

Clarion

A CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE: TO ENCOURAGE, EDUCATE, ENGAGE, AND UNITE

Ordination of Rev. Darren Feenstra



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***A BLESSING AND A FRAGILE GIFT
IS SCRIPTURE ENOUGH?***

Clarion

**Clarion: a trustworthy
and engaging magazine,
widely spread and read
in Canadian Reformed
households and beyond.**

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Our issue leads with an article from Dr. Cornelis Van Dam: he discusses how a federation of churches is both a blessing and a fragile gift. Issue 2 also begins a four-part series from Rev. Rob Schouten, "Is Scripture Enough?"

There are a number of reports: the ordination of Darren Feenstra as co-pastor of Hamilton-Cornerstone, a ministerial in the west, a Teachers Conference, and Church News Review (the new column from Rev. Carl Van Dam).

Other regular columns include Treasures, New & Old, Clippings on Politics & Religion, Clarion Kids, Ray of Sunshine, and You Asked. There is also a CD review, a letter to the editor, and a press release.

Laura Veenendaal

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The Federation: A Blessing and a Fragile Gift

*What about changes and practices that are
debatable or challenging?*

We live in a time of many changes. Change is everywhere. Technology and society are undergoing transformations that present challenges on many levels. Change seems to be difficult to avoid. It is in the air ecclesiastically as well, also in the Canadian Reformed Churches. Over the last number of years liturgies have been changed and the tweaking continues. There also appears to be a growing desire to have a greater selection of songs to sing from than what is found in the *Book of Praise*. There is also change in how outreach is receiving an ever-increasing priority compared to the early immigrant years of the federation. There is a more concerted effort to reach out into the community around us. In some cases, the term missional is used to underline this desire.

The growing interest in and passion for reaching out to the lost in our own communities shows that change in the church can be very beneficial and spark a renewed enthusiasm for the gospel. But what about changes and practices that are at the very least debatable and present challenges? How do we handle such instances so that God's people are built up and the cause of the gospel is best served?

One of the gifts the Lord has given us to help handle such challenges is the gift of the church federation. Let us pause and consider this blessing.

The blessing of a federation

Being in a federation, a bond of churches, is a tremendous blessing. To appreciate that blessing we need to be clear on what exactly constitutes a federation of churches. Put differently and more pointedly, what is the "glue," so to speak, that holds the Canadian Reformed Churches togeth-

er in a federation? In short it is our common faith in and commitment to our risen Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Some hints to this unity can be found in Revelation 2 and 3. The seven churches, represented by the seven lampstands, find their unity in the Lord Jesus, who is in their midst. He is the head of the church (Col 1:18). Strikingly, the letter he sends to one church is meant to be read by all the churches (Rev 2:7, 11, 17 etc.). This shows that there is an acknowledged unity among all these very different churches. It is this unity that also comes into expression in a federation of churches. We recognize in our common faith in Christ that we belong together.

And so the unity of the faith that we experience as diverse churches is visible in the federation into which the churches have entered voluntarily. However, the member churches each keep their own identity and autonomy. The churches do not get swallowed up in a larger "church" as a national body with a national board. For that reason, the name of the federation is plural: Canadian Reformed Churches, a federation of autonomous local churches which have sought each other organizationally in the unity of the faith. This being together in a federation is a huge blessing.

It is a tremendous gift of God that as congregations spread across the continent we do not exist as isolated entities but are part of a larger unity. Consider one aspect of this gift: as a federation, we have essentially entered into a covenant with each other to help each other. This assisting each other can take different forms. The apostolic command to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2) also applies to churches. Assisting each other can involve helping churches which are financially not able to support a pastor

on their own but are able to call one with the help of churches in the same classis. Being part of a federation thus gives the member churches a stability that would simply not be there if they existed completely on their own as independent congregations. A drawback, for example, of a non-denominational evangelical church with no official ties to a larger community of churches is that it may get its stability and to some extent its identity from a famous pastor who shepherds them. However, when the pastor goes, the very existence of such a church can be threatened.

The help that churches can give also includes the very important element of helping each other to remain faithful to the biblical faith that forms the basis of the unity. That is one of the reasons that the churches have adopted a Church Order. The churches in the federation have voluntarily committed themselves to observe the articles of this Church Order. It functions as a summary of promises that we have made to each other so that we are accountable to each other and can help each other in an orderly manner. After all, God hates confusion and disorder and thus wants our church life also to function “decently and in order” (1 Cor 14:33, 40).

A fragile gift

There is a certain fragility in being a federation of churches. Our unity is the unity of faith in our common Saviour and we trust each other to abide by the promises we made. At the same time, there is also some tension because the congregations that form the federation do so as independent churches. Christ gave offices to the church which are local in function and authority. The Lord never gave the church an earthly headquarters with office bearers to oversee a federation. Hierarchy cannot be tolerated. No church may therefore lord it over another church.

At the same time, churches need each other. No church has all the wisdom and discretion needed. Scripture teaches that “in an abundance of counsellors there is safety” (Prov 11:14) and “with those who take advice is wisdom” (Prov 13:10). Thus, churches meet regularly in classis and synod to discuss and make decisions on the issues that are legitimately brought to these assemblies. The churches of the federation have promised to abide by the decisions of the broader assemblies unless they conflict with the Word of God (CO, Art. 31). A church should therefore not approach the Church Order with a minimalist mind set, to see what it can get away with in terms of implementing change without being accused of not honouring the promises made as articulated in the Church Order.

In order to maintain the trust and confidence vital to the effective working of the federation, it is necessary that churches who desire to implement change from what had been previously agreed upon (such as the exclusive use of the *Book of Praise* in the worship services) bring their wishes and/or concerns to the broader assemblies. With respect to the issue of what we sing in our worship services, it appears that the upcoming general synod, to be held in Edmonton, will have this matter on its agenda. That is the proper way to seek change and to consider its merits or demerits.

Now, there can be issues that need not necessarily be brought to the broader assemblies and could be justified as belonging only to the province of the local consistory. This possibility is a source of unavoidable tension in the functioning of a federation of independent local churches. The Church Order is brief, expounding principles; it is not meant to address every possible scenario. However, when there is a debatable situation it is far better to prevent possible misunderstandings or even suspicions of infidelity to the Scriptures and confessions to bring such a matter to the next broader assembly of the churches to seek its counsel and advice. A case in point is what has happened last year at Blessings Christian Church in Hamilton. In their very specific and unusual circumstances, they invited the Baptist pastor of the church, whose building they were in the process of taking possession of, to preach his farewell sermon to his Baptist congregation in a combined service with the Blessings congregation. The consistory had not brought this matter to a meeting of the neighbouring churches since there was no meeting of classis within the time frame when the decision had to be made and executed. This circumstance is unfortunate. This matter should have been subjected to the counsel of neighbouring churches, since such an invitation is unprecedented. We are in a federation together and actions like this should be taken in consultation with those with whom we have promised to stay in touch and ask for advice, especially when a decision is potentially controversial and might cause confusion in the federation. Officially consulting with other churches (the classis) would facilitate the trust and peace in the bond of churches.¹

***Hierarchy
cannot be
tolerated; at
the same time,
churches need
each other***

Moving forward

We are living in exciting times. There is change in the air, but what remains constant is God's Word, the living Word of our heavenly Father and our Saviour. This gives us good hope for the future as we face the challenges of being churches that want to convey the gospel to God's people and also to let the light of the gospel shine to those outside that they may be convicted and look to the only Saviour there is.

