

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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A more meaningful Lord's Supper?

THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

CLARION KIDS

YOU ASKED

Working the Long Form

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The parts of the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper correspond quite well to the order of worship

The congregation of which I am a member has been vacant for about a year and a half now, so I've been asked on a number of occasions to lead Lord's Supper services. This has given me the opportunity to try something new or, at least, new for me. I had noticed that the parts of the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper correspond quite well to the order of worship, so I wanted to try to spread the parts of the form out over the worship service, rather than read the whole thing in one shot as we normally did. I've now taken this approach several times, and the response from the congregation has been warmly positive. In this article I'd like to explain how it was done and then offer some reflections.

Since our churches have varying orders of worship and Lord's Supper practices, let me begin by mentioning how the Lord's Supper is celebrated in my home church. The service begins with a "Call to Worship:" the minister reads a Scripture passage that invites the congregation to worship the Lord. We also have an "Assurance of Pardon" after the first prayer, in which the minister reads a passage to assure the believers that their sins have been forgiven. Also, the communicant members remain in the pews for the celebration of the Lord's Supper rather than coming to the table at the front. This allows all the communicant members to partake at the same time, and it also gives time for a short sermon before the sacrament. I mention these things simply as background information.

Dividing the form over the worship service

Next, I would like to show how the form can be divided over the parts of the worship service. As a sample, I've included the song selections and Scripture reading from a

recent service. To make it as clear as possible, I also include the parts of the worship service (**in bold letters**), the words that I spoke to introduce each part ("in quotation marks"), and the relevant words of the form itself (*in italics*).

Welcome and Announcements

Call to worship: "This morning we celebrate our union with Christ through the sacrament of Holy Supper. As our call to worship, I would like to read the Scripture passage found in the opening words of the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26."

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ: The holy supper has been instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to the words of this institution as described by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29: For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Votum and Salutation

Singing: Psalm 75:1, 2, 5, 6.

The Ten Commandments: "Scripture teaches us that the Lord's Supper is a holy supper. We may not partake without thoughtful preparation and self-examination. The Form explains this teaching of Scripture with these words."

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgement on himself. In order that we may now celebrate this holy supper of the Lord to our comfort, we must first rightly examine ourselves. Further, we must use it as Christ intended it, namely, to his remembrance. True self-examination consists of the following three parts: First, let everyone consider his sins and accursedness, so that he, detesting himself, may humble himself before God. For the wrath of God against sin is so great that he could

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Issue 15 begins with an interesting editorial on using the Form for the Celebration of Lord's Supper through a worship service, in such a way that it matches up and complements the order of worship. We are blessed to have our CRTS professors often write guest editorials, and thank Dr. John Smith for writing this one.

Following up from news in our previous issue regarding the decision of our Dutch sister churches to allow women in office, on these pages readers will find an article from Dr. Cornelis Van Dam: "Dutch Decision on Female Ordination to the Office of Elder Weighed and Found Wanting."

In news there is a report from Flamborough congregation welcoming Rev. Jake Torenvliet and his family. This issue also includes Treasures New and Old, You Asked, Clarion Kids, Ray of Sunshine, a book review, and a press release.

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not leave it unpunished, but has punished it in his beloved Son Jesus Christ by the bitter and shameful death on the cross. Second, let everyone search his heart whether he also believes the sure promise of God that all his sins are forgiven him only for the sake of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ and that the perfect righteousness of Christ is freely given him as his own, as if he himself had fulfilled all righteousness. Third, let everyone examine his conscience whether it is his sincere desire to show true thankfulness to God with his entire life and, laying aside all enmity, hatred, and envy, to live with his neighbour in true love and unity. God will certainly receive in grace all who are thus minded and count them worthy to partake of the supper of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who do not feel this testimony in their hearts, eat and drink judgment upon themselves.

“The Lord has given us the ten commandments in order to examine our lives and expose our sins. We find a paraphrase of the ten commandments in the next part of the Form, and this morning I would like to read this paraphrase with you.”

Therefore, according to the command of Christ and of the apostle Paul, we admonish all those who know themselves to be guilty of the following offensive sins to abstain from the table of the Lord, and we declare to them that they have no part in the kingdom of Christ [and here follows the paraphrase]: [1] all who refuse to trust in the LORD alone or [2] who serve him in their own manner; [3] all who abuse the name of the LORD by cursing or in any other way; [4] all who do not diligently attend the worship services and who despise the proclamation of God’s Word or the sanctity of the sacraments; [5] all who are disobedient to their parents or to others in authority over them; [6] all who violate human life or cherish hatred against their neighbour and refuse to be reconciled to him; [7] all who, either within or outside of holy wedlock, do not keep their bodies pure; [8] all who by stealing, greed, or extravagance, lead a worldly life; [9] all liars, backbiters, and slanderers; [10] briefly, all who either in word or conduct show themselves to be unbelieving by leading an offensive life. While they persist in their sins, they shall not take of this food, which Christ has ordained only for his believers; otherwise their judgment and condemnation will be the heavier.

Prayer of Confession. “When we honestly examine our lives we find that we all are guilty of such sins. None of us is worthy in ourselves to partake of holy supper. So let us confess our sins in prayer to God.”

Assurance of Pardon. “God does not leave us in our sins and misery, but he pardons our sins and counts us worthy

to enjoy table fellowship with him. We find assurance of this in the next part of the form.”

