

Clarion

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

What is covenant worship?



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THE EMANCIPATION OF MEN AND WOMEN
WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP DAY IN LANGLEY

Clarion

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Issue 16 leads with Dr. Jason Van Vliet's article, "Reformed Worship: Principles or Preferences?" in which he discusses five principles of Scripture-based worship.

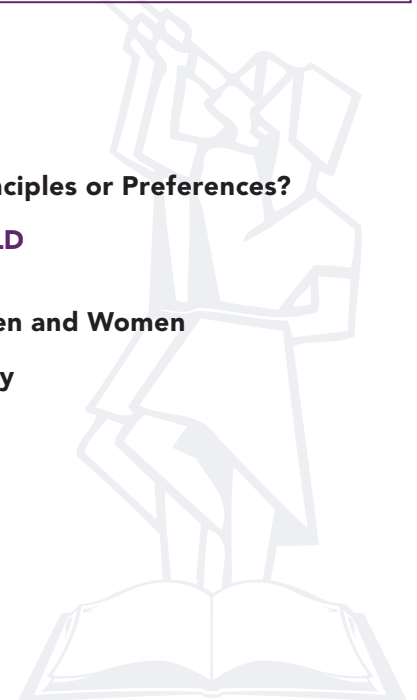
We also have a translated article (thank you to Mr. Pieter Torenvliet) by Dr. Bart van Egmond, "The Emancipation of Men and Women." He takes a look in to the egalitarian thinking of our time and the power such a culture actually has over men and women. A follow up article will appear in our next issue.

There is a report on the Women's Fellowship Day held in Langley, BC. We also have a few regular columns on our pages: Treasures, New & Old, *Clarion Kids*, and Education Matters. There is also a Canticle and a press release.

Laura Veenendaal

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Reformed Worship: Principles or Preferences?

What does God want in his worship services?

"I just love singing Psalm 42 with a full congregation and a skilled organist. It still sends shivers down my spine after all these years."

"I just wish we could sing 'In Christ Alone' in the worship service. I think the lyrics are solidly biblical, and somehow the tune just lifts up my soul."

Worship has a way of getting people to speak. We all have our opinions, ideas, and preferences. If anything will draw us into a vigorous discussion, likely it will be something to do with liturgy.

In one way, that's good. Weekly worship services both anchor and shape our life with our LORD. We should be passionate about this. But in another way, there is a problem here. In our discussions about worship, far too much revolves around those little words: "I," "me," and "my." Personal preference often trumps biblical principle. We need to turn that around.

Let's briefly explore five principles of Reformed, or Scripture-based, worship. These principles won't answer all your questions, but they should provide a solid foundation upon which we can all build.

Principle #1 – Worship ought to be thoroughly and consistently God-centred

This primary principle is found in many passages, including Psalm 95:2, "Let us come into *his presence* with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise *to him* with songs of praise!" Or Hebrews 12:28, "Let us offer *to God* acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for *our God* is a consuming fire." To state the matter very plainly, worship is all about God. . . *not* about us.

That may sound perilously one-sided. After all, worship is a holy meeting between God and his people (see Principle #3 below), and as such we are most certainly involved. True, but from the start we need to clear away some potential cobwebs and put the obvious into laser-precise focus: we go to a worship service to revere and praise *God*, to listen and submit to *him*. As we do so, we ourselves will be greatly blessed; however, that is secondary not primary.

Being truly God-centred, or theocentric, about worship demands that we constantly strive to answer this question: "What does God want in his worship services?" This involves carefully listening to what God says in his own Word rather than hastily assuming that just because *we* like it, therefore, it must also please God as well. Lord's Day 35 makes this same point when it says, "We are not. . . to worship him in any other manner than he has commanded in his Word" (Q/A 96).

Here's one example to make the point. Personally, I love praise psalms. If I see Psalm 47, or 84, or 150 on the board when I walk into church, my vocal pump is primed to sing with gusto. You may, or may not, have the same preference. Yet, if we look together at the entire book of Psalms that God gave us, we notice something we might not have expected. Of the 150 psalms, no less than fifty-nine of them are lament songs, forty-one are usually labelled as praise songs, and the remaining fifty fall into a number of other categories.

At a minimum this means that our God wants us to sing to him about the problems and pains we experience in this fallen world. After all, he gave us *a lot* of lament psalms to sing, more than one-third of the psalter. Thinking this

through more deeply, don't we as human parents have some of the most meaningful times with our children as we work through hardships together? It also makes sense, then, that our heavenly Father wants us to pour out our struggles to him in song. Since that is what *he* wants, that is what we will do. After all, worship is God-centred.

Principle #2 – Having moved ahead from old to new covenant, we join by faith in heavenly worship

Here Hebrews 12:22-24 comes to the fore. We come “to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, *the heavenly Jerusalem*, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant.”

This list is strikingly full of the invisible. Sure, each Sunday we see our church buildings, including the things we appreciate (“I just love how bright and cheerful our church building feels!”) and those we dislike (“What *were* they thinking when they picked that colour for the carpet?!”). But we can't see the heavenly Jerusalem. Neither can we see the hosts of angels, nor God, nor the spirits of the righteous, nor Jesus, our ascended mediator.

Thus, we worship as we walk: by faith, not by sight (2 Cor 5:7). This was already true in the OT, but it is all the more true in the NT. Old covenant worship was filled with many special things to see: a large bronze altar, impressive temple walls, and priests in colourful robes. But when the earthly temple was destroyed, that all fell away and our hearts have been lifted up to where Christ, the Substance of the shadows, has gone – into the very throne room of God in heaven (Col 3:1-2).