Though we are a small federation of churches, let us pray that our Saviour be pleased to use us as a witness to the truth and to be a beacon of hope in this world. May we use the tremendous but fragile gift of the federation to God's praise and glory and for the upbuilding of the church. Within the federation there are those who have special gifts with respect to the missionary calling of being church; we should be prepared to learn from them. It is heartening to see a growing burden for the lost.

If a congregation feels the need to innovate, but wonders whether their way is the best way forward, let such a church not hesitate to use the gift of the federation of

which it is part and use the meetings of the broader assemblies that it may benefit from the counsel of others. It is critical that in this day and age of fake news and media manipulation we as a federation keep honest open lines of communication with each other as churches and work with consensus as much as possible and not challenge the status quo in an unwise manner. Doing "one's own thing" without regard for the federation is potentially to sow suspicion and distrust. That weakens the federational fabric and bond. Then we all lose. Let us move forward to meet the challenges of our time together; let us use the varied gifts God has given to us in humble submission to his Word and in prayerful supplication for his blessing.

¹ As part of the published justification for this decision, it was stated that the Free Reformed Churches in North America (FRCNA) have provisions in place to allow Baptists on the pulpit (Bill de Jong in *Clarion* Sept 21, 2018, p. 512 n 2). For the record, according to my investigation, no Baptist has ever preached from a FRCNA pulpit.

With respect to the URCNA, on my inquiries, it was noted that some URCNA congregations may have a non-URC minister on the pulpit occasionally but I could not find any confirmation that a Baptist minister was ever invited to preach in a URC church.

C





Dwelling Place

"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!" (Psalm 84:1)

Do you think of the dwelling place of God as being lovely? The Sons of Korah, the authors and first singers of this Psalm, thought it was. Their souls longed, even fainted, to be at the dwelling place, the courts of the LORD.

They noticed that the little birds – the sparrow and the swallow – loved to be there too. In the ancient world, birds were not chased out of temples. Birds were allowed to stay, to build nests, lay eggs, and raise their chicks. And to sing! The singing birds were allowed to be in the temple, near God. The writer of this Psalm knew there was no better place to be.

Can you say that you want to be there where the Lord is?

In Luke 10, we read about Martha and Mary, the two sisters of Lazarus. Once, when Jesus was visiting them, Martha was distracted with meal preparations and serving, while Mary sat at Jesus' feet, soaking up his teaching. Martha was annoyed. She thought Mary was the one distracted and ought to focus and help her with the meal preparations. Jesus said,

"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

Only one thing is necessary: to be at Jesus' feet. That's the New Testament application of Psalm 84. Longing for the courts of the LORD today is sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to his teaching. Everything might be taken away from you, but if you are sitting at Jesus' feet, you have everything you need.

There are some who think they do not need to be in the courts of the LORD. They don't need to be at Jesus' feet. Why? Because they need a new heart. They need to be born again. It is a heart problem. The human heart is, by nature, desperately corrupt. By nature, the human heart is a heart of stone. We need a heart transplant.

If you are going to have a heart transplant, you need a donor. Is there a donor available? Yes! Jesus! Jesus will give you a new heart. If you believe in Jesus, if you give yourself to him, if you seek him out and sit at his

feet, you will be born again and you will get a new heart. And then you will hunger and thirst for the courts of the Lord.

Jesus is the great donor and the great physician. Without him you have nothing, but with him you have everything you need.

Whenever we sing this song I am reminded of my little niece, Ruth. She was severely disabled by several crippling conditions, but Ruth loved to sing about her love for her Lord Jesus. The Lord took her home the night after a school concert at Credo Christian Elementary School in Langley, BC. There she was in the front row, like a little birdie, faintly singing about her love for her Lord. That night the angels carried her soul to her heavenly home, to be with her Lord Jesus ever to sing his praises.

You are sitting at his feet, are you not? Soaking up the good news of salvation through his sacrifice on the cross? There is no place like at the feet of Jesus, listening to him, singing his praises.



For further study

1. Consider how Jesus, in Matthew 6:25-34, uses the example of birds to teach us not to be anxious about anything.
2. Think about how Deuteronomy 33:27 speaks about God as our dwelling place.
3. Where is God's dwelling place today? See, for instance, 1 Kings 8:30, and think about the connection between the earthly temple and heaven.



Is Scripture Enough? (Part 1)

While visiting a local Christian college, I once met a Roman Catholic student. As a Catholic studying political science in an evangelical school, she was something of a fish out of water. She told me an interesting story about the time leading up to her decision to enrol at this particular post-secondary institution. When the parish priest heard of her plans to attend this school, she and her parents received a special pastoral visit. The purpose was to warn about the dangers of studying in a Protestant environment. The culmination of the visit came when the priest emphasized in his closing words, “Remember, we Catholics do not accept *sola Scriptura*.”

In contrast with the Roman Catholic Church, and in unity with all orthodox Protestants, Reformed churches confess the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*. These Latin words mean “by Scripture alone.” They capture the idea that when it comes to matters of Christian faith and Christian life, the Bible alone is our ultimate and completely sufficient authority.

From the very beginning of the Reformed churches in the sixteenth century, the question of spiritual authority was always near at hand. In nearly every doctrinal dispute between Rome and the Protestant movement, the underlying issue was really: *What standard do we go by?* For instance, if the church is guided by Scripture alone, it’s pretty obvious that there is no warrant for the practice of indulgences. However, when Martin Luther debated various Roman Catholic apologists on this point, they asserted that even in the complete absence of scriptural teaching, indulgences could be justified merely on the grounds that they were authorized by the Pope. The teaching of the Pope was put on the same level as Scripture.

Article 7 of the Belgic Confession

In time, the Protestants articulated their beliefs about *sola Scriptura* in confessional statements. Article 7 of the Belgic Confession articulates the Reformed doctrine of *sola Scriptura*. In the first paragraph, the doctrine is stated a pos-

itive form: “We believe that this Holy Scripture *fully contains the will of God and that all that man must believe in order to be saved is sufficiently taught therein. The whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in it at length.*”

In the next paragraph, Article 7 gives us *sola Scriptura* in a negative form: “We may not consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of *equal value* with the divine Scriptures; nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of *equal value* with the truth of God, since the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars, and lighter than a breath (Ps. 62:9).”

A few observations about Article 7 are in order. First, the Confession says that the sufficiency of Scripture extends to the *knowledge of salvation* and for guidance in *worshiping God*. For both Christian doctrine and Christian worship (in the broadest meaning of this term), Scripture is sufficient and it is final. Whatever God wants his people to know about salvation and worship is fully revealed in Scripture alone. For other kinds of knowledge, the Bible clearly is not sufficient. It’s not sufficient, for instance, for the knowledge of grammar or mathematics. We say that Bible is sufficient for the purposes for which God gave it, namely, to reveal salvation to his people and to guide them in the worship of the Lord.

