a previous Canadian student and minister that served among the Australian churches for the last twenty years, I may personally consider myself evidence of that real living unity. Over the years this unity has reciprocated by Australia sending students to Canada who may end up serving churches here in Canada and at times Australia calling candidates or ministers to Australia. Just this year two Australian students, Aidan Plug and Kelvin Dekker, are enrolled to begin their studies. In the meantime, the Bunbury congregation in Australia is awaiting a positive response to the immigration of the candidate-in-waiting Br. David Winkel and the Byford congregation is awaiting a response from Rev. Holtvlüwer for the call they extended.

We are very thankful for the relaxed and brotherly manner in which we as bonds or federations of churches may relate to one another. In our minds it reflects the unity the Lord himself teaches us to maintain and which we with thankfulness are taught to sing about in the words of Psalm 133, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity!" Even though we dwell on opposite sides of the world, we surely rejoice in this wonderful unity that transcends all political boundaries and geographic obstacles. Among the Australian churches we continually pray for the theological training that takes place here in Canada with the realization that our unity is founded in the Lord. We therefore pray that men may be trained here at the Seminary to faithfully serve the Lord according to his Word so that you as churches in Canada and we as churches in Australia may continue in the unity of the true faith which we both, in our own parts of the world, may confess and defend.

*Thank you, Rev. P.K.A. de Boer* 

*Senate and Board of Governors*



Chris Nienhuis,  
Joanne Van Dam,  
and Janet Van Vliet

# Presentation of the Women's Savings Action At Convocation 2016

Mr. President, Members of the Board and Faculty, Graduates, Brothers and Sisters,

## Introductions

Good evening everyone. Let me introduce myself to you. My name is Largent. I am cheque number 712 in the Vanmembersma's cheque book. It is a sunny Sunday morning in April. Rain fell last night and I awoke to the earthy smells of wet soil mixed with the heavy scent of hyacinth blossoms. Breakfast has just been eaten in the Vanmembersma's household and the dishes are done. And this is what I, Largent, cheque number 712, hear:

"Liam, please get me the water spray bottle and the comb," Mom calls, "We have to get that rooster tail down."

"Mom? Can I please have a wall in my hair with gel today?" he responds.

"Mom! Please don't touch my hair with a comb at all today, okay?" three-year-old Sophie begs.

"Mom! Have you seen my blue tie anywhere?" thirteen-year-old Seth yells from his bedroom.

"I think you used it for a book mark this week. I think I've seen it on your desk." She responds. "Liam, can you please get everyone's notebooks and make sure candies are ready?" As Mrs. Vanmembersma asks this question, I feel her hand grasp my leathery jacket, otherwise known as the cheque book. "Dear," she calls, "Can you please write church cheques and one for the WSA as well? I need to do Sophie's hair."

"Sure Dear," I hear as a pen tickles my papery skin. Mr. Vanmembersma gently tucks me into an envelope that a rep had printed with the Women's Savings Action logo on it. He slides me back into the dark depths of a purse from where I hear the general hubbub of feet getting into shoes and heading into the family van.

All is quiet for a moment or two when suddenly Sophie asks, "Mom, what's the 'WSA'?"



"Oh, it stands for Women's Savings Action," she says.

"What's that? Lady action figures like those muscly toys that some kids have?" seven-year-old Liam asks.

"No," comes Seth's disgusted voice from the back seat, "But why do they call it that anyway?"

"Well," Mom replies, "It's called *Women's* because back when the Seminary started two ladies asked if every congregation could have a woman who would collect pennies for the Seminary library. Back then the women asked people to save their pennies. Each woman gave everyone in their congregation a Women's Savings Action label to put on a special tin in their household. If we still had pennies, we would have that tin in our house too, but since we use our debit and credit card so much there's rarely change in the house. So Women's Savings Action means women working or acting together to save money for the seminary library. Today, the only thing that has changed is that the WSA mostly collects cheques. Some women hand out envelopes with the new logo on it to their brothers and sisters instead of a tin. The women also let people know that they can now donate on-line through the *Canada Helps* website."

