

# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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**The ascension  
of our Lord  
is of tremendous  
importance**

**OUR EVANGELICAL MANDATE  
IN MEMORIAM: REV. J. MULDER  
CLARION KIDS**

# A Laughing God

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*God laughs at those who oppose his King,  
but loves those who take refuge in him*

What comes to mind when you read the title of this editorial? Does it sound a little disrespectful and inappropriate? After all, laughing suggests joviality and lightheartedness, the type of response to a good joke. This is not exactly the type of attitude we tend to ascribe to God. The title, however, was not chosen frivolously, just to catch your attention. It is based on the words of Psalm 2:4, “He who sits in the heavens laughs. . . .” As you read the second half of that sentence, you realize that this is not a laugh of enjoyment, but a laugh of derision. We read, “The Lord holds them in derision.” It is the way one laughs at the futile attempts of an opponent. We speak of laughing something off, or, of something being laughable or ridiculous. If we pitch an idea at work, or try to make a point in a discussion and people laugh at it, that does not make us feel good.

What is it that God laughs at? We learn that from the opening verses of Psalm 2, where we read about nations and rulers plotting and taking counsel against God and his Anointed, saying, “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” In short, God is laughing at the futile attempts of all those who oppose him.

As Psalm 2 continues, we learn that this is not just left as a general statement. There is something that is to make his opponents shake in their boots, to terrify them. God says, “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” This king is promised the nations as his heritage. This king will break the opponents with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.

Who is this king? In Acts 4:25, David is mentioned as the author of this Psalm. He is not speaking about himself. He is speaking about someone greater than himself. He is

speaking about his great Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The words of this Psalm find their fulfilment in the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Evidence of Jesus’ rule

That the Lord Jesus is the one set on “Zion, [God’s] holy hill,” making the nations his heritage, breaking down opponents, is the clear testimony of the New Testament. We see it already during our Lord’s ministry. He proclaimed that the kingdom of God was here. He showed it by withstanding temptations for forty days in the wilderness, casting out demons, and healing people from many diseases. All this was only a foretaste of things to come. Because he gave his life as a ransom for many, “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name” (Phil 2:9). The gospel of Matthew concludes with the Lord Jesus telling his disciples that all authority has been given to him in heaven and on earth. This is critical for understanding the commission to make disciples of all nations. The apostles are sent out as ambassadors of King Jesus.

We need to remember that at the very heart of their message is that Jesus is King, and that God’s kingdom is being established. While it is true that Paul sums up his preaching as that of Christ crucified, when we read the accounts of the gospel preaching in the book of Acts, it often is summed up in terms of preaching the kingdom of God. In Acts 8:12, Philip’s preaching in Samaria is summed up in terms of preaching “good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.” In Acts 19:8, we read how Paul spoke boldly, “reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.” In his farewell words to the

Ephesian elders, he recounts how he proclaimed the kingdom (Acts 20:25). The book of Acts concludes with the account of Paul as prisoner in Rome, proclaiming the kingdom of God and showing that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 28:23, 31). Through the preaching of the message of the kingdom of God, present in Christ, Christ gathers his inheritance from among the nations and breaks into the territory once ruled by the prince of darkness.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

In our Ascension Day issue, Rev. Eric Kampen writes that "the ascension of our Lord is an event that easily gets lost in the annual church calendar. It does not have the sparkle of Christmas, Easter, or even Pentecost. However, in term of comfort value, and in terms of shaping the message of the church to the world, the ascension of our Lord is of tremendous importance." We also have a meditation on the topic of Ascension Day.

The second in a series from Rev. Rob Schouten, "Sermons: A Listening Guide," focuses on preparing ourselves for attending services in various ways, both physically, mentally, and spiritually.

On March 23, 2017, Rev. Johannes "Hans" Mulder went home to be with the Lord. Thank you to Rev. George van Popta for writing his In Memoriam, remembering the life and passing of the last of the Canadian Reformed pioneer ministers to come from Holland in the 1950s.

This issue contains an article that was originally published in *Nederlands Dagblad*, as well as Clippings on Politics and Religion, Ray of Sunshine, *Clarion Kids*, a canticle, and a press release.

Laura Veenendaal

- 258 EDITORIAL**
- 261 TREASURES, NEW & OLD**
- 262 Sermons: A Listening Guide (2)**
- 265 CLIPPINGS ON POLITICS AND RELIGION**
- 266 In Memoriam: Rev. J. Mulder**
- 268 May the Wife of the Minister Please Have a Word?**
- 269 CANTICLE: The Flood Prayer**
- 271 RAY OF SUNSHINE**
- 272 CLARION KIDS**
- 273 PRESS RELEASE**

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The rule of Jesus is also mentioned in various letters. In 1 Corinthians 15:25, 26, Paul mentions how Christ “must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. . . . For God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” Ephesians 1 concludes with a description of how God “seated [Christ] at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church. . .” (Eph 1:20-22).

