

# Clarion

YEAR-END 2016



*Best Wishes and the Lord's blessings in the year 2017 to all our readers.*

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# Christmas and the Shepherd King

In our culture, the greatest celebration of the year is Christmas. While much of the focus is on family celebrations and the giving of gifts, it is also a time when people are reminded about the birth of the Lord Jesus. Today, the story is retold about the birth of a child in a stable in Bethlehem. We remember the shepherds who came to see him and the wise men from the east who gave him gifts. People flock to hear the majestic sound of Handel's Messiah and are carried along by the traditional songs of the season. For many, the birth of this child long ago has become a romantic notion that provides good cheer for the season. What has been lost is the understanding that this child has become the king of all the earth to whom all mankind must give homage.

## ***The King in a hostile world***

Wise men came to Jerusalem from the east talking about seeing the star of the one who was to be the king of the Jews. After inquiring where he was to be born they were told that according to the prophet Micah he would be born in Bethlehem. The Jewish leaders did not only give the name of the place but they also quoted from 2 Samuel 5:2 saying, from Judah "will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel." In 2 Samuel the leaders of Israel came to make David their king for the Lord had previously said to David, "You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler." The Lord took David from a humble shepherd to becoming king over Israel.

God prepared the people of Israel to accept David as their king by giving him a great victory over Goliath. The confrontation between David


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and Goliath will have great implications for the Christmas story. At that time Israel was at war with the Philistines and the people were terrified because of the giant Goliath. David's father, Jesse, sent David from taking care of the sheep to go and see how his brothers were doing in the army. After David arrives in the war camp, Goliath came out to taunt the army of Israel. He mocked the men of Israel and challenged them to come out to fight him. He boasted about his great power and that he would destroy Israel. Goliath represents the evil and wicked powers who oppose the Lord God and his people.

The reality is that the world is hostile to God and in their arrogance mankind believes that they can destroy God's work on earth. David came into the war camp and he heard the boastful and arrogant words of Goliath. David became angry at his mocking and says to the men in the camp, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" This young shepherd boy comes from looking after his father's sheep and he comes face to face with the hostile powers of this world. Many years later the Christmas story tells the birth of David's great son, who entered into a hostile world. It does not take long for the hostility of this cruel world to become apparent, for Herod soon commands the death of all the children in Bethlehem in the hope of destroying this child. That is only the beginning of the cruel oppression against the son of David. During Christ's ministry, opposition quickly grew until finally the one sent by God was crucified on the cross.

Since the days of Jesus Christ, opposition against him and his church has not ceased. The powers of darkness continued to oppress the



believers throughout the history of Christ's church. The powers of the evil one are clearly present in our society today as many espouse the wicked agenda of the evil one. Opposition against the moral authority of the Lord Jesus is great. Christ's rule is challenged and people promote values that are evil in the eyes of Christ. They mock and ridicule the one who was born in Bethlehem, believing that they can oppose the one God has made ruler over all the earth.

### ***A shepherd is raised as King***

When King Saul hears that there is a young man who is asking why the soldiers are afraid of Goliath who is defying the living God of the armies of Israel, he summons David. Immediately David says to the king, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine, your servant will go and fight him." Saul replies, "You can't go out to fight Goliath, you are just a young boy, Goliath is a grown man who has been fighting from his youth." From a human perspective David is much too small and weak to fight against this hostile power.

***The child born  
of David's line in Bethlehem  
did not come in great glory  
with great fanfare***

David says, "I have been a shepherd, taking care of my father's sheep." That seems rather ridiculous! How can a lowly shepherd ever hope to defeat a giant warrior? Is David deluded to think that he can defeat such a great enemy? Not at all, for he is a man of faith who knows that the living God of Israel is on his side. He believes with his whole heart that the living God will not be mocked and ridiculed by this uncircumcised Philistine. God will raise up this shepherd in Israel to be the Saviour of his people. When David goes out to fight, he goes out as a shepherd boy, carrying his shepherd's staff in one hand and his slingshot in

the other. When Goliath sees him approach, he becomes angry, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" he says.

David replies that he comes against him in the Name of the LORD Almighty, the God whom he has defied. The dark powers of this world always underestimate the power of God, for the Lord uses the weak in order to display his great power in this world. God raised up this shepherd boy to be the great ruler of Israel. He gave this shepherd the great victory over his great enemy. From this shepherd the Lord God will raise a greater shepherd in Jesus Christ. Jesus himself spoke of that in John 10 when he proclaims himself to be the good shepherd.

***It is a story  
that continues  
to be relevant today***

The child born of David's line in Bethlehem did not come in great glory with great fanfare. His birth had to be announced in Jerusalem by foreign Magi. His own people did not recognize him for he came in humble appearance. He was ridiculed, despised, and rejected by his own people. And yet the Lord raised up this shepherd to be the King of the whole earth. The powers of darkness attempted to defeat him, but Jesus Christ prevailed. Death itself could not defeat him for he rose from the dead on the third day. Today he is seated in victory at the right hand of God where he rules over all things.

The Christmas story does not end with his birth in Bethlehem, but it is a story that continues to be relevant today. The powers of darkness may scoff at the idea of Christ's victory, but this story gives great hope and joy. God has raised up a shepherd to be our King. He now has all power and authority to rule over all things for his people. My life now rests securely in the hands of my Lord and my King.



## What's Inside

With this year drawing to its close, so does Volume 65 of *Clarion* magazine. We look back at a year of blessings from our Heavenly Father, celebrate the birth of his Son, and prayerfully look forward to 2017.

As I compiled and reviewed these pages, it did not escape my notice that each of our editors has written something for our Christmas issue: an editorial from our newest editor, Rev. Matthew Van Luik, articles from Revs. Peter Holtvliwer and Eric Kampen, Dr. Van Dam's Clippings column, and Dr. James Visscher's annual Year in Review. What a blessing their work is to our magazine and our federation! It also brought to mind someone we miss at *Clarion*: Rev. Klaas Stam, who was taken to the Lord on the first day of 2016.

The magazine is filled with Christmas articles and federation news. May it be a blessing to all the readers in your home! On these pages you will find greetings from many brothers and sisters in our federation – may I add mine to theirs: wishing you all a Christmas season filled with joyful celebration and a blessed new year.

Laura Veenendaal

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# Clarion

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### ***A King with a shepherd's heart***

What a king we have! He rules with a shepherd's heart. When King Saul said to David, "But you are just a young boy!" and questioned his ability to defeat Goliath, David responded by telling him that he took care of his father's sheep and he had experience in defending the sheep from predators. He says, "When a sheep was carried off by a lion or a bear, I would go and strike the animal and rescue the sheep. If the lion or bear would turn on me, I would grab it by its hair and kill it with my own hands."

On the one hand David described how the Lord gave him power to destroy these fearsome animals, but it says so much more about David. It shows that David cared about the sheep so much that he did not worry about his own life to defend them. David was not concerned about his own life, but he cared about the life of the sheep for which his father had given him responsibility. That shepherd's attitude is also what causes David to tell Saul that he will fight Goliath. Here God's people are being

threatened, their lives are in danger, and David with a shepherd's heart immediately wants to go and defend God's people.

David's attitude is only a shadow of the attitude in the heart of his son, Jesus Christ. The Christmas story reveals the great King who came with a shepherd's heart. Jesus himself says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." The great king did not come for his own honour and glory, but he came to care for his sheep. In his love and compassion, he laid down his life on the cross. He came to deliver us from the hands of the cruel oppressors and give us the glorious hope of the life everlasting. At Christmas we rejoice not just because a famous baby was born, but we look to him in faith, trusting that he will protect our life in the face of this hostile world. Christmas is a time that gives great joy to our hearts, for the Lord has given to us a great King with a shepherd's heart. Christmas is not an empty celebration, but a celebration in which we give glory and praise to our gracious King. "He shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah." ❄



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## **The Shepherds Near Bethlehem**

*And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.*

*Luke 2:8*

*This meditation was originally published in this magazine in 2004.*

The Holy Spirit makes sure we understand very clearly that Jesus was born in Bethlehem's stall, of David's line and in David's town of Bethlehem. Who this child is and what he will accomplish is now revealed by angels to shepherds who were awake that night in the vicinity of Bethlehem. An important question for us is, why shepherds? Why was the fact of Jesus Christ's birth first revealed to shepherds? We might be inclined to say: do not make too much of this. The fact is, the shepherds of that region were the only ones awake that night and they were nearby. In other words, this is a matter of convenience and haste: get the closest possible and available people to be eyewitnesses of the greatest event in history – Immanuel, God with us. There is merit to this logic. Some commentators stand by this interpretation. But is there more?

Many would say that the most obvious people to be informed of Christ's birth would be the high priest and other leaders in Jerusalem. After all, these are the men whose calling it was to bring good news to God's people. They were the ones who proclaimed the gospel and foreshadowed the coming of Jesus Christ in the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law. Who better to be eyewitnesses of the all shadows and promises coming to fruition? Who better and more reliable to proclaim the birth of the Messiah? Good point.

Certainly they would be better than shepherds who were regarded as shifty and untrustworthy in those days. In fact, according to Jewish law, no shepherd was allowed to be a judge or even an eyewitness in a court of law. They could not be trusted for that. So why should a shepherd be the eyewitness to the greatest event in history? Wouldn't you want the priests in Jerusalem for that? Who better and more reliable to proclaim the birth of the Messiah? Good point. And yet, we have a problem. Jerusalem was not interested. When the Magi came to Jerusalem announcing the birth of Israel's king, they were politely directed to Bethlehem but not one person went with them from Jerusalem.

The words of the Apostle Paul come to mind: "We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles." You know that our Lord Jesus Christ also spoke with frustration during his public ministry how his own people – particularly the spiritual leaders of his day – did not accept him. They had ears but would not hear!

There is a certain significance to the choice of God to use rough, tough, and lowly shepherds to be both recipients of the good news that Jesus Christ was born and to be the very first eyewitnesses. Again to use Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1, it is as if he were speaking about the shepherds: "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were



influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.”

Does this not teach us something today? Is the gospel of salvation the special reserve of those who have an established place in the church, who may have been born into a well-established Christian family, who often have an important role in church and kingdom, such as being an office bearer, a teacher and so on? The very opposite is true. It is for anyone. It is even for one who may have spent a large part of his or her life in sin and darkness, far removed from church life and a lifestyle of holiness.

The good news of Jesus Christ is that it is not the wise and intelligent, it is not those of noble birth and influential status who have a special “in” with God. But it is for everyone who will stand in awe at Bethlehem’s stall because of God’s grace; it is for everyone who weeps quietly at Golgotha’s cross because of his sins; it is for everyone who stands before God and puts his hand on his chest and cries out to God “Oh, you have been so merciful to me a sinner.” For them the peace of God will flow down like a river, washing away every sin, renewing the totality of life, and preparing us for an eternal inheritance. Yes, there will be great joy in heaven among the angels, as they see God’s sons and daughters praising God in this way. The shepherds heard the angels say, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.” ❄





# Crime, Cruelty, and Christmas

*This article was originally published in New Horizons, December 2015. It is reprinted with permission.*

Have you noticed at this time of year how some people get so upset by stories of crime and cruelty in the news? These are the same people who seem to take all sorts of bad things in stride throughout the rest of the year. Frequently they will comment on how terrible it is that people commit crimes around Christmas. For some reason, they believe that this season of the year should bring a moratorium on bad behaviour. In fact, some of us may even have similar feelings. We have the idea that Christmas should have such an impact on our world that it makes people better.

Those in the helping professions may notice that Christmas brings on certain kinds of emotional difficulties for some people. Again, some of us may be surprised. We would like to believe that Christmas is such a wonderful time of the year that it should have a therapeutic effect on people.

All of this, it seems to me, misses the very reason for Christmas. Certainly it reminds us of love and giving. But if we think about Christmas simply in terms of love and giving, we miss the point. Christ was not born simply in order to set an example for us to follow.

If there were no crime or cruelty, there would not have been any need for the incarnation. The Lord Jesus was born in order to address the problem of sin. If there is no sin, there is no need for Christmas.

In the first few verses of Romans 8, the Apostle Paul reminds us of why Christ came into the world. He tells us in verse 3 that God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful man in order to condemn sin.


## **Christmas is about failure**

Paul explicitly tells us that the law was powerless to free us from condemnation. The weakness of the law was not something inherent in it, but in our sinful flesh. Paul is clear that the law is not bad; rather, the people who are to keep the law are bad.

The problem was that humankind, beginning with Adam, failed to obey God. Because Adam failed and passed his guilt on to all his progeny, we are all guilty of sin. Our guilt is compounded because not only are we guilty of Adam's sin, but we also sin ourselves.

I find it interesting that some who are disgusted with crime and cruelty at Christmas are the ones who encourage greed, self-centredness, and hedonistic indulgence. They want us to enjoy ourselves. You have heard them say, "Enjoy yourself; Christmas only comes once a year." They see it as license to engage in a variety of sinful behaviours.

Paul writes to Timothy, "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost" (1 Tim 1:15). Sinful failure and Christmas are integrally related. The Father in heaven loves sinners and sends his Son to earth to redeem them. The heavenly Son becomes a man in order to save sinners.



Any view of Christmas that does not recognize the role of sin in the incarnation misses the point of the incarnation.

### ***Christmas is about fraternity***

Paul is at pains to make sure we remember that the incarnation is real, not mythical. It is not simply a story that brings out the good in people. I think many who get exasperated by the evidence of crime and cruelty at Christmas think of the story of Jesus' birth as a fable like those of Aesop. Well, it is not.

*Christmas is about God  
taking the initiative in sending  
his own Son*

Jesus was a real baby. When we romanticize the birth of Jesus, we reduce the meaning of what he did. He freely gave up the glories of heaven in order to take on genuine human flesh. The Creator became a creature. When we make Christmas so ethereal that it is no longer real, we diminish the marvel of it all. Jesus did not simply appear and take on an apparent human form. When he was born in the stable, there was an afterbirth to be cleaned up. His mother experienced birth pains, just like every other mother.

Jesus is like us in our weak humanity, yet without sin. Note the way Paul describes the incarnation in a few words in Romans 8:3. He speaks of God "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh."

Jesus was a man with all the weaknesses that accompany human beings. He faced life without any special tricks or gimmicks that enabled him to fulfill God's will. He was like us in all ways, except that he did not inherit Adam's sinful nature and

did not commit any sins. In our reflections on Christmas, it is easy to forget this about Jesus.

When Jesus was born in that stable, he experienced cold, hunger, and discomfort. Like any other baby, he was able to communicate his wants and needs only by crying. Yet we often forget this. Even a carol as wonderful as "Away in a Manger" misses this point. The second verse says, "The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but the little Lord Jesus no crying he makes." Surely Jesus cried – how else would Mary know he was awake?

It is essential that the Lord Jesus was really a man. He had to face and overcome every temptation in order that his righteousness could be imputed to us and received by faith alone. It was as a real, weak human that Jesus faced the cross. It was as a regular person that he endured the pain of crucifixion. If not, it would have done no good. Because we, as humans, sin, it is necessary that a human being suffer in our place.

Christmas is about God taking the initiative in sending his own Son. The babe of Bethlehem is sent by God the Father in order to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Jesus freely comes because we cannot save ourselves. He comes because he loves us and will die to take away our sin. He is called Jesus because he will save his people from their sin.

### ***Christmas is about freedom***

The incarnation provides us with freedom from the curse and penalty of the law of sin and death. In Romans, the Apostle Paul helps us to see that Jesus defeats sin by taking the punishment that sinners deserve in his death on the cross. The incarnation was directed toward that deliverance from the penalty of sin.

Jesus was born in order to keep the law and then bear the consequences of breaking the law. Note that Jesus kept the law and then suffered the penalty of law-breakers in order to free us from the guilt and penalty of sin.

Remember the last verse of "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing:" ". . .born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth."

In Romans 8, Paul teaches us not only about freedom from the penal consequences of sin, but also about deliverance from the dominion of sin. Jesus frees us from the necessity of sinning. Sin no longer reigns over us. Paul tells us in verse 4 that God's people don't live according to the sinful nature, but according to the Spirit. We are no longer fleshly; we are now spiritual – that is, the Holy Spirit directs us.

In our thinking about Christmas, we need to keep this in focus. When you read of crime or when you hear reports of cruelty, remember that because Jesus was born in Bethlehem and died in Jerusalem, you are no longer mastered by the Evil One and his evil ways. You are now able to love the Saviour. You are now able to rejoice in his wondrous love. You are now able to please him by doing as he did, denying yourself and esteeming others better than yourself.