Second, the Confession does not say that tradition or the writings of men are of *no value*. Instead, it states carefully that these things are not of *equal value* with the divine Scriptures. In reality, the church receives great benefits from Christian tradition. There is much value in knowing what people who went before us have thought and written and what councils and synods have decided. At the same time, the only ultimate standard for doctrine and life is the Word of God.

It’s also important to recognize that Article 7 seeks to ground the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* in Scripture itself. This is important because Roman Catholics frequently argue that the Protestant doctrine of *sola Scriptura* is itself a violation

of *sola Scriptura* since, they say, nowhere does the Bible teach *sola Scriptura*. The Confession, however, cites Deuteronomy 12:32 as evidence for a scriptural principle of *sola Scriptura*. This text reads as follows: “Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.” Later in these articles, we will say more about the scriptural basis of *sola Scriptura*.

Catholic rejection of *sola Scriptura*

Not only Protestants but also the Roman Catholic Church soon came to see that the principle of *sola Scriptura* was at the heart of the Reformation. To head off Reformed thinking, the counter-Reformational Council of Trent (1545-1563) issued a clear response to what the Reformed churches were saying about spiritual authority in the church. In its fourth session, the Council issued a “Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures.” In this document, the Council stated that the truth of the gospel is contained in the written books of the Bible but also in the “*unwritten traditions*.” It went on to say that the Roman Catholic Church “*receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety and reverence*” all the books of the Bible and the “*said traditions*. . . preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession.”¹

As you can see, the language used by Trent is the opposite of that used in the Belgic Confession. Trent speaks of an “*equal affection of piety and reverence*” for Scripture and tradition. In contrast, the Belgic Confession, while acknowledging the value of tradition, clearly states that it is *not* of *equal* value. We should have respect for tradition, says the Confession, but not a respect on the same level as our respect for the writings of the Bible.

Some very helpful literature on the topic of *sola scriptura*, to which I am indebted for sharpening my thoughts includes:

Barrett, Matthew, *God’s Word Alone. The Authority of Scripture. What the Reformers Taught... and Why it Still Matters* (Zondervan, 2016).

Mathison, Keith, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura* (CanonPress, 2001)

Chapters 2 and 3 of *Roman but Not Catholic. What Remains at Stake 500 Years after the Reformation* by Kenneth J. Collins and Jerry L. Walls (Baker Academic, 2017).

Chapters 2 and 3 of *Reformed Catholicity* by Michael Allen and Scott Swain (Baker Academic, 2015).

What Catholics said at Trent has been maintained over the centuries in subsequent official writings of the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) stated: “Sacred tradition and sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, which is committed to the church.”² This important Council went on to say that both tradition and Scripture “flow from the same divine wellspring” and that “both sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture are to be *accepted and venerated with the same devotion and reverence*.”³ For Catholics, then, the decisions of past synods and councils together with proclamations made by many popes are just as weighty as anything in the Bible. For Rome, God’s normative revelation comes to us in two ways – through Scripture and tradition. In Catholic thought, one can’t even say that Scripture has a priority over tradition.

The recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) continues to promote tradition as an authority equal to the Word of God. It repeats sentiments of earlier Catholic documents. For instance, in paragraph 82, we read: “As a result, the church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from Scripture alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.”⁴

It’s not that Catholics have a Bible and then a tradition subordinate to the Bible. Instead, the Catholic Church confesses to have two *equal* authorities for the doctrine and life of the church. As long as Protestants have a single authority (the Word of God) over against the Catholic confession of a dual authority (tradition and Scripture), the divisions between these two groups will continue. They simply can’t be settled because we don’t agree about our ultimate authority for doctrine and life.

Endnotes

¹ For these references re the Council of Trent, see *Dogmatic Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent and Vatican Council 1 Plus the Decree on the Immaculate Conception and the Syllabus of Errors of Pope Pius IX* (Tan Books and Publishers, 1912, 1977), pages 7 & 8.

² Abbot, Walter M., gen. ed., *The Documents of Vatican II. With Notes and Comments by Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Authorities* (The American Press, 1966), page 117.

³ *ibid*, pg. 117.

⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Publications Service, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992), pg. 32.

To be continued 

"For and From the Flock" – Welcome Rev. Darren Feenstra

Ordination

On a Sunday in early November, Hamilton-Cornerstone congregation began the Lord's day with the joyful expression, "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! In his house with one accord!" (Psalm 150:1). This verse prefaced our church bulletin column, entitled "For and From the Flock," and we sang it as an introductory song later in the afternoon service. We are pleased to share our joy within the community of believers.

After many years of effort, we were able to receive a co-pastor. This special reason for gratitude had us witness the ordination of candidate Darren Feenstra during the morning service. His father, Rev. Peter Feenstra (pastor at Guelph – Emmanuel), led the service. What a reason for thankfulness. We witnessed the laying on of hands on a young man, as he entered the ministry. Participating in the laying on of hands were two of Darren's seminary professors, his father and father-in-law, former pastor, as well as co-Pastor John Louwerse and the serving elder.

The laying on of hands signifies that the one ordained into office, in this instance a candidate who just recently passed his peremptory exam at a classis, is being set apart for service. The character of this service was elucidated with the sermon theme "The love of Christ controls the ministry of reconciliation." The senior Rev. Feenstra developed this theme noting that Christ died for all and that all must live for him. From 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15 the congregation and Feenstra junior, "fresh out of seminary," were reminded of the "preacher's feet." This image, referenced from Isaiah 52 and Romans 10, describes the herald. The preaching is not to give prominence to the preacher, but to broadcast the powerful message of God's love. Biblical treasures are stored in "jars of clay" and as such the power of the message is from the King.



The herald shares the message of God's love in the Lord Jesus. This focus on the Lord Jesus is what should direct us as congregation as well. The sermon was culminated with the final phrase from Hymn 70, "Come near, you blessed, see the kingdom I bestow, you forever shall my love and glory know." We would leave the auditorium with the last words of Hymn 84, "Thanks never ceasing for infinite love."

Before leaving, however, four of our neighbouring daughter churches had occasion to congratulate and encourage us and our new co-pastor. Representatives from Ancaster church, as well as from their daughter church, Providence, and from Glanbrook and Blessings congregations, who in that order "severed" from us, were a welcome reminder of God's grace over time. Grand Valley, represented by its pastor, also showed us the fellowship of believers. The morning was completed with much appreciated time for fellowship.

Introductory sermon

In the pm service, now Reverend Darren Feenstra entered the pulpit and we rejoiced in song with the words of Psalm 150, "Praise the Lord! In his house with one accord!" The text for this introductory sermon, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, was in striking harmony with the message from earlier that day. The son further highlighted what the father had shown us, preaching the words, "I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. . . . I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. . . the power of God." The sermon theme was "Jesus Christ and him Crucified!" The content and the communication of this message was thoroughly shared and appreciatively received. In song we prayed the words of Hymn 67:7, "Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus! Your great day is drawing near." As congregation we appreciated the day, especially the preaching.

