

# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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**What is top priority  
in our life?**

***CHRIST IS OUR LIFE  
WOMEN IN MINISTRY  
CLARION KIDS***

# #myhappyplace

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*We no longer live to serve ourselves but him –  
and everything in our lives should reflect that*

If you are on social media you can't miss it. A picture is posted, a scene is described, an upcoming event is forecast, and at the end you find the hashtag: #myhappyplace. At last count, this phrase appeared on Instagram 1,394,878 times. That's not counting #myhappyplace plus a variation of emoji. A lot of people, including a lot of Christians, are very aware of, connected to, and don't mind sharing with the world the location of their "happy place."

## Hashtags and happy places

In case you are wondering what a hashtag is and does, it is another name for the pound sign (#) above the digit 3 on your keyboard. It is used across many social media apps (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook to name a few) to join your post to anyone else's post on the same subject (using the same hashtag) so they can all be grouped together and viewed later at your leisure via a quick search. You can use existing tags or make up new ones (hoping to start a new trend). For example, if you post a picture of a beautiful sunset and add to the caption the hashtag #sunset, then whenever anyone in the world searches the Internet for #sunset, your picture (and any other with that hashtag) will come up. There could be many thousands such photos but an interested searcher could scroll through them all and enjoy their beauty.

For the hashtag #myhappyplace, the idea is simple: it's a place or circumstance in which the person feels most content and satisfied. There's quite a range of happy places out there, everything from being with your boyfriend/girlfriend to hugging your pet, holding your child, sitting pool-side in the sun, visiting Disney World, riding your horse, to binge watching your favourite show. . . and the list goes on. Whatever situation makes me feel good inside, glad and cheerful, that is #myhappyplace. Social media encourages us to think along these lines and post pics of our own happy places.

## #mybucketlist

Another hashtag that is quite popular right now is #mybucketlist or simply #bucketlist (more than 3.5 million hits on Instagram). The idea here is not so obvious at first but it seems to come from the 2007 movie, *The Bucket List*. In that story, two older men are diagnosed with terminal diseases and rather than use their time and energy fighting the ailments, they decide to set out to experience a bunch of things before they die, things each had always dreamed of doing. It's a bit crude, but before they "kick the bucket" they want to have certain experiences, hence each has his "bucket list." Bucket list pictures include many travel photos, going to exotic locations, eating special foods, and enjoying unique experiences.

## Fun and gratitude

Now, I realize a lot of this is social media fun and meant in a light-hearted way. And fun is good – but shouldn't our fun give glory to God? As unbelievers use these hashtags, they are quite naturally focussed on themselves. In a world where God doesn't mean much to you, you cling to "happy places" and try to make the most of life by getting through your "bucket list." But is that our mindset as Christians? Where does God want us to find happiness and joy and what would the Lord want to see on our bucket list? What message does the world hear if we use these hashtags without further comment or context? Can unbelievers spot any difference between our posts and theirs? Is there a difference?

Christ Jesus has redeemed us so that we no longer live to serve ourselves but him – and everything in our lives, including our posts and hashtags, should reflect that. The Lord gives us much in this world to enjoy and explore but then he wants us do so with a certain mindset: thankfulness to God. Paul speaks about this in 1 Timothy 4:4, "For everything cre-

ated by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer." That's the question I want to pose to all of us: are we using social media generally, and hashtags in particular, in a way which directs honour to the Lord?

## An old attitude

This isn't a social media issue in the first place. Those of us who may look down on Instagram and Facebook as being filled with worldliness and of no redeeming value must not think these ideas didn't exist be-

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

#myhappyplace is Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer's next editorial. What does this hashtag bring to mind? What does it communicate when we use it? And how should we use hashtags in our social media activity?

Rev. Clarence Bouwman sets the context and follows through with helpful examples in his article "Women in Ministry?!" Read on. . . it may not be what you think!

Issue 6 brings regular columns Treasures New and Old, Clippings on Politics and Religion, Education Matters, Ray of Sunshine, and *Clarion Kids*. There is also a book review, a letter to the editor, and a mission news insert.

Laura Veenendaal

- 174 EDITORIAL**  
**#myhappyplace**
- 177 TREASURES, NEW & OLD**  
**Christ is our Life!**
- 178 Women in Ministry?!**
- 181 CLIPPINGS ON POLITICS AND RELIGION**
- 182 EDUCATION MATTERS**
- 185 CLARION KIDS**
- 186 RAY OF SUNSHINE**
- 187 LETTER TO THE EDITOR**
- 188 BOOK REVIEW**

Cover: Reformed Church of St. Paul in Strasbourg, France

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fore or in different forms. Isn't #myhappyplace the updated version of "living for the weekend" or "working for my next holiday"? Those sayings were popular long before Instagram and implied that work was a drudgery to be tolerated and that "real life" was your spare time on the weekend or leisure time on holiday. Happiness is found when you are where *you* want to be, doing what *you* want to do.

And isn't #bucketlist the twenty-first century way of making a list of the things that we desire most to do and then making them a top priority in our lives? The thought is: before I die I'm going to make sure I do this and this and that – why? So I can get the most out of this life and have the most pleasure before I die. Both hashtags tap into a very old hedonism we humans have long held: wine, women, and song has become on Instagram people, pets, and pools (#myhappyplace) or travel, tastes, and thrills (#bucketlist). Social media has spread these ideas far and wide but they run deep in all our sinful hearts and have since the beginning – #makemyowndestiny would have fit well on Adam and Eve's post after Genesis 3!

### Thoughtful hashtags

What I'm asking for is a more careful, thoughtful use of posts and hashtags. When we post, we send a message – are we aware of how other people perceive our words? When I write #myhappyplace, I am stating that in this location/circumstance I am truly happy – and I am implying that I am less happy or not content in the rest of my life (especially at work). Is that really what we want to say to society when work itself is a gift of God to us? And isn't our happiness as believers found not in our circumstances but in our relationship to the Lord?

