

# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

V 67 N 4 FEBRUARY 23 2018



**What is happening  
to the bag?**

*JESUS PREPARES ANOTHER SOWER  
DO THEY KNOW YOU BY YOUR SUIT?*

## 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

Our editorial, from Dr. James Visscher, examines if perhaps there is a growing trend of passing the collection bag in the worship service without giving; are there reasons that need to be discussed and addressed?

Dr. Arjan de Visser's series, "Redemptive Historical Preaching Today," continues in the issue. We are also thankful to be able to reprint an article by Rev. William Boekestein of the URCNA, "Do They Know You By Your Suit?"

Issue 4 contains many of our regular columns: Treasures New & Old, Clippings on Politics & Religion, *Clarion* Kids, and Ray of Sunshine. There are reports from the Women's Savings Action, and a press release from NAPARC.

Laura Veenendaal

## CONTENTS

- 83 **EDITORIAL**  
Passing the Bag
- 85 **TREASURES, NEW & OLD**  
Jesus Prepares Another Sower
- 86 **Redemptive-Historical Preaching Today (3)**
- 89 **Do They Know You by Your Suit?**
- 91 **CLIPPINGS ON POLITICS & RELIGION**
- 92 **CLARION KIDS**
- 93 **RAY OF SUNSHINE**
- 95 **Women's Saving Action**
- 96 **PRESS RELEASE**



# Passing the Bag

*Man can talk all he wants about absolute ownership,  
 but it is a delusion*

No, the above title does not refer to passing the grocery bag. Rather, it has to do with the collection or offering bag in the worship service. Unlike a great many churches in North America our churches prefer the privacy of a bag to the openness of a plate.

So what is happening to the bag? Well, as I look at the congregation, either from the pulpit or the pew, I see that there is a tendency of some to pass along the collection bag when it is given to them and then to put nothing into it. They simply hand it through without making a contribution. Is this tendency growing? I am not sure, but I am noticing it more than I used to. Perhaps that is also your experience.

## Reasons

Now, I do not want to imply that this is something like the unforgiveable sin. It is not. Besides, there can be any number of innocent reasons for not putting anything into the bag. It may be as simple as: you forgot your wallet. Or it may be due to the fact that you could not gather together enough loonies and toonies for you and your children. After all, we are living in a society that is more and more going cashless.

Still, it may also be more than that. Perhaps it is not so much an accident as it is an indifference. You see the bag going around in the service and you really see no need to put anything into it. Why bother? Who cares? What's the big deal anyway?

Then again, it may be more than indifference. It may be resistance. You just do not see the need to do what so many are doing. You feel that there are others who are in a lot better shape financially than you are, so let them fill the bag. Why should the poor and the rich be doing the same thing? Let the rich give and let the poor receive.

## A closer look

The end result is that there are any number of reasons as to why people pass the bag. Some are practical, others are more involved. Still, taken together, they give us more than sufficient reason for taking a closer look at what is often a forgotten element in our congregational worship, namely the matter of offering.

What does a closer look reveal? Well, for openers, there should be the realization that when we are dealing with collections or offerings, we are dealing with the larger realm of material things. Money belongs in the same category as houses, cars, and clothes. Of course, material things also have spiritual dimensions, as we shall see, but the point is that collections and offerings bring us into the area of objects and physical realities.

## Principles

Now, in that area, a number of principles apply. The first is that the Lord God is the Creator and Keeper of all things. In the beginning it was his speaking that called everything into being (Gen 1). If he had not spoken, it would not be there. It just would not exist. Along with that, there is the matter of keeping. The God who makes all, keeps all. Paul reminds us that in Christ "all things hold together" (Col 1:17).

The second principle is that the Lord God is the owner of everything. Could Psalm 24 be any clearer, "The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein" (v. 1)? The One who makes it all and keeps it all, owns it all. Man can talk all he wants about absolute ownership, but it is a delusion. There is only One who owns absolutely, and that is our God.

The third principle is that while God is owner, man is steward. The basis for that goes back to the Garden of Eden where man is told to take care of all that God has made. And that does not change after the fall into sin, either. No, Psalm 8 speaks about man being given dominion over the work of God's hands and about all things being put under his feet (v. 6). Later on, in his parables, the Lord Jesus expands on this principle of stewardship by stressing that man has not only been given much to take care of, he also has much to give account for (Matt 25).

The fourth principle is that the act of offering or giving is an integral part of the life of a child of God. Look at Old Testament Israel and the kind of things that God seeks to teach his people in the wilderness. You open the book of Leviticus and the first thing that you come across are offerings: burnt, grain, peace, sin, and guilt (Lev 1-7). Israel's worship centres on offering. Sure, the priests do it, but they do it on behalf of the people. Israel is an offering community! It is taught how to give to God or how to offer up to God. The same applies in the New Testament. What is Paul so busy with in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9? It is all about giving – and doing it generously.

The fifth principle is that Christian giving has both God and the needy in view. In the OT, many of the offerings were about restoring the relationship with God, but they were also about caring for “the widow, the orphan and the sojourner.” Indeed, the last three terms run like a refrain though the OT. And as for the NT, this emphasis is not set aside. Widows still get a lot of attention. The needy are always a focal point.

Taken together then, the key principles have to do with Creator (Keeper), Owner, steward, offering, and the needy. Naturally, there are others that apply as well, but space limits us. In the end we need to keep these five main aspects in mind.

## Our worship

But we need to go a step further and apply them to our worship. For when we sit together in our church buildings on the Lord's Day, what is going on? Some will say, “Many things!” and that's true. Nevertheless, there is also this: we are there as people made by God, kept by God, enriched by God, giving to God, and responsible to God for the needy among us and around us.

