



# Clarion

*183* "SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE," OR HATE SPEECH? *193* UPDATE FROM CRTS

*197* PASTOR DATHAN PLEITER'S ORDINATION AND WELCOME

# what's inside

As the LORD brings us out of winter into spring, new energy fills the air. That is reflected in this issue as we present a wide array of topics and activities such as the new model for mission work undertaken by churches in BC for mission in Mexico; an update on seminary life at CRTS; a peek into the inner-workings of the Women's Savings Action which helps to fund the vital library at CRTS; a podcast review related to the business world; a book summary that focuses on the delicate but critical relationship between congregation and pastor; and the happy recounting of the ordination of Elm Creek's new pastor (congratulations to you in southern Manitoba!).

And still, there's more! Jim Witteveen's editorial gets us thinking about the challenges we face in Canada (and the West generally) with our gospel conversations. How can we speak the truth in love in a world that increasingly regards that truth as hateful? John Smith concludes his three-part series on the antithesis, reflecting on how it should affect the preaching. Eric Kampen uses the column Churches Outside the PARC to review the goings-on in the Christian Reformed Church, leaving readers to draw lessons for themselves even as we pray for churches everywhere. For those interested in better understanding the various responses to Naziism in the Netherlands in WWII, Wes Bredenhof has a book to recommend.

We also bring you our usual columns and press releases and if you keep a sharp eye you'll find a musical "Easter egg" to enjoy as well. May the changing of the seasons remind us of how the LORD never changes (see Treasures, New & Old) and that great is his faithfulness.

*Peter Holtvlüwer*

On our cover: Pastor Dathan Pleiter's Ordination and Welcome

Photo Credit: Lianne T Photography (Lianne Krogstad)

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## Clarion

A trustworthy and engaging magazine, widely spread and read in Canadian Reformed households and beyond.

To equip God's people for his glory, in faithfulness to Scripture, as summarized in the Reformed confessions, Clarion adheres to the following core values:

**C**onfessionally Reformed  
**L**oving in manner  
**A**ttuned to current issues  
**R**eadable and Reliable  
**I**n Submission to Scripture  
**O**pen to constructive criticism  
**N**urturing Christian living

# “SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE,” OR HATE SPEECH?

Recently a private Member’s bill was introduced in Canada’s parliament that seeks to change our country’s “hate speech” legislation by removing the religious exemption provision found in Section 319 of the Criminal Code of Canada. In this section of the Criminal Code, we read that “no person shall be convicted of an offence under subsection 2 (which deals with “public incitement of hatred,” “wilful promotion of hatred,” and “wilful promotion of antisemitism”) “if, in good faith, they expressed or attempted to establish by an argument an opinion on a religious subject or an opinion based on a belief in a religious text.”

## EXPANDING DEFINITION

Canada’s hate speech law is already vaguely written, based in erroneous premises, and subject to much abuse by those who wish to silence dissenting voices. Now the leader of the Bloc Québécois, Yves-François Blanchet, has introduced Bill C-367, which seeks to eliminate this religious exemption as a defence against “wilful promotion of hatred or antisemitism.”

While this is a private Member’s bill, and it is very rare for such a bill to pass through Parliament, there is still much cause for concern in the mere fact that such a bill is being proposed and seriously considered by our federal representatives. Additionally, the response of Canadian citizens to this proposal shows that the winds of public opinion have strongly shifted, with the majority of Canadians expressing support for this proposed change. It seems that freedom of expression, and especially freedom of religious expression, has fallen out of favour with the majority of Canadians, and research shows that 66% of Canadians support Blanchet’s bill.

It could be argued that as Christians we have nothing to worry about when we consider “hate speech” legislation of this type, or the removal of any religious qualification to the law. After all, Scripture says that we are to love our enemies, that we are not to harbour hatred in our hearts, and that we are to use our speech to build people up, and not to tear down. The apostle Paul teaches that we must always let our speech be gracious, seasoned with

salt, so that we might know how we ought to answer each person (Col 4:6), so “hate speech” should have no place in our private or public discourse.

## DON’T SHRINK BACK

It is true that Scripture is clear when it comes to the power of the tongue, and the way in which we are called to communicate. However, Canada’s hate speech laws, even as they currently exist without this amendment, can already be interpreted and applied to make certain kinds of Christian speech worthy of prosecution. This amendment only serves to make it more clear that we are swimming against the cultural tide.

So, what does this mean for the church of Jesus Christ? First of all, we must be prepared. We must have our eyes open to the ways in which our society is changing, and the increasing opposition to the truth (and to the One who described himself as the Truth) that is in evidence in the public square. We must be ready to face the challenges that may lie ahead and continue to proclaim the message of the Kingdom with boldness, following in the footsteps of our forefathers in the faith who did not shrink back from proclaiming the truth, “in season and out of season” (2 Tim 4:2).

And secondly, we must redouble our efforts to reach out in our communities, and proclaim the uncompromising message of the truth to those who are lost in confusion, deceived by the “tolerant” spirit of the age, and on the road to destruction. This is the glorious message that has been entrusted to us. This is the privilege that God has given to us. The good news of Jesus Christ may be on its way to being classified as “hate speech,” but its proclamation is the ultimate expression of love for our neighbour. 



