

Clarion

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A photograph of a person with short brown hair, seen from behind, sitting on a wooden bench in a park. They are wearing a white t-shirt with black sleeves and a red and black plaid skirt. They are looking towards a body of water and trees in the background.

**Does your body
fit you?**

REFORMED CHURCHES OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA
YOU ASKED

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
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Issue 11 begins with an editorial from Dr. Cornelis Van Dam. It is lengthier than usual; I suspect this has to do with relevant and serious nature of the content: transgender issues and how to approach them. Dr. Van Dam's column "Clippings on Politics & Religion" also appears on these pages.

A report from Rev. Cornelis Kleyn and br. Mark Mulder keeps us informed about their work in Papua New Guinea, both in various congregations and at the Reformed Churches Bible College. This issue also brings readers columns such as Treasures New & Old, You Asked, *Clarion Kids*, and Education Matters, as well as a press release.

Laura Veenendaal

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Who Am I?

The opposition to encouraging children to accept their biological sex is fierce

“Who am I?” This is a question more and more children are and will be asking themselves, prompted by sex education curricula imposed on public schools. In Ontario, for example, grade three students are essentially taught that in answering such a question you need to be aware of the fact that being a boy or girl does not necessarily relate to your physical anatomy. The official *Health and Physical Education* component of the most recent Ontario curriculum (2015) states that gender identity must be taught to Grade 3 students (p. 124). Gender identity is described as “a person’s sense of self, with respect to being male or female. Gender identity ... may be different from birth-assigned sex” (p. 231). To say that teaching this ideology, for that is what it is, to eight- and nine-year-olds is confusing is an understatement.

Yet, the theory that gender is a social construct and not necessarily biologically based is not only confusing and wrong but also dangerous. It evokes questions in the minds of the young that touch on the very core of their identity as an individual and can do much harm. If one’s gender is fluid and changeable, depending on how you feel and not on your biology, then how can you be sure you have the body that fits you? More and more children are becoming confused.

Although those who consider themselves to be transgender apparently comprise less than .5 % of the population, transgender activists want people to believe that your biology does not determine whether you are male or female. Only the individual person can determine which sex belongs to him or her. In other words, what has always been considered a mental disorder (if a biological boy self-identified as a girl, and vice versa), should now be accepted as valid and not as something abnormal.

There is an agenda operating here. First marriage has been deconstructed with the push for recognition of same sex marriage and now the very notion of biological gender as determinative is being attacked. The January 2018 issue

of the *National Geographic* was even dedicated to and celebrated transgender children. The influence of this pernicious ideology is becoming pervasive. It is also making its inroads into Christian homes and minds.

For those struggling in the maelstrom of gender identity, this is a very sensitive topic, because it is all about feelings. Do you feel like a boy or do you feel like a girl? It may therefore be good to consider some aspects of this topic and to try to put it into a biblical context.

The pressure is on

Transgender activists have been quite successful in promoting the idea that one’s biological sex has little or nothing to do with your gender identity. Consequently, increasing numbers are confused and want to change their biological sex. There are even reports of entire peer groups at school identifying themselves as transgender. Governments are bending to the pressures and often paying the costs of a sex change operation for those who feel that they are not in the right body. And so male bodies are subjected to hormonal treatments and operated on to look like females and females can become males. Parents faced with a child that wants to change his biological sex will often go along with the child’s wishes for fear of losing the love of their son or daughter.

The push to legitimize as “normal” the determination of your own gender, even if it does not match your biology, is a huge tragedy, for there is no justification for it. Transgender treatments are started solely because people say they feel that they are in the wrong body. There is no scientific basis for the notion that your genitals have nothing to do with your gender identity. They most certainly do. And it is not just one’s sex organs that determine your identity as a boy or girl, male or female. The entire genetic makeup of one’s body is involved. The long and short of it is that scientifically speaking you cannot really transition to becoming

a male if you are a biological female or vice versa, no matter how clever the doctors are or how much the “new” body looks like the gender of your choice. As Quentin Van Meter, a pediatric endocrinologist, put it: “You’re never changing the sex of the patient. Never. Every cell in the body is programmed to be male or female.”

In 1965 the John Hopkins Hospital was the first academic hospital to offer sex change operations and served as a model for teaching the procedure. However, in 1979, under the leadership of Dr.

For those struggling in the maelstrom of gender identity, this is a very sensitive topic

Paul McHugh it stopped doing these surgeries. Why? Because follow-up and other studies showed that changing one’s sex is biologically impossible. It is a psychological problem and not a biological phenomenon. As Dr. McHugh put it: “People who undergo sex-reassignment surgery

do not change from men to women or vice versa. Rather, they become feminized men or masculinized women.” However, due to pressure from the transgender lobby, this hospital once again began doing these operations last year.

Because it is not a biological problem but one in the mind, surgery is of no help and is actually counterproduc-

tive. Those who have undergone sex-change operations experience a far greater risk of mental disorders such as anxiety and depression. Attempts at suicide for all ages of transgender individuals is about forty-one percent compared to under five percent for the general American population. One can hardly call transgender operations promising. There is even the case of Blair Logsdon who, starting at the age of twenty-six, underwent 167 surgeries from 1987 to 2005 in the hope of solving his gender confusion, going from male to female to male to female. He now calls himself a eunuch, a castrated man. Those operations never solved his problem. The problem is not one’s biology but one’s mind. To mention just one more example, Walt Heyer, now seventy-six, was operated on to become female and then later had to return back to being male. In an attempt to try to prevent other vulnerable people from experiencing the traumas he went through, he hosts a website: www.sexchangeregret.com.

With respect to children, studies have shown that about eighty to ninety percent of those with gender confusion or gender dysphoria accepted their biological gender as they became older. In other words, they spontaneously outgrew the problem. The fact that some have continuing difficulties indicate they need help to overcome them. But, they should not be encouraged to embrace their gender confusion as normal or as the transgender lobby likes to do, to celebrate and reinforce this condition and go for a sex change operation.