Not to offer on Sunday because one forgot his wallet or could not find enough cash on Saturday is one thing. Not to offer because one deems it to be a useless or unneces-

sary exercise is something different altogether. Such an attitude calls into question not just your theology but also your commitment.

## Mammon

Indeed, do you realize that commitment and offering are connected? How so? Consider money and material things carefully. What are they? Are they just things? Are they merely dead, lifeless, inanimate things? Are they take it or leave it things? No, money and material things are invested with power. They do something to us. They excite us, attract us, hold us, control us. How much of our time is not spent thinking about money: How to earn it? How to keep it? How to grow it? How to spend it?

It is not for nothing that our Lord Jesus gave money a personal name. He called it “Mammon” (Matt 6:24 – see note in italics). He even said that Mammon and God are in competition with one another and thus you cannot serve both. You have to choose. Will you serve God or will you serve Mammon? Who is your master?

So what do those questions have to do with our worship and our giving in worship? Well, think of it this way: every time the collection bag comes around, you are being confronted with a choice. Will it be God or Mammon? Give, and you acknowledge God. Do not give and you acknowledge Mammon.

The great sixteenth century Reformer John Calvin used to say that every time you give to God in the offering you are confessing that God is Lord of your life and that Mammon has been dethroned in your life. Giving, you see, is a matter of the first and the second commandments.

Hence when you see that bag going around in church, look deeper. This is not just a bag. It is not just a container. It is an act of worship.

## Encouragement

As a result, we do well not to minimize this part of the worship service. I know that sometimes it looks as if the offering or collection is an afterthought or an add-on. Sometimes it even comes across as an entrance or exit fee. Yet, in reality, it is none of that. It is an important and integral part of the worship that we owe to our great God and Father in Christ. Give, and thereby make it abundantly and publicly clear every time again that God is the Lord and Master of your life.





# Jesus Prepares Another Sower

The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with Jesus, but Jesus sent him away, saying, “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him (Luke 8:38-39).

A man from the city meets Jesus as he comes up the shore. Luke calls him “a man from the city,” but he was a beast of a man. They had tried to make him a man of the city. They had chained him, locked him in a room, and posted a guard. But he broke the chains, jimmied the door, and attacked the guard and ran away, ripping off his clothes as he went, and chose a home among the dead.

This is the man who meets Jesus as he comes up the shore. When he sees that it is Jesus, he cries out, “I beg you, do not torment me!” That’s a bit ironic. Of course, it is not the man himself speaking. It is the devil who had hijacked this man, who has ruined his life, made him choose to live among the dead and reject the living and all those who loved him in the city, and all the blessings of living in the city. It is this devil who asks, “I beg you, do not torment me!”

Why shouldn’t Jesus torment him?!

But Jesus chooses mercy. He does not send them to hell. He only wants the demons to release the man. They are free to seek other prey, and so they do. They

attack a herd of pigs nearby and destroy them. It’s what demons do.

The man, having been freed, now sits at Jesus’s feet. Jesus saved him and made him human again. That is what God does – he restores us to what we’re supposed to be. So, he sits down near to Jesus.

The people from town come and see the man sitting near to his Saviour and become afraid. Why are they afraid? Well, they had tried to fix this man. They tried to force him to behave like a civilized person. They saw in this man outwardly what they were inwardly. Their hearts were filled with thoughts that would lead to their own destruction: lust, greed, hatred, pride, envy. Their consciences were loaded with guilt for all their sinful habits and they could no more control their sinful hearts than they could control their demon possessed countryman. Their desires ran riot over their conscience and they found that when they acted, they always gave way to their sinful impulses.

So, when they see that Jesus has conquered and driven out the evil spirits, they are afraid. Jesus was not like them. He was not led by but controlled his heart. Should he open his mouth and begin to preach, he would demand impossible things: that they change and control their sinful feelings.

They fear Jesus. We all fear the call to repentance. It is impossible. I don’t know how to be a good person. We don’t have the power to become good. There is this evil inside us. So, verse 37 says that all the people asked Jesus to leave. Nothing is said about the pigs or about the money that was lost when the demons destroyed the herd. All that mattered was Jesus. They want him gone.

But Jesus had come for these people, just as he came for us. He came across the sea to sow the seed, but before he gets the chance, he is asked to leave. Is Jesus frustrated? No, he gives the task to another. There is a man who is more suited to bring the gospel than Jesus himself. Jesus has prepared him for this. So, when he asks to leave with Jesus, Jesus tells him to sow the seed which he could not. Sow the seed. Tell your neighbours what Jesus has done for you.

Yes, sometimes you are more suited to sow the seed than Jesus himself. Tell them what Jesus has done for you – things you could never have done without him: how the Lord has delivered you from addiction to some substance or another, from lust for money, adopting a hateful attitude toward certain people, arrogance, or enslavement to pornography. **C**

## For Reflection

What has Jesus done for you? Go and tell, for you are the sower who sows the seed. You have been prepared by God’s mercy to be just the right person to do the job with your friends, your fellow students, your colleagues, the person on the bus you meet every day. They might ask Jesus to leave, but they will listen to you.





# Redemptive-Historical Preaching Today (Part 3)

In two previous articles we have discussed how the redemptive-historical preaching movement developed in The Netherlands. We should now turn our attention to the North American continent where a similar development took place, albeit with features of its own.