But all this, beloved brothers and sisters, is not meant to discourage broken and contrite hearts, as if only those who are without sin may come to the table of the Lord. For we do not come to this supper to declare that we are perfect and righteous in ourselves. On the contrary, we seek our life outside of ourselves in Jesus Christ and, in doing so, we acknowledge that we are dead in ourselves. We also are aware of our many sins and shortcomings. We do not have perfect faith and we do not serve God with such zeal as he requires. Daily we have to contend with the weakness of our faith and with the evil desires of our flesh. Yet, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we are heartily sorry for these shortcomings and desire to fight against our unbelief and to live according to all the commandments of God. Therefore we may be fully assured that no sin or weakness which still remains in us against our will can prevent us from being received by God in grace and from being made worthy partakers of this heavenly food and drink.

Singing: “Let us now thank the Lord for his grace by singing Hymn 64:1, 2.”

Scripture Reading and Text: John 19:12-16

Sermon

Singing: Hymn 25:3, 7

Administration of the Lord’s Supper. “Let’s now read the rest of the Form, starting on p. 604 with the Remembrance of Christ.”

Profession of Faith: Hymn 1

Exhortation

Singing: Hymn 30:4, 5 (while table is prepared)

Communion

Doxology

Singing: Psalm 103:2, 4

Thanksgiving Prayer

Offertory

Singing: Hymn 26

Benediction

Reflections

Let me conclude with some reflections. First of all, I am not proposing that other churches ought to do it this way. Each congregation has its own way of celebrating the Lord's Supper under the leadership of the consistory and with the use of the forms adopted by the churches. Not all churches have a call to worship or an assurance of pardon, so the sample liturgy I've presented will not work everywhere. But perhaps churches with a liturgy similar to ours can find some workable ideas here, or at least some food for thought. To such churches I am simply suggesting that we do with the first half of the form what we already do with the second half: use it as an order of service. It does not require any changes to the form itself, nor to the order of worship, and thus it would not be difficult to implement. Further, I should mention that it doesn't always have to be done the same way: I'm not the only minister to lead Lord's Supper services in my home congregation; other ministers still do it "the old way," which is fine.

Secondly, I must admit that one of my motivations was to try to make the worship service a bit shorter. The Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper is very beautiful, but also quite long, and sometimes its beauty can get lost in its length and familiarity. If the service becomes too long, children (and parents) become restless, and the nursery, already fuller than it usually is, becomes an anxious and noisy

place. (Maybe ministers should make it a standard practice on Lord's Supper Sundays to pray for the babysitters!) Some churches shorten the service by reading the first part of the form the Sunday before, or by using the abbreviated form, or by doing without a sermon. Such creative solutions can be helpful, which is why I offer the above suggestion as another option to consider.

Thirdly, the members gave positive feedback. What struck me is that people did not mention the fact that the worship service became shorter. Nor did people appreciate it just because it was "something different." Rather, they said that it made the Lord's Supper celebration more meaningful. Some had never noticed that the form contains a paraphrase of the ten commandments. They appreciated the use of this paraphrase to convict us of sin before using the sacrament. Others found rich comfort in using the invitation to those "with broken and contrite hearts" as an assurance of pardon. This feedback showed me that people are eager for a more meaningful Lord's Supper "experience," if I may put it that way. I often pray on Lord's Supper Sundays that the sacrament would not become a meaningless routine for us, but a highlight of God's amazing grace towards sinners. Of course, the best way to make it meaningful is to prepare for the Lord's Supper via self-examination. Yet it seems to me that we can also explore modest ways to use the form more "worshipfully." It is, after all, a *liturgical* form. C



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The Good Fight of Faith

"[For] the Spirit [desires] what is contrary to the sinful nature."

Galatians 5:17b

This meditation was originally published in this magazine in 2005.

Place yourself in your lawn chair staring at a campfire in front of you. Notice how the fire slowly consumes the wood. Before the piece of wood is thrown on the fire it remains hard, cold, and unchanging. When you throw a piece of wood on the fire, immediately the fire begins to consume the wood – the wood puts up some resistance, and for a while you have both wood and fire in the same place, but if the wood is normal the fire will conquer it. We read in Galatians that when the Holy Spirit is present in your heart, He is waging war against the wooden heart of your sinful nature. Although your sinful nature puts up some resistance so that the two are in conflict with one another, the Holy Spirit will overcome. The sinful nature can be compared to a block of wood: firm, unmoving, and unchanging. The Holy Spirit can be compared to a fire that burns up a block of wood. The two are in conflict with each other.

The words of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5 remind us that in this life there will always be a conflict in the hearts of believers as the Holy Spirit battles with the sinful nature. We must be realistic about the ongoing struggle in the lives of every one of us. There is winning and there is losing –

there is back and forth – one morning you feel ready to serve the Lord as the general of his army, and that very afternoon you might be slinking away from your business, your husband or wife, or your parents. . . you failed again. Sin is a real and debilitating part of our lives. The sinful nature pulls us in one direction and shows itself in many ways in our own lives (Gal 5:19-21). We are grieved when we “do not do what we want” (Gal 5:17), and yet God does not make us face this struggle alone. In Galatians we read that the Holy Spirit is *in conflict* with the sinful nature. Like a fire in conflict with a block of wood, so the Holy Spirit continuously works to overcome the ongoing desires of the sinful nature in the heart of the believer. And as we see this struggle and this conflict, we know and believe that in Jesus Christ we will be victorious!