We can do this differently. We can use social media to celebrate God's gifts to us – gifts of family, work, church, friendship, and much more. We simply need to be intentional and genuine. How about a picture of you at work with the tag: #workingfortheLord? Or #developingcreation? Or one at the beach with your kids: #enjoyingcreation? Or of a family dinner #gratefulforfamily? What about a pic of your Bible study group with the note #studyingtheWord or #churchfamily or #believerstogether? Let's be creative, thoughtful, and direct our reader's thoughts to God.

### FOMA

When we say #bucketlist then we are stating that we've just had another wonderful experience on a list of things we are eager to do before we die – and we are implying that this list is top priority in our lives. Is that truly the case for us as believers? And do we really want to send this message to the world? When God allows us to have a very cool or thrilling experience,

what about writing #thankfultoGod? Or #feelingblessed? Or – alongside a spectacular picture of creation – #myFathersworld? I am happy to say that I do spot Christians occasionally using tags like these and I would only urge us to do it more. As believers, let's not blend in with the world so as to be unnoticeable but let's deliberately shine our light with a salty, Christian message. Social media can be a gospel spreader!

We know as Christians that this life is only a short beginning to an eternity which awaits us on this earth made new. While it is nice and pleasurable to see many parts of God's creation, if we miss parts of it now we can relax. There is no need for a *fear of missing out* (forget FOMA!). In the next life we will have eternity to explore an even more beautiful earth! Christians may certainly enjoy God's good gifts – including rest, relaxation, and leisure time – in thankfulness to him, but we don't live for them and we don't need to consume our energy chasing them down. Our happy place is in God's company and our bucket list is to do his will.

### Jesus' hashtags

As we ponder the sobering wonder of Christ's crucifixion on Good Friday, what sort of hashtags might Jesus have used if he had a cell phone with social media apps? What was his happy place? What was on his bucket list? His greatest desire was not to please himself: "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38) – #myFatherswill #notmywill. Aren't those good ones for us too – certainly as the driving thought for our lives! We may not make our pleasure, our happiness, the central focus but rather the pleasure of our heavenly Father.

Jesus was bound for the cross, the place of ultimate self-denial and horrible suffering of body and soul – #cross ofGolgotha #calvarystree #curseofGod #wrathagainstour sin. Thanks be to God that he went there in our place so that we do not have to endure that! Because of his sacrifice, we are now free from guilt and shame and able to live for him – #thankfulnesstothemax #completeforgiveness #livefor mySaviour #eternallife. We may have his joy in us and have it to the full – #joytothefull (John 15:11) – even while we take up our own cross and follow him daily – #takeupmycross #followHimalone #selfsacrifice (Luke 9:23).

If we keep Christ crucified in the centre of our thoughts and the ascended King Jesus in heaven at the forefront of our minds, then our statements and conversations online and off will be salted with God-glorifying remarks. It will come out in little and big ways. Then our leisure, fun, and good times will not be something separate from our faith and service to God but something we receive with deep thankfulness to God. And we'll be quite fine to share that with the world. #Godisgood #contentinChrist



# Christ is our Life!

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***“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21)***

*This meditation was originally published in this magazine in 2005.*

What is the most important thing in your life? What is continually on your radar screen as you fly through the clouds and storms and also the clear blue skies of life? What makes you excited about living? In all of life's hustle and bustle, what remains constant and gives you sure direction and solace? What gives life meaning?

The Apostle Paul provides a clear answer to this question in his letter to the Philippians. When Paul writes this letter, he is being held as a prisoner; he is a man in chains (Phil 1:13). But Paul does not despair because of his unpleasant circumstances. Rather, he rejoices that his imprisonment has in fact even helped to spread the gospel. For now more people than ever are speaking about Christ (Phil 1:14).

In verse 21, Paul makes a very personal confession, as the “to me” indicates. Paul shares with the Philippians what is important to him as a believer in the Lord. For Paul, “to live is Christ.” What is really meant with this expression? It is a concentrated way of saying what he wrote in verse 20, namely, that Christ will be exalted in his body, whether by life or by death. “To live is Christ” means to let Christ determine one's life. Christ becomes the focal point of life and the very reason for living. In everything that Paul does and says, he seeks to exalt

Christ. Only then will life have fulfillment and meaning. For it is Christ who has given him life with God. Christ has brought about complete reconciliation with God the Father. Through Christ it is possible to begin to live life the way the Creator intended it, namely in communion with him.

Christ is everything in the life of the believer, and the work that Christ has done on our behalf will also change the view that we have of death. Death is the last enemy and is feared and dreaded by all. But because of Christ, Paul is able to regard death as gain. The two phrases, “to live is Christ” and “to die is gain,” are connected by a vital “and.” Death can only be seen as gain in a life that has been dominated by Christ. Because Christ lives in the believer, when he dies he has nothing to fear but may instead look forward to tremendous gain, indeed even to things that are not present in this world.

Of ourselves we might have thought to switch the two phrases around, like this: to live is gain and to die is Christ. There are those who call themselves Christians who live like this. For them this earthly life with all its pleasures is what really counts and then they have Christ in their back pocket, as it were, to provide some relief when they are confronted with death.

But that is not how it is for those who truly belong to Christ. For them

this life already is full of a focus on Christ. Let us desire here and now to live for him and to magnify him in our lives. It is now already that he gives us peace through his sacrifice on the cross. It is now already that we experience the mercy and grace of God through his Son Jesus Christ. If we state for ourselves that this life itself is gain, then we have missed the seriousness of the call of the gospel. Then we live for ourselves and apart from Christ. If we regard this life as “the gain,” then we are faced with eternal death.

No, this life is not “the gain” but rather this life is the testing ground. It is the time that determines our eternal place. Those who realize their need for Jesus Christ and turn to him will gain much in the life to come. But those who live only for the fleeting pleasures of this world will find every sorrow in the next life. They will exchange gain for pain if they reject Christ.

