

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

V 66 N 17 SEPTEMBER 8 2017



Humbly bow before God's Word

READERS FORUM

CLARION KIDS

YOU ASKED



Eric Kampen
Minister of the Canadian Reformed
Church at Orangeville, Ontario
rev.e.kampen@gmail.com

The Church as a Body as God has Arranged

When it comes to the church, we may think globally (catholic), but we must act locally

September is the month when life returns to its regular routines, including the life of the church, with the resumption of meetings, catechism classes, and many other activities. It is a good time to reflect on the way the Apostle Paul compares the church to a body in 1 Corinthians 12. It is not only good, but very necessary. There is the constant danger of losing sight of the church as a body where God has arranged the members of this body (1 Cor 12:18). We will first briefly review the point Paul is making by calling the church a body, before moving on to some implications and applications.

Body language

When you read through 1 Corinthians 12, you quickly learn that Paul uses body language to impress on his readers the unity of the church. From the first chapter of this letter, it is obvious that there was a lack of unity in Corinth. Paul indicates that as a body has many members, so the many members of the church form one body. In verse 13, Paul mentions the unity in the Spirit among members of different ethnic and social backgrounds. He writes this after having pointed out how the Spirit has given a variety of spiritual gifts and abilities for the common good, or, we could say, for the good of the body. It is the diversity in a body that is essential for it to function. As it is made clear that there is great diversity in the church ethnically, socially, and in terms of abilities, Paul brings out that this diversity is the work of God. When he concludes speaking of spiritual gifts, he writes that the Spirit “apportions to each one individually as he wills” (v. 11). A little further, he writes, “But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them as he chose” (v. 18). A few verses later, after having explained how there are more and less presentable parts in the church, just as in a body, he writes, “But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to

the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another” (v. 24, 25).

With this basic information fresh in our mind, we can consider some implications and applications for our life as local churches.

Act locally

First, Paul is not speaking of the catholic church, but the local church. Paul’s words impress on us that as a body is a very distinct entity, with many parts belonging to a very specific body, so believers belong to a particular congregation. This is important to stress over against the idea that if you believe in Jesus, you belong to his church, but there is no need for attachment to a specific local congregation. When it comes to the church, we may think globally (catholic), but we must act locally. As body parts can’t exist in isolation from the body, believers can’t exist in isolation from a local church body.

Some may question this by pointing to a man like the Ethiopian eunuch, or those who come to faith while imprisoned, or in some place where there are no other believers, but we are speaking here of the norm. Members of the body can’t exist apart from others. The general principle is that those who come to know Christ usually do so through contact with other believers, and those who come to know the Lord will desire to be part of the local body of Christ.

Following God’s leading

Second, we have to think through how God arranges the members of the body as he chooses. If we look at our own bodies, each part has been designed by God and put into the specific package of our body. We didn’t go shopping in the body parts store. It is God who has made us male or

female. In God's providence, we are born as member of a certain ethnic group. It is God who has assigned us our abilities. We are called to work with who we are and what God has given us and the parts of our body have to fulfill their role.

This is true for the body of the church as well. In Old Testament times, God's people were organized by tribes, clans, and families. In the New Testament age, churches were established in specific cities. Paul wrote his letters to specific bodies of believers. If you lived in Corinth,

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

We read in the Bible that the church is the body of Christ, and that God arranges us the members (1 Cor 12). Our editorial from Rev. Eric Kampen speaks to the implications of following (or not following) God's lead as we organize our local church.

Over the past few issues we have had several articles from Dr. Cornelis Van Dam on Synod Meppel's decision to allow women in office in our Dutch sister churches. In this issue readers may find "The Justification for Female Ministers in Our Sister Churches."

We have a League Day report from Yarrow, BC that includes a summary of the speech, "Humility and Our Anxious Hearts."

Issue 18 includes columns Treasures New and Old, Clippings on Politics and Religion, You Asked, and *Clarion* Kids. There is a Readers Forum article that addresses the concern of the looming shortage of ministers in our federation. We also have a letter to the editor.

Laura Veenendaal

- 498 EDITORIAL**
The Church as a Body as God has Arranged
- 501 TREASURES, NEW & OLD**
All Scripture is God-breathed
- 502 The Justification for Female Ministers in Our Sister Churches**
- 505 CLIPPINGS ON POLITICS AND RELIGION**
- 506 READERS FORUM**
- 507 Women's League Day – Yarrow, BC**
- 510 CLARION KIDS**
- 511 YOU ASKED**
- 513 LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal
Coeditors: P.H. Holtvliuwer, E. Kampen, C. Van Dam, M. VanLuik

ADDRESS FOR MAGAZINE CONTENT

Clarion
8 Inverness Crescent, St. Albert, AB T8N 5J5
Email: editor@clarionmagazine.ca

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

CLARION
Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, MB Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: 204-663-9000, Fax: 204-663-9202

Subscriptions subscriptions@clarionmagazine.ca
Advertisements ads@clarionmagazine.ca
Website www.clarionmagazine.ca

2017 SUBSCRIPTION RATES

			Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada			\$49.00*	\$ 82.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds			\$69.00	\$102.00
International			\$98.00	\$171.00

*Applicable GST, HST, PRT taxes are extra.
GST/HST no. 890967359RT

Cancellation Agreement

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.

2017 ADVERTISING RATES

Advertisements: \$20.00 per column inch
Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$21.00 per column inch.
We reserve the right to refuse ads.

PUBLISHER

Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

We acknowledge the financial support
of the Government of Canada.



Agreement No. 40063293; ISSN 0383-0438

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

you belonged to the church at Corinth. We could say that God used the geographic principle for local church bodies.

This geographic principle prevailed for much of history. You see it reflected in the idea of a parish. In other parts of Europe, they may have used different words, but the idea was the same. A parish was a certain territory. If you lived in that territory, you belonged to the church in that territory. This principle was maintained in the Reformation. This made good sense too, for when you have to walk everywhere, you are not going to walk further than necessary.