"But why does the Seminary library need money?" Liam asks.

"Well, the librarian, Mrs. Alkema, with the help of Ms. Mechelse, purchases new books and journals as well as online databases, which are very costly," Mrs. Vanmembersma answers. In a side comment to her husband, she says, "And then there's the exchange rate which lowers the purchasing power."



*Mrs. Chris Nienhuis, Mrs. Joanne Van Dam, Mrs. Janet Van Vliet*

"Right, of course," he nods his head, keeping his eyes on the road. "I heard a rumor that Mrs. Joanne Van Dam and Mrs. Chris Nienhuis are retiring this year. Is this really the case?" I hear Mr. Vanmembersma question his wife.

"Yes, indeed," she replies, "Mrs. Van Dam came on the WSA board in 1989 and Mrs. Nienhuis in 2001. That means it has been twenty-seven years of service for Mrs. Van Dam, some of which were secretarial duties and some chair duties. She has penned many newsletters, convocation presentations, many of them in rhyming poetical verse, and reports for the Library Committee. All of these were fashioned in a humble and gracious spirit."

Then she adds, "And Mrs. Nienhuis has served for fifteen years, meticulously keeping the amount that each church has donated, helping reps to keep their tax receipts straight, thanking each rep for the donation, as well as many other financial duties. She also served with a quiet and loving spirit. The WSA is really going to miss them. It is certainly our prayer that God will bless them both as they continue to serve in different ways to further the kingdom."

"Has anyone been found willing to fill the empty spots?" Mr. Vanmembersma asks.

"Yes, God has graciously provided two women to carry on with the work. Mrs. Deb Alkema from the Lincoln congregation will take over as secretary and Mrs. Karen Schuurman from the Glanbrook congregation will take over as treasurer. May God bless them as they learn their duties and may God give them strength for all the work." Mrs. Vanmembersma finishes talking as we pull into the already busy church parking lot.

"I second those sentiments," I think to myself. As you might guess from my name, Largent, I am just a small bit of money that is added to all the other amounts from

thousands of members across Canada, the United States, and Australia. I'll make up part of that grand total at the end of the year. Maybe Mrs. Nienhuis and Mrs. Van Dam won't meet me personally, but they'll be thankful to God for causing so many hearts to want to support the Seminary in this way. I wonder what the gift will be this year.

### **Farewells**

Yes, indeed, as you might have guessed from that allusion, Chris and I are retiring from the board of the Women's Savings Action after many years of wondering each year what our annual contribution would be! And we are indeed very thankful to the Lord for the faithful and generous support from the congregations for the seminary library, for the good cooperation with the many representatives and other members of the board. We are also very appreciative of the fact that our work was never taken for granted by the seminary community. Above all, we thank the Lord for health and strength to do our tasks. It has been a real privilege to serve in this way. And as you already heard, it gives us great pleasure to be able to announce that Deb Alkema and Karen Schuurman have been found willing to join the board. So the board will have a very different look – may I say, a more youthful look! We wish them the Lord's blessing!

### **Contributions**

Every year it has been with great gratitude to the Lord that we may make our annual contribution to help keep the library up-to-date. A very sincere thank you to the representatives and all those who assist in collecting and counting, and to all of you for your generous donations. During this past year a total of \$35,100.48 was collected and we pledge \$35,000 for the coming year. **C**



## Press Release of the Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary held on September 8, 2016

### Opening and roll call

The Board of Governors met at CRTS in Hamilton, Ontario, on September 8, 2016. All the governors were present at the meeting except Br. B. Hordyk, who was absent with notice. Rev. R. Aasman opened with the reading of Psalm 140 and led in prayer. Sr. Leanne Kuizenga was present as requested to take the minutes of the meeting. Rev. Pieter de Boer from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia was welcomed. Rev. de Boer informed the Board that the Australian churches intend to send a delegate to visit CRTS once every three years. The new governors Rev. John Louwerse, Rev. Joe Poppe, Rev. James Slaa, Br. Peter Vandersluis, and Br. Kasper Van Veen were welcomed to the meeting. The new governors signed the compliance documentation.