Lord's Day 35 confirms the significance of worshipping by faith, which the Holy Spirit works in us through hearing the preached Word (Rom 10:14). It's not hard to think of all kinds of interesting and helpful visual aids that could potentially be introduced into the worship services, but in our Catechism we confess, “We should not be wiser than God. He wants his people to be taught not by means of dumb images, but by the living preaching of his Word” (Q/A 98).

Principle #3 – Worship includes a holy, covenant conversation

As a matter of undeserved privilege, the LORD our God has established “an eternal covenant of grace with us” (see Forms for the Baptism of Infants and Adults). In Scripture,

the covenant is compared to a marriage relationship. “I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord God, and you became mine” (Ezek 16:8; also see Jer 31:32). Marriage involves much communication, back and forth. Similarly, covenant worship includes a most holy conversation between God and his people, back and forth. The table below illustrates this, using a common order for morning worship.

“I am your God”	“You are my people”
Call to Worship	Votum
Salutation	Amen and Song
Law	Song and Prayer
Scripture Reading	Song
Sermon	Amen, Song, Prayer, Offering, Song
Benediction	Amen

Worship services vary from congregation to congregation. For example, in some churches, the congregation says or sings the Amen, while in others, the minister says it on behalf of the congregation, just as he prays on behalf of the congregation. The practice is different, but the principle is the same.

However, if we always go back to this biblical principle of covenantal worship, then the central question will not be “Should we make a change or stay the same?” but “*Why* do we do what we do, and are there ways to improve this time of holy, worshipful conversation?”

Principle #4 – On the musical side of worship, congregational singing is a priority

In the old covenant, David set aside some of the Levites to concentrate on music and singing in the temple. Yes, all of God's people sang his praises, but names such as Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their descendants had a particularly prominent role (1 Chron 15 and 25). In the new covenant, though, we don't have special Levitical choirs because all of God's people are “a holy priesthood” (1 Pet 2:5). Thus, if congregational singing was important in the old, it has now become a liturgical top priority.

In the letter to the Ephesians, the Holy Spirit underlines the same point when he instructs us to “be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (5:19). Those who belong to this “one another” are the members of Christ’s body, so beautifully described in the previous chapter (4:11-16). This body is one (4:4), must become more one (4:13), and thus should also mature in singing as one (5:19).

This principle affects, for instance, the pace of congregational singing. We all know: some long to pick up the tempo, while others wish to press gently on the brakes. Yet, if principle has priority over preference, then we need to find a tempo that allows the greatest number of members in the congregation to sing *together* in the best possible way. If the tempo is too fast for elderly members to catch their breath between lines or for the young ones, who have not yet mastered reading, to keep up, maybe we need to slow down a bit. Conversely, if the tempo is too slow and the elderly members don’t have enough wind in their lungs to make it to the end of the line or the congregation is struggling to sing wholeheartedly at such a protracted pace, maybe we need to speed up the metronome a few notches.

Principle #5 – Since congregational singing involves both teaching and admonishing, sound lyrics are essential

As we sing, we praise our God together, but that’s not all. Both in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, our Lord

reminds us that as we sing, we also teach and admonish each other. The direction of our songs is not only *up* toward our God, but also *over* to our fellow believers.

Sometimes we sing encouraging truths to each other (“The LORD will fail you never / but keep you safe forever,” Ps 121 stanza 4). Other times we sing a corrective, even threatening message to each other (“Now kiss the Son, lest he in fury scorn you / lest in his wrath the LORD cause you to perish,” Ps 2 stanza 4). Both are necessary. By way of comparison, if the preaching becomes lopsided, always focussing on the encouragement but never sounding forth an exhortation, we realize something should change; we need balanced preaching. But what about singing? Do we also long for balanced singing that teaches *and* admonishes? After all, that is the kind of singing that God speaks about in his own Word.

Added to that, since we are busy teaching and admonishing in song, we’ll want to make sure that the lyrics are scripturally sound, doing full justice to all the deep riches of his holy revelation. Anything less would be a dishonour toward our God but also a disservice toward our fellow believers.

Our opening question was “Reformed Worship: Principles or Preferences?” Let’s keep our liturgical priorities straight and avoid false dilemmas in our answer. May the Spirit of Christ dwell richly in us as we say, “Worshiping our God according to his revealed principles *is* our preference, indeed, our deepest desire.”





Outside the Covenant

"Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, of tent-dwelling women most blessed." (Judges 5:24)

Throughout the Scriptures, God has indicated his desire to bless all the peoples of the earth. One way we see this in the Old Testament is in his inclusion of sojourners in his plan of salvation. Every Sunday morning, when we read the law in church, we hear about the "sojourner who is within your gates." A sojourner was someone who was not an Israelite, but still chose to live among God's people. They were immigrants, refugees, and foreigners who wanted to live in the Promised Land among God's covenant people and share in God's covenantal blessings. Some of these sojourners are quite well-known. For instance, Ruth the Moabitess, Uriah the Hittite, and Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite were all sojourners.

Jael was not an Israelite, but a Kenite. The Kenites were ethnically Midianites, a non-Israelite people. In Judges 1:16 we read, "And the descendants of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up with the people of Judah from the city of palms into the wilderness of Judah, which lies in the Negeb near Arad, and they went and settled with the people." But being separate from the Israelites, the Kenites did not receive allotments of land in the Promised Land. They lived a nomadic lifestyle, travelling

from place to place, seeking good grazing land for their flocks and herds. They lived among the Israelites, but they were also separate from them.