*Any view of Christmas  
that does not recognize  
the role of sin in the  
incarnation misses the point  
of the incarnation*

I'm not suggesting that we aren't supposed to be disturbed by reports of sin in God's world at this time of year. But what I am suggesting is that we don't forget that the babe of Bethlehem was born to set us free, so that we could obey God, rather than always disobeying him.

Try to make sure that your Christmas celebrations include rejoicing in the freedom Christ brought to you.

## **Christmas is about the future**

In the future, a wonderful transaction will take place. Whereas Jesus came to earth in the incarnation and took a true body and a reasonable (rational) soul, in heaven we will become like Jesus. He will still have his body, and we will have a transformed body just like his. But the wonderful thing is that we will be conformed to his image, and will only and always desire to do the will of the Father.

*In the new heavens  
and the new earth,  
righteousness will prevail*

Because we and all others in heaven will be transformed, there will no longer be any crime or cruelty. In the new heavens and the new earth, righteousness will prevail. No one will engage in cruel thoughts or actions. Crime will disappear, and all will be glad followers of the way of the Lord.

We are all disappointed when we hear of crime and cruelty. No Christian person should ever forget the horrible ugliness of sin and how cruel sinners can be.

Nevertheless, when we hear about such things at Christmastime, remember that Jesus came because of our failure to keep his law. Rejoice in his fraternal character – he was born to be like us, in order to save us. Embrace the freedom that the incarnation begins and the cross completes. Live free from the consequences of sin and from its dominion. Most of all, as you celebrate the first advent, anticipate the future advent, when you will be with the Saviour forever. Sing with hope the words of Charles Wesley: "Come, thou long-expected Jesus. . . . Raise us to thy glorious throne."



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# *Behold, I Have Come!*

## (Christmas in the Psalms)

In last year's final *Clarion*, I wrote about the Christmas message of Psalm 132. The expectation of the coming Messiah was in the minds of faithful believers like David but even more importantly, the revelation of Christ was woven into his writings by the Holy Spirit. This year we'll see how his birth is spoken of in Psalm 40:6-7, a fact we have confirmed by the writer of the New Testament book Hebrews. To get the most out of this article, you'll need to read Psalm 40 and then Hebrews 10:1-10 – *carefully*. It requires meditation – perfect for the holidays! So, take your time, grab a hot chocolate, a short-bread cookie, settle into your favourite chair and let the Holy Spirit show you Christmas in Psalm 40.

### *Christ in David*

One of the first things we have to learn in reading the psalms of David is that we are meant to see and hear Christ in him and his words. David as the anointed king is a *type* of Christ. That means, God deliberately raised up David to model for us something about the future King Jesus. Through David's real experiences and his writings, we are being taught the deeper dimensions of our Lord's work. What David was made to suffer, Jesus was made to suffer more fully; what the inspired David wrote about his royal task was later on taken up by and applied to Christ in completeness.

This is taken for granted by Hebrews' author as he introduces David's words from Psalm 40:6-7 and puts them into the mouth of Christ: "Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me'" (Hebr 10:5). We have no record of Jesus ever saying these words about himself, much less at the moment when he came into the world (!), and yet they are said to be his. This tells us that the inspired NT writers saw Christ in David and felt free to apply his words to Jesus – and so should we! And these words of Psalm 40 tell us something about Christ's incarnation, about Christmas.

### *A body prepared*

In Psalm 40, David is both praising and praying for help. Along the way, he also describes the kind of person who "seeks" the LORD and "loves" his salvation (Ps 40:16), the kind of person who has made God his trust and lives under his blessing (v. 4). The true believer knows that God does not first of all delight in sacrifice and offering but in obedience – "I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart" (v. 7).

*God deliberately raised up David  
to model for us something  
about the future King Jesus*

In that context, David says something that sounds strange, "Ears you have dug for me" (v. 6 - see ESV footnote which gives a literal translation). It's through our ears that we hear God's Word and



learn to obey it, so its meaning is that it is the LORD who has given David, as it were, “ears to hear,” as Jesus would later say (e.g. Mark 4:9). Because the metaphor is so unusual, it was translated with more elaboration into the Greek Old Testament as, “A body you have prepared for me” – and it’s that translation which is quoted in Hebrews 10. When you think about it, it makes sense: what goes in to our ears and down into our heart will come out in the actions of *our entire being*. Thus, in preparing David’s body, the LORD was preparing his whole person to offer a life of obedience to God.

*The body that was  
prepared for God’s Son  
to take up as he entered the  
human race is the same body  
Christ offered on the cross  
to free us from our sins*

The Holy Spirit in Hebrews 10 takes over that translation (thus validating it) and applies it in a fuller way to the birth of Jesus: “A body you have prepared for me.” This was necessary in a unique way for God’s Son. Just as God created and prepared David’s body to do God’s will, so the LORD created and prepared a physical body for the Son of God *to take up as his own flesh* in order to do his Father’s will! For David, these words refer to the Holy Spirit readying him throughout his youth for service as anointed king; for Christ, these words refer to the Holy Spirit’s secret work in the womb of the virgin Mary, readying a true human body in which he would serve as the Great Anointed King!

### ***“Scroll of the Book”***

What is at issue in this part of Psalm 40 is obedience to the LORD, something he wants from each of his children (Deut 6:4-6), but then doubly-so from the king he anoints over his people. The king had to be an example for the people and be able to teach them the way of the LORD. As the anointed one, David knew this and, thanks to the Holy Spirit’s

work in his heart, he eagerly committed to doing God’s will (v. 8). He had learned from Saul’s negative example and, no doubt, Samuel’s instruction, how important obedience is (1 Sam 15:22). This is why he exclaims in verse 7, “Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me; I delight to do your will O my God.”

The opening part of verse 7 has puzzled many. What “scroll of the book”? And who is speaking? How has he “come”? Some have thought that David is referring to God’s “book of life” in which the names of his elect are written (e.g. Phil 4:3). Others have thought that David is no longer speaking here but rather only Christ, in the voice of direct prophecy, and that the “scroll of the book” refers to the writings of Moses and the prophets generally as predicting the coming of the Messiah.

### ***The King’s Bible***

But these suggestions depart from the flow of the psalm and don’t make sense within the context. What does make sense, however, is for David to refer to the scroll of Deuteronomy in which God had specifically written about the future king(s) of Israel! In fact, in Deuteronomy 17:18-20, the king was charged with the task of writing for himself a “copy of the law” which he was to keep on his person “all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law.” Very rare for those days, the king was to have his own personal Bible!<sup>1</sup> This is the scroll of the book which speaks of the king delighting in God’s law and it would have been this “torah” that David would have meditated on day and night (Ps 1:2).

How much more, then, our Lord Jesus Christ! What David delighted in imperfectly, Christ rejoiced in with every fibre of his being! What David wanted to keep but often failed, Jesus resolutely obeyed and never failed (John 4:34; Hebr 4:15)! He was the spotless servant-king who performed his Father’s will even to the point of sacrificing *the body* that had been prepared for him.



## Born to die

For King Jesus, obedience meant death, and he knew that in advance. When David says, “Behold I have come. . . I delight to do your will, O my God” then it refers to his “coming in” from tending sheep in Bethlehem’s fields to take up his task as king. David’s kingly duty was to shepherd and defend God’s people. When Christ says, “Behold I have come,” then it refers to him “coming down” from heaven into the virgin’s womb. And while he exceeds David as the Good Shepherd and the Great Defender of his sheep, Jesus’ special and unique task was to lay down his life for his sheep (see John 10, esp. vv. 15-17)! Christmas is Christ’s first step toward the cross!

*What David could only  
put his finger on in Psalm 40:6  
Christ Jesus actually  
brought into full effect*

The author of Hebrews stresses this foreknowledge of Christ by putting David’s words into Jesus’ mouth (10:5) and by pointing out what doing God’s will meant for him, “And by that will we have been sanctified through *the offering of the body* of Jesus Christ once for all” (v. 10). The body that was prepared for God’s Son to take up as he entered the human race is the same body Christ offered on the cross to free us from our sins. The baby in the manger was born to die so that we might live!

## Priest-King ends sacrifice

Jesus’ once-for-all sacrifice took away the need for the repeated sacrifices of old, and this

adds a deeper dimension to the words of David, “In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted. . . burnt offering and sin offering you have not required” (Ps 40:6). Of course, the LORD *had* commanded such sacrifices in the laws of Moses but only as a temporary measure. It was not God’s deepest desire to have endless sacrifices for sin but rather that sin itself be done away with, that sacrifices would no longer be necessary – and that is precisely what our priest-king Jesus came to do!

This is a point that Hebrews brings out of the shadows of Psalm 40. David was only ever a king and could not perform the duties of a priest – but Jesus could! He is like Melchizedek, a king and a high priest before God (Hebr 6:20ff). David could never stop the flow of sacrifices, but Christ could and did! “But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God” (Hebr 10:11). What David could only put his finger on in Psalm 40:6 as God’s lasting will, Christ Jesus actually brought into full effect as Shepherd-King-Priest who flawlessly obeyed God and protected the lives of his people through the sacrifice of the body which had been prepared for him!

Behold, I have come! That’s a Christmas announcement from Psalm 40 and Hebrews 10 to your home and mine! He came, he served, he sacrificed – and through it achieved for us everlasting peace with God! May we rejoice together in this Christmas gift!

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<sup>1</sup> Most likely what is meant a “copy of the law” in Deuteronomy 17 is a copy of the entire scroll of Deuteronomy. It is a self-contained covenant document which contains a thorough summary of the LORD’s *torah*, everything a king would need to have at his finger tips to rule the people well. ❀

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# Imitating Christmas

## Introduction

Christmas is a time of celebrating the incarnation, when the Son of God became man for us and our salvation. In this celebration, we will be reminded, as we read Scripture, hear sermons, and sing songs, of the humble circumstances of our Lord's birth.

While Scripture is sparse on the details, through the influence of religious art and manger scenes, we do tend to have an image of the baby Jesus lying in a manger, with some animals in the background. However exactly it may have been, there is no denying that here is a stark contrast to what the Son of God was before. The eternal Son of God, present with the Father at creation, left his heavenly dwelling and entered our world in the humblest of circumstances.

As we reflect on the scene, we see the depth of our Saviour's love in his willingness to enter our world in such obscurity and humility. At the same time, while the birth of our Lord is reason for celebrating, it is also reason for imitating. We can say this based on Paul's words in Philippians 2:3, 4, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

## Context

To see how these words call for the imitation of Christmas, we have to step back and look at the context in which they are found. This requires going back to chapter 1:27, where Paul calls the

Philippians to "let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ." The following verses bring out that his particular concern was that the Philippians live in unity and harmony. The way he mentions "standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel," indicates that unity and harmony was lacking. We have a specific example of a breakdown of unity and harmony in Philippians 4:2, where Paul exhorts Euodia and Syntyche to agree in the Lord. The problem, however, was broader. This is evident in the way, in chapter 2:2, he again mentions "being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." This forms the background for his exhortation to "in humility count others more significant than yourselves" and looking "to the interest of others." Paul then drives home his exhortation by pointing to the incarnation. The coming of God's Son into the world is the ultimate example of in humility counting others more significant than yourself and looking out for the interest of others.

## Christ as example

What follows in Philippians 2 are the words put to music in the hymn, "Let us of Christ, our Lord and Saviour sing." This hymn gives us opportunity to sing about the incarnation. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that these words were written in the context of urging the Philippians to live humbly in love and unity, ready to serve one another. In the incarnation, the Lord Jesus gave the ultimate example of humility and seeking the best interest of others.

The humility comes out in the way our Lord, "though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." Paul adds to that how in human form, "he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross." Indeed, we need to reflect on this humbling experience. The eternal Son of God did not hesitate to crawl into our human flesh.

*The eternal Son of God,  
present with the Father  
at creation,  
left his heavenly dwelling  
and entered our world  
in the humblest of  
circumstances*

He did not hesitate to forego his heavenly glory and splendour. He willingly entered the world in obscurity and poverty. He, who is the life and the truth, did not hesitate to humble himself unto death.

Why did he do it? He did it for us and our salvation. He considered the salvation of those given to him by the Father more important than his own comfort and convenience. He was willing to humble himself and be humiliated in his bitter death on the cross. As he told his disciples, "the Son of

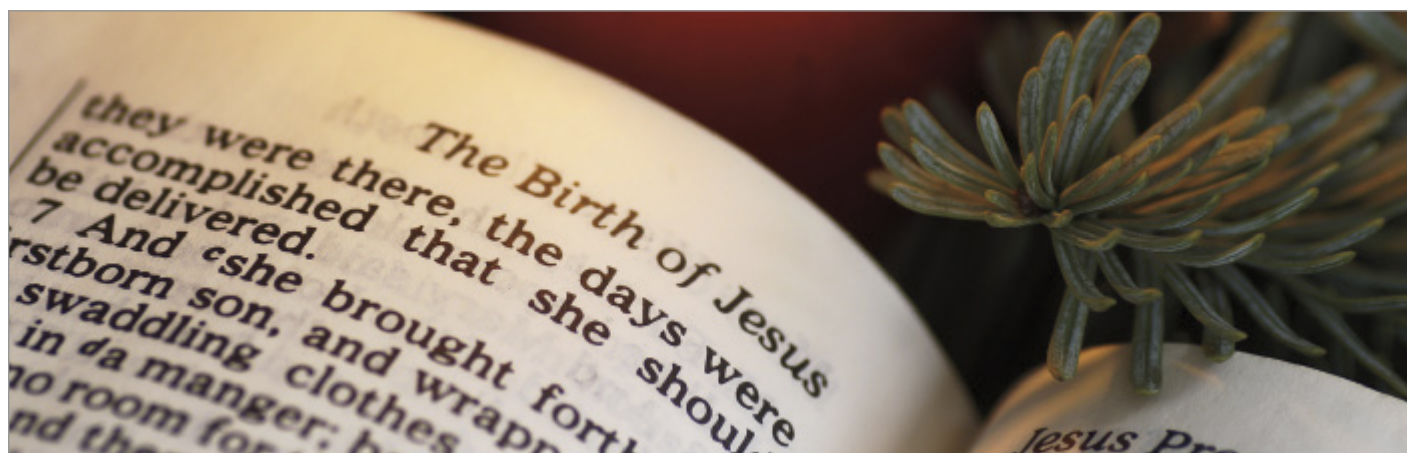
Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

### **Imitation**

There are many parts of the Lord's life that we cannot imitate. He alone is the Son of God who took on our human nature. He alone is our only High Priest, our unique Saviour. At the same time, there are aspects of his life that are held up for us to imitate. One of them is the humble attitude our Lord showed, the desire to serve, to seek the best interest of his people. In his case, that required the incarnation as well as the crucifixion. In this way, he laid the foundation of the church. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul makes it clear that we build on this foundation by having the same mind as Christ our Lord. It is by thinking of the interests of others, by humbly considering them more significant than ourselves, we not only show ourselves to be followers of Christ, but we also build the church of Christ. It is in that attitude that believers can stand side by side for the faith of the gospel and not be afraid of opponents (1:28).

### **Conclusion**

Christmas is indeed a time for celebrating the love of God in sending his Son and the love of the Son in willingly taking on our humanity. At the same time, celebrating should also be accompanied by imitating that humility of our Saviour and his readiness to serve. ❄





## *From the Publisher*

*“And they were astonished at his teaching,  
for he taught them as one who had authority. . .”*

*Mark 1:22*

### **One who has authority**

We have recently come through another presidential election in the United States. The campaign and the reaction to the election results indicate the high hopes and the dismay that the election of Donald Trump has caused for many. This man will exercise the authority of one of the most influential offices in the world. Yet, there is a higher authority: the King of kings remains enthroned.

The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke record the same first reaction to the Lord Jesus' public ministry. His hearers were astonished because Jesus taught with authority and demonstrated his authority over unclean spirits. Throughout his ministry, Jesus further showed his authority over sickness, disability, and creation. Yet more astonishing were his authority to forgive sins and his authority over death.

Our Lord, as the Good Shepherd, spoke and acted on the authority of his Father: “I have authority to lay [my life] down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” Christ exercised this authority for our eternal good. Let us remain amazed at the power and love our God, and follow the voice of our Good Shepherd.

### **Thank you**

Our editorial team continues to point us to the authoritative Word of God. Thank you, Rev. J. Visscher, Mrs. Laura Veenendaal, Rev. Holtvliuwer, Rev. E. Kampen, and Dr. Van Dam for your dedicated work in bringing us another volume. Very early in the year, Rev. Stam was

called to his heavenly home. We thank God for his many years of writing for our benefit, and pray for continued strength and comfort for the family he has left behind. Thank you, Rev. Van Luik, for taking on a role on the editorial team.

