

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

V 67 N 2 JANUARY 26 2018



Retirement of Rev. Henry Versteeg

*CELEBRATING DORT
REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL PREACHING TODAY*

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal
Coeditors: P.H. Holtvliwer, 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

2018 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.

2018 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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The editorial for Issue 2 is by Rev. Eric Kampen. He writes, "It is the 400th anniversary of the Synod of Dort. The decisions of that synod give much food for thought." In this editorial he focuses on one specific outcome of the Synod of Dort: the Church Order.

In this issue we also begin a series on redemptive-historical preaching by Dr. Arjan de Visser. This four-part series starts with an overview of what redemptive-historical preaching really is.

There is a report on Rev. Henry Versteeg's retirement, as well as many of our regular columns: Treasures New and Old, *Clarion Kids*, Education Matters, and Ray of Sunshine.

Laura Veenendaal

CONTENTS

- 31 **EDITORIAL**
Celebrating Dort
- 34 **TREASURES, NEW & OLD**
Fear Not
- 35 **Redemptive-Historical Preaching Today (1)**
- 38 **Retirement of Rev. Henry Versteeg**
- 40 **EDUCATION MATTERS**
- 42 **CLARION KIDS**
- 43 **RAY OF SUNSHINE**



Celebrating Dort

*If you don't put some safeguards in place,
getting rid of the pope in Rome opens the door
to getting a little pope in your local church home*

As Reformed churches, we have been in a celebratory mood for several years. Just last year, we celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Great Reformation. We were reminded of the way Luther's publishing of his Ninety-Five Theses proved to be a decisive event leading to a return to the gospel of grace. By the end of a year of remembering and talking about the Great Reformation, the name of Martin Luther was well known. The five *sola* statements were firmly imprinted on the minds of many. I was pleased to hear young people able to list without too much difficulty, though with imperfect Latin pronunciation, *Solus Christus*, *Sola Gratia*, *Sola Fidei*, *Sola Scriptura*, *Soli Deo Gloria*.

As the Reformation was celebrated in the broader Protestant world, churches with roots in the Reformed stream of the Reformation could celebrate the 450th anniversary of the publishing of the Heidelberg Catechism in 2013. While it may not have received as much attention, in 2011 we had the 450th anniversary of the Belgic Confession. Both have proven to be valuable tools in passing on the gospel message rediscovered in the Great Reformation in their faithful, succinct summaries of the doctrines of Scripture.

If one enjoyed the celebration of these important events in the life of the church, it will be heartening to know that 2018 is another anniversary year. It is the 400th anniversary of the Synod of Dort. The decisions of that synod give much food for thought. That synod came up with a clear defense of the gospel of grace in the Canons of Dort. It also is known for finalizing a set of rules for church life, a church order. Hopefully, many others will be stirred to write articles about this synod. In this editorial, I will focus on the Church Order. The Church Order in use in the Canadian Reformed Churches is based on this Church Order in its principles and structure.

A brief history of the Church Order

It was just mentioned that the Synod of Dort finalized a set of rules for church life. This was the culmination of nearly half a century of development. The beginning of this development can be traced back to the 1560s, when the Reformed faith gained wide acceptance in The Netherlands. Persecution forced many who embraced Reformed teaching to flee The Netherlands. They established refugee congregations in places like London, England, and in German cities such as Wesel and Emden.

In the year 1568, leaders of the Dutch refugee churches held a meeting in the city of Wesel. This is called the "Convent of Wesel." "Convent" has the sense of "convention." It appears that, at this meeting, discussion took place about rules for the life of Reformed churches that could be used once peace was restored in The Netherlands and there would be religious freedom. However, there is no documented proof of this. Further, this meeting did not have any official standing, as it was a meeting of individuals, not delegates from the churches.

A better starting place for the development of a Church Order is in the city of Emden, in Northern Germany. In 1571, a more formal meeting took place in this city, with proper representation of churches. For this reason, it is possible to speak of the Synod of Emden. This synod came up with a concrete set of rules that would serve the churches once the situation improved.

The situation improved much sooner than expected. Though The Netherlands would continue to be in a state of war with the King of Spain, whose territory also included The Netherlands until 1648, by 1572 The Netherlands began to function as an independent country, and the Reformed faith received the support of those in authority. The rules devel-

oped at Emden helped the development of Reformed church life locally, regionally, and nationally. The following decades were a testing time for these rules and they were modified as needed. By the time the Synod of Dort was held, the Church Order already had a track record of nearly half a century. The Synod fine-tuned and finalized it.

The principles of the Church Order

While the Church Order we use reflects various adaptations and modifications with a view to making them suitable for use for Reformed churches in Canada, the structure is identical to the one adopted by Dort and the wording is very similar for many articles. For this article, quotations will be taken from the Church Order currently in use.

