

Clarion

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



**The gospel is meant
for all nations**

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THE CONVICTING HOLY SPIRIT
THE STORY OF NIVERVILLE

Clarion

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

In your hands is our Pentecost issue. Rev. Eric Kampen writes that Pentecost, while last in a series of special days that start at Christmas, is certainly not least. The New Testament church is deeply blessed by what we commemorate at Pentecost.

After a year of serving in a new church plant in a Mennonite community of Manitoba, Rev. James Zekveld reports on his first-year reflections with Ambassador Church. We also have a report from CRTS as they celebrate fifty years!

Issue 11 shares a couple reader responses on the topic: "Volume of Church Accompaniment." There are a number of regular columns, Treasures, New & Old, Education Matters, and Clarion Kids, as well as a letter to the editor, a Canticle, and a press release.

Laura Veenendaal

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Pentecost: Last but not Least

*The Holy Spirit is the legal assistant who helps the church
makes the case of the gospel to the world*

In a family where several children have their birthdays quite close together, by the time the last child has his or her birthday, the family may be a little tired of celebration. Birthday cake is great, but too many birthday cakes too close together – well, you can overdo it. So, we can pity the poor child whose birthday is last.

That same danger is there for Pentecost. After the hype of Christmas and the sober, yet joyful, reflection on Good Friday and Easter, the celebratory mood is wearing off. Ascension Day is always in danger of being overlooked. As for Pentecost – well, by that time we taste summer and all its excitement instead. If it were not for the fact ministers tend to pick a passage connected to Pentecost, it could very well pass by under the radar. The question might even arise as to how to celebrate Pentecost, besides having a sermon related to it? It does not tend to be a time for family gatherings and special meals.

While Pentecost may be the last of the ecclesiastic feast days, it certainly is not least. In fact, it marks the culmination of God's self-revelation of himself and of his plan of salvation, as it is the final event in salvation history before the coming of our Lord Jesus in glory. It starts the last phase of salvation history. We benefit from being reminded about Pentecost, so that we will be refreshed in our understanding and appreciation of what it means for us as New Testament church.

The event

We will begin this reminder with a brief review of the course of events. We read about it in Acts 2, where we are told the disciples were together on the day of Pentecost. The word Pentecost refers to a feast described in Leviticus 23:15ff. This feast was to take place seven full weeks after the bringing in of the sheaf of the wave offering, which was connected to Passover. At this feast, various animal sacrifices were to be offered,

along with the bread of the firstfruits. That it took place fifty days after the previous feast explains the name Pentecost, for that is related to the Greek word for fifty. We know that these Old Testament feasts all foreshadowed our salvation in Christ.

It was on this feast day that the Holy Spirit came down upon the disciples gathered in Jerusalem. His presence was noticed in the way "there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where [the disciples] were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them" (Acts 2:2,3). Those present then began to speak in other tongues.

The event foretold

In the account that follows, we read how Peter explained that what had happened was in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, which spoke of the Spirit coming to all God's people, young and old. Our concern at this point, however, is to take note of how the Lord Jesus had foretold this would happen, for that brings out the purpose.

We find the most detailed foretelling of the coming of the Holy Spirit in his conversations with the disciples at the last Passover meal, as recorded in the gospel of John. The first mention is in John 14:16, where we read, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth." This promise is repeated in verse 26, 15:26, and 16:7.

The key word to note here is the word "Helper." The word "helper" is also translated at times as "counsellor" and "comforter." The same word is used to describe our Lord Jesus Christ in 1 John 2:1, where it is translated as "advocate." With respect to our Lord, it refers to his action as our mediator and high priest. He is fulfilling the action of a lawyer, defending us before the Father, speaking up on our behalf.

This meaning does not quite fit with respect to the Holy Spirit, but we should keep in mind the legal meaning, which is inherent in the term. While our Lord Jesus is our legal representative before the Father, pleading our case, the Holy Spirit is the legal representative who helps the church make the case of the gospel to the world.

That this is what our Lord meant comes out in the other passages referenced. In John 14:26 we read how the Holy Spirit “will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that [Jesus] said to you.” This is reinforced in chapter 15:26,27, where we read that the Spirit “will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.” It is driven home with ultimate clarity in chapter 16:8 where we read, “And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.” The word “convict” underlines the legal angle.

The passages from John make it clear that the Holy Spirit would come to equip the disciples for the task the Lord Jesus had in mind for them, namely, to bring the gospel to the nations. This comes out also in the words he spoke just before his ascension, as recorded in Acts 1:8, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Evidence after the event

We have seen how the promise of the Holy Spirit was linked to the task the Lord Jesus had for them, namely, to boldly bring the gospel to the world. This is exactly what happened. We see it already on the day of Pentecost. It was first evidenced in the ability to speak in different languages, which was an indication the gospel was meant for the nations. This general statement about the believers speaking of the mighty works of God is followed by Peter’s explanation of what had taken place and tying it all to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The bold preaching of the gospel continues to be evident through the book of Acts. Chapters 3 and 4 describe efforts to silence John and Peter. They refused to be silenced. When they prayed for boldness to continue, they received a renewed experience of the Holy Spirit to assure them (Acts 4:31). We have another description of opposition in Acts 5, but again, the apostles continued unfazed. We see that same boldness in Stephen as he spoke to the Jewish Council (Acts 6 & 7). This same boldness marks the preaching of Paul.

Further benefits

The gift of the Holy Spirit to empower and embolden the disciples to bring the gospel to the nations is not the extent of what is to be said about Pentecost. There is also a connection to the way the Holy Spirit came on this specific feast. It was mentioned earlier that, at Pentecost, the people brought

the first fruits of the harvest. The Holy Spirit can be seen as the first fruits of God’s gift of salvation. Paul points us in this direction when he writes in 2 Corinthians 1:22 that God has “given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” that all his promises will come true. He repeats this in 2 Corinthians 5:5 when he writes, “He who has prepared us for this very thing [i.e. eternal life] is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.” The word “guarantee” has the sense of down payment. The Spirit is the first taste of the rich blessings that will come to fulness in the age to come.

In connection with this, we should also note how Pentecost was the last feast before the Feast of Booths, which was in connection with the Day of Atonement. That was the culmination of all the feasts, the great celebration of living in fellowship with God. As we line up various events in salvation history with the feasts, we can see that the gift of the Spirit on Pentecost tells us that we are now in the final period of history. Peter, quoting Joel, indicates that with Pentecost we are in the last days. There is only one feast left, for which we should all be eagerly longing, that is, when our Lord comes in glory.