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# THE LORD IS ALWAYS THE SAME

*They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end*

PSALM 102:26, 27

Change is a constant part of the human condition. We are born as infants and grow up into children, teenagers, and then adults. As we grow up, we are constantly developing and changing. And then the time comes when we may get sick or suffer from various frailties and weaknesses as we get older. Eventually the time comes when our earthly tent breaks down completely and we pass away and are buried.

All of creation, heaven and earth, will perish and wear out like a garment. Just like a pair of pants wears out and starts to fray so that eventually you need to get rid of them, so creation as well will wear out and be discarded and destroyed. Everything in this world undergoes the process of breaking down and wearing out. All of man's technology and medical research cannot prevent this process from happening. And all the environmental activism in the world cannot prevent the heavens and the earth from breaking down and wearing out like a garment. There is nothing in creation that lasts forever.

But the LORD will always remain, and he stays the same! The psalmist writes in verse 12 that the LORD is enthroned forever and is remembered throughout the generations. His name is Yahweh, "I am who I am." The God who never changes remains faithful to his covenant promises forever.

The psalmist cries out to him for deliverance. He relies upon the LORD's mercy and pity "to set free those who were doomed to die" (v. 20). He sets them free so that they will worship him and declare the name of the LORD in Zion. Their children will dwell secure and be established before the LORD (v. 28).

Verses 25–27 are quoted in Hebrews 1 in connection with the Son of God. We might not have expected this, but the author of Hebrews is explaining how the Son of God is superior to the angels. The Son of God is eternal and is worshipped by the angels.

The eternal Son of God showed the LORD's faithfulness and mercy in its fullest depth and glory by becoming a frail man like us so that he could suffer in our place and set us free from our sins and our sinful nature. He took part in our frailty and weakness

and bore our sins in order to make us share in the amazing blessings of freedom from slavery to sin, reconciliation with God, and life eternal.

When we carefully consider the accomplishments of Jesus Christ on our behalf, then we are amazed and awestruck at the greatness of God's love. Jesus Christ our Saviour, who shares in our human nature, is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8). His work stands secure into all eternity. This means that we may also enjoy an eternal, unchanging relationship with the LORD. Although we will always remain creatures, yet in a very real way we may partake of his everlasting faithfulness because we may look forward to enjoying eternal life.

Heaven and earth will pass away and be recreated by God. We ourselves will also be resurrected from the dead and given new, incorruptible bodies which will never perish or fade away. Then we will receive "a building from God . . . eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor 5:1). 

## FURTHER READING:

1 Corinthians 15, 2 Corinthians 4–5, Hebrews 1

## QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. Discuss the implications of the fact that the heavens and the earth will wear out like a garment.
2. How is the Lord's unchanging nature a comfort to you?
3. How is the exhortation of 1 Corinthians 15:58 connected with the rest of 1 Corinthians 15 and the theme of this meditation?



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# God's Battle Lines:

*The Antithesis in the Preaching of the Gospel (3)*

JOHN SMITH

In the second instalment, we saw how the antithesis can be traced through the Old Testament. In this final article we will see its culmination in Christ and its significance for the New Testament church. We will conclude with some reflections on the importance of the antithesis for preaching, mission, and education.

## CHRIST'S LIFE & DEATH

In the New Testament, the age-old enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent comes to a climax in the life and death of Israel's Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Born under the *Pax Romana* of Caesar Augustus, his mission was nevertheless not to rescue Israel from Rome but sinners from Satan. Many passages could be mentioned, but I'd like to restrict my focus to the authority of his words. It was by quoting Scripture that Christ resisted the temptations of the devil. His preaching was a matter of announcing that the kingdom of God was at hand, of calling the people to repent and believe, and pronouncing woe on the towns that refused. With authority he commanded the evil spirits to come out, and they obeyed. He shared that ministry with his disciples as well, sending them out to the towns of Israel as lambs in the midst of wolves, to preach and to heal, and to shake the dust from their feet if people refused to receive them. When the seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons

are subject to us in your name," he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:17-20).

He spoke with authority and won the people's admiration, but he called for more: radical faith and costly discipleship. His preaching ministry cut to the heart, exposing the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders and the doublemindedness of would-be disciples. His words drew battle lines, and the battle centred on himself: "Who do people say that I am?" Nothing less than Peter's confession would do, but few came to that confession. The people were divided about him (John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19), and Christ predicted that the division would only sharpen: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and

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## *His words drew battle lines, and the battle centred on himself*

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follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matt 10:34–39).

Christ’s preaching ministry drove him to the cross. The zoom lens of the Gospels focuses our attention on his last days, when Satan entered Judas’s heart, and he betrayed Jesus to the chief priests; his disciples forsook him; the Sanhedrin condemned him; Herod and Pilate became friends over him; the Roman governor condemned him; Gentile soldiers mocked and crucified him; the women were helpless to support him; God himself forsook him. But he remained obedient to death, and by his self-sacrificial love he paid the penalty for sin and broke the power of death. And therefore, “God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it” (Acts 2:24).