When you look at the Church Order, you will not find a specific article spelling out principles. You will, however, notice two principles manifesting themselves. The first is that it opposes hierarchy. The second is that it opposes independentism. To put it differently, it promotes the autonomy of the local congregation, while at the same time recognizing the catholicity of the church, where churches willingly seek to assist each other and be accountable to one another.

First, there is the principle of opposing hierarchy. Hierarchy means “rule by priests.” We see here a rejection of the top-down approach of the Roman church, where the pope is the head of the church, and there is a descending order of authority. Local churches are at the bottom of the chain, as they receive direction from above.

As you read through the articles, you will see evidence of the rejection of hierarchy and the promotion of the autonomy of the local church. The selection of office bearers, for example, is fully a local matter. No outside body can impose elders, deacons, or a minister on a congregation. Access to the pulpit is fully a local matter, requiring consent of the consistory. Broader assemblies have been given jurisdiction in certain matters, but the authority lies with local consistories. Discipline of members and office bearers is fully a local matter.

Second, there is the principle of opposing independentism. The very adoption of a church order suggests an awareness of the danger of going it alone, an awareness that if you don’t put some safeguards in place, getting rid of the pope in Rome opens the door to getting a little pope in your local church home. If we think of the tremendous fragmentation of the churches growing out the Reformation, we see this is a very real threat. There are many Diotrephes-type personalities in the history of the church (see 3 John). In our North American church scene, we see many little

popes building their empires, where their word rules and their ministries are known by their name.

At this point it is good to stress that churches voluntarily indicate they oppose independentism by agreeing with other churches to live under a common set of rules. These rules don’t only deal with situations where the churches interact, but also in their local situations. There is agreement to follow a certain set of rules for electing office bearers. There is agreement on the process of calling ministers and having men enter the ministry. There is agreement on who should preside at meetings, on the frequency of meetings, on the songs to be used during worship, on catechetical preaching, on admission to the Lord’s table, on marriage, on how to go about discipline. To

be sure, there is room for variation, but, at the same time, there are agreed on parameters for how to conduct church life. In this way, churches indicate that they are not going to be led by the whimsy of an innovative minister, or a headstrong elder, or dictatorial consistory. They don’t have to reinvent the wheel and come up with new designs every time there is a change of office bearers. Opposing independentism is simply trying to prevent little popism.

With common accord

Now it could be construed that by adopting a church order, churches in effect make the church order their new pope, and the church order begins to function as a new pope. The Church Order itself indicates that this is contrary to its intent. The final article states that “[t]hese articles ... have been adopted with common accord.” This brings out the awareness that the rules are not absolutes. The last article also states that the articles can be “changed, augmented, or diminished.” Unlike the confessions, the articles are not accompanied by copious Scripture references. Some articles incorporate Scripture references. Some brief reflection on other articles may suggest various Scripture references. It is not always possible, however, to find a text to support an article. Rather, it is the case that the churches have agreed that these are a good set of rules for the promotion of good order in the church. If better ways are found, churches are free to propose changes.

The Church Order is a good tool to keep the church focussed on the real head of the church, our Lord Jesus Christ

While the rules are not absolute and change is possible, and many changes have been made over the years to address new or different situations, it is important to note that the rules have been adopted by common accord. No church is compelled to be part of the federation that lives by these rules. If one is a part of the federation, however, one thereby agrees to these rules. The last article concludes by stating that as long as the rules have not been changed, “no consistory, classis, or regional synod shall be permitted to do so, but they shall endeavor diligently to observe the articles of this Church Order as long as they have not been changed by a general synod.” Churches have given their word. In the life of the churches, that has the power of an oath. Our yes should be yes.

Reread, reflect, recommit

The Church Order, fine-tuned at Dort, has served Reformed churches well for more than 400 years. In this anniversary year, church councils would do well to work their way through the Church Order, rereading it, reflecting on it, and recommitting to the promises to live by these rules. Why not make it a congregational project, where every member re-reads, reflects and recommit to understanding the dual dangers of hierarchy and independentism. We don’t need any popes, big or small. The Church Order is a good tool to keep the church focussed on the real head of the church, our Lord Jesus Christ.



Synod of Dordrecht



Eene vergadering van de nationale Synode te Dordrecht.



Fear Not

Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:10,11

Three times at the beginning of Luke's gospel an angel must calm the fears of one of God's people. First, when Gabriel appeared to Zechariah in the temple he tells the priest, "Do not be afraid." Second, when Gabriel greeted Mary she was greatly troubled at his greeting and he says to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God." Finally, when an angel of the Lord appeared to shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night, and the glory of the Lord shone around, the angel tells them, "Fear not." Three times we see people react in fear when confronted by God's messengers, but their fears are laid to rest and good news is given.