Another benefit of the gift of the Spirit, which ties in both with equipping the church for the task to bring the gospel and its waiting for the coming of our Lord in glory, is how he distributes a variety of gifts on believers. Paul writes about this in 1 Corinthians 12. There is a diversity of spiritual gifts for the common good of the body of the church. These gifts are very necessary because the New Testament church is made up of peoples who do not have the family ties of Old Testament Israel. The church is made up of people from all tongues and tribes and nations. Their unity is not in flesh and blood but by common faith in the Lord Jesus and the same Spirit who works in them all. It is the Spirit who enables the church to live in love and harmony. We can connect to this also the fruit of the Spirit, as Paul describes it in Galatians 5:22-23, which enables us to live in love and harmony. Such living in love is part of the powerful testimony to the world that the believers are Jesus’ disciples (e.g. John 13:35).

Celebrating Pentecost

No doubt, much more can be said about Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit. What has been written should nevertheless give us a sense again of the importance of Pentecost for the life of the church. It is truly too bad it easily gets lost. It may be last, but it is not least. Rather, as the most recent of all God’s great deeds in the history of salvation, it should grab us more than all the other feasts. Pentecost tells us who we are now, what we are to do, how we can do it, and, above all, as the second last feast, what we should be longing for, namely, the final feast, the coming of our Lord in glory.





The Convicting Holy Spirit

“And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.” (John 16:8)

Before our Lord Jesus suffered and died on the cross, he spoke extensively with his disciples about what would happen after he returned to his Father in heaven. He assured them that he would not leave them on their own. He will send to them another Counselor (NIV), who is the Spirit of Christ. Normally when we think of the Holy Spirit and his work, then we think of him as being the One who works faith in our hearts and who comforts God’s children with his nearness and presence in our lives.

In our text, John 16:8, Jesus tells us about another task which the Spirit does. When he has come, then he will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment. This work of the Spirit is aimed at the world at large.

What an encouraging word for the disciples and for all of us who seek to reach out to the lost in the world around us! We do not do this work all by ourselves but the Spirit actively goes with us convicting the world of the basic truths of the gospel.

In the following verses, Jesus explains what this conviction of the Spirit means. The Spirit will convict the world of sin. He will convict the world of its guilt because they do not

believe in Jesus Christ, the only Saviour. The greatest sin is rejecting the love of God in Jesus Christ.

The Spirit will also convict the world of righteousness. The Spirit will present convincing evidence that true righteousness can only be found in Jesus Christ. This evidence is found in the fact that Jesus Christ has gone to the Father and can no longer be seen (John 16:10). Why is this convincing evidence? Because the return of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and true man, to his Father in heaven is solid proof that he is truly righteous. God would not have received an unrighteous man into heaven but only one who has accomplished all the righteousness of God. Jesus Christ rose from the dead, as the first fruits of the new humankind. He is in heaven as the Head of the church.

Finally, the Spirit will convict the world of judgment. Judgment from God is sure to come because, as Jesus explains in John 16:11, “the ruler of this world is judged.” The ruler of this world is the devil, “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2). This prince of darkness stands condemned by God because of the work of Jesus Christ. Jesus comforts the disciples later with

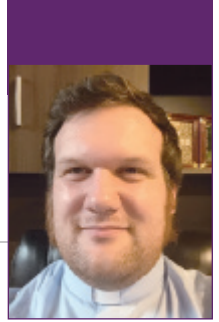
the words, “Take heart, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Jesus Christ defeated Satan decisively on the cross. There he rendered the perfect payment for the sins of the world. Jesus Christ rose victorious from the grave. All the powers of darkness tremble because the Son of God has overcome them all. One day the final battle will be fought and they will be destroyed forever.

How will the Spirit convict the world of these things – of sin, righteousness, and judgment? Through the means of the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When the truth of the gospel is proclaimed, it will result in a two-fold response among those who hear. Some will be hardened in rebellion against God and will stand condemned in their unbelief and rejection of the truth. Others will be softened, will weep because they are convicted of their sins, will rejoice in Christ’s perfect righteousness, and will be comforted in the judgment which condemns the ruler of this world. May this work of the Spirit encourage us all to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. The Spirit helps us and he accomplishes the Lord’s purposes in those who hear the message. **C**

For further study

1. How does the Spirit convict the world that true righteousness can only be found in Jesus Christ?
2. How is the Prince of Darkness condemned?
3. How does the Holy Spirit give you courage and strength to share the gospel with your neighbour?

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*Under the supervision of the
Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church
at Winnipeg, MB*

A Church Plant Among the Mennonites:

Our story and some first-year reflections

Introduction

About a year and a half ago, Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church called a missionary to Niverville, Manitoba. Niverville is in South-Eastern Manitoba, about a half-hour south of Winnipeg. It is a Mennonite community, although that demographic is quickly changing. The leadership in Redeemer grew interested in planting a church in this area because of some contacts it had with individuals and families in the South-East of Manitoba. Originally, they planned to send their man to Steinbach. However, a homegrown Reformed Baptist church had started there. They did not want to start competing with that local church. Therefore, they did some more research and settled on the town of Niverville.

Here, I want to tell the story of how I came to take that call, what has happened since we have settled in Niverville, and offer some reflections on the nature of our ministry in Niverville.

The story of Niverville

The Canadian Pacific Railway company named Niverville after an eighteenth-century explorer and fur trader. Originally, some English and Scottish settlers settled in the area, but Lord Hespeler ultimately included it into the land given to the first group of Mennonite settlers to Manitoba. A small United Church in town represents something of the contribution of the English and Scottish settlers to the life of the town. The majority of the town is Mennonite. The other six churches in town represent the Mennonite population, even though three of the six churches are not Mennonite by name.

The town is still largely a Christian town. When you enter the town, you are welcomed by a sign that says, "The churches of Niverville welcome you." The mayor of the town attends one of the churches in town.

But this state is quickly changing. The town has doubled in size over the last number of years and most of the newcomers are not Mennonite. If they go to church, they often go to church in Winnipeg. The churches in town do not grow, but slowly shrink. Besides that, liberalism grows in the hearts of the churches. They begin to deny the truths of Genesis 1 and the God-given order of sexuality and gender. The Christianity of Niverville is weakening.

As I have already mentioned, the Christianity of Niverville is Mennonite. The older Mennonites in town carry a lot of their fathers' biases for free will, pacifism, and otherworldliness, but the younger generation grows more and more indistinguishable from the member of our local first Baptist, Peoples, or even Pentecostal church. They share in the generic evangelical culture of modern Christianity. Occasionally, there is still a vague belief in some of the older Mennonite distinctives. Even the older generation drank deeply of the evangelical milieu of the mid-twentieth century. One example of this is that many Mennonites rejected all consumption of alcohol, which is not a historical Mennonite position. Like the other Mennonite distinctives, that teetotaling attitude is also disappearing. Unfortunately, the younger Mennonites have also left behind their parents' knowledge of Scripture and church attendance.