But the opposition to encouraging children to accept their biological sex is fierce. Kenneth Zucker has successfully helped young children with gender dysphoria to accept the body they were born with. But under pressure from transgender activists, he was dismissed from Toronto's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health at the end of 2015. His good work was not politically correct.

How can a Christian parent best respond to a child struggling with their sexual identity? They should encourage their loved one to accept the sex that he or she was born with. The Bible gives every reason to embrace one's biological sex and God's Word also gives hope.

Rejecting stereotypes

Stereotyping can cause children to worry about their identity. For example, boys are supposed to be self-confident, rough, assertive, and play with guns or trucks and girls are expected to be more accommodating, gentle, emotional, and play with dolls. If a child does not conform to such gender expectations and parents let that be known, then the seeds of confusion and future trouble about one's true identity can be sown.

Stereotyping should be rejected. Each child is a unique creation from God. It is difficult to justify gender stereotyping from Scripture. The Bible pictures Esau as the rough outdoors type, but Jacob as a quiet and stay-at-home type close to his mother (Gen 25:27-28). Women were the ones

who asserted themselves and challenged Pharaoh's command to kill the male children (Exod 1:15-2:4) and it was a woman, Jehosheba, who defied Queen Athaliah's decree to kill all her grandchildren by hiding her infant nephew Joash (2 Kgs 11:1-2). Our Saviour characterized himself as "gentle and lowly in heart" (Matt 11:29). Christian

virtues for both male and female include being gentle and meek (Matt 5:5; 2 Cor 10:1). The gifts of the Spirit are not classified for male and female, but both genders need to exhibit "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, selfcontrol" (Gal 5:22-23).

Acknowledging God's creation

Those who struggle with their sexual identity can find hope by acknowledging that their biological sex is a gift

from God. To reject this gift and to start questioning one's identity is to cast oneself at the mercy of one's feelings and emotions with no sure objective foundation. Parents can do much to guide their children. We live in a culture where adults let children lead the way. But children are not always sure about who they are. They need a firm and loving hand to guide them to their God-given identity. Pointing our children to the Lord gives hope to those struggling with their sexual identity. Adults struggling with their gender also need to look to their Maker.

God knows what is needed. Did David not confess: "O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether" (Ps 139:1-4). Yes, God knows us through and through. He made us! "You formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance" (Ps 139:13-16).

We can accept and love our body as a gift of God. God created male and female; both are made in his image. Unfortunately, we are in a fallen world. Gender confusion is one of the tragic results of sin. It is made worse by our current secular culture pushing God away and ignoring his good revelation. In the process our world has become oversexualized, ignores divine norms, and so invites God's wrath (cf. Rom 1). In the midst of such moral disarray, Christians confused or challenged with their sexual identity need to affirm that their body is a unique treasure, made specifically for them by the Creator. Christians will not be wiser than God and try to remake themselves into another gender. Doing so amounts to usurping God's place as Creator and saying we can do it better. We cannot; the results of sex change surgeries have also shown this to be impossible.

To start questioning one's identity is to cast oneself at the mercy of one's feelings and emotions with no sure objective foundation

Child of God


But children of God do not need to despair as they struggle while trying to answer the question, “Who am I?” Also those with gender issues may know that God has given them a clear identity. He has embraced them as his children and given them promises. At their baptism he has promised as heavenly Father that when they are troubled by the darkness of their confusion and limitations, then he will also use that bad situation for their good. And if they fall into sin as they struggle to come to terms with their sexual identity, God the Son has promised to wash them clean from all their sins. And God the Holy Spirit assured them that he will join their life to Christ’s life so that they are living members of Christ. Those baptized are children of promise and they have every reason to turn to the God of their baptism who gives hope even in the darkness surrounding their sexual identity.

Not everyone in the congregation or in a Christian family has a clear sense of their being male or female. There are those with ongoing unsolved issues who do not experience the normal distinction of male or female. But God also accepts and embraces them. Is it not remarkable that the first convert outside Jerusalem that Scripture mentions was someone with an abnormal sexual identity, an Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39)? Yet the Lord called him to himself. A Christian’s identity is ultimately to be found in Christ. We are in a fallen world, but we receive new identity in union with our Saviour. If we struggle the fight of faith against our sins and the darkness of this world and seek to put to death the old nature and embrace Christ, then he transforms us so that we can say with the apostle Paul, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). Or as the apostle puts it elsewhere: “For me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21). In focussing our life and identity on Christ, the Spirit will unite us with him and give us our true identity. For as believers the identity that counts is the one that is found in Christ.

Earlier in this article we met Blair Lodgson, who underwent 167 surgeries in his quest for his true sexual identity. The story has a happy ending. He found his true male self in embracing Christ as Saviour. Someone I happen to know and who struggles with sexual identity similarly testified,

my true identity is only in Christ, in loving him and having him as the focus of my life. With him is life and light. This does not mean that the real mental problems associated with questions of one’s sexual identity disappear. The struggle continues. But in affirming one’s relationship to Christ, Christians may appeal to God’s promises and receive strength from above. God is able to work all for our good.

C.S. Lewis once wrote in the last pages of his book, *Mere Christianity*, that “it is no good trying to be ‘myself’ without Him [Christ]. The more I resist Him and try to live on my own, the more I become dominated by my own heredity and upbringing and surroundings and natural desires. . . . What I call ‘My wishes’ become merely the desires thrown up by my physical organism or pumped into me by other men’s thoughts or even suggested to me by devils. . . . It is when I turn to Christ, when I give myself up to His Personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own.”