Our regular contributors fill out the magazine with interesting and uplifting content: Rev. Slomp organizes *Treasures New and Old*; Mr. Arthur Kingma maintains *Education Matters*; Rev. W. den Hollander (Sr.) responds to your questions in *You Asked*; Mrs. Rachel Vis provides *Ray of Sunshine*. We also feature *Mission News*, supplied by Rev. Souman, from time to time. Thank you all! This year, Mrs. Emily Nijenhuis created the *Clarion Kids* page. Thank you for your willingness and creativity!

We are thankful to also have many advertisers throughout the year. Thank you for supporting the magazine! Included are some faithful business advertisers. We encourage readers to use their services.

Our focus is on enriching and serving our readers. May our magazine be a blessing to you. Thank you for your continued support!

### **Greetings**

We extend our warm greetings to you during the Christmas season and in the coming year. May God bless you richly! Let us look to him who said “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me,” and go forward trusting his promise: “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

*William Gortemaker*

# "Out with the Old, in with the New"?

As we approach the end of one year and look forward to the next, tremendous civilizational changes are taking place in Europe. It seems to be "out with the old, in with the new." The historic Judeo-Christian culture is dying and Islam is poised to fill the vacuum. Change is undoubtedly taking place. Two important indicators are the demographic transformation and the decline of biblical morals.

In Europe today, more people are dying than babies are being born. Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union (EU), reported that during 2015, 5.2 million people died and 5.1 million children were born. At the same time, Europe's population increased by almost two million. Why? The population went up only because of the large number of immigrants coming in. These are mostly Muslims who feel no loyalty to Western culture. As a result, Europe is slowly being transformed by Islam. Muslim immigrants are not integrating into their new homeland and indeed many refuse to do so. The result, as Giulio Meotti noted, is that "in one generation, Europe will be unrecognizable." What is truly remarkable is that in spite of all the warnings of the need to boost the birthrate, the elite in Europe do not seem to care.

It is politically correct to favour the foreigners pouring in even if it goes at the cost of one's own civilization. To criticize is to be labelled Islamophobic. Meotti noted that "demographic suicide is not only experienced; it appears to be wanted." Those who control the politics and media "have turned against the values of their own Judeo-Christian culture and combined it with a hallucinatory, romanticized view of the values of other cultures."

Ironically, while Western morals more and more abandon divine norms, the leadership of Russia, known as "the godless nation" some decades ago, is mobilizing its citizens against Western decadence. Meotti notes: "Are France, the United States and Ireland open to gay marriage? Putin's Russia bans

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'gay propaganda.' Does Western Europe allow quick divorce? Putin's Russia taxes divorce. Does the West legalize abortion on demand? Putin's Russia is trying to restrict it. Russia's leading clerics have just urged Putin to ban abortion." Furthermore, "against a perceived Western amnesia about its own Christian past, moral relativism and political correctness, Putin affirmed the Christian roots of Russia, traditional family values, patriotism and obedience to hierarchy."

The fact that a communist regime can claim some sort of moral high ground against the West is a devastating testimony to the decay of Western Europe and for that matter the entire Western world. The West cannot keep benefiting from the foundations of its more solid moral Christian past. Those foundations are now crumbling. What will take their place? "Out with the old, in with the new"? But what is that "new"? Unless attitudes change and change quickly, for Western Europe the "new" is going to be some form of gradual Islamization. It's not a pretty picture, but the evidence is obvious. Muslim immigrants have a much higher birth rate and place much greater value on children and the family unit while Western culture is going in the opposite direction. Demographically, the trend seems irreversible and those with eyes to see are rightly getting very worried.

Current developments underline the fact that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov 1:7) and "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people" (Prov 14:34). May the Lord our God bless all biblical work at home and abroad for cultural and political renewal in the coming year, starting with our families and being a salt in all areas of life.

Sources used: Giulio Meotti, "Europe: The Substitution of a Population, Gatestone Institute, August 27, 2016; Giulio Meotti, "Putin's Puritain Piety: The Ideological War against the West, Gatestone Institute, October 9, 2016.



## A Beloved Pastor Bids his Flock Farewell

When Rev. George van Popta informed his consistory several months ago that he could no longer fulfill his tasks at Jubilee Church due to declining health, there was real sense of sadness around the meeting table. At the same time, we realized that we had much to be thankful for. Truly the promise of Isaiah 40, "But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" has been fulfilled in this brother's life. Afflicted with M.S. when he received his first call to the ministry in 1987, Pastor George was given the strength to guide us for several fruitful years. After leaving to carry out the Lord's ministry in Taber and Ancaster, he returned to Ottawa in 2008 for a final victory lap.



When a minister announces his retirement, a ripple of consistorial and congregational activity typically ensues – planning a farewell party/ dinner, purchase of a suitable gift, preparation of speeches and the like. For Jubilee Church, we knew that we had to do something extra special since we were not simply saying our goodbyes; we were marking the end of an era.



This was to be no ordinary celebration. We started with a Saturday afternoon picnic, that ended with a crowd photo shoot and, of course, the obligatory tug of war competition: just like the "good old days" of Labor Day church picnics in city parks. The following Sunday, two brothers preached to a church packed to capacity: Rev. John van Popta led the morning service, drawing attention to the providence of God as illustrated in the life of Joseph (Gen 39-40) and in the afternoon, Rev. George van Popta urged us to continue walking in the Lord's way in a farewell sermon on 2 John 4-6. Between services, Merivale United Church invited the Jubilee congregation to a special luncheon, marking Pastor George's retirement and celebrating our long standing (thirty-eight years) use of their heritage church building. In the afternoon, Pastor George and Dora were treated to a multigenerational and varied musical tribute by the very young (Shoots and Arrows, directed by Emma Buist) and youth/adult choir (directed by Elizabeth Smith). By the time we sang Jon Kingma's *Benediction*, there was not a dry eye in the house.





Rev. Stephen Rockwell (Lisbon RPCNA) recalled with fondness the many ministerial breakfast meetings and offered words of encouragement to Pastor George and best wishes for the retirement years. Pastor John van Popta, Sarah Vandergugten, and Matt and Garnet van Popta all noted in their own way the intimate connection between their extended family and Jubilee Church - a bond that has grown ever stronger over the last three decades and continues to this day. Yours truly spoke a few words of thanks to Pastor George and Dora on behalf of the congregation; a photo memory book was then presented by Mallory

Walters, who had expertly assembled a collage of current Jubilee members.

Final words of thanks from Pastor George were truly from the heart. The congregation responded by singing "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow." After closing prayer, we had more time to mingle with the many guests from out of town over cake and refreshments. We reflected on the many blessings that the Lord has given our church over the years. Jubilee Church wishes our beloved pastor and Dora many more years of faring well together, surrounded by family and the communion of saints. ❀





# Langley Says Farewell to the deJonges

On a damp October evening, Langley church gathered for a farewell/send-off evening in honour of Pastor Ryan and Ruth deJonge and their family, soon to leave BC's temperate rainforest for the tropical rainforest of Papua New Guinea (PNG). It was an evening of appreciation, fond memories, and gratitude to God.

Greg Vanpopta opened the evening by reflecting on the Holy Spirit's provision for the church through pastors and missionaries. In his seven years in Langley, Pastor deJonge ably and tirelessly fulfilled his calling here; now his duties are shifting to another corner of God's kingdom.

We sang Psalm 87, reflecting on the universality of the church, before Keith Broersma gave a brief introduction to Papua New Guinea itself. PNG is a nation of about seven million people. It is a relatively poor nation, and nearly thirty percent of the adult population is illiterate. It's also the most linguistically diverse country in the world, with about 850 languages spoken! A type of pidgin language called Tok Pisin is widespread, however, so thankfully Pastor deJonge won't need to learn a few hundred new languages. Although most Papua New Guineans identify themselves as Christian, there is a strong influence from indigenous animist religions. The Reformed Churches of Papua New Guinea have six churches, a training college, a mission in the city of Lae, and one other mission point. In 2016 the first two native Papua New Guinean pastors were ordained.

After this informative presentation, Pastor James Visscher spoke a few words of appreciation and farewell. Pastor Visscher retired as Langley's minister in 2012, and was Pastor deJonge's co-pastor when the latter arrived as a "rookie"



*Pastor Ryan and Ruth deJonge with Matthew, Samuel, Timothy, Abigail, and Chloe*

seven years ago. Pastor Visscher spoke highly of his former colleague's work and growth as a pastor, and highlighted the exceptional support of Pastor deJonge's wife Ruth. Quoting 2 Timothy 2:15, Pastor Visscher urged Pastor deJonge to continue to "present [himself] to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."

Pastor Theo Lodder of Cloverdale next spoke on behalf of Classis Pacific West, expressing thankfulness for Pastor deJonge's faithful preaching and also for the caring and support shown by Pastor Ryan and Ruth deJonge. Pastor Lodder concluded with a blessing for Pastor deJonge from Hebrews 13, that God would "equip you with everything good for doing his will."

The next pastor to take the lectern was Pastor Frank Dong of the Chinese Reformed Church, a



*Ministers' Jeopardy with the young people*

congregation which began as a joint urban mission project of the Cloverdale and Langley churches. Pastor Dong entertained us with some light-hearted reflections on the differences between the Chinese and Dutch cultures and the two congregations, and then, on a more serious note,

expressed deep appreciation for Pastor deJonge's work with the Chinese Reformed Church. Pastor Dong commended Pastor deJonge for his integrity and trustworthiness, and the love he demonstrated for those God entrusted to his care. Pastor Dong also presented the deJonges with a gift as a token of his congregation's affection and gratitude.

Next the "council choir" (usually heard only within the confines of the council room!), led and accompanied by Frank Ezinga on piano, sang a blessing for the deJonges: "God Be with You Till We Meet Again."

The young people took the stage next, inviting Pastor deJonge and Pastor Doug Vandeburgt to the front for some rousing face-to-face competition in "Ministers' Jeopardy." The pastors tested their wits and memories with questions in categories such as "Dates," "Numbers," and "Members." In one dramatic round, Pastor deJonge impressed us by correctly guessing that Langley church has thirty-four different last names beginning with the letter "V."



*The council choir: "God Be with You Till We Meet Again"*

A “double quartet” of eight talented singers, again led by Frank Ezinga, sang a hymn that echoed some of the evening’s earlier thoughts: “In Christ There Is No East or West.”

Jacoba Leyenhorst and Yolanda Hoogstra, representing the leadership team of the Stephen Mentors program (of which Pastor deJonge was an instrumental part), shared some memories and reflected on Pastor deJonge’s contributions, using the opportunity to practice plenty of “feeling” words. They thanked Pastor deJonge for his enthusiasm and commitment in getting the program off the ground and helping make it a success.

Walter and Dolita Snyder, in the roles of Pastor Ryan and Ruth, then reminisced (in a song written by Ginny Vanderhorst) about some favourite memories from Langley, singing about “a few of their favourite things:” everything from camping in the rain, to celebrating seniors’ birthdays at Manoah Manor, to enjoying the famous croquettes produced yearly as a fundraiser for Credo school. The congregation joined in to the refrain: “When you go away, far away to Lae, when you’re feeling sad. . . .” No doubt many of us went home humming the catchy tune.

A congregational gift is often a feature of this kind of evening, but Greg Vanpopta confessed that finding an appropriate gift for the deJonges to transport across the world proved challenging. At the suggestion of the deJonges, a monetary gift was made in their honour to Advokate (formerly Langley Pro-Life), whose mission and activities have always been close to the hearts of the deJonge family.

Pastor deJonge took the microphone next, expressing his thanks for all the words and sentiments of the evening, and then presenting to us his “Top Ten List” of reasons why the deJonges will miss Langley. He spoke at some length about how he will miss going overtime on his sermons in Langley, reflecting that he had considered getting a



*“Keep Calm and Preach ON”*

large clock for the church as a going-away gift, but that since he was leaving, this potential gift would no longer be necessary. Instead, he presented us with a banner that he felt would encourage Pastor Vandeburgt and incoming pastor William den Hollander: “Keep Calm and Preach On.”

The other top ten things the deJonges will miss include many aspects of congregational life – catechism classes, church colleagues, visits to Manoah Manor and elsewhere, Langley’s pipe organ (and talented organists), fellowship, and Sunday worship: “the heartbeat of our time here.”

Also mentioned: the “casserole express” whenever the deJonges welcomed a new baby (“we enjoyed that so much we did it four times”). Most of all, Pastor deJonge concluded, they would miss all of us. . . . certainly, as Pastor Vandeburgt commented in his closing remarks, a mutual feeling.

Although farewells are never easy, we left trusting that the great Shepherd will continue to guide and provide for both the deJonges and our congregation – until we meet again. \*



# Guido de Brès Christian High School: Graduation 2016

October 1, 2016 (graduation day) began the same as September 6, 2012 (the first day of Grade 9): cloudy, damp, with scattered showers and filled with a group of eager students excited for the day's events. Mr. Vanoostveen opened with the same Bible reading, Exodus 34. A few things had changed, students were older, wiser, and filled with new hopes and dreams. Guido had also changed with a new chairman Dave Kampen welcoming the 2016 Guido de Brès graduates to the McIntyre Center at Mohawk College.

Mr. Kampen spoke about character and the greatest distance you will ever travel, the eighteen inches between your head and your heart. Throughout the last four years, students' heads were filled with sermons, catechism instruction, and countless lessons from Christian education. The key is to have these teachings travel the eighteen inches from head to heart. There are many stops in our lives but none more important than this biblical journey. Mr. Kampen connected the greatest journey we will ever travel with Mark



12:28-34 and noted that the hardest part of this journey is the conviction of your heart and life.

In his welcoming message in 2012, Mr. Vanoostveen said that students had two choices. Picking up on the rainy weather, he used the metaphor of an umbrella. Students could be like an open umbrella and deflect the blessings they would receive or they could close their umbrella and soak up the blessings. In 2016, Mr. Vanoostveen reminded the students of the opening message they heard in 2012 and encouraged them to now share their blessings with others.

After a stirring rendition of "By your side" by Tenth Avenue North performed by Josina Bouwman, Calvin Hutten, Ben Ravensbergen, Nadine Tenhage, and Erin Wieske, Rev. Bouwman shared a moving message about our King Jesus Christ and how we are brothers and sisters to this king of kings. Rev. Bouwman stated that we are heirs to the world and our position as heirs is signified in our baptism and reaffirmed through







profession of faith. With our king on the throne we do not need to cower in corners in fear of the world but use the technology, transportation and opportunities of the twenty-first century to spread God's name. With eagerness we can present ourselves to the world and spread God's glory. We should not behave as if we are small cogs in the massive machine of society; rather, we should press on with our best, no shuffling, no slouching. We are to use our youth and enthusiasm as best we can to share God's glory. We have no reason to be intimidated since this land is his land and the King, our King will not fail us.

After this message, the graduates received their diplomas with clapping, cheering, hooting, and the occasional party horn. After all 101 graduates had been seated, a final class photo was taken. Various scholarships, participation awards, the volunteer award, the governor general's academic medal, and the student-of-the-year award recipients were called forward to accept recognition for their diligent use of their God-given talents.

The final words of the night were presented by the valedictorian Kayla Ruggi, who shared a message full of spunk about how we must change, adapt, and prepare for the future. Ms. Ruggi spoke of the struggles of adapting to change, from the initial struggles of grade nine to the challenges throughout high school and through to the anxiety of what lies ahead after grade twelve. Christ is the constant in our lives through whom the future need not be feared.

The afternoon was crowned with a moving musical performance, Casting Crowns' "Praise You in this Storm." The performance was a tribute to the deceased classmate, Benjamin Bartels.

Finally, the audience rose to sing "O Canada," followed by the recessional postlude performed by Sam Boisvert and Keisha Heeringa as the newly minted graduates exited to be congratulated by friends and family.

Congratulations Guido graduates of 2016, and may God continue to bless you and make you a blessing in the years ahead!