The story of the Zekvelds in Niverville

We first came to Niverville in the summer of 2017. I had just finished seminary that spring. We came at the request of the Redeemer church and their calling committee. What we saw was a unique opportunity. We had an opportunity not only to plant a church and provide a light to the lost, but we had an opportunity to reach out to fellow churches and strengthen the church as a whole; to live out the vision that Paul calls the church to, "Complete my joy by being of the

same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.” We wanted to engage fellow churches in conversations about Scripture and doctrine and, hopefully, share some of the strengths of the Reformed catholic tradition. It was also an opportunity to grow in Reformed catholicity ourselves. When we received the call, we joyfully accepted a couple of weeks later.

After my ordination exam, we came out to Niverville in October. We quickly settled in the southeast corner of the town. From there we began to get to know the town. We were able to connect with people at various events in town and in the southeast of Manitoba. I was able to connect to the Ministerial in town. I was able to start a games night in a local coffee shop. Throughout the last year, I have been able to connect to local pastors and other local leaders, both being encouraged by them and hopefully encouraging them as well.

We have put on a couple of events for the town. We offer a conversations evening, where locals can come and freely ask whatever questions come to mind about Scripture. Unfortunately, this evening has not borne a lot of fruit yet. We also invited a member of Creation Ministries International to give a presentation. One of our most successful events, which you may have heard of, was a discussion between me and a local Reformed Baptist pastor from Steinbach. We spoke on the question, “Does God want us to baptize children of believers as well as their parents?” This type of discussion is something I hope to do more of in the coming years. We’ve also started up a yearly Christmas concert and yearly carolling as well.

Providentially, God had already been working in the southeast through his servants there. Through a family south of us we were able to meet a young single mother, who was looking for help and community. This is a friendship that has grown over the last year. She continues to grow in the gospel, especially through our bi-weekly Bible study on the Catechism. We were also able to meet a young Iranian man, who had attended a Bible College which is to the south of Niverville. He had befriended a young man from the Canadian Reformed Churches and through that friendship God connected him with our ministry. This young Iranian man has only recently been baptized and has joined Ambassador Church.

As we began our ministry, we sought further understanding of both our community and of church planting. During the winter of 2018, my wife and I both attended the University of Winnipeg to study a variety of Mennonites around the globe and their relation to the earth. Our professor was very knowledgeable about the history of Mennonites around the world. We were happy to take the class. We also had the opportunity to learn from URCNA Pastor, Rev. Spen-



cer Aalsburg from Sioux Falls, South Dakota. We visited him for a week in February. It was a wonderful experience. Rev. Aalsburg had a lot of wisdom from his years of experience.

With spring came the work of finalizing who would be part of our core group and selecting a place and a time to worship. For a month we worshipped at a gym. The Lord, however, soon granted us another place to worship, a church that was empty. By his grace, the Lord also raised the question of purchasing the church to the Redeemer congregation and the Redeemer Consistory this past October. We are grateful to the Lord that he has now given Ambassador a permanent home in the Niverville community.

If you come and visit Ambassador, you’ll notice some differences from many Canadian Reformed Churches, although nothing is outside of the Canadian Reformed experience. We have more response in our services; particularly, we respond to God’s law with a prayer of confession. We do this first, because we believe it is a deeply scriptural practice, but also to demonstrate to visitors what confession of sin is and as a practical presentation of the doctrine of justification. After the morning service, we eat lunch together, living the communion that God calls his saints to live out.

We also do our afternoons a bit differently. Already before I had come, the consistory of Redeemer and the Mission Committee had decided that Ambassador’s afternoon service would look more like a study. I have to admit that, although I saw the logic in their decision, I was personally hesitant about the afternoon. I am happy to say that I am no longer so. The opportunity to make the study of the Catechism into a study has greatly blessed all of us in Ambassador. We still have the warnings and exhortations to faith and good works

in the morning, and that is supplemented by digging a bit deeper into the historic doctrines of the church in the afternoon. I don't think of all this as merely being missional. Rather, I see our practice as maturity in existing as a church. As we grow in being a church, we will be more missional.

Some first-year thoughts on my role in Niverville

Having been here in Niverville for a year now has given me the opportunity to put some thought into my particular situation. The Niverville project is unique. I am church planting in a town where a lot of people still go to church. This is a church area. A lot of this Christianity is not very deep. Some vague Christian mysticism seems to be the predominant expression of Christian piety in the town of Niverville. But it is recognizable as Christianity. I am sure that there are still faithful Christians, and faithful churches as well, in our town. They struggle with whatever version they have of Jezebel and the Nicolaitans of Revelation 2. They struggle to retain worship infused by Scripture. Their angels must be encouraged in obedience to the gospel.

My role, then, is variegated. First of all, I do have a role in reaching out as the church going population diminishes. But I also have a role in relation to the other churches in town. There are threatening clouds on the horizon for the churches in North America both within and outside the church. The church needs to be strengthened in her knowledge of the salvation of God and needs to be encouraged to stand strong even on those things that don't seem all that central to the faith: things like women in office and the interpretation of Genesis one. We need to encourage our brothers and sisters in other churches to stand firm in the Scriptures. And we need them as well. I only need to look to 1 Corinthians 12 to prove that.

I should add that I truly desire that all would hold to the doctrines we consider so central to the understanding of Scripture, justification by faith alone, the inclusion of infants in the covenant of grace, and the sovereignty of God in all of life. These find their clearest expression in Reformed teaching. These are the truths that give the Reformed church its backbone, and I would desire that all churches would participate in this backbone.

This means that I do not fit into our generic understanding of a missionary. We tend to think of a missionary as one who goes to those who have never heard. Our vision of a missionary is one who comes into a jungle town and announces the gospel to those who have never heard of the term Jew or Gentile, Israel or David, Jesus Christ, Yahweh, or Trinity. I do meet those who have strayed and those who have very lit-



tle knowledge. In Niverville, even those who do not confess Christ generally have some knowledge of the church. Most of my interactions are with those who confess Christ. All this means that I work with a somewhat expanded definition of a missionary.

As I have settled myself into this community, I see my role as having three functions. For one, I am a missionary because I am seeking to find ways to reach out to those who have never heard or those who have left the church. I seek to build a relationship with my neighbours for example, who are lapsed Christians. I hope that through the games night we have started in our town we might find a way to find others who are lost and need a saviour.

I also function as a pastor. The consistory of Redeemer in Winnipeg decided that they would support the church plant in Niverville by encouraging a number of its members to join the fledgling church. We started with seven families meant to function as a core group, who would provide a welcoming atmosphere for those who were interested in joining Ambassador. Among these families, I function as a pastor. As the man who is called to bring them the Word every week, I am also called to encourage and exhort them in remaining faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ. This pastoral work is an organic working out of my weekly presence in Ambassador.