Scenario 1

There will be challenges in following this pattern in our time which has a severe case of Protestant split-ends. One wonders, though, if the principle that God arranges the members of the body as he chooses is applied as faithfully as possible as we live together as a church federation. For instance, when a congregation experiences the blessing of growth to the point that it is decided to institute a new congregation, generally, the division is drawn along geographic lines. At the same time, people are given a choice to join the newly instituting church or remain a member of the original congregation, even though they live in the territory of the new congregation. Someone may say, “I have been a member there all along,” or, “some of my children are there,” or, “I’ve been part of a new church two times already, I don’t want to do it again,” or, “I like the minister we have just fine,” or some other reason. It may all sound nice and well, and consistories will want to be compassionate, but, the truth is that now members arrange themselves into a body.

We can also see this in situations where people move into the territory of another congregation, not too far from their previous congregation. They may have reasons for staying. Or, they move into the territory of a certain congregation, but there are other congregations not that far away. They may also have reasons for not wanting to join the congregation into whose territory they have moved. Perhaps it is too liberal for their liking, or too conservative. Perhaps the minister of the congregation does not have the pizzazz they are used to. It may be too small, and for them size means something. It may not offer enough programs. Whatever it may be, it is the case that it is no longer God who arranges, but members arrange themselves.

Scenario 2

Another example comes to mind, when a church is organized not according to geography but mindset. It is visional, rather than spatial. Perhaps in a large congregation, a significant number would really like to worship using the A liturgy, and have the minister assign no more than one hymn

per service. Further, they only want members who are well versed in all Reformed doctrines, and who are engaged in political activism. In another situation, a significant number thinks they can address the size issue in a congregation by gathering all those who are mission minded. In neither case is the organizing principle geographic. It is not the case that God arranges a body, but likeminded people arrange a body. What we, in effect, have now is a genetically modified body, no longer showing the diversity of the body. It has an excess of certain parts, at the expense of others that don’t suit its vision of the body. In fact, they don’t want members who don’t share their vision. We might even be able to label such churches as “designer churches.” Whatever the situation may be, a church is no longer organized spatially but visionally. In situations like that, it is very well possible that members of the same church federation pass each other on Sunday morning, going to the church of their choice.

A matter of the heart

I realize I may have hit a sensitive nerve in the two scenarios. Yet, I trust that as readers, you will grant the point that Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 12 describe the way it should be, the ideal. One could counter that in this life, we deal with the real. If we would pursue ideal, it would cause a lot of grief, with consistories setting border lines and enforcing them. I assure you that I know the real and the grief. I’ve had my share of border incidents.

What I would plead for is that we have a look at our heart. It is a matter of the heart to humbly bow before God’s Word. Through his servant Paul, God has taught us that he arranges the members of the church body, just as he arranges the members of our physical body. When it comes to our physical body, the parts have no choice but to cooperate. That’s the point that also comes out when it comes to being members of the body of a local church. You look around and see who God has put together. It is an amazing mix of people, ethnically, socially, as well as in terms of talents and abilities. As it is an amazing mix, it is also an awkward mix of sinners being sanctified. It should not escape our notice that the chapter about the church as a body if followed by the chapter about the greatest gift, love. We need to look around at those whom the Lord has gathered into a local body and impress upon ourselves: These are the ones Christ loves, these are the members of his body at this place. And then we should tell ourselves: Let me know do my utmost to live together in love and harmony with them, to do my part to build up this body.

As we head into another busy season, let us strive to live as a Spirit regenerated body of believers, the body God has arranged as *he* chose.



All Scripture is God-breathed

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. . . ." 2 Timothy 3:16

This meditation was originally published in this magazine in 2005.

These words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy give us perspective as we begin a new season of organized Bible study.

In 2 Timothy the Apostle Paul was encouraging Timothy in his work of preaching the gospel in Ephesus. Paul warned Timothy that he would face opposition – false teachings and teachers, and immoral lifestyles, also in the midst of God's people. In that context, Paul urged Timothy to continue preaching and teaching the Scriptures. Nothing must deter him.

In this text Paul explains why the Scriptures are so important. They have an exalted character, and are very powerful.

Their exalted character is that they are God-breathed. The Bible was clearly written by people – for example, Moses, David, and Luke. That all Scripture is God-breathed means that the words these men wrote were written under the guidance of God. To give an example, David endured terrible suffering and anguish at the hands of Saul and other enemies. David wrote down how this treachery made him feel. But God was guiding the circumstances that David experienced and the way he wrote about those experiences, so that the Psalms we now have are the very words of God through David.

Therefore, the Bible has absolute authority. Other books need to be read critically. Does the author do justice to the topic? Can I believe everything he wrote? But the Bible is what God has said – and he is the God who does

not lie. His Word must be believed, accepted, and obeyed. Scripture is the final authority, because it is what the almighty, all-wise God has said.

It is useful for teaching. That means it is the Word of God which teaches God's people true doctrine. Particularly because the world is full of heresies and false teachings it is so necessary that God's people be taught sound doctrine. For then they are able to be on guard against the tempting heresies that attack the church.

The Scriptures are useful for rebuking. The word used here has the sense not only of rebuking but of actually being convincing in your rebuke. It is one thing to rebuke someone. The Lord Jesus Christ was often accused of sins, but those accusations did not convict his conscience or make him feel guilty, because he had no sin. To be rebuked in the sense of our text means to be brought to genuine knowledge of your sins in such a way that you know the accusations are just. The powerful Word of God will reach into our hearts and convict us of sin.

The Scriptures are useful for correction. They are powerful to change us, exposing what is wrong in our doctrine and conduct and also directing us back to the right path. They point us to Jesus Christ, and direct our faith and life to him.

Finally, the God-breathed Scriptures are useful for training in righteousness. God's Word has the power to teach us about the lifestyle that is pleasing to the Lord, about what are

appropriate activities and habits and entertainment for the child of God and what are not.

This was important encouragement for Timothy in his work as an office-bearer. No matter the opposition or the pressure to tone down the message, no matter the temptation to find other methods to work change among God's people, Timothy had to remain steadfast in preaching and teaching the complete Word of God. That is how God's people would be brought to repentance and daily increase in obedience.

It is for us to apply this truth also in our Bible study. For us to be servants of God fully equipped to serve him in all good works (v. 17), we need to be instructed, rebuked, corrected, and trained by all parts of the Word of God.