When children ask, “Who am I?” or when adults struggle with the same question, we may remind ourselves of the riches we have in Christ. And as people of God, his congregation, we will also do everything in our power to embrace those struggling with these issues and help to usher them into the light and peace that only Christ can give. 

Some helpful resources:

Nancy Pearcey, *Love Thy Body* (2018)

Gender Identity Respectfully Submitted Policy Report (Summer 2016) available on the ARPA website

Paul R. McHugh, “Surgical Sex: Why We Stopped Doing Sex Change Operations” *First Things* November 2004

Lawrence S. Mayer and Paul R. McHugh, “Sexuality and Gender” *The New Atlantis* 50 (Fall 2018) 1-143

Jamie Dean, “Suffer the Children” *World Magazine* 32:7 (April 15, 2017) 30-35

Apart from the book, all the articles are available on the Internet.



Remember

Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. (Psalm 25:6)

King David, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote beautiful words. He asks God to remember his *mercy*. Some translations speak of *tender mercy*. That gets the idea across well, for the word for mercy is about the same as the Hebrew word for womb. As a mother's womb encircles an unborn child, and as a mother naturally has love for the child in her womb, so David asks the LORD to look upon him with tender mercy. As a mother has feelings of love and tenderness flowing to her child, so David prays for feelings of love and tenderness to flow from God to him. If a child is hurt she wants her mother, and mother's heart opens wide for her hurting child. Soldiers injured on the battlefield and ending up at death's door will call out for their mothers. So David calls out for his God.

What about you, when you are hurting? When you are ill, are diagnosed with a serious, a life-threatening illness, you may call upon the LORD who has tender feelings of mercy towards you. When life becomes difficult, call upon the LORD for help.

David also asks the LORD to remember his *steadfast love*. A special word is used here that speaks of the love the LORD has for his covenant people. The people with whom he has a relationship of love. We are those people. He has love for us together as his people, and for each of us personally. Relish his love like you bask in the warm sunshine! Rest in his love!

You see how King David called upon God as *LORD* – “LORD” with four capital letters in our English translation. That is the special covenant name of God by which he revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush. There God revealed himself as the covenant God of love. He is not like other gods who are cold, unmoving, and impassive. Or like gods who are so cruel they demand the sacrifice of firstborn children. Oh no; he is the God who has tender mercy and steadfast love for his people.

King David says that there is a solid reason for his prayer: “For they have been from of old.” He could have said that he was praying for tender mercy and steadfast love *which* have ever been from of old, and he would have

been saying something true. But that is not quite what he said. He used the word “for.” *For*, *since*, or *because* they have been from of old. David asks God to deal with him in tender mercy and steadfast love *because* that is who the LORD is. That's the way he has always been. That's what he is like. From of old, since Adam and Eve, Noah and his family, Abraham and Sarah, the children of Israel – throughout the ages, the LORD has acted tenderly and lovingly toward his people.

Perhaps you are saying to yourself, “Well, Pastor, I'm not feeling much love right now. You don't know the trouble I've seen.” Well listen; I can't explain your troubles. I can't explain why God is leading you along the dark and scary paths. But I can tell you about a child of God named Paul who had such a disability that he stopped everything to ask the Lord to take it away. And Jesus answered, “No Paul; you need to learn that my grace is sufficient for you.”

That's what we need to learn too. The grace of God is enough.

For further study

1. Is the steadfast love of God sufficient for you? Why or why not?
2. How could you get to the spot where you say: “The grace of God is all I really need”?





Emerging Islamist Political Clout in Europe

Counterterrorist expert Afshin Ellian of Leiden University asserts that Europe is in the process of Islamizing itself. Abigail Esman passes on some of the reasons why this professor's analysis is realistic. There is no meaningful official resistance to the culturally incompatible demands of Islam. But there is a growing Islamic political strength.

Belgium's Muslims support their ISLAM Party (**I**ntegrity, **S**olidarity, **L**iberty, **A**uthenticity, **M**orality) which wants to make Belgium an Islamic state. Currently this party has two elected representatives, both from areas known as hotbeds of Islamic extremism. The party hopes to do even better in the October elections.

The Netherlands has its own pro-Islamic party, DENK which has been doing well. "In local Dutch elections last month, DENK (which means 'think' in Dutch) gained three seats in Rotterdam, totaling four seats among 45 total and edging out Geert Wilders' farright Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV), which fell from three seats to one." Similarly, in Amsterdam, the party gained three seats in its first election there.

Islam's growing political strength is also evident in France. "France's Union of Muslim Democrats (UDMF) has taken a number of voters from the Green Party by promising to defend Muslims." Also Austria has seen the rise of organized Islamic political action.

These political gains are as such not remarkable. But in the larger picture they are most ominous. "Most disturbing are the large numbers of Muslims who have all flocked to parties like DENK and UDMF throughout Europe. Rather than moving towards more secular, traditionally democratic political movements, Europe's Muslims are apparently increasingly distancing themselves from the 'European' side of their identity and identifying more with Islam and the Muslim community." This development is the result of Europe not sufficiently asserting the need for Muslims to integrate into their new homeland. Instead multiculturalism has been celebrated. This has often allowed Muslims to set their own rules and even create no-go zones where sharia law essentially rules.

Also most troubling is when security forces get close ties with questionable Islamic organizations and promote Muslim institutions. The Amsterdam police force has been exposed to have links with Abdelilah el Amran, a Muslim Brotherhood-connected imam. The police department invited him to lead last year's annual Islamic Iftar dinner marking the end of a day's fast during Ramadan. But it is worth noting that "no other government body sponsors a religious ceremony. Nor does any Dutch government agency, let alone the police, host a Passover Seder or observe any other religious event with the public." A similar event seems to have been held in Rotterdam. Because of this dinner, the police department there tweeted that "police will be difficult to reach tonight, due to various Iftar meals." In other words, "city security and the safety of citizens was being compromised in the name of a religious celebration."