What do you live for? What gives your life meaning? May this confession of Paul “to live is Christ and to die is gain” also be our confession. We can be excited about living in this sinful and unstable world because of the firm confidence that we may have in the work of Christ on our behalf. In him, we may now already have communion with God and so experience the deepest joy there is.



# Women in Ministry?!

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I am aware that this title sounds provocatively daring. So I remind myself and my reader of the apostolic injunction (out of step though it was with the accepted norm of his day and of ours): “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet” (1 Tim 2:12; see also 1 Cor 14:34).

Yet the same apostle elsewhere would have us embrace women in ministry. Paul writes that the ascended Christ gave to his church the gift of office bearers so that these office bearers might “equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:12). The “saints” to whom Paul was referring in that passage included the men and the women of the Ephesian church, irrespective of age. Every “saint” is to engage in “the work of ministry.”

## Obvious

I want to think that the need for everybody’s involvement in church life is self-evident. I don’t know how big the church in Ephesus was when Paul wrote his letter, nor do I know how many elders that congregation had. But I think we all understand that if the office bearers alone in the Ephesian congregation had to do all the work that needed to be done to comfort, encourage, admonish, correct, instruct, and guide the entire flock, these brothers would very quickly be totally burnt out. That’s not only due to the demands on their time that such care would require; that’s due also to the fact that not every office bearer has an obvious “in” to every member of the church (or ward) so that he can work effectively with each person. Under the guidance of the all-knowing Holy Spirit, Paul knows this, and so deliberately sets the whole body of Christ to work for mutual care and edification.

I currently pastor a congregation of some 600 members. I can perhaps unpack a passage of Scripture in order to address a particular need of the day within the Smithville

congregation. But no preacher can press the application of any given passage upon each of the 170 or so addresses in this flock in such a way that each address receives exactly the nuance and the emphasis that particular home requires. That’s why elders need to take the sermons into their wards and talk through their instruction to fit the needs of each home. But again, that’s more work than the elders are able to do – both in terms of having the time to drop in on each home, as well as in being in a position to know the precise needs of each address. This illustrates why Paul’s instruction is so appropriate for today’s congregations. He would have the elders “equip the saints” so that *the saints* do “the work of ministry.”

## The sisters

That includes the sisters. No less than brothers, the sisters too struggle with life’s brokenness and pressures, and so may need a word of comfort or rebuke or instruction. How, though, shall the elders bring the specific word of instruction or comfort or admonition that the sister needs? We see the meeting unfolding before our eyes: a brother elder visits with a sister. . . , and he’s trying to get her to open up about some personal sensitive matters. . . . We get uncomfortable with the picture; somebody’s integrity is potentially compromised. So what if we add an elder to the picture to ensure that integrity isn’t compromised? We know what will happen next: in the presence of two men, the sister surely feels altogether overwhelmed so that she clams up – and all parties feel the meeting was unsatisfactory. What’s the solution? Should her husband or father (or brother) be present then? Or some other witness? But more ears means less openness and candidness – on the part of the visited sister as well as on the part of the elder(s). How, then, is the pastoral care of the sisters to be organized??

## The solution

Paul shows the way in his letter to Titus. Paul instructs Titus to “teach sound doctrine” to “older men,” “older women,” “younger men,” and “slaves” – and from the list of persons Titus must address he omits “young women” (Tit 2:1-10). Titus, we need to know, is a relatively young man himself. Paul realizes well that it would be unbecoming for Titus to get into the homes of the “young women” to teach them the tasks God has assigned to them in his church and kingdom: “to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands” (2:4, 5). One can imagine the ticklish situations Titus could get himself in if he were to visit the younger sisters with such instruction.... Getting a young husband offside with his ministry would be just one potentially unhappy consequence. So Paul tells Titus to teach the “older women” to “train the young women.” That’s their “work of ministry” – for the edification of the congregation.

## Qualifications

For their specific task the apostle even tells Titus to ensure that these older sisters measure up to some precise standard. We can’t be surprised at that, for when Paul earlier in his letter had spoken about who could serve as “elders” in Crete he made clear that not any Christian man could serve (even if in time past he’d been a respected community leader). Titus could appoint to the office of elder only those Christian men who met specific criteria; Titus 1:7-9: the candidate had to be “above reproach,” “not be arrogant or quick-tempered,” etc; the list is well-known. Well now, the apostle insists that before older sisters can serve in the specific work of ministering to the young women, they also must meet particular criteria. Titus must teach these older women “to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good” (2:3). I need not now unpack the details of the qualifications required of these older women. The point I need to make is that both men and women need to meet precise qualifications in order to be authorized to do the “work of ministry.” And that’s fully in step with the passage quoted earlier from Ephesians 4; the task of office bearers is “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” (v. 12). And obviously the saints themselves need to stretch themselves to be the better equipped for the task God reserved for them in the church. That’s true for men and women alike.

## CALL EXTENDED

Called by the Neerlandia South Canadian Reformed Church in Neerlandia, Alberta:

### Rev. S. Vandavelde

of the Carman East Canadian Reformed Church in Carman, Manitoba

Called by the Salem United Reformed Church in Bowmanville, ON:

### Candidate Han Lee

## CHURCH NEWS

## Train

What, now, is the specific “work of ministry” the Lord has assigned to the older women? They are to connect with the “young women” – those the elders can’t so easily reach – and “train” them “to love their husbands and children. . . .” The point of the word “train” is not that these older sisters are to *tell* their younger counterparts to love and to be self-controlled and pure and work at home and be submissive to their husband; the younger Christian woman already knows she needs to do that because that’s the uniform instruction of all Scripture. But the challenge is to love your *particular* husband, the one she was so eager to marry but who turns out to be sinner, perhaps arrogant, perhaps lazy, perhaps a drunk, perhaps insensitive. To show a sister living in such brokenness how to “love” her man (and be submissive) requires a lot of experience in the school of life, as well as wisdom and sensitivity and patience – and obviously a very open ear and a shoulder willing to absorb many tears. *Training* takes dedication, and a good relation with the sister concerned!