This is a task that will often require hard work. One passage of God's Word may seem more useful than another. But the promise of God's Word is that all Scripture is God-breathed – a list of names in a genealogy, a historical account about David and Saul, a passage from a New Testament letter – and it is all useful. He is the all-wise God who knows all that we need to know. His Word will equip us to be faithful servants in the midst of all the challenges that will come our way. With this conviction in mind we can eagerly begin a new study season, as we saints assist each other in being equipped by the God-breathed Word for a life full of good works.



The Justification for Female Ministers in Our Sister Churches

Cornelis Van Dam
*Professor emeritus of Old Testament
at the Canadian Reformed
Theological Seminary
in Hamilton, Ontario
cvandam@canrc.org*



Synod Meppel of our Dutch sister churches approved the ordination of women to all ecclesiastical offices. We previously considered its arguments for the ordination of female elders and found them unconvincing. This synod also declared that there were biblical grounds for the ordination of women to the office of minister of the Word. Five arguments were given. Let us briefly consider each one of them.

Prophetesses

Synod's first ground was that:

The Old Testament already makes mention of prophetesses (Exod 15:20-21; Judg 4:4-7; 2 Kings 22:14) or of prophetic activity by women (1 Sam 2:1-10). In the New Testament also, already before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we read of prophetic activity by women. We note Mary and her Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55). We also read of Anna, who prophesied together with Simeon on the occasion of the infant Jesus' presentation in the temple, and who served the Lord day and night in the temple (Luke 2:36-38).

In an earlier *Clarion* article (July 28, 2017), we saw how Miriam (Exod 15:20-21) and Deborah (Judg 4:4-7), who both functioned as prophetesses, were exceptional both in their place in the history of redemption as well as with the specific content of their prophetic office. Their work cannot function as a paradigm and ground for female participation in the office of the elder, including that of the teaching elder, the minister of the gospel. The appearance of the prophetess Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14) and the mention of Isaiah's wife as a prophetess (Isa 8:3) are also rare exceptions in the midst of the many male prophets that are mentioned elsewhere. Indeed, apart from the examples just mentioned there are no other instances of true prophetesses in the Old Testament. Mary's song of praise or Magnificat has similarities

with the Old Testament song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10), but like Hannah, she, too, is not called a prophetess. With respect to Anna, the prophetess, her prophetic activity consisted of "worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day" in the temple. When Jesus was presented, "she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:37-38).

All the instances of prophetesses underline the fact that God is able to raise up whomever he wishes for special service. But such instances do not form a pattern for us to follow, especially if God gives clear guidelines for the office of teaching elder elsewhere in Scripture (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-8). Synod's first justification for admitting women to the ministerial office is therefore not convincing.

The next three grounds all deal with prophesying.

Prophesying in the New Testament church

The second argument which Synod Meppel used to justify female ordination into the office of minister of the Word is as follows.

The fulfillment of the promise of Pentecost (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18) is that sons and daughters, old and young, will share in the gift of prophecy. The New Testament displays that reality. On the day of Pentecost the apostles, together with other disciples, among whom possibly women (Acts 1:14), anointed by the Holy Spirit, acted as Jesus' witnesses (Acts 1:8; 2:4-8). Other places, too, make mention of women who prophesied (Acts 21:9; 1 Cor 11:4-5).

When Peter proclaimed that Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled (Acts 2:17-18), he was explaining the striking phenomenon that all the believers, young and old, male and female, were telling "the mighty works of God" (Acts 2:11). Thus, prophesying as explained by Peter is telling the great acts

of God. One can say that by receiving the Spirit-given ability to tell the saving deeds of God to others, all believers are thus equipped to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. In this sense, all believers have the prophetic office and calling. As we confess in the Heidelberg Catechism, we share in Christ's anointing and as prophets we "confess his name" (LD 12). However, the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy on the day of Pentecost involved more than this general prophetic office of all believers.

The context of Peter's referencing Joel's prophecy is that the Holy Spirit came down upon the believers and they "began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). The result was that when people came to see what was happening they heard the mighty works of God each in their own language (Acts 2:8, 11). In response to those who mocked this speaking in other tongues, the Apostle Peter declared that Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled. Thus, not only the gift of prophecy but also of tongues were involved in this fulfillment.

In light of the above, one cannot use Joel's prophecy to justify female ordination. The fulfillment of this prophecy does not address it. Furthermore, when it comes to spreading the gospel in an official capacity, Christ did specifically address the apostles to be his witnesses (Acts 1:8; Mark 16:13; Luke 24:48; cf. Acts 13:31, 47; Col 1:23).

Synod's second argument also mentions "women who prophesied (Acts 21:9; 1 Cor 11:4-5)." This brings us to Synod's third and fourth grounds.

The third ground for the ordination of female pastors is: "the meaning of Scripture is that *'the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation'* (1 Cor 14:3). This manner of prophesying applies to both men and women."

The fourth ground for female ministers is that "New Testament prophecy, as to its content, has always been understood within the Reformed tradition as the explanation of Scripture, and a Spirit-guided application to the present day, specifically in the preaching."

When considering these grounds, the key question is what is meant by prophesying in the passages that the synodical decision references? To answer that question, we will especially concentrate on 1 Corinthians, since this is where the biblical proof for the third ground comes from. Prophecy is a special gift of the Spirit (1 Cor 14:1, 14) which was given to both men and women (1 Cor 11:4-5; also cf. Acts 21:9). It involves giving revelation from God. This is evident from the close association of prophecy and revelation in 1 Corinthians 14. The apostle instructs: "Let two or three prophets speak,

and let others weigh what is said. If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" (1 Cor 14:29-32). These verses form part of the Apostle Paul's instruction for orderly worship. Significantly, he earlier introduced this section by writing: "When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up" (1 Cor 14:26). By including "revelation" he clearly alludes to prophesying as his subsequent instructions show (vv. 29-32).