Do you continue to fight the desires of your sinful nature? Such a fight is evidence of the Holy Spirit in the life of those who believe in Jesus Christ. When we have faith in Jesus Christ, we begin to want to show our thankfulness; we begin to desire to keep in step with the Holy Spirit and fight against our sinful desires. In the Form for the Celebration of Lord’s Supper, the necessity of this fight against sin is stated very clearly. First we confess that we do not yet have

perfect faith, and so we daily contend with the weakness of faith and with the evil desires of the flesh. But then we confess: “Yet, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we are heartily sorry for these shortcomings and *desire to fight against our unbelief* and to live according to all the commandments of God (*Book of Praise*, p 604). The gracious message of the gospel is that in Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, sin and weakness remain in us *against our will* and cannot prevent us from being made worthy partakers of this heavenly food and drink.

The block of wood and the fire are battling each other in the fire pit before your eyes. In the heart of every believer the Holy Spirit battles the sinful nature so that the life of every Christian resembles a battlefield of desires. But in the midst of our battle we know that we have the victory in Jesus Christ. We may know that as we see this struggle in our hearts, it is evidence of the Holy Spirit’s presence within us, and we may know he will overcome. It is then in thankfulness for the work of Jesus Christ in our lives that we desire to submit to God’s Word in Timothy 6: “But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith” (1 Tim 6:11, 12).



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Dutch Decision on Female Ordination to the Office of Elder Weighed and Found Wanting

The grounds which Synod Meppel used to justify their decision to allow churches to ordain women to all ecclesiastical offices were given on July 4 in a letter from the executive of the Synod to our Dutch sister churches. The Synod made separate decisions to justify female participation in the office of deacon, elder, and minister. Since the elder office is the basic governing office in the church and the office of minister is an elder office, this article will focus on the Synod's decision to open the elder office to women. The Synod declared that: "There are biblical grounds to call women alongside men into the service of supervision, the pastorate, and teaching and thus into the office of elder." Considering the many potential ramifications of this far-reaching decision, let us briefly consider each of the four grounds which Synod gave in turn.

Deborah

The first justification for female ordination into the elder office which Synod mentioned is: "The persons of Miriam (Micah 6:4) and Deborah (Judges 4-5) show that women in the old covenant participated in governing and judging in cooperation with men."

Since Miriam will come up in the next synodical justification, we will now concentrate on Deborah. Is the fact that Deborah functioned as a judge and prophetess a valid reason to open up the office of elder to women today? The answer must be no when you consider the following. A primary rule for the correct interpretation and application of Scripture is to place the passage in question within its biblical context. Deborah lived in the days of the judges. This was a time characterized by Israel's repeated apostasy, followed by divine judgment, and the desperate cry of the nation for deliverance. God would repeatedly graciously re-

spond by raising up a judge who would rescue the people from their enemies. In Deborah's time the LORD sold his rebellious people into the hands of Jabin, king of Canaan (Judg 4:2-3). In these critical times Israel cried to the LORD for help and he used Deborah to give deliverance.

It is important to note how God introduced Deborah and how he involved her for the salvation of his people. We read that "Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. She used to sit under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment" (Judg 4:4-5 ESV). With the preceding two crises, the Hebrew expression "the LORD raised up a deliverer" (Judg 3:9, 15) is used. We also frequently read of the judges being empowered by the Spirit for their military task (Judg 3:10; 6:345; 11:29; 14:19; 15:14). Remarkably, these expressions are not used with Deborah. Rather she is introduced as a prophetess and not a military leader.

As a prophetess she was judging Israel. One could imagine that as a judge she was resolving legal issues brought to her. However, this interpretation is unlikely. A judge in the book of Judges is a military leader who delivers Israel and when judge "so and so" judged Israel for so many years, then it means he ruled Israel for so many years (e.g. Judg 3:10; 10:2, 3 etc.). The NIV therefore translates that she "was leading Israel" (Judg 4:4). How was she leading Israel? She was a prophetess. People came to her "for judgment." Literally it says: "for the judgment" (Judg 4:5). In other words, in this time of national crisis when Israelites "cried to the LORD for help" (Judg 4:3), they came to Deborah for the judgment of God which she as prophetess could give in answer to their cry for help. As prophetess she was God's representative for the people and spoke God's Word.

As a result she summoned Barak and gave him God's command to mobilize ten thousand men to defeat the foe (Judg 4:5-7). When he protested because he was afraid, Deborah assured him that she would accompany him. Her coming along as spokesperson for the LORD gave tangible expression to the fact that God himself would go with Barak and give him the victory.

Deborah is never pictured as a military leader of Israel, a judge in the sense of Othniel or Gideon. She was a prophetess. It is therefore not surprising that there is no reference to her with respect to the battle. Although she gave leadership through her prophetic task, she is not de-

scribed in Scripture as the judge who delivered Israel from Sisera. Rather it is God who is specified as the deliverer of Israel (Judg 4:23) and he used another woman, Jael, to kill Sisera (Judg 4:21). Deborah's subordinate role as prophetess and not as military leader is also evident from the fact that God did not send Deborah to head the troops into battle, but Barak. Furthermore, when Samuel would later

Can Deborah function as an example for us to follow for today by ordaining women into the office of elder? The answer is clearly no.

mention deliverers of Israel (1 Sam 12:11), he did not mention Deborah, but he did name Barak, the commander. Similarly, Deborah is not mentioned with the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, although several judges, including Barak (v. 32) are, but not Deborah. All of this underlines her relatively modest role with respect to the deliverance of Israel.

God raised up Deborah to be prophetess in Israel at a time of crisis. Deborah's function as prophetess was an exception within an exceptional situation. The fact that she was also known as the wife of Lappidoth could indicate the ad hoc character of her office. People came to her in the current circumstances for God spoke through her, but there is no record of her going out and prophesying among the people. Without taking anything away from her being a prophetess, it should not be forgotten that she is also identified as a married woman, indeed as "a mother in Israel" (5:7). Her prophetic office was not everything. She also fulfilled a woman's normal place in Israelite life.