Similarly, the older are to engage the younger to “love their. . . children.” We all well know there are moments when loving is easy, as well as moments when loving is exceedingly difficult. The young mother is exhausted, the kids are cranky, the one spilled his juice over the couch, the next stole the third child’s toy, and the baby is screaming in her cot. And you’re supposed to be self-controlled and pure in your thoughts? You’re supposed to enjoy “working at home”? There’s so much there for a heart-to-heart discussion between the older women and the younger – and the best way to make that discussion happen is for the older to drop in on the young mother at 9:00 in the morning – or perhaps at 4:30 in the afternoon. That, after all, is when home life in its unvarnished mess is at its most genuine, and when the young mother could certainly use the helping hand of an experienced and loving sister. That sets the context for

**Training  
takes  
dedication**



a heartfelt and helpful conversation. That's the older woman's challenging and very essential "work of ministry."

I'm deeply thankful that something of this is happening in our churches. It's also something that needs to continue to happen. I would love to see this sort of interaction between the sisters grow and abound in our midst. How many marriages would be spared increased tension if (relatively) newlyweds would receive the wise council of an older sister (be that her mother or another)? How much misgrowth in mother-child relations could be nipped in the bud if young mothers received guidance from the older in how to discipline and nurture and keep the little ones productively busy? I have no doubt that such involvement on the older sisters' part would be a blessing in the churches – and in the long run make the work of the elders so very much more manageable.

### **Younger**

The young sisters in the church also have a "work of ministry" that helps build up the church of the Lord. I'd like to think that the young woman's husband (perhaps that arrogant, or lazy, or selfish man mentioned above) is also a child of the Lord, a member of the church. Certainly the children are (see 1 Cor 7:14). Well now, this husband and the children are not placed primarily under the care of the elders, but are entrusted first of all to the (spiritual) care of the wife and moth-

er. Her work of ministry, then, is specifically to pour herself into the work of cultivating spiritual growth in her husband and children. That work is obviously vital church-building work! After all, tomorrow's elder is today's young husband. And the leaders of the church in forty years time is today's terrorizing toddler. Jocabed had no idea when she poured her energies into Moses' care that she was in fact raising Israel's deliverer from Egypt! Similarly, no young mother today knows how God will use her son or daughter in years to come. That's why the young woman needs to look much beyond the pressures of today – the dirt of the laundry and the dirt of life – and see that the Lord is using her sweat and tears today for his church gathering work in years to come. That's her blessed work of ministry. The older have already spent many years in God's school of life, and so they know this bigger picture. It's their "work of ministry" to train the young women to take ownership of their own "work of ministry."

***The saints  
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# Intensified Persecution in North Korea

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It is difficult to imagine today that the capital of North Korea, Pyongyang, was once known as the Jerusalem of the East. It “was the center of the Presbyterian Church in Asia, and hundreds of thousands of Korean Christians lived there and elsewhere in what is now North Korea” (R.S. Kim). It is this memory of a glorious Christian past that the brutal communist regime of Kim Jong-un is still trying eradicate from the land. He is using every possible and horrific method in attempting to do so.

The 2016 *Hall of Shame Report*, the main source for this article and published by International Christian Concern, highlighted the persecution Christians endure in North Korea. We need this reminder lest we forget what believers there are going through even as we enjoy freedoms which they can only dream about.

Over the last several decades, North Korea has condemned hundreds of thousands of Christians to death. Currently estimates are that about 30,000 to 70,000 are imprisoned for their faith in the terrible conditions of the *gulag* style labour camps. To understand the plight of Christians one must realize that the state views Christianity as a dangerous movement that challenges its power. Why? Because Christians are not able to give total loyalty to the ruling Kim family which considers itself virtually as divine. A Christian’s first loyalty is to the one true God. As a result of extreme state hostility, Christians by and large remain in hiding and are very careful in the way they spread the faith.

North Korea persecutes Christians by using three primary tools: the *songbun* system, the civil and political police, and the labour camps. *Songbun* divides society into three classes or tiers. The first tier is totally devoted to the ruling Kim family and forms their core support. The second tier is wavering in their support and the third tier is considered hostile. This classification of society comes with its rewards and punishments. Those with ancestral and personal loyalty to the State are the most privileged. Any

sign of disloyalty makes it impossible to get to the top tier. All Christians are considered hostile and thus in the lowest category. They are economically oppressed and make no more than three to five dollars per month.

The Communist state apparatus devotes enormous resources to monitoring its citizens. Any suspicious act or speech can land you into a labour camp, the final weapon against dissent of any kind. These are terrible places. “Massive workloads, starvation, extreme isolation, torture, and the casual murder of prisoners define North Korean gulags. One former child prisoner described how prisoners were forced to stone each other to death in a camp. Another prisoner reported seeing the execution of whole families in gas chambers. ‘I witnessed a whole family being tested on suffocating gas and dying in the gas chamber,’ he said. . . . ‘The parents were vomiting and dying, but till the very last moment they tried to save the kids by doing mouth-to-mouth breathing.’”

There have been high level defectors leaving North Korea like never before, even though family members left behind suffer enormously. However, it remains to be seen whether the state can retain its draconian control. North Koreans are becoming more and more aware of how good life outside their supposed “worker’s paradise” really is. “Kim Jongun is desperately trying to control the situation and hold power. There is evidence of more arrests, expanding prisons, and increased torture. As a result, Christians are at a greater risk for persecution during North Korea’s hour of desperation.”

Let us not forget these Christians and pray that the capital city Pyongyang may one day again be known as a great center for Christianity.

Sources: R.S. Kim, “Jerusalem of the East”, *Providence: Journal of Christianity and American Foreign Policy*, July 13, 2016; 2016 *Hall of Shame Report* (International Christian Concern - persecution.org).