The revelatory character of prophecy is also seen by the apostle's closely associating the gift of prophesy with understanding "all mysteries." He wrote: "If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge. . . but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor 13:2). A mystery is that which God needs to reveal. It is hidden to human beings. The Apostle Paul considered himself to be steward of God's mysteries (1 Cor 4:1), which means that God used him to reveal what would otherwise have been hidden. As he wrote to the Corinthians: "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Cor 15:51-52). Similarly, he wrote to the Roman Christians: "I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (Rom 11:25-27).

Dr. Richard Gaffin, emeritus professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, has shown in more detail than is possible here that the revelation given by the prophets in the New Testament church was "on a par and of one piece with the inspired revelation received and proclaimed by Paul and the other apostles." Furthermore, revelation given through prophecy did not address "individualistic, purely localized interests, but concerns, along with apostolic revelation, the salvation in Christ with its rich and manifold implications for the faith and life of the church."¹ Thus, it is not difficult to see that "the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation" (1 Cor 14:3).

It needs to be recognized, however, that such a special revelatory prophetic gift was part of the foundation of the church and thus a temporary gift. And so, seeing that "the foundation of the apostles and prophets" has been laid with "Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Eph 2:20), such special prophetic gifts have ceased to be given to the church. As a result, the New Testament passages dealing with prophecy that are mentioned in the decision are not applicable as grounds for female ordination in the church today.²

Is Scripture clear?

Synod's final argument: "While there is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the precise interpretation of the apostolic command to 'be silent,' comparative examination of 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 14:26 shows that in any case this prescription cannot be understood as an absolute prohibition to speak (or preach) in the worship service."

This last argument is premised on the fact that Scripture is not clear since "there is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the precise interpretation of the apostolic command to 'be silent.'" Is this true? The apostle wrote: "When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation" (1 Cor 14:26). These words reflect the situation in the apostolic era when God gave special gifts of revelation and tongues to both male and female (1 Cor 11:4-5). With the completion of the canon of Scripture, there is no reason to think that God will continue to give new authoritative revelation through the gift of prophecy. However, in the apostolic church revelations were received, but one had to be able to distinguish between true and false prophecy or revelation (1 Cor 14:29). In that context, the apostle charged that women were to be silent for judging prophecy could involve exercising authority over a male prophet which was not fitting for women for they "should be in submission" (1 Cor 14:34). The fact that women were to be silent in that particular context was so important that this command was repeated three times (1 Cor 14:34-35).

A basic principle underlying the demand for the silence of women is that they should be in submission in accordance with the creation order as taught in the Law, that is, the Five Books of Moses, and specifically Genesis, chapter 2 (1 Cor 14:34; cf. 11:8-9). Similarly, God's Word elsewhere says: "Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Tim 2:11-13). In other words, it is not fitting for women and their role over against men to speak publicly in church. This inappropriateness is not confined to the apostolic church since the reason for the submission of women is grounded in the order of the creation of male and female.³

In light of the above, Synod Meppel's final argument is unconvincing and does injustice to the clarity of Scripture, especially in light of the Bible's requirements for the

teaching and preaching office as spelled out elsewhere in Scripture (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-8) and the prohibition that a woman may not teach in church (1 Tim 2:12). If one part of Scripture is not completely clear to us, it should be interpreted in light of the more clear passages.

In conclusion

It is very difficult not to sense that the egalitarian culture of our times has had an enormous influence on Synod Meppel's reasoning, especially when one considers that Scripture has clearly reserved the teaching and preaching office for qualified males. In this connection, it is of interest to note that even a secular Jewish historian is not impressed with the so-called biblical arguments typically set forth for the ordination of women into ecclesiastical office. The Bible is simply too clear on the requirement for male ordination into ecclesiastical office. Here is what Yuval Noah Harari had to say in his book *Homo Deus* (Man is God) about the acceptance of gay marriage and female clergy: "Where did this acceptance originate? Not from reading the Bible." He then explains that it came from cultural forces such as Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* or Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto." But true believers cannot admit drawing their ethics from these people,

So they go back to the Bible. . . and make a very thorough search. . . until they find what they need: some maxim, parable or ruling that if interpreted creatively enough means that God blesses gay marriage and that women can be ordained to the priesthood. They then pretend the idea originated in the Bible, when in fact it originated with Foucault. The Bible is kept as a source of authority, even though it is no longer a true source of inspiration."⁴

Need more be said?

¹ Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Perspectives on Pentecost: Studies in New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 62.

² On the foundation character and cessation of the gift of prophecy, see Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 93-102.

³ For more a more detailed biblical discussion than is possible here, see, e.g., George W. Knight III, *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 29-32, 36-40.

⁴ Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (Toronto: Signal, 2015), 275-76, with thanks to Rev. D. de Jong, who alerted me to this passage.



Gospel Balloons Over North Korea

Cornelis Van Dam
Professor emeritus of Old Testament
at the Canadian Reformed
Theological Seminary
in Hamilton, Ontario
cvandam@canrc.org



With tensions rising in the Korean peninsula, the military is on the alert, missiles and other weapons are in a state of readiness, and American warships are positioned off the coast. However, in the midst of all this sabre rattling, there is another struggle going on: the gospel offensive to get portions of the Bible, the sword of the Spirit, into the hands and minds of the inhabitants of North Korea. The “missiles” used to bring the Word of life are balloons.


This initiative has been quietly going on since 1991, when seventy-eight-year-old, North Korean born Oh Mo Duk, with others, prepared balloons for the north. The gospel of Mark, or another portion of Scripture, is attached to the balloon which is filled with helium. Up it goes, but eventually the helium will leak out of the balloon and fall to the ground. Whoever finds it will have the gospel in his or her hands. This work became dubbed as mission Operation Dandelion. As a dandelion needs the wind to spread its seeds, so this operation needs favourable winds to get the gospel north into the hermit atheist state.

The balloons have been released from both land and water. When the weather conditions are right, then typically just before sunset a group of South Korean Christians will go as unnoticed as possible north close to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Under the cover of darkness, they release hundreds of balloons at different locations. Boats have also been used. Balloons launched from the sea are larger and may even hold a Bible, other Christian literature, and a small radio. The radio will enable the one finding the balloon to listen to radio broadcasts which are like church services.