Welcome evening

A few weeks later, in a sermon based upon Lord's Day 21, our new co-pastor stressed "Jesus loves his church and so should we." That evening we gave substance to that theme when, together as congregation, we shared a uniquely joyful supper. Most of the nearly 550-member congregation attended to "Get to know the Feenstra family." In a celebratory manner, Pastor Darren Feenstra, his wife Laura, and their two boys, Aziah and Javan, became more familiar with us. Various study societies and fellowship groups, young and not so young, made contributions to flavour the occasion. Gems, cadets, a grade 7-10 Link group, as well as two elderly sisters in conversation, seated on their walkers, enlightened us. The latter thought a pedicure might be appropriate for the "beautiful feet" of the new minister they called "Pastor Co." Meanwhile, our co-pastors enjoyed themselves.

In closing the evening in prayer, Pastor John Louwerse stressed our desire to flourish as his church. In thanksgiving for all that God has graciously blessed us with, we ended in song: "Take my life and let it be. . . consecrated Lord to Thee." We look forward to our co-pastors leading us towards "endless praise."



CHURCH NEWS REVIEW

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175th Anniversary of Edinburgh Theological Seminary

The December 2018 issue of *The Record* (the monthly magazine of the Free Church of Scotland, hereafter FCS) reported that this past November, the FCS seminary celebrated its 175th anniversary. The seminary began back in 1843,

the year that the Disruption happened. The Disruption was the departure of 474 ministers from the Church of Scotland, which led to the establishment of the FCS. In the previous year, 1842, a majority at the General Assembly of the



Edinburgh Theological Seminary is the second building on the left in this block

(Photo taken by S. Carl Van Dam May 2017)

Church of Scotland had protested against the interference of the Scottish Parliament and the courts in ecclesiastical affairs. They held that the church should be permitted to govern itself. The rejection of this protest by Parliament led to the formation of the FCS the following year in 1843. Dr. Thomas Chalmers, minister and theologian, was the main leader of those who left and became the first moderator of the FCS General Assembly.

On November 1, 1843, the New College, as the FCS seminary was then called, was opened. The College's first principal and professor of divinity was Dr. Thomas Chalmers. Sadly, he was only to serve in this capacity for four years as he passed away in 1847. In the following years, the Lord provided New College with gifted men to train men for the ministry, men whose works still grace the shelves of our ministers today, such as, for example, Patrick Fairbairn (*The Typology of Scripture*), James Bannerman (*The Church of Christ*), and George Smeaton (*Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*).

In 1900, the name of the seminary was changed to Free Church College as a result of the formation of the United Free Church, which was a union between a majority of the FCS and the United Presbyterian Church. A smaller FCS continued throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. It is with this church that we have a sister church relationship. In 2014, the seminary changed its name once more, this time to Edinburgh Theological Seminary, as a result of an expansion of its course offerings and student body.

On November 1, 2018, exactly 175 years after its founding, Edinburgh Theological Seminary hosted a commemorative public lecture by Professor Donald Macleod, emeritus professor of systematic theology, entitled

"Free Church Principles: The Disruption and Today." He explained three basic principles which motivated Chalmers and like-minded ministers in the struggle culminating in the Disruption. The first was "the Christian good of Scotland," knowing that Scotland would benefit from a vibrant, Bible-believing church. The second was "the right of every congregation to elect its own minister." And the third was "the strong helped the weak," by which Chalmers had in mind especially that the richer areas of the country would help the poorer areas. As a result, the Sustentation Fund was established, essentially a central church fund from which local congregations would draw for their local needs. Macleod emphasized that the central mission of the church must always be to preach Christ crucified. The other aspects of church life must naturally derive from this central gospel message.

The commemoration of the anniversary of the seminary was held in the midst of much sadness, since just a few days before, on October 25, 2018, the Lord took to himself Professor John L. Mackay, emeritus professor of Old Testament, at the age of seventy. He had served faithfully for thirty years since 1983, retiring in 2013. He will be remembered as an excellent teacher who opened up the riches of the Old Testament Scriptures and kept in view the realities of the pastoral ministry. He wrote many commentaries on Old Testament books, especially the prophets (e.g. his two volume works on Jeremiah and Ezekiel published by Christian Focus), which will remain of benefit for future generations of gospel preachers and students of Scripture.

May the Lord continue to bless Edinburgh Theological Seminary in its efforts to further the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this world.



Canadian and United Reformed Western Ministerial Conference 2018

From November 6 to November 8, 2018, a group of pastors and their wives from the Canadian, American, and United Reformed churches gathered in Sumas, Washington for a time of refreshment, encouragement, fellowship, and education. The topic for the conference this year was “Fearing God,” with the theme text being Revelation 15:4, “Who will not fear you, O Lord?” Our main speaker for the event was Rev. Harry Zekveld from the Providence United Reformed Church in Strathroy, Ontario.

We started off the evening on Tuesday afternoon with the opening speech entitled, “The Reason for Godly Fear,” in which we dared for a moment to gaze upon our Creator as the Bible reveals him. We were led to a sense of deep awe of who God is, and also incredible amazement that this great and terrible God would come to us in our sinfulness and redeem us.

This was followed by a delicious supper meal, made even sweeter by the fellowship we enjoyed while eating it.

Our evening session was led by Rev. Doug and Karen Vandeburgt from the Langley Canadian Reformed Church, in which we were introduced to Stephen Ministry, a discipleship and mentoring program used in Langley. It was informative and interesting and gave us lots of good food for thought for mentoring and discipleship programs for the churches we all serve.

Evening fellowship is always a time of fun and mutual encouragement, and this one was no exception. It’s hard to go to bed on time when enjoying the fellowship of our colleagues!

Wednesday morning started bright and early with the men’s prayer meeting, followed by a delicious breakfast. Devotions happen before every meal (or after every breakfast), and at the end of each day, and these are also incredibly beneficial and encouraging for all. The singing in the facility is incredible, even seems transcendent, and we raise

the roof by joining our voices in psalms and hymns from both the *Book of Praise* and the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. Many thanks to our volunteer pianists who often offer at the last moment to accompany all of us!

Our first session for the morning was the second of speeches by Rev. H. Zekveld, entitled “The Nature of Godly Fear,” which led us to think deeply about our relationship with God and whether or not we were living in a deep reverence for God that was rooted in true faith. We dove into the Bible and meditated on many different texts that show different facets of what the fear of God is and looks like.

After a coffee break, we split up, and the men stayed downstairs for a discussion on Article 11 of the Church Order led by Rev. Joe Poppe of Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg, while the women went upstairs for a discussion titled “Pastor’s Wives in Conversation” led by Cecilia Vandeveldde from the Emmanuel American Reformed Church of Denver. Both were edifying discussions, encouraging and thought-provoking for all.