Finally, I function as an ecumenist, or you might say an ecumenical missionary. This last function is probably the most significant part of my ministry in light of the Lord's leading right now. I seek to understand the varieties of traditions and beliefs that are in the town of Niverville and particularly in the Mennonite and Evangelical Community.

I seek to distinguish to those who still hold to the articles of the Christian faith and who seek to obey their Lord and those who have moved beyond that to other things. I approach my brothers and sisters with an open Bible, seeking to both understand how they understand things and seeking to challenge that framework.

At the same time, I retain an attitude of openness. Perhaps we have missed something. Perhaps they have reached some understanding that the Spirit working in the community of Christ has not fully illuminated yet. I know that I can grow in seeking to clarify and communicate the dogma of historic and catholic Christianity. Ultimately, I seek to retain an attitude of humility toward the Word of God, the final conscience-binder in all my interactions with fellow Christians.

I don't pretend that I will excel at every one of these functions. It is even truer that I cannot divide my energies equally between these three functions. I have to divert my energy in those places that the Lord leads. "Man makes a plan, but God directs his way." I trust that God will give me the strength to do as he sees fit. Neither do I claim to have the understanding of how to function in our contemporary world. Rather, I seek to use the wisdom that God has given me to apply what has been handed down in the Reformed catholic tradition of the church under the foundational and final authority found in the Word of God.

Some first-year thoughts on the role of a Reformed church in Niverville

Of course, I am not the only Reformed witness to the gospel in the Niverville. Ambassador Church also plays a role in bearing witness to the authority of Scripture and the Reformed catholic tradition. Ambassador is not just another flavour of church. Neither is Ambassador a type of non-denominational church, representing a faint parody of Reformed catholicity. We bind ourselves to the Canadian Reformed Churches to preserve our catholicity; to preserve ourselves from sectarian doctrine. Rather, Ambassador represents a challenge to the contemporary believer. Ambassador offers a different way to move toward unity in Christ. We provide a way of catholic unity based in the ecumenical creeds and confessions of the church and grounded in active submission to the living Word of God. It is only through digging deep into Scripture and digging deep into the history of the church, the breadth and the depth of the teaching of the universal church that we will find a way to abolish the walls of division that we raise between one another in the modern world.

I believe that the way the Reformed can truly represent themselves as distinctive is by pursuing the way of Reformed

catholicity. That means we affirm an individual's confession of the evangelical centre of Christianity, Christ's death and resurrection and the Trinity. We also seek to dig deep into Scripture so that we know the truth and obey every breath that comes from the mouth of God.

Other traditions fail in this catholicity. Baptists want to keep children from membership in the church. Among the Baptists, there are those who reject the formal membership of any who have been baptized as an infant. Pentecostals want to form a group of elite members who have the second blessing of the Spirit. Catholics have their own have special status as members of the church because they submit to the Pope. If you don't like Vatican II you might say there is no salvation outside of submission to the Pope; at least that is what *Unam Sanctum* seems to say. If you like Vatican II, Protestants are separated brethren, saved by association with the sacramental work of the Catholic priesthood. Unless these denominations rid themselves of these sectarian doctrines, ecumenical efforts will fail or dissolve into the vapid expressions of unity we see among churches today.

What stands out about the Reformed church is its catholicity, that is, its desire to hold to the great tradition of the Christian church, its absolute humility before the Word of God, and, finally, its affirmation of justification and therefore the high value of all who truly confess Christ as Lord. It can sustain deep discussion of theology and polity and is at the same time able to affirm the simple faith of all those who hold to the gospel. We accept the mature and the immature as equal before God. Male, female, Jew, and Gentile are all freely accepted by God through faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no elite group of the faithful whether they identify as the circumcised or those of the second blessing. The gift of salvation belongs to the theologian as much as it belongs to the infant. More often than not God chooses the praise of the infant to establish strength rather than the high thoughts of the theologian. This is the catholic way of the Reformed church. This makes the Reformed church the best place for any person who desires to learn Christ.

We desire that Ambassador be a living demonstration of such catholicity. And as such, we hope that we will truly be a witness in our community as well, both as an encouragement to our brothers and sisters in other churches and as a light to those who do not yet know Jesus. I am sure we fail in many ways to live out the vision I have described. Few churches do. Like our Father Jacob, we walk with a limp. What I do know is that this is the church that Christ has washed, sanctified, and justified. It is the church that he wishes to present as a spotless bride to his father in heaven.





CRTS Celebrates Fifty Years of God's Faithfulness

Time flies

Fifty is a number that can sneak up on you quietly, and before you know it, there it is. When a couple celebrates their golden wedding anniversary, they sometimes say, "We don't know where the time went; it seems like yesterday that we were walking down the aisle." *Tempus fugit*. Time flies, and the big five-O arrives sooner than we expect. . . also for seminaries.

The first convocation for the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, as it was called at the time, took place on Wednesday, September 10, 1969 in the Central Presbyterian Church in Hamilton. More than one thousand people attended this historic event! Five days later, on Monday, September 15, the door of the seminary classroom, located in an old mansion on 374 Queen Street in Hamilton, swung open for the first time. Four students found their chairs. Three full-time professors and two part-time lecturers had prepared their lectures, and the rest, as they say, is history. Five decades of history, to be precise, now that we are in the year of our Lord 2019.

Planning underway

When a milestone anniversary is on the horizon decisions need to be made about how to commemorate the festive event. Organizing a fiftieth wedding anniversary with extended family and friends already has a certain level of complexity to it, but what if you are celebrating the anniversary of a seminary with the involvement of an entire federation or even two or three? In all of this we must also include the Free Reformed Churches of Australia who have been long-standing, faithful supporters of the seminary and the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa who have had close contact with us in recent years. How do you organize a commemoration of that scope?

Well, the discussions began more than a year ago at the seminary. Early on it was determined that publishing a book was certainly appropriate. Since books take time to

write and publish, work began on that project immediately. Chapters were penned about the history of the seminary, its present operation, and its future opportunities. Stacks of old photos were sorted and (at times humorous) contributions from alumni were solicited. All of this has been compiled into a forthcoming hardcover volume entitled, *Your Word is Our Light: Celebrating Fifty Years of The Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary*. This book is presently in the final stages of editing and layout. The Lord willing, it will be available for purchase within the coming months. We hope that you enjoy reading it as much as we have had the pleasure of writing it. Stay tuned for an update once it rolls off the press.