# Welcome to Ebenezer Canadian Reformed School, Smithers, BC!

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When Ebenezer Canadian Reformed School (ECRS) opened its doors in late September, 1969, it didn't even have an official name. The four-classroom building had just been completed (under budget at a total cost of \$20,350), but the first teachers had not yet arrived from The Netherlands to begin teaching the sixty or so waiting students. By the end of that year, though, school was in full swing and was called "Ebenezer" – thus far has the LORD helped us – as taken from 1 Samuel 7:12. And indeed, the LORD had helped this new church community, comprised almost entirely of immigrants who had arrived from The Netherlands within the previous fifteen years. Let's review some background.

## The beginning

Although the idea of a Canadian Reformed School was germinating already in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it wasn't until 1965 that a formal school society was set up. That society began drumming up support for a school they hoped to soon build. While at this time the small Bulkley Valley congregations were not in unanimous support, as momentum built more people slowly came on board. Dues were collected more regularly and a School Board was elected. In 1966 Friday evening / Saturday classes were implemented for the children of the church – these taught one hour of Bible and half an hour of church history, science, and history on top of the education they were receiving at the public or Christian schools.

Events moved more quickly in 1968 when 4.6 acres of land were donated for a new school near the Bulkley River about seven kms out of town, and plans and a budget were drawn up. An Education Committee was formed with the purpose of locating Reformed teachers, curricula, and resources for the school. Extra contributions also came, and construction began in late 1968. The building itself was

constructed of wood (in plenteous supply!) and largely with volunteer labour and few power tools. By the spring of 1969 it was nearing completion and the search for teachers ramped up. Parents in the Smithers and Houston congregations (Houston was about 65 km away from the school building) had to decide if their children would continue to attend the public schools, the Bulkley Valley Christian School (which had just opened a couple of years earlier), or the new Canadian Reformed School. Although there was still some conflict over this, overall enthusiasm and support grew with time.

In the first years there were struggles and failures as well as times of rejoicing and thankfulness. With the arrival of more immigrants and the birth of many children, more teachers, an addition, and a small gym (which quickly was turned into classrooms) were added. The initial two classes (grades 1-4 and 5-8) were split and the higher grades were added so that by 1975 the first grade 12 students could graduate. . . the first from a Canadian Reformed school in all of BC! The student population climbed to 105 by 1975. In these years the teacher turnover was very high due to low wages, large class sizes, cultural differences, and personality clashes, to name a few of the factors. In the late 1970s the BC government implemented partial funding to independent schools that met certain basic standards. Many words of warning were expressed by concerned members who feared government interference, but soon ECRS received thirty-three percent of the public school's cost of educating students. This was later increased to fifty percent. Later the school joined the Federation of Independent Schools of BC (FISA). As is true today, no funding was provided for capital expenses, so in 1985, when a new gym, kitchen, and change rooms were constructed, each society

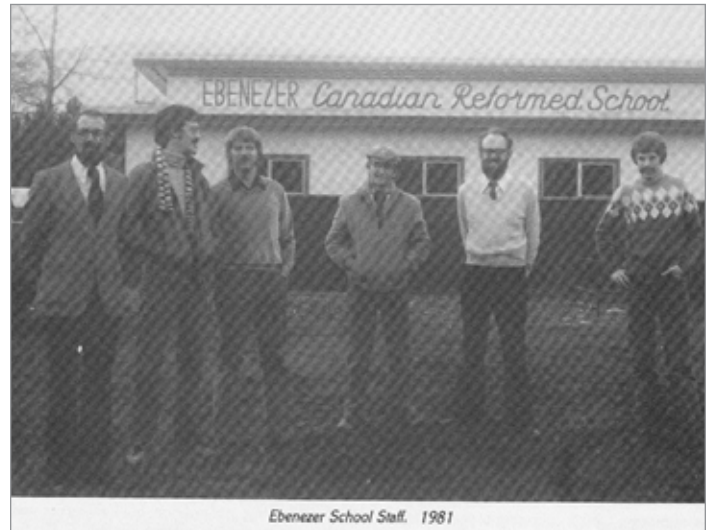
member was expected to contribute not only money, but also 100 hours of volunteer labour. Many also donated materials and the use of equipment.

By the 1980s and 1990s things slowly stabilized as the school became more professional and experienced, offering better remuneration and ensuring that the teachers were graduates of university education programs. In 1987 computers were introduced and a Learning Assistance program was formally set up to assist those covenant children with special learning needs – a program that has continued to grow and thrive. Integration into the regular classroom was emphasized. Around this time there were controversies over whether or not to allow students to participate in sports programs against other schools. By the mid-1990s, it was allowed.

Around 1990 many members of the ECRS society were keenly interested in the events taking place in the local Christian Reformed Churches, particularly in Telkwa (12 km away), where a new Faith Reformed Church left the CRC and later became part of the United Reformed Church of North America federation. A few years later a URC congregation in Smithers, Bethel, was also instituted. Soon a few URC families sent their children to ECRS and in 2002 the constitution was amended to extend membership members of the URC. This number has been growing slowly and steadily since then including some teaching staff, and a new *Ad Hoc* committee has been struck by the school board to look at some of the questions relating to this (including the name of the school as well as memory work from the *Book of Praise*).

## Growth

In the late 1990s the school experienced such a staffing shortage that it could no longer offer all the grades. The Grades 8-12 were dropped temporarily. Families had to choose between home schooling, the public high school, or another local Christian school. Enrollment fell to fewer than eighty students. However, as new teachers were hired the grades were added again. The effect of losing these grades rekindled commitment to and passion for and appreciation of Reformed education. It was also at this time, as a new millennium began, that the school developed its vision statement based on Lord's Day 12, Q/A 32: "As parents and supporting members, united in our understanding of the Word of God, we acknowledge that we must raise our covenant children in an environment permeated with his



Word. This school has therefore been established to assist us in equipping our children with the tools needed to function as prophets, priests and kings in this world." All of the course rationales are linked to this vision.