Lunch was another delicious treat, followed by a short discussion by Rev. Karlo Janssen about some logistics of the next ministerial. After that we split up again, women upstairs and men downstairs, for a Books and Gadgets talk in which we all traded recommendations for different resources. This always ends up giving us a long list of ways to spend our book budgets for the following year!

Free time on Wednesday afternoon means going for hikes, catching up on sleep, visiting with friends, enjoying the amazing grounds at the retreat centre, or tossing the ball around. Cameras were out looking for the perfect shot that would win the photo contest, which consisted of four categories: most humorous, most studious, most romantic, and most scenic. Any couple walking hand-in-hand trying to catch some couple time was immediately accosted for a photo or two, as was anyone trying to catch up on some

reading. It was all great fun and made for a relaxed and fun environment in which to have some down time.

Following a delicious supper we again sat down for a speech by Rev. H. Zekveld, entitled “How to Grow in the Fear of God,” in which we were encouraged to delight in the fear of God, to remove all hindrances to the fear of the Lord, to drink deeply at the wells of Godly fear, and to worship the Lord both in private and corporate worship. This was again a challenging message for us, encouraging us to think deeply about our relationship with God.

After the speech the microphone was given to Inge Pol from the Carman West Canadian Reformed Church, who gave us an update on the refugee situation in Pakistan and encouraged us all to think about motivating our churches to sponsor refugees. The need is great, and the situation is getting even more desperate than ever for our brothers and sisters. Anyone who wants information on how to sponsor refugees are encouraged to contact City of Refuge, an organization that is eager to help churches rescue believers from persecuted countries.

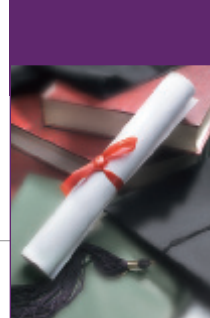
After closing devotions, we again had a chance to sit and chat with each other, building relationships that are immensely beneficial for all. Again, we went to bed too late and slept well until the smell of breakfast woke us up on Thursday morning.

Thursday morning was the last speech in the series by Rev. H. Zekveld, titled “The Joy of Godly fear.”

This time we were greatly encouraged to run the race, to look to God for everything, and to realize just what a generous and loving God we serve. This was followed by another rousing hymn and the official closing, but of course we weren’t quite finished since we still had to judge the photo contest. This was done amidst much levity and winners were selected arbitrarily by the volume of applause from the audience. The grand prize winners went home with some pretty fun prizes to remember the conference by!

In all, the conference was an amazing time of uplifting fellowship, edifying topics, and delicious food, punctuated from time to time by the giveaway of prizes that, of course, highlighted the thriving city of Denver, CO (where the organizing committee was from this year). The difficult part is all the good-byes at the end, but we go knowing that, whether we will be back next year or not, we carry with us this precious time of fellowship and learning with us like a warm memory to keep us going into the cold winter months. (Although it isn’t as cold in Denver as in most places the attendees come from. . . just sayin’.) The friendships we make and build are priceless and the time to put all else aside and learn and enjoy ourselves means more than I can possibly articulate here. Thank you to the consistories who sponsor their pastors and wives to come, this truly is the event of the year for many of us!





Crown of Creation Teachers Conference in Caronport, SK

The town of Caronport, Saskatchewan is home to just under one thousand people, one post office, one gas station, and Briarcrest Bible College. But once every year, just before Thanksgiving, the population swells by about ten percent due to the influx of teachers and educational assistants from Canadian Reformed schools in Alberta and Manitoba. Previously known as the Canadian Reformed Teachers Association (West) conference, the current edition was organized by Coaldale Christian School.

Those of you who noted the identity of the author might wonder why he was there, as the school which he serves is located in Langley, BC. It turns out that two members of Credo Christian High School attended the conference on behalf of the Reformed Curriculum Development Committee. Derek Hoogerdijk gave multiple presentations on Information Technology and senior Science topics, while the undersigned attended to make and maintain connections between our BC and Prairie schools.

This particular conference is known for its collegial atmosphere. In contrast with many other education conferences, the Caronport participants all have to travel to attend, and therefore stay together in the same hotel. This creates rich opportunities for interaction and conversation between conference participants.

The Coaldale Christian School staff, led by Joop Hart-hoorn, did an admirable job of keeping the conference running smoothly, doing devotions, and keeping the coffee hot. The facility, organization, and food were all excellent. Singing from the *Book of Praise* was a particular pleasure, as it was vigorous and strong under the capable musical leadership of Mrs. Sylvia Hofsink.

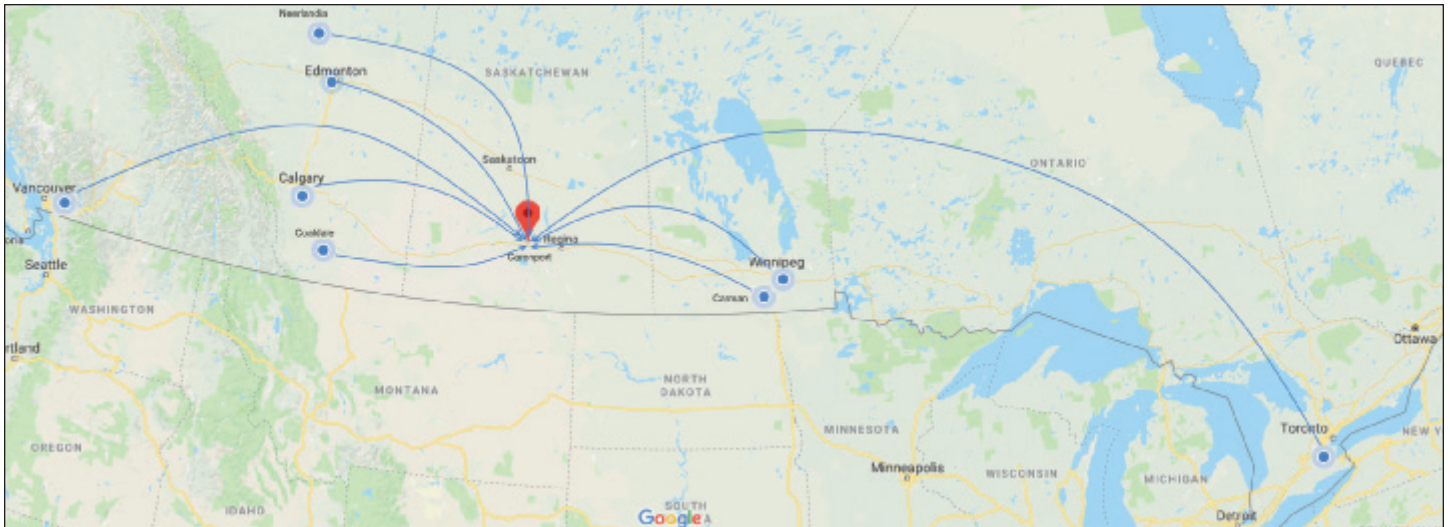
Due to the recent actions by the Alberta government, however, a pall hung over the gathering. The Alberta Government has been threatening a number of independent schools in Alberta with a withdrawal of funding or accreditation because the schools' policies on gay-straight alliances do not meet government requirements. In some cases,



schools were ordered to remove references to the infallibility of Scripture from their policies. In spite of this, the gathering was reminded numerous times by the various presenters that God is ultimately in control and will turn all things to our benefit.