In saying "Fear not," the angel addresses what the shepherds are feeling at that moment. But in his amazing announcement are titles which ought to calm our fears and cause us to experience great joy. We see, particularly in the three titles used by the angel, that our God has sent his Son into the

world so that we would not have to fear his wrath or judgment against us. He desired to reconcile sinful humanity to himself, so that once again we would be able to live in his presence, without fear.

The announcement of "a Saviour" reminds us that God sent his son to save us from the tyranny of our sins. The sins which can cause us to fear God's wrath and justice, which can make us hesitant to approach God, have been wiped away through the work of the one who was born in Bethlehem.

The announcement of one "who is Christ" reminds us that God has sent an anointed one who, among other things, is our great high priest who mediates between us and the Father. During the time between the Old and New Testament the Jews had begun to use the term "Christ" to refer to the special anointed one of God. We do not need to be afraid of approaching our God because at his right hand sits the promised anointed one.

That the child is Christ *the Lord* reminds us that he is one with the Father. In Luke 1:46, 47 Mary sings, "My soul magnifies *the Lord*, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." And in Zechariah's prophesy we hear him tell his son John, "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before *the Lord* to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins" (1:76, 77). These prophecies use the word *Lord* to refer to God and so when this child is called Christ *the Lord* we should not merely take these words to imply that Christ will only be an authoritative figure, these words point towards the true reality that this baby is also our divine *Lord*. He is the God we are all supposed to worship and adore. And being God, he is the perfect one to bring us before his Father; so that we might live with him without fear forevermore.



For Further Study

1. Is our own relationship with the Lord marked primarily by fear or joy?
2. How can we encourage others to find joy in Jesus Christ?
3. What comfort can we draw from our Saviour being born in the city of David?



Redemptive-Historical Preaching Today (Part 1)

Redemptive-historical preaching has been part of the DNA of the Canadian Reformed Churches from the federation's inception in the 1950s. Today, it still is a hallmark of much of the preaching that is delivered from Canadian Reformed pulpits. But things have changed. Church members, especially the younger generation, are much less familiar with the concept of redemptive-historical preaching than the previous generation. And preachers are aware that using the redemptive-historical approach is no guarantee that one's preaching will always be well received.

In a short series of articles, I plan to describe the historical background, the abiding value, and some of the pitfalls of redemptive-historical preaching. In order to do so, we need to look at developments and debates on both sides of the ocean: The Netherlands and North America. It is important to recognize that the Canadian Reformed Churches have their historical origins in The Netherlands, but they have their current context in North America. Therefore, we will not just look at the Dutch heritage but also at the North American context.

What is redemptive-historical preaching?

Let's begin by defining our topic. What is redemptive-historical preaching? It is an approach to preaching that takes into account *the history of salvation as it culminates in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ*. In other words, it focusses on God's plan of salvation for his people, how he promised it, how he put his plan into motion, how he overcame resistance from the side of the devil and his followers, how he guided it through various historical phases to find its culmination in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and how he is now working on bringing his plan of salvation to its final fulfilment with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If done well, redemptive-historical preaching is strong in showing what God has done in the past, what he is doing in the present and will be doing in the future. It is also

strong in proclaiming Christ as the one in whom we have everything we need for our salvation. The listener in the pew gets a sense of being part of a dramatic struggle between forces of good and evil, all the while knowing that the decisive victory has been won with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Dutch origins

We first need to consider how redemptive-historical preaching emerged as a movement in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands in the late 1930s and early 1940s. It was in many ways a reaction against the preaching approach that was commonly followed at the time. Men like Dr. Klaas Schilder and Benne Holwerda criticized the way ministers preached on narrative passages from the Scriptures, especially the Old Testament. Holwerda framed the discussion by coming up with a name for the kind of preaching he did not appreciate. He called it *exemplaric preaching*.¹

Why "exemplaric"? Because preachers often found application for their sermons by taking *examples* from their text passages. A preacher would preach on an event in the life of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, or some other biblical figure, then draw practical lessons from it. Sometimes these examples were examples to be followed: the faith of Abraham, the steadfastness of Joseph, the meekness of Moses. Sometimes the examples were to be avoided: David's adultery, the doubts of Thomas, and so forth. The point was not that Holwerda and friends had a problem with the use of examples and illustrations as such. They rather objected to the way biblical narratives were used as mere sources of illustrations for preaching.