The rule of Jesus as king is also the theme of the book of Revelation. His ascension to the throne is described in chapter 5, where John saw someone seated on the throne with a scroll in his right hand. At first, he was saddened because there seemed to be no one to open the scroll. Then he saw a Lamb. It had been slain, but it was alive again. His power is symbolized by seven horns and seven eyes. In the following chapter, we see how this Lamb, which clearly represents the Lord Jesus, opens the seven seals. This shows his authority over the course of world events.

### Source of encouragement

In a world where the Christian faith seems to be in retreat, there is always the danger of being defeatist. It is

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important to remember that God is working to shatter all who oppose him through the reign of our ascended Lord and that he is claiming his inheritance from among the nations. He accomplishes his purpose not by means of the sword, that is, by force, but by

the Spirit and the Word. He will bring in the ultimate victory when he comes to judge the living and the dead.

### Testimony to the world

While the message, Jesus reigns, is something that encourages us, it also should be part of our testimony to the world. It has been pointed out how Jesus and the apostles proclaimed the kingdom of God being here. Psalm 2 con-

cludes with words that bring out how all those who are working against God’s anointed one, against Christ, should stop their plotting and scheming. Rather, they should be wise and serve the LORD with fear, to kiss the Son, lest he be angry and they perish, for his wrath is quickly kindled (Ps 2:10-12). The reality is that those who reject Christ as king, those who refuse to submit to him, will be subject to his righteous anger.

It may not sound winsome to speak this way. It may sound intimidating. It may appear to contradict the message that God is love. The full message of the gospel, however, has two sides. We hear it also in the words from John 3, so often quoted to sum up the gospel, namely, that God

so loved the world that he sent his only Son. Full disclosure, however, means you don’t stop at John 3:16, but read right through to verse 18. While there is forgiveness for those who believe, there is condemnation for those who refuse to believe. Psalm 2 has that same message, but reverses the sequence. “Blessed are those who take refuge in him,” only comes after mentioning that those who don’t will perish.

### A message of hope and urgency

The ascension of our Lord is an event that easily gets lost in the annual church calendar. It does not have the sparkle of Christmas, Easter, or even Pentecost. In terms of comfort value, and in terms of shaping the message of the church to the world, the ascension of our Lord is of tremendous importance. It gives us hope in a world that opposes God and his anointed. The ascension impresses on us that God is laughing at their feeble, futile efforts. At the same time, it gives direction and urgency to our testimony to the world. The kingdom of God is here and Jesus is King. God laughs at those who oppose his King, but loves those who take refuge in him.

*When we read the accounts of the gospel preaching in the book of Acts, it often is summed up in terms of preaching the kingdom of God*



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# Our Evangelical Mandate

***"Christ ascended into heaven as the Head of his Catholic Church."***

**Acts 1:9**

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

As with so many earth-shaking events in the history of salvation, the Word of God covers the ascension of our Saviour with just a few verses. How we would love to have some details here, especially in our age of space travel. Not only to hear witnesses testify to his departure, but also to hear eyewitnesses speak of his arrival in that heavenly dwelling place as located somewhere in or beyond our universe. Just as with our Saviour's wondrous resurrection from the dead, the gospel of his ascension is very brief and very sober. Whereas we would have filled in all the details, the Lord God gives us just the bare necessities. The Lord teaches us to live by faith.

There is enough written in the gospel to convince us that our Saviour's ascension was a necessary conclusion to his work on earth, and that it was for him a most glorious transition from earth to heaven. After all, that heavenly abode had been his special dwelling place ever since creation. But he came to earth for a specific period of time to live among us, sinful mankind. He came so that whoever believes in him as the only Saviour would not perish but be accepted by a holy and righteous God, live with him, and have fellowship with him for ever and ever.

Even though the Saviour traveled a great distance from us, "ascended higher than all the heavens," he assured his apostles that he would continue to be intimately involved with them as they carried out their great commission to proclaim throughout the world the gospel of his birth, ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection. The book of Acts contains the acts of the Lord Jesus Christ as performed by his apostles, the acts to establish his catholic church, of which he was and forever remains the Head. He assured his apostles that he as the Head would be with them always, "to the very end of the age."

During the forty days between his resurrection and ascension the Saviour had been speaking with his disciples. In order to become his ear and eyewitnesses, the disciples had to be convinced of the reality of his resurrection. They had to be instructed for the special task he had assigned them. After Jesus summarizes their basic charge to make disciples of all nations and to baptize them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, he is on his way to his heavenly dwelling place, to manifest himself there as Head of the church through whom the Father was going to govern all things.

Well, today we know how successful that spiritual government of our

Head has been throughout this New Testament age. Despite continuous opposition from Satan and his millions of accomplices, from the billions in league with him, there has been throughout this New Testament age the steady expansion of the Lord's catholic church throughout the world. Today we know how truly universal the church of Christ has become. We know that it has indeed reached the ends of the earth. We know that this catholic church has already drawn disciples from every nation and people, and practically from every tribe and language. We know and believe that it is all the result of the work of our ascended Lord and Head in his heavenly headquarters.

Therefore, no believer needs to doubt that Jesus will finish perfectly what he has undertaken for his one holy catholic church. To be sure, it is an undertaking in which he involves each and every member of that church. Thus, when we commemorate the ascension of our Saviour Jesus Christ, we realize anew, as assemblies of his catholic church, the mandate to preach the Word of God from Lord's day to Lord's day, to do so right up to the day of his glorious return, and as living members of this church carry out our evangelical mandate: to speak of him in our life every day, in church, state, and society.