## Awards

### *Guido de Brès Scholarships*

Rachel Kamstra	Autumn Douma
Nadine Tenhage	Alexa Heeringa
Michaela Vis	Lindsey VanGoolen

### *Subject Specific Scholarships*

Applied Skills	Lindsay Nordeman
The Arts	Beth VanderBruggen
Humanities and Social Sciences	Emily Wildeboer
Languages	Josina Bouwman
Mathematics	Jason Lof
Science	Andre Mansour

### *Academic Athletics Scholarship*

Lawrence Eikelboom

### *The Guido de Brès Participation Award*

Serena DeJong	Kara Elgersma
Jason Lof	Tim Schutten
Brandon VanderVeen	

### *The Governor General's Bronze Medal*

Michaela Vis

### *The Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award for Students*

Autumn Douma

### *The Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff Student-of-the-Year Award*

Clancy Bouwman	Josina Bouwman
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# Ontario Secondary School Diplomas

Sidney Henry Alkema  
Chad William Bartels  
Jamie Harmen Victor Bartels  
Reuben Bradley Bartels  
Christopher John Bergsma  
Taylor Dawn Bos  
Clarence Andre Bouwman  
Josina Theodora Bouwman  
Jared Nathanael Bultje  
Sarah Hennie Crewe  
Jaclyn Debbie DeBoer  
Kory Franklin DeBoer  
Luke Jonathan DeBoer  
Ryan Jeffrey DeBoer  
Danielle Julie DeHaan  
Serena Derica DeJong  
Sarah Brianne Dekker  
Jannel Klasiena DenBroeder  
Autumn Nicole Douma  
Megan Emily Douma  
Lawrence Eikelboom  
Kara Jayne Elgersma  
Sheldon Cornelis Gelms  
Andrew Gerrit Groenwold  
Krista Marie Groenwold  
Hannah Geertruida Heemskerk  
Owen Marinus Heemskerk  
Alexa Grace Heeringa  
Lucas Henry Holtvluwer  
Katriel Lyn Hoogsteen  
Calvin David Hutten  
Jennifer Noelle Hutten  
Tiana Skye Jans  
Morgan Jane Jonker  
Reuben Gerrit Jonker

Benjamin Frank Kampen  
Madison Diana Kampen  
Spencer Aaron Kampen  
Rachel Stephanie Kamstra  
Braden Joel Kasper  
Rachel Danielle Leistra  
Ashley Hermina Ligtenberg  
Alexander Scott Lof  
Jason Peter Lof  
Trenton Dirk Lof  
Bradley Johaan Bartholt Ludwig  
Timothy James Ludwig  
Jordan Albert Mans  
Justin Nikolaas Mans  
Andre Kameel Mansour  
Ashley Nicole Nienhuis  
Lindsay Taylor Nordeman  
Taryn Dakota Oliver  
Kyle Robert Oosterhoff  
Michaela Joanne Pilon  
Arendina Katarina Post\*  
Shayla Arendina Post  
Seth Henry Prinzen  
Benjamin William Ravensbergen  
Kayla Breanne Ruggi  
Spencer Troy Salomons  
Cassandra Marlene Schipper  
Elsa Yvonne Schouten  
Levi Allan Schulenberg  
Timothy David Schutten  
Haylee Dianne Slaney  
Lena Anna Smid  
Jessica Cindy Tenhage  
Nadine Dallas Tenhage  
Timothy Benjamin Tenhage

Janessa Adrianna Turco  
Roselyn Whitney Turco  
Aaron Dean VanAndel  
Leah Michelle VanAndel  
Ian Joel Vandenberg  
Rosemary Alaina Vandenbos  
Vanessa Vanderboom  
Bethany Dalyce  
VanderBruggen  
Claire Emmeline Vandergriendt  
Bradley Curtis Vanderlaan  
Natasha Leanne VanderLaan  
Brandon Derek VanderVeen  
Reanna Lynn Vanderveen  
Caleb Derek vander Velde\*  
Lindsey Marie VanderVelde  
Lucas Mourice VanderVelde  
Owen Martin VanderVelde  
Aaron Charles VanEs  
Lindsey Danielle VanGoolen  
Natalie Bree VanLuik  
Michael Johnathan Bruce Vellenga  
Michaela Nadine Vis  
Jillian Marie Walters  
Kevin Hendrik Werkman  
Robyn Amanda Widmer  
Erin Rachel Wieske  
Emily Madelaine Wildeboer  
Calvin Gerard Woudenberg

\* Receiving the Ontario Secondary  
School Certificate



# Commencement at Emmanuel Christian High School, Fergus, Ontario

The change of season is evident in October as the trees flaunt vibrant new colours and the air takes on a chill. For Emmanuel Christian High School's class of 2016, October 7 marked the significant change from students to alumni. Graduands, along with their family, friends, and former teachers, gathered at Lakeside Church in Guelph to celebrate the end of one era and the beginning of another.

The class of 2016 was always famed to have an abundance of energy, and this certainly had not changed over the summer months! Dinner was enjoyed with much conversation and laughter. Thank you to those who prepared and served the meal, especially Mrs. Anita Bouwman and Mrs. Robin Westrik for their organization of the event. Thank you also to Mr. Kris Swaving for putting together a compilation video of the graduands so that the guests could all have a hearty laugh over the antics of the class. Since the students



filmed everything themselves, teachers claim no responsibility for any mortification experienced!

After dinner, graduands left to prepare for the evening's ceremonies. The auditorium filled with people, and soon the graduands marched in as Ms. Cailey VanVeen played "Pomp and Circumstance."

Mr. Andrew Westrik opened the formal evening in prayer, and then welcomed Mr. Gerry VanWoudenberg to the stage. Using Exodus 28:1-29 as the starting point in his speech, Mr. VanWoudenberg beautifully addressed the importance God gives to names as acknowledgement of unique and precious individuals. The graduands now have their names written on diplomas, but more importantly, they have always been written in the book of life.

Mr. Henk Nobel then took the microphone to reminisce about the first jerseys that Emmanuel ever had, when the eagle mascot was often mistaken for a chicken. He hoped the graduands







would not have the losing spirits of chickens, but the winning spirits of eagles. They were reminded that on their own power, they would never be able to get off the ground, but with the power of the Holy Spirit, they would be able to soar.

The forty-eight students then walked across the stage to receive their diplomas and become official graduates of the class of 2016. What a blessing it was to see so many together at this milestone in their lives.

In another demonstration of the unique spirit of the group, students turned their backs to the audience and used their cell phone cameras to take a selfie on stage rather than formally posing for a class photo. Both laughter and eye-rolling was elicited from the audience.

Awards were then presented, sans selfie this time! Congratulations to the winners in each category.

Next, class valedictorian Connor Koster took the stage. He compared the years spent at ECHS

to a fabulously wrapped present given to you by your parents which, when you tear off the ribbons and shiny paper, turns out to be. . . a sweater. As the years go on, the sweater becomes worn in and comfortable, and although it collects some stains and strange smells, it is still precious because of the love with which it was given. He acknowledged that his analogy had some holes in it (just like a sweater), but don't worry, Connor, you had the audience in stitches! Aside from being humorous, Connor beautifully acknowledged the sacrifice and hard work which went into the gift of Christian education. Thankfulness was deep and heartfelt.

Mr. VanWoudenberg closed in prayer. The graduates exited the auditorium to be congratulated by their family and friends in a time of fellowship and celebration. Congratulations, class of 2016! May the Lord bless you as you leave the nest and soar like eagles as you carry out his plan for you!





# Awards

## Honours Achievement Award

Rosalyn Brouwer	Debra Van Eerde
Alisha Dewit	Amanda Van Raalte
Cody Endeman	Laura Van Raalte
Nienke deJong	Holly van Weerden
Michaela Hutten	Jonah Vanleeuwen
Jocelyn Jonker	Garrett VanWoudenberg
Taylor Jonker	Nicole Vis
Connor Koster	Ryan Westrik
Cameron Menken	Corina Wierenga
Alicia Mills	

## Post Farm Structures Award

Sean Breukelman

## Royal LePage RCR Realty Business Excellence

Garrett VanWoudenberg

## L. Martin Toet Memorial Athletic Scholarship

Nicole Vis

## Governor General's Award

Garrett VanWoudenberg

## Jordan Hutchinson Memorial Academic Proficiency Award

Garrett VanWoudenberg

## Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award

Samantha Horsburgh

## Golden Eagle Award

Michaela Hutten	Laura Van Raalte
Holly van Weerden	Nicole Vis

## Citizenship Award

Rachelle VanLuik

## Stewardship Award

Nicole Vis  
Michaela Hutten



# Canadian Reformed Church of Orangeville

Nestled in the heart of Dufferin County, the Canadian Reformed Church of Orangeville has had a long life. Established in 1950, the church itself has evolved from a small group of Dutch immigrants to a community of just under 400. While the church is situated in Orangeville, many of the members live in outlying areas, including Melancthon and Shelburne, Hillsburgh and East-Garafraxa, and within the township of Mono. This may make it a bit of a drive for some, but the variety of changing views in the gorgeous countryside make it an enjoyable one!

The congregation of Orangeville is very blessed beyond the landscape. The variety and number of Bible study groups, committees, and sports teams speaks to how the Lord has built up the communion of saints. From the Young People's Society to the church choir to the Vacation Bible School offered every July, many members are diligently active with various tasks beyond the



regular scope of everyday life. The elementary-aged youth are able to attend Dufferin Area Christian School and integrate with fellow students from the Grand Valley Canadian Reformed Church who also attend DACS. After graduating from elementary school, Orangeville church's students are also able to attend Emmanuel Christian High School in Fergus. It is wonderful that throughout much of the pivotal years of development there is Christian education that is readily available, both at the elementary and secondary stages.

While the demographics of Orangeville and Dufferin County, as a whole, lean towards employment in manufacturing and retail, a strong contender is the construction industry. Skilled trades are notable occupations of choice within our congregation; you need a carpenter, electrician, or plumber? We have one (or two, or three. . .). Welder, mechanic, or hair dresser? We have these too! The diversity of occupations is quite a broad spectrum



– Orangeville is also known as a commuter town with access to the GTA and other large cities, and this is reflected in variety of occupational choices. A more unconventional career choice within the congregation is policing (we have three members who belong to three different police forces).

The congregation itself has transformed over the years from the small group of Dutch immigrants. Our membership reflects the changes encountered by all congregations; the loss of past members who no longer worship with us for a variety of reasons have been countered by the joy of church growth through births, relocations, or those new to the Canadian Reformed Church. All in all, Orangeville Canadian Reformed Church has known the guiding hand of the Lord and we see his blessing in our church life and communion. Orangeville is neither a “young” or “old” church. The nursery is often full of babies and toddlers and the benches upstairs hold many in the “over-seventy” age group. When the challenges of health can especially be a factor for the young and old, it is a blessing to know how technology has given us advantages in worshipping on a Sunday.



Live-streaming of our services online is a new and welcome addition to what Orangeville church has to offer, and many members benefit from this when unable to attend in person.

Something unique to Orangeville CanRC is how we gather every Boxing Day and New Year's Day – a local arena is rented, the Ladies Auxiliary prepares and serves fundraising lunches (hotdogs and soup!), and church members eat, skate, play and watch hockey, and socialize! One small section of ice will likely contain a toddler learning to skate, energetic youth laughing with their friends, and a grey-haired couple gliding steadily by hand-in-hand.

Visitors are not foreign to our worship services. In their primary years, Campfire! Summer Bible Camp operated just outside of the town of Orangeville before moving to their current location in Markdale. The staff that worked there through the summer can attest to the welcoming environment of our church when they worshipped with us on Sunday. Visitors are well taken care of. Come worship and visit with Orangeville Canadian Reformed Church – there is a host family waiting to feed you!





As you read this article you are probably in the midst of all your Christmas celebrations and festivities. We may enjoy dinners, parties, family gatherings, and gift giving. Throughout all of this we should take this time to sit back and reflect on the blessings that we have been given, and remember why we are celebrating. Our dear Lord and Saviour was born into this world so he could save us all from our sins. Our Lord Jesus has filled us with indescribable joy and peace in our hearts. We can know that no matter what happens throughout the year, and what trials we face, we are his children. So throughout this Christmas season let us all remember our Lord Jesus Christ and the sacrifice he made for us. Let us also be a support to everyone who needs extra care and love this Christmas season, filling them with the joy and peace of the Lord.

## **Birthdays in January**

- |    |  |    |   |
|----|--|----|---|
| 2  | <b>Liz Koning</b> will be 57<br>10905 163 Street, Edmonton, AB T5P 3P7                           | 17 | <b>Grace Homan</b> will be 61<br>c/o Anchor Home, 361 Thirty Road S.,<br>RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2 |
| 6  | <b>Jason Herrewynen</b> will be 43<br>c/o Harbour Home<br>42 Spadara Drive, Hamilton, ON L9B 2K3 | 19 | <b>Edwin Schutte</b> will be 33<br>844 Bowman Road, Abbotsford, BC V3G 1S9                            |
| 7  | <b>Christine Breukelman</b> will be 45<br>2225-19th Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4                 | 19 | <b>Janine Smid</b> will be 47<br>141 Kittridge Avenue E., Strathroy, ON N7G 2A9                       |
| 14 | <b>Stephen Dykstra</b> will be 34<br>Box 3573, Smithers, BC VOJ 2N0                              | 26 | <b>Katherine Nijenhuis</b> will be 51<br>c/o Lighthouse<br>6528 1st Line, RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4    |
| 17 | <b>Henry Driegen</b> will be 61<br>#19-31450 Spur Avenue, Abbotsford, BC V2T 5M3                 | 30 | <b>Tyler Hoeksema</b> will be 28<br>6755 Lorne Drive, Sardis, BC V2R 2G3                              |

As we look at the January birthdays we can also reflect that the beginning of a new year is approaching us once again.  
I wish everyone a Blessed New Year filled with joy and peace from the Lord.

*Happy Birthday to everyone celebrating in January, we wish you the Lord's blessing in the year ahead.*

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15:13*

## **A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS**

*If there are any address or other changes that I need to be aware of please let me know as soon as possible.*

**Rachel Vis**  
731 Lincoln Street, Wellandport, Ontario L0R 2J0  
tom.rachelvis@gmail.com • 905-329-9476



# Clarion Kids

## Samuel

### 1 Samuel 1 - 8

Samuel was one of God's priests. His mother was named Hannah, and she prayed for a long time before God gave her a baby. When Samuel was born she was so thankful that she wanted his whole life to be dedicated to serving God. When he was just a little boy he went to live in God's temple with the priest Eli and his two sons. Eli's sons were not obedient to God. One night, God spoke to Samuel. Samuel thought Eli was talking to him but it was God. He said that Eli's sons could not be his priests because they did not listen to God. God would make Samuel his priest.

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



### Crossword Puzzle:

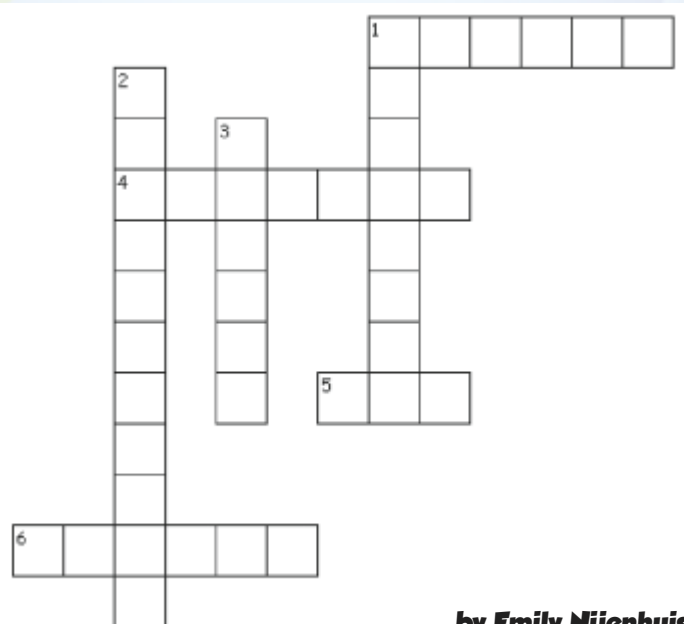
Solve the clues to fill in the puzzle!

#### Down

1. How Hannah felt when God gave her Samuel.
2. Eli's sons could not be priests because they were \_\_\_\_\_.
3. God made Samuel his \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Across

1. Where Samuel went to live.
4. Samuel was dedicated to \_\_\_\_\_ God.
5. The priest who taught Samuel.
6. Samuel's mother.



by Emily Nijenhuis

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



## Q *Did God's unity fracture when Christ was sent to Earth?*

*In one of our devotional booklets the author writes of heaven being empty when the Lord Jesus came to earth as a baby: "The three were one and God had allowed the fracturing of his precious unity for our sake; heaven was left empty of God the Son." We have never thought of it in this way; would you please clarify?*

A In order to answer a question like this or remove a doubt regarding a dubious point in our readings, it is always helpful to turn to our confessions for an answer. We confess that Christ, our Mediator, is true and eternal God (HC, LD 6; BC Art. 10).