The Kenites knew of the one true God, but they were not a part of his chosen nation. The Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, is called "the priest of Midian." At one point during the exodus, he even brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God and he shared a meal with Aaron and all the elders of Israel in the presence of God. He clearly worshipped the one true God. But his family did not appear to have practised circumcision, which was the sign and seal of the covenant. We can assume this because Moses never bothered to circumcise his son during the forty years when he lived with his father-in-law, before he was called to lead the people of God out of Egypt. You can read in Exodus 4 how Moses was nearly killed because he had failed to properly circumcise his son and his Kenite wife, Zipporah, carries out the covenantal deed with some disgust.

The fact that Deborah and Barak can sing, "Most blessed of women be Jael," reminds us of God's desire to distribute his blessings to all the peoples of the earth. When God called Abram, he said, "I will bless those who bless you,

and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." The blessing bestowed upon Jael is a reminder that even in the Old Testament, God was not only interested in members of his covenant and he did not only care for his people Israel. He wanted to bring others into a relationship with him. His rules regarding the treatment of sojourners, for example, were meant to ensure that people from other nations could live and worship him alongside the nation of Israel and would even want to do so.

Of course, this reality is more fully revealed in the New Testament. There Jesus told his disciples, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd." We see how the Jews and Gentiles who believed in Jesus Christ as Lord were united by faith to form a new Israel. Believers today need to keep in mind that the covenant is not just something that people are born into; it is also something that people are called into as the gospel is proclaimed. Many who are not yet part of the covenant will be among those who are blessed by our gracious God.



For further study

1. How does Jael's killing of Sisera impact the relationship between Kenites and Israelites?
2. What are some other examples from the Old Testament of God blessing non-Israelites?
3. How are we to view people who are outside of God's covenant?

The Emancipation of Men and Women

A few weeks after our synod¹ opened the ecclesiastical offices for sisters in the congregation, Prof. C. Van Dam wrote in one reaction: “That decision is a symptom of a deeper, underlying problem. The Synod has embraced a new way of reading Scripture, a way which brings them into bondage, in this case, into the bondage of the prevailing egalitarian culture of our day.”²

It is worth noting that Van Dam sees the egalitarian thinking of our time as a power that is intended to get the church in its grip. It deprives Christians of the freedom that God gave them. This image of the culture in which we live is quite different from the way in which this same culture sees itself. In our culture, the egalitarian norms are emphatically seen as a sign of liberation, rather than bondage. Formerly, your life was prefaced by all kinds of societal expectations. If you were a woman, you were expected to become a wife and mother. Women who married would immediately receive a dismissal letter from their employer. For some time, however, this is no longer the case. As a woman, you have the same rights and opportunities as men, even though there’s still room for improvement on this point. Additionally, sexual liberation has become a fact. Everyone is permitted to experience his/her sexuality in whatever way he/she wants, as long as the other consents. You can also choose your sexual orientation yourself and enter into a relationship that resembles marriage. Gay marriage has been introduced. And gay couples have the right to adopt children. The most recent development is the transgender movement, which fights for the right to define one’s own sex, regardless of one’s biological nature. You should have the right to decide yourself whether want to go through life as a man or woman or as something in between. The proponents of emancipation see these developments as ongoing liberation. People are freed from the oppressive burden of traditional standards that have stood in their way. Now they’re truly able to develop themselves.

In two articles, I would like to show that we are confronted here by an aggressive ideology that truly threatens

to rob the church of the freedom that God has given her. In this article, I will describe the vision of “liberation,” which has become dominant in our culture. In a subsequent article, I want to show you how this line of thinking has also entered the church.

Christian freedom for men and women

“Serving God is true freedom.” This expression, which is attributed to the church father Augustine (354 – 430 AD), provides a good summary of what the Bible understands with respect to freedom.³ You are truly free if you love God and obey his commandments. Like a fish comes into its own in the water, so a person comes into his own when he voluntarily listens to God’s commandments. God’s commandments are not arbitrary rules, but they fit with the nature and character of humans. That nature comes to its true potential when people turn to God’s commandments. But this development is disrupted if he goes his own way. From this perspective, Christians have also looked at the relationship between men and women. God created humans as male and female (Gen 1:27). The male or female nature comes into its own when it is ruled in accordance with God’s intentions. It was God’s intention that men and women would not live as two separate individuals, but that they would work together in his service, as a two-in-one unit.⁴ In that relationship, the man is the head of the woman (1 Cor 11:3). He is the one who is primarily responsible in governing the world on behalf of God. The woman was given to him as an indispensable helper, with whom he carries out that calling.

This distinction between men and women has consequences in the way men and women relate to each other in all areas of life.⁵ But most particularly, this will be evident in marriage. Through marriage, God joins one man and one woman to each other to serve him together throughout their whole life. In marriage, the man, as the head of his wife, has a calling to lead her, to care for her, and to protect her. The woman has the task to entrust herself to that beneficial guidance from her husband and cooperate

in the service to God. Central to that service to the Lord God through marriage is having and raising children. The sexual differences between man and woman achieve one of their main purposes when they have children together, in response to their God-given task. That is, if God permits. Then their different inherent characteristics receive additional development in the way they take care of their children as father and mother.