# Sermons: A Listening Guide (2)

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Last time, we saw that preachers and listeners are engaged in a joint venture. Preachers are called to bring God's Word in its purity and listeners are called to bring to the hearing of God's Word the hunger and intensity which it deserves. We also considered that genuine hearing of God's Word (which includes doing) is only possible through the great miracle of rebirth accomplished in us by the Holy Spirit.

We will now go on to discuss the ways in which God's people can improve their hearing of God's Word before they actually arrive in church for Sunday worship.

## Physical preparation

Important human activities always require preparation. For instance, if we belong to a board of some kind, preparing for a meeting will require of us that we peruse the agenda and study related material. If we come to the meeting ignorant of what is to be discussed and decided upon, this is not looked upon favourably by our colleagues. Even something as simple as a birthday party for a child requires lots of planning. We need to prepare food, games, and arrange for children to be returned to their homes. How much more do we need to prepare for an encounter with the living Word of God!

Physical preparation for hearing the Word of God involves arriving in worship with rested bodies and minds. If we expect to be in the presence of Christ, we don't want to be lacking energy and alertness. Hearing God's Word is not an activity in which we can be passive. We come to church to work hard at hearing the Word of God. For that task, we need rested bodies and minds. I know families that have an 11 o'clock rule for Saturday evening. Doors are locked and lights are out because everybody needs to get enough rest to offer to God the best of our attention.

Jay Adams tells the story somewhere of how he once fell asleep while preaching! He dozed off in the midst of his own words and woke up having no idea of where he was at in

his message or what he should say next.<sup>1</sup> More common, of course, is sleeping in the pew. Even if they are not actually asleep, many sermon-listeners are somewhat drowsy while hearing God's Word. They are not giving the gospel the full attention which it needs. Instead, they are easily distracted with the result that they lose the flow of the message.

One preacher, noticing that some of his congregants were less than fully engaged with the message, suddenly began to recite some verses from the Old Testament in Hebrew. Of course, his audience came awake immediately. People stared at their minister in astonishment. He then pointed out the folly of having more interest in an unknown tongue than in the truth they could understand.<sup>2</sup> It shouldn't really take a gimmick like that to awaken us to the Word of God, should it?

Hearing God's Word, then, requires sufficient physical rest. It's also important to arrive at worship with enough time to spare. In some households, Sunday morning is a blur of frantic activity. There are children to dress and feed and then there's a clean-up

because people are coming to visit after worship. On top of this, the children are not always cooperative and maybe Dad and Mom just had a quarrel, too. Conflict happens more frequently when people are in a rush.

To arrive at church in a relaxed state of mind, we all have to plan and prepare. We should try to keep things really simple on Sunday morning and afternoon. We could set the table and plan the meals in advance. We could set out the clothing for everyone the night before. We could get up half an hour earlier than we used to in order to allow for a calm breakfast including prayer and Bible reading.

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If we arrive at the worship services with ten minutes to spare rather than at the last second, we will have opportunity to transition to the atmosphere of worship. Transitioning from normal life to worship in ten seconds is not really doable. Arriving on time means we'll have the opportunity to greet people around us, offer a silent prayer and look up the passages to be read. Worship requires a certain degree of inner tranquility and this means we need sufficient sleep and a well-planned Sunday routine.

### Preparing our hearts

While the physical preparation of sleep and good structure are important, the state of our heart is more critical when it comes to hearing God's Word on the Lord's Day. Even with a well-rested and relaxed body, a person can be totally unprepared for the reception of the gospel.

The best way to prepare for hearing God's Word on the Lord's Day is to be busy with it throughout the week. Private reading of Scripture stirs up hunger for public preaching. When we are engaged with our faithful God through reflection on his Word from day to day, the worship services and our hearing of sermons will be much more meaningful. Those who are worshipping God in their hearts and lives every day of the week will be hungry for the unique blessing imparted through the preaching of the gospel.

Along with daily engagement with Scripture goes the privilege and discipline of prayer. When we call upon God from the heart in the course of daily life, his Word will settle deeper into our spirits. When we pray over the message we read, it begins to take shape in us. We will grow in the knowledge of Christ and will be formed after his image. Through daily prayer, we receive the gift of understanding and the strength for doing what God says.

Along with taking heed to ourselves in prayer, we also remember before God the preachers of the gospel. Perhaps the single most important preparation for hearing a sermon is to *pray for the pastor*. Christ's apostle, Paul, frequently besought his readers to pray for him. "Pray also for me," he wrote, "that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph 6:19-20). If you want to grow in your ability to hear God's Word, put your pastors on your prayer list and keep them there for the rest of your lives. Pastors are com-

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#### Rev. Theo Lodder

of the Canadian Reformed Church at Cloverdale. Rev. Lodder is therefore available for call. For preaching availability and other inquiries, you are invited to contact him at [theo.lodder@gmail.com](mailto:theo.lodder@gmail.com) or 604-828-8508

## CHURCH NEWS

mitted to praying for God's people under their care (Acts 6:4). God's people, in turn, need to be diligent in praying for those who bring God's Word to them.