By 2007 it was becoming clear that a large wave of students was about to enter ECRS and a committee was struck to plan ahead for the longer term. The result was the building of three additions over seven years, including in 2009 a high school student foyer (with lockers, built-in benches, and ping-pong and air hockey tables) and two classrooms; in 2011 two primary classrooms; and, in 2015, a new gym, kitchen, and conversion of the old gym into three new classrooms. With great thankfulness, all this work was completed and now there are enough classrooms for each grade, as well as a library, music room, computer room, kitchen, storage rooms, and new gym. Again members were asked to contribute 100 hours each. Many trades also donated supplies and equipment to use as well, keeping a three million dollar expansion down to a cost of only one million dollars. With the LORD's blessing, generous giving, and careful ongoing spending, mortgages have been avoided and the school remains debt-free. Currently the school is saving up for the possible purchase of an adjoining property which will more than make up for the field space lost to the new gym.

## At present

This leads us to today – an enrollment of 218 students with mostly single grades in their own classrooms (there are still a few combined-grade classes in the high school but





those are scheduled to transition to single grades as well) with a full teaching staff and numerous support staff working in the office, Learning Assistance department, library, and as janitors and drivers of the two buses (one of which goes 65 km to Houston and back every day twice).

The students are busy with the usual range of courses across the grades, both core subjects as well as some electives like music, art, and computer courses. ECRS has also developed several new courses for the high school in the past ten years: Christian Discipleship 11 (apologetics, financial stewardship, current ethical topics, etc.), Bible 12 (Major Worldviews), and Church History 12.

School life is enhanced for the students with field trips to nearby and more distant locations (including Fort St. James, the coast off of Prince Rupert, and the Fraser Valley), and various sports (especially volleyball, basketball, and badminton). As well, a busy Students' Council promotes school spirit and senior students organize and supervise an intramurals program. A well-designed climbing wall in the new gym is used by the students in the Climbing Club. Outside there is a soccer field, two basketball courts, playground, and a slackline. Each year a Yearbook Club puts out an annual yearbook. The Makers Club builds electronic projects and remote control airplanes, including some with

the ability to video the school grounds from high in the air! Over the years a website has been built and maintained, and you are invited to check it out to learn more about the school and see some lovely pictures. <http://www.ebenezer-school.com/>

And so, almost fifty years after it opened, ECRS continues to help parents educate the covenant children they have been entrusted with by God. They do this by keeping God's Word central in the classrooms and board and committee rooms, and humbly carry on with the important task of teaching and molding the next generation, telling them "the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done" (Ps 78:4). Although the path has not always been easy or smooth, especially in the first years, our faithful God has graciously seen fit to use the work of weak and sinful vessels to guide and shape this school into the institution it is today. Our prayer is that his name is glorified in this. All praise and thanks to him!

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*The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Arthur Kingma [akingma@echs.ca](mailto:akingma@echs.ca).*



# Clarion Kids

## Solomon

**1 Kings 2:13 - 11:43**

Solomon was the son of David and Bathsheba, and he became king when David died. God gave Solomon great wisdom so that he could be a good ruler. Solomon built a beautiful temple for God with lots of gold. Solomon became very famous because he was so wise and so rich. One day, two women came to him because they had one baby and they were arguing about whose it was. Solomon told his guard to cut it in half. One of the women agreed, but the other woman said to give the baby to the other woman rather than kill it, and then Solomon knew the baby was hers.

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



### Crossword Puzzle:

Solve the clues to fill in the squares!

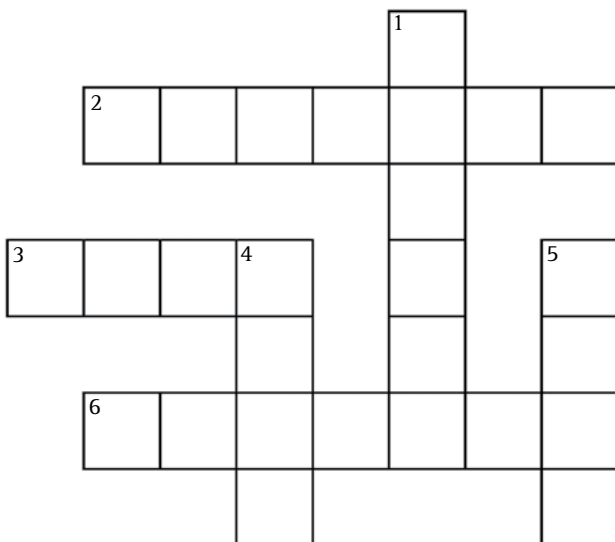
#### Across

2. Two women were \_\_\_\_\_ over a baby.
3. Solomon was very \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The son of David and Bathsheba.

#### Down

1. God gave Solomon great \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Solomon told his guard to cut the baby in \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Solomon became \_\_\_\_\_ when David died.

**by Emily Nijenhuis**





## Edwin Schutte

Hi! My name is Edwin Schutte, and I live in the beautiful city of Chilliwack, BC. I grew up in Abbotsford with my parents and lots of brothers and sisters. About seven years ago, I moved into my own place with a friend. I get together with my family as much as I can, and every Sunday one of my siblings picks me up to spend the day with them. I love being with them and getting to be an uncle to all my nieces and nephews.



I just had my thirty-third birthday and had a houseful of family over to eat pizza and cake to help me celebrate. One of my favourite things is parties because there are usually Cheezie chips. I. Love. Cheezie Chips! I also love peanut butter and popcorn, but not together.☺ Anytime I get hungry or want a snack, I usually ask for popcorn with lots of butter.

I really enjoy sleeping and am not always happy when it is time to get up in the morning. Sometimes, I get up just to say that I am sleepy and would like to go back to bed! My week is usually spent helping with chores in the house or running errands. When the weather is nice, I like to help with the yard work. I am very good at weeding and enjoy mowing the lawn. On Tuesday mornings, I help my sister clean out her horse stalls. (I like helping her out, but I think I like the coffee and fresh baking that she has even better!) I attend a Friendship service once a week, in the evening. The singing and the snack are my favourite! On Mondays, I go to Abbotsford and pick up the recycling from Bethesda's Head Office. Sometimes, there is a lot for me to take away and other days, there is just a little. Either way, when I am done, I usually get a small treat from the front desk. I get together with my guy friends once a month at a gathering called Guys Garage. We do things like build toolboxes, have RC car races, make catapults, and sometimes watch movies. And, you guessed it, we eat snacks!