Because of the Fall into sin and the curse that followed, however, men and women are no longer capable of carrying out the calling that they received from God. But by God's grace, they may again learn how to discover what God had initially intended them to be. God's grace does not elevate our nature, but it does restore our nature. In Christ, you can again learn to be man and woman in accordance with God's standards. In this life we have to contend with constant sinfulness and brokenness from which we will only be fully liberated in the life hereafter. Yet God, in the midst of that brokenness, truly gives a new beginning in Christ and through his Spirit. God's standards are the fertile ground in which we as creatures blossom again and may bear fruit for our Creator (Rom 6:22). This is what Christians understand by "liberation."

Liberation of men and women in Western culture

For centuries, this vision of human freedom was embedded in our culture. God is the Creator; we are his creatures and live according to our nature if we obey him. Because of the dominance of Christianity in our Western society, Christian standards for sexuality and the relationships between men and women were publicly recognized. But beginning at the close of the eighteenth century, people increasingly believed themselves as separate from God. Ultimately, that change in thinking led to God himself disappearing behind the horizon. People no longer saw God as their Creator, who had made them with a set purpose and recreates them with an eye to that purpose. We are alone in the universe, the accidental products of evolution. Our life has no purpose and no sense. We must provide that purpose and sense to and for ourselves. But precisely because we have to provide our own purpose to our life, we need absolute freedom of choice. If we see ourselves as the authors of our own life-project, we have to be free to organize life in whatever way we want and not be tied down by so-called "supernatural" norms.

That's how the ideal of our society came into being: absolute, individual freedom of choice.⁶ But, predictably, this

ideal clashed with the surviving standards of Christianity. After all, they restricted your freedom of choice as long as society would continue to recognize them. Consequently, a movement came about to abolish those surviving standards. They had to be "deconstructed." Deconstruction means that you try to demonstrate that these so-called self-evident standards are not objectively true, but that they were invented by people for the interests of their particular group. But in doing so, they suppressed others. Those other people must be freed from the burden of these self-evident

We are confronted here by an aggressive ideology

standards so that they would be enabled to make their own choices, to determine purpose for themselves.

During the 1960s, this movement led to the criticism of marriage. It was no longer seen as an institution from God, in which men and women could develop their potential. It was put down as an oppressive institution, invented by men, serving their privilege, and thus suppressing women. It held her back from taking responsibility for her own life. Simone de Beauvoir, a well-known existentialist philosopher, wrote in her book, *The Second Sex* (1949): "You are not born as a woman, you become one."⁷ And how does that happen? She claims that it's because women in society are seen as future wives and mothers. Being a woman is always determined from a man's perspective. Therefore, you can never be truly independent, and you can never decide who you want to be or how you want to develop your life. Women had to be delivered from that burden. That's why emancipation movements fought to ensure that women could choose a career, that they could divorce more easily, and also that they would be in control of their own womb by means of contraceptives and the legalization of abortion. What actually happened? In the name of liberty and freedom, a woman was expected to deny her female identity.⁸ Fertility, pregnancy, and motherhood were seen as obstacles that did not permit your development as a woman.

Human sexuality was also deconstructed. Up to that time, sexual intercourse was associated with marriage between a man and a woman and focussed on having children. But that norm was criticized. Under the influence of psychologists like Freud, it was stated that free sexual experience was necessary to allow you to develop into a

well-balance person.⁹ Sex is just a basic human need such as food and drink. Whoever sets or determines sexual norms, suppresses sex drive, which in turn will lead to frustration and aggression. That's why you have to be able to have sex with different people and outside of marriage, and to provide room to fulfill this need. Also because of the invention of the contraceptive pill, it became possible to perceive sex as a goal in itself, disconnected from the marriage relationship between a husband and wife and having children.¹⁰

A logical consequence was that the practice of homosexuality became more normal. If sexual intercourse is disconnected from marriage and having children, why then could it not be practiced between people of the same sex? In line with this shift, a lobby emerged promoting the introduction of gay marriage. Which was not, by the way, so much a fight for gay couples to be married, as such. The battle about gay marriage was primarily a way to fight against the normative character of heterosexuality in society. After all, marriage had been an institution that supported the norm of heterosexuality. If that institution would be opened up to gay couples, the norm of heterosexuality would also be undermined.¹¹

Most recently, the gender revolution also became part of this movement. It is a fact that there is a small percentage of people who experience so-called gender dysphoria: someone is seen biologically as a man or a woman, but you don't feel like that. The gender revolution, however, has made this into an ideology: you determine, independent of your gender and sexual characteristics, how you want to go through life. You may have male or female gender characteristics, but this does not say anything about your identity as such. You develop that yourself in whatever way you want to live. You can have male sexual characteristics but go through life as a woman. Or vice versa. You may want to move between these identities. That's why the idea emerged to promote gender-neutral toilets and (Dutch) train subscriptions which will no longer indicate the gender of the traveller. Why? Because that can be "oppressive" for the person who doesn't recognize him/herself with that predetermined "label." Everyone must be able to determine for him or herself what it means to be a man or a woman, or something in between.

The abolition of man and woman

What you now observe in our Western society is that all the standards that God had initially given to regulate the relationships between men and women are perceived as oppressive and should be discarded. Even sexual dis-

NEW CHURCH IN SARDIS

With thankfulness to the Lord, we celebrate the institution of a new Canadian Reformed Church at Sardis, BC. Worship services are held at 2 pm and 5:30 pm each Sunday at the Sardis Community Church, 45625 South Sumas Road, Chilliwack, BC.