Another example of government catering to Islam is the proliferation of sharia courts in the United Kingdom.

When government or its agencies are partial to Islam and thus promotes a faith that is antithetical to everything that Europe has historically stood for, the handwriting is on the wall. With demographic momentum favouring Islamic numerical domination, it may be only a matter of time before today's Islamic political efforts will in the end mean the transformation of Europe, one city and country at a time. Ten years ago, *Le Figaro* predicted that Brussels, the European capital will probably be Islamic within twenty years. It is not unlikely. There is an obvious lesson here for Canada as well. The optics are not good for historic Western civilization.

Sources used: Quotations are from Abigail R. Esman, "Emerging Islamist Political Clout Accelerates Europe's Self-Islamization" (April 24, 2018) on *FrontPage Magazine* website which relies to some extent on Afshin Ellian's "De Europese zelf-islamisering is een sluipend gevaar" on the website of *Elsevier Weekblad*; Stéphane Kovacs, "L'islam, première religion à Bruxelles dans vingt ans" (March 21, 2008) on *Le Figaro* website.



Reformed Churches Bible College and Reformed Churches of Papua New Guinea

Semi-annual reports of Rev. Kleyn and br. Mulder prepared for the Mission Delegates Meeting of Toronto and the supporting churches, November 2017

Greetings in Christ our Lord! The past year has seen much change in the Lord's work in Papua New Guinea! We have experienced the blessings of our LORD time and time again. Our awesome God is in control of his church, blesses in spite of difficulties, and continues to nourish and strengthen what he has started.

Rev. Cornelis Kleyn

God's sheepfold in Papua New Guinea, while under the protection of the Good Shepherd, has had many wolves entering it. In the last half year, we have been challenged in many ways. We had doctrinal differences among the students and had to deal with the sin of adultery. A church leader felt he wanted to give up on everything; other church leaders were continually at odds and not working well together and a missionary had to leave the field for personal reasons.

But in and among all this turmoil, weakness, disunity, and sin, we have God's powerful Word that continues to heal, restore, and grow. Christ continues to gather, defend, and preserve his church in this country. We praise the Lord for giving strength, health, several faithful growing students and church members, opportunities for outreach, and men that continue to faithfully bring the Word.

In this report I will look at the Reformed Ministries team (the missionaries), the Reformed Churches Bible College, and the Reformed Churches of Papua New Guinea. As I deal with the churches, I will share a little about each church group separately and finally talk about the school board as well.

Reformed Ministries

In our previous report we mentioned that 2017 is a year of changes. We saw the Wildeboers (left February) replaced by the deJongs to serve in the Lae area. We saw the Versteegs (left early July) just recently replaced by the Mulders (a teacher), here at the RCBC. We saw the addition of a campus manager here in Port Moresby and we saw the continued work of the Slobes in the Lae area. But unexpectedly we also saw the Doumas leaving the field for an extended period of time. Within a period of a year, we (the Kleyns) moved from being one of the least experienced couples on the field to being the most experienced and longest serving couple on the field.

Needless to say, our workload increased a lot during the last six months as we went in Port Moresby from three missionary pastors to only one. Before July, I was a teacher at the RCBC, from July on I carried the title of "acting principal." Before July I did not focus much attention on any church group apart from East Boroko, since July I became counsellor/advisor for all the church groups. Thankfully we are not alone here at the RCBC nor in the churches. And the Lord gave an extra measure of grace and strength to be able to continue to carry out the work he called us to do.

Reformed Churches Bible College

In July both the Doumas and Versteegs left the country. At that stage the Mulders had not yet made it into PNG. It is amazing how the Lord did provide the Bible College with different teachers that could fill in. We were privileged to have Rev. Archbald from New Zealand and Rev. Kleyn sr. (my father) here during block 4 and Rev. Ryan DeJonge and br. Wayne vdHeide for block 5.

During these last teaching blocks one of the students fell out and did not return for his studies. On the other



*Staff and Students of
Reformed Churches
Bible College with
Guest Lecturer
Rev. John and Alice Kroeze;
Papua New Guinea*

hand, there was also a student that joined us at that time to take his place. This meant that we continued to have twelve students in the certificate program and four in the diploma program. Of the certificate students, four are not academically capable of fulfilling the requirements of all the courses, another five are doing alright, and a further three are doing really well. The variety in ages, capabilities, and backgrounds of the students makes teaching the certificate course quite challenging.

In the Diploma Program there are two out of four students doing quite well, but also two students that are struggling in different ways. Of these two, one struggled with the doctrines of salvation (TULIP) and on and off with sickness as well. The other student struggled with motivation and sleeping in class (since he does not want to become a pastor anyway) and he has been disciplined for plagiarism. Sadly, these two students will probably not be able to continue on with us next year.

But things were not all sad and going wrong at the Bible College. The student committee gave input into the spiritual welfare of the students at the Bible College and we will implement some strategies next year to further encourage the spiritual life of the students, including some more organized Bible study and social time among students. In addition, as staff we are marking different students for each of us to spend more time with and keep tabs of. We also thank the Lord for growing several of the students in leaving different practices and beliefs behind. It is our hope and prayer that God will continue to bless the Bible College for many more years and raise up men and women to works of service in the sheepfold.

The Immanuel Reformed Church at East Boroko

Working in the East Boroko settlement as a missionary alongside church leader Ben has been a challenging and often disappointing affair. As humans we like to see growth and stability, but we saw very little of this in East Boroko. In the past half year in addition to the usual Sunday worship and Sunday School, leadership training continued to happen, as did Wednesday night fellowships and outreaches, home visits, and membership classes.