### Plowing our hearts

In order for fields to be ready for sowing, they typically need to be plowed. In some interesting texts in the Bible, God's people are told to plow their hearts. Through Jeremiah, God says to his people Israel, "Break up your unplowed ground. . ." (Jer 4:3). Ground that is unplowed is land that could be productive but has not been broken up and prepared for seeding. Without plowing, the fallow land is simply too hard for seeds to germinate. They can't put down a root into the ground.

If we come to church with hard hearts, we won't benefit from hearing the Word of God. If we are holding on to sin in our lives and just don't want to give it up, our hearts are getting harder. Any sin we cherish and refuse to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus will block our prayers and will also prevent us from receiving the Word of God. For this reason, the prophets admonish us to get out our spiritual rototillers to plow our hearts. Through daily repentance, we keep our hearts in a state of readiness to hear God's Word.

As a specific application of repentance, the Bible highlights the need to be forgiving. If we come to church with grudges in our hearts, we won't hear the Word in a positive manner. Our listening will be compromised by our unwillingness to forgive and restore those who have sinned against us or by our failure to seek out those against whom we have sinned. It should be a top priority for us to live at peace with everyone so that our hearing of the voice of God won't be overcome by our own sinful emotions (see Matthew 5:23-24).

### Disengaging from media

In the contemporary world, people spend a lot of time with their electronic devices such as computers and smartphones. While technology is indeed a great gift of God, it

can be readily abused. Many Christian people are well and truly addicted to their devices and the effects are of great concern for those who care about the state of the church.

When screen time rises to six or seven hours a day, as is quite common in Canada or the United States, when people are checking their email and social media apps ten to twenty times an hour, there will be an effect on how we hear

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the Word of God. Overuse of media turns us into lazy listeners. Our attention span is shortened. Lacking peace and quiet, we lose our ability to reflect deeply about life. We have a lot of information at our finger tips but we are likely to lack depth of wisdom.

One writer indicates his concern in this way: "Media saturation of our society has a dulling, dead-

ening effect on our hearts. We are constantly bombarded with visual stimulation, which conditions and diminishes our ability to listen to and comprehend the preaching of God's Word."<sup>3</sup>

Because of the way our devices tend to become our dominating masters instead of our helpful servants, we have to regulate their use in our lives. The best way to accomplish this is to simply disengage from our devices for periods of time every day. Meals, for instance, should be free of the intrusion of our devices. When we get up in the morning, it would be a positive step to spend time in prayer and the Word before checking our phones. Every day should include significant periods of time when we are not connected to our devices. Establishing evening curfews for our phones will enable us to sleep more restfully and deeply. Not only will such media habits improve our human relationships, they will also deepen our walk with God and our ability to truly hear his Word.

Especially on the Lord's Day, it's important to exercise self-control in regard to our use of technology. If worship is preceded and followed by frenzied activity through our devices, the Word of God will not dwell richly in our hearts (Col 3:16). Instead, it will be supplanted by the cares and concerns as well as the trivialities of this passing world. Every person and every household should establish guidelines to ensure that we are not mastered by what God has given to serve us.

### **Focusing on the text beforehand**

One of the most dramatic ways to improve your hearing of God's Word in the form of a sermon is to spend some time with the text before arriving at the service. Your ability to do this is greatly enhanced if you receive the church bulletin or sermon outline a day or two before the worship service. If this is not currently the case in your congregation, you might consider requesting this of your church leaders.

If you know the passage for Sunday's sermon, you can read it through a couple of times. You can consider the context. You can ask some big-picture questions about the text such as: What is the theme of this passage? What words and ideas are repeated? Which verses puzzle you? What do you think God is calling you to believe in this passage? What does this passage show you about the grace of God and the calling of a Christian?

Taking the time to think about the text beforehand will create a sense of expectation when the sermon begins. Almost certainly, the message will connect with you at a deeper level. You will find you are hearing with greater benefit.

<sup>1</sup> Jay Adams, "Be Careful How You Listen. How to Get the Most out of a Sermon" (Solid Ground Christian Books, pg. 25).

<sup>2</sup> Adams, pg. 26

<sup>3</sup> Ken Ramey, "Expository Listening. A Handbook for Hearing and Doing God's Word" (Kress Biblical Resources, pg. 42).

*To be continued*



### **Correction**

Education Matters apologizes for sharing the incorrect author's name for the school snapshot article entitled "Welcome to Ebenezer Canadian Reformed School, Smithers B.C." The article was written by David Penninga.



# Canada's Gender Equality Test

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Life Site News blew the whistle on the underreported news that Canada's Liberal government is implementing a mandatory feminist "gender equality" course for federal public servants. Pete Balinski noted "that one has three chances to pass this course or face unspecified consequences."