As you might expect, the fiftieth convocation, on *September 6, 2019* (mark the date, please), promises to be a special event, with some festive, musical, and nostalgic notes appropriately sprinkled throughout the evening. We also look forward to the graduation of six students on that evening, so please come out and share in their joy and thanksgiving. As with other convocations in recent years, this one will be livestreamed, especially for those who do not live near Hamilton and cannot join us in person.

A commemorative book and an extra-special convocation evening make for a good start, but what else? A fiftieth anniversary is not only a time to celebrate but also a time to reaffirm and appreciate anew what the Lord has given us in our seminary. After five decades it is possible that CRTS simply becomes an assumed part of our federational "furniture." But if the seminary and the churches are to be a mutual blessing to each other for years to come, then our relationship must be strong, vibrant, and tangible, even if thousands of kilometers separate numerous congregations and the seminary.

Strengthening bonds

How can we sustain, and even strengthen, that bond? Here are some ideas we are working on. In the first place, we want to connect more intentionally with the elementa-

ry and high schools within our church circles. After all, that is where the future of the church is growing up, rapidly before our eyes. We are inviting a class or two from each school within reasonable driving distance of the seminary to come and visit the seminary at some point during the 2019-2020 academic year. We also hope that in years to come, these same schools will return regularly with new groups of students, as indeed some, but not all, local schools already do.

But what about those schools that are a plane-ride, rather than a bus-ride, away from the seminary? Don't worry, we are thinking about you as well. Although nothing is finalized yet, we have begun exploring the idea of producing a resource, perhaps including a PowerPoint with some pictures (and video?), that will assist school teachers in introducing the seminary to students in our Reformed schools. If you have experience in developing resources for schools, or you have other ideas about this potential project, please contact us. You'll find our email addresses on the seminary website.

Speaking of digital matters, if you follow the seminary's Facebook posts you might have noticed that we have begun a new series of posts that include the hashtag #CRTSis50. (Yes, even the seminary knows about hashtags!) This series will include interesting blast-from-the-past photos and other historic fun facts, some of which we'll be asking you to guess at the answers. Surprisingly, our first #CRTSis50 post



APPOINTED

General Synod 2019 has appointed the

Rev. Dr. W. den Hollander

as professor of New Testament at the CRTS, to fill the vacancy created, the Lord willing, in 2020 by the retirement of the Rev. Dr. G.H. Visscher.

ELIGIBLE FOR CALL

Determined to have met the requirements according to Article 8 of the Church Order by Classis Ontario West of May 15, 2019, and declared eligible for call:

Dr. Jeff Temple

EXAMINATION TO SPEAK AN EDIFYING WORD

Examined by Classis Ontario West, May 15, 2019, and granted permission to speak an edifying word:

Brs. Kelvin Dekker and Aidan Plug

CHURCH NEWS

received the highest amount of Facebook activity we've ever had. Check back regularly for more posts or follow us and receive regular updates automatically. More details can be found on the website under "News > Stay in Touch."

Finally, have you ever wondered exactly what happens inside the halls of CRTS on a regular school day? Maybe you have heard a snippet here or there from your minister or a theological student. But what if *you* could experience it for yourself? Just for an hour or two, mind you. We will not require you to have a B.A., and we won't expect you to know *any* Hebrew or Greek or complicated stuff like that. There is only one pre-requisite: healthy curiosity. For the rest, come one, come all. On the day following convocation, Saturday, September 7, 2019, we plan to have a special "Be a CRTS Student (for an hour or two)" day. Profs will give you an appetizing taste of what they teach. (Don't worry, we're going to make it *very* user-friendly.) You'll get to look around the inside of the building. We'll introduce you to some long-standing, semi-melodious CRTS birthday traditions. More details and precise schedules to follow in due time.

In conclusion

Well, hopefully we have whet your appetite for some of the special things we are planning. This occasion, though, is much more than that. The seminary is a gift, a blessing, and a privilege we have all received from our gracious and faithful Father in heaven. Let us humbly acknowledge it as such, joyfully praise him for it, and prayerfully seek the Lord's ongoing blessing on the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. May "our" seminary continue to serve *him* and *his* church for many years to come.





Connect with him on
Facebook or Twitter (@
PeterHoltvluwer) where
he is currently tweeting
on Christ in the Psalms.

Volume of Church Accompaniment

Last fall in the editorial “Passionate Singing?”, I asked interested readers to write short answers to several questions relating to musical practices in the Canadian Reformed Churches. It came with the promise to publish the most helpful of them in *Clarion*. I thank all respondents for their engagement – good to see! Below are two responses to the following question: “What role does the volume of music play in accompanying congregational singing?” Read, enjoy, and engage (with letters to the editor as well)!

Understanding Dynamics

By Martin Jongsma

Member of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church and a church musician currently pursuing a doctoral study in organ performance
martinjongsmamusic@gmail.com

An accompanist’s use of dynamics (“volume”) must be considerate of two things: 1) supporting the congregational singing; and 2) awareness of the sung text. In the case of the organ, there is a greater opportunity for dynamic fluctuation (“adjusting the volume”) by utilizing various ranks or rows of pipes through the means of stops. Understanding the function, use, and combination of stops is a learned skill that requires training, especially as it pertains to the accompaniment of congregational singing. For the successful accompaniment of congregational singing, an audibly present bass line is the most important consideration. It provides the foundation on which the congregation can “build” or place their voices.

Additionally, the use of dynamics provides an opportunity for the accompanist to draw attention to the sung text. For example, in the case of Psalm 13, the questioning and pleading of the psalmist in stanzas 1 and 2 become a joyful confession of faith in stanza 3; the text can be reflected with a softer dynamic in the first two stanzas and a fuller sound in the last stanza. This example confirms that the ac-

companist ought to take time to review each of the selected stanzas; carefully considering an appropriate manner of accompaniment. Ultimately, when it comes to the “volume of music” and the accompaniment of congregational singing, the question must be: what am I, as accompanist, doing to support and encourage congregational singing? There must be a balance between leading and supporting the congregational singing while paying careful attention not to overpower them.

Considering Factors and Being Sensitive

By Frank Ezinga

Organist for the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley
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The volume of the accompaniment is a subjective matter. What is loud to one person is not loud to another person. When people express that music is loud, it is loud in their personal experience.

There are many factors that play a role. For example, *the environment*: a loud bang in an empty church feels different than when there are 500 people talking loudly. The room itself makes a difference. Where a large room can amplify the sound, a high ceiling can make the sound disappear. Each person brings their own ears: ears that may be exposed to lots of noise during the week, or ears that are equipped with hearing aids. Some people have more sensitive hearing to low sounds, others to high sounds.