CALL DECLINED and ACCEPTED

URCNA candidate **Nathan Zekveld**

has declined the call to work as a missionary in London with the Pilgrim Canadian Reformed Church and has accepted the call to serve as a pastor in the United Reformed Church of Prince Edward Island.

CHURCH NEWS

tinctions as such are no longer recognized. Those who really want to be free cannot be bound by these distinctions. Gabriele Kuby, a Roman Catholic sociologist who wrote a book about the sexual revolution, describes their terrible consequences based on sociological research. What is portrayed as liberation is ultimately the destruction of really being human as God intended. Everything revolves around preserving your personal freedom and your experience of personal enjoyment. Therefore, people lose their willingness to truly love, to be faithful, and to take responsibility for husband, wife, and children. The birth rate is decreasing, families are falling apart, more and more children suffer from mental disorders (due to the instability of their family environment), and millions of children are killed in their mother's womb.¹²

How does this threaten the church now? Kuby shows that in our society we are dealing with a totalitarian ideology that is aimed at changing our thinking. That ideology has been worked out in government policy documents, and it controls most media and all kinds educational programs. Constantly, they insist that everyone has the right to live his or her life in whatever way you choose, and that you suppress others if you disapprove of their lifestyle. Thus, they want to compel you to agree with the thought that the true liberation of people can only exist if you are allowed to follow your own impulses, instead of obediently following God's revealed will for our lives. Incidentally, this does not mean, they claim, that you cannot continue to embrace your Christian convictions. But you may no longer see these convictions as the only true choice. It is a personal choice, but it's not a matter of obedience to a truth that applies to all people. If you say that, you are intolerant and you are accused of discrimination.¹³ Here, it turns out that the egalitarian thinking in our society does not tolerate absolute truth. In fact, it wants to compel you to regard your Christian view of life as an arbitrary choice that might

work for you, but it is certainly not better than someone else's convictions.

The freedom of the church

How will the church retain its freedom? By staying faithful to the Word of God, through which the Lord gives us freedom. That is the freedom from our debt to God through the forgiveness of our sins, and the freedom to begin living again according to God's will. That will of God, also concerning the relationship between men and women as he has revealed to us in the Bible. Only if we acknowledge the Bible as God's clear Word, through which he liberates us from the bondage of sin, will we remain resistant to the moral relativism that threatens to engulf us. Concerning that point, I think we have much to discover again. For example, concerning the uniqueness of men and uniqueness of women in marriage and in society, and the link between sexuality and having children. But then we can also expect that Christian men and women will experience and testify that serving the Lord, in accordance with his Word, is truly beneficial for all people.

On this point, the warning from Prof. Van Dam comes close to home. If we're going to read the Bible through the glasses of our own culture, and then on our own authority dismiss certain things as time-bound, then we have in actual fact become slaves of the egalitarian thinking of our time. Then for a while we might still maintain our Christian convictions about men, women, and sexuality, but these convictions will only exist by the grace of our own arbitrariness. The next generation will jettison the hobby-horses of their parents, and be increasingly swept up into the postmodern ideology of freedom for men and women. This ideology is portrayed as serving our liberation, but in actual fact, it leads to death (Cf. Romans 6:23).

Endnotes

¹ General Synod of the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands (GKv) closed a lengthy sitting in the Fall 2017. At this synod, the ecclesiastical offices in the churches were opened to women. The decision remains controversial in The Netherlands. It affected ecclesiastical relations with both the CanRC and FRCA. The International Conference of Reformed Churches terminated their membership.

² C. Van Dam, "Our Sister Churches Open All Ecclesiastical Offices to Women," (5-07-2017). Published via www.eeninwaarheid.nl

³ Actually, this expression does not appear literally in Augustine's works, but it does capture what Augustine thinks about freedom. A similar expression can be found in his *De civitate dei*: The freedom to choose is truly free when it does not submit itself to shortcomings and sins.

⁴ J. van Bruggen, *Emancipatie en Bijbel*. Kommentaar uit 1 Korinthe 11, Amsterdam, 1975, p. 55.

⁵ J. Van Bruggen, *Emancipatie en Bijbel*, p. 31-33. Here I have followed the exegesis of 1 Cor. 11: 3 given by Van Bruggen, although I am still searching for the implications that this has for man-woman relations outside of marriage.

⁶ Gabriele Kuby, *Die globale sexuelle Revolution. Zerstörung der Freiheit im Namen der Freiheit*, Fe-Verlag, Regensburg, 20166, p. 22.

⁷ "On ne nait pas femme, on le deviant." For the influence and reception of this book in feminist circles in the 1960s, see: Maarten Verkerk, *Sekse als antwoord*, Amsterdam, 1997, p. 80-81.

⁸ Kuby, *Die globale sexuelle Revolution*, p. 65.

⁹ Kuby, *Die globale sexuelle Revolution*, p. 54, 72.

¹⁰ Concerning the negative impacts of the Pill on society, see: Mary Eberstadt, *Adam and Eve after the Pill. The Paradoxes of the Sexual Revolution*, San Francisco, 2012.

¹¹ Albert Mohler, *We Cannot Be Silent. Speaking Truth to a Culture Redefining Sex, Marriage and the very Meaning of Right and Wrong*, Nashville, 2015, p. 58.