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION**

It is impossible to overstate the significance of Christ’s resurrection from the dead. First, it authorizes Christ to sit on the throne of David at God’s right hand, from where he pours out his Spirit and wields all authority in heaven and on earth. Second, it makes the gospel the authoritative proclamation of the victory of Jesus Christ and propels the apostolic commission to make disciples of all nations.<sup>1</sup> Third, it strips Satan of his access to heaven as “accuser of the brethren” (Rev 12:10), and it gives the saints access to God through the mediation of Christ and the intercession of the Holy Spirit. Fourth, it lays upon all believers the obligation to resist the devil, to put to death all that belongs to the sinful nature, and to live more and more out of the new life that they have in Christ, submitting to his kingship in all areas of their lives.<sup>2</sup> Fifth, it gives the church great assurance of the return of Christ, the complete defeat of Satan, the final resurrection, and the gift of eternal life.

### **A SOBER HOPE**

All of this gives great reason for hope, and yet it is a hope that remains sober. Benne Holwerda put it this way, “The triumph of Christ’s ascension is indeed a step forward; the accuser is thrown out of heaven, but this also makes the life of the church more

difficult: the devil has great wrath, knowing that his time is short.”<sup>3</sup> Our Saviour already told his disciples: “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved” (Matt 24:9–13). And the apostle Paul warned Timothy to “understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people” (2 Tim 3:1–5). In Revelation we read that “the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 12:17). And so, that ancient enmity of Genesis 3:15 will continue until Christ returns. And yet the certainty of victory remains, as Paul wrote to the saints in Rome: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Rom 16:20).

### **ANTITHESIS IN THE PREACHING**

To answer the second question of this series: yes, the antithesis is indeed a theme that runs through the Scriptures. It can be *identified* where God’s Word draws battle lines between his people and mortal enemies that threaten their very existence, and it can be *traced* in a redemptive-historical manner through the Old Testament to its fulfilment in Christ’s death and resurrection and its final outcome on the last day. As such, it is a significant theme for the preaching of the gospel. That brings me, briefly, to our third question: What place should the antithesis have in the preaching of the gospel?

Here I would like to offer five reflections. First, as our redemptive-historical study has confirmed, the antithesis is not merely an opposition of irreconcilable ideas but it is a hostility between parties at war. It is not a static category, a fixed characteristic of the fallen world, but a dynamic and progressive theme in the history of revelation. Therefore, it is not yet the sign of a good preacher that

<sup>1</sup> In that regard, the occurrence (twice) of the word “hostility” in Ephesians 2:14–16 is worthy of further study. If Paul there alludes to Genesis 3:15, then the reference is not merely to the religio-cultural hostility between Jews and Gentiles but to the ancient hostility between the seed of the woman (Israel) and the seed of the serpent (the Gentiles), overcome in Christ’s death on the cross. See also Colossians 1:21, 22.

<sup>2</sup> See also Lord’s Day 52, which speaks of three “sworn enemies—the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh.” Note also the Scripture texts footnoted there.

<sup>3</sup> Van Bekkum, “Het begin van een eigen weg,” 198, citing Holwerda, *Oudtestamentische Voordrachten*, 1.194; translation mine.

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## *Missional preaching is antithetical*

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he regularly sprinkles the word “antithesis” in his preaching, but rather that he wrestles with his Scripture passage in its redemptive-historical context and does justice to both the continuities and the discontinuities of this theme. Holwerda gives us an example from the Old Testament command to destroy the Canaanites. He writes, “The New Testament church has no longer been assigned a particular land in which to live a separate life until Christ has come; her task rather is that of missionary expansion, and the command is to preach to all peoples. God has not commanded the extermination of a single people. Yet in this command there is an instruction, also for the New Testament church, to keep itself unstained from the world and so to keep the witness of Jesus Christ pure; also there is an instruction never to adopt heathen cultural practices in a more or less christianized form. In that regard, God still desires the radical removal of all synthesis.”<sup>4</sup> I find it striking that Holwerda mentions the missional task of the church here, and that brings me to my second reflection.

I mentioned in the first article that Abraham Kuyper in his lecture on religion said very little about the preaching of the gospel and nothing at all about mission. I wrote there that this was a significant omission, given Kuyper’s emphasis on the antithesis, and that Schilder, by contrast, stated that “the first task of the church will always be the proclamation of that centuries-old antithesis.”<sup>5</sup> Here I would like to clarify that we should not seek a choice between being *either* more antithetical *or* more missional in our preaching. Rather, missional preaching *is* antithetical, because the gospel draws battle lines, it holds out Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation, it asserts the rights of his kingship, and it demands that people repent and believe. Such preaching will not leave people untouched but will have a twofold outcome: obedient faith or obstinate unbelief. As in Genesis 3:15, so still today, it is the Word of God that *draws* the battle lines.