As our mediator he had to be both. "We believe that Jesus Christ according to his divine nature is the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from eternity, not made, nor created – for then he would be a creature – but of the same essence with the Father, equally eternal, . . . and is equal to him in all things. He is the Son of God, not only from the time he assumed our nature but from all eternity. . . So he is true, eternal God, the Almighty, whom we invoke, worship, and serve."

In Belgic Confession Article 19, we confess and believe that ". . . the Son of God is inseparably united and joined with the human nature, so that there are not two sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in one single person. Each

nature retains its own properties: his divine nature has always remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life (Hebr 7:3), filling heaven and earth" (cf. Matt 28:20) ". . . Meanwhile his divinity always remained united with his human nature, even when lying in the grave."

So while Jesus was on earth and there his divinity appeared hidden at times, yet he was and remained the Son of God also during that time. He continued to have all the properties and virtues of the true Son of God, including the fact that he was *everywhere present*, i.e. also with the Father in heaven. Hence, heaven was at no time empty due to an absence of the Son of God!

*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 ✱



# Letter to the Editor



## Dear Editor,

Thanks to Rev. K. Janssen for his informative two-part article entitled, "The Reformed Churches in South Africa." My comments pertain to Part 2, *Clarion* Vol. 65, No. 22.

Rev. Janssen writes: "In 2003 the GKSA (Reformed Churches in South Africa) determined that women could serve as deacons. It should be noted that the GKSA church order determines that the consistory is the ruling body of the church, never the consistory with the deacons as we in the CanRC have it."

I'm not sure if Rev. Janssen's comment on this development in the GKSA (although subsequently overturned) is a lament or an endorsement of the CanRC practice of continuing to have deacons part of the consistory. Is he willing to have deacons ordained in a non-ruling capacity?

CanRC have been somewhat hypocritical on that score. In 1998 Synod recommended that we enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec. We argue that their Church Order "does not specifically forbid the ordination of women to the office of deacon as it does for the office of elder and minister of the Word. The deacons, however, are not part of the ruling council of the church, but work in the ministry of mercy under the supervision and ruling of that council" (Acts of Synod Fergus 1998, p 292 and 303).

Yet we use the official practice of ordaining women deacons (non-ruling) as a premise to not enter into fellowship with Presbyterians. In the Press Release of Synod Dunnville 2016 (*Clarion* Vol. 65, No. 13) we read, "that Synod decided 'that the CanRC not enter into a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship' with the Reformed Presbyterian Churches of North America. Even though Synod stated that the 'RPCNA can be recognized for their fidelity to the Word of God and their strong Reformed convictions,' the practice of ordaining

women to office was a barrier to moving to a closer relationship." Also, we read in the Acts of General Synod Dunnville 2016 – Final Digital page 42: "In view of General Synod 2013's decision not to offer ecclesiastical fellowship to the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA) on the ground that these churches allow for female deacons. . . ."

Presbyterians hold to a more hierarchical and centralized form of church government which allows for "ruling" and "non-ruling" or "teaching" elders, giving rise to the idea that women may hold office. The "non-ruling" concept makes things murky! I think our Reformed churches were correct in following the Belgic Confession, Article 30, ". . .there should also be elders and deacons who, together with the pastors, form the council of the church." One of the first Reformed synods (Emden 1571) states that ministers, elders, and deacons make up the local consistories/councils of each church (without "non-ruling" distinctions). I don't think the godly women of our Reformed Churches would or should stand for men abdicating or delegating frontline responsibility of the poor and needy or even "non-ruling" teaching ministries. Women already do a lion's share of the work in this regard and I think they are content to have the men take on servant leadership in an official capacity.

I am not disagreeing with an ongoing good cooperating spirit within the churches, Presbyterian or Reformed (they/we have a lot in common), but we should be consistent in our approach and perhaps one of the things which should be addressed is the governing practices of Presbyterian vs. Reformed. These differences have very real and practical implications.

Sincerely,  
Aubrey Vandergaag  
Aldergrove, BC

## Reply

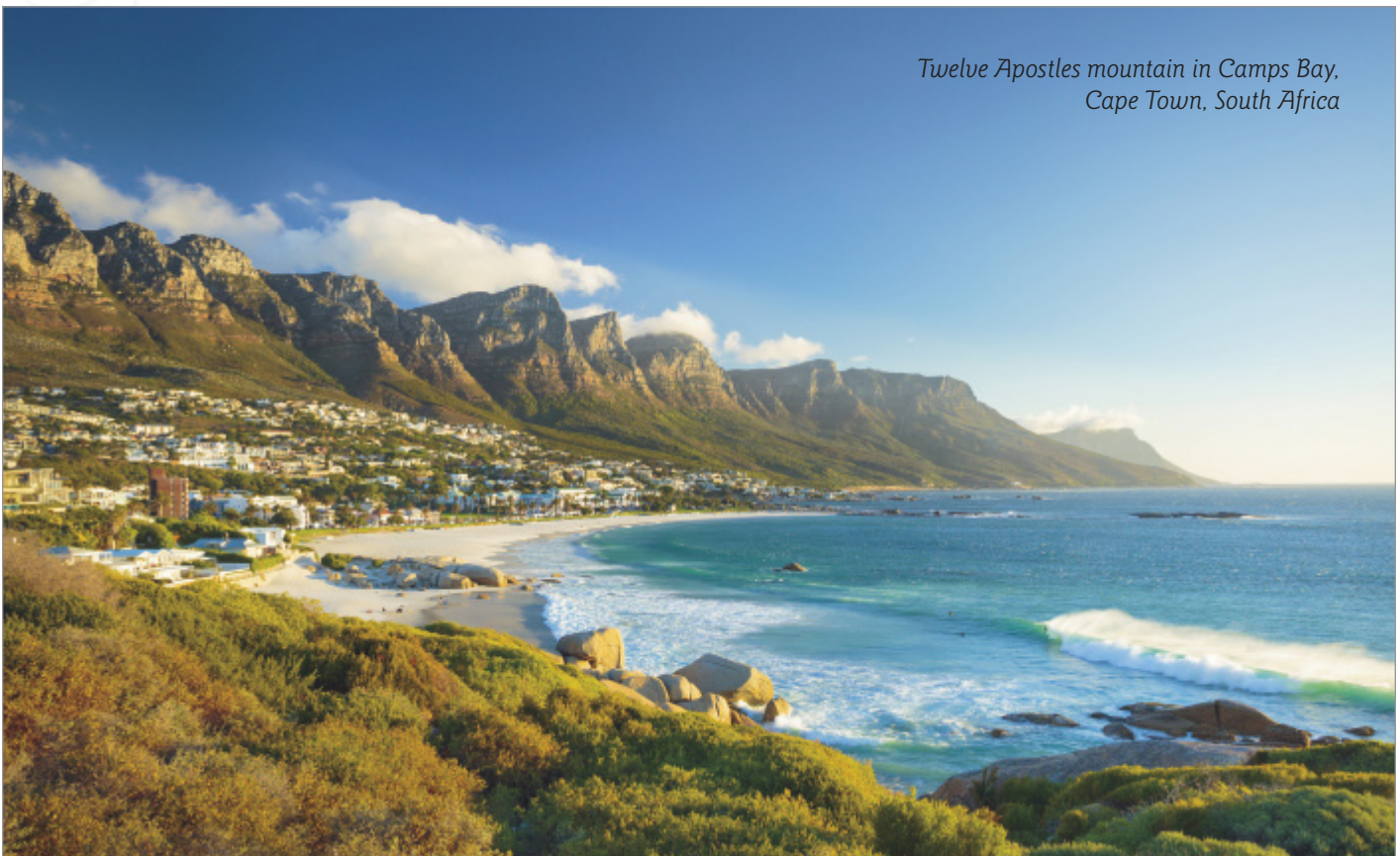
Br. Aubrey Vandergaag raises an issue that certainly deserves attention. Much of what he writes is not directed at what I wrote but flows out of what I wrote and so I won't comment on that. I see it as an invitation to write on topics (ordination, Presbyterian polity) that I certainly would not mind writing on, when time allows. He does ask me one question directly and I am glad to answer it. No, I am not willing to have deacons ordained in a non-ruling capacity. For I consider "ordination" to be a step in the process to being vested with authority. However, I am not convinced that all the deacons mentioned in Scripture were vested with authority and thus were ordained. As such, I

am willing to have deacons serve in a non-ruling capacity. I believe we actually have such "deacons" in our churches, we just don't call them that. In Abbotsford we call them "Finance and Property Committee," "Helping Hands," "Evangelism Support Committee," and the list goes on. If one is looking for a technical term to go with this, such deacons would not be "ordained" but "commissioned," as also the word "committee" suggests.

I commend Br. Vandergaag in his endeavour to defend the honour of the ordained deacon in our adopted system of church governance. May also the deacons in our churches serve with joy and be respected for their work.

K. Janssen ✱

*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.*



*Twelve Apostles mountain in Camps Bay,  
Cape Town, South Africa*



### **Press Release of Classis Ontario-West Oct. 5, 2016 in Kerwood, ON**

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. K. Kok welcomed the delegates, the deputies of Regional Synod, Revs. M. Jagt and D. Wynia, and Rev. W. Van Hal, retired minister of Woodstock URC and a member of CERCU. Rev. K. Kok called the meeting to order and led the opening devotions. The following matters were remembered in prayer: the continuing vacancies of London and Providence; the retired professors, Dr. DeJong, Gootjes, Geertsema, and their families, and the recent CRTS convocation and graduation.

The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. Classis was constituted. The officers suggested by the previous classis took their place: Rev. K. Kok as chairman, Rev. J. Poort as clerk, and Rev. J. Ludwig as vice-chairman.

Br. Hilmer Jagersma presented the required documents to undergo a peremptory examination. He delivered his sermon proposal on Luke 10:25-37. In closed session the sermon proposal was discussed and judged sufficient to continue with the rest of the exam. In open session Br. H. Jagersma was informed of this decision, and the rest of the examination took its course, with Rev. J. Ludwig examining in Old Testament, Rev. D. Deboer in New Testament, and Rev. K. Kok in doctrine and creeds, Rev. J. Poort in church history, Rev. R. Vermeulen in knowledge of Holy Scripture, Rev. P. Aasman in ethics. After lunch Rev. J. Louwerse examined Br. H. Jagersma in Diaconiology and Rev. J. Ludwig in church polity. In closed session Classis evaluated the examination and decided that there were no objections to admitting candidate Hilmer Jagersma into the ministry of the Word in the Can/Am. Reformed churches. The deputies of Regional Synod concurred with this decision. In open session Br. Hilmer Jagersma was informed of the decision, and

signed the Form of Subscription. Rev. J. Ludwig led in a prayer of thanksgiving and opportunity was given to congratulate Br. Jagersma.

Rev. W. Van Hal spoke words of encouragement to the assembly and expressed appreciation for the fellowship that he enjoys when attending Classis.

Classis decided to approbate the call to Br. H. Jagersma by Hamilton-Blessings.

Question period according to Article 44 of the CO was held. All the churches answered that the ministry of the office bearers was being continued, and that the decisions of the assemblies were being honoured. The church of Ancaster requested that Rev. J. Ludwig be relieved of all his classical/federational responsibilities during his sabbatical. This request was granted. The church of London asked for pulpit supply for January through July of 2017. This request was granted.

The church at Chatham requested advice in a case of discipline. Advice was given.

Br. Johan Brintjes requested a one-year extension for permission to speak an edifying word. His request was granted.

A report of the Classis treasurer was tabled recommending that the assessment for Classis increase from \$4.00 to \$5.00/communicant member for the calendar year 2017. This recommendation was adopted. Classis also decided that the churches be assessed \$1/com. member for the remainder of 2016.

The church at Ancaster, which administers the Fund for Needy Churches, presented a report recommending to financially support the church at Grand Rapids at \$19/communicant member for 2017. This recommendation was adopted.

The audit of the records of the classical treasurer by Cornerstone CanRC was received stating that the financial statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016 were in good order.



The following appointments were made:

1. The convening church for the next classis is Hamilton-Blessings which will be held on December 14, 2016 (alt. date: Mar. 8, 2017) in Cornerstone.
2. The suggested officers are: Rev. J. Ludwig (Chairman); Rev. J. Poort (Vice-chairman); Rev. R. Vermeulen (Clerk).
3. Delegates to RSE, Nov. 9, 2016 Revs. D. Deboer and J. Ludwig; with alternates Revs. R. Vermeulen and K. Kok (in that order); Elders Art Witten

and Arie DenHollander; with alternates Ben Harsevoort and Keith Sikkema (in that order).

4. The church at Cornerstone was appointed to represent the churches of Classis Ontario-West at the ordination of Candidate H. Jagersma. Personal Question period was held. Censure ad Article 34 was not deemed necessary. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release approved, after which Rev. J. Poort closed in prayer.

*For Classis Ontario-West,  
Rev. J. Ludwig (Vice-chairman at that time)*

### ***Press Release of Classis Alberta, October 19, 2016, held in Calgary***

On behalf of the convening church, the church at Taber, Rev. T. Vandergaag opened the meeting by reading Isaiah 43:1-13; he asked that Psalm 111:1 and 5 be sung. In prayer the following matters were mentioned: the institution of Neerlandia South; Candidate G. Veurink's acceptance of the call from Neerlandia North; the declines by Candidate W. DenHollander to the calls from Calgary and Neerlandia South, candidate D. Pol to Calgary, and Candidate J. Torenvliet to St. Albert; the call extended to Rev. R. Vermeulen to Neerlandia South; the ongoing vacancies of Calgary, Neerlandia South, and St. Albert; the installations of Rev. J. Van Spronsen to Edmonton Immanuel, and Rev. J. Huijgen to Coaldale; the commencement of CRTS this past September; the health concerns of Dr. J. DeJong and Dr. N. H. Gootjes, and concerns for their wives as well; finally the recent passing on of Wilma DeJong, the wife of Rev. D. DeJong who served as minister in Edmonton Providence and Calgary.

The credentials were found to be in good order and all delegates were present. Classis was constituted and the following took their respective positions in the executive: chairman: Rev. T. Vandergaag; vice-chairman: Rev. R. Aasman; clerk: Rev. C. Vanderlinde. The deputies for Regional Synod, Rev. J. Poppe and Rev. R. Schouten were welcomed to the meeting, along with Rev. W.B. Slomp who was present for the peremptory examination of Gerard Veurink, and

Brother Lloyd Van Eeden Petersman from the Lethbridge Trinity URC. The agenda was adopted with one minor modification.

A special welcome was extended to Gerard Veurink, who had come to Classis for his peremptory examination. Gerard Veurink presented a sermon on Joshua 10:1-14. After a discussion, it was decided to continue the examination. Brother Veurink was then examined on the various subjects in a peremptory examination. Classis decided with thankfulness that brother Gerard Veurink sustained his examination; the deputies of Regional Synod gave concurring advice. The call extended to Brother Veurink by the church at Neerlandia North was approbated, and he signed the Subscription to the Confession. At this time Rev. J. Van Spronsen and Rev. J. Huijgen, who recently came to this classis, also signed the Subscription Form.

The report from the Classis Treasurer was received with thankfulness. The church for the inspection of the books of the Treasurer (St. Albert) reported that the books were in good order. This report was received with appreciation.

It was decided to grant the churches at Calgary, Neerlandia South, and St. Albert pulpit supply. Rev. T. Vandergaag will arrange a schedule.

A proposal from the Church of Taber to make a change to Classis Regulations was adopted. The change corrects an error in the regulations concerning the documents required for a minister's certificate of release. The change reads, "Letter of release from the minister's current congregation (date and time)."

Question period according to Article 44 of CO was held. All the churches answered that the ministry of the office bearers was being continued, and that the decisions of the assemblies were being honoured. None of the churches requested the judgement and help of Classis for the proper government of their church.

Classis appointed the Church at Barrhead as the convening church for the next classis to be convened on December 6, 2016 (alternate date March 7, 2017). The suggested officers: chairman: Rev J. Van Spronsen; vice-chairman: Rev. T. Vandergaag; clerk: Rev R. Aasman.

Rev. J. Huijgen was appointed as examiner for Knowledge of Scripture. Appointed as church visitors

are Revs. R. Aasman, J. Huijgen, T. Vandergaag (coordinator), C. Vanderlinde, and J. Van Spronsen.

Brother Lloyd Van Eeden Petersman from the Lethbridge Trinity URC addressed Classis on behalf of the URCNA speaking encouragingly of the relationship we have as churches. Rev. R. Aasman responded. Some points were raised during personal question period. The chairman deemed that brotherly censure (Article 34, CO) was not needed. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release approved.