### Memorabilia

The following brothers and sisters were remembered in prayer: Srs. K. Deddens, the widow of the late Dr. K. Deddens, Dr. J. DeJong and his wife Margaret, sister W. Faber, widow of the late Dr. J. Faber, Prof. J. Geertsema, Dr. C. Van Dam, Dr. N.H. Gootjes and his wife, Dinie.

### Minutes and agenda

The minutes of the Board meeting held on January 14, 2016 were approved. The agenda for the meeting was established.

### Receipt of decisions, reports-material agenda items

- a. Article 76 from the Acts of Synod 2016 was reviewed. It was noted that no correspondence was received from the clerk of Synod and therefore the Board does not have enough information to deal with all of the recommendations as found in Article 76. Many of these things will come back on the January agenda. Two recommendations of Synod 2016 were dealt with: The Board appointed Dr. Jason Van Vliet as Principal beginning September 2017 (Art. 76, Rec. 4.5), and the Board granted tenure to Drs. J. Smith and J. Van Vliet. (Art. 76, Rec. 4.11)
- b. After a meeting between the faculty of CRTS, the chairman and vice-chairman of the Board, and the Deputies for Theological Training in South Africa,

the decision taken by email to allow theological students of our sister churches in South Africa to be long distance auditors of certain courses taught in CRTS was officially approved. The details were spelled out in a Memorandum of Agreement between CRTS and the Deputies for Theological Training in SA. The churches there are at a crossroads. Circumstances are deteriorating at the Theological School in Mukhanyo, so they need to set things on a better track as soon as possible. In order to do that, however, certain technical equipment needs to be put in place. All expenses for that will be covered by SA which means there is no budgetary impact for CRTS.

- c. Strategic Planning. Report on Key Thrust 1 – Promotional Plan Proposal (Dr. J. Van Vliet). This report was received with appreciation. It was suggested that there should be more communication with church councils and ministers to help encourage young men to pursue the ministry.
- d. Report of the Executive Committee. The chairman and vice-chairman met with the Principal and reported he has a good working relationship with the staff and other faculty members.
- e. Report of the Principal. Dr. G. H. Visscher gave an update on the incoming and outgoing students, as well as on the upcoming conference which will commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.
- f. Report on Visits to the Lectures at CRTS on March 17 and 18, 2016 were received from Rev. R. Aasman and Dr. A.J. Pol. These reports gave reason for thankfulness since the students are being taught in faithfulness to the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity.
- g. The Governance Committee submitted items with suggested changes and additions (e.g. Privacy Policy, Board-Committee Operating Protocol) to the College Handbook that incorporated previous decisions of the board. These suggestions were adopted.
- h. A Report on Visits by the Professors to churches in Ontario was received with thankfulness. Fourteen out of thirty churches have been visited and the remaining sixteen churches will be contacted in the coming months.
- i. The following Conference Reports were received for information:
  1. ATLA Conference Report – M. Alkema
  2. Grand Rapids Conference Report – Dr. T. Van Raalte
  3. ATS Conference Report – Dr. G.H. Visscher

- j. The Board accepted the recommendation of the Academic Committee to reconsider its earlier decision and accept the recommendation of the Principal that CRTS seek membership in the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and in Christians in Higher Education Canada (CHEC). In our day and age when colleges and universities are being required to offer same-sex couples housing, admission, and any number of similar “rights” it is prudent to be in contact with organizations that keep us informed about the various political tensions and happenings that may adversely affect CRTS and its missions.
- k. Report of the Finance and Property Committee: The Financial Statements for 2015 and the CRTS Budget for 2017 were approved by the Board. The assessment per communicant members was increased from \$85 to \$90.