Third, I am not arguing that antithetical preaching should be a Canadian Reformed distinctive, but rather, with Klaas Schilder,

that it is the *ecumenical* task of the church.<sup>6</sup> Of course, when Schilder addressed the question, “What is your ecumenical task?” he was speaking to young women who would not become preachers of the gospel. To them Schilder said, “Your first ecumenical task is witnessing.” “If witnessing . . . remains the quiet, level-headed passing on of the content of Scripture as we confess it, then it represents the beginning of all Christian efforts in the ecumenical sphere.”<sup>7</sup>

Fourth, the theme of the antithesis has lessons for the preacher’s character. The *need* for antithetical preaching does not yet imply that the *tone* of the preaching should be antagonistic or hostile or dismissive. Here preachers need to remember that the battle of Genesis 3:15 was won by Christ’s self-sacrificial love, and that they need to reflect and to model that love.<sup>8</sup> Here I think also of the generous spirit that Jesus modelled for his disciple John. When John said, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us,” Jesus replied, “Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you” (Luke 9:49, 50).

Finally, I venture a bit hesitantly into the area of Christian education. After all, if the preaching of the church should be antithetical, then surely the instruction in the home and the school should be as well. And indeed, one of the four hallmarks of our Christian schools is that they are antithetical.<sup>9</sup> Should they also be missional? To be sure, it is not the task of our schools to train missionaries, nor is it their goal to send students into the world two by two. But if, as we’ve seen, the biblical theme of the antithesis leads to the Great Commission, then our school teachers should also reflect on the missional implications of the antithesis, if only to ensure that our students are not taught to *withdraw* from the world but are equipped to *engage* it with the message of the sovereignty of Christ.<sup>10</sup> 



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<sup>4</sup> Van Bekkum, “Het begin van een eigen weg,” 197–198, citing Holwerda, *Oudtestamentische Voordrachten*, 2.272, 3.173; translation mine.

<sup>5</sup> K. Schilder, “Your Ecumenical Task,” Appendix 3 in Rudolf van Reest, *Schilder’s Struggle for the Unity of the Church* (Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 1990) 451.

<sup>6</sup> If there’s anything that’s distinctive here, it’s the redemptive-historical approach to the preaching.

<sup>7</sup> Schilder, “Your Ecumenical Task,” 453, 454.

<sup>8</sup> See also Luke 6:27–36.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., “Basic Training: Reformed Education Recognizes the Antithesis,” *The Link: Newsletter of the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies*, 8.2 (June 2023), 1–2. The other three hallmarks are: covenantal, confessional, and unity of purpose between church, home, and school.

<sup>10</sup> On this point, see also A. C. Breen, *Teaching for Real* (*Reformed Guardian*, New Series 22; Armadale: Pro Ecclesia, 2006), 91–113.

# THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CANRC'S *Mission in Mexico*

KARLO JANSSEN

In a recent series, Dr. Arjan de Visser described the mission organization of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), of the Canadian Reformed Church (CanRC), and advocated a form of cooperation within the CanRC for mission abroad via general synod. In the second article he noted that with respect to CanRC projects, the organizational structure for Mission in Mexico is an exception. He hoped I would have the time to write on that: I did and here is the article.

## BACKGROUND

When I was installed in the Abbotsford CanRC in 2009, the church participated as a supporting church in the work in Brazil, supervised by Surrey-Maranatha. Abbotsford, though, was dissatisfied with the level of its involvement. With more than 500 members, it had plenty of financial and human resources. There was, however,

no opportunity for more direct involvement in the work in Brazil; Abbotsford was limited to “paying and praying.”

In 2008, Langley had done some investigation with respect to opening a mission field in Mexico, as it had two families living there. A mission project was deemed viable, but Langley, given its commitments to Mission Brazil and Asia Mission, could not take it on. Abbotsford indicated a readiness to investigate taking this project on and Langley passed it on.

Since one of the families in Mexico also had close ties with Vernon, it became a project of Abbotsford and Vernon together.

## THREE CONCERNS

As Abbotsford and Vernon set out to create the new project, they decided to address their various concerns with how other mission projects were structured.

A first concern was that churches might spread themselves too thin if they were involved in several foreign mission projects. The prevailing thought was that, rather than have multiple churches support and supervise multiple foreign mission fields, each group should just have one. If there are eight churches and two projects, four churches should do one and four churches do the other, rather than eight churches doing both. Opening the field in Mexico should mean churches directly involved in the work withdraw financial support from other projects.

A survey was done in 2014 among the CanRC to see what the average contribution to foreign mission projects per communicant members was. At the time it was around \$200 per communicant member per year. Abbotsford and Vernon determined that, between the two of them, there would be enough financial resources to fund the new project. Abbotsford and Vernon thus gave notice to other projects they were involved in that their support would end in three years.

A second concern was that the councils of churches cooperating in the endeavour often did not have a voice in the running of the project. “Pay and pray” should not be the only option. I was aware other options existed as I had studied and reviewed the governance structures of all the foreign mission projects by the GKv when serving there as minister. The way to maximize church involvement would be to use ecclesiastical assemblies or a similar format.