When the weather is nice, I like to take advantage of the area that I live in. During the summer, I make frequent trips to the lake just so I can take a quick dip. I like hiking with my roommate and my staff; Teapot Hill is one of my favourites. There are no shortages of adventurous hikes around here! There are lots of parks and trails around Chilliwack, and I know most of them. If you ever need advice on where to go, just ask me.

When I'm not out and about, I like to relax at home. I love to play sports, especially basketball. I don't want to

brag, but it's not very often that I miss a shot! I also enjoy throwing the football around and will play with anyone who is willing. I also like to paint on the big easel, play Flappy Birds on my iPad, do a crossword puzzle, play checkers, and a number of other things.

I really like playing jokes on other people. One of my favourite jokes is prank calling my friends in Abbotsford. They have a phone number that is really close to a local tanning salon's number. So, I call my friends and tell them I would like to book a tanning bed. The joke never gets old and I laugh every time!

Before I know it, my day is done and it is time for bed. I have to make sure that I feed my two fish, Isaac and Tom, before turning in for the night. I love that my bed is warm and cozy. It really is one of the best places in my house.

Living in Chilliwack is fantastic! Thank you for taking the time to read a little about who I am. I hope that you will say hello to me if you ever see me out and about. I like meeting new people.

## April birthdays

### 2 DEREK KOK will be 47

c/o Beacon Home  
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

### 23 ARLENE DEWIT will be 56

31126 Kingfisher Drive  
Abbotsford, BC V2T 5K4

### 29 BRYCE BERENDS will be 42

c/o Lighthouse  
6528 1st Line, RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4

Congratulations to everyone celebrating a birthday in April. We wish you the Lord's blessing in the year to come and a wonderful day with family and friends.

*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**

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tom.rachelvis@gmail.com • 905-329-9476







### Dear brother editor,

I was pleased that Rev. den Hollander wrote in *Clarion* (Jan 13, 2017): “How important is it to say the Lord willing?”

I fully agree with his answer. However, I would like us to go one step further and think on the *manner* that this should be practised, one that properly honours God’s sovereignty. Rev. den Hollander refers in his opening remarks that he has in times past also “been concerned that it could just be habit, a cliché.” Once again I agree. This becomes even more clear when “the Lord willing” is found from the Latin form of “*Deo Volente*,” and then for modern verbal and written economics we just add: “DV” rather than make a clear statement of faith saying: “the Lord willing.” So by using “DV” we reduce the confession of our amazing providential God to a convenient grammatical abbreviation. In so doing we reduce *him* to an abbreviation. Is that showing respect to almighty God? Surely not.

Too often in written consistory/congregational dates, plans, and announcements, we read the well-intentioned, but nevertheless the cliché “DV” thrown around like confetti, even seemingly inserted at random, as an after-

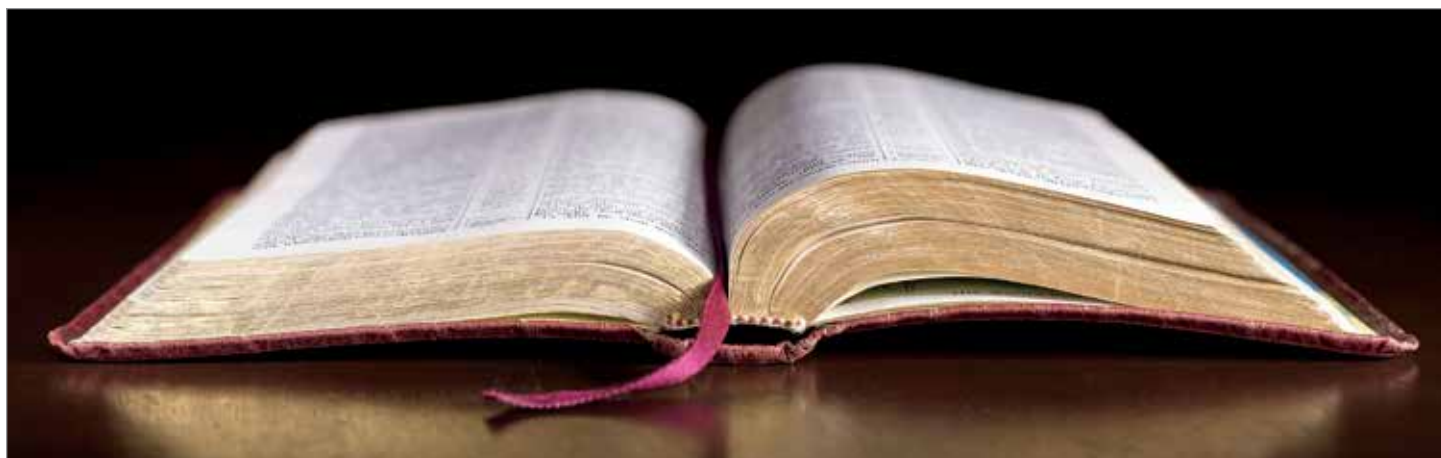
thought. That clearly does not honour God’s sovereignty. Can we not fully exclaim, confess, and shout out his sovereignty? Is it OK that we reduce our God’s sovereignty over the business of our lives to a convenient abbreviation like “DV”? I think not. We can and should do better than that.

The use of “DV” instead of “the Lord willing” seems to me to be inherited from our Dutch past where the term “DV” is commonly used. However, I find its use in the English-speaking church world rarely, if ever, used. My point is for us, in the English-speaking Reformed world, of which we are an integral part, to consider using the proper, easily understood, and biblical “the Lord willing.” Is “DV” acceptable over “the Lord Willing”? Does using the Latin abbreviated “DV” not in itself promote a mere habit use, or worse, “a cliché,” as Rev. den Hollander intimates?