This work has been quietly going on for many years, but it is proving to be too successful for the North Korean government to ignore. The media in North Korea warn against these balloons and according to Dr. Eric Foley, CEO of Voice of Martyrs Korea, the communist state has

requested the South Korean government to forbid the launching of balloons into North Korea. These developments show that the balloons are having an effect. The sword of the Spirit is heading north and changing hearts and lives in spite of the horrific persecution Christians in that country face. Indeed, it has the unenviable reputation of being one of the worst places in the world to be a Christian. Although it is extremely difficult to estimate how many Christians live in North Korea, those best able to judge say about 100,000 is a reasonable figure, of which 30,000 are in prison camps without any prospect of every being free again. The persecution is so harsh that in some cases parents don't even tell their own children that they are Christians because children are compelled to pass on this information at school.

The balloons and the radio broadcasts are a tremendous encouragement to those Christians in the north who are reached by these means. Many of those working to getting the gospel to North Korea have been able to flee from that country and make their way to South Korea. Some of those working on Operation Dandelion are convinced that for North and South Korea to get together, it would have to be by the weapons God has given, and the most important is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Only the gospel can truly unit and heal the bitterness of the past. Such sentiments are not far from the truth. May the Lord continue to bless those labouring to bring his Word of life to that nation in the death throes of atheism, oppression, and fear.

Sources: “Directeur VOM-Korea: Evangelisatie met ballonnen in Noord-Korea succesvol”(May 30, 2017) on the website of *Reformatisch Dagblad*; George Thomas, “Bible ‘Balloon Offensive’ Floats into North Korea” (August 19, 2016) on the website of CBN News. 

New Approach Required

Some concern has been expressed of late by various members of the Canadian Reformed Churches and members of sister churches about the looming shortage of ministers. In the July 23, 2017 of the *Manitoba Church News* (Vol. 26, No. 15), information was presented about demographic issues regarding church growth and ministers to serve in the churches (see under “From the Carman West Congregation”). We read that if trends continue, we may soon see about fifty-five vacancies in Canada, the USA, and Australia. It was also stated that we would need about eighty new students in our theological seminary over the next ten years. The brother who compiled these numbers urged us to think about these things and suggested we should pray about them (Amos 8:11-12).

We also hear voices here and there about the need to split various congregations because of the growth in membership. Vacancies caused by the retirement of ministers also add to the number of vacant congregations. No doubt we are all thankful for the growth in congregations and it is wonderful to see that we have members in all age brackets. In many other denominations, in contrast, there is concern about the lack of young members. While church growth is a reason for much gratitude to God, it should also stimulate us to do long range planning. After all, leadership involves looking ahead.

For some time, I have been contemplating these issues and I wonder if it isn't time for us to try some fresh ideas. Thinking outside the box may help us respond better to the growing need for more ministers of the gospel.

For instance, would it not be a good thing to have career days at our seminary? Businesses, universities, and colleges use such strategies to attract young people for various trades or careers and so it seems it would be good to have our seminary utilize similar methods. To facilitate this sort of thing, the seminary could ask consistories to supply names of young men who may be gifted for ministry. Giving these young men a chance to visit the seminary, meet the professors, and perhaps get a taste of the teaching would make everything more real for prospective stu-

dents. The churches to which these young men belong could finance such a venture.

Another demand on the supply of ministers in our federation is the work of evangelization in places such as Smithers (Prince George), B.C., Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Hamilton, Ontario. Some years ago, the Redeemer CanRC of Winnipeg initiated a mission venture and much effort has gone into attracting a minister for this endeavour. Seven calls have been declined while an eighth is undecided at the time of writing.

I wonder if we don't need a new approach. Is it necessary to have an ordained minister for the work of evangelism? Does an evangelist really need to know Greek and Hebrew? Why not have a track of studies at the Seminary that would be aimed at preparing evangelists? One would think that the important areas for an evangelist's training would include a strong knowledge of the Bible, a good grasp of the confessions of the church, a good understanding of our culture, excellent skills in apologetics, communication, and the ability to relate well to many kinds of people.

It can also be mentioned that in the case of the initiative from the Redeemer church in Winnipeg, the evangelist or missionary, if you will, would have the back up of three ordained ministers in the immediate area. This would no doubt provide a very helpful resource for anyone engaged in the work of evangelism.

Finally, in the case of calling an evangelist or missionary, would it not be possible to advertise for this position? Why contact a person who has no real interest in local mission work? Much would need to be fine-tuned with the out-of-the box approaches I have suggested. I don't doubt that we have plenty of wisdom and talent on the seminary faculty and elsewhere among the churches. However, arriving at solutions does need fresh thinking and a willingness to try new methods.

Terry M. Veenendaal
Winnipeg, MB

Woman's League Day

hosted by Yarrow Canadian Reformed Ladies June 7, 2017

We started the sunny June morning with refreshments after a long – or short drive. After some socializing with other women from across Southern BC and Washington (namely: Abbotsford, Aldergrove, Chilliwack, Cloverdale, Langley, Surrey, Vernon, Willoughby Heights, Yarrow, and Lynden!) all 121 ladies came together in the sanctuary of Yarrow Church.

League Day is a day of fellowship for women of all ages to socialize face to face, to hear a speech, to strengthen our knowledge about God and his Word, to be entertained, and to eat lunch. All of this requires a whole league of women working together. Interestingly, one of the meanings of the word “league” is an association of people working towards a common goal. One of our goals as women would be to glorify God in our association with others in our church community.

Yarrow ladies were the host(ess) church so they supplied the venue, food for lunch, and the welcome introduction. Willoughby supplied the Introducer, Alida Vanderhorst and the speaker, Sara Kingma. Abbotsford supplied the discussion leaders for the groups that were dispersed throughout the church after the speech. Aldergrove and the Chilliwack ladies supplied the delicious baking. And finally, Lynden supplied the afternoon entertainment.

Devotions

We began with the singing of Hymn 4, ending with “Yours be all honour, yours the power and glory, now and forever.”

Lorraine Louwerse, of the Yarrow congregation, began by reading from Acts 7:17-36, where it speaks about Moses and his life. As a baby he was to be drowned in the river, as a young man he was brought up as an Egyptian with power, as a man he was a murderer, and finally he became a sojourner in exile where the Lord taught him humbleness. Moses was trembling in fear by the time God called him from the burning bush to lead his people out of Egypt. He left his Egyptian home because he felt the divine call to help his people. This was pride; he thought his people knew he was their deliverer.