A third concern related to liability. The drug industry is alive and well in the field that was being explored, the city Aguascalientes where Death is revered as a saint. Some investigation of the structure of CanRC mission projects made clear that, given the unincorporated status of most of our churches and the fact that mission boards functioned directly under local church oversight, liability for mission projects likely lies with the individual members of the sending church. A liability issue in the mission field could become the responsibility of “the person in the pew.”

## INCORPORATION

A team of three, a church polity specialist, a lawyer, and a CPA, put their heads together and with an investment of about \$10,000 produced articles of incorporation, by-laws, regulations, and policies for Mission in Mexico. The investment was made also with a view to creating a template that would allow other CanRCs to cooperate in their own mission project together.

As there had been talk of involving an Alberta church in the mission project, it was decided to incorporate the project under federal rather than provincial law. The Mission in Mexico

Association is incorporated as a Canada Not For Profit. As a legal entity, liability rests with this incorporated body.

The members of this association are the individual cooperating churches. Initially there were two members: Abbotsford and Vernon. The formation of Pathway church out of Abbotsford meant a reduction in communicant members. In response to a request from the project for more support, Willoughby Heights became a supporting church in 2022 and a cooperating church in 2023. Currently the association consists of three members.

## STRUCTURE

The mission organization in Canada consists of three units: the Cooperating Churches in Meeting, the Sending Church(es), and the Mission Board.

The Cooperating Churches in Meeting, in short: CCiM (pronounced: see-kim), functions much like a classis. The Mission Board functions as a standing committee of the CCiM to facilitate the work. A sending church executes CCiM decisions and has whatever role the Church Order assigns to a local church with respect to an individual worker.

This structure is similar to the one used by the CanRC with respect to the Seminary. The Mission Board is like the Board of Governors, the sending church is like the church to which a professor is connected as minister, and CCiM is like a general synod. Thus, for example, the structure for calling a missionary is similar to that for calling someone to serve as professor, if the minister to be called is serving in a church that is not part of the CanRC federation (most recently, Dr. R. Bedenhof).

A CCiM is held every six months, with an agenda sent to the councils of cooperating churches in advance. The constitution of the CCiM is overseen by the chair and secretary of the Mission Board. Once the executive of CCiM is in place, a CCiM works its way through its agenda. As with a classis, once CCiM is over, the executive ceases to exist. Mission Board members are present at a CCiM but, unless delegated as an office bearer, have no vote.

Since the number of cooperating churches would never be huge, a formula was created to ensure enough people at a CCiM. If there are two cooperating churches, all the office bearers in both churches are delegated and quorum is set at the total of the quorums of the individual church councils. If there are three cooperating churches, at least half the office bearers in each church are delegated. When there are four or more cooperating churches, each church will delegate four office bearers. This way a CCiM will always consist of at least ten men.

CCiM decisions are taken as at a classis: every delegate has a vote. The only exception is where the articles of incorporation and by-laws require a vote by the association members, in that case each church has one vote.

Following a CCiM, its decisions are to be ratified by the councils of the cooperating churches. That is a process similar to the Barrier Act commonly practised by Presbyterian churches, and also by the URCNA with respect to certain types of synod decisions. Decisions only take effect once a majority of the cooperating churches have approved them.

The Mission Board consists of at least three and at most twelve members. Mindful that the Board depends on human resources within the cooperating churches, its composition is determined by CCiM according to the size of the cooperating churches. Currently the Board consists of nine members: four from Abbotsford, three from Vernon, and two from Willoughby Heights.

A sending church has oversight over a mission worker. The intention is that missionaries and mission workers ecclesiastically fall under the oversight of the cooperating churches in turn. The project assumes at least two workers in the field. The current worker, br. Scott Bredenhof, is sent out by Abbotsford. The next worker is to be sent out by Vernon. If a church feels ill-equipped for its task, it can request release from its duty.

For their labours, the mission workers are answerable to the CCiM via the Mission Board. This is similar to professors at CRTS being answerable to a general synod via the Board of Governors.

Becoming a cooperating church implies taking on responsibilities. Churches can also choose to be a supporting church, in which case they “pay and pray” as they deem appropriate. Supporting churches commit to financial support of a certain amount for a

certain period. The following churches are supporting churches in 2024: Chilliwack, Devon, Langley, Sardis, and Taber.

## IN OPERATION

Thus far the structure has worked well. One challenge has been new people transitioning into roles in the project or in councils. If one is not aware of the background to the organizational structure, there is a tendency to lapse into the more common ways of doing things. For example, church councils tend to forget that the Mission Board is directly answerable to CCiM, not to individual councils.

The main advantages of this structure are that it encourages maximum involvement of cooperating churches in a project, protects church members with a view to liability, and structures a project in a way that is church politically responsible and equitable where financial and human resources are concerned.

Finally, this structure would sync well with the creation of a synod-appointed committee to serve the churches with advice, information, and expertise in matters related to foreign mission. The CRMA, of which Mission in Mexico was a founding member, could serve in this capacity. Incorporating the CRMA into our church structures as a general synod appointed committee, as Dr. De Visser advocates, would create more accountability and thus is a better way to go. 