During the last half year we have had about twenty new people passing through and coming to church for several weeks but then leaving again. We have had some of our lost sheep returning for a while and then leaving again. We have spent a lot of time with the few youth we have, only to see them all leaving the church too. Sunday worship services



*Leader Br. Ben (right) with some members of
Immanuel Reformed Church at East Boroko*



Reformed Ministries Team 2017

Rev. Cor and Greta Kleyn family; Br. Richard 'tHart; Rev. Ryan and Ruth deJong family; Br. Mark and Liz Mulder; Br. Julian and Shannel Slobe family

most Sundays have an attendance of five to eight adults from the church group, of which four or five are members.

But not all is doom and gloom for the East Boroko Church group. Br. Ben continues to grow in his commitment and ability. The Sunday School program is running quite well, with about twenty children from the settlement regularly attending on Sundays before the worship service. And a new group of about thirty people, close by to the church, have been requesting our help for the last half year. We fellowship with them once a week. They have not yet shown commitment in coming to church, but they have paid money and given gifts to us as leaders for the church. It is our hope and prayer that God will continue to open hearts and minds so that his people may hear his Word and enter into the care of his sheepfold.

The Covenant Reformed Church at Nine Mile

The suburban church group at Nine Mile continues to be led by Pastor Aisi and church leader Mattes. About twenty people attend church services most Sundays, but recently this church group was rocked to the core by the adultery committed by the leader of the women's fellowship. Attendance has been down for a while with several disagreements and sicknesses among members.

Nevertheless, this past Sunday all the members attended the worship service and things seem to be on the mend in this church group again. A new leader for the women's fellowship has been chosen and she has been showing a lot of godly leadership in visiting sick and wayward members and encouraging the women's fellowship in other church groups as well.

The congregation is also working on two major projects, namely the fundraising to raise a new church build-

ing and the initial work in raising a Christian day school in the coming year. The church group is about K250 away from raising to its target amount of K10,000 for the church building. We continue to wait for the plans at this time, but it is our hope and prayer that the building work may begin in January next year if everything falls into place. This is one of the projects for which we have already made an initial request for help in 2016. A more formal request may be forthcoming after the amount of K10,000 has been reached and a costing done for the new church building.

The Bethel Reformed Church at Beretete

This beautifully set village church, an hour drive from home, is ably led by Pastor Nawai and Elder Boboro. Although this church group lacks men (and it is therefore hard to get more office bearers), of the church groups on the Port Moresby side, this is probably the most stable and unified church group. The congregation has been struggling to pay their pastor sufficient means to live off, but recently this is no longer the case as the congregation now has a well functioning committee of management with continual fundraising. Another highlight has been the creation of a teaching program this year that starts with Sunday School (ironically held on Saturdays), followed by younger and older youth programs and catechism instruction.

The church also had an official opening in June just before the Versteegs left the field after completing a concrete floor for the church building. And they plan to raise a school in 2018 with two teachers that have already received some preliminary training during this past year.

Recently the Mulders were hosted by this church group and were richly blessed by them as they learned Tok Pisin and got some culture training. The membership on the other hand loved the fact that they tried so hard to learn and were willing to enter into their homes and share their lives.



Official opening of Bethel Reformed Church building on June 17, 2017 at Beretete, Papua New Guinea



New Graduate of Diploma of Reformed Studies program, David Kaupa with Rev. Cor and Greta Kleyn

It is our hope and prayer that this church group may continue to thrive and go from strength to strength.

The church group at Beregoro

An hour and a half drive to the east lies another beautifully situated village far away from the hustle and bustle of the Port Moresby city life. Beregoro is led by Elder Evangelist Joel Sine and church leader Wapo. Sadly, there is a growing and underlying conflict in this church group between its preacher and the congregation. This has seriously affected many of the church programs including the women's fellowship and Bible studies. Recently the consistory had to meet to decide on the future of the work there. We thank the Lord that there are still faithful members in Beregoro, but also pray that peace may be found within her walls for the sake of the wellbeing and growth of the church and the glory of God. It is likely that their preacher will finish his work at the end of the year, leaving the church group vacant. But the future of the church group rests in the hands of the Lord our God.

The church group at Veifa'a

About three and a half hours to the west from the Bible College lies our fifth and final church group on the Port Moresby side of PNG. This church group was led by Pastor Alan Douma and has three candidate elders in leadership. With the Doumas in Australia, the consistory recently decided to supply Veifa'a with a preacher every second week to continually encourage them. This year they have been struggling with conflict among the leaders, long-term sickness of one of the candidate elders, and a general weakness in church attendance and commitment. For most of the year

CALLED

Called by Blessings Christian Church in Hamilton, ON, to launch a second site for outreach in East Hamilton:

Rev. Ian Wildeboer

former missionary to Papua New Guinea

CALL DECLINED

Declined the called extended to him by the St. Albert Canadian Reformed Church in St. Albert, AB:

Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer

from Spring Creek Canadian Reformed Church in Tintern, Ontario

CHURCH NEWS

the regular church programs have not been running, and it is only recently that the women are having their women's fellowships again, the candidate elders are meeting together again, and a weekly Sunday school is being run.

The church group in Veifa'a certainly continues to have a great potential for growth with knowledgeable men in the congregation and a large village to minister to. But this church group continues to struggle with conflicts between leaders, commitment of its members, and a lack of continuity in its programs. It is our hope and prayer that the church group may prepare itself to call a pastor to serve in the congregation. And we pray that God will provide stability, peace, and commitment for the sake of his work in that part of his vineyard.

School board

As already mentioned, both Nine Mile and Beretete intend to raise a school in 2018. A school board was formed this year to raise those schools and help find teachers and students. Four young ladies got some teachers training in this year and are preparing themselves to teach in the coming year. A lot of work will still need to be done, but the biggest hurdle in raising the schools will be financial. For that reason, this is a fundraising project we would seriously like you to consider helping us with.