Can Deborah function as an example for us to follow for today by ordaining women into the office of elder? The answer is clearly no. The situation in Israel was desperate and by way of exception God raised her up as a prophet in Israel. In this way God enabled her to pass on God's command that Barak (and not Deborah) summon and command a military force against the enemy (Judg 4:6-7). The fact that God used a woman to make this clear was an implicit condemnation of the lack of male leadership in Israel. Furthermore, the need for Deborah to accompany Barak and to go with him to the battlefield (Judg 4:9-10) underlined how male leadership was totally lacking in Israel. For a woman to have to goad a male to take charge and so in effect give leadership was akin to a disaster (cf. Isa 3:12). It showed that things had gone terribly wrong. Deborah is therefore not an example to be followed and her situation provides no justification to open the leadership offices of the church to women. But, as Calvin noted on 1 Timothy 2:12, God is sovereign and he can do in extraordinary circumstances what we are not allowed to do. He therefore did use Deborah in a special way for his service.

Miriam

The second reason Synod Meppel gave for admitting women to the office of elder is: "They [women] could be called thereto [i.e. to participate in governing and judging] by God, as is evident from Micah 6:4 where the LORD addresses Israel and says: 'I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam.'"

Miriam's leading Israel refers to an event after the Israelites had left Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, and the LORD had drowned the pursuing Egyptian forces. Then "Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them: 'Sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea'" (Exod 15:20-21). Miriam led the women in song. She is identified as "the prophetess." What does this mean?

With respect to her identity as a prophetess, it is possible that Miriam received revelation from God (cf. Num 12:2) as one would expect from a prophet (cf. Exod 7:1-2), but Scripture nowhere indicates that she publicly proclaimed new prophecy. The public prophetic act of this prophetess was singing with a musical instrument and exhorting praise to God.

There are also indications elsewhere in Scripture that praising God and declaring his great deeds constitute proph-

esying. Take, for example Saul. He met a procession of prophets with musical instruments prophesying and the Spirit came on him and he prophesied as well (1 Sam 10:5-11). This prophesying can best be understood as praising God. Another example that can be mentioned is when David set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun for the ministry of music in the temple. This ministry is then described as “the ministry of prophesying” and the singers are described as prophesying when they thank and praise the LORD (1 Chron 25:1-3). Consistent with the nature of

To seek justification for female ordination to ecclesiastical offices from the admonition that older women should be an example of Christian conduct to others simply does not hold

this musical ministry, the leaders of the temple song are called seers or prophets (1 Chron 25:5; 2 Chron 35:15) and the poet Asaph is also called a seer or prophet (2 Chron 29:30).

Miriam’s prophetic task can therefore be seen in her music and singing ministry – an activity also associated with Deborah, the prophetess, when she with Barak, sang a song extolling God’s deliverance (Judg 5:1). And like Deborah, Miriam as prophetess gave needed

leadership to Israel, along with Moses and Aaron (Micah 6:4). Her leadership was for the women of Israel since they were the ones who followed her (Exod 15:20). In his sermon on Micah 6, Calvin notes that even though Miriam was a woman, God gave her this leadership role “in order that she might strengthen women.” In his commentary on this passage, he notes that “it was an extraordinary thing, when God gave authority to a woman. . . no one may consider this singular precedent as a common rule.” Indeed, how true. It is noteworthy that the Dutch decision ignores the fact that God punished Miriam with leprosy when she challenged the leadership of Moses (Num 12). Furthermore, Micah 6:4 is the only time that Miriam is mentioned as a leader along with Moses and Aaron. She is not mentioned in other places where the LORD says that he sent Moses and Aaron as leaders (Josh 24:5; 1 Sam 12:8; Ps 105:26). Her leadership in leading the women in singing at that one exceptional event

CALLS DECLINED

Declined the call by the the Attercliffe Canadian Reformed Church:

Rev. D. Wynia

of the Lincoln Canadian Reformed Church

Declined the call by the Free Reformed Church of Armadale, Western Australia to serve as missionary in North Eastern Papua New Guinea:

Rev. Arend Witten

of the Vernon Canadian Reformed Church, B.C.

CHURCH NEWS

cannot function as an argument for ordaining women to the ruling and leadership offices of the church.

Older women who teach

A third argument for synod to justify ordaining women to the office of elder is: “While the New Testament names older men as elders, older women are also called upon to be an example and to spiritual care (Titus 2:3–5).”

The point of this argument seems to be that while older men are called to be elders (their qualifications are given in Titus 1), older women are addressed in chapter 2 and charged to do certain things which to the Synod seem to intimate that they too had an office. But this sort of logic does not hold. After giving the qualifications for the office of elder in chapter 1, the apostle next addresses different groups in the congregation. He first mentions the duties of older men “to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness” (Titus 2:2). The apostle then continued that “older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train young women to love their husbands and children” and so forth (Titus 2:3-5). After that the apostle addressed the younger men and slaves (Titus 2:6-10). There is no talk of office in Titus 2. Here the apostle gives instructions to the entire congregation. To seek justification for female ordination to ecclesiastical offices from the admonition that older women should be an example of Christian conduct to others simply does not hold.

Junia and Priscilla

The fourth ground for the Synod’s decision is articulated as follows: “Paul’s description of Junia and Andronicus as apostles who were greatly esteemed (Rom 16:7) or of other couples as his co-workers (Rom 16:3) and his mentioning couples and a brother and sister in whose home a congregation meets (Rom 16:5, 15) create the impression that man and wife gave leadership in Christ’s congregation in positions of equal standing.”