**Karlo Janssen**

Minister

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## THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED

# Church

ERIC KAMPEN

In the introductory article for this column, I used the image of families picnicking in a park as an analogy of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches who are members of NAPARC, the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council. The focus of this column is on churches outside the PARC. We begin by paying attention to the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRC).

### HISTORICAL CONNECTION

There is a good reason for starting with the CRC. First, there is a close historical connection with the CRC. Like the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), the CRC traces its roots back to the Secession of 1834 in the Netherlands. In the late 1840s, a significant number of members from the seceded churches immigrated to western Michigan and Iowa, which is the beginning of the

CRC. Their faith sustained them in their rough pioneer experience. Some decades later, Dutch immigrants who had experienced the Doleantie of 1886 and the Union of 1892 joined them.

Before the second World War, most immigrants from Reformed churches would naturally join the CRC; however, the church division in the Netherlands in 1944, known as the Liberation, changed that. Those who had experienced the Liberation felt that they could not in good conscience join the CRC. While the CRC claimed to be non-judgmental about the division that had taken place in the Netherlands, they sided with the so-called Synodical Churches. The acts of the general synods of the CanRCs in the 1960s and 1970s show that there were efforts to work through points of dispute. There were two lengthy appeals to the CRC. The second appeal can be found as an appendix in the Acts of GS Coaldale, 1977. That appeal warned the CRC about the negative

influence of continued contact with the Synodical Churches in the Netherlands, which was following a new hermeneutic, that is, a new way of reading the Bible which undermined its authority in the lives of the church.

The separation from the CRC was painful, considering the shared history and shared confessions. The break was felt in many families. No judgments were ever made about anyone's eternal salvation. It was about faithfulness to God's Word.

The warning voice of the second appeal about the new hermeneutic proved to be prophetic. Its influence in the CRC became evident in creeping acceptance of evolutionary theories and the opening of the offices in the church to women. This drifting away from humble submission to the Word of God led to a secession, with those wishing to remain faithful to God's Word federating in 1996 under the name of the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA). Currently, CanRCs have a good and growing relationship with the URCNA.

## REMOVED FROM THE PARC

Second, and this has to do with NAPARC, the CRC was one of the five founding member churches of NAPARC but now is no longer in the PARC. The reason for this is the same as what led to the formation of the URCNA. The other members of NAPARC concluded that especially the issue of opening the offices to women was reason to remove the CRC from membership. This proved to be a lengthy process. It was started in 1997 and was completed in 2002. Perusing the minutes of NAPARC, it is clear that this was a painful process.

## CHURCH IN FREE FALL

If one goes by the statistics, the CRC has been in a free fall since the departure of many that led to the formation of the URCNA. While about 20,000 members formed the basis for the URCNA, that is only a fraction of total membership loss since the peak year which was 1992. In that year, membership stood at 316,415. In 2023, membership stood at 195,704. This is a total decrease of 38% in just over twenty years. It is interesting to note that while membership has decreased significantly, the number of churches

has seen a modest increase for in 2024 there are about thirty more churches than there were in 1992.

## CURRENT ISSUES

A major issue that has been playing itself out in the CRC pertains to questions about human sexuality. The CRC Synod of 2022 dealt with a major report about this issue. The report concluded that homosexual sex was a practice that contravened the definition of unchastity. Synod 2023 dealt with many overtures that requested a delay of the implementation of the decision of the Human Sexuality Report as well as overtures to remove "homosexual sex" from the list of practices that contravened the definition of unchastity. The synod also upheld a decision that those in same sex marriages should not be allowed to serve in office and called upon one church to remove someone who was in a same sex relationship from office. The Acts of Synod 2023 make it clear that this was a very contentious point. It appears that this matter is not settled and has the potential to cause further division in the churches.

## PRAYER

The CRC may be outside the PARC, but they are not outside of our interest and, most importantly, not out of God's sight. His Word is still there, convincing and convicting. Rather than evaluate and judge, it is best to finish with the Prayer *For the Church Universal* found in the Common Book of Prayer,

Most gracious God, we humbly beseech thee for thy holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth; in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where any thing is amiss, reform it; where it is right, strengthen and confirm it; where it is in want, furnish it; where it is divided and rent asunder, make it whole again; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* 



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# *Update from* CRTS

JASON VAN VLIET

Here at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, we have experienced the Lord's blessings in many different ways. Please allow me to give you a tour, as it were, through these good gifts from our God.

## RENOVATED FACILITIES

Speaking of tours, we have had the distinct pleasure of leading a good number of seminary tours in the past few months. People from across the country, and some countries abroad, have stopped by to check out what the newly renovated facilities look like. To be sure, they have exceeded our expectations in several different ways.

First, the renovations give us the *space* we need, as well as some room to spare. The refurbished classrooms are well used, but we still have room for increased enrollment. Currently, we have about thirty students, but our building can now accommodate at least

forty-five students and perhaps a few more. It is also so nice to have our chapel room back in use for chapels and sermon sessions. Previously, we were using our chapel for our senior classroom. Everything in our weekly routines flows nicely now.