So what is this course? This gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) course was developed prior to Harper's tenure as Prime Minister by the Liberal Chretien government. "Its purpose was to 'advance gender equality in Canada' by helping government employees craft and implement 'gender equality' policies, programs, and legislation." The Harper government apparently did not do much to develop this program, but things are rather different with Justin Trudeau's government. The so-called experts, the "sexual elites," are using this program "to impose their vision of 'diversity and inclusion' across the Federal government. The 'plus (+)' in the name [added by the new Liberal government] indicates that Genderbased Analysis 'goes beyond gender,' according to Status of Women, and includes factors such as 'sexual orientation.'" For example, after taking this course you will be better able to address the needs of a homosexual couple. This sounds like compulsory sensitivity training.

Not surprisingly, Gwen Landolt of Real Women has slammed the course and the test that follows as "indoctrination" which is to "purge the politically incorrect" from the federal bureaucracy. "This is outrageously totalitarian. It shows a complete lack of democratic and so-called 'liberal' principles. What this program reveals is an intolerant government that wants to purge anybody who doesn't adopt their ideology."

Such a harsh judgment on GBA+ is borne out by the fact that the course teaches unproven radical feminist claims such as the following. "Sex is biology. Gender is social context." "Gender refers to the characteristics associated with 'feminine' and 'masculine,' as defined by society, culture and history. It changes over time and between cultures. Gender is not necessarily determined by sex." "Gender exists on a continuum, meaning femininity and masculin-

ity exist in differing degrees; all influenced by these many other variables." The course wants to train employees not to think in terms of traditional assumptions when it comes to sex and gender.

To pass the test, you need to answer the questions according to what the course expects, not according to your beliefs. For example, one question asks what gender is. You have to choose between A. "The characteristics associated with 'feminine' and 'masculine,' as defined by society, culture and history." or B. "The biological differences between men and women." If you select B, your answer is wrong.

The Minister of the Status of Women, Maryam Monsef, is determined to expand the use of GBA+ "throughout the federal government in accordance with the mandate given to her by the Prime Minister. With the prospect of a compulsory GBA+ course and test, "a climate of fear exists across Federal departments." Public servants hesitate to speak out of concern for retribution from superiors.

Where does this leave the protection of one's conscience on issues of sexuality? As Landolt said, these public servants "are not employed to be indoctrinated with an ideological position that most people disagree with." Federal employees should have the freedom to maintain their deeply held convictions about sexuality, convictions which for Christians are based on Scripture. Forcing them to agree to the contents of GBA+ training and examination violates those rights in a profound way. Along with high profile cases such as the consciences of doctors being violated with euthanasia legislation for which court challenges have been launched, this issue also needs to be exposed, and opposed. This is a form of social engineering that government has no right to engage in.

Sources: Pete Balinski, "Canadian Federal employees must take and pass 'gender equality' test, or else ¼" February 9, 2017 on [lifesitenews.com](http://lifesitenews.com); The ministerial letter PeterboroughKawartha Maryam Monsef, Minister of Status of Women, received from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau found on the *Peterborough Examiner* website.



# Rev. Johannes Mulder

November 2, 1928 ~ March 23, 2017

*"At home with the Lord"*



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On March 23, 2017, the last of the pioneer Canadian Reformed ministers passed away. After a lingering illness that kept him confined to a wheelchair for the past several years of his life, the Rev. Johannes "Hans" Mulder went home to be with the Lord. The text he had chosen some years ago for the funeral service message was 2 Corinthians 5:8, "Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord." Near the end, as he felt his earthly tent wearing out, he often spoke of this, his greatest desire.

Johannes Mulder was born in Stad Vellenhove, The Netherlands, on November 2, 1928. After preparatory studies he enrolled at the Theological College in Kampen, from which he graduated in 1955. Not yet twenty-seven years old, he was ordained in the village of Gees, in the province of Drenthe, on July 31, 1955. Two weeks before that he had married Elizabeth "Lies" Sollie, a native of Kampen and a school teacher there.

Only three years later Rev. Mulder accepted the call extended to him by the Canadian Reformed Church of Carman, Manitoba. During the Carman years they joyfully received two sons by adoption, Carl (1964) and Paul (1965). Having children gave them much happiness, which was later magnified by the birth of several grandchildren.

In following years he also served the Canadian Reformed Churches of Coaldale (AB), Cloverdale (BC), Toronto (ON), and Burlington-Waterdown (ON). After having suffered some troubles with his heart he retired from active pastoral service in 1991. It was difficult for him to come to this decision, for he loved the pastoral ministry, but he realized it was for the best.

Over the years Rev. Mulder filled many key roles. He was one of the men of the first hour. Besides build-

ing up local congregations, he served at many ecclesiastical meetings, and on committees and boards. He was there at some of the first synods which were so crucial for getting the new federation of Canadian Reformed Churches up and walking. He was instrumental in the formation of the Theological College (CRTS), in fostering good contact with other churches, e.g., the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the United Reformed Churches, as well as with other efforts having to do with a modern English translation of the confessions, the Church Order, and the earlier editions of the *Book of Praise*.

Retirement from the pressures of the active ministry, and the effects they were having on his health, gave him a second wind. Though "retired" he was still very active. Among other things, Rev. Mulder became heavily invested in the work of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF). MERF is a Reformed evangelistic missionary organization which serves in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia on behalf of the Reformed and Presbyterian family of Churches and believers worldwide. Rev. Mulder became the face of MERF in Canada. His indefatigable efforts on behalf of MERF resulted in very broad support across the Canadian Reformed and other Reformed churches in Canada for this worthy organization.