Conclusion

God's work in PNG continues on despite the attacks of the evil one. Despite disunity in some quarters, God has given unity in others. Despite the sin of adultery, God has raised up others with a new level of godliness and commitment. Despite theological differences, God gives greater depth of understanding and commitment to his Word. Despite disappointment in church leadership, God continues to use the church leadership to advance his Kingdom in this country.

To him alone the glory.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Cornelis Kleyn*

Br. Mark Mulder

In this report I will focus on what's been happening in our lives since May 2017. I won't be reporting much about the RCBC, as we have only just arrived and I haven't as yet started any teaching.

May: This was a month of preparation and anticipation; we spent much time practising our Tok Pisin, we received numerous vaccinations, and we (more or less) sorted out what was to go in our container. We also received numerous cupboards and the like, all flat packed, ready to be installed in our house at the RCBC. On the anticipation side of things, we needed to exercise patience as we continued to wait for our work permit and visa, and we needed to wait for someone to place an offer on our house.

June: A month of waiting and being taught to place all our trust in God. This lesson turned a frustrating month into a good month.

July: The work permit arrived and our spirits lifted. Many farewells were made and the final preparations could be completed. There was one outstanding issue; the house still hadn't been sold.

August: Everything came together in perfect timing, again evidence of God's love toward us. The house sold, the visa came, the container got packed and we flew out, bound for POM.

We spent some time in Cairns "unwinding" and getting ready physically for our new life in POM. We arrived in POM on the 17th and were warmly welcomed by all at the RCBC. The last two weeks of August were spent getting ready for village living in Beretete.

September: The entire month was spent in Beretete away from western civilisation so that we could learn Tok Pisin and learn the PNG culture. This was an amazing experience and we certainly learnt a lot.

October: No sooner did we come back from Beretete and our container arrived. We used the three week break between teaching blocks to sort out all the goods. Fortunately, one of my uncles came across from Western Australia and helped in assembling cupboards vanities, kitchen tops, pantry etc. Much could be done, and the inside of the house has certainly been changed. ☺ Our helper left today, having completed all the big jobs.



Br. Mark and Liz Mulder, new principal of the Reformed Churches Bible College

Right now I'm working extra hard finalising my lessons for the final teaching block, which starts next week.

Conclusion

So much for us; in the future the reports will focus more on the activity and happenings at the College. For now, a random collection of thoughts:

- We are feeling the strain of not knowing what will happen next year with respect to a third lecturer.
- Liz and I will be staying at the RCBC over Christmas and the New Year break. We'll take our first break in July, DV, when we hope to visit our grandchildren (and their parents) who live in Neerlandia, Canada. This would be a good time to visit Toronto as well.
- There is a good "feel" at the RCBC at the moment. (Praise God!)
- The rain has come!!!! Wonderful.

We feel we have made a good start to our "new" life. We are truly thankful for this opportunity and we're looking forward to really settling in and making a good contribution. We would like to express appreciation to the Toronto Mission Board who have given us tremendous support.

*In his service, Mark and Liz Mulder
(markmulder64@gmail.com)*

PS: We do send out an email every two weeks (at this stage) called "Mulders in Moresby," where we keep everybody posted on the latest happenings. If people wish to join, please give me their email address and I'll add it to the list.





Celebrating Sixty Years of Reformed Education

Rejoicing, recounting, remembering, reflecting!

What an evening it was! The convention centre in Perth was packed with 2300 voices praising God in song and words! I don't think I ever heard that many voices at once singing in unison from the psalms and hymns: "Come thank the LORD, his goodness praising" (Psalm 118), "O LORD our Lord, yours be all adoration. How glorious is your name in all creation!" (Psalm 8), "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation" (Hymn 78), etc., accompanied by organ, piano, trumpet.

The theme for the event provided the entire focus for the evening: "A GraceFull Covenant, Commemorating His Story: 60 years of Reformed Education." Yes, it was God's work alone and to him alone be the glory! The commemoration evening marked sixty years of the John Calvin Christian covenant schools established by the Free Reformed School Association in 1957 in Armadale and expanding to surrounding regions. Parents from the newly established Free Reformed Church of Armadale worked together to establish a school association to address their baptismal responsibilities in finding a way to educate their covenant children entrusted to them by the Lord.

The highlights of the evening were the choral fest singing of school children and the launch of the book *A Gracefull Covenant*. Through these highlights, the evening was marked with praise to our almighty God by rejoicing, recounting, remembering, and reflecting on his work in our church and school life.

Rejoicing

The highlight of the evening was the choral fest involving the singing of some 350 children from the four primary schools and the middle/high school choir. Arrayed on stage in their beautifully blended schools colours – blue for Bunbury, red for Byford, yellow for Kelmscott, green for Rockingham, and white for middle/high school – the students sang their praises to God wholeheartedly and with enthu-

siasm, accompanied by piano and other instruments. They sang beautiful renditions of songs that had interwoven into them the well-known hymns of A Mighty Fortress Is Our God, Great is Thy Faithfulness, O God Our Help in Ages Past, and Amazing Grace.

Recounting

The evening was filled with snippets of recounting the early days of establishing and building the first school and hiring the first teachers. The Lord blessed this work with growth in student numbers, building and educational resources, and increasing the number of schools to four primary schools, a middle school and high school. The evening commenced with a video showing the first church building at Wungong, commencing the building of the school and opening the school with the first cohort of students and teachers.

The second highlight of the evening was the launch of the book *A GraceFull Covenant*. The first copy available was presented to the first teacher of the school, Mrs. Van der Gugten (nee Rozema). Then a reflection by one of the students for each decade since commencement was played on video, commencing with Mr. A. Hordyk, one of the first students in 1957. Each of these persons was present on stage and enacted their reflection by holding the book and peering through its pages while their reflection was played audibly. This glimpse into the book for each decade of the school's life showed how the book was not a dry history book, but a living rendition of the activities, developments, struggles, and growth of sixty years of Reformed education. We look forward to receiving our own copy and reading, recounting, reflecting. . . !