An example may help to explain the difference between the two approaches to preaching. Let's say 1 Samuel 1 is the text for the sermon. The exemplaric preacher might tell the story and focus on Hannah, who prayed fervently and whose prayers were heard by the Lord. The application would be that Hannah is an example for us, and that we

should persevere in prayer like she did. The redemptive-historical preacher, on the other hand, would focus on what the Lord was doing in the story: that the Lord used Hannah's faith to bring salvation to his people by raising up a prophet and judge for them (Samuel). He would point out that Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving (1 Samuel 2) did not just focus on what the Lord did for her personally, but even more so on what the Lord did for his people. In other words, while the exemplaric preacher would draw the lesson from 1 Samuel 1 that we should persevere in prayer, the redemptive-historical preacher would say that the chapter teaches us how the Lord prepared the hearts of his people for the coming of the great King, Jesus Christ.²

Objections

The objections that were levelled against exemplaric preaching may be summarized in three main categories.³ First, exemplaric preaching does not honour the historical character of biblical narratives. It ignores the fact that these narratives tell us real history. It treats them as if they were parables that are intended to teach us practical lessons in faith. Related to this, exemplaric preaching also causes the unity of the history of redemption to be dissolved and fragmented. It treats the historical books of the Bible as if they were collections of interesting but independent stories. There is no awareness that these narratives form part of a continuing story that leads to the coming of the Son of God into the world.

The second main objection against exemplaric preaching was that it is anthropocentric (man-centred). The focus is on the people in the story, whether they are weak or strong in faith, whether they are able to resist temptations or not, and so forth. What *the Lord* was doing in a particular episode is ignored. An exemplaric sermon on John 2:1-11 (the wedding at Cana) might have the application that we should invite Jesus into our marriage and that he will change our water into wine (metaphorically speaking). While this might be a secondary application, the text passage itself emphasizes the fact that Jesus began to show his glory to his disciples and how they believed in him (v. 11). Therefore, the sermon should focus on how Jesus revealed his glory at the wedding feast.

The third main objection against exemplaric preaching was that it tries to overcome the historical gap between the text passage and today's listeners by inappropriate means such as spiritualizing, psychologizing, and moralizing. An example of spiritualizing would be to preach on David's fight against Goliath as a lesson in how we should fight our spiritual enemies (1 Sam 17). An example of psychologizing

would be to speculate about the state of mind of Elijah as he was fleeing the wrath of Jezebel (1 Kings 19) and then make this a lesson about dealing with fear. An example of moralizing would be to focus on Abram's deceptive behaviour in Egypt (Gen 12:10-20) and draw from this a moral lesson that Christians should avoid lying. In all these examples, the historical context of the Scripture passages is ignored, and the focus is not on what God was doing in the event but on what the persons in the stories were doing or experiencing.

Redemptive-historical approach

What was the preferred approach of Schilder, Holwerda, and other representatives of the redemptive-historical movement? First, they all emphasized that redemptive history is real history. God has been working out his plan of redemption in the history of this fallen world in which we all live. Historical passages in the Bible tell us how this story has developed over time. In addition to that, the history of redemption is a *unity*. All historical narratives in the Bible are part of one, long story that is still in process of being completed. A foundational text for the redemptive-historical approach is Genesis 3:15, the so-called proto-evangelium, where the Lord promises that the Seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent. This promise was fulfilled in the birth of the Lord Jesus in Bethlehem. Another important text passage is Revelation 12:1-6, the vision of the pregnant woman and the dragon who wants to devour her child. Based on these and other passages, the men of the redemptive-historical movement believed that the struggle about Christ coming into the world, and the devil's schemes to prevent this from happening, is the main theme of the Old Testament. Even now that Christ has ascended into heaven and assumed his position of authority, the struggle still continues. The historical narratives in the Old and the New Testament all tell us about various unique moments in the age-long struggle. It is the preacher's task to identify the unique character of every moment and to show this to the congregation.⁴

***If done well,
redemptive-
historical
preaching is
strong in showing
what God has
done in the past,
what he is doing
in the present
and will be doing
in the future***

Schilder took this a step further. In his view, the preacher should not just show that a certain historical event was a specific moment in the history of redemption. The preacher should also show the *progress* God had made with the realization of his plan of redemption *up until that specific point in time*. By way of illustration, when Schilder compared the deaths of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, he maintained that the deathbed of Elisha was “greater” than the ascension of Elijah, even though Elijah’s death was much more spectacular.⁵ To Schilder, this was a logical conclusion based on the fact that Elisha died after Elijah, so by neces-

All historical narratives in the Bible are part of one, long story that is still in process of being completed

sity the Lord would have made progress towards the goal of bringing his Son into the world. (Not everyone was convinced of Schilder’s logic here.) A second characteristic of redemptive-historical preaching was its Christ-centredness or Christological quality. Luke 24:27 was an important text in this regard: “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he (the Lord Jesus Christ) interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” If Christ taught his followers to see how all the Scriptures pointed to himself (see also John 5:39), preachers have to do the same. The main point of Old Testament narratives is how God was making progress towards the coming of Christ into the world. And the main point of New Testament narratives is to show how Christ is working on completing his mandate as Saviour of the world. Therefore, every sermon on a historical passage in the Bible should have a Christ-centred focus.