He also did much preaching during his retirement years and until his eightieth birthday. On that particular day, November 2nd, 2008, he preached for the final time. He delivered a sermon from "his" last pulpit, at the church of Burlington-Waterdown, on what had been his inaugural text many years before in Gees, 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not



in vain.” Rev. Mulder had a servant heart like few other people have. He was a well-loved pastor who had a heart for the hurting and broken. Even after he was retired he continued to care for the ill and those damaged by the ravages of this life. He always had an encouraging word, loved to sing, and filled every room he entered with joy and laughter. He was gifted with an uncanny memory for names.

The children of the immigrant ministers of the 1950s, of which I am one, knew all the other ministers and their wives as “Oom” and “Tante.” To me the Rev. and Mrs. Mulder always were, and always will be, “Oom Hans and Tante Lies.” In those early years a whole tribe of the western minister-families would camp for three weeks at Sunnyside Campground on Cultus Lake, near Yarrow, B.C. The camping metaphor came readily to mind as I considered Rev. Mulder’s chosen funeral text, for there the Apostle Paul compares the earthly tent with the heavenly home. When you go camping in a tent, which is what we all did in the 1950s and 60s, then your tent at first stands smartly and crisply, but eventually it begins to lean and sag. Those who knew

the Rev. Mulder do not need to be told that his camping tent was shipshape: all the poles were straight and the ropes taut. But even Rev. Mulder’s tent began to look tired after three weeks. One of the best things about camping is going home! As the earthly tent of our present existence grows old and tired we may know that we have a heavenly home, eternal in the heavens with Jesus. And it will only get better after the great resurrection. Rev. Mulder is home, in that better country, and with him we may look forward to the great day of Christ’s return.

Rev. Johannes Mulder has entered into his rest. We let his body down into the earth in the sure and steadfast hope of the resurrection. His death marks the end of an era for the Canadian Reformed churches as he was the last of the pioneer ministers to come from Holland in the 1950s. His death brings an end to a living link to the first professors of the ecclesiastical liberation of 1944. He is the last of our ministers to have sat under the teaching of the professors K. Schilder, B. Holwerda, and S. Greijdanus. In the providence of God, Rev. Mulder died on the sixty-fifth anniversary of the death of K. Schilder. The baton has now been decisively passed to a new generation of ministers and church leaders, and to us all. Let us remember our leaders, those who spoke to us the Word of God. Let us consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith (Hebr 13:7).

We extend our condolences to his widow, Mrs. Mulder, to his sons, daughter-in-law, grandchildren, and relatives in Holland. May we all rest in the gospel teaching repeated in the hymn which says:

*We know that if our earthly tent  
falls to the ground, all worn and rent,  
our God as gift to us extends  
a heav’nly house not made with hands,  
a building steadfast and secure  
that will eternally endure.*

(Book of Praise, Hymn 74:3)

Happy birthday to all of you celebrating in the month of May! May the Lord bless you in the coming year and grant you health and strength.

“May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” Romans 15:5-7

“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.” 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 13

## May birthdays

- 1 CLARENCE ZWIEP will be 63**  
c/o Beacon Home  
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 4 DEBBIE VEENSTRA will be 43**  
4238 2nd Concession Road  
Sherkston, ON L0S 1R0
- 10 ROB DE HAAN will be 52**  
c/o Anchor Home  
361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
- 21 EDDIE VAN ROOTSELAAR will be 24**  
c/o Beacon Home  
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 30 BERNIE DE VOS will be 42**  
c/o Anchor Home  
361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2



## 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





Annette van der Laan  
*A minister's daughter, and a minister's  
wife for thirty-four years*

Translated by Pieter Torenvliet  
Abbotsford, BC

# May the Wife of the Minister Please Have a Word?

## Note from the translator

Differences of opinion about a minister's effectiveness are not unique to a particular time, place, or country. As we know, the Apostle Paul also experienced those issues in his ministry. (E.g. see Paul's letters to the Corinthians and Galatians.) Do these differences of opinion have to be problematic? Often not, if they are handled in a transparent Christian fashion. Unfortunately, problems at a consistory level can, and often do, impact the family of the pastor. In the short article that follows, a (Dutch) former minister's wife bares her soul after meeting with three others who experienced similar challenges.

Sin is everywhere, in every church, and therefore we do well to take note of the hurting that takes place in ministers' families as they bear the burden of criticism directed at their husband and father. Perhaps this will make us more circumspect.

The following article was taken and translated from *Nederlands Dagblad*, (d.d., Feb. 10, 2017), with the permission of both the editors and the author of the article.

## Nederlands Dagblad article

It's an ordinary Tuesday. For the first time, four women have come together under the guidance of a counsellor. Four very ordinary women who hardly know each other, but nevertheless, women who share a common bond. These four women are wives of men who served the church with heart and soul. Four women who had also eagerly given everything for the work in the church. Four women who, as a result of their situations, experienced little privacy, no free weekends, and had to explain to their children why their dad was so busy and had so little time for them.