¹² Kuby, *Die globale sexuelle Revolution*, p. 25. Additionally, people are subjected to new powers that dictate to us what is good for us. When the Christian norms associated with human sexuality disappear, new norms will be put in place. Absolute, individual self-determination doesn't really exist in our society. In our society, for example, it has become normative that you can express your personal sexual impulses together. That is considered to be a basic need, like eating and drinking. Those needs must be satisfied. Up pops the market to provide sexual satisfaction, and to stimulate it even more. That explains the advent of adulterous websites such as Second Love and the enormous market of pornography, with all the grief that it entails in relationships. See: Kuby, *Die globale sexuelle Revolution*, p. 202-222.

¹³ Kuby, *Die globale sexuelle Revolution*, p. 187.

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Women's Fellowship Day – Friday, April 12, 2019 Langley Canadian Reformed Church

What comes to mind when you read the words “Christian Mentorship”? One woman in particular has a special place in my heart because of her unswerving ability to be that encouraging influence in my life. When I would see her on Sundays, she would mention the sermon in whatever conversation we were having, and I would walk away feeling uplifted and loved. She brought me meals when I was anxious, visited when babies were born, and brought flowers when I had surgery. Christian Mentorship was the topic of our Fellowship Day this year, and the presenter was Diana Kobes.

The day began with coffee in the foyer and, as she entered the doors, one lady declared “It is louder than a hen house in here!!” She should know – being married to a chicken farmer and all. After a good laugh, I paused to take it all in and I could see lots of smiles, hugs, and laughter being shared. Is that not a beautiful scene to behold *before* we even heard the inspiring speech? Mentorship was already happening in an entirely natural way.

We started our day by being welcomed by Deanna Van Dyke and Shelley Sikma. They appeared to be confused about the order of the day and to help them along the women from Women's Bible Study flash mobbed them with the song “We've Been Working on League Day!” (to the tune of “I've Been Working on the Railroad”), joyfully accompanied by Joy Van Vliet.

Diana Kobes as a speaker was succinct, precise, and orderly but not without feeling. She shared a personal story of when a Christian co-worker asked to pray for her and then proceeded to pray for her right there in the lab where they worked. At first she was taken aback, unused to such demonstration of faith, but afterwards felt calm and buoyed up by the Spirit for the rest of the day. Perhaps it was in this moment that she was directed in the importance of praying with and for each other while mentoring.



Diana Kobes (l) and Annette deBoer (r) answering questions

Diana started with a basic definition of *mentorship* as: a relationship where a more experienced person helps to guide a less experienced person. The more experienced person can be older or younger, but the key is that they have an area of expertise that the other person can use. Some basics of mentorship are that it be both directional and relational. Interestingly, there is no mention of mentors in the Bible, however, when we read Titus 2:3-5, we are guided in our relationships within the church and how to be good examples to one another.

We then went on to learn about many mentoring relationships in the Bible such as: Jethro to his son-in-law Moses, Naomi to her daughter-in-law Ruth, Cousin Elizabeth to Mary, and Jesus with his disciples. In life, we come across many relationships that include mentors for us: mothers to daughters, grandmothers to granddaughters,



aunts to nieces, friends to friends, teachers to students, and supervisors to employees; the list is endless.

In mentorship, the Holy Spirit will work within you and your communication skills will be honed as you go along. The benefits are that we can impact lives with our gestures, words, and wise counsel. We can safely share ideas and an understanding but it's also a place where we can ask questions without being judged. Confidentiality is a gift that is given in such circumstances. It is something to be treasured, as you were honoured to receive it in confidence.

How does one become a good mentor? Diana pointed the way to Carol Kent's book, *Being a Woman of Influence*, as a good start, but also recommended spending time alone with God as Jesus did. Praying, reading his word, and reflecting on Jesus will give you the oxygen you need to then give life giving oxygen to others too.

We can naturally be mentors in our walk and talk as things come up. Through story telling we can share ex-

periences of God's grace and mercy to us as sinners. We learned more about how sharing Scripture, praying out loud with each other, and giving a gentle touch or a hug can mean so much.

The concept of praying with each other was reiterated in the different break-out groups as well as later again during question period. It seemed to be a real "take away" for the day!! We were then encouraged to "Weep with those that weep" (Rom 12:15) and extend a helping hand when needed. Lastly, we were directed to give unconditional love. We can show this by trying to understand another person and what they are going through, and in this way, we will show Jesus' love and forgiveness.

After breaking off into smaller groups to discuss the topic further, we ended our blissful morning with more pleasure of the epicurean nature, that is: a delicious lunch served by the ladies from Langley. Such a delight!!

When we returned from our break, we were amused with stories by Joanne Liewen about children in church. Did you ever hear such as these? We don't have ushers, we have "hushers" and. . . "Mom, I have a pain in my side, I think I'm going to have a wife!!" As usual, laughter is good medicine and balm to the soul.

Question Period was the last order of the day, with Annette deBoer joining Diana in the hotspot as she had some involvement with mentoring. Many good questions were asked and reflected on and clarified. Mentoring between women can be a huge blessing to all involved, with a distinct beginning and an agreed upon end it can present itself as a timely solution to life's burdens. In this way, we pass on the love of Jesus and his saving work and share our experiences of God's grace in our lives.



In the kitchen the night before, an army of ladies getting the lunch ready for the next day.



The Lord Ascended from the Earth

...he ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty. . .

1. The Lord as - cend - ed from the earth in - to the heaven a - bove,
 from where he does his priest - ly work for us, whom he does love.
 He will re-main there till the end when he will come a - gain
 to judge the liv - ing and the dead from God the Fa - ther's throne.