The keynote addresses were delivered by Dr. Jason VanVliet and Dr. Christine VanHalen-Faber and all fit well into the theme of "Crown of Creation." Dr. VanVliet began the conference by retelling the creation account in Genesis 1 and by pulling out various life lessons that applied to education. He also delivered an excellent presentation, entitled "Image and Identity: Gender questions and our schools," in which he gave insight into the difference between God's blessing and the world's agenda with respect to gender.

The drama unfolding in Alberta schools regarding sexual orientation and gender identity gave Dr. VanVliet's remarks on these topics added relevance and urgency. He advocated for a godly sex/gender education curriculum so that students can develop an enduring understanding that distinct genders are God-given gifts that bring many blessings to marriages, families, congregations, and societies. In the ensuing discussion, a number of implications and sugges-



tions for schools were brought forward. These included: fostering a willingness to bring gender issues into our schools, thereby letting God (rather than the Internet) teach our children about gender; responding through teacher training in addition to the work being done on policy and curriculum writing; encouraging cooperation between the church and school when trying to help students with gender issues; and resisting the temptation to let fear of funding changes drive policy.

On the last day, Dr. Christine VanHalen-Faber, principal of Covenant Canadian Reformed Teacher's College, gave an address on the topic of educational narcissism, which is the tendency to place one's self-interest above the interests of others. She reminded us that, covenantally speaking, we are created to live relationally with God and each other. The One who has our names engraved on the palm of his hands is in control. The covenant relationship that God has is the entire environment in which we work. As professional teachers, we have a filial relationship with our students. They are our little brothers and sisters! As Reformed schools, we need to resist educational narcissism and instead aim for service in community.



In addition to the keynote addresses, a number of workshops were given, mostly by practicing educators. Topics included Google Classroom, Australian football, musical classroom activities, encouragement for beginning teachers, and a pertinent session on the value of silence.

As Christian schools, it is too easy to work in isolation, especially when we are separated sometimes by considerable distances. Conferences such as this one serve the purpose of establishing and maintaining connections between schools. These connections, once established, can be fostered by electronic means or by regular meetings of school leaders, or by curriculum conferences and projects sponsored by organizations such as CARE and/or RCDC. However, there is much value in setting aside time and money to enable our teachers to meet and interact face-to-face while engaging in shared professional growth and mutual encouragement. As Dr. VanVliet reminded us:

Reformed education is dear to our hearts. But we are anxious because governments are putting more and more pressure on religious schools. If we go back to Genesis 1, we remember that in the beginning, there was no heavens and no earth. That was the status quo – God and God alone. But in six days, God changed it all. Status quos can change. But whatever status quo comes, our God can snap that status quo like a twig, and it won't even take him six days. Concern? Yes. Despair? No. No human generated status quo is going to stop our Creator from bringing about the new creation. Let this fact encourage us (and our teachers) to continue our work in our homes and classrooms.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Arthur Kingma akingma@ech.ca.





The Ideology of Globalism and Canadian Repercussions

We are witnessing an enormous political push in favour of globalism by which one's national identity is downplayed and one is prepared to give up one's sovereignty as a nation in certain areas – for example, in immigration. Instead of a national government, a global entity, the United Nations (UN), would determine the overall framework within which immigration policy is to be determined by each country. To that end, the UN has produced a document: “The global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.” The majority of the world's nations have signed this document while meeting on December 10-11, 2018 in Marrakesh, Morocco.

The document contains good humanitarian elements, but also those that call for pause. This document obliges those who signed it to make no distinction between legal or illegal immigrants, thus making migration a human right and obscuring the difference between those who are seeking refuge from genuine persecution and those simply seeking a better life. Furthermore, migrants, regardless of their legal status, are to be given rights equal to those in the host country with access to health care, education, and labour opportunities. Furthermore, among the commitments agreed to, are pledges to eliminate all forms of discrimination or intolerance towards migrants. Governments which sign the agreement therefore agree, for example, to “enact, implement or maintain legislation that penalizes hate crimes” and to “promote independent, objective and quality reporting of media outlets.” This last commitment includes “sensitizing and educating media professionals on migration-related issues” and “stopping allocation of public funding or material support to media outlets that systematically promote intolerance, xenophobia, racism and other forms of discrimination towards migrants.”

Unlike President Trump, who believes in prioritizing his own country and wants to defend its borders against illegal immigrants, our prime minister, Justin Trudeau, is an enthusiastic supporter of globalism. His government therefore tends to avoid the notion of illegal immigrants and in-

stead calls them irregular migrants. In his view, as related in a *New York Times* interview (October 2015), Canada has no core identity and this country could be the first postnational state. In pushing his globalist agenda, Trudeau, in accordance with the UN's “Global Compact” document which Canada signed, has promised to subsidize media which promote his agenda with more than half a billion dollars over the next five years. This amounts to government control of the press and if it materializes, is a severe blow against both the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press. Only papers acceptable to Ottawa will get the subsidy.

In Trudeau's view, as articulated by professor Salim Mansur, “The idea of sovereign nation-states is both reactionary and obsolete. In this borderless world, the governing body is the unelected, untransparent, unaccountable, corrupt United Nations and its agencies.”

Thankfully some nations refused to sign the UN's “Global Compact:” the United States, Australia, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Nations can be proud of their identity and defend their borders and sovereignty. This is consistent with God's ordaining the existence of nations (Gen 11:1-9). From one man, God “made very nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth” (Acts 17:26). We must oppose the ideology of globalism that can ultimately lead to a world government with virtually unlimited power. Such a scenario reminds us of the end-time prophecy of the beast to whom all authority was given and who was allowed “to make war on the saints and to conquer them (Rev 13:7-8). As the apostle noted: “Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints” (Rev 13:10). But the Lamb will be victorious (Rev 14).

Sources used: The official text of “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration” on the UN website; Salim Mansur, “Canada's Treacherous ‘Faustian Bargain’” on the Gatestone Institute website; for Scripture on nationhood and immigration, C. Van Dam, *God and Government* (Wipf & Stock, 2011), chapter 9.



Introducing Fred Ludwig



Fred was born on February 24, 1952, in Haulerwijk, The Netherlands. Fred is the eldest of a set of triplets. This caused quite a lot of excitement, not only in the Ludwig household, but also in the town. Fred grew up with eleven siblings, which made for a lot of playmates. Fred was a very easy-going boy and was always willing to help around the house. Very often he was the one peeling a 10lb bag of potatoes for dinner.

Fred attended Calvin Christian School in Hamilton, John Calvin School in Smithville, and Hamilton District High. Fred worked at Westbrook Greenhouses, Duvall Brothers, and Rosaflora. On May 23, 1973, Fred had a serious accident at work, and his right hand was cut off. Although the surgeons spent many hours to reattach it, Fred has limited use in his hand. Fred played a lot of hockey when he was young and was a pretty good player. He also loved to attend a Ti-Cat game when he could.