But also, these are four women who wanted to share this life with the love of their life, because they love their husbands; they love God; they love people. But being a minister is more than a job, something you find out when you're married to one. And that has an effect that impacts one more than another.

What exactly is their proper place? Who knows? It's not *their* job, but it is their life. May they choose a job of their own? There are expectations, but those are not spelled out in the letter of call, and, they are not paid for those expectations either. But who informs them about that? They called your husband, but not you.

Look at members of parliament, at doctors. Their wives experience the same thing. If only their husband had trained for a different career.

And then something goes sideways. They say her husband doesn't function properly. That he doesn't meet the expectations of the members of the congregation, of the consistory.

And those men sin, just like members of the congregation; they are after all ordinary people. Men, who cause disappointment, are one-sided, sometimes lacking in tact, sometimes unfaithful. They are men who confess their sins, who want to serve their God with all their heart – but they themselves are not God! They come to God with their brokenness and weaknesses. They ask for forgiveness, and know that God grants them that. Not just like that. . . but because Jesus has already borne their guilt. What grace!

And thus we're sitting together – defeated and sad. Sad, on account of our husbands, who suffer equally, but who so dearly wanted to carry out their love for our good God.

Should God not have placed us in that congregation? Did he err?

And yes, we know: the congregation, the consistory, are not God either; they are people too, who know that they sin every day, just as we all do.

Today we shared with each other that we love people – people at our work, people at a concert who greet us in a friendly fashion and who provide us with the feeling that we are just nice people.

But we hardly dare to go to church anymore. Many people there aren't so friendly anymore. They don't greet us anymore; they're disappointed in our husbands, in us. Suddenly, we've become lonely.

And the consistories have told us that as minister's wife, we should be modest over against others, not to have


an opinion of our own, and we've accepted that. We don't want to be a bother.

In this way the four women have connected with each other, in the hope that they can help each other.

And what happened? We shared each other's stories and we felt happiness in mutual recognition, but also frustration, sadness, and powerlessness in this mutual recognition.

Should this have happened in our congregations? Also for us there should be a sense of security, especially in the church. Where should we seek that? And, what about our children? How does this impact on them?

God, have mercy on us, on our congregations. Teach us to live from forgiveness and grace.

This Tuesday, four women. . . how many more are there? 

## The Flood Prayer

George van Popta  
Minister emeritus of the  
Jubilee Canadian Reformed  
Church at Ottawa, Ontario  
gvanpopta@gmail.com



It might be good to provide a few words along with the hymn, "The Flood Prayer." The prayer we pray before someone is baptized, whether child or adult, is well known and is called "The Flood Prayer" because of the references to the Great Flood and to the crossing of the Red Sea. The words are familiar:

Almighty, eternal God, in your righteous judgment you punished the unbelieving and unrepentant world with the flood, but in your great mercy saved and protected the believer Noah and his family. You drowned the obstinate Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea, but led your people Israel through the midst of the sea on dry ground – by which baptism was signified.

This prayer goes back to the medieval, pre-Reformation, church and is the oldest part of our liturgical forms as found in *Book of Praise*. The Reformation did not do away with the good elements found in medieval liturgy. This prayer was maintained by Martin Luther in Germany, Leo Jud and Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland, Olevianus in the Palatinate, and Peter Datheen in The Netherlands.<sup>1</sup> Today this prayer is also found, with various modifications, in the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran liturgies. It is a truly catholic prayer.

The references to the Flood and the Red Sea are typological, i.e., whereas they are first understood to refer to events in sacred history they are also taken as pointing to something else in the future – in this case, to baptism. The Apostle Peter (1 Pet 3:19-21)<sup>2</sup> interpreted the story of

the Flood in a typological way and the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 10:1, 2)<sup>3</sup> understood the story of Israel crossing the Red Sea in a similar way. Both Peter and Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, said God was signifying baptism by way of the Flood and the Red Sea.

I set the hymn to the Genevan tune for Psalm 103 since that psalm speaks so beautifully of God's covenant faithfulness to parents and their children. As the metrical version has it:

*God's mercy, everlasting and unfailing,  
his righteousness, for evermore prevailing,  
will rest on those who worship him with awe.  
God will be faithful through the generations  
to children's children who with dedication  
uphold his cov'nant and obey his laws.*

<sup>1</sup> G. Van Rongen, *Our Reformed Church Service Book* (Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 1995), p. 184.

<sup>2</sup> ". . . they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

<sup>3</sup> "For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. . . ."

# The Flood Prayer



1. Al - migh - ty God, e - ter - nal heav'n - ly Fa - ther in righ - teous judg -  
 2. You drowned the stub - born Phar - aoh and his ar - my but led your peo -  
 3. We there - fore pray that, in your bound - less mer - cy, you will, through grace,  
 4. We pray that he may fol - low Christ his Sav - iour and bear his cross  
 5. All this we ask through Christ our Lord and Sav - iour, your on - ly Son

7  
 ment you de - stroyed with wa - ter the un - be - liev - ing and re - bel - lious world  
 ple through the rag - ing Red Sea. They walked on dry ground as you led the way.  
 in - clude this child, most kind - ly, and through your Spir - it make him one with Christ  
 in faith and hope with fer - vour. We pray, con - sole him right un - til the end.  
 who is our one Re - deem - er whose love for us is bound - less, with - out end.