Before we discuss *preaching*, it is worth noting that there is a redemptive-historical view of *hermeneutics* in North America. The groundwork for this approach to biblical interpretation was laid by Geerhardus Vos, professor of biblical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1893 until his retirement in 1932. Vos's teachings have had a tremendous influence on Reformed and Presbyterian theology in North America, so much so that the redemptive-historical approach has come to be acknowledged as one of the main approaches in the field of hermeneutics. In a recent book that describes five views on hermeneutics, the redemptive-historical view is one of the main approaches that is discussed. That particular chapter is written by Richard B. Gaffin Jr., emeritus professor of biblical and systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup>

Gaffin summarizes the characteristic of the redemptive-approach by identifying a number of basic elements. The most important ones are the following: First, God reveals himself in two ways: in his deeds in history and in his word in Scripture. Second, the history of redemption (and God's revelation about it in Scripture) constitutes one organically unfolding whole, a completed history. Third, the history of redemption culminates in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Since his person and work is the final goal, Christ is also the focus throughout, from beginning to end, in both Old and New Testament.

With convictions like these, the foundations have been laid for a redemptive-historical approach to preaching.

## Clowney

Turning now from hermeneutics to preaching, a key figure in the promotion of redemptive-historical preaching was Edmund P. Clowney, professor (and later also

president) at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia from 1952 to 1984. He influenced generations of students, some of whom are now leading preachers in North America (for example Tim Keller). Already in 1961 Clowney published the book *Preaching and Biblical Theology*. It was an impressive effort to build on the foundations laid by Geerhardus Vos. Clowney emphasized that the Bible is one book that has one continuous, unfolding theme, and that unfolding theme is the person and work of Jesus Christ. Not every theologian who promotes biblical theology necessarily supports a Christ-centred emphasis, but Clowney certainly did.<sup>2</sup> His theology is Christ-centred in its aim and its conclusions.

If Clowney focussed on the Christological aspects of all biblical texts and the unfolding of God's plan of redemption, how did he draw applications for the practical Christian life today? To put the question in a different way: how did Clowney solve the tension between the redemptive-historical and the exemplaric approach? The answer is that Clowney did not really see a problem here. He acknowledged that "it has been assumed by some that a choice must be made between ethical preaching and that which is redemptive-historical," but he himself felt that "the New Testament sanctions both and does not set them in opposition."<sup>3</sup> In other words, while we ought to focus on the unfolding of redemptive history in Christ, we also need to note the subjective aspects in biblical revelation, or what Clowney calls "the religious riches of the experience of God's people, and its relation to our own."<sup>4</sup>

How this works itself out in practice becomes clear when we look at Clowney's sermons. In his sermon on Genesis 22:1-19 (Abraham called to sacrifice Isaac), Clowney draws out both redemptive-historical and ethical aspects from the passage.<sup>5</sup> He suggests that the main thrust of the passage is that God provides redemption, and that this redemption is costly. Abraham was not able to provide a sacrifice, but God did it for him by providing a ram. This points to the coming of the Messiah into the world. At the same

time, the passage also sets Abraham before us as an ethical example of obedience and Isaac as an example of faith.

Clowney's conclusion is: "We do well, then, to avoid setting up a false antithesis between the redemptive-historical and what might be called an ethical approach to the Scriptures, particularly in the historical passages. The redemptive-historical approach necessarily yields ethical application, which is an essential part of the preaching of the Word. Whenever we are confronted with the saving work of God culminating in Christ, we are faced with ethical demands. A religious response of faith and obedience is required."<sup>6</sup> This does not mean that it is easy to get it right in preaching. Clowney acknowledges that "every evangelical preacher has struggled more or less consciously" to combine redemptive-historical aspects and ethical aspects in sermons on historical passages.<sup>7</sup>

## Greidanus

A second name that needs to be mentioned is Sidney Greidanus. After he had completed his dissertation on the Dutch debate regarding redemptive-historical versus exemplaric preaching,<sup>8</sup> Greidanus went on to become professor of preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids. In 1999 he published the influential book *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*,<sup>9</sup> and in recent years he added books on preaching Christ from Genesis, Daniel, Ecclesiastes, and the Psalms.

Greidanus did ground-breaking work by developing a method for preparing redemptive-historical sermons. He summarizes his approach as "seven ways of preaching Christ," in other words, seven ways of moving from an Old Testament passage to Christ. First, *redemptive-historical progression* calls us to evaluate how messages from the Old Testament are amplified and ultimately culminate in the work of Christ. Second, *promise-fulfilment* asks the question how Old Testament promises are fulfilled in Christ. Third, *typology* calls us to evaluate how Old Testament figures and events are pre-figurations (types) of Christ (the anti-type). Fourth, *analogy* looks for similarities between redemptive actions of God in the Old Testament and redemptive actions of God in Christ. Fifth, *longitudinal themes* refer to themes that can be traced from the Old Testament to the New, for example the theme of the coming of God's kingdom or the theme of God dwelling with his people. Sixth, *New Testament references* are places in the New Testament that allude to passages in the Old Testament. Seventh, *contrast* looks for discontinuity between the Old and the New Testament.

## CALL ACCEPTED

Accepted the call by the Yarrow Canadian Reformed Church, in Yarrow, BC:

### Rev. Ted VanSprosen

of the Free Reformed Church at Busselton, Western Australia

## CALLED

Called by the Providence Canadian Reformed Church of Hamilton, Ontario:

### Rev. H. Alkema

of the Free Reformed Church of Albany, Australia

## CHURCH NEWS

Greidanus recognizes that it is unlikely that all seven ways will work equally well with a given text passage. It is more likely that the preacher will use only three or four, and there may even be overlap between them. The point is that this approach gives the preacher a method he can use to develop a Christ-centred message from an Old Testament passage. How useful Greidanus's method is in practice is a question that is answered in different ways. Many reviewers appreciate the methodical approach followed by Greidanus.<sup>10</sup> Others find his approach to be too formulaic. They suggest it could lead to sermons that are wooden and applications that are somewhat artificial.<sup>11</sup> Even so, nobody denies that Greidanus has done much to promote Christ-centred preaching.