2. Yet Christ is with us till the end,
 as he has promised us.
 He is both true man and true God,
 and him we worship thus.
 As man he is no longer here,
 but in his deity
 he's never absent from his church,
 and so he'll always be.

3. Our Lord's ascension profits us,
 and makes our lives secure.
 Christ pleads our cause at God's right hand.
 God's grace for us is sure.
 We have our flesh in heaven above
 where we will one day be.
 His Spirit dwells within our hearts
 that we like Christ may be.

4. Christ Jesus our great King and Priest
 is now at God's right hand
 from where he blesses all the church,
 and governs every land.
 He, by his Spirit, pours out gifts
 on us, abundantly,
 and by his power shelters us
 against all enemies.

Text: Heidelberg Catechism, QA 46-51 (Art. 6, Apostles' Creed; vers. George van Popta, 2019)
 Tune: Clement W. Poole, 1875
 For SATB version, please see <http://mostlycanticles.blogspot.com/>

CMD
 PETERSHAM



Clarion Kids

Better Than Others

Romans 14

Sometimes when we are really good at something, we might think that no one else could do it better. We might begin to think that we are better than others. We might even think that God loves us more than someone else because of something we did. But we should never think that we are better than others. God sent Jesus to die on the cross for the sins of everyone who believes in him. That means God doesn't see any one of us as better than anyone else. None of us deserves the grace that God has given us in sending his son. God loves all of his children, so we should always show love to everyone as well.

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



Word Search

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

Believe	Better	Cross
Everyone	Grace	Love
Others	Romans	Son

Double Puzzle

Unscramble the clues to solve the final word.

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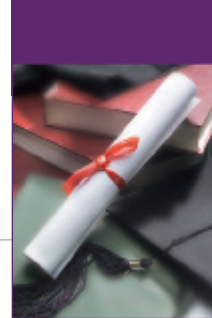
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by Emily Nijenhuis



*Jordan is married to
 Amanda, they have
 four children, and they
 attend Providence United
 Reformed Church in
 Strathroy, ON*

Metaphor as Education

Part 2: Metaphor in Education

The following article discusses the use of Metaphor in Education. It assumes that relational understanding is beneficial, if not essential, to learning as discussed in the previous article Education is Relational. The articles following this one will discuss Technology and Relationships and Metaphor and Empathy.

I know a lab instructor from a university who says that even at the university level of education, professors are essentially still teaching students how to read. Thirteen years of education and our children are still not literate?

Language is confusing. Discourse is difficult. Older generations shake their heads at the nearly incoherent emails, at the “paragraphs” strung together filled with short forms and devoid of punctuation, sent by younger generations. Younger generations roll their eyes as their parents chicken-peck out texts. When it comes to phones, they’re all thumbs.

At a recent English teachers’ conference I attended, a large emphasis was placed on people learning to read and write within and for a particular “discourse community.” Each group has its own lingo or jargon that those within understand and those without find confusing. It seems that the “Tower of Babel effect” not only places duct tape over the mouths of those using different languages, but also tries to glue shut the mouths of those speaking the same language. Is Math really done in English? And what about university level Science courses? What about university English courses for that matter? Are we still speaking the same language? The backdrop of communication is multi-faceted and has many designs; this means that communication is difficult at all levels.

Comparative language

My previous article talked about how important it is to place learning in a relational context. This is also true

in the classroom. So how do we use that idea in the classroom? While communication can be difficult, there are skills which provide us with the ability to relate to and understand new or unfamiliar situations. One such skill that provides a scaffold for learning is using comparative language. Despite large differences between the types of courses our students take, learning is fostered by relating new information to concepts that are previously established or easier to understand.

Comparative language is formally defined in our English language courses. Students are taught that a *simile* is a comparison using the terms “like” or “as.” For example, “the apple bounced like a ball;” or, more interestingly: “his face was earthy and boulder-like, weather cracked, with a nose like a potato growing from it.” As we continue in our English courses, we add new kinds of comparison such as personification, juxtaposition, character foils, and so on. I am convinced that students who have a good grasp on comparative language, or metaphor, can understand and appreciate poetry, can write university level papers, and can make helpful and interesting connections both to other books and also to life.

Consider how, in order to understand science, we use models. Models are our metaphors for learning about concepts or systems. Biology, for instance, is full of models: arteries and veins are a transportation system, mitochondria are power plants, the eye is a camera, and so on. Or, take the history of atomic theory: small particles are replaced with raisin buns, which in turn are replaced with orbital models, which eventually are replaced with electron clouds. In each case we say this is what the body is like or this is what the atom compares to.

In Math our comparisons are most often examples. Often a teacher will give the most abstract and general form of a rule (for instance, subtracting rational numbers in the

form $\frac{m}{n} - \frac{p}{n} = \frac{m-p}{n}$), and then proceed to work through a more specific and more concrete example (suppose a pie originally cut into 8 pieces is already missing two slices, whereupon a hungry teacher comes and eats four more slices; how much is left? In numerical form $\frac{6}{8} - \frac{4}{8} = \frac{6-4}{8} = \frac{2}{8}$). After this, the student is challenged to complete a question that involves the same process but with different numbers. We are saying that this new question is *like* the previous question and is also *like* the general rule.