Second, wow, what a difference *light* makes! By removing some walls, much more natural light is flooding into our lower level. Moreover, even on cloudy days, modern LED lighting keeps our study and fellowship spaces bright and cheery. This also helps brighten everyone's mood, including our students from the southern hemisphere whose internal, biological "season-clock" tells them it should be summer when, in fact, we have winter here in Canada.

Third, our *fellowship* has been blessed by these renovations. Whether for the daily coffee time, or lunches, or impromptu chats, the student lounge sees much more activity than previously. To be



Clockwise from top: Harbour Home visit; Seminary Wives Day; JTerm; Anchor Home visit.

honest, the student lounge used to be a place where people went because that's where the coffee pot and some tables were located. But now it is a place where people also go because it is a pleasant place to be. The added blessing in all this is that students chat more with each other, which is excellent training in the interpersonal and conversational skills that are so beneficial in the ministry.

Fourth, our classrooms are now equipped with *up-to-date technology*. Both on-campus students and online students benefit from the large, clear screens and the ability of the equipment to switch cameras in the room depending on who is speaking and where that person is sitting. At CRTS we prioritize on-campus, in-person education. We use this principle: on campus as much as possible, online as much as necessary. So far that has worked well. At times a student cannot obtain a study permit on time or there are other extenuating circumstances. In these cases, training for

the ministry can continue online without delay. But for the rest, we sing, pray, and learn together in the same physical space. That is so much better, especially for training for the ministry!

It has also been a joy to share our refreshed facilities with larger groups on various special occasions. We have had two visits from groups of Anchor Home residents, with more planned. We also hosted a number of ministers, both local and from other provinces, for a special three-day preaching seminar in our annual two-week January interim semester. In addition, all the wives and girlfriends of seminary students were invited to a special day of seminars and fellowship devoted to topics such as marriage and family life in the ministry. Please take a look at some photos of these events in this issue of *Clarion*.

If all of this has whetted your appetite to see more, you are welcome to stop by, if you live in the area or are visiting in Hamilton.

Alternately, we have put together a slideshow and a short video. Just go to our seminary website, [www.canadianreformedseminary.ca](http://www.canadianreformedseminary.ca), and navigate to the “Partnership in the Gospel” page.

Once more, thank-you to everyone for their support of this renovation. In various ways, it has been a game-changer, as they say. Before leaving this topic, the Finance and Property Committee also plans to bring the upper level fully up to modern standards and the new colour scheme this coming summer, the Lord willing. Due to various factors in the construction process, that work could not be completed at the same time as everything else. If you wish to donate to this project, information can be found on the same webpage as the renovation video.

## FACULTY & STAFF

Faculty and staff have been blessed with sufficient health to complete their work each week. Everyone has enjoyed being back together again and re-establishing good routines that may have slipped by the wayside in the past years due to COVID and the renovations.

In particular, I would like to highlight how well Dr. Reuben Bredenhof, our new Professor of Ministry and Mission, has adjusted to his new role and how thankful we are to have him here. Doing sermon evaluation for two weekly sermon sessions is a lot of work already, in addition to his other courses. But he tackles the work with a cheerful heart and a steady hand. His teaching is well received by the students and he fits in well with the team here at CRTS.

## STUDENTS

As mentioned above, our student body hovers around thirty. This includes twenty-seven students in the MDiv program, studying for ordained ministry. We also have two students in our BTh program, although one had to pause his studies for a semester to recover from an injury. We also have two students doing some part-time studies. Currently we are receiving applications for next year and in due time we will be able to let the churches know what the incoming class looks like.

We are also grateful that all our recent graduates who are eligible for call have now received and accepted calls. It is such a blessing to see these men enter pastoral ministry, the Lord willing, after completing their peremptory exams. We expect seven more graduates this year, all from the MDiv program.

## PUBLICATIONS

This past semester saw the publication of *In Holy Service: Essays on Office, Personal and Ecclesial* by Dr. C. Van Dam. We remain thankful for his active role in writing new books. Professors are also contributing to popular church magazines such as *Clarion* and scholarly journals as well. Work has begun on another book. Between all the other responsibilities, professors need to carve out time to research and write as well. Some of those writing projects are seeing some progress again now that other areas of seminary life are settling down.

## CONNECTION TO THE CHURCHES

Here at CRTS we highly value our supervision by, support from, and connection to the churches. It is truly a blessed relationship. So, in addition to regular news items on our website, Facebook, and Instagram posts, we also send out prayer requests to the churches, as a rule, four times per year. Hopefully, you also recently saw a “Thank-you” postcard with a QR code to the seminary website that was distributed in all the church mailboxes across the federation. A copy was also sent to Australia for distribution there.

Dr. Van Raalte went on a church tour to British Columbia in January of this year. He came back thankful for the rich fellowship and uplifting conversations he could have in various congregations and schools. Finally, discussions are now underway about how we can refresh our public website.