In the third place, redemptive-historical preachers had a specific approach to discuss the role of the people in the historical narrative. The main question is not what the people in the story experienced or how they felt about what they experienced. The main question is what role they played – positively or negatively – from the perspective of God’s continuing work in Christ. By way of illustration, in a sermon on the meeting between Abram and Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20) Schilder makes the point that we should not focus on Abram as a person or speculate about Abram’s faith. We should rather focus on his calling to be father of all believers. The ques-

tion then becomes: was Abram, as father of all believers, faithful in acknowledging Melchizedek as the one who is superior to himself? Yes, he was faithful, and as Christian believers we need to follow his example and submit to our great High Priest Jesus Christ. Following Schilder, redemptive-historical preachers were fond of using the threefold office of believer (prophet, priest, king) in the applications of their sermons. It allowed them to avoid overtly exemplaric applications, while at the same time being able to draw practical examples from the way biblical figures acted in obedience or disobedience to their calling.

CALL DECLINED

Declined the call by the Pilgrim CanRC of London, Ontario:

Rev. C. Vermeulen

of the Free Reformed Church at Darling Downs, Western Australia

CALL ACCEPTED

Accepted the call extended to him by the Free Reformed Church at Mundijong, Western Australia:

Rev. A. Pol

of the Chilliwack Canadian Reformed Church, in Chilliwack, BC

CHURCH NEWS

tion then becomes: was Abram, as father of all believers, faithful in acknowledging Melchizedek as the one who is superior to himself? Yes, he was faithful, and as Christian believers we need to follow his example and submit to our great High Priest Jesus Christ. Following Schilder, redemptive-historical preachers were fond of using the threefold office of believer (prophet, priest, king) in the applications of their sermons. It allowed them to avoid overtly exemplaric applications, while at the same time being able to draw practical examples from the way biblical figures acted in obedience or disobedience to their calling.

In the next article we will discuss how the redemptive-historical preaching movement developed further and how it was evaluated in later years.

Endnotes

¹ The Dutch word “exemplarisch” has been translated in different ways: exemplary, exemplaric, and exemplaristic. It is problematic to use the word exemplary because this generally means: serving as a worthy example. Holwerda certainly did not think that “exemplaric preaching” was *exemplary* in this sense! We prefer the word *exemplaric*. For Holwerda’s original quote, see Trimp, *Preaching and the History of Salvation*, (Scarsdale: Westminster Discount Book Service, 1996): 87.

² See for example S.G. de Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, Vol. 2, (St. Catharines: Paideia, 1978): 67-70.

³ Here I’m summarizing lists of objections put together by Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: problems and principles in preaching historical texts* (Toronto: Wedge, 1970), chapter 3; William R. Renninger, “The New Testament Use of Old Testament Historical Narrative,” (Dissertation ETF Heverlee, Belgium): 25ff; Arie Baars, “Heilshistorische prediking in deze tijd,” *Nader Bekeken* 18/1 (2011), 10-12.

⁴ Here I borrowed insights from Gert Kwakkel, “Lezen over Gods goede plannen.” In Ad De Bruijne & Hans Burger, *Gereformeerde hermeneutiek vandaag*. (Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2017): 99-122.

⁵ Trimp, *Preaching and the History of Salvation*, 129.



Retirement of Rev. Henry Versteeg

Farewell sermon

On September 17, 2017 Rev. Henry Versteeg celebrated forty years as a minister of the Word. The event also marked the day of his retirement. Rev. Versteeg preached on Revelation 3:14-20, which is the letter to the church in Laodicea, a church which is lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. He used as the theme for the sermon, "Christ calls us to live in a living relationship with him." We need to watch out for false faith, and put our relationship with the Lord first and foremost in our lives. In Laodicea they did not do that as they put their wealth first and had the Lord on the backburner. Are we relying on our own achievements? Is there something in our lives that we cannot let go of? Is that our god? We were encouraged to keep up the good fight for faith knowing that Christ alone is our Saviour. Christ's call is serious and we need to know that call through daily Bible reading and meditation. This Word must be heeded and a response is required. The Scripture reading was from Isaiah 55, where the Lord clearly points out that his Word never returns empty. This same farewell sermon was also preached to all church groups in PNG.