## Other contributions

In recent decades various authors have written books on redemptive-historical preaching and/or Christ-centred preaching. To mention a few: Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (2nd ed., Baker, 2005). Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (P&R, 2007). Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (Viking, 2015). Eric B. Watkins, *The Drama of Preaching: Participating with God in the History of Redemption* (Wipf & Stock, 2017). While each individual author comes with his own perspective, they all share the conviction that preaching should be Christ-centred. Sinclair Ferguson observes that "it has now become a commonplace in the teaching of homiletics to stress that we must preach Christ in all the Scriptures in a manner that takes account of the flow of redemptive history."<sup>12</sup> This is a positive development for which we can be very thankful.

At the same time, there is still work to be done. To mention one aspect, while the idea of *Christ-centered* preaching has become quite popular in North America, the same cannot be said about the concept of *redemptive-historical*

preaching. Bryan Chapell makes a few positive comments about the redemptive-historical method but he immediately follows that up with the warning that this method can have “unfortunate preaching repercussions.”<sup>13</sup> It appears that Chapell is more comfortable with drawing redemptive messages from the text and its immediate context. Eric Watkins, on the other hand, seeks to promote redemptive-historical preaching as an antidote against the influence of postmodern thinking.

Another challenge is that Christ-centred preaching remains something that is hard to get right. It is quite possible for a sermon to *sound* Christ-centred (because the name of Christ is mentioned often) while in reality the sermon has a moralistic or legalistic character. Preaching Christ from all the Scriptures is never easy, and there will be very few preachers (if any) who claim to have mastered this art. In the following (and final) article we will offer some concluding observations.

<sup>1</sup> Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “The Redemptive-Historical View,” in Stanley E. Porter & Beth M. Stovell (eds.), *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 89-110.

<sup>2</sup> Jason K. Allen, in his Ph.D. dissertation, compared the approaches of Edmund P. Clowney and Sidney Greidanus with the approach of Walter C. Kaiser and came to the conclusion that Kaiser is much more hesitant than Clowney and Greidanus to use Christ-centered interpretation for Old Testament texts. “The Christ-Centered Homiletics

of Edmund Clowney and Sidney Greidanus in Contrast with the Human Author-Centered Hermeneutics of Walter Kaiser.” Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theol. Seminary, 2011. <http://digital.library.sbps.edu/handle/10392/3722>

<sup>3</sup> Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 78.

<sup>4</sup> Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 78

<sup>5</sup> Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 71-78.

<sup>6</sup> Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 79-80.

<sup>7</sup> Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 81.

<sup>8</sup> Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts*. Toronto: Wedge Pub. Foundation, 1970. Reprint by Wipf & Stock, 2001.

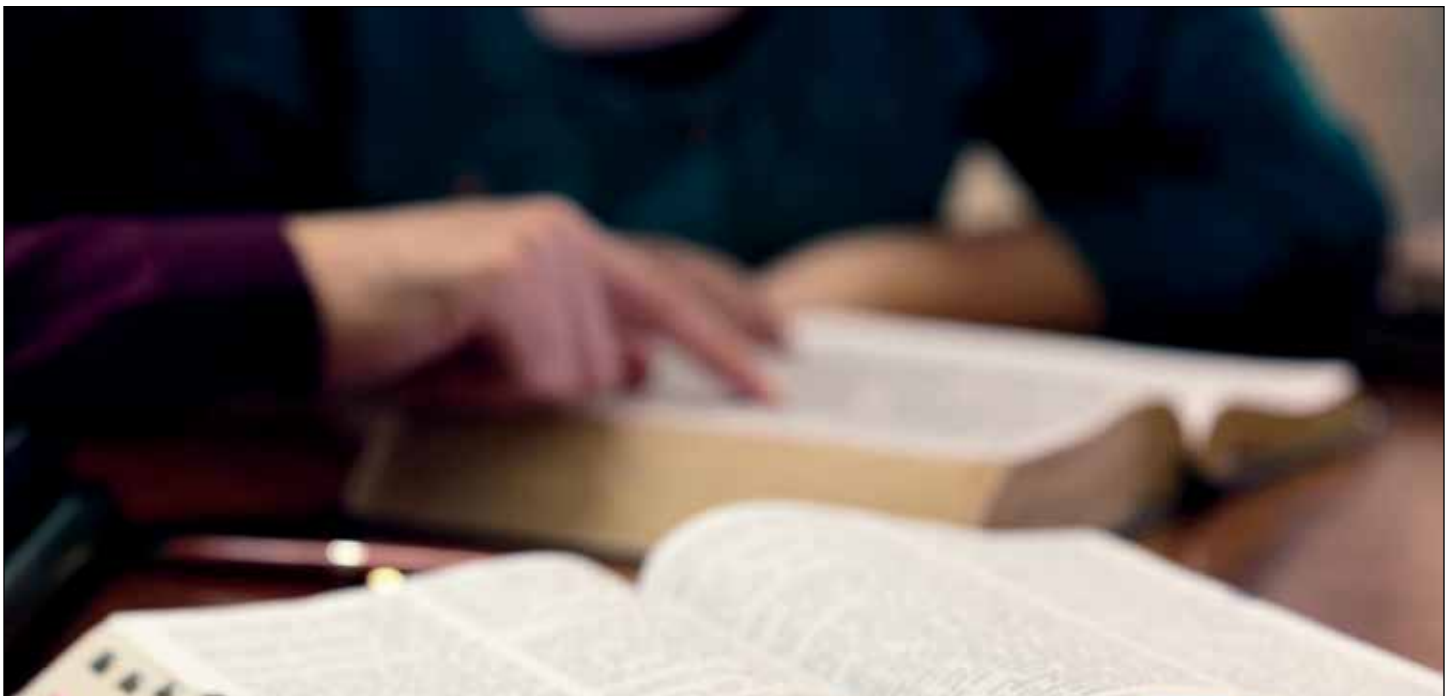
<sup>9</sup> Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

<sup>10</sup> For example David Gundersen in a review at The Gospel Coalition website: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/preaching-christ-from-the-psalms/>

<sup>11</sup> For example David Prince, “Evaluating Sidney Greidanus’s Approach to Christ-Centered Preaching,” <http://www.davidprince.com/2015/02/04/evaluating-sidney-griedanuss-approach-christ-centered-preaching/>

<sup>12</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament.” Proclamation Trust Media Paper 2, 2002. <http://www.proctrust.org.uk/proclaimer/preaching-christ-from-the-ot-part-1/>

<sup>13</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. (Baker, 2005), 306.