It is difficult to understand how this fourth ground can give any support to the notion of women elders. In the first place, to suggest that Andronicus and Junia are a man and wife couple is saying more than what the text states. It does say that they are fellow Jews who were in prison with Paul. Furthermore, it is far from certain that Junia (or Junias as it can also be written) was a female. There are strong arguments to insist that it could be a man's name.¹ In addition, it needs to be ascertained what exactly is meant by the term "apostle"? Before discussing that it should also be noted that the text can not only be translated as "they [Andronicus and Junia] are outstanding among the apostles" (NIV 2011) but also as "they are esteemed by the apostles" (footnote in NIV 2011). The translation that they were apostles is one interpretation of the Greek, but other translations which remove Junia's identity as an apostle are also possible and indeed may very well be preferable.²

So what does the term "apostle" mean here? It should be stressed that the term can mean different things. It does not need to refer to the apostolic office such as Paul had. The first meaning of the original Greek term is "messenger." Paul used it in this sense in 2 Corinthians 8:23 and Philipians 2:25. So why could he not have used it with the sense of "messenger" here as well? The indications are that this is the case if the translation "among the apostles" is chosen. After all, the apostles were all personally chosen by Christ. And they were all male.

In summary, Romans 16:7 cannot be used to prove that there was a female apostle in the days of Paul. There are too many uncertainties to make this claim.

The Synod also referred to a couple mentioned in Romans 16:3, namely, Priscilla and Aquila. This Christian couple had

taken Apollos aside in Ephesus "and explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26). This was clearly private instruction and not official ecclesiastical work. Priscilla did not participate in this teaching as a female office bearer (cf. also 1 Cor 16:19). The references of Synod Meppel to Romans 16:5 and 15 prove nothing with respect to women in ecclesiastical office in the apostolic church.

Conclusion

One gets the impression that Synod Meppel had determined to open the elder office to women due to pressures from churches influenced by the egalitarian culture of the day. They thus cast about looking for a biblical warrant to make that happen. Synod ended up grasping at straws as any neutral reader of Scripture can see from the above evidence. Furthermore, Synod's apparent refusal to let the full weight of the clear apostolic teaching on the requirements for a male eldership in the church (1 Tim 3 and Titus 1) come to bear on their decision making process is unreasonable. Synod ended up recommending women for ordination to the elder office contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture.

¹ See especially Al Wolters, "IOYNIAN (Romans 16:7) and the Hebrew Name Yēhūnni," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008): 397-408.

² For a summary of the debate and defence for the translation "well-known to the apostles" or something similar, see Michael Burer, "Rom 16:7 as 'Well Known to the Apostles': Further Defense and New Evidence," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 58 (2015): 731-56. ESV (2016), NET Bible (2005) render "well known to the apostles"; Christian Standard Bible (2017) translates "noteworthy in the eyes of the apostles."



Ordination and Welcome Evening: Flamborough's New Minister, Reverend Torenvliet

"To everything," the Preacher writes in the book of Ecclesiastes, "there is a season." All of them seasons that have been ordained by God, in accordance with his holy will, to be carried out in his gracious and good time.

We in Flamborough rejoiced to see that God's will has also seen, in our congregation, that the season of ministerial vacancy we experienced – a season that spanned a few years – drew to its close when we received Reverend Jake Torenvliet as our minister. It was rejoicing tempered by thanksgiving, for God has remembered and kept this congregation throughout that season, has indeed guided her through that time; gathering, defending, and preserving her through his Holy Spirit.

Ordination

Reverend Torenvliet was ordained in the morning service of November 13; a day that dawned as any ordinary Sunday, though somehow it seemed as though even the very skies rejoiced in the new mercies of this particular morning.

Reverend DeGelder, our Minister Emeritus, chose Jeremiah 1:11, 12 as his text, urging us all, minister and congregation alike, to remember God's lesson of the almond branch; a lesson for the preacher, as well as for the listeners. "I am watching over my word to fulfill it." Powerful and comforting words, to be sure; for a new minister, as well as for the rest of us. A necessary reminder that it has never been about human strength or power, but about God powerfully working out his holy will as he unrolls the scroll of time.

Reverend Torenvliet was ordained as a Minister of the Word, receiving the laying on of hands, and following the service there were several brief congratulatory speeches by ministers who were present for this joyful event.

The text for Reverend Torenvliet's first sermon as an ordained minister was John 13:1-20, and his focus was on Jesus's foot-washing sermon; a demonstration of love, two



lessons about cleansing, and a paradigm of Christian behaviour. "Of all the events in the gospels that reveal something of the character and the love of Jesus," Rev. Torenvliet explained, "the one recorded in our text is, arguably, the deepest, most beautiful, apart from the cross itself." Drawing that thought out to establish that leadership is a big deal, not only in the world, but in the church, too. Putting it into his own personal, immediate context for a few moments: ". . . I stand here today, as your new pastor, inexperienced, a little bit anxious, and so I can't help but think things like 'Who can be a role model for me as a pastor? How do I want my ministry to be characterized? What should my relationship with you be like? How does God want me to conduct my ministry here in your midst?'" Focusing our attention, then, on John 13, where each of these questions is addressed, laying the excellent and solid groundwork of daily Christian living being characterized by service borne out of humble obedience to God's will.



Welcome evening

November 23 was the welcome evening for Reverend Jake Torenvliet, his wife Marietta, and their children, Olivia, Gabriel, Elias, and Annika. The level of excitement was high at the nearby school gym we'd gotten for the event.