Fred has lived in many homes during his life. Our prayers were answered when Fred was able to move into one of our own homes, the Beacon Home, in Dunnville. Fred lived there for a number of years and moved to Anchor Home in 2016.

Fred has a great sense of humour and enjoys interacting with the staff and other residents in Anchor. He loves his “coffee” and enjoys playing a serious game of Skip Bo with the staff. Fred loves to spend time with his family and really enjoys having visitors at Anchor Home (especially when they take him out for coffee). Fred’s health has declined during the last few years, as he has had to deal with many bouts of pneumonia. The Lord willing, Fred will celebrate his 67th birthday on February 24, 2019. We pray that the Lord will bless the treatments he is receiving and grant renewed health.

February Birthdays

6 Trevor Buys will be 39

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

12 Connie VanAmerongen will be 54

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

24 Fred Ludwig will be 67

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

Congratulations to the three of you celebrating a birthday in February! We wish you the Lord’s blessing in 2019 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 LOR 2J0
tom.rachelvis@gmail.com • 905-329-9476



Clarion Kids

The Death of Jesus

Matthew 27:45-66, John 19

God sent Jesus into the world to die for our sins. By the end of his life many people, including Jewish leaders, hated Jesus. They wanted him to be put to death. They got a judge named Pilate to condemn him to death. In those days, criminals were put to death by hanging them on a cross. It was a terrible and painful way to die. Jesus was put to death along with two criminals. But Jesus never complained. He knew that this was all part of God's plan. Because Jesus went through this terrible suffering, he was able to pay for all of our sins.

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



Word Search

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

Complain	Condemn	Criminal	
Cross	Death	Jesus	Judge
Leaders	Pilate	Sins	

Double Puzzle

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

DOCNMNE

6

EFURFS

BERTILRE

5

2

PALN

1

3

4

1

2

3

4

5

6

by Emily Nijenhuis

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I read both articles by Rev. P. Holtvlüwer pertaining to church music and I'm glad that I can agree with so much he said; but I think there are some problems.

It seems to me that having a band front and centre in church is not simply an aide to congregational singing. It cannot avoid being theatrical, dramatic, and a show. Its sight and sound, musicians performing together, and cannot avoid being a distraction from the main element of worship – the preaching. Some of these concerns are valid for the organ as well, but, I think it fair to say, to a much lesser degree.

I was once helped remove an organ that, after the organist had died, had fallen mostly silent. As I worked, someone came in with the minister and started talking about how the space was going to be used. The minister asked if having the band front and centre, instead of off to the side as it had been, would “take away from the preaching.” The easy answer was, “No, it just adds to it.” I don't think he agreed, and his suspicion is my conviction. Years later, while helping them fire up their replacement digital organ, the same minister came to tell me how much he missed the sound of organ in church. They have a band, but miss the organ. I wonder if this will be lost on us.

I am aware that in some congregations where organ is the accompaniment, the singing leaves much to be desired. This can be for various reasons, but the bottom line is that using an organ does not guarantee good singing. An organist that is unsure of rhythm or melody can be a major hindrance to good singing; but, on the other hand, I think we need to be careful not to ascribe good and passionate singing to the organist (or band for that matter). Since it is God who works in us both *to want to* and *to do* God's good pleasure (Phil 2:13), we know that the Holy Spirit works in us the desire to praise God in song to the best of our ability. The difference is that the Holy Spirit gets the credit for our singing, not the musician.

I agree, we should not discourage emotional expression in church music, but there is a caveat to that. For example, it's not rare for me that, during the sermon or congregational prayer, I'm struck to tears. While I'm unashamed of tears on my face, I try not to make a show of them either. I certainly wouldn't amplify it into sobbing. Emotional restraint is also advisable in order to keep the focus of the worship service

pointing up to God. If we over-encourage emotional expression, we could soon lose the Reformed distinctive of trying to focus our attention on God in worship, not ourselves. Ergo, there is no shouting out “Hallelujah” or “Amen,” because it draws attention to man instead of God. In my opinion, the use of organ exclusively forestalls distractions and can assist in keeping the focus on Christ our king.

What to do about a lack of organists? I was very encouraged recently by a father asking about organ lessons. He too believes that there's no substitute for organ in worship, and he isn't sitting around waiting for an organist to drop out of the sky. He's scouting his kids for organ skills. They need to practice after school for ten minutes he says, or at least, that's the goal. This proactive approach has born some potential fruit as one of his sons is showing interest and it looks promising! True story! It only needs a little encouragement! It doesn't have to be expensive, but it's pretty rare to learn to play any instrument without a practice instrument available. I know there is a love of music in our circles, as well as money and time to learn how to play instruments; the choirs, bands, and orchestras prove it. I'm not trying to discourage this because I'm not against other instruments, but we should not neglect to encourage organ playing too.

I would not argue against instruments in worship, although I do respect the rationale. I don't think that any musical accompaniment is necessarily idolatry, though it certainly can become so – even the organ. I'm not saying that the organ is God's favourite instrument, or that using any instrument other than organ is unreformed. I would only say that, in worship, we should present God with our best, and I believe that, with a decent organ and a competent organist, we can do better than a band. So, I think it's unwise to accept, as a matter of course, that we will have more bands in church to lead the singing in the future.

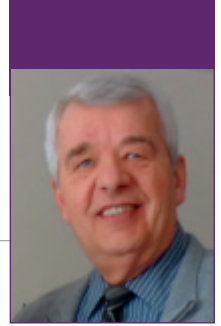
Having re-read parts of Dr. K. Deddens's book, *Where Everything Points to Him*, for writing this letter, I find some scope for variety (and dare I say, change?!) in the way Reformed worship is conducted, while at the same time staying biblical, historically informed, and focussed on Christ.

Soli Deo Gloria.

*Yours in Christ,
Peter VanIperen*

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





Q Should a wedding band be placed on the right hand?

We had guests over from Australia who happened to mention, as part of our visit discussions, that there is some significance in placing a wedding band on the right hand of one's beloved versus the traditional left hand placement. We have never heard or known of such placement. Apparently, there is some religious significance to this placement in past church history. Is this another example of where we, as churches and church practices, have been slipping?

A When assuming the position of answerer of questions living in the midst of our readers circle you never know what kind of questions you would have to grapple with. This is one of the questions that make you wonder what you've gotten into. Just as the questioner states, this is a practice that you won't give much thought until you get into a discussion the questioner had with the Australian guests. Of course, I don't know what background these Australian guests adduced to make their point, but when the questioner includes it with the matters in which we are slipping as churches, the matter becomes serious to say the least. Who would want to see more evidence of slipping in our churches? I certainly don't, but in this case, I am not too worried to be honest.

Investigating the matter, one finds that there may be some history related to the practice of wearing the ring on the left or on the right hand; there also are some age-old wives tales and superstitious myths. I assume that the Australian guests (perhaps familiar still with some Dutch history and practices) shared with the questioner that in The Netherlands and other countries affected by the Great Reformation, the Roman Catholics wore the wedding band on the left hand, and in reaction to this Protestants wore it on their right to distinguish themselves from the RC.