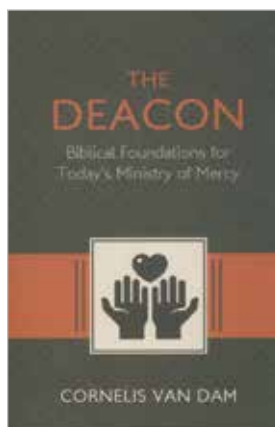
I would much rather that we give clear testimony of the will and providence of the Lord using plain English with an understandable meaning, “the Lord willing,” than an abbreviation of an ancient theological language.

*Spike Fokkema*

*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.*



# The Deacon



**Cornelis Van Dam,  
*The Deacon: Biblical  
Foundations for Today's  
Ministry of Mercy.*  
Grand Rapids, Michigan:  
Reformation Heritage  
Books, 2016**

**Additional Information:  
253 pages; paperback CDN  
\$23.72. Available at [orders@  
heritagebooks.org](mailto:orders@heritagebooks.org) or your  
local Christian Bookstore**

*The Deacon*, a much anticipated book by Dr. Cornelis Van Dam, acts as a perfect complement to his earlier book, *The Elder: Today's Ministry Rooted in All of Scripture*. The office of deacon is not always well understood in church circles, and can be undervalued. This book will help not only deacons and aspiring deacons, but all Christians to see the privilege, joy, and love in helping those in need.

*The Deacon* is divided into four main sections. Part One deals with Old Testament Background. Dr. Van Dam ably demonstrates that even without the official office of deacon in the Old Testament, all the principles of taking care of those in need are clearly laid out. God delivered his people from Egypt and wanted his people to live in joy and freedom. Therefore when anyone suffers, those around him or her must lovingly assist them. Need is not just a matter of lacking material necessities. It includes, for instance, those impaired physically or psychologically, those intimidated, exploited, and oppressed, as well as sojourners, strangers, and foreigners. The Old Testament makes clear that helping someone in need starts with the family. If more help is needed, then the wider community steps in. There are many laws that show how this is to be carried out. When Israel did not care for the poor, then God sent them into the exile. This part of the book, like all the others, contains an abundance of Scripture references and explanations. Every section also sums up the contents of the section, reinforcing what the reader has learned.

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Part Two takes the reader to the New Testament. Dr. Van Dam demonstrates how Jesus Christ in teaching and example helped the poor spiritually and materially. His greatest gift was going to the cross for sinners. He brought the joy of redemption to those oppressed by sin. That joy leads Christians to follow the example of Jesus Christ: love and generosity to others.

Dr. Van Dam carefully examines Acts 6 where seven men are ordained to serve at tables. He makes a good point that these seven are ordained to an office that would later be known as the office of deacon. These men did more than distribute material blessings. They came with the Word of God. This was a new office, closely connected to what the Old Testament and our Lord Jesus Christ taught about caring for those in need. It proved to be an enormous blessing that led to joy in the church. No one should live with any form of oppression that diminishes the joy of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Careful attention is paid to the requirements for those who are to be ordained as deacons. Their task is not only for the deacons themselves to focus on the needy, lonely, and sick, but to mobilize church members with gifts to help others both within and outside the congregation. Dr. Van Dam also tackles the question whether having female deacons is biblical. He concludes that "the weight of evidence points to their not being ordained." At the same time godly women are enlisted to help in special cases of need.

Part Three examines the office of deacon in the history of the church. During the early and medieval times, the deacons lost their function. The Reformation brought the office back to its legitimate place and task. It is very interesting to read of Calvin's understanding of the office of deacon. He saw two grades of deacon: those ordained to distribute alms, and those appointed but not ordained to visit the poor and sick. Calvin saw the latter as the widows Paul mentions in 1 Timothy 5:9-10. While Calvin's teaching did not catch on in a big way, it demonstrates the valuable role that women have in serving the congregation.

Part Four examines the current functioning of deacons. The deacon is an office-bearer equal to elders. Deacons

and elders work together, but also maintain distinct roles in the congregation. Dr. Van Dam makes a good point that deacons are not elders in training. Deacons have a valuable and challenging office. Attention is given to proper training for the office of deacon. Part of this is how families and the congregation prepare men for office.

Attention is given to how deacons go about meeting difficult situations. Here the Old Testament principle that families take care of their own is something deacons need to take into account. Deacons are men who need wisdom and discretion as they go about their task. When it comes to visitation, deacons should not just respond to requests for help. Dr. Van Dam makes a compelling argument that deacons should visit the entire congregation over a period of time. In these visits they can explain their office, discover gifts among the members, and mobilize everyone to use their gifts for the benefit of one another. Much valuable insight and practical advice is given that will help deacons to work with different kinds of needs, and the kind of challenges they might face. Deacons will find this section very helpful.

In keeping with Galatians 6:10 there is an obligation to extend help to those outside the church community, with

an eye to the entire world. The church is to be a light to the world. There are some really valuable suggestions how a local congregation can reach out to the community with the gospel as they help those in need. Dr. Van Dam ends his book with showing the blessings of the work of the deacons. There are obvious blessings to the poor and to the congregation. But there is also a blessing to the faithful deacon who gains “a greater sense of confidence in God and assurance of salvation.”

This is followed by a question section that allows for further study and reflection. This is well done and helpful. Dr. Van Dam also provides two lists of resources. The latter is very helpful in assisting anyone who wants to dig deeper into certain aspects of the book. There is also a thorough Scripture and subject index.

*The Deacon*, while clearly showing good scholarly work, is written in a clear and practical way for all. It is a much welcomed book that speaks about an important aspect of church life that is not always well understood. It is a must read for any deacon or aspiring deacon. It is valuable to all Christians who long for a biblical perspective on living joyfully and thankfully together as a congregation. For me, this book has revived appreciation for the office of deacon. 