14  
 but saved be - liev - er No - ah and his fam' - ly, pro - tect - ed them and showed to  
 In ag - es past you sig - ni - fied our wash - ing, how you de - liv - ered us from  
 who died and rose a - gain for his sal - va - tion, who paid his debts and earned him  
 May he ap - pear be - fore the throne of judg - ment with con - fi - dence in Je - sus  
 He and the Ho - ly Spir - it are to - geth - er with you one God, who lives and

21  
 them your mer - cy. To them your gra - cious love you did un - furl.  
 all that's threat' - ning. To us your cov' - nant love you do dis - play.  
 full re - mis - sion. Now may he walk with Christ the sac - ri - ficed.  
 Christ's a - tone - ment for in your love this child you did bef - riend.  
 reigns for - ev - er. We pray to you our God, A - men, A - men.

Text: George van Popta © 2017  
 Based on "Prayer Before Baptism," *Book of Praise*, p. 598

GENEVAN 103  
 Strasbourg, 1539 / Geneva, 1543





## Classis Central Ontario Press Release – March 10, 2017

The convening church was Jubilee Church. Their delegate elder, Chris van Popta, called the meeting to order and welcomed the delegates and the guests present in the gallery. A special welcome was given to minister-elect of Jubilee church, Rev. Winston Bosch. After some opening remarks, Br. C. van Popta led the assembly in a time of Christian devotion to God.

The delegates of Flamborough examined the credentials of the delegates in attendance and found that they were in order with all primi delegates present.

The executive suggested by the previous classis was appointed: Rev. A.B. Roukema of Ebenezer as Chairman, Elder Br. C. van Popta of Jubilee as Vice Chairman, Rev. C.J. Vandervelde of Rehoboth as Clerk. Classis was declared constituted, and the executive took their seats at the table.

In memorabilia, the chairman noted the health concerns of several of the retired ministers in our classis, as well as the work that many of them continue to do. Since the last classis, Jubilee church, then vacant, has received a positive outcome to their call to Rev. W. Bosch.

The first order of business attended to was the approbation of the call Jubilee church extended to Rev. W. Bosch of St. Paul Church in Repentigny, Quebec, a congregation of l'église réformée du Québec (ERQ). Jubilee submitted the required documents to Classis for review. Upon finding the documents complete and in good order, a brotherly colloquium took place with Jubilee church's minister-elect. The brothers of Classis enjoyed speaking with Rev. Bosch about his doctrine and knowledge of Reformed church polity.

During a closed session, Classis heartily agreed the colloquium was satisfactory. This favourable conclusion was shared with Rev. W. Bosch in open session after which the Chairman read the Subscription Form for ministers of Classis Central Ontario. Rev. W. Bosch signed the form to complete the approbation of his call to Jubilee church. Rev. George van Popta, pastor emeritus of Jubilee church, led the assembly in a prayer of thanksgiving, seeking the Lord's blessing on Rev. W. Bosch's transition to Jubilee church, and his ministry there. Rev. George van Popta was delegated to attend Rev. W. Bosch's installation. Rev. W. Bosch was then invited to take a seat at Classis as a fraternal delegate from the ERQ.

Classis adopted the following proposal of Fellowship church: Upon approval of C.O.W., that Blessings Christian Church of Hamilton be seated at C.C.O. in Sept 2017.

Grounds:

1. The relocation of Blessings Christian Church to Classis Central Ontario would redress inequities between two (2) Ontario classes in terms of number of churches and size of membership.
2. The churches of a newly aligned Classis Central Ontario could formally collaborate on missional endeavors and assist each other in discussing methods and strategies for bringing the gospel to the urban centres of Ontario.

Rev. W. Bosch brought Christian greetings from the ERQ and shared encouraging words from Scripture. Rev. John van Popta responded in kind and offered thoughts and prayers on behalf of C.C.O. to the ERQ. He also asked God for his grace upon St. Paul during their upcoming vacancy.

Question period according to Article 44 of the Church Order was held. The chairman asked the churches whether the ministry of the office bearers is ongoing, whether they are honouring the decisions of the major assemblies, and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of the classis for the proper government of their church. Classis thankfully noted that all the churches answered: "Yes, yes, and no" respectively.

Classis made appointments according to its conventional schedule. The convening church for the next classis is Bethel, scheduled for June 16 at Ebenezer church. The alternate date is set for September 15, 2017. The suggested officers are Rev. C. Vandervelde (Chairman); Bethel elder delegate (Vice Chairman), Rev. J.L. van Popta (Clerk).

After a brief question period, the chairman addressed the assembly and determined that Christian censure according to Art. 34 C.O. was not necessary.

The Acts of Classis and the Press Release for Classis were read and approved for publication after which Rev. A.B. Roukema closed Classis with a prayer of thanksgiving.

For Classis Central Ontario, March 10, 2017  
Elder Chris van Popta, Vice Chairman at the time