It was an enjoyable evening, with good food prepared and served with by the Hospitality Committee, and the Torenvliets taking part in games that have deservedly become Welcome Evening classics over the years, such as Guess the Relative, as well as the Survival Kit that contained things like gift cards to local stores, and games for the kids, as well as a Conservation Area season pass.

Another highlight was the album composed of pages that the congregation members had been occupied with making pages for over the past few weeks; it was a beautiful and delightfully personal way for the Torenvliets to get to know us that little bit better; a good start.

It was a casual and lively evening of fun and fellowship, ending with the joyful strains of “O Give Thanks Unto the LORD” followed by a prayer of thanksgiving for God’s immensely rich grace and mercy.

May our gracious God continue to guide and keep us all in his care, as minister, and as congregation, throughout life’s many seasons.



Churches are reminded that a report should be submitted within two months of the event.

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made Psalm 139

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret."

Did you know that God knew who you were, even before you were born? He made you very carefully, exactly the way he wanted you to be. We can be very thankful that God knows us so well. He knows everything that we think and say, and there is no place that God is not with us. He will protect you and watch over you wherever you go. We should always praise God for all he does.

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



Crossword Puzzle

Solve the clues to fill in the puzzle.

Across

2. God knew who you were before you were _____.

4. My _____ was not hidden from you.

6. I am _____ and wonderfully made.

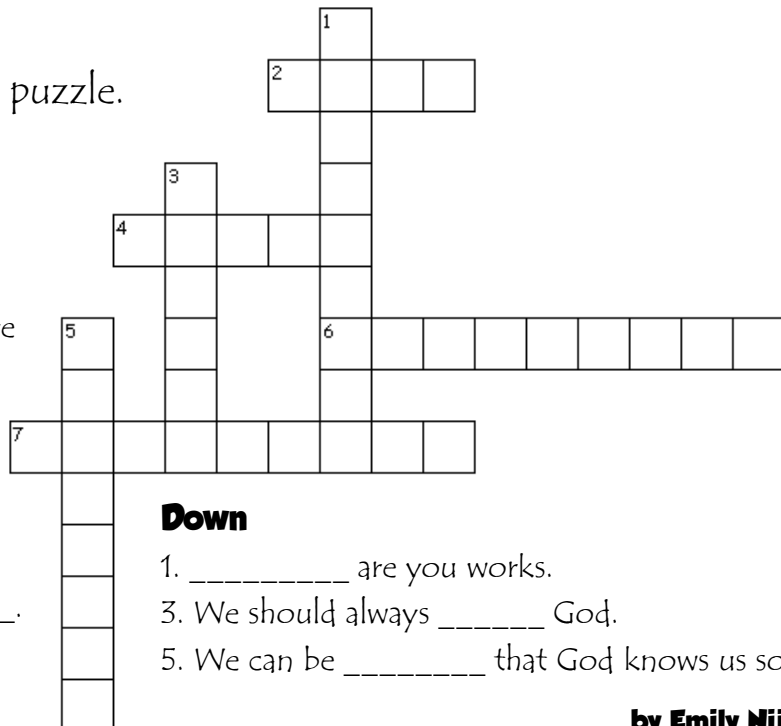
7. God made you very _____.

Down

1. _____ are your works.

3. We should always _____ God.

5. We can be _____ that God knows us so well.



by Emily Nijenhuis

Fenny Kuik

Hello. We would like to introduce you to Fenny Kuik.

Fenny lived with her sister for many years. During most of those years, Fenny was employed at Premier Printing.



For the last year and a half, Fenny has been living in a group home supported through Cornerstone Christian Care Society. This has been a very big change for Fenny but she has adjusted well. She has come to know many people from her church and elsewhere and enjoys many good times with them.

Fenny has lots of nieces and nephews, and great nieces and nephews. She has a soft spot in her heart for all of them! She looks forward to Sundays when she visits with family and friends.

Fenny enjoys all kinds of animals and has a special love for cats. There are many dogs in the neighbourhood and people are always happy to stop and let Fenny pet their dogs.

She also enjoys active games like shuffleboard, velcro darts, and throwing balls around.

There are other ladies in our home and Fenny has a very compassionate heart for them. She will do what she can to make them happy. Fenny has a desire to making people smile.

This is an exciting time as she and her roommate will soon be moving into a new house. This will be a change from the two bedroom apartment they currently live in and they are very excited about that. It will be a new neighbourhood to explore.

August birthdays

4 Terence Berends will be 41

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

5 Philip Schuurman will be 58

1156 Diltz Road
Dunnville, ON N1A 2W2

9 Rose Malda will be 60

Mt. Nemo Christian Nursing Home
4486 Guelph Line, Burlington, ON L7P 0N2

18 Fenny Kuik will be 65

140 Foch Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2C 5H7

23 Jack Dieleman will be 45

c/o Harbour Home
42 Spadara Drive, Hamilton, ON L9B 2K3

31 Kristi Oosterhoff will be 27

c/o Harbour Home
42 Spadara Drive, Hamilton, ON L9B 2K3

Congratulations to everyone celebrating a birthday in August. We wish you all the Lord's blessing in the year to come.

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



William den Hollander
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Q Are Sunday school programs for young children right or wrong?

Some of our churches are beginning to discuss (some have already implemented) Sunday school programs for young children, to be conducted during the worship service. Is there anything biblical to suggest that is either wrong or right?

Should our churches be cautioned against it? Or should they be encouraged to send children out of the worship service to a program geared at their own level?