He thought he had all the knowledge and power he needed to help his people. Instead, after becoming a murderer, Moses ran away to Midian for another forty years, where he was stripped of his powers and privileges until God made Moses ready to be his humble servant and lead his people out of Egypt. Moses found favour in God's sight as a foreign shepherd in a foreign land. Moses was considered more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth (Num 12:3). His humility ran so deep that he made the excuse he was not enough. Those who humble themselves will be answered by God saying, “I AM.” Moses wanted to see more of God's glory. God allowed this by passing over him while Moses was in a rock cleft. Jesus is the rock of our salvation. Christ humbled himself so that we could be raised up by him (Col 3). Let us humble ourselves and seek his presence.

We may remember Moses as a powerful leader of the exodus, the Red Sea parting, and the giving of the Ten Commandments, but God does not see what he does but who he was. God sees our hearts. God saw a humble Moses willing to serve and wanting to see more of God's glory. God gives grace to the humble.

We then prayed and sang Hymn 49.

Speech

Alida Vanderhorst introduced Sara Kingma as a young woman with many abilities. She was born in Winnipeg and schooled in Edmonton, where she received a music degree. She met her husband at Stepping Stones Bible Camp and married Raoul Kingma. They have two adorable little boys and will be moving to Hamilton soon, where Raoul hopes to go into the ministry.

Sara's speech is titled "Humility and Our Anxious Hearts." She began by saying we all struggle with the cares and worries of this life. We feel shame, judgment, guilt, depression, and anxiety. We feel we are the worst mom, or have the ugliest cloths, or never perform well enough at work or at home. How can we find peace? We must remember who we are and who we are not. We also have the most important example of humility in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Humility is mentioned second to love in the Word of God. Our church father Augustine said that the precepts of Christian religion is: first humility, second humility, and third humility. Humility is foundational to our Christian lives! It is a Christian virtue that we must not only talk about but also meditate on. In Ephesians 4:1-2 we are told to walk in a manner with all humility and gentleness and be eager to maintain unity of Spirit in the bond of peace. 1 Peter 5:5-7 says to clothe yourselves with humility toward one another and Phillipians 2:3 says do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit and count others more significant. 1 Peter 5:5-7 tells us not only to be humble but to strive to be humble. Four ways: 1) God opposes the proud; 2) God gives grace to the humble; 3) God exalts the humble at the proper time; and 4) God cares for and grants rest for the humble from anxiety. Humility is a confession of emptiness that receives grace.

What does it mean to be humble? Humility is opposite pride. Pride is a belief that we can be God. We want to be in control of our lives with decisions about boyfriends, work, travel, etc. Pride says that making our plans give us control and guarantee success. Genesis 3:5 was the first act of pride. The fall into sin. We think we can be like God. Genesis 11:4 is the building of the tower of Babel. They wanted to make a name for themselves but they had their heads stuck in the clouds so God confuses the language and disperses the people all over the earth as a direct result of their pride. In Jeremiah 13:9-10 God says he will destroy the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. Pride does not give credit to God. Just like in Daniel 4:30, where Nebuchadnezzar builds Babylon by his own power and for his own glory and majesty. God makes him eat grass like an ox until he knows who is the Most High. Nebuchadnezzar praises God the King of Heaven and says that *his* works are right and those who walk in pride God is able to humble (Dan 4:37).



We have jobs and make money, we buy shoes or the perfect dress, and we give credit to ourselves for everything. We easily forget that our heavenly God provides for us. We are scared to leave it all in his hands because we easily become blind to God's mighty works and would rather give ourselves credit. We cannot be proud and trust in God at the same time. God is always in control.

The correct understanding of pride teaches us what humility is. But solely using pride to define humility misses how humility is expressed. Humility is not just the absence of pride but the presence of something. The character of humility is expressed in Matthew 5 in Jesus's Sermon on the Mount where it lists the Beatitudes. Poor in spirit, humble, meek, hunger and thirst for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peace-makers. Embracing that God is God and we are not, that is good!

Our hunger and thirst for righteousness caps the first three beatitudes. God moves our emptiness into fullness in him and the gospel. We are righteous before God because Christ was. We daily pursue righteousness as a sinner dependent on God.

Humility is blessing those who persecute you. Do not look to your own self interest and stop seeing how everything affects you and your comfort. In dealing with others: stop belittling, stop exasperating, stop pushing buttons but seek unity in everything! The Beatitudes give a picture of what humility looks like. Persecution will follow. Jesus's humility led him to the cross and our humility will lead us there too. Our humility must be Christ-like and come from him alone.

Matthew 11:28-20, Jesus says to come to him and you will find rest for your souls. Our society burdens us with having the perfect family, being the perfect mom, and having a picture-perfect life. Our pride then makes us think we have to do it better and more. Then we become stressed and anxious. The yoke of slavery is fatal and we need to be reminded that we have been set free (Gal 5:1).

In John 13:3-5, Christ washed his disciple's feet as a servant even though he knew that he was equal with God. And he became obedient to death on a cross (Phil 2:8). This is the greatest act of love and humility! God came to this earth to be a servant. He restored humanity by exalting Christ so that every knee should bow. We are called to be on our knees. Humility is not to be achieved but flows out of the heart, for the mouth speaks what the heart is full of (Luke 6:45). You are or you are not humble.

In John 15 Jesus teaches us that he is the true vine. If we abide in him we can bear fruit. We can do nothing without Him. We must become part of him to reflect him. Jesus comes to us! We cannot humble ourselves, so he humbles himself. He is the model and means of humility and shows us our true identity through his life. We can easily think that we are larger than we really are and on top of that we think others should think this too! When we find out from everyday occurrences or a Facebook page from another person, that we are not better, we get worried and depressed. Why do other people's lives disturb us so much? C. S. Lewis said, "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only of having more than the next man." Humility reminds us of our limits. We are not and are never meant to be divine. God is God and we are not. And that is good!

From God, through God, and to God are *all* things! To God be the glory forever.