Rev. R. Aasman led in closing prayer.

*Richard Aasman  
Vice chairman (at that time)*

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### **Press Release of Classis Central Ontario- October 21, 2016 in Burlington, ON**

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. C.J. VanderVelde welcomed the delegates, the deputies of Regional Synod, Revs. P. Feenstra and D. Wynia, as well as the fraternal delegates, Rev. M. Overgaauw of Grace URC of Simcoe County as a representative of Classis Ontario East (URCNA), Rev. D. Ventura of Living Hope URC, Waterdown, representing Classis Ontario West (URCNA), and Rev. D. Bylsma of Living Hope Presbyterian Church, Beamsville representing OPC, Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario. Rev. C.J. VanderVelde called the meeting to order and led the opening devotions. The following matters of memorabilia were noted and included in prayer: the death of Rev. W. Pouwelse in The Netherlands at the age of eighty-eight years who formerly served in the federation in the churches at Burlington-Waterdown and Langley. The death of Mrs. Wilma deJong in The Netherlands, wife of Rev. D. deJong, minister emeritus of Burlington-Ebenezer. The upcoming eighty-eighth birthday of Rev. J. Mulder on November 2, 2016, minister emeritus of Burlington-Waterdown.

The credentials were examined and found to be in good order with all primi delegates present. Classis was constituted. The officers suggested by the previous classis took their place: Rev. J. vanPopta as chairman, Rev. G. Brintjes as clerk,

and elder R. Ludwig as vice-chairman. The agenda was adopted.

Rev. A. B. Roukema of Burlington-Ebenezer signed the Classis Form of Subscription. Br. Jake Torenvliet presented the required documents to undergo a peremptory examination. He delivered his sermon proposal on Matthew 14:22-33. In closed session the sermon proposal was discussed and judged sufficient to continue with the rest of the exam. In open session Br. J. Torenvliet was informed of this decision, and the rest of the examination took its course, with Rev. G. Brintjes examining in Old Testament, Rev. C.J. VanderVelde in New Testament, Rev. G. Brintjes on knowledge of Scripture, Rev. J. van Popta in doctrine and creeds, and Rev. J. van Popta in church history. During the morning examination session senior classes from Grace Christian School observed the proceedings. Following the lunch break, Rev. M. Overgaauw brought greetings on behalf of the URCNA and Rev. A.B. Roukema responded on behalf of Classis. Rev. D. Bylsma brought greetings on behalf of the OPC and Rev. G. Brintjes responded in kind. The examination of Br. J. Torenvliet continued with Rev. G. Brintjes examining in ethics, Rev. A.B. Roukema in church polity, and Rev. C.J. VanderVelde in diaconology. In closed session Classis evaluated the examination and decided that it was sustained and there were no objections to admitting candidate Jacob

Torenvliet into the ministry of the Word in the Canadian and American Reformed churches. The deputies of Regional Synod concurred with this decision. In open session Br. J. Torenvliet was informed of the decision. Rev. J. deGelder led in a prayer of thanksgiving and opportunity was given to congratulate Br. J. Torenvliet. A certificate of admittance to the ministry was presented on behalf of Classis. The call of Br. J. Torenvliet to the church at Flamborough was approbated. The ordination will take place on Sunday, November 13, 2016 at 11 a.m. Burlington-Ebenezer was delegated to represent Classis.

Br. Johan Bruintjes presented the required documents to undergo a preparatory exam. He delivered his sermon proposal on 2 Timothy 2:8, 9. In closed session the sermon proposal was discussed and judged sufficient to continue with the rest of the exam. In open session Br. J. Bruintjes was informed of this decision, and the rest of the examination took its course, with Rev. A.B. Roukema examining in Old Testament, Rev. J. van Popta examining in New Testament, Rev. C.J. VanderVelde examining in doctrines and creeds. In closed session Classis evaluated the examination and determined that it was sustained and Br. Johan Bruintjes could be admitted as a candidate to the ministry of the Word in the Canadian and American Reformed churches. In open session Br. J. Bruintjes was informed of the decision. Rev. C.J. VanderVelde led in a prayer of thanksgiving. Candidate J. Bruintjes signed the Classis Form of Subscription. An opportunity was given to congratulate J. Bruintjes and a certificate of candidacy from Classis was presented.

Burlington-South presented a report that the Classis Archives were inspected and found in good order. A report of the Classis treasurer was tabled recommending that the assessment for Classis remain the same for the calendar year 2017. This recommendation was adopted.

Burlington-Waterdown reported that the books of the Classis treasurer were inspected and found to be in good order.

Burlington-Waterdown reported that the books of the Needy Church Fund were inspected and found to be in good order.

Rev. C.J. VanderVelde reported on his attendance at Classis Southwestern Ontario September 21, 2016 of the URCNA as a fraternal delegate.

The Classis ad hoc committee submitted a report on the Lord's Supper admission per CCO June 10, 2016. The report was deemed admissible. A motion was made by Flamborough to defer the item to the next classis to allow for additional time to review the report. Classis decided to defer the item to the next classis.

A proposal was submitted by Toronto requesting the removal of regulation 7.9 from the Classis Regulations regarding Observers from the Free Church of Scotland. Classis decided to remove regulation 7.9 from the Classis Regulations.

Question period according to Article 44 of the CO was held. All the churches answered that the ministry of the office bearers was being continued, that the decisions of the assemblies were being honoured and no advice of Classis was requested.

The following appointments were made:

1. The convening church for the next classis is Flamborough which is scheduled for December 9, 2016 at Ebenezer Church.
2. The suggested officers are: Rev. G. Bruintjes (Chairman); Flamborough elder (Vice-chairman), Rev. A.B. Roukema (Clerk).
3. Numerous appointments were made according to the Classical Regulations.
4. Delegates to RSE, Nov. 9, 2016 Revs. A.B. Roukema and J. van Popta; with alternates Rev. G. Bruintjes and an alternate elder (in that order); Elders Bert Knol and Jack Vanderee with alternates Mark Deboer and Andrew Kieft (in that order).

Question period was held. Censure according to Article 34 was not deemed necessary. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release approved, after which Rev. J. van Popta closed in prayer.

*For Classis Central Ontario,  
R. Ludwig (Vice-chairman at that time) ✱*



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# Year in Review 2016

## Another Year

It seems like only yesterday that we reviewed the major events in our Canadian Reformed Church life, and yet here we are at it again. Another year has passed, the year of our Lord 2016. And a busy year it was. Let me recount some of the ways.

## Churches and pastors

### British Columbia

This year our survey begins in British Columbia, and then in the northerly part of the province. In the city of Prince George there has been a church plant for a number of years and this year it experienced some major changes. The Rev. Jim Witteveen received and accepted a call to do mission work in Brazil. Thankfully, the vacancy that then followed was soon filled when Candidate Tim Schouten answered "yes" to the call of the church at Smithers, the church that oversees the work in Prince George.

Further to the south there was also some activity as the Rev. Anton Souman from the Willoughby Heights church accepted a call to the Free Reformed Church at Kelmscott. In November he made the big move with his family and the Willoughby church went on to call the Rev. Karlo Janssen of the almost next door Abbotsford church.

Across town the Rev. Ryan deJonge from the Langley church also received a call from Australia as the church at Armadale approached him for the mission work in Lae, Papua New Guinea. He too accepted and plans were soon underfoot to begin the work there in December. Still, the Langley church was not vacant for long as Candidate

William den Hollander was called, accepted, passed the classical exam, and was ordained to serve beside the Rev. Doug Vandeburgt.

One of the ministers of the church at Abbotsford, the Rev. Justin Roukema and his family, spent some time in 2016 labouring in Cyprus. He helped out in a church plant connected to the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF).

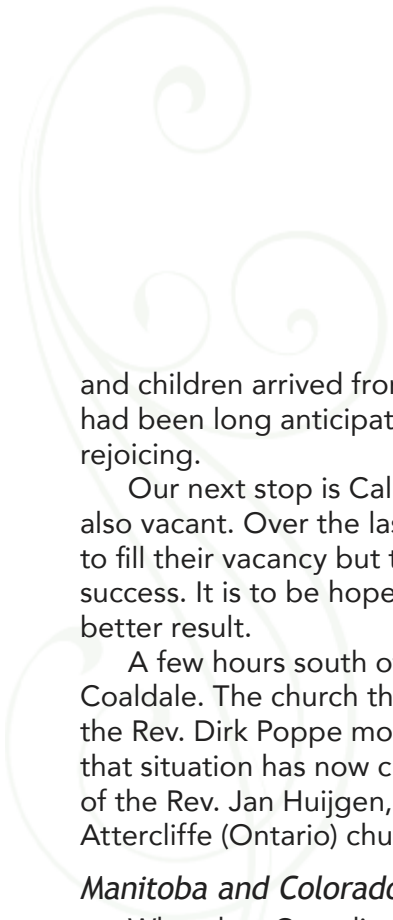
Further south yet, the Rev. Bill Wielenga of the Lynden American Reformed Church was granted a sabbatical in view of his many years of service in that congregation. No doubt this time of refreshment was much appreciated and well used by him.

### Alberta

Crossing the provincial boundary and moving east, we come to Alberta. After the departure of the Rev. John Louwerse to the Cornerstone church in Hamilton, the church at Neerlandia decided to split into Neerlandia North and Neerlandia South. A warm welcome is hereby extended to the newest church in the federation! Only which one is the new one? Seeing that Neerlandia North retains the church building, my guess is that Neerlandia South can lay claim to that honour.

Be that as it may, the Neerlandia North church decided to call Candidate Gerard Veurink and he accepted. Meanwhile, Neerlandia South has been busy calling too, but thus far without success.

Moving south, the St. Albert church said "farewell" to its minister, the Rev. Tony Roukema, and began to cast about for a new pastor and teacher. It is still looking. Across town the Immanuel church could stop looking and waiting when the Rev. Julius VanSpronsen, his wife Karen,



and children arrived from Brazil. Their arrival had been long anticipated and was greeted with rejoicing.

Our next stop is Calgary where the church is also vacant. Over the last year they have tried hard to fill their vacancy but thus far it has been without success. It is to be hoped that 2017 will see a better result.

A few hours south of Calgary is the town of Coaldale. The church there became vacant when the Rev. Dirk Poppe moved to Australia. Thankfully that situation has now changed with the arrival of the Rev. Jan Huijgen, formerly serving in the Attercliffe (Ontario) church.

### *Manitoba and Colorado*

What do a Canadian province and an American state have in common? They have churches that belong to one and the same classis. Presently all of the churches in Manitoba have pastors. The same cannot be said of the Denver church which is still actively seeking to fill its vacancy.

### *Ontario*

Crossing the border at Windsor we soon come to the London church. It has been vacant since the departure of the Rev. Reuben Bredenhof for Australia. Thus far its calling work has not seen the desired result. In addition to filling its vacancy, the London church, together with several other Reformed churches in the area, is involved in a local evangelistic initiative. For this work a decision was made to call a pastor/evangelist, and this call then went out to Candidate Han Gil Lee; however, he decided to decline.

In the Hamilton area there has also been some activity. The Providence church became vacant with the departure of the Rev. Wes Bredenhof and has since extended several calls but without success. The Blessings church decided to pursue a second pastor and sent out a call to Candidate Hilmer Jagersma. He responded positively to it and has since been ordained into the ministry of the gospel in the Canadian Reformed churches.

Further into the Niagara region the Smithville

church too decided that a second pastor was needed and began the calling work. They are still waiting for a positive result.

Moving north, the Burlington-Ebenezer church called the Rev. Tony Roukema from St. Albert, Alberta, and he accepted. Across town the Fellowship church decided to call a second pastor and they made the decision to extend a call to the young man who has been serving in their church during the past year, namely Candidate Johan Bruintjes. In neighbouring Flamborough the long wait for a pastor came to an end when Candidate Jake Torenvliet accepted its call.

To the northwest there has also been activity. The church at Elora called Candidate Jonathan Chase and he gave them a "yes." The church at Grand Valley called Candidate Randall Visscher and he was ordained in the first month of the year.

Far to the east the Ottawa church became vacant with the early retirement of the Rev. George van Popta. For many years already this brother has been fighting a brave battle against multiple sclerosis (MS), but in the last years this battle became increasingly difficult and began to seriously hamper his ability to do his pastoral work. May the Lord bless him, and his wife Dora, and be with them in their retirement years, even though they will be ones with ongoing challenges!

Since then the Ottawa church extended a call to the Rev. Winston Bosch who is serving as a pastor in the Reformed Churches in Quebec.

As this last *Clarion* issue for 2016 goes to the press, Candidate Johan Bruintjes is deep into prayerfully weighing his seven calls: three from churches in South Africa and four from churches in Canada. In due time the Lord will undoubtedly point him to the right place to serve as pastor and teacher.

### *Trends*

Looking back over the calling and movement of ministers, there are two things that stand out. The first is that a considerable number of pastors have departed Canada to serve in Australia. At

present the flow is mostly one way, but perhaps in the future the flow will reverse itself. In any case, we can be thankful that this kind of movement is possible and we certainly do not hold this trend against our brothers and sisters down under.

For those who are concerned about it and the large number of vacancies in Canada, kindly remember that it is the Lord Jesus Christ who ultimately governs the affairs and wellbeing of his church. At the same time it also serves as a call not to take our pastors for granted but to treat them with charity and support them with our prayers.

Another thing that this survey reveals is that a growing number of churches are moving to a two-pastor model. At present this is happening in the churches of Abbotsford, Blessings, and Langley, and soon it may become a reality in the churches of Burlington (Fellowship), Hamilton, and Smithville as well. I am sure that when projections were made in the past about future vacancies, this trend was not part of the calculations. Still, these churches obviously are trying to meet the growing needs in their large churches or take advantage of the opportunities that exist in the community for outreach and growth.

### **Retired pastors**

Over the last number of years there has been plenty of evidence that what is called "the baby boomer generation" (those born after WW II) is moving into the retirement camp. This is obvious in the general population (just visit a local Tim Horton's or a McDonald's in the morning) but it is also obvious in our church circles. More and more of our older ministers are "retiring."

I have put that word, however, within quotation marks because their retirement needs to be qualified. What I mean to say is that although they may have ceased to serve a particular congregation, they have not stopped preaching, teaching, counselling, visiting, and administering. Many of my fellow older colleagues are helping out in vacant churches, both near and far away. Some have been filling in when the regular minister

goes on a study leave or a sabbatical. Others have been doing more than their share of counselling troubled members, younger colleagues, and struggling congregations.

There is so much work to do, and it is a beautiful thing when one can still be busy in the Lord's work. After all, as so many of you have told me, "retirement is not in the Bible." But is that true? Not quite, for the Levites retired at the age of fifty. It even says in Numbers 8:25 that they "must retire from their regular service and work no longer." So what did they do? Go to the Mediterranean, lie on the beach, and soak up the sun all day? I am not sure, but I do know this: namely, it is a good thing that ministers are not Levites. They can at least retire from "their regular service" and work as long as they have their health and strength.

At the same time we also need to be sensitive to the fact that there are ministers who can no longer work. Many of them have served for years but their health is no longer such that they can contribute as they desire. Let us continue to esteem them for the sake of their office.

### **New and active pastors**

Before we leave the subject of pastors, let me also remark on another trend. It is the trend to ease new and inexperienced pastors into the duties of their new churches slowly. In that regard, how things have changed! As a member of the old guard, I came to my first congregation as a totally green rookie (no mentorship, no job shadowing, no summer internship). It was a case of, "You have been ordained, so here it is! Full steam ahead! Please prepare two sermons every week, chair all of the council and consistory meetings, teach all of the catechism classes, and visit all the sick, struggling, and wayward. Oh, and also kindly begin the process of visiting all of the members of the congregation in their homes as soon as possible." It was a daunting task, but we did it, and with loads of help from above, most of us survived.



Still, is this the best way to begin one's ministry? I do not think so and most consistories no longer think so either. Thank you, elders, deacons, and congregations, for your understanding and flexibility! Keep on being sensitive to the needs of your pastors, especially your young pastors. This will be a great help to them and, in time, it will prove to be a rich blessing to you.

On another front it is also good to see that pastors in both the east and the west now get together at a certain time of year for a number of days to be taught, to discuss, to explore, and to fellowship. In the east the Campfire! venue was used for this and in the west Cedar Springs, Sumas, Washington, continues to be the favourite place.