# Do They Know You by Your Suit?

Speaking on the matter of Christian freedom John Calvin said, “This is a slippery place, and there is great danger of falling on either side” (*Institutes* 3.10.1). Too true! Christians face the dual temptation of excessive rule-making and inappropriate freedom-flaunting when it comes to matters that the Bible doesn’t explicitly address. Of course, neither is a biblical solution. Neither option promotes the freely-rendered, loving obedience for which the cross of Christ aims. For believers to flourish – especially those with differing convictions within the same congregation – there has to be a better way.

Rather than evaluate this matter in the abstract, let’s consider the sometimes “slippery” issue of convictions and practices related to how Christians dress for worship.

Christian A takes this approach: “Our God is a consuming fire whom we must worship with majesty and awe (Heb 12:28–29). For those who meet with the king of Kings the proper worship attire is formal. After all, if I were going to meet the president I would wear my very best. I don’t want to convey to God or others that this meeting is casual or insignificant.”

Christian B sees it this way: “Our God is a Father to the fatherless (Ps 68:5) who, in Christ, gathers his children as a hen gathers her chicks (Matt 23:37). I meet with God saying, “Naked, [I] come to thee for dress; helpless, look to thee for help,” so formal attire might actually get in the way. I’m thankful that God imposes no dress code upon his children. After all, I never feel obligated to dress up for a family meal.”

Which attitude is right?

Or is that the wrong question?

As you read those two approaches to worship you might have sympathized with one more than the other. At the same time, you recognized that both attitudes appeal to Scripture and seem to reflect a complementary rather than contradictory understanding of meeting with God. God is

transcendent; he is also close. He is a King; he is also a Father. He is majestic; he is also loving. One of the last things we should want to do as God’s people is to ramrod into a single, uniform approach to God the abundant and diverse motifs God uses to help us understand him. Of course, how we dress for worship can be a reflection of our hearts. But it is too simplistic to say that the more formal our dress the more we value worship or, conversely, the more casual our dress the more intimate we are with God.

Instead, what we should desire are houses of worship where people in “fine apparel” and those in “filthy clothes” (James 2:1-4) – and those in between – feel welcome meeting around the table of grace with their Father-King. Should it not be possible, in the same congregation, for some people to worship God with the modern equivalent of sackcloth and ashes while others honour him with their best robes? Each of us choose our Sunday clothes, if even subconsciously, based on how we process biblical metaphors for relating to God. We might be guests at a wedding, or children on Jesus’ knee, or courtiers in a palace, or a bride entering a bridegroom’s chamber. But as these metaphors take on garb, the threads need not be discordant. Instead, they can form a beautiful tapestry of Christian experience externally displayed in our dress.

To get to this point believers will need to learn to distinguish those actions that might have biblical warrant with those that are biblically required. I hope I have briefly demonstrated that a biblical case could be argued

*They can form a  
beautiful tapestry  
of Christian  
experience  
externally  
displayed in  
our dress*

for both a more-formal and less-formal dress for worship. Both models might not equally resonate with every believer. But that fact is insufficient for attempting to squeeze others into our mold.

We also will have to learn to be comfortable expressing our faith differently on matters of moral indifference. Writing on Christian liberty Paul says, “Whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom 14:23). He’s reminding us that in amoral matters we have to respect our consciences without imposing them on others. “The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God” (v. 22; NAS). If a woman feels bound by her faith to wear a dress to church, then she ought to do so. If a man feels better able to express his faith in worship wearing jeans, then he should do so. On indifferent matters our personal faith can form guidelines for ourselves but not for others. As Calvin says, “The liberty of the Christian in external matters is not to be tied down to a strict rule” that everyone must follow (*Institutes* 3.10.4). It would be wrong to say that God demands men to wear ties and jackets or that women must wear blouses, skirts, and dresses, and that shorts and informal clothing are inappropriate for worship. Most churches cannot avoid having a culture where a majority dresses either formally or informally. And, of course, these cultural mores vary between

societies. But a culture is different than a code. The simple reality is, God doesn’t provide marks of a well-dressed man or woman.

While facilitating a culture of thoughtfulness, gratitude, simplicity, and modesty in our dress, let’s avoid making rules based on one facet of Scripture while ignoring others. Let’s be candid: Hypocrites can be found in “long robes” (Luke 20:46) and “old garments” (Josh 9:5); the opposite can also be true. Let’s gladly recognize that the variety of worship attitudes recorded in Scripture are like a mosaic depicting the riches of restored worshipping humanity. Let’s appreciate why Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and their heirs so strongly promoted Christian liberty as a biblical tonic for the enslaving, demoralizing, manmade regulations of the medieval church. Let’s pursue the shared quest of worshipping God with love and trust, and reverence and awe, without imposing on others what we should wear while doing so. Let’s learn to look past what others are wearing on the Lord’s Day and gaze instead on the beauty of Christ, rejoicing that he clothes his children with the garments of salvation and with robes of righteousness (Isa 61:10).