Remembering

Throughout the evening, images displayed and videos played provided the audience with a remembrance of school days gone past, many having been students in the past sixty years, and many with children, grandchildren,



and great-grandchildren who have been blessed with covenant education in the John Calvin Schools. Many people saw themselves in the various photos and videos, bringing back remembrances of many teachers, fellow students, events and activities. The audience was truly involved in remembering the Lord's work over that past sixty years and the influence and importance of the schools in their church and family lives!

Particular mention and attention in the words and singing of the evening were also given to the Great Reformation 500th anniversary this year, commemorating God's work of reformation in the church through Martin Luther and others. Incredible to remember such events in the life of the church and to see how God used such humble people and activities to gather, defend, and preserve his church through the ages.

Reflecting

In fact, one of the first teachers, Mrs. Van der Gugten, accepted an invitation to travel to Western Australia from

The Netherlands to attend the celebration. She reflected on applying for and accepting the teaching invitation and arriving on the boat in 1957 to take up her task and what it was like to teach in Western Australia in those early days. A number of other people used as instruments by God and that had a great impact on the development of the schools also reflected on various aspects of the past sixty years.

The current chairman of the School Board, Mr. Henry Dykstra, reflected on the relationship between the church, home, and school, a relationship which was necessary and instrumental in the school's development. He did this by personifying the school with the church as it's "mother." The church is where God gathers his covenant children who grow in him through the preaching of his Word and administration of the sacraments. The church as mother is where the children of the school come from; these children need to be nurtured in the ways of the Lord and prepared to serve him in their life and task on this earth. The school provides parents with assistance to carry out their baptismal vows. The struggle to remain Reformed in every way should also characterise our home situation. This presents the challenge for us: let the school, church, and home relationship be close and harmonious, based on the one foundation which is Christ.

The overall theme of the evening was carried throughout all the activities of that evening! God's work and story through covenant education in Western Australia was highlighted beautifully through the children's singing, community singing, reflections of God's work and blessings in the development of the schools. The focus on God's work through our humble, weak, and sinful efforts shows the greatness of his Name. All praise to him alone!

This article was originally posted at www.ReformedNews.info and is published in this column with permission.





Q What does biblical forgiveness look like?

What does biblical forgiveness look like? I keep hearing from well-meaning brothers and sisters that being willing to forgive or having a forgiving spirit towards the unrepentant is not enough but that we must forgive them unconditionally. They cite the Lord's Prayer as a reference (Matt 6:12) that if you don't forgive, God will not forgive you. According to these brothers/sisters God can demand repentance; we can't because only God can change hearts.

A Forgiveness in the Bible pertains first of all to God's gracious forgiving of us, sinners. His forgiving is based on the work of atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is ours by faith in him. We need not make any payment for the sins we have committed but may appeal to the payment Christ made for our sins by his death on the cross. When we embrace Christ by faith and repent of our sins we may be assured of his forgiving us. Then repentance means that we turn around, we turn away from those sins with grief and sorrow because we offended God by our sins (Ps 51; Ezek 18:30-32; LD 33, Q&A 89). Faith *and* repentance are required for the forgiveness of our sins!

As imitators of God (Eph 5:1), we show the evidence of his grace in us and the same determination to seek the forgiveness of the sins our neighbours sinned against us by pursuing the same faith and repentance. "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him," (Luke 17:3); this shows us that the Lord Jesus teaches us the same approach. We must be willing to forgive, as God is towards us, and we must help our brother in his repentance by showing him his fault (Matt 18:15). "And if he listens, you have won your brother over:" his listening means that he acknowledges his sin, shows sorrow over it, and repents from what was exposed as sinful. That's when you forgive

him his sin. Thus the Lord Jesus teaches us to seek our neighbour's repentance! Then too, forgiveness makes sense if and when the neighbour knows his sin, confesses it as sin, and turns away from it.

There is a clear connection between our sinning against God and against the neighbour (just as our love of God and the neighbour are closely related!). As David indicates in Psalm 51:4, by his sinning with Bathsheba he sinned against the neighbour *and* against God: "Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (cf. Acts 5:4). We cannot use the Lord's Prayer as the only standard for the requirements of faith *and* repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The Lord's Prayer is rather compact and does not give all the details that are revealed elsewhere in Jesus' teachings. The Lord's Prayer does not mention the requirement for *repentance* for our sinning against *God* for God to forgive them, even though the Bible teaches it, neither does the Lord's Prayer mention this requirement with regard to our forgiving the *neighbour* (though the Lord Jesus teaches it elsewhere, Luke 17:3). God the Father awaits our repentance and show of grief, as the Lord Jesus portrays in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:20). Forgiveness upon repentance and reconciliation lead to peace and restoration; we need the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit with his Word for that! Therefore, James writes (5:16), "confess your sins to one other and pray for

one other.” Then by the power of the Holy Spirit the sinner is able to repent. *He* is able to change hearts!

There are situations in which forgiving is very, very difficult. When someone has ruined your reputation, harmed your body, or abused you emotionally, it will be very difficult to forgive. Then it will make a difference whether you deal with the neighbour as a creditor, harshly, insensitive, intimidating, and demanding repayment in every possible way, or approach him with an attitude that the Heidelberg Catechism portrays: as a miserable sinner yourself, who himself depends

on Jesus Christ for his forgiveness completely. It will require full confession of sin, total remorse over the absence of love to which we are indebted to the neighbour, yet as expectation from someone who himself lives by grace alone, who received God’s love while we were still sinners, enemies, and debtors. And if the confession of sin and repentance is not forthcoming, we treat him according to Paul’s instructions in Romans 12:17-21, not avenging ourselves, or living in anger, but dealing with him with respect, knowing that God will avenge and repay: “overcome evil with good!”