Program

After the worship service the Bethel congregation along with the Versteeg children and grandchildren enjoyed a light meal together. There was then a formal program in the church auditorium emceed by the current Bethel Mission Board chair, Philip DeBoer, and the corresponding secretary, Carol Diomedi. Letters of congratulations and appreciation were received from Rev. Kleyn and Rev. Douma, the other two missionaries at Port Moresby. They expressed thankfulness for the work and care the Versteegs brought to them, the churches, and the field through their friendship, wisdom, missionary focus, energy, and pastoral compassion. Rev. John van Popta spoke on behalf of Classis and the supporting churches, thanking Rev. and Mrs. Versteeg for their time



and work in PNG. Prof. Dr. G. Visscher spoke as a friend, colleague, and former classmate, reflecting on some of the times they spent together at the Seminary when it was located on Queen Street, and also about the experience he and his wife had on a visit to the Versteegs in PNG. The attendance of the Versteeg children and grandchildren was also very special as the family sang the Shepherd's Lullaby.

Gerald Boot spoke on behalf of the mission board and thanked Rev. Versteeg for his detailed and timely board reports, noting with thankfulness that it was all done under the guidance, care, and blessing of the Lord. He then presented a gift from Bethel Board and the supporting churches to Rev. and Mrs. Versteeg. Rev. Versteeg reflected briefly on his time as a missionary and expressed appreciation for the support of the Bethel Board, particularly in the early days from Rev. Mulder and John Boot. Rev. Bruintjes closed the evening in prayer.

A look back over forty years

In September 1977 Rev. Versteeg was ordained as a missionary for the church at Toronto and its supporting churches. Toronto's previous missionary, Rev. Knigge, had



just repatriated to The Netherlands after serving in Budiptiri from May 1960 to December 1975. Rev. Versteeg started his mission work in Manggelum, Irian Jaya (today this area is known as West Papua). He also spent a number of years in Sentani. After twenty years, the Versteeg family repatriated.

From October 1997 to June 2009, Rev. Versteeg served the church at Chatham. While there Rev. Versteeg (sometimes accompanied by his wife) visited Manggelum every two years, using his vacation for that purpose. With Rev. Versteeg's repatriation from Irian Jaya, Bethel church started another mission project in the same hemisphere of the world, albeit in a different country, namely Papua New Guinea. It was Rev. Versteeg who recommended that we work there, particularly in Ekoru, which is where Rev. 't Hart ended up spending his first seven years.

So with the repatriation of Rev. 't Hart, in June 2009 Bethel church once again had Rev. Versteeg as its missionary, this time in Papua New Guinea.

He served the Reformed churches in PNG as missionary of Beretete (formerly Ekoru), and Beregoro, as well as lecturer and Principal of the Reformed Churches Bible College in Port Moresby. In addition, due to their close proximity to PNG, the Versteegs were still able to visit the churches in Papua on an annual basis with some preaching, teaching, and encouragement.

The second call as missionary was different from the first, as the circumstances in the Versteeg family had changed. All of their children had left the family home, so there were no children to care for on a day to day basis. However, it did cause the furlough/vacation arrangement to change. During their time in PNG, Rev. and Mrs. Versteeg returned to Canada every summer for about six weeks. This meant there was no extended furlough as there had been in the past when they came back for a furlough

every four years. This facilitated the opportunity for them to be with their children and grandchildren.

In Port Moresby, with the Reformed Churches Bible College and six church groups, there was plenty of work to do. With a young and growing church federation many things needed to be put in place. The church order, church liturgy, songbook, the process from church plant to institution, Classis regulations, Principal duties at the Bible College, and much more found their way onto Rev. Versteeg's agenda. He ensured the ecclesiastical structure of the Reformed Churches of PNG and the RCBC were well set up. He has written catechism manuals in both the Indonesian and Tok Pisin languages, both with illustrations.

Rev. Versteeg did his work in a very organized and structured way, leaving binders for every subject he taught at the RCBC, along with lecture notes, assignments, reviews, and tests. He set up various programs including the pastoral candidacy program, diploma student fund program, and so much more. As a young church federation, all these structures are extremely important and going forward these churches will continue to benefit from this work. All of this was done under the blessing and guidance of the Lord.

As well as supporting her husband in all his work, Mrs. Rita Versteeg faithfully cared for the medical needs of the students and their families wherever they were. She wrote the Ventures and spent countless hours working on the RCPNG Songbook. Many of the families and visitors that came to PNG were hosted by the Versteegs.

We trust that Rev. Versteeg will continue to serve the Lord as a missionary minister in some capacity with the same love and dedication. We thank him and praise God for all that he has been able to do as a missionary for these past forty years. We also thank Rita and appreciate everything that she was able to do. May God bless them as they begin another stage in their life together in his service.