*This article was published by The Christward Collective in June, 2017 and is reprinted with permission.*





## Canada: A Postnational State?

Our Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, likes to emphasize that Canada is proud of its “strength in our diversity,” as he did most recently in his 2017 Christmas message to the nation.

In a New York Times interview on November 15, 2015, shortly after having been sworn in as prime minister, Trudeau stated that “There is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada. There are shared values – openness, respect, compassion, willingness to work hard, to be there for each other, to search for equality and justice. Those qualities are what make us the first postnational state.”

It may be good to consider what a postnational state is supposed to look like. In a perceptive article on the Gatestone Institute website, Philip Carl Salzman, professor of anthropology at McGill University and a Middle East Forum fellow, addressed this issue. He noted that over the past decade, many western leaders “have been honing a historically unprecedented narrative – one that not only renounces the culture they have inherited but that denies its very existence.” So, for example, in 2010, Mona Ingeborg Sahlin, at the time leader of the Swedish Social Democratic Party told Turkish youth: “I cannot figure out what Swedish culture is. I think that’s what makes many Swedes jealous of immigrant groups. You [immigrants] have a culture, an identity, a history, something that brings you together. And what do we have? We have Midsummer’s Eve and such silly things.” Five years later, Ingrid Lomfors, head of the Swedish governmental Forum for Living History said: “There is no native Swedish culture.” Former president Barack Obama has also played down the uniqueness of the United States and, as noted above, Trudeau has denied that Canada has a core identity.

These views share a postmodern ideology whereby all cultures are “equally good and valuable.” The views of the leaders also have in common postcolonialism which “holds that peoples across the globe all got along with each other comfortably and peacefully until Western imperialists invaded, divided, conquered, exploited and oppressed them.” Consistent postcolonialism even holds that Western culture is inferior to other cultures.

The West is considered guilty of much of the world’s trouble, due mostly to their past colonialism. But as Salzman notes, this is a terribly skewed reading of history. The real colonizers were Muslims. “How do they [postcolonialists] think virtually all of the Middle East and North Africa and the Middle East became Muslim – through a democratic referendum? Muslims invaded and transformed the Christian Byzantine Empire, now an increasingly Islamized Turkey; Greece; the Middle East, North Africa, the Balkans; Hungary; northern Cyprus and Spain.”

There is a dark side to downplaying or ignoring the Western cultural heritage and debt to Christianity. “Politicians in Western democracies seeking election often downplay their own cultures to garner immigrant and minority votes.” Salzman notes that “this marriage of postmodernism and electoral politics is having a terrible effect on societies that pride themselves on openness and diversity.” Instead of letting different ethnic and religious groups enrich countries with a Judeo-Christian foundation, “multiculturalists have actually been rejecting their own Western culture. While they encourage diversity of race, religion, and heritage, they forbid diversity of opinions, particularly those that do not conform to the postmodern narrative that rejects that of the West.”

The history of the West is far from perfect but it “has nevertheless afforded more freedoms and prosperity to more people than ever before in history.” The Western world’s Judeo-Christian past, has given us, for example, its historic morality, “its political evolution into full democracy; the separation of church and judiciary from state; its commitment to human rights and most of all its gravely threatened freedom of speech.”

How long a country can continue to live off the benefits of its Christian inheritance while denying its reality is a sobering question.

Source used: Philip Carl Salzman, “Multiculturalists Working to Undermine Western Civilization” (Dec 16, 2017) on the Gatestone Institute website.



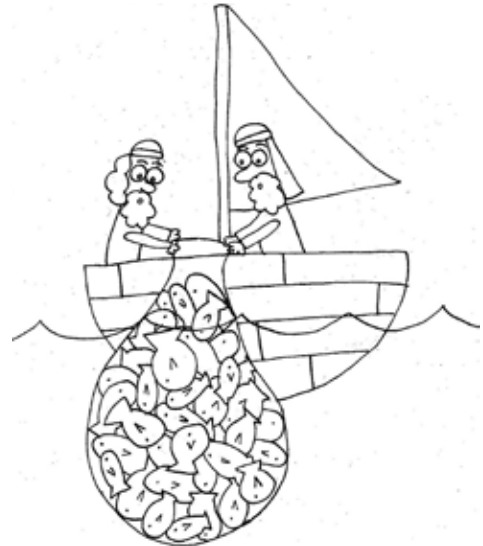
# Clarion Kids

## Jesus Calls the Disciples

**Matt 4:12-22, Mark 3:13-21, Luke 5:1-11**

When Jesus was starting his ministry, he called men to help him, and to learn from him, called disciples. Some of his disciples were fisherman. He saw them in their boat but they told him they had not been able to catch any fish, even after trying all night. But Jesus told them to try one more time, and they caught so many fish that their nets started to break and their boat started to sink. They were afraid but Jesus told them not to be. He said he would make them fishers of men. The names of the disciples were Peter, Andrew, two men named James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, Simon, and two men named Judas.

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



### Double Puzzle

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

SIMNO

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

7

DERWAN

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

1

10

PIPLIH

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

4

6

SEAMJ

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

8

9

PERTE

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

3

2

HONJ

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

5

B											
---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

### Word Search

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

Andrew

James

John

Judas

Matthew

Peter

Philip

Simon

Thomas

by Emily Nijenhuis





## David Rowson

Hi Everyone,

We would like to introduce you to David Rawson. David will be celebrating his birthday on March 9. He will be fifty-six years young. He loves to get cards in the mail.

My name is Grace Towe and I am the manager at Twin Oaks in Burlington, ON. I am writing this article with input from David. David joined his housemates, Ron and Derrick and myself, at Twin Oaks on May 22, 2015 from London, Ontario. He lived in London from 1982-2015. He still has many friends there that he keeps in contact with via e-mails and sometimes by texts. David is also close to his Van Tol family, whom he will visit from time to time.