After the speech, all the ladies broke into smaller groups into meeting areas throughout the church. Abbotsford supplied a discussion leader in each group and asked questions like: We tend to think humble people are always nice. But can a humble person be offensive at times? (Matt 12:34, 17:17, John 8:44, Gal 2:11-14, 3:1); When life becomes easy, what often happens to our walk with God? How does God

respond? (Deut 32:15, 1 Cor 11:32, Hebr 12:6-8, Prov 3:12); In what area are you most likely to struggle with humility? Where do you tend to judge other people most? In what ways are you overly self-focused, either with anxiety, pride, insecurity, self-promotion, or worry? And one last sample question: How much time do you spend each day seeking him by reading and meditating on his Word? What will you do to spend more time in prayer and in the Word? (Ps 1, 119, John 17:17, Phil 4:8).

Afternoon

After the group discussions all the ladies gathered together in the auditorium to sing the Women's League Day Song (R. Koat) and have lunch devotions. The appetizing buffet lunch line was organized by the "cooks" of Yarrow church. After eating a fulfilling amount of delicious and nutritious food, the women went back into the sanctuary to discuss our questions (and answers) about humility in a large group with the speaker Sara Kingma and her helper Alida Vanderhorst. They did an excellent job of responding to the questions and gave answers that were both helpful and enlightening.

After lunch, the women were treated with entertainment from the Lynden fisherwomen. The three women, Stephanie Bareman, Jeanette Bouwman, and Janet Brown, came walking in decked out in full fishing gear with fishing rods as well. One was too busy to fish but came along anyway, one was afraid of fishing wrong, and one kept bringing the fish in. The conversation led to the reasons some of us do not fish anymore. Its messy, time consuming, and the fish don't always bite. These excuses are very similar when we are called to build God's kingdom; we give excuses like: life is too busy at home, or too busy on Facebook, or because no one wants to hear them. We, as fisherwomen, may feel inadequate and feel like others are more effective in calling others to God and his Word, but ultimately we all should encourage one another in our task here on earth to be fisherwomen and gather in those who are willing to bite and hear the gospel. We must be positive and believe that the great Fisherman supplies the rest. Never mind the Facebook statuses, overcome your fears and get back in the boat with all the other fisherwomen!

The skit ended with much laughter and applause!

Wendy Winkelaar closed with prayer at 2:30 pm and with singing of the song "Go now in peace; Know he will guide you in all you do; Reach out to others so all the world can see."

Next year's 2018 duties ~ Hosting: Chilliwack; Baking: Langley/Abbotsford; Speaker: Aldergrove; Discussion Leaders: Lynden; and Entertainment: Cloverdale.



Listening to Your Parents

Proverbs 1:8-9, 6:20-23, 22:6

"Hear, my son, your father's instruction,
and forsake not your mother's teaching."

There are many places in the Bible where God says that it is important to listen to your parents. God gave you parents so that they could teach you about Him, and to keep you safe and healthy. It's your parents' job to tell you everything you need to know about God and what he wants you to do. It's not always easy to obey your parents, but that's the job God has given you to do.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord,
for this is right." – Ephesians 6:1

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



Crossword Puzzle

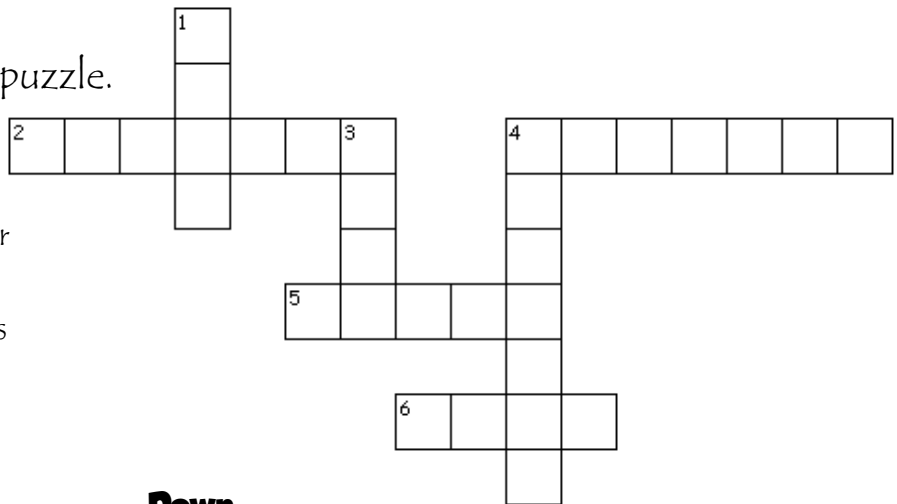
Solve the clues to fill in the puzzle.

Across

2. God wants you to listen to your _____.
4. Do not _____ your mother's teaching.
5. Your parents _____ you about God.
6. Children obey your parents in the _____.

Down

1. It's your job to _____ your parents.
3. Your parents keep you _____ and healthy.
4. Hear, my son, your _____' instruction.



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



Q What does the sanctification of the day of rest entail?

God said we shall rest on the Sabbath, yet it has become acceptable to go to the airport and fly to another city so we can be in another location for the Monday. Why do we not work on Sundays but have no problem letting someone else work on that day? How can we best show our neighbour in our walk and talk on the Sunday that we belong to the LORD?