Reflections on the National Principal's Conference

On September 25 – 27, thirty-four education leaders were able to gather together in the beautiful area of Crieff Hills, Ontario. Our keynote speaker, Mr. Ed Noot, the Director of the Society of Christian Schools of British Columbia (SCSBC), led us through the topic of Excellence. Mr. Noot is actively involved in education in British Columbia and also serves as the vice-chairman of the Federation of Independent Schools and as a school evaluator for the Ministry of Education. The theme of the conference was “Leadership for Excellence in Reformed Christian Education.” We were able to walk through six different sessions. Some comments and questions below help frame the conversation about changes in education and excellence.

Session I: Why excellence?

The presenter started the session challenging the participants on the definition of excellence and set the foundation for the rest of the sessions. As leaders we were challenged with the questions:

*Why pursue excellence?
Is it a worthy pursuit?*

We were able to search Scripture as we attempted to define what excellence is in our schools. We were also asked to reflect in small groups on the statement, “Although Christian schools may tout excellence, many have in fact settled for mediocrity.” In smaller groups we were able to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of our school context for achieving and cultivating a culture of excellence.

Session II: Vision of excellence

In this session we delved into the topic of mission and vision. We discussed mission and vision statements that are explicitly stated versus those that are hidden or assumed. When the mission and vision is blurry, perfunctory, hidden, or assumed, it can lead to a lack of purpose, focus, and a tug of war of competing views and ideas. Mission and vision statements need to be owned communally and organizationally embedded – *are they in your school community?*

Session III: Excellence in learning

Grad 2030: the current Kindergarten classes of our schools will be graduating in 2030. Perhaps a question we as educators need to ask is what skills, characteristics, or knowledge will these young brothers and sisters in Christ need? How do the learning frameworks in our schools reflect the different abilities and gifts entrusted to each of our students? How do the practices in our schools reflect what we envision our graduates to be? How does the role of teacher change as the ability to access content becomes easier with the use of technology?

Session IV: Governing for excellence

For this session we were joined by a number of board members of local schools, which was a great addition to the session and conversations. Many of our schools are well established and have been instituted for longer than thirty, forty, or even sixty years. As schools continue to move forward, it is important to realize that board progression is complicated and rarely occurs in a linear fashion. Boards often transition from a Founders' Model into a Management Model and then into a Governance Model; perhaps many of our boards would identify more and more with the Governance Model. It is important to note that as we move through these models, school society member's expectations are changing as well.

We addressed four learning targets in this session:

- 1) Understanding your role as board member,
- 2) Key board responsibilities,
- 3) Board procedures, and
- 4) A Governance Model.

We were asked to ensure that we understood the term trustee: “An individual or person or member of a board given control or powers. . . in trust with a legal obligation to administer it solely for the purposes specified.” The role of a board member is neither volunteer-helper or watchdog, but trustee of a vision. Board members have three key

responsibilities, which are to protect, direct, and inspect. We discussed the need for confidentiality and the need for “one voice.” We were challenged to consider the voice of discussion and dissent, the voice of consensus, and the voice of unity. Lastly, we discussed the Governance Model, which is focussed on engaging and communicating in a relationship-oriented way.

Session V: Excellence in staffing

“Your staff is your most valuable asset – or . . . greatest liability.” We analyzed three different areas in this session: hiring, onboarding (orientation), and evaluation. Every time we hire a new staff member we have an opportunity to improve our schools. It is also important that schools have clear protocols and that those protocols are followed. Once we do have staff, it is vital to ensure the initial success of all new employees, which should include mentoring. It is important to acknowledge that schools have probationary periods for teachers who are new to a school. Is your school using it? Schools also need to have clearly articulated growth plans in place for all staff members. We should ensure that everyone is on a trajectory of self/staff improvement. Lastly, we looked at necessary endings. Necessary endings are painful in the moment, but we must remind ourselves that student learning must trump teacher employment. All this must be done with integrity, commitment, respect (confidentiality), compassion, and grace.

Session VI: Excellence in leading

Our mission statements, strategic plans, and student learning must direct everything! Sounds easy if you leave the statement as is and do not delve deeper into each area. Ed Noot left us with many questions to reflect on as school leaders. As leaders we must ask ourselves what are the goals

and intended outcomes of my leadership? What is the heart of my own leadership? What are the core values of our leadership? How has my leadership defined reality in my setting? We were reminded numerous times through this session that leadership is complex, exhausting, and yet a rewarding balancing act. We were also reminded that we do not do this work in ourselves, but only through the constant help and guidance of our faithful Father. As leaders we must become reflective practitioners and have a clear vision as to where the schools we serve must head. The school’s mission and vision statements, strategic plans, and our young brothers and sisters in Christ frame this work.