We all attend the Burlington Ebenezer Church. He has made a lot of friends there. He likes to sit up front so he can hear the minister better. He loves to help find the Bible passages that we will be reading for that service for the lady that he sits with.

David loves to help around the house with the chores. He will notice something that needs to be done and will do it without being asked. He also loves to help outside with the yard work. David gets along fairly well with his housemates. David is a joy to have around here. He loves it when we have visitors over. He will be upstairs and see them coming up the front and come downstairs and greet our company. We have had a lot of games nights here over the past year. Our thanks go out to Fred and Jackie for getting that ball rolling. I would like to warn you that he is a pro at playing UNO and Rummy Cup. David loves it when we all go on outings to different places. Last year we rode the train to Toronto to go to Ripley's Aquarium to see the big sharks and other sea life that is there. He really enjoyed that. We also went to Niagara Falls to see one of God's wondrous creations. He goes to Anchor Camp every year the last week of June and the first week of July. He loves to help the ladies in the kitchen with making the coffee, cutting vegetables, and doing the dishes.

David keeps busy with his job and volunteer work. He also delivers papers on our street every Thursday. He delivers thirty-six papers and will do that independently. David loves his job at Tim Horton's. He works there two days a week on Mondays and Fridays from 8:30 to 2:30-3pm. He does the dishes and cleans the tables and empties the garbage cans. He keeps everything spic and span. On Wednesday mornings he joins the Bibles for Mission Thrift store team with Ron. He will help out with the sorting of the clothes and then puts it out on the floor.

If you are in the area, please feel free to come and visit. We just ask that you call first because the guys all have busy schedules.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

## March Birthdays

**3 Trevor Hofsink will be 40**

14407 McQueen Road  
Edmonton, AB T5N 3L3

**9 David Rawson will be 56**

c/o Twin Oaks  
3217 Twin Oaks Crescent  
Burlington, ON L7M 3A8

**10 James Boone will be 22**

c/o Carewest Dr. Fanning Centre  
1 West - Room 153A, 722 - 16 Avenue NE  
Calgary, AB T2E 6V7

**12 Gerry Eelhart will be 56**

c/o Mrs. Grace Eelhart  
# 120 13425-57 Street, Emmanuel Home  
Edmonton, AB T5A 2G1

**13 John VanWyngaarden will be 40**

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

**14 Tineille VanRootselaar will be 22**

219 Lock Street W  
Dunnville, ON N1A 1V2

**14 Lisa Alkema will be 37**

c/o Harbour Home  
42 Spadara Drive  
Hamilton, ON L9B 2K3  
email: lhalkema@gmail.com

**15 Jim VanderHeiden will be 59**

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

Happy Birthday to all of you celebrating a birthday in March! We wish you the Lord's blessing in the year to come, and a wonderful day with family and friends.



### A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

*If there are any address or other changes that I need to be aware of please let me know as soon as possible.*

**Rachel Vis**

731 Lincoln Street, Wellandport, Ontario L0R 2J0  
tom.rachelvis@gmail.com • 905-329-9476





## WOMEN'S SAVINGS ACTION

FOR THE CANADIAN REFORMED  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7*

*"Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." Hebrews 13:16*

With thankfulness to the Lord, we may report that once again God has indeed moved the hearts of his people so that many have shared their monetary gifts cheerfully with the Women's Savings Action in support of the Seminary's Library. Running a library is no small task; books and electronic purchases are extremely costly, and the maintenance of an orderly, updated library is ongoing. However, we continue "not reluctantly or under compulsion" but with thanks for the rich blessings we receive through our work for the benefit of the Seminary.

On behalf of our supporting churches we were able to present a pledge of \$35,000 to the library committee at the 2017 convocation. In large part this is due to our hard-working representatives in each of our churches for gathering in the funds. This year their efforts brought in \$35,102.74. We recognize that we could not do this without the cooperation of our congregations, under the Lord's blessing. To that end, may God continue to bless our work so that our Seminary's library remains current, efficient, and maintained; we are all blessed by it, and we thank God for it.

For those of you that may not know, the Women's Savings Action said goodbye to Mrs. Van Dam and Mrs. Nien-

huis, but not before thanking them for their long-standing dedication and commitment to WSA. These women worked quietly and fruitfully, serving over forty-two years combined! May God bless them in their future endeavours.

Now that Janet Van Vliet has become the new president of the Women's Savings Action, Deb Alkema has taken over her secretarial position and Karen Schuurman will capably handle all the numbers that come our way. Needless to say, this past year has been a learning curve for our new committee members, but we are thankful that despite the significant change the support from our church community has remained the same.

Over the years the WSA committee has been impressed and inspired by the ingenuity of our representatives as they come up with innovative ideas to raise funds within their congregation. Part of their challenge is communicating who we are and the importance of why we do what we do! This year we hope to take a closer look at the how we can accurately relay the answers to those questions coming from our supporting churches. On that note, keep a look out for the new Women's Savings Action poster. We hope that it will serve all as a reminder that WSA has been, and continues to be, an important piece in the grand scheme of teaching and training men to preach the gospel and to instruct according to sound doctrine.

We covet your prayers for God's guidance as we continue in our work to support the Seminary Library and the federation it serves.

C





# North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council

## November 27, AD 2017

The 43rd annual meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) convened on Tuesday afternoon, November 14, 2017 on the campus of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Chairman Rev. Bartel Elshout led the opening devotions during which the delegates and guests sang heartily from Psalm 67, “O God to Us Show Mercy.”