In Biblical Studies we often look at types. We say that Israel's activity in the book of Judges is an example of our own thought and actions. We say that Melchizedek is a type of Christ; that David foreshadows Christ; that the daily sacrifices point us to Christ's one sacrifice. We don't say that these things *are* Christ but are *like* Christ. And we say that Jesus is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Each of these is a metaphor for who Jesus is. We talk about going through storms when explaining our own struggles. Then we respond with "my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge" (Ps 18:2). The Bible is full of comparative language.

Fostering an environment of growth

Education is full of metaphor. And for good reason: if understanding is a child, then metaphor is the milk and the meat. If we foster metaphorical thinking, we foster an environment of growth. To borrow an example (Kierkegaard n.d.): suppose I say, "Consider the fact that God sent his Son to die for us." Actually stop and do this. Now spend a moment stepping into the shoes of Abraham. That is, imagine you are Abraham. Imagine that you are taking your son to Mount Moriah. You are hiking up that hill. And he is asking you where the sacrifice is. And he is looking at you when you lift him onto the altar. Imagine it is your son's face staring up at you. Could you reach for the knife and raise it? But

that is what God has done for our sake. The metaphor forces us to stop and consider rather than making hasty assertions or judgements. We grow when our understanding is broadened and deepened. The metaphor enables this. Metaphor is the language of understanding.

As a teacher, I often hear students and parents ask, "How is this (math question, English course, etc.) going to help me?" Education helps students to be able to relate to a broad variety of subjects and tasks. This is important for Kingdom citizens. It is healthy to be able to relate to, understand, and participate in things we may not be naturally interested in, such as math, politics, or Bible study. But it also provides the foundation for being able to make connections, in many other fields of study, on our own. Educators might not teach what so called "real life" is, but they can, should, and do teach what it is like.

In school we capitalize on using relational understanding, though perhaps without thinking about it in such a formalized way. Our comparisons, our models, and our metaphors are devices used in teaching that seem to have just floated to the surface; they are life jackets which save in a sea of information.

If learning, as my first article suggests, is relational, then in teaching metaphors must be our language. Comparisons create a context, an atmosphere, an environment that encourages connection and understanding. We stimulate learning when we find ways to have students relate to their instruction.

The ability to relate concepts and compare ideas is helpful especially in the classroom. But this leaves room for a couple of questions. We spend a lot of time using technology. So, what does technology have to do with metaphor and education? And are there any other benefits or is there any other basis for encouraging the use of metaphor in education? **C**



Press Release of the Tri-annual Meeting of the Foundation for Superannuation

The meeting was held in the Edmonton Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church on Saturday, May 18, 2019, following the first four days of Synod Edmonton Immanuel.

The meeting, which started at 9:00 AM, was opened by the chairman, Rev. J. Visscher, who read Psalm 146, led in prayer, after which the meeting was asked to sing Psalm 146, stanzas 1 and 3.

All those present were welcomed to the meeting.

A review of the credentials indicated that twenty-eight member churches and the Seminary were represented at the meeting.

Secretary br. C. Baarda was given an opportunity to present his report, which was an overview of the activities of the Foundation since the last tri-annual meeting held in Dunnville, Ontario, in May 2016. Since that last meeting three years ago, the Lord took to himself two of our retired ministers, the Reverend J. Mulder and Professor J. deJong. Two widows were also taken away; Mrs. D. deJong and Mrs. W. Faber, the widow of the first principal of the Seminary.

Since the Dunnville meeting, four ministers have retired. They were Rev. G. van Popta, Rev. H. Versteeg, Rev. J. van Popta, and Rev. R. Aasman.

Two churches joined the Foundation in the period; Neerlandia South was instituted on May 15, 2016 and Nooksack Valley, in the State of Washington, was instituted on July 8, 2018.

Treasurer br. S. Vandermolen brought the meeting up to date on the financial position of the Foundation. The report indicated that the assets of the Foundation increased by \$270,000 over the three year period since the last tri-annual meeting. The increase in assessments that the churches pay is 2.3% for the current year. If unforeseen events occur, the Foundation board can adjust the increase on an annual basis. The Board of the Foundation consists of the Cloverdale and Langley church councils.

The revised constitution and bylaws document had been sent to all the member churches for comment late in

2017, and the final document was sent to the churches in February 2019. The governing document was adopted after some additional changes were made and the final version will be sent to the member churches later this year. An important change is that the name "Foundation for Superannuation" will now be "Ministerial Retirement Assistance Fund of the Canadian Reformed Churches," hereafter referred to as "the Fund."

The tri-annual meetings of the Ministerial Retirement Assistance Fund will be discontinued in favour of electronic annual meetings to be held in April of each year. It has at times been difficult to have enough member churches represented at the tri-annual meetings, so church councils will be urged to appoint one person who is able to familiarize himself with the work of the Fund and who can then represent the church at the annual meeting of the Fund.

In response to several letters that asked for changes to how the Fund deals with member churches whose ministers leave their congregations before retirement age without receiving a call from another church, the meeting appointed a committee to study the potential changes needed and recommend a satisfactory way of dealing with the last church such a minister served so that justice is done to both the minister and the church where he last served.

To reiterate, the Fund pays member churches and the seminary who are responsible for an emeritus minister/professor, or widow, an amount that is set each year based on the rate of inflation. Churches are free to supplement the amount they receive from the Fund, if they consider that it is needed.

Prior to the end of the meeting br. H. Moes thanked Rev. Visscher and br. Baarda, both of whom will be retiring later this year, for their service to the Fund.

After the usual question period, Rev. Visscher thanked everyone who attended the meeting and asked br. C. Baarda to close in prayer.

Submitted by C. Baarda, Secretary 