### ***Buildings***

Across the country churches continue to build new buildings, renovate old ones, and rent larger premises. The Providence church in Edmonton is looking into a major upgrade. The Grand Valley church plans to add more meeting space. The Maranatha church of Fergus has plans to both expand and renovate an aging structure. The Fellowship church in Burlington is hoping finally to receive the green light to build. The Blessings church in Hamilton is looking for a bigger building.

The Flamborough church is still exploring for a way to obtain its own building.

In all of this the major challenge is often not money but getting municipal approval. Over the years the red tape surrounding the construction of new church buildings and the alteration of old buildings has grown immensely. Members on the building committee dread going to city hall because every time some new requirement is added, increasing the cost and delaying the opening. In short, this is one more indication that our culture is not nearly as "church friendly" as it used to be.

### ***The Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS)***

The year 2016 will long be remembered as a very fruitful year at CRTS. The Convocation in September saw the degree of Master of Divinity awarded to Iwan Borst, David Pol, Jonathan Chase, Han Gil Lee, Hilmer Jagersma, Jeremy de Haan, Jake Torenvliet, William den Hollander, and the degree of Bachelor of Theology to John Boeke. This year's class represents the largest graduating class in the history of CRTS.

In addition to the regular teaching that goes on at CRTS, there was also the annual January conference in 2016. This year the major theme



was the preaching of the gospel. The Rev. Eric Watkins of the OPC spoke on redemptive-historical preaching and christocentricity, the Rev. Lawrence Bilkes spoke on preaching the whole counsel of God and on spiritual guidance in preaching, the Rev. Jack Moesker spoke on sermon evaluation, the Rev. James Visscher promoted the need for preaching from Leviticus, and Dr. Arjan de Visser dared to speak on the cheeky question, "Would Schilder Pass Classis?" It should also be mentioned that Rev. Watkins made presentations in several places on evangelism and the planting of Reformed churches.

Throughout the year other speakers also made an appearance as the Rev. Matthew VanLuik addressed staff and students on preaching from the Song of Songs, the Rev. Clarence VanderVelde spoke on preaching from notes or a full manuscript, Dr. Andrew Selle held two speeches on peacemaking, the Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer lectured on the Psalms, and the Rev. Bill DeJong taught on ministering at funerals.

Most, if not all, of these presentations are available on video. You are urged to visit [www.canadianreformedseminary.ca](http://www.canadianreformedseminary.ca). Indeed, the totally revamped CRTS website is now much more attractive to the eye, better structured, and full of useful information. It has become a most instructive resource.

Another highlight in 2016 was the publication of Dr. Jason Van Vliet's three-volume work, *Growing in the Gospel*. These are available from your local book seller and Amazon. They can also be ordered in hardcover, paperback, or electronic format. As such they are beneficial for private as well as group study. It may be mentioned too that the material for these three books comes originally from the lectures that Dr. Van Vliet prepared for the China Reformed Bible College (CRBC). It is good to see them available now not just in Chinese but also in English, and who knows what other languages in the future.

Other highlights at CRTS relate to the fact that Dr. John Smith and his family could spend a good

deal of his sabbatical in Australia. This is just one more way that the bond between our churches and the Australian churches could be strengthened. Needless to say, he was not the only travelling professor. The Principal's Report lists most of the visits made near and far away by other faculty members.

All in all, CRTS has undergone somewhat of a transformation in the last number of years. The accreditation process and the subsequent reception into membership in the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) has been the catalyst to a whole re-think of how best to teach seminary students. The addition of a fifth professor has led to a more equitable distribution of the teaching load. The library under the care of the Librarian Margaret Alkema continues to develop into a quality research facility. The website increasingly serves to connect staff, students, and supporting community.

No doubt the future will see more developments. One of them will be the rise of more online teaching. Seminaries around the world are making greater use of the internet and CRTS too is becoming part of this movement. Of course, this is not to say that in the future we can get rid of onsite teaching, but it does open up more opportunities to deliver different courses in different ways to students in different parts of the world. All of this is happening as seminaries realize that bringing students in from other countries, separating them their families and church communities for long periods of time, incurring great expense in the process, is not always the best way forward. In short, challenges and opportunities abound!

At the same time there are also ongoing concerns about widows, widowers, and ailing retired faculty members and their wives. Sr. J. Faber and Sr. K. Deddens are aging and, at times, struggling. Prof. J. Geertsema is managing but frail. Drs. J. DeJong and N. Gootjes continue to receive excellent care at Shalom Manor. Still, the burden for their wives and families is heavy. It is good to see that they are regularly remembered in prayer in churches across the land.



## **Synod Dunnville**

2016 was also a synod year. Twenty-four brothers, twelve from the east and twelve from the west, gathered in the town of Dunnville, Ontario. It met from May 10 – 19 and thus counts as one of the shortest Canadian Reformed general synods on record. No doubt part of the credit for this goes to the Rev. Richard Aasman, who has become a most experienced chairman of such gatherings.

## **Inter-church Relations**

A close look at the Acts of GS Dunnville reveals that once again most of the meeting time was devoted to relations with foreign churches in Australia, Brazil, Indonesia, Korea, The Netherlands, Scotland, South Africa, and the United States. Some of the decisions made on these relationships are predictable and merit little additional comment. Still, a few things stand out.

With regard to the Scottish churches, it was decided that these churches should be visited at least once every three years. With respect to South Africa, the Seminary was instructed to assist these churches in the challenges that they face when it comes to theological training.

Synod also decided to “normalize” relations with various sister churches (Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Reformed Churches in Quebec, Reformed Church in the United States). What this means is that from now on when we enter into sister church relations or ecclesiastical fellowship, there will not be a list of “divergences” or “particular issues” added to the relationship. Instead, any and all issues that exist can and should be discussed within the framework of the relationship. As well differences that were noted and discussed prior to entering into a relationship and which did not hinder it do not necessarily require resolution. Synod also debated whether or not to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America. In the end it decided not to do so. Two main issues are cited as reasons for refusal: the fact that the RPCNA ordains women as deacons and the status of the

Testimony, a special document that appears to have almost confessional standing in the RPCNA.

As for our relationship with the United Reformed Churches in North America, it was decided to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the URCNA, to re-appoint and expand the Committee for Church Unity, as well as to seek ways to facilitate building unity at the local level. Synod also stressed that it is love that compels us to seek merger. To that end various committees on the church order, forms/confessions, and theological education were re-appointed.

In addition to our relationship with the URCNA, another relationship that received particular attention had to do with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. As such this is a longstanding matter. Concerns about the course of our Dutch sister churches have been expressed repeatedly over the years and have thus far failed to bring about any real changes. As a result, Synod Dunnville decided that the time had come to place our relationship “under strain” and to suspend rules 4 and 5 of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship. What this means is attestations will no longer be accepted as a matter of course and ministers from these churches will not have ready access to the pulpits of the Canadian Reformed churches.

Since this decision was taken, bad news continues to be the order of the day. In November the Committee on Men and Women in the Church appointed by the last Dutch synod released its report. Its main recommendation is that all of the offices in the church should be opened to women. Of course, it is not known what the next Dutch synod will do with this report and its recommendation, but the signs are not favourable. It would seem that sooner or later the fateful decision will be made and the pressures of modern culture will win out over the clear teaching of Holy Scriptures.

All in all, the above represents a very sad and disappointing development. The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands have always had a special place in the hearts of many Canadian Reformed members.



After all, in some ways the GKNv, as it is initialized in Dutch, is our “mother.” Yet now “daughter” finds itself in the uncomfortable position of reprimanding and distancing itself from “mother.”

## Appeals

Synod Dunnville also entertained various appeals, and among them the one that stands out has to do with women’s voting. In due course it decided that Synod 2013 (not to permit) was in error when it overturned the decision of Synod 2010 (to permit). What this means is that whether or not women vote in the election of office bearers is, and remains, a matter of local regulation. Should a local church decide not to do so, it may. Should a local church decide to do so, it may.

## Other Matters

The matter of Bible translations also had the attention of Synod Dunnville. A number of churches expressed disappointment and disagreement with the previous synod and its handling of the NIV2011. Another church argued the question of which translation to use is a matter of the churches in common.

Synod responded by continuing to recommend the ESV. It also stated somewhat curiously that while it may not be possible to recommend the NIV2011, its usage cannot be forbidden.

When it comes to the matter of how we as churches have handled the matter of Bible translations, as well as the *Book of Praise*, two expressions come to mind, namely “over-reaction” and “stewardship.” If the Brampton church is right (see: Acts, page 130) we may have over-reacted in our decision about the NIV2011. If one counts all of the still good quality NIV1984 editions in the pew that have been replaced with the ESV at considerable expense, as well as the various editions of the *Book of Praise* that have been discarded after minimal usage, it adds up to a lot of trees being sacrificed and thus a case of questionable stewardship. Surely, we can and should do better in the future.

In connection with this, if you thought that the *Book of Praise* was finished and finalized, you may need to think again. Synod Dunnville made it clear that changes to the hymn section remain possible as the Committee was instructed to “seek, receive, evaluate and recommend proposals for changes to the hymn section to be compiled for possible submission to a future Synod” (Acts, Article 122, 4.2.2).

All in all, the Acts 2016 reveal that the brothers did a lot of good and difficult work in record time. They are to be commended for their efforts. May the Lord bless their labours and may the churches be diligent to test the results.

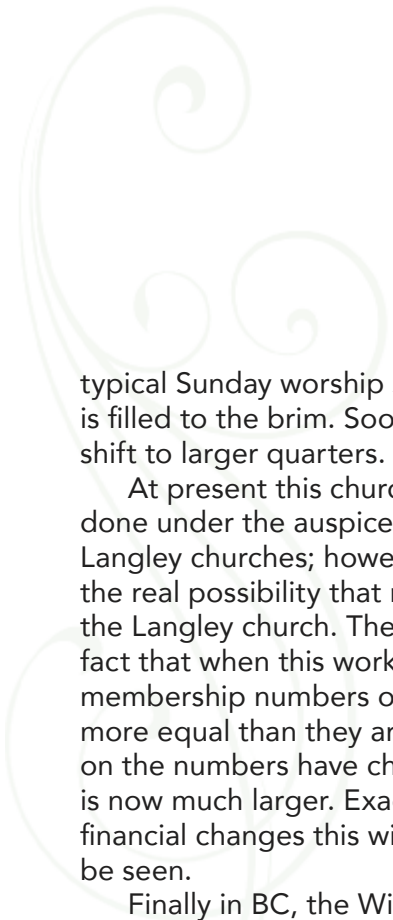
## Home mission

### In BC

Currently our churches are involved in a number of home mission projects. One thinks here of the work that the Smithers church is doing in Prince George. This work, as previously mentioned, is spearheaded by the Rev. Tim Schouten. As such this effort has been going for some years and is continuing to bear fruit.

Nevertheless, it is hard work. I often travel to a foreign country, which will remain nameless, and am repeatedly struck by the hunger that is there for the gospel. People are interested and responsive, even craving spiritual truth. But then I come back to Canada and I am struck by the very opposite. In Canada, as in so many Western countries, there is a startling and distressing indifference to the gospel. Most here are blasé, if not hostile. All of that makes church planting a formidable work in Canada and it makes the need to pray for Rev. Schouten, and others like him, very urgent.

Moving to the Fraser Valley in BC we have a church plant of quite a different kind as it is directed almost entirely at Chinese citizens and immigrants. This work, as led by the Rev. Frank D, continues to be blessed. On a regular basis new contacts are made and visitors come, embrace Christ, and join the church. The result is that on a



typical Sunday worship service the worship space is filled to the brim. Soon there will be a need to shift to larger quarters.

At present this church planting work is equally done under the auspices of the Cloverdale and Langley churches; however, in the future there is the real possibility that more of the onus will fall on the Langley church. The reason for this being the fact that when this work was started in 2000 the membership numbers of the two churches were more equal than they are now. As time has gone on the numbers have changed and Langley church is now much larger. Exactly what structural and financial changes this will bring about remains to be seen.

Finally in BC, the Willoughby church has been operating a reading room in the Burnaby area, closer to Vancouver, in the hope that it will stimulate interest in the truth of the gospel. Thus far some contacts have been made and any number of volunteers go out of their way to staff the site.

### **Manitoba**

In Manitoba the churches continue to call suitable men to lead the work of outreach; however, thus far they have not been met with decline after decline. Disappointing, to say the least. Still, there is no indication that the churches, led by the Redeemer church, are ready to call it quits.

### **Ontario**

In Ontario the work done by Streetlight Ministries and led by the Rev. Paul Aasman continues to receive a lot of support and move forward. There is still the hope that soon a church will be instituted in the downtown Hamilton area. Plans are also underway to raise a million dollars to construct a new worship and ministry center as the present site is clearly inadequate to meet the growing need.

Closer to the Toronto area the Brampton church continues to operate its Spirit and Word Centre and has also approached the churches in the area for support as it seeks to call a home

missionary. The same sort of initiative appears to be happening in the London area.

What all of this indicates is that in the churches there is a growing desire to reach out into the community and to make the most of the opportunities as they present themselves. And that is a healthy trend. Let us be aware of the fact that an insular, standoffish, or ingrown church does not represent a healthy development. A vibrant local church will look upward in terms of worship, inward in terms of care and fellowship, as well as outward in terms of evangelism. All three directions need to be embraced, juggled, and stressed to be a living church.

### **Youth work**

In any number of churches summertime is VBS time. This means that a committee, usually composed of ladies, will call on other ladies in the congregation to help organize a week-long outreach to the children in the neighbourhood around the church. All in all, it represents a lot of work, but the work is done gladly and many seeds are sown.

In some places the efforts of the Vacation Bible School are augmented with youth camps. In southern BC, Stepping Stones continues to run its camp for youth during the months of July and August at their beautiful site in Deroche. In northern BC, the Home Mission Board in Smithers has long been hosting an annual week long camp that reaches out to native children in the area. In Ontario, Campfire! works on an even larger scale and for a longer time in the summer ministering to the needs of youth in southern Ontario. Their beautiful facilities at Markdale, along with its new swimming pool, are being put to good use for youth camps, family gatherings, and other meetings.

### **Foreign mission**

#### **Brazil**

The nation of Brazil continues to be the object of a considerable amount of Canadian Reformed mission work. Both the Aldergrove and Hamilton churches are involved there. The year 2016 was

filled with a number of noteworthy events. The first was the graduation of three men from the seminary and their coming to serve as pastors in the federation. As such they join a growing number of very capable local men who are having a great impact in the churches.

The second event saw the return of the Rev. Julius VanSpronsen and his family from Brazil. For quite a few years our brother worked extremely hard to assist the Brazilian churches in many ways and to insure that the John Calvin Seminary was properly organized. No doubt his transition and the transition of his family from life in Recife to life in Edmonton will come with its challenges. After all, you can't move from thirty degrees Celsius above to thirty degrees below and not feel something! In addition, breaking ties and relationships established over many years represents an even more daunting hurdle. Still, we cling to the conviction that our Lord is faithful and will see them through.

The third main event was the calling and acceptance of the Rev. Jim Witteveen to replace the Rev. VanSpronsen, as well as his ability to spend some months already in Brazil, together with his family. Once there he showed that he has astounding ability as he preached in Portuguese.



Needless to say, this offers good hope that he will prove to be a most effective replacement. Early 2017 may well see the family living and working in Brazil.

Since the Aldergrove church received the green light from the supporting churches to call a third missionary, a call was extended to the Rev. Arend Witten of Vernon, but he declined this call. Hence the search continues.

The Rev. Ken Wieske, who remains Aldergrove's most experienced missionary in Brazil, enjoyed a furlough in Canada together with his wife Tamara and their children. It is hoped that this time served to re-charge batteries and grant new energy for the tasks ahead. Also, mention should be made of the fact that a new house is being built for the Wieske family in Recife. After much planning and frequent delays, it is good to see this building project moving forward.

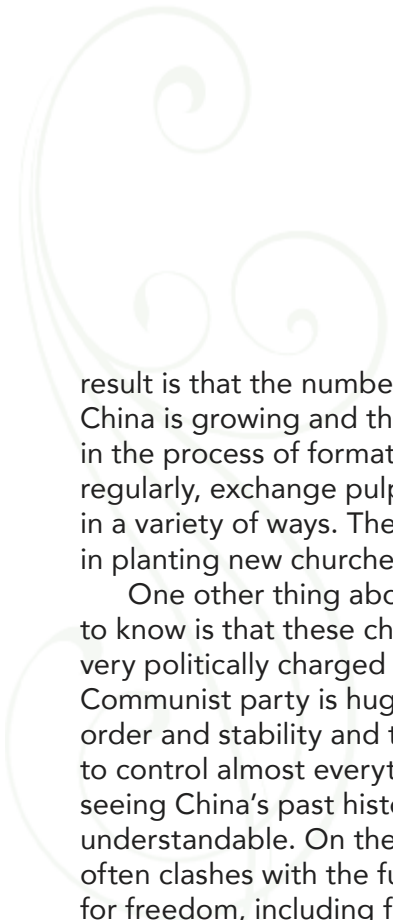
Closely connected to all this is that the Yarrow church continues to take the lead in taking excellent care of the Aldeia Training Centre. The property with all of its buildings is kept in good repair and regular upgrades are made to the facilities as needed.