Personal reflections

One of the greatest gifts of attending the National Principals Conference is the ability to connect with other school leaders throughout Canada and the world. Two administrators from Australia, one from the United States, and one from Holland also joined us and provided some international perspectives. It was a time of stimulating conversations, reflections, and collegiality. Another fantastic experience, as always, was the time of devotions. It is amazing to hear so many “deep” voices as we sang praises to our Lord. Before the conference we were tasked with reading a book of which we were to present the key findings in a creative way. Some groups were much more creative than others, and provided some great laughs. We also were able to spend an afternoon enjoying the beauty of the Niagara escarpment at Rattlesnake Point in Milton. Some enjoyed the beautiful walk, while others who were braver did some spelunking. On behalf of the participants, thank you to the organizers for putting on a great conference and I eagerly look forward to connecting, encouraging, and learning in Sumas Prairie 2019.

C



Clarion Kids

Jesus as a young boy

Luke 2:41-52

Every year, Jesus's parents went up to the temple to celebrate the Passover. When Jesus was 12 years old, Mary and Joseph accidentally left the temple to go home without him. After a day of travelling they realized he was missing and went back to the temple to look for him. They found Jesus sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. Everyone was amazed by his understanding and by the answers he gave. Jesus's parents were upset that he had not gone with them, but he knew that he had to be in his Father's house. Jesus is the one true Son of God.

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



Word Search

J	H	A	J	G	M	A	M	P	E
A	E	P	U	D	O	I	K	A	V
G	I	R	E	S	S	D	F	S	L
J	Z	S	U	S	U	X	Z	S	E
B	S	S	I	S	O	I	E	O	W
I	E	N	N	I	A	J	G	V	T
J	G	M	A	R	Y	L	A	E	A
J	T	B	R	D	G	D	E	R	X
N	C	Y	T	O	X	D	P	M	V
E	L	P	M	E	T	S	C	R	A

God	Joseph	Passover
Jerusalem	Mary	Temple
Jesus	Missing	Twelve

Double Puzzle

Unscramble the words, then unscramble the circled letters to solve the final word.

SEVLARMEJ

MYAR

SPJEOH

VATREL

OSSRVAPE

by Emily Nijenhuis



Connie Van Amerongen

Hi! My name is Connie Van Amerongen. I'm confined to a wheelchair because of Cerebral Palsy, but that hasn't stopped me from loving life. Sure, I still experience many ups and downs in this life, but I have also experienced many joys as well - I am still experiencing many joys today! God has truly blessed me with a loving Christian family and friends who support and care for - and about me. I am a professing member of Vineyard Canadian Reformed Church of Lincoln. I have lived here in Beamsville, Ontario, at Anchor Home since the end of August of 2002. I have many things to do - whether it be a paying job, or volunteer basis - i.e., typing for someone or helping out at a school bazaar, even making birthday cards for the people mentioned in the *Ray of Sunshine* in order to keep me busy. (I hate being lazy!!)

I have a fairly busy social life, including being involved in church activities, as well as swimming with friends at an indoor pool in St. Catherine's at least once a week. I also enjoy reading and writing, but because I have only limited use of my hands, all of my written work is done using a computer, typing on a keyboard, using one - sometimes two - fingers! (Yes! My computer is a real God-send.) I have written short stories - for children, also articles for *Clarion*, the *ANCHOR Newsletter*, and the like - as well as writing poems/verses for handmade greeting cards. Yes, I love writing - especially poems - some of which have been put into book form, the most recent book of poems entitled *Dancing*, and in 2014 I wrote a children's book about a penguin named Perry, and it is entitled: *Perry Goes to Anchor Camp*. D.V. I hope to have a new book of poetry out in the not-too-distant-future, which will be entitled: *Connie's Lunch Box*. Since April of 2012, I have had a small part-time greeting card business (where someone makes really beautiful outsides for my cards), called *Connie's Smile Creations*, and, yes, I am also on Facebook as well. My business e-mail address is: connies.smile.creations@gmail.com and I sell my cards for \$2.50 a piece.

What follows next is my latest acrostic poem:

THANKFUL!

*Thanks be to Almighty God for:
His many wonderful deeds shown to us;
And yes, He loves you, and He loves me.
Not because we deserve it; we must like Him be;
Kindness and unfailing mercy He bestows,
Faithful and loving is He, our glorious King!
Untold Blessings from Him, we receive: Yes!
Everything;
Let us of His greatness and His glory praise Him
and sing!*

Connie E. Van Amerongen

February birthdays

6 Trevor Buys will be 38

c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2

12 Connie VanAmerongen will be 53

c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2
conniev1965@gmail.com

24 Fred Ludwig will be 66

c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2

Congratulations to all of you celebrating a birthday in February! Thank you Connie for the beautiful write-up, we always love learning more about the people featured in the *Ray of Sunshine*.

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 LOR 2J0
tom.rachelvis@gmail.com • 905-329-9476