When five brass players join the organ in our church building, they have to limit their volume so that they organ can be heard. But on a Sunday morning the organ can come across quite loud. However, when building up the volume in a prelude before the service (e.g. with a transparent Bach piece), the feeling of loud accompaniment during the first song is diminished. People that are exposed to the sound of an electronic organ will experience a pipe organ as loud. But

people who are used to hearing real pipes each Sunday will find an electronic organ sounding more muffled.

The maximum *volume of the instrument* used also varies. Pianos are often amplified. Electronic organs have the main volume set during the installation, but are usually able to reduce the volume significantly. Pipe organ builders assess the space, the size, situation of pews, and the acoustical characteristics and custom-fit the sound and volume of the pipes (voicing). Some organs are not designed for the building, or not built/installed by an organ builder. But regardless: the volume of the accompaniment should not overpower the singing.

The role of music in accompaniment depends also on the *singers*. Organists in North America are trained to observe the articulations in the text in their accompaniment. For example, when accompanying the tune Nicea (*Holy, Holy, Holy*), it is expected to phrase at the commas, and play the proper rhythm for the text of each stanza. Sensitivity in volume to the text is also expected. Many churches are used to this style of accompaniment and respond accordingly. This is in contrast with singing in Reformed churches with European roots. Ever since the Reformation, John

Calvin's words "*poids et majeste*" (weight and majesty) have been used to indicate the style of singing, regardless of the text or the tune. Even when the accompaniment is softer, the singing holds generally the same volume. (Although in smaller congregations there could be more sensitivity and response to the accompaniment.)

Skills of accompaniment and knowing the instrument play also critical role. For prayer text, the accompaniment is softer, sometimes the pedal (bass) is omitted. For a reflective text, a leading solo voice can gently lead. For praise songs, a louder introduction is fitting, which prepares the singers to sing louder. Organs that are voiced well will allow the use of all voices: with exclamations in the text, the trumpet voice can indicate the character, and with a statement of faith the sparkling sound of a mixture can give the singers more confidence. When the text changes during a song (such as in Psalm 130), change in the volume for each stanza (or perhaps even per line) will make the singers more aware of what they are singing. When the congregation and the accompanist have a strong trust relationship, no accompaniment at all could emphasize the text even more.

C





Relationships with Indigenous People (Part 1)

Our reasons for gratitude abound in this land, first because in Jesus Christ we receive all things from God's fatherly hand, but also because we can afford to have fine cars, homes, schools, and churches. When there are storms, we know it is for our good and we can weather the billows. This happens on land we may actually own and have title to, even though, until some centuries years ago, it was owned by others. These are all gifts of God.

Today, *Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action* compel us and our schools to pay increased attention to Indigenous peoples' histories. Such attention will inevitably uncover that their unsavoury treatment by newcomer-Europeans goes back much further than residential schools. This article exposes some of those uncomfortable realities. A follow-up article wrestles with the legitimacy of our North American presence, our task as Christians, and some implications for our schools. For the schools to be effective, our communities need a considered Reformed perspective on this matter. Living close to the *Six Nations of the Grand River* territory ("*Six Nations*"), most of my examples feature *Haudenosaunee*¹ and Dutch, but each region of our country will have its own stories to tell. Throughout, italicized phrases invite further exploration.

Commerce, newcomers, and conflict

The story goes that, in 1613, Dutch captain Jacob Eelckens ventured up the Hudson River. Near present-day Albany, he somehow agreed on a trade pact with some Mohawks, writing it up in Dutch. The Mohawks signed it, and also registered it in their culturally appropriate *Two Row Wampum Belt*.² The belt had white and purple beads woven into five parallel bands: Three white ones (for friendship, peace, and respect), separated by two narrower purple ones (for the two "brothers" or equal parties, and their respective boats, cultures, beliefs, and laws). They would sail parallel courses, never interfering with each other *as long as the grass would grow, the rivers flowed, and the sun would shine,*

and settle disputes orderly. They smoked tobacco and shook hands to seal the agreement. If kept, it would both benefit commerce and fit with the Haudenosaunee's oral constitution, the *Great Law of Peace*. The pact was remembered and expanded, but not kept.

Early in the seventeenth century, many Europeans crossed the Atlantic to settle in North America. In 1608, for example, 400 miles north of Albany, *Samuel de Champlain* established Quebec among Algonkian speakers. It confirmed the French claim to the land and served as a trading post and a (fleeting) refuge for French *Huguenots*. When Champlain shot some rival Mohawks in 1609, his hosts knew he was their friend. Also in 1608, a community of English *Separatists* fled to Amsterdam, and, in 1620, some of them ("Saints") sailed the *Mayflower* to Cape Cod. "Strangers" (non-members) had joined them and helped pay the fare. They founded *Plymouth Plantation* as a gift of God. In 1624, *Reformed Walloon* refugees joined Dutch settlers in *New Netherland*, in 1626 (Dutch) Peter Minuit bought part of Manhattan, and in 1628 the first Reformed Dutch church was instituted. The year after, English *Puritans* established *Massachusetts Bay Colony* near Boston. Their governor, John Winthrop (1587-1649), declared that it was to be a *city on a hill*, as in Matthew 5:13-16. Depravity also came along with Saints and Strangers to each colony, however. Also, refugees and opportunists alike were uprooted from familiar contexts and traditions, probably traumatized by the hazardous journey, and had to learn survival in this alien and often hostile continent. As for the Saints, some clung to their faith and found rest; others strayed, perhaps keeping its form, or abandoned it completely.

Having no choice in the invasions, Indigenous peoples were no less traumatized. While poorly understood in many ways, and ignorant of salvation through Christ, they maintained well-established social and cultural structures. Suddenly, even while accommodating the strange and forlorn newcomers who cut their trees and took their land,

they started dying from unknown diseases like measles and smallpox. With local variations, twenty-five to ninety percent of them succumbed, including seventy-five percent of the Haudenosaunee. Rum, new to them, brought more grief. On either side, good intentions existed, but not universally, and animosities mounted with aggressive settler encroachment. Apart from incidental skirmishes, the seventeenth century *Beaver Wars* were one wide-spread result of European rivalries merging with Indigenous ones – including the mid-century Haudenosaunee decimation or annihilation of the Huron and other nations in southern Ontario.³ Certainly, disputes were often not settled orderly. Two Row friendship, peace, and respect unravelled, especially when the Saints’ and Strangers’ metaphorical boat took to scheming and appropriating, pushing the Indigenous canoe aside.