Allow me to end with a short anecdote. Recently a couple stopped by to visit the seminary. Classes were in session at the time, and as I took them on a quick, impromptu tour of our renovated space, they stopped and, for a minute or two, just looked in through the windows of the double doors leading into one of our classrooms. They soaked in the sight: one professor lecturing to about twenty-five students preparing for the ministry of God’s holy gospel.

As we stepped away, they commented: “That is the most beautiful sight we’ve seen all week!” Indeed, and all praise and glory to the Lord for that. 📺



**Jason Van Vliet**  
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# O God of Light

1. O God of light,  
whose power of sight  
leaves nothing undetected,  
to you lies bare  
how we all are  
by sinfulness infected.

The musical score is written on six staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics placed below the notes. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (half). The second staff continues: D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F#5 (quarter), G5 (quarter), A5 (half). The third staff continues: B5 (quarter), C6 (quarter), B5 (quarter), A5 (quarter), G5 (quarter), F#5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), D5 (half). The fourth staff continues: C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (half). The fifth staff continues: E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter), B3 (quarter), A3 (half). The sixth staff continues: G3 (quarter), F#3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), D3 (quarter), C3 (quarter), B2 (quarter), A2 (half), G2 (half).

2. Pure is your light,  
so clear and bright,  
unparalleled in splendour.  
How, then, O Lord,  
will you regard  
foul sinners, vile offenders?

3. You, mindful of  
your steadfast love,  
your justice and compassion,  
gave us your Son,  
for he alone  
could pay for our transgression.

4. Christ bore our blame  
in bitter shame  
and deep humiliation.  
With guiltless blood,  
as Lamb of God  
he bought us our salvation.

5. Now, Lord, we pray,  
help us each day  
respond with godly living.  
Increase our faith;  
let our life's path,  
be marked by true thanksgiving.

Text: William Helder, 2023; loosely based on the Dutch hymn "God enkel licht"  
Tune: Jour du Seigneur, *Cantiques pour le culte public*, 1803



# PASTOR DATHAN PLEITER'S

## *Ordination and Welcome*

JENIEN HOLT LAND

On a chilly Sunday, January 14, we gathered at the Elm Creek Canadian Reformed Church to witness the ordination of our first minister, Pastor Dathan Pleiter. Despite the cold weather, there was a warm sense of fellowship. This day held special significance for both Dathan and our congregation. His journey, shaped by faith from early years, and through education, led him to this crucial moment in ministry. For Elm Creek, a young congregation, the void of a ministerial vacancy is now filled, marking a significant milestone in our collective journey.

### **IMPERFECT SERVANTS, DIVINE RECONCILIATION**

The sermon, led by Dr. J. Smith, was titled “The Lord entrusts sinful men with the ministry of reconciliation.” It reflected on the ordination of Aaron and his sons, emphasizing God’s gracious choice in ordaining imperfect individuals and highlighting the necessity of a perfect and eternal priest—Jesus Christ—for lasting hope and reconciliation. This lasting ministry of Christ was presented as a source of encouragement for Dathan in his new role, emphasizing the transforming power of the gospel. It possesses the power to transform lives and break the chains of sin, not by



his own strength but through the exalted Christ in heaven. Pastor Pleiter was encouraged to fulfill his duties with humility, lead a godly life, and remain vigilant against sin. The congregation was then urged to support and pray for Pastor Pleiter, as the Lord blesses him and the congregation.

In the ceremony of ordination, Dr. Pol, along with the elders of our congregation, joined in the laying of hands upon Dathan, affirming his calling to the ministry of the Word.

## CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES

After the service, messages of congratulations were shared with sister church representatives. Pastor Slaa, of Carman West, unable to attend due to a canceled flight, sent heartfelt wishes for strength to Dathan and blessings to Katrina.

Alan Dewit from Grace Canadian Reformed Church (Winnipeg) warmly welcomed the filled vacancy, and read Psalm 73:28. “As for me it is good to be near God. I have made the Lord God my refuge that I may tell of all your works.”

Len Bergsma from Carman East celebrated the new minister, highlighting rich blessings and firsts for both congregation and minister, expressing anticipation for a pulpit exchange.

Les Vanderveen, from Carman West, extended a welcome to southern Manitoba even though in this case “south isn’t as warm as we expect south to be.” He hoped the warmth of the community would match that of Australia.

Pastor Joe Poppe and William Gortemaker, on behalf of both Ambassador (Niverville) and Redeemer (Winnipeg) Canadian

Reformed Churches, sent a letter congratulating council, and specifically Dathan and Katrina, noting “we got to know them when we extended a call to them and visited with them . . . we recognize his gifts and are glad to see him in this classis.”

Elm Creek Council congratulated Dathan, emphasizing his role in leading God’s people in grace and truth. They also stated: “May God grant you wisdom, strength, and truth to ‘lead his herd,’ as us farmer folks would say.”

## A SERIES OF FIRSTS

In the afternoon, Pastor Pleiter delivered his inaugural sermon. The sermon focused on the theme “With unveiled faces, you behold the Man in the Mirror,” emphasizing two key points: Without this unveiling you can’t