A First of all, Sunday School programs, originally, were not meant for services in which children were addressed and activated *during* the worship services attended by the parents. Children's programs that have come into practice as *alternative* for their attendance in the regular worship service are of a *different* nature and for a *different* purpose. Sunday Schools were held outside of the regular worship services and for others than the children of the congregation. When I was a pastor in the church of Winnipeg, the evangelism committee and Sunday School teachers operated a Sunday School before the morning service (which for that reason started at 10:30 a.m.). This Sunday School was meant for children from the neighbourhood with whom there was contact via the parents, advertising, VBS (follow up!), and other ways. In some of the churches of the URCNA I have seen the operation of a Sunday School which is held following the morning service for the children of the congregation. There the teachers follow-up on the worship service (sermon a.o.) and teach the children Bible stories, songs, and crafts.

While the parents socialize with their fellow-members, the children are (happily and actively) engaged in these Sunday School classes.

The question refers to programs for "young children" to be conducted during the worship service. It depends first of all on the actual age of these "young children." If this pertains to the three- and four- year olds, for instance, who are in the nursery still because they are yet too young to sit still and to sit through the worship service with their parents, then it certainly would be an effective and fruitful pastime to keep them occupied with an activity, craft, story, and song. Just as the parents may be doing at home, it will be a useful way of introducing these "young children" to the practice of listening, singing, and busying themselves with matters related to the service of God.

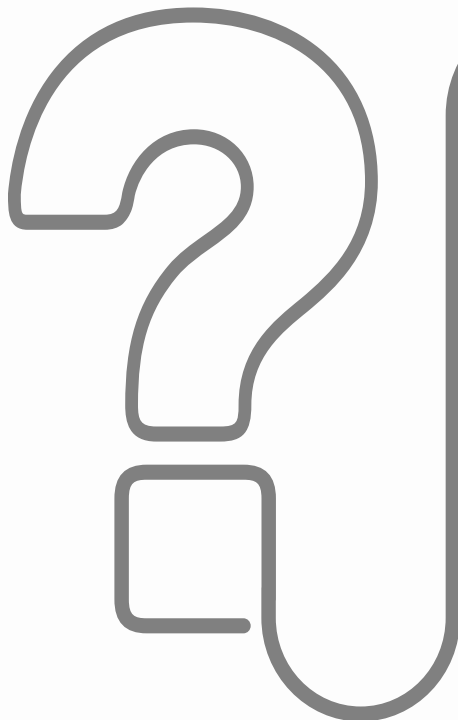
The "problem" that's implied in the question, however, probably pertains to the older children for whom sometimes "services" are organized as substitute or alternative to the regular worship service. Then it can happen that children leave the worship service before the sermon begins, and they return for the closing part of the regular service. This, of course, is a different matter and a practice that we should

not start in our churches. Then, indeed, there are biblical inferences that teach us the important scriptural notion that the children belong to the covenant assembly of the people of the LORD! From Deuteronomy 29:11 and Joshua 8:35, we learn that the children were taken to the meetings of God's people and that they were present when his people celebrated their feasts (1 Sam 1:3f.). From Nehemiah 8:2 we may conclude that these children were of an age at which they were "starting to understand," yet with their parents they shared in the instruction in the Law by the Levites (v. 7). The children, "who do not know this law," also need to learn to listen to the voice of their God, together with their parents and the other members of the congregation.

In some churches an alternative to this substitute children's service was found by addressing the children separately or by introducing the message of the text by way of a children's version. This, too, is something that's not found in the Scripture. Rather, we should note that on the one hand the Bible speaks time and again about "you and the children (Deut 4:40; 11:21; 12:25, 28; 30:2), texts in which

the children are mentioned specifically, but as children of their parents: your children. On the other hand, we note that Moses or the prophets or the apostles do not address the children directly, but they show the parents what they have to share and instil in their children (often also upon the child's question, "What does this mean? Exod 12:26; Deut 6:7, 20f.; Josh 4: 20; Joel 1:3). Indeed, for "the promises are for you and for your children. . ." (Acts 2:39).

The parents have the task, therefore, to follow-up on the service and explain to their children what they have learned from the instruction in God's Word. As I know from experience, then they will also be surprised how much the children pick up and learn to understand. Then in their family devotions as well they can train their children to sit still, participate where they can, and grow in understanding the Word of God! At the same time, it has also been my experience how beneficial it is for the involvement and participation of the children when in the liturgy, where possible, the Psalms they learn for school are integrated in the liturgy.



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

Ask us a question!

Please direct questions to Rev. W. denHollander

denhollanderw@gmail.com

23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0

Just Thinking: 95 doodles to noodle over

by Jason Bouwman (Grimsby, ON:
Jason Bouwman Illustration, 2017)

**Additional Information: Available from
www.justthinkingbook.com for \$14.95 CDN**

I've never seen anything quite like it. Jason Bouwman shows why his company is called Compass Creative, because in this little volume he has creatively come up with a new concept: to blend the art of journaling, sketching, and whiteboard presentation together with devotional thoughts. The result is a book of "word doodles" which transforms common worldly sayings into uncommon heavenly wisdom.

Visual appeal

Right from the front cover through to the last page, what strikes you is the eye-catching illustrations, Bouwman's bread and butter. He is passionate about art but even more passionate about serving Christ. He has served as an elder in his local church (Grassie CanRC) and by God's grace he loves to help people serve the Lord. All of these passions come together in the striking diagrams, sketches, and word arrangements in *Just Thinking*.