They smoked tobacco and shook hands to seal the agreement

Justification for subjecting others goes back centuries. The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC), still influential in the Middle Ages, believed that “barbarians” were destined to be slaves. For later European explorers, ignorant of Indigenous civilizations, the *terra nullius* (nobody’s land) doctrine portrayed non-Christians as uncivilized “savages” or “children,” essentially lesser beings, who must be educated to become fully human and could be treated to one’s advantage. In fact, colonization often pursued political and economic benefits for the home country or company, and, while spreading the gospel was frequently part of the justification for such ventures, it rarely won out. A twenty-three-point 1584 colonization proposal advertised “enlarging the glory of the gospel and from England plant sincere religion, and provide a safe and sure place to receive people from all parts of the world that are forced to flee for the truth of God’s Word”⁴ – as point number sixteen only. French Jesuits had a more focussed mission, but Dutch good intentions and actual efforts were hardly different.

In 1628, the first Dutch Reformed minister in New Amsterdam, *Rev. Michaelis*, had to also bring the gospel to Indigenous peoples. However, he (not unlike Jesuits and Puritans) viewed them as “entirely savage and wild, strangers to all decency, yea uncivil and stupid as garden poles, pro-

ficient in all wickedness and godlessness. . . . [To convert them,] begin with the children. . . they ought in youth to be separated from their parents; yea from their whole nation. . . .” He left within four years, and his successor, *Rev. Bogardus*, was too busy fighting governor Kieft to reach out. Dutch missionary efforts also faltered for lack of support, unrealistic expectations, linguistic challenges, worker and settlers’ depraved conduct. Perhaps most grievous were Mr. Kieft’s cowardly massacres of at least 120 Algonkian men, women, and children, in 1643. It was not till the end of the seventeenth century that Indigenous conversions became more common.⁵

Initially, migration to North America was limited to the Atlantic seaboard. Yet, by 1750, English, French, and Spanish claims covered nearly half the continent. Frontier relationships frequently became strained on a massive scale. For instance, after living peacefully together in North Carolina since 1653, English, Dutch, and German settlers (with Indigenous allies) attacked and defeated the *Tuscarora* in the 1711-1715 *Tuscarora Wars*. The latter fled to the New York *Finger Lakes* area and joined the Haudenosaunee confederacy by 1724. Within fifty years, both the *French-Indian War* and *American Revolution* brought more havoc. Those Haudenosaunee who had supported the British were now persecuted on their traditional land in New York, and received the 950,000 acre *Haldimand Tract* along the Grand River in Ontario, “to be theirs forever” as a reward. Through geographical ignorance, various sales, surrenders, betrayals, and imposed adjustments, only five percent of this tract is theirs today, and nearly thirty associated disputes remain unsettled (excluding the 2006 *Caledonia Reclamation*). After the American Revolution, white colonization of Ontario increased dramatically. By 1812, the whole continent was claimed by settler nations, and treaties pressured Indigenous peoples to allow for ever further westward settlement. Honouring the treaties was quite another story.

Haudenosaunee believed that *Turtle Island* was given to them by the Creator, that they had always been here, and that it was theirs, forever. Since their near self-destruction in *Hiawatha and Deganawida’s* days, sometime between 1100 and 1500 AD, Haudenosaunee had (sort of) kept their Great Law of Peace, but their beliefs and odds of survival were deeply shaken by settlers’ impacts. In 1799, *Handsome Lake* (1735-1815), a deeply aggrieved Seneca leader and recovering alcoholic, responded to this by creating the *Longhouse Religion*, a mix of traditional teachings, a strong moral code, and Quaker input.⁶ In 1809, *Shawnee Chief Tecumseh*,

noting an illegitimate transfer of land to settlers, emphasised that “the land belongs to the first who sits down on his blanket or skins which he has thrown upon the ground; and till he leaves it, no other has a right.”⁷ Finally, *E. Pauline Johnson* (1862-1913), an acclaimed Mohawk poet, summed up the sentiments and stirred her people’s spirits,

...O! coward self I hesitate no more;
Go forth, and win the glories of the war.
Go forth, nor bend to greed of white men’s hands,
By right, by birth we Indians own these lands,
Though starved, crushed, plundered, lies our nation low...
Perhaps the white man’s God has willed it so.

This stings, as it apparently faults God and, not without cause, it implies settlers’ guilt. Canada’s *Indian Act*, the *Residential Schools* (such as the *Mohawk Institute*) and the *Sixties Scoop*, while aiming for assimilation, only injured Indigenous people further. If we read the 2007 *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, our discomfort increases. What are we doing with all this? Should we even be here at all? And if so, which are the good works God prepared for us to do today (Eph 2:10, LD 4, 5)?

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@echs.ca.

Endnotes

¹ Haudenosaunee (or Iroquois) means “People of the Longhouse”. Their confederacy first included the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca nations; the Tuscarora joined in 1724.

² For details, see honorthetworow.org/learn-more/history/ and links.

³ Joseph Boyden’s disputed 2013 novel, *The Orenda*, relates a fictionalized Huron-Haudenosaunee confrontation.

⁴ Wright, Louis B., and Fowler, Elaine W. (1968). *English Colonization of North America: Documents of modern history*. London, UK: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd. p. 22-26.

⁵ Donald J. Bruggink, Donald J., and Baker, Kim N. (2004). *By Grace Alone: Stories of the Reformed Church in America*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. Ch 5.

⁶ Chief Thomas, Jake (1994/2013). *Teachings from the Longhouse*. Toronto, ON: Stoddart Publishing Co. Ltd. For more detail and background, see <http://www.philtar.ac.uk/encyclopedia/nam/handsome.html> Today, some 20% of Six Nations people follow it, while others attend almost 20 different churches, claim no religion, or hold to ancient traditions. This diversity is also apparent in what could be done to move outstanding issues forward.

⁷ Breverton, Terry (2011). *I have a dream: Inspiring words and thoughts from history’s greatest leaders*. London, UK: Quercus Publishing Plc. p. 129. A British ally in the War of 1812, Tecumseh tragically died in battle in 1813.



Clarion Kids

Paul and Silas in Prison

Acts 16:16-40

Paul and the other apostles brought the gospel to many people, but not everyone wanted to hear their message. One time, Paul and Silas made a crowd so angry that they ended up being thrown into prison. They were locked up and heavily guarded. But then one night at midnight, Paul and Silas were singing hymns to God. Suddenly, there was a big earthquake and all the prison doors opened. The prison guard was terrified, but Paul and Silas told him not to be afraid. They told the guard about Jesus, and he was baptized with his entire family. The next day Paul and Silas were released from prison.