### *New business*

The date of the next Strategic Planning Session has been scheduled for Wednesday, September 6, 2017. Frank Oostdyk was appointed as the Strategic Planning Coordinator. The Board agreed to bring in an outside facilitator.

Date of the next Board Meeting: January 12, 2017 at 1 p.m.

### *Press release and closing*

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

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

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



# Clarion Kids

## Rahab and the Spies

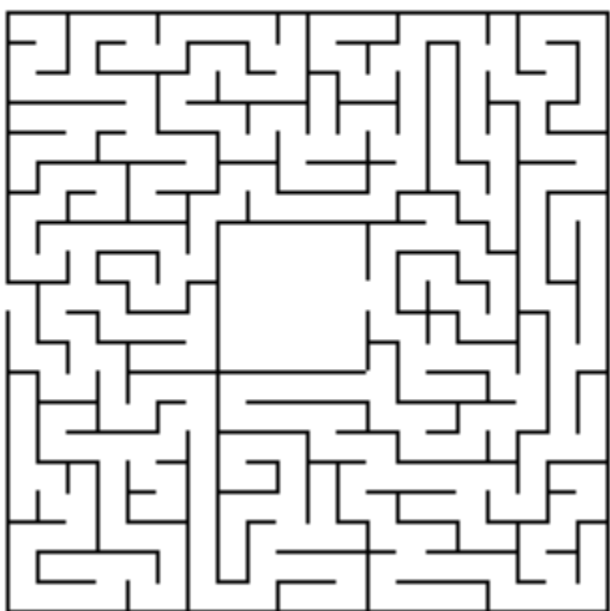
### Joshua 2

When the Israelites were close to the city of Jericho, Joshua sent two men to spy out the city. They stayed with a woman named Rahab who lived in the city wall. The king of Jericho heard that spies had come to stay with Rahab. When men came to find them, Rahab lied and hid the men to protect them. Because she did not turn them in, they told her that she and her family would be saved when the city was destroyed. She let them out of the city through a rope in her window. She tied a red string in her window as a sign that anyone in her house was not to be harmed.

Go to [www.clarionmagazine.ca](http://www.clarionmagazine.ca) to print and colour this picture!



**Maze:** Help the spies find their way around Jericho to Rahab's house!



A	S	H	L	W	M	G	R	P	I
E	P	G	E	F	O	Z	N	H	A
Q	I	Y	A	T	Y	D	G	I	K
X	E	T	R	S	U	N	N	R	K
Q	S	I	S	D	I	Y	I	I	R
O	H	C	I	R	E	J	O	L	W
U	X	H	T	F	A	M	I	L	Y
H	L	S	N	U	W	H	U	K	P
D	E	V	A	S	J	X	A	R	K
M	C	P	J	P	Y	U	S	B	W

**Find these words!**

Rahab	String	Israel	Family
Saved	Spies	King	Window

**by Emily Nijenhuis**





*William den Hollander*  
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Bethel Canadian Reformed  
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Q

**Where should we worship during extended vacation stays?**

**Our denomination has Ecclesiastical Fellowship in the USA with the URCNA, OPC, and RCUS. Is it our duty to try to worship with them? Should we instruct our members to worship with our sister churches while away from their home church? Or is attending a preaching point operated by a committee (instead of a Council) also acceptable? If preaching point services are suitable while on vacation, what message are we giving our sister church?**

A

So far it's been very interesting maintaining this column of Q&As. The great variety of questions (topics) has made the answering of questions interesting and intriguing (at least in my experience). From the fact that questions keep coming in we may

conclude that the column fills a need and has been appreciated as a place for inquiry and as a source for answers that come up in our readers' hearts and minds. Of course, I also received feedback regarding these questions and answers; good and positive feedback as well as critical comments. One of these was that there have been questions that need not be asked, of which the questioner already knows the answer. That may be so for some, while to others these questions do stand out in their experience of Bible Study or with regard to their participation in church life, or they originate from discussions, conversations, or otherwise. The above question, I think, is one of which the questioner has given the answer already.