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

Ask us a question!

Please direct questions to Rev. W. denHollander

denhollanderw@gmail.com

23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0

NOTICE OF CONVOCAATION

General Synod 2019 is slated to be convened by the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Edmonton on May 14, 2019. A prayer service will be held on Monday, May 13, 2019, at 7:30 PM at the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church building. Synod Edmonton 2019 will commence on Tuesday, May 14, 2019, D.V.

All material for Synod should be send to the attention of the Synod Organizing Committee at the address of the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Edmonton:
21112 35 Avenue NW, Edmonton, AB T6M 2P6
email: clerk@synod.edmontonimmanuel.ca



According to the GUIDELINES FOR GENERAL SYNOD all material for Synod should be received by the convening church (in digital format, and five paper copies) no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of General Synod. Material received after this date shall ordinarily not be added to the agenda unless Synod is satisfied that the reasons given for later arrival are reasonable.

Clarion Kids

The Faith of a Centurion

Matthew 8:5-17

God sent Jesus to the world to die for everyone who believes in him. Some of the Israelites thought Jesus only came to save them, but he came to save everyone who believes. One day while he was preaching, Jesus met a centurion. A centurion is a Roman soldier. The centurion asked Jesus to heal his servant who was lying sick in bed at his house. Jesus agreed to go with him, but the centurion knew Jesus was powerful enough to heal his servant without going to his house. Jesus was very happy with the faith of the centurion and he healed the servant. Jesus said that many other people like him would be saved.

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



Word Search

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

Believe
Heal
Roman

Centurion
Powerful
Saved

Faith
Preaching
Soldier

Double Puzzle

Unscramble the words, then use the numbered letters to solve the final clue.

MANRO

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VAENSTR

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LOEDISR

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by Emily Nijenhuis

PRESS RELEASE

Press Release of Classis Pacific West – April 10, 2018

On behalf of the convening church, the Willoughby Heights CanRC, Rev. Janssen opened the meeting in a Christian manner, with the reading of 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5, the singing of Psalm 40:3, 4, and prayer. Surrey reported that all the churches were properly represented. As per the proposal of the last classis, Rev. Schoof was appointed president, Rev. Janssen was appointed vice, and Rev. Slaa clerk. Classis was declared constituted. Rev. Schoof expressed gratitude for the preparations made for convening and hosting the classis. He remembered Cloverdale as a vacant church as well as the Lodder family, the approaching end of the academic year at CRTS, and, given the presence of Rev. Tim Schouten, the work in Prince George. The agenda for Classis was duly adopted.

Willoughby Heights proposed that Classis adopt a proposal on the implementation of Church Order article 21b. The proposal, which has its origins with CRTS, seeks to create room for students to be licensed to speak an edifying word after two years of training at CRTS. The request to Classis was to pass this proposal on to Regional Synod West for presentation to General Synod 2019. Following discussion, the proposal was adopted as presented for submission to Regional Synod West.

Reports were then presented to Classis. The report of the treasurer and the review of the classis books were presented. The fiscal year 2017 was declared closed and the treasurer (present as a delegate) was discharged from his responsibilities for 2017 and thanked for his work. The assessment was increased by fifty cents per communicant member to \$10.50. The report for the inspection of the archives was then presented, and the archiving church (Smithers) and inspector church (Houston) were thanked. In closed session the church visitations made to Cloverdale and Surrey-Maranatha were reported on. These reports were received with gratitude.

The president asked the questions stipulated in the Church Order Article 44. All churches responded positively to the first two questions; no church sought advice in any matter.

The churches apprised each other of their mission efforts. Langley and Cloverdale reported that they are re-

structuring the management of the Asia Mission project. Smithers, in the person of Rev. Schouten, reported. There has been a decrease in membership since five years ago, as people move elsewhere (remaining in Reformed churches). Rev. Schouten currently receives assistance from CRTS graduate br. Iwan Borst. Recently a conference was held to reach out into the community. For worship there is a regular morning service, followed by a doctrinal class modelled as a service. Willoughby Heights reported that it is currently reflecting on the future of the Burnaby Church Plant Project as the current approach is not really leading to a church plant. A seminar is being organized to which local church leaders have been invited.

Classis made the following appointments.

Convening church: Cloverdale. Place: Cloverdale. Date: June 12 (alt. Sept 11).

Suggested officers: President: Rev. Janssen. Vice: Rev. Slaa. Clerk: Langley minister.

Committee for Examinations: *Deputies for examinations:* Revs. Janssen, Schoof. *Exegesis OT:* Rev. Van Dam. *Exegesis NT:* Rev. Schoof. *Scripture Knowledge:* Rev. Den Hollander. *Doctrine and Creeds:* Rev. Vandeburgt. *Church History:* Rev. Van Dam. *Ethics:* Rev. Den Hollander. *Church Polity:* Rev. Slaa. *Diaconology:* Rev. Vandeburgt. Church visitors: Revs. Vandeburgt (convener); Janssen, Slaa, Van Dam

Church for taking care of the Archives: Smithers.

Church to inspect the Archives: Houston.

Treasurer: br. Jake Kuik (17167 83rd Avenue, Surrey, BC V4N 0B2; 778-574-5083; jkuik@shaw.ca).

Church to audit the books of the treasurer: Cloverdale.

Committee for Financial Aid to Needy Church: Harold Leyenhorst (convener), Jerome Lengkeek, Rene Jacobi.

Deputy for preaching arrangements in vacant churches: Rev. B. Schoof.

Deputy for Coordinating Ecclesiastical Contacts: Rev. W. den Hollander.

Opportunity for personal questions were given. Censure according to Church Order Article 34 was deemed not necessary. The Acts of lCassis were adopted and the Press Release was approved.

Rev. Ben Schoof led the Classis in closing, with the singing of Hymn 9 and prayer.