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



Crossword Puzzle:

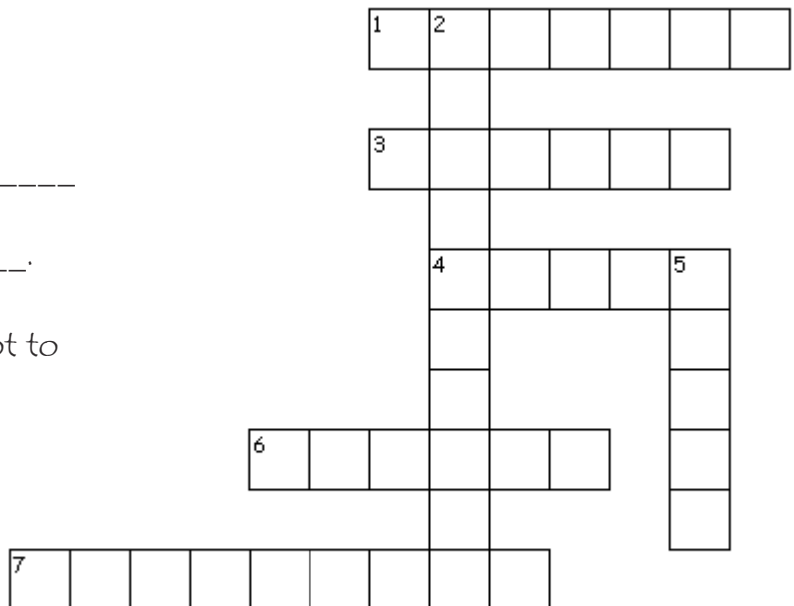
Solve the clues to fill in the puzzle.

Across

1. Not everyone wanted to hear the _____ of the apostles.
3. Paul and Silas were thrown into _____.
4. What Paul and Silas were singing.
6. Paul and Silas told the prison guard not to be _____.
7. The prison guard was _____.

Down

2. What shook the prison.
5. Who was in prison with Paul.



by Emily Nijenhuis



I Believe in God the Father

I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth

I be - lieve in God the Fa - ther,
 he who made both heaven and earth.
 Out of noth - ing he cre - at - ed
 eve - ry - thing that he called forth.
 By his prov - i - den - tial power
 he up - holds it eve - ry hour.
 For the sake of Christ my Sav - iour
 he's my God and lov - ing Fa - ther.

2. I rely on God completely
 as to have no anxious doubt
 that he'll give me all that's needful,
 for my soul and flesh, throughout.
 He will turn to my own good
 all the sorrows of this world.
 For he is the God Almighty
 and a Father who loves fully.

3. God upholds all of creation
 by his ever present power
 so that health and also sickness,
 rain and drought, and every flower
 do not come to us by chance
 but from God's paternal hands.
 He's the Lord of earth and heaven
 from whom every gift is given.

4. We'll be patient in our suffering,
 when we face adversity
 with full trust about the future,
 thankful in prosperity.
 We will always know the love
 of our faithful God above.
 In his hand is all creation
 subject to his good direction.

Text: QA 26-28, Heidelberg Catechism (Art. 1, Apostles' Creed); vers. George van Popta, 2019
 Tune: Strasbourg, 1539 / Geneva, 1551

GENEVAN 42

Note

The next series of (ten) canticles published in *Clarion* will be based upon the questions and answers of the Heidelberg Catechism, which elaborate on the Apostles' Creed. Technically, they are not canticles which, strictly speaking, are songs based upon texts of the Bible other than Psalms; however, they will be published under the "Canticles" rubric.

Some will be published with a single line of music in order to keep the song to one page. An SATB (four part harmony) version can, in each case, be found at <http://mostly-canticles.blogspot.com/>.

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord." (Eph 5:19)



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letter to the Editor

I read the fine articles on "Worship in our Churches." It seems throughout history, music always has been a matter of contention in the church and is often the cause of much controversy also today.

Long ago, church father Augustine (AD 354-430) pondered the place of music in his life. In his classic book *Confessions*, in Book 10, chapter 33 he meditates on "the delights of the ear" as he considers the "various lusts of the flesh" and how he deals with them. I find his writing quite helpful and thought provoking. You can read what Augustine wrote about music by going online and typing in this link: <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/augustine/confess.html>.

What he wrote in Book 10, chapter 33 of the *Confessions* can be summarized as follows:

Augustine confesses he once enjoyed music to such an extent that he was enthralled by the beauty of music and almost became addicted to it, but God set him free from

this. He continues to enjoy music because the words set to music increases his devotion to God.

Nevertheless, as a Christian, he finds it hard to find the "proper place" for music in his life. He recognizes that it helps him have a deeper devotion to God when the words are sung well but he realizes that certain forms of music simply stir him up emotionally and "gratify his senses."

He also recognizes the tendency on the other hand to overreact and to be overly strict and in so doing, denying himself the pleasures of music. He concludes that there is a legitimate place for music in the church but expresses his desire to always delight more in the truth that the music conveys, than in the mere emotional stimulation which music itself gives him.

I find the writing of this wise influential church father written so many years ago is still worth reading today and is very much applicable to the church in the twenty-first century.

Andrew Jans, Dunnville

Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication. Submissions can be sent to editor@clarionmagazine.ca and need to adhere to a 750-word limit.



Press Release Classis Central Ontario (Blessings), March 22, 2019

On March 22, 2019, Classis Central Ontario was convened by Blessings Christian Church at the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church. On behalf of the convening church, Rev. Hilmer Jagersma welcomed the delegates and opened the meeting. He invited the delegates to sing Hymn 52 stanzas 1, 2, and 5, read John 10:11-18, and provided a short meditation on this passage, then led in prayer.

The credentials of all of the delegates were found to be in order, and Classis was constituted. Rev. Bill DeJong served as Chairman, Br. Pete Van Grootheest served as Vice Chairman, and Rev. Tony Roukema served as Clerk.

The agenda for Classis was adopted, with minor changes. The chairman remembered the retirement of Rev. John van Popta, as well as his celebration of twenty-five years in the ministry. Rev. Clarence Vandervelde has also celebrated twenty-five years in the ministry. The CRTS will celebrate fifty years as the seminary of the Canadian Reformed Churches this year. Rev. Bert Nederveen has celebrated thirty-five years in the ministry. Rev. Ian Wildeboer

and Blessings have begun preparations to launch an East Hamilton church plant.

There were no reports to be dealt with.

Jubilee Church sought advice from Classis on a matter regarding pulpit supply. After some discussion, Classis provided some general input and comments.

An overture from Ebenezer church regarding a previous Classis decision was received. This overture was not adopted.

Jubilee Canadian Reformed Church will convene the June 2019 Classis. The following officers are suggested: Rev. Gerrit Bruintjes as Chairman, the elder from Blessings as Vice-Chairman, and Rev. Winston Bosch as Clerk.

Next classis is recommended to convene on June 14, 2019. If this classis is postponed, the alternate date would be September 13, 2019.

An opportunity was given for questions. A question was asked and answered.

Censure ad Art. 34 (C.O.) was not deemed necessary.

The chairman, Rev. Bill DeJong, closed Classis inviting the delegated to join in singing Hymn 45, and then leading them in prayer.

C