The actual context of this question already gives rise to reservations with some: can we agree to this phenomenon of extended vacations? Is it a good and acceptable practice to be away from the family, congregation, and wider church community for an extended period of time (half a year for some)? Then it may be true that for some there are health reasons which necessitate an extended

stay away from the Canadian winter, but that is by and large not the reason for the extended stay, and therefore the practice of these "snow birds" is questionable and not conducive for a living membership in the home church and family relationships.

It's in this context that for instance a "preaching point," as the questioner calls it, was established in Palmetto, Florida. Perhaps this was "necessary" back in the 1980s when there were no formal sister churches yet in Florida, but that is (as the questioner indicates) not the case any longer. There may have been blessings derived from their Sunday gatherings and weekly Bible Study get-togethers, yet the actual confessional calling (LD 21, Q/A 55) of being living members who employ their gifts and talents for the benefit and well-being of the congregation to which they belong is not honoured. Besides, in our church life we don't know about "preaching points" but we do support "house-congregations" and "church plants" under the supervision and discipline of a neighbouring church with the purpose of seeing these eventually result in officially instituted congregations of the Lord Jesus Christ. I know that in the past the "board" of the Palmetto gathering has tried to find such a supervising church but did not succeed. This was mostly in order that the Lord's Supper could be administered, church life formalized, and their status rectified.

In the present situation of our sister church relationships with federations in the US such as the URCNA and OPC, therefore, it would be more appropriate if and when the Palmetto gathering wants to be maintained, to seek such supervision and discipline of a neighbouring church. If for instance the distance to some of their congregations is too far and Palmetto should be continued, then it could also serve as a church plant which eventually ends up being a URC or OPC congregation. The principle of the matter, however, as articulated in this question, should be that indeed when we are on holidays (whether for a week or a month or so) we should attend the worship services of the

faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ in that place (Hebr 10:25). Besides, even in our choice of holiday destinations we should first inquire or investigate whether we are able there to attend such a faithful church!

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

### **Ask us a question!**

Please direct questions to Rev. W. den Hollander  
denhollanderw@gmail.com  
23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0



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*Announcements of Weddings, Anniversaries (especially those with an Open House) should be submitted six weeks in advance.*

## ANNIVERSARIES

### **45<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary**

1971 ~ October 15 ~ 2016

*I am the vine; you are the branches.*

*If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit;  
apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5*

With great joy and thankfulness to God, we would like to announce the 45<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary of our dear parents and grandparents

#### **JOHN and MARY (nee Jonker) VAN EERDE**

Fergus, ON: Henry and Eileen Van Eerde  
Jolene, Wade, Chantel  
Grand Valley, ON: Paul and Kim Van Eerde  
Ben and Corissa, Debbie, Dan, Dave, Sarah,  
Jon, Mike  
Neerlandia, AB: Ed and Cisca Jansen  
Roseanna, Steven, Jesse, Leanne  
Fergus, ON: Greg and Christine Van Eerde  
Mckayla, Megan, Cohen  
Dunnville, ON: Ed and Maria Kelly  
Hailey, Tyler, Luke, Evan

2 Jane Street, Smithville, Ontario L0R 2A0

### **40<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary**

1976 ~ October 23 ~ 2016

*He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will  
find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*

*Psalm 91:4*

#### **JOHN and JANET VANDENBERG (nee Dewit)**

We thank our heavenly Father for His faithfulness in the lives of our parents, and that we may together mark the occasion of their 40<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary.

With love and appreciation for their care in our lives:

Jessica and Allan  
Lucas and Stephanie  
Levi, Mason  
Matthew

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