The effect of the doodles is hard to explain – you really need to see the book to grasp the concept and message. They are carefully thought out and present a gospel message you can ponder throughout the day. Let me try to offer one example: On one white page is a single word in bold, black typed letters: "**Imperfect.**" Then, scrawled by hand in red-ink above the word is the expression, "**In Christ.**" Next you see a red vertical dashed line appearing between the "Im" and the "perfect" along with a tiny red apostrophe to make the first two letters the new contraction "I'm." The result is arresting: what began as a sober statement about oneself as being "Imperfect" (which is

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Connect with him on Facebook or Twitter
where he is currently tweeting on
Christ in the Psalms.

true but only half the story for Christians) becomes a joyful confession of faith "In Christ I'm perfect" (which is the complete and wonderful truth for believers!). All of this is accomplished by Bouwman's thoughtful creative play with everyday words and expressions.

Journaling

In combination with these doodles, the author offers a running commentary that threads the ninety-five illustrations together. The journaling (as he calls it) is a mixture of Bouwman's own thoughts on the issues of life and quotations from a variety of people – Christians, non-Christians, famous and unknown, and even an imaginary character (Yoda)! Plenty of Scripture is also quoted and put to good use.

Bouwman's basic purpose is to hold a magnifying glass to everyday sayings, to weigh them carefully on the scales of biblical teaching. He is concerned that our words, axioms, and idioms – often used carelessly – become in effect our practical theology. Many times we don't even realize what's happening. We may confess one thing in church but by our daily expressions we show that we live out a different confession at work, home, and school. Jason works hard in this book to have us analyze our every-day talk and do better at lining up our thoughts, words, and deeds with what God teaches so that we more and more live out the reality of the grace-filled gospel of Jesus Christ.

Devotional

This book is designed to work as a devotional too. On the bottom of every other page (on average) can be found references to the Bible (and sometimes the Reformed confessions) for further reading. These are intended to lead the reader to deeper reflections on the truths Bouwman writes about on the page above. In checking several of these, the chosen texts seemed quite appropriate. I did notice some



unevenness in the selections: sometimes only one single verse is cited and other times whole chapters and psalms. Psalm 119 is even mentioned twice. That kind of lengthy recommendation may be a bridge too far for some.

Conclusion

Jason Bouwman is to be commended for offering us a very thoughtful, grace-filled book. Teenagers, young

adults, and every thinking Christian would benefit from reading and pondering *Just Thinking*. Couples or families might look at a doodle or two together and discuss its meaning. It's something to take along for campfire conversation this summer. There's a fun aspect to this book but the fun leads us to serious, edifying reflection on how we speak and live the gospel in real life. Very worthwhile and warmly recommended!



Press Release of Classis Niagara held on June 21, 2017 in the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church

Opening

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. C. Bouwman opened the meeting by welcoming all present. He requested that we sing Psalm 24:1, 5 followed by the reading of Revelation 5. After reflecting on the message of this passage he led in prayer, making special note of Attercliffe's ongoing vacancy after receiving a decline on their call to Rev. D. Wynia while Lincoln gratefully continues under his pastorship, Smithville's ongoing search for a co-pastor, and the recent twenty-fifth anniversary of Rev. and Mrs. Van Woudenberg. He also remembered with sorrow the recent developments in our sister churches in The Netherlands.

Examination of credentials and constitution of Classis

The credentials were examined by the convening church and found to be in good order. Upon the examination of the credentials, Classis was declared constituted.

Appointment of executive officers

The suggested officers from Classis Niagara March 22, 2017, Rev. J. Van Woudenberg as chairman, Rev. R.J. den Hollander as vice-chairman, and a delegate from Spring Creek, in this case, Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer as clerk were appointed. The chairman thanked the church at Smithville for their preparations. Additionally, he noted that since the last classis Rev. J. Mulder and Dr. J. de Jong passed away and that Dr. N.H. Gootjes and his family continue to deal with his ongoing health trials. He noted Rev. C. Bouwman's recent return from a teaching trip to China. He also welcomed Rev. R.J. Kampen as observer.

Adoption of the agenda

The proposed agenda was adopted.

Question period (Art. 44 CO)

The chairman asked the questions according to Art. 44 of the Church Order. Each of the churches indicated that the ministry of the office-bearers was being continued, the decisions of the major assemblies were being honoured and that they did not require the judgement and help of Classis for the proper government of their church.

Correspondence

Classis entered closed session to deal with an appeal. The appeal that was submitted was declared admissible. Classis entered into discussion regarding the appeal. The appeal was denied.

Reports

The Deputies for Contact with Neighbouring Classes/Presbyteries submitted a written report on their attendance at the meeting of Classis Ontario-East (URCNA) on Sept. 22, 2016 at the Trinity ORC in St. Catharines, Ontario. Minutes of that classis were also shared. They make special note of Rev. J. Bouwers' (member of CERCU – Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity) response to their greeting in which he shared that despite recent overtures to the URCNA Synods, CERCU is convinced of the necessity of ongoing contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches. The report is received with gratitude.

Appointments

According to the schedule, the church of Spring Creek is appointed as the convening church for the next classis. It will be convened, D.V., on Sept. 13, 2017 (or if deemed not necessary then, Dec. 13, 2017). The suggested officers are Rev. D. Wynia as chairman, Spring Creek delegate as vice-chairman, and Rev. J. Van Woudenberg as clerk.

Personal question period

Personal question period was not made use of.

Brotherly censure (Art. 34 CO)

With gratitude the chairman noted the good harmony at the meeting and deemed brotherly censure not necessary.

Adoption of the Acts and approval of the Press Release

The Acts were read and adopted and the Press Release approved for publication.

Closing

The chairman closed the meeting by requesting the singing of Psalm 24:2, 3, 4 and leading in prayer.

*For Classis Niagara June 21, 2017,
Rev. Rolf den Hollander
Vice-president at that time* 