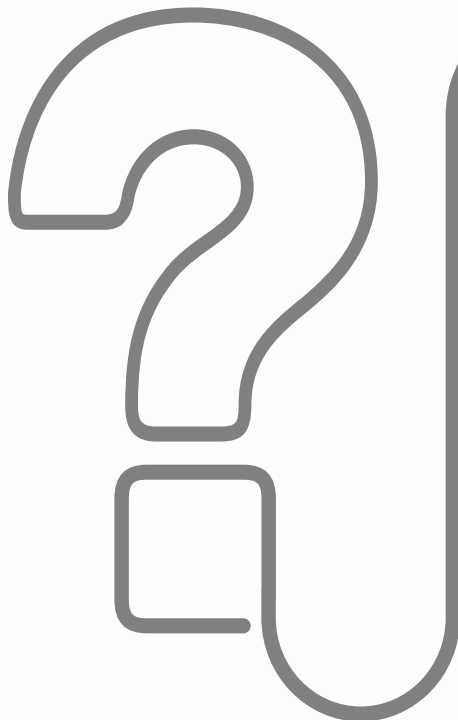
A The questioner correctly refers to the Scripture and the confessions that the “day of rest” is a day in which we shall not do any work. Our day of worship is also today a “day of rest” according to the fourth commandment, which is still in force for the new covenant dispensation. This day must be consecrated to worship; hence we should rest from all servile works, except those required in our love and care for the neighbour and such service that is necessary in our present society for the defense and protection of our fellow men. This sanctification of the Lord’s Day includes that we refrain from all such recreations as interfere with worship. The entire day is the Lord’s Day. Having said this, though, the Sunday observance today does differ from that in earlier times of the church. In today’s society a police officer, a nurse, a minister, a fireman, a farmer, those working in public transportation, in utility companies, in laboratories, on snow plows, you name it, there are many labours of necessity today that were unknown fifty years ago. It has become hard to judge what’s truly necessary or not; reservation in judgment is called for! Even though certain services may be necessary, those who are engaged in it, however, should still make every effort exerting themselves to defend and expand the Sunday rest still permitted.

This, generally speaking, still is the common understanding in the Reformed churches and has been maintained this way to this very day. It has been and still is today a “problem” to fill in the exact details of what would be allowed or what not, especially regarding activities that are not necessary but pertain to those considered recreational. In the Old Testament, the LORD gave his people Israel many a directive for the sanctification of this day, rules about travelling a Sabbath day’s journey, the nature of works that show the LORD’s love and care for the neighbour and the animals for instance. In the NT we read about rules and regulations the Pharisees had put in place to make it even more specific than what the LORD had regulated. The Lord Jesus, however, refuted these man-made rules and ignored them, while also the Apostle Paul instructed the churches that there should be no strict humanly imposed stipulation about the “day of rest” (Col 2:16, 17). As a result, the actual practice of recreations has been a point of discussion or controversy, which at one time in the history of the church was characterized as those condoned by the “lenient” and those allowed by “the strict.” The differences between the “lenient” and the “strict” has been a matter of Christian freedom most of the time, in which we should avoid binding the consciences of fellow members.

In my own experience, when serving in the army in The Netherlands, travelling back to my station on Sunday

evening in order to be present for duty on Monday morning was accepted by some and rejected by others. The former considered the value of being in the home congregation on the Lord's Day higher than spending the day in the barracks or away from the church; and the end of the "day of rest" was considered the time when boarding the train. The latter stressed the aspect of "rest" and sufficed with the reading of a sermon in the barracks or recommended attending a church elsewhere. Another example to illustrate the decisions that had to be made in the freedom of one's Christian conscience pertained to spending the holidays in a hotel outside the country, there to be served with the regular meals that others received as well; while others decided to refrain from any participation in this hotel, read a sermon, prepared a sandwich on Saturday, and "rested" the entire day in the room or spend some time going for a walk. There is difference between a situation that is exceptional, during the holidays only for instance, and those that are more of a regular nature.

In today's world and society it has become a challenge to observe and keep the "day of rest" as day of worship, as feast day to be celebrated in the communion of saints and the family, and to distinguish between activities done during the week (swimming, playing hockey) and those that are more in line with a restful and festive use of the "day of rest." The challenge to live in Christian freedom, with a clear and good conscience, walking by the Spirit, crucifying the flesh rather than using the freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, etc. when it pertains to the sanctification of the "day of rest," will be with us till the Lord returns. The last word has not been spoken about it, and this also won't be the final answer to the question about the observance of the Lord's Day. As we consider these challenges and examine our conscience and our ways, it will be good to look with James (1:25) into the perfect law, the law of liberty, persevering, not as hearer of the law only who forgets but as a doer who acts, in order that we be blessed as we learn to live in the glorious liberty of the children of God!



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

Ask us a question!

Please direct questions to Rev. W. denHollander

denhollanderw@gmail.com

23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0

Response to Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer's articles "I'm not a Reader" and "The Reading Habit"

Thank you Rev. Holtvlüwer for your article highlighting the importance of reading, and for offering a way forward for those who are not readers by nature.

My husband Peter and I grew up as avid readers, and have for the most part passed the love of reading to our children, who are all adult by now. They have quite different interests. Some read, but don't read novels; they prefer non-fiction, manuals, how-to-books, theology, and philosophy. I would like to suggest some other possibilities besides the actual reading of books that we have learned from our children.

One of our sons downloads lots of sermons, theological speeches, and courses and listens while working (he's a landscaper). He and his brothers developed this habit while in university, working in landscaping maintenance as their summer job. It relieved the boredom of sitting on a mower all day, and was certainly preferred over day-long music or commercial radio. Today's possibilities with smart phones, podcasts, and MP3 files are seemingly limitless.

Another son has recently been doing lots of home improvements, and has been listening to recordings of classic novels – Jane Austen and the Brontës, Dickens and Dostoevsky. Your local library will be a great resource for these.

Listening while working is a great option, but what about during a long road trip or a flight to some distant

place? It will likely be more worthwhile than the movie options, or endless solitaire on your tablet or phone.

Another option is to join (or create) an online book club. There is a Facebook group called 26 books to Read in 2017, which has members from Reformed Churches across Canada. So far, it's mostly women (about 130) with one or two men. (Another interesting topic to consider: women reading more than men.) This group chooses the types of books they want to read – twenty-six each year – via a poll in December. Members post a short review as they complete a book, and include a thumbs up or thumbs down. It's a great source for a reading list.

Another possibility, which Rev. Holtvlüwer also mentioned, is a church book club. We had one for several years in in Cloverdale. It was called it Not-a-Novel-Book-Club. We read current theological books and met monthly for discussion. It's currently in hiatus but it was a great way to discuss significant books and topics.

As people of The Book, reading and listening (as noted in Rev. Rob Schouten's article on listening to sermons) needs to become part of our DNA. With the various options available today, it need not be a chore but joy.

Sarah Vandergugten

*Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication.
Submissions need to be less than one page in length.*