NAPARC is composed of thirteen member churches (denominations or federations of churches) which together represent about 3,600 organized and mission congregations and about 584,000 members including baptized covenant children. Each member church may send up to four delegates and they meet annually “to advise, counsel, and cooperate in various matters with one another, and to hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice.”<sup>1</sup>

Member churches of NAPARC are the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC), the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), the Église réformée du Québec (ERQ), the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA), the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC), the Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC), the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the Presbyterian Reformed Church (PresRC), the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), and the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). Representatives of the Bible Presbyterian Church (BPC) and the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA) attended as invited observers.

The basis of NAPARC’s fellowship is “Confessing Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Sovereign Lord over all of life, we affirm the basis of the fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches to be full commitment to the Bible in its entirety as the Word of God written, without error in all its parts, and to its teaching as set forth in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, the West-

minster Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms.”<sup>2</sup>

One of the first orders of business was the election of officers. Elected as Chairman was Rev. Dr. S. Steve Park of the Korean American Presbyterian Church, and as Vice-Chairman, Rev. David Kim of the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin). Elected as Secretary was Rev. Ralph Pontier, and as treasurer, Rev. Dr. Maynard Koerner. The chairmanship and vice-chairmanship rotate annually between the thirteen member churches following an alphabetical listing. The vice-chairman this year is slated to serve as chairman next year, and his denomination is asked to host the following year.

A large portion of time was spent on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning with each member church giving an oral report on the state of its church. Following each report delegates could ask questions and a designated delegate led the group in prayer for the church that had reported. One theme was repeated in several reports, that the work of missions is thriving among the churches.

On Tuesday evening, Rev. Mark Kelderman of the Heritage Reformed Congregations (the host church this year) led a devotional service. He encouraged the assembled with a message based on Revelation 1.

On Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning, a discussion took place on four topics suggested by member churches. The topics were:

1. How important is organic union among dissimilar NAPARC denominations? For example, do the denominations which focus on a specific ethnic/linguistic group in North America really need to merge with other NAPARC denominations?
2. What denominational distinctives presently exist as obstacles to organic union? (Examples: exclusive psalmody, delegated or non-delegated assemblies of synods, strict subscription or good faith subscription, unique denominational histories, etc.)



3. What denominational distinctives should be considered as valid obstacles to organic union under biblical scrutiny?
4. Discuss the possibility of a structure that allows for both distinctives and organic union.

The discussion revealed different ideas about the importance and feasibility of organic (organizational) union, but also a common commitment to giving visible expression to that unity which is already ours in Christ. The discussion was helpful in reminding delegates of the two-fold purpose of NAPARC, but also of its limitations. NAPARC continues to provide a venue for its member churches to talk with one another corporately and bilaterally, and to hold out before each other the ecumenical imperative of Scripture. It has strengthened fraternal bonds and spurred greater cooperation in missions, diaconal services, theological education, and youth ministry.

On Wednesday evening, Rev. Dr. Joel Beeke gave an inspirational address, "An Earnest Call to Help Restore Family Worship among Our Church Families."

In addition to the annual meeting of the Council, NAPARC sponsors consultations where representatives of member churches gather to discuss cooperation in a specific area of

ministry. For more than thirty years, there have been annual world mission consultations in September of each year. This year's Council appointed hosts and convenors for three other consultations. The OPC was asked to host, and Mr. David Nakhla to convene, a consultation on relief and diaconal ministry. Mr. Nakhla is the part time administrator of OPC's Committee on Diaconal Ministries. The ARP was asked to host, and Rev. Dr. Kyle E. Sims to convene, a consultation on theological training. The ERQ was asked to host, and Rev. Ben Westerveld to convene, a consultation on youth ministries.

The NAPARC schedule runs from Tuesday afternoon to Thursday noon and provides time slots for bi-lateral meetings between the inter-church or ecumenical committees of the member churches. These smaller meetings have proven fruitful for member churches to grow closer together and manifest more fully their oneness in Christ.

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled to be hosted by the Korean American Presbyterian Church in the Philadelphia area on November 13-15, 2018.

<sup>1</sup> NAPARC Constitution, III. Purpose

<sup>2</sup> NAPARC Constitution, II. Basis



## ADVERTISEMENTS

Announcements of Weddings, Anniversaries (especially those with an Open House) should be submitted six weeks in advance.

### 100<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY

Although "the years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength, eighty," the Lord has now blessed our mother with one hundred years.

On Saturday, March 17, 2018, DV, we hope to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of our mother

#### AKKE METZLAR

Mary Lee and John Stennett

Alice and David Horrocks

Phil and Gerty Metzlar

Lyn and Stan Leyenhorst

Teresa and Howard van Esch

19 grandchildren

21 great-grandchildren

You are invited to join us at an Open House on  
Saturday, March 17, 2018, from 2:30 - 4:30,  
at Emmanuel Canadian Reformed Church

8037 Hwy 7, Guelph, Ontario

Mailing address: 6991 Wellington Road 124, Guelph, ON N1H 6J4

### ANNIVERSARIES

1983 ~ March 4 ~ 2018

We love because He first loved us. 1 John 4:19

With thankfulness to our heavenly Father, our parents

#### CARL and MONICA OOSTERHOFF (nee Viersen)

are celebrating 35 years of marriage

Cambridge UK: Richard and Elora Oosterhoff  
Sydney, Norah, Judah

Purple Springs AB: Andy and Felicia Bijlsma  
Seth, Tristan, Rowan, Abigail, Marla

Owen Sound ON: Ken and Natasha Hutten  
Gavin, Tanner, Kyrie, Everett

Vineland ON: Aaron and Lyndsay Oosterhoff  
Levi, Theo, Rose

Smithville ON: Tim and Alyssa Oosterhoff  
Kaycia

Neerlandia AB: Ben and Ruth-Ann Tiemstra  
Asher, Charlotte

Vineland ON: Samuel Oosterhoff  
Micah Oosterhoff