At first, however, Protestants didn't wear rings at all since they were considered improper vanity, just as the Puritans in England considered such jewelry frivolous. It was not until the nineteenth century that Protestants introduced the wedding band, though commonly only for the wife. After the world wars it also had become common for men to wear a wedding band, which had been introduced for those men who were stationed far from home and thus were reminded of their wives and family back home.

Another interesting piece of history pertains to a practice begun in medieval England. There the bridegroom would move the ring over the left hand of the bride from the thumb to the index finger to the middle finger pronouncing the Name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, then to put the ring on the fourth finger, the ring finger. This practice was formalized in the sixteenth century, when the son of Henry VIII included this practice in the Book of Common Prayer (1549). Since then, the wedding ring is worn on the ring finger of the left hand in the former British Empire, which includes Australia (the land of origin of the questioner's guests). Perhaps, given this historic background, Reformed people in Australia wish to distinguish themselves as well by wearing their wedding band on the right hand.

Aside from these historical details, there are some legends that lead the origins of such practices to the time of

the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. Before medical science discovered how the circulatory system functions, people believed that a vein ran directly from the forth finger on the left hand to the heart: it was called the *vena amoris*, the vein of love. In Rome, a girl wearing a wedding ring had given her heart away and had made a legal commitment and was no longer free. Whether it's true or not, in most countries and cultures the wedding band is worn on the left hand. However, in India, the left hand is considered unclean, so the right hand is preferred. Jewish brides wear the ring on their index finger because this is the finger they use to read the lines of the Torah. In short, practices and customs differ per country, region, faith, or personal preferences. It's cer-

tainly not something that's described or prescribed in the Scriptures, so that as churches we could be slipping in it. What should stand out in our consideration of the wedding band, however, is its symbolic meaning: the circle symbolizes infinite or eternal love, and it is the sign of faithfulness in marriage whether worn on the left or on the right hand!

*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. den Hollander
denhollanderw@gmail.com
23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0



CD REVIEW

SING to the Lord a New Song, Chorus of Praise Male Choir

Additional Information:

Cost: \$20 each (\$5 per CD is given to Anchor association)

Director: John Van Iperen

Accompanists: Sheryl Kampen

(piano) and guest performers
Elleanna Van Raalte (violin) and
Pete Ravensbergen (organ).

Order via: petedebruin49@gmail.com or <http://chorusofpraise.com/CD-Purchase>



The recently formed choir, Chorus of Praise, has produced its first CD: *SING to the Lord a New Song*. The all men's choir began in 2014 with just eight men. Over the next three and a half years, it grew to thirty-five men, whose homes are all between Owen Sound and Dunnville, Ontario (about 250 km apart). The choir is made up of men from their mid-twenties to their mid-seventies.

George van Popta
Minister emeritus of the
Jubilee Canadian Reformed Church
at Ottawa, Ontario
gvanpopta@gmail.com



The choir sings very well its collection of nineteen songs for seventy-six minutes of beautiful music. The director, John Van Iperen, has his choir well in hand as can be heard from the good range of dynamics, tempo, and key changes. The accompanists perform well. I appreciate the variety of pieces, from a Bach cantata to a contemporary version of Psalm 23 by Michael Card.

Some of the selections are based upon ancient liturgies (e.g., "Sanctus"). Others are from a time in church history where personal reflection and devotion to God were emphasized (e.g., "I Wish I Had Given Him More"). The collection ends with the masterful arrangement of Genevan Psalm 42 by Klaas Jan Mulder. I do wonder why the choir, in this selection, does not sing the revised words as they are found in the 2014 edition of the *Book of Praise* but, rather, sings from the 1984 edition.

This very minor criticism notwithstanding, *SING to the Lord a new Song* is highly recommended.



Press Release Regional Synod East November 14, 2018 held in Burlington, Ontario

On behalf of the convening church of Burlington-Ebenezer, Rev. Anthony Roukema opened the meeting of the delegates by having them sing. He then led in Scripture reading and prayer. The meeting elected Rev. Clarence VanderVelde as chairman, Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer as vice-chairman, and Rev. Clarence Bouwman as clerk.

Rev. VanderVelde as chairman thanked the meeting for the confidence placed in the moderamen. He then expressed appreciation to the church of Burlington-Ebenezer for convening and hosting this regional synod.

Overtures

Synod dealt with an overture from Classis Ontario West May 23, 2018 regarding changing the timing of when a student of theology could be permitted to speak an edifying word in the churches (as per Art. 21 CO). Currently, a student of theology in our seminary may seek such permission in our churches only after the third year of studies. The overture seeks to have the next general synod change this to following the second year of studies. Regional Synod agreed with this overture and, with only very minor grammatical/editorial changes, decided to forward it to General Synod.

Synod next dealt with an overture from Classis Central Ontario Sept 6–7, 2018 regarding changing Article 55 of the Church Order. The change would allow local consistories to independently decide what songs to sing in the worship services. The overture was not adopted.

Synod then dealt with an overture from Classis Central Ontario Sept 6–7, 2018 regarding changing those masculine pronouns in the Forms for Lord's Supper which are intended to refer to both males and females. With some modifications and commentary, this overture was forwarded to General Synod.

Reports

Synod received reports from deputies who attended peremptory examinations and other matters pertaining

to their mandate. Reports were also received regarding the work of the treasurer and the archives of Regional Synod East. Synod adopted the treasurer's proposal to assess the churches \$1 per communicant member (to be paid to the local classis treasurer who then is to forward it to the treasurer of Regional Synod East, br. Dave Van Amerongen). Synod appointed deputies as specified in Article 48 of the Church Order. Appointments were also made pertaining to the finances and the keeping of the archives of Regional Synod.

Appointments

Appointments to the upcoming General Synod Edmonton 2019 were made as follows:

Elders: John Jager, Bernie Kottelenberg, André Schutten, Fred Stoffels, Nick VandenOever, Art Witten;

- Alternates in order: Allard Gunnink, Ron Bremer, Jeff Jans, Jonathan Reinink, John Witten, and Harold Jonker.

Ministers: Revs. Douwe G.J. Agema, Clarence Bouwman, Peter G. Feenstra, Peter H. Holtvlüwer, John Louwerse, Clarence VanderVelde;

- Alternates in order: Revs. Matthew VanLuik, Bill DeJong, Rodney Vermeulen, John Vanwoudenberg, Theo Wierenga, and Arend Witten.

The remuneration for loss of wages for delegates to general synod was set at a maximum of \$215 per day, with a maximum of \$1075 per week. The travel reimbursement rate was set at \$0.49/km (not to exceed the cost of air travel).

A nominee for the Board of Governors was selected along with one alternate. These names will be forwarded to General Synod Edmonton 2019.

The Church at Guelph-Emmanuel was appointed to convene the next regional synod, scheduled for November 13, 2019.

After adoption of the Acts, approval of the press release, and closing devotions, Regional Synod was closed.

*Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer,
vice-chairman at that time* 