Further south in the Maceio area the Rev. Bram de Graaf continues to serve as the missionary of the Hamilton church. He too is a man with much experience and a thorough understanding of Brazilian culture. It is hoped that his church planting work around the Maceio area will also continue to be blessed and that with his gifts he too may continue to serve the many needs of the Brazilian churches.

## China

Moving along alphabetically we come to the nation of China where the Canadian Reformed churches are also active (together with the involvement and support of the Free Reformed Church in Kelmscott and Mount Nasura, Western Australia). In Canada this work, spearheaded by the Asia Mission Board and its missionary, and the Rev. Frank D., continue to be blessed by the Lord. The





result is that the number of Reformed churches in China is growing and that a fledgling federation is in the process of formation. These churches meet regularly, exchange pulpits, and assist each other in a variety of ways. They are also extremely active in planting new churches.

One other thing about them that you need to know is that these churches live and grow in a very politically charged atmosphere. The ruling Communist party is hugely concerned about order and stability and this compels them to try to control almost everything. On the one hand, seeing China's past history of turbulence, this is understandable. On the other hand, this all too often clashes with the fundamental human desire for freedom, including freedom of religion.

As for the house or family churches in China, they feel caught in the squeeze. Some of them registered with the government years ago and have experienced no difficulties. Other have done the same thing and found themselves in deep trouble as the local authorities sought to dominate every facet of their church life. So what are they to do?

One thing, however, is certain. If they defy the government, the consequences can be dire: fines, confiscation, beatings, and imprisonment. Obviously, these fellow believers and their churches need our prayers.

Meanwhile, as all of this is going on, the influence and impact of the China Reformed Bible College continues to spread. One illustration of this is that in 2016 the enrolment jumped from twenty-four students to eighty-four students. In turn these students now have access to a complete online biblical and theological curriculum consisting of hundreds of lectures that have been written by Canadian ministers and professors and translated into Chinese. Efforts are underway to add to the courses offered and thus keep the curriculum up to date.

Mention also needs to be made of the fact that Rev. Frank D is assisted in the teaching and marking of the CRBC courses by Br. John B from

Australia and by members of the translation team. This team consists of the sisters Jean, Helen, and Maple. These hard working, full-time labourers have their office in Langley, and in addition to monitoring, marking, and interacting with students, see to it that sermons, lectures, lessons, books, and pamphlets are regularly translated into Mandarin and uploaded to the website.

As for the website ([www.ccifellowship.org](http://www.ccifellowship.org)), it is a very highly developed piece of work thanks to the splendid efforts of Br. Eugene and others. Every day it is being viewed and used by thousands in China, throughout Asia, and around the world. In the beginning the plan was to make it a bilingual website using both Chinese and English; however, today it is all Chinese (Mandarin). There has simply not been enough time and manpower to develop both. As always, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.

### *Indonesia*

Speaking of Asia attention also needs to be drawn to the nation of Indonesia where the Rev. Edwer Dethan is working under the auspices of the Smithville church. The college that he founded and continues to direct keeps on doing great work in the Sumba area. In addition the Reformed churches in the area benefit greatly from his good advice and steady leadership.

A word of appreciation also needs to be passed along to Sr. Femmy Dethan for all the work that she does in assisting her husband, caring for her family, and being involved in community care. Happy is the missionary who has a loving and able wife to stand beside him in what can often be a lonely task and an isolated place!

### *Papua New Guinea*

Far to the east of where Rev. Dethan lives is Papua New Guinea, where the Canadian Reformed churches have a presence too. Rev. Cornelis Kleyn and his wife Greta, together with their children, live and work there in Port Moresby. Beside him labours the Rev. Henry Versteeg with his wife Rita. Together they are especially involved in

church planting, leadership training, and seminary teaching.

Both brothers spend a great deal of time teaching at the Reformed Churches Bible College (RCBC). This college offers both a two year certificate program and a three year diploma program. The latter is aimed at men who are training to be ministers of the gospel.

In connection with that, the year 2016 was especially noteworthy as several men graduated, were ordained, and began to serve in local churches. It is hoped that more will follow in their footsteps.

When Kleyn and Versteeg are not busy teaching, they can usually be found helping out in one of the six mission posts or in developing resources that can be put to good use by the Reformed Churches in Papua New Guinea.

Organizationally, the Reformed Churches in New Zealand are also involved in this work. The Rev. Alan Douma, along with his wife Odette, is there as representative, missionary, and teacher. On the Canadian side of things, this work continues to be spearheaded by the Mission Board of the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church in Toronto, with the support of local churches in that area.

### *Mexico*

At present there are no Canadian Reformed missionaries in Mexico but that may soon change. The Abbotsford Canadian Reformed Church is teaming up with the Vernon Canadian Reformed Church and together they intend to pursue missionary work in Mexico. Their aim is to find a suitable candidate, train him, and send him to plant churches there.

I am not sure whether or not a site has been found but up till recently the talk was that this work would be centred in Aguascalientes, a large city in the central part of that country. One of the attractions of working there is that for some years already several Canadian Reformed families from the Langley church have been living and working there. Both the Van Beilen and Visscher

families have been busy with the construction and operation of orphanages.

### *The Middle East*

There are also no Canadian Reformed ministers or missionaries presently working in the Middle East, although this year it was a close call. For a number of months the Rev. Justin Roukema, together with his wife Amanda and children, lived and worked in Larnaca, Cyprus. They had secured a leave of absence from Abbotsford church in order to assist a church plant in that city. The time there proved very insightful and stimulating, but it was not enough to draw them there on a permanent basis.

Meanwhile, in Larnaca, Cyprus, one will find the headquarters of an organization that is supported with prayers and offerings throughout our churches, namely the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF). As such this organization has branches around the world and one of them is called MERF-Canada and is located in Burlington, Ontario. It also has representatives around the world and two of them who represent Canada are the Rev. Jan de Gelder and Br. Lammert Jagt.

But getting back to headquarters, over the years I have heard a great deal about it but had never had a chance to see it. That changed in November when my wife and I, and others from our churches, paid a one day visit to head office, or to the John Calvin Center, as it is called. The Rev. Victor Atallah and his wife Lisa hosted us for lunch and showed us around their very fine training facilities. In this large, multi-floor building there is a worship hall, many meeting rooms, a library (called the Klaas Schilder Library, by the way), sleeping facilities for a large group of students, commons areas, an eating area, as well as research and broadcasting facilities. All in all, it is a very a functional building and serves the purposes of MERF marvelously well.

On the day that we were visiting a meeting was in progress attended by MERF workers from different parts of the world. We were privileged



as to hear what MERF is doing in Somalia and Ethiopia. In addition, we were also informed about the work that is being done via radio and internet (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.). MERF has a number of broadcasting sites in Lebanon, Egypt, Cyprus, and elsewhere that are making maximum use of the electronic media. These centres are staffed by a host of able, energetic young people who are firmly committed to spreading the Reformed faith. Looking back it proved to be a wonderful visit and a highlight on our "Following the Journeys of Paul" tour.

### ***Mission aid or mercy work***

Along with bringing of the gospel to the ends of the earth comes the task of bringing the mercy of God to bear on the lives of the local people. As such this is being done in a wide variety of ways. For example, working closely with the missionaries in Brazil is the Mission Aid worker, Br. Chris Boersema. His work is multi-faceted in that he assists the needy in a variety of ways whether it has to do with senior or nursery care, with employment opportunities, with financial seminars, with gospel distribution, and so the list goes on and on. One of his latest projects has to do with giving Papyrus to the illiterate and poor. What is a Papyrus? It is a small electronic device which contains a recording of the entire New Testament. Simply push a button and someone is speaking to you. No reading skills necessary.

Another person, only recently appointed and employed by Mission Aid Brazil, is Br. Elias Barbosa da Silva. He is what is called a "Reformed Mission Worker." His task is to promote the cause of Reformed education. This involves him in organizing training sessions for teachers, doing promotional work, helping home schooling families, assisting teachers, curriculum development, and a host of other educational endeavours.

While it is true that not every mission field has a well-developed organization like Mission Aid Brazil beside it, it is nevertheless true that no matter

where our missionaries are bringing the gospel, there is a degree of mercy work involved as well. Whether it be supporting needy students in China, poor villagers in Papua New Guinea, struggling families in Indonesia, orphans in Mexico, illiterate people in Brazil, the social, health, and economic needs are endless, and they cannot be ignored.

In that regard it is thus also a blessed thing that we have relief organizations working in our midst and on our behalf as well. In Canadian Reformed circles the work of the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund (CRWRF) comes to mind. This organization has been around for a long time and it continues to do much good work. It also does it with little or no overhead costs to speak of.

At present CRWRF is involved in many different parts of the world: Kenya, South Africa, Liberia, Timor, Ethiopia, Iraq, Syria, Haiti, and more places. It sends work teams to Mexico, Haiti, parts of the United States. It was also involved in helping those caught in the Fort McMurray fires.

Of course, being a small, volunteer organization CRWRF does not have and cannot send staff members around the world to make contacts, evaluate needs, develop programs, and review outcomes. Instead it works together with members and deaconries of local sister churches. It also enters into partner agreements with larger dependable organizations. Generally the aim is, as they say in business circles, "to get the most bang for your buck."

Another organization that does similar relief work is called Word and Deed. It differs from the CRWRF in that its main support base can be found in the Free Reformed, Heritage Reformed, and Netherlands Reformed communities. Of late it has also been garnering increasing Canadian Reformed support, especially in the business community. Another difference is that Word and Deed has a paid staff composed of some very capable people led in part by a man of considerable ability and experience, namely Br. Rick Postma.

In any case, getting away from the organizational aspects, the main point is that



Word and Deed is also involved in disaster relief, economic aid, Christian schooling, orphan care, and the many needs that are out there.

Aside from these efforts there are many others. One can think of the work of the Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF), Wycliffe Bible Translators, EduDeo, Hope for Children, World Vision. Every year the list of volunteers and young people looking for opportunities to serve abroad grows. I could mention any number of names, as I did last year, but the danger is always there that some are forgotten. So to all of you out there, our hats go off in a salute and with the prayer that your work be blessed.

### ***The Canadian Reformed Missions Association***

In an attempt to bring some order into an ever-expanding mission and mission aid world, the Canadian Reformed Missions Association was established. At present all of the churches and organizations in our midst involved in either work are members. Every year as well a meeting is held, usually at CRTS in Hamilton, where representatives from all of these organizations and committees come together to discuss their work, to liaison with each other, to debate pertinent issues, and to listen to able speakers.

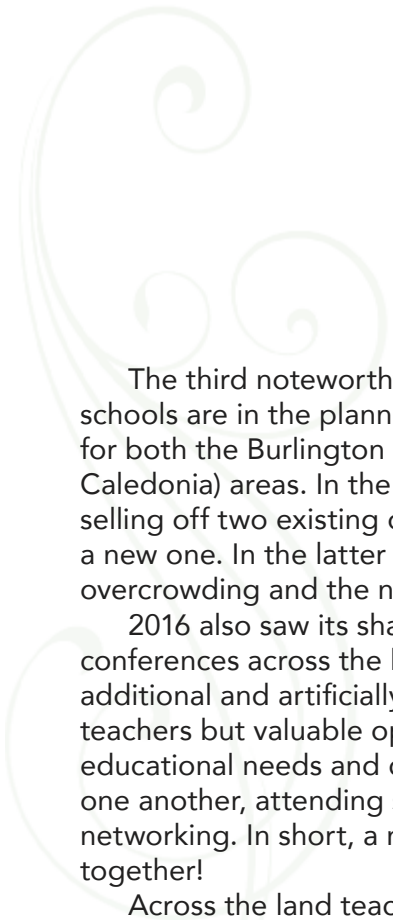
In 2016 the main speaker was the Rev. Richard Bout, the Missions Coordinator of the United Reformed Churches in North America. He gave two very insightful speeches, one on domestic or home mission called "Every Church a Church-Plant" and the other on foreign mission called "Challenges of Establishing Self-Sustaining, Self-Supporting, Self-Propagating Churches on the Mission Field." Both presentations sparked a good deal of discussion and left the hearers with many points to ponder. It was also decided to hold the 2017 CRMA meeting on the west coast. Finally, the dues were reduced for a third year in a row! Something virtually unheard of in mission circles or elsewhere.

### ***Christian education***

Under the matter of Christian education, there is as always a lot to report. Indeed, there is so much that your reporter is having a hard time keeping up. Still, I did come across a few noteworthy things. The first is that the John Calvin School in Yarrow, BC is in the midst of a massive addition and renovation. The old plant needed some serious upgrades and classroom space has been at a premium for some time. In rather quick order the money was raised and the eight classroom addition is underway.

Another noteworthy news item is the completion of the new/old building for the Emmanuel Christian High School in Fergus, Ontario. The result of a lot of planning, fundraising, community support, contracted work, and free labour is that as you enter Fergus from the south you cannot miss the impressively restored building that greets you on your right. What was once a well-loved but dilapidated monument of a building has been infused with new life and purpose. Congratulations are hereby extended to the visionaries, organizers, and workers who made it happen! And they said that it could not be done. . . but in faith all things are possible.





The third noteworthy news item is that new schools are in the planning and building stages for both the Burlington and Glanbrook (Hamilton, Caledonia) areas. In the former it is a case of selling off two existing older schools and building a new one. In the latter it is a case of dealing with overcrowding and the need for more space.

2016 also saw its share of teacher and principal conferences across the land. As such these are not additional and artificially manufactured holidays for teachers but valuable opportunities for discussing educational needs and challenges, learning from one another, attending seminars, adding skills, and networking. In short, a necessary and fruitful time together!

Across the land teachers are always in the process of adding to their skill sets by taking courses. Some of these courses are hosted by local colleges and universities. Others are taken online. And still others are done in connection with the Covenant Canadian Reformed Teacher's College in Hamilton. As has been reported on previously, the CCRTC continues to train new teachers, to assist established teachers and to offer a host of resources in the area of Christian education from a Reformer perspective. It is also continuing to pursue ways in which its courses and programs will receive proper recognition and accreditation. May that pursuit be crowned with success soon!

### **Special homes**

From education for the young to care for the disabled and the elderly is quite a jump, but it too is an area that continues to make headlines. Across our country organizations such as Bethesda in BC, Rehoboth in Alberta, and Anchor in Ontario continue to play a pivotal role in the care of the mentally disabled among us.

On the topic of senior care, Manoah Manor in Langley, BC continues to upgrade its physical plant and at times there is talk of constructing another retirement and intermediate care home further into the Fraser Valley. In Alberta the new retirement centre in Lethbridge is drawing more and more of

our seniors. In Ontario, a new Christian retirement centre has opened in Aurora, north of Toronto, and it is attracting residents from the Bethel Church. In Burlington, Maranatha Homes, or as it is now called, Maranatha Gardens, is getting off the ground and the retirement suits are selling well.

### **Christian politics**

If it is a leap to go from students to seniors, then it is an even further leap to go from education and special care to politics. Still, the jump needs to be made as the efforts of the Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) continue to expand. Br. Mark Penninga as Executive Director and Br. André Schutten as General Legal Counsel, along with a growing cast of characters, are doing fine work in Ottawa, on Parliament Hill, before the Supreme Court of Canada and across the land. On a host of different issues and matters they are bringing the gospel to bear on the political realm. Although dealing with a more defined issue, Br. Mike Schouten also continues to speak out for the rights of the unborn and his WeNeedALaw organization is making a difference.

Readers, their efforts deserve your thoughts, prayers, and support, both financial and otherwise. Let it never be said that our nation sunk into darkness and that not a Christian voice was heard in the land.

### **In conclusion**

Once again the tale has been long. If truth be told, it could have been much, much longer; however, I will not try your patience any further. Hopefully this Review has informed and reminded you of some of the big things that happened in 2016. What the Lord will do in us, among us and for us in 2017 is something only he knows. And that need not worry us in the least, for we know and believe that he is faithful and that his love in Jesus Christ is never failing. Thank him for 2016 and slip your little hand into his almighty hand as you stroll down the road of 2017. ❀









# *Season's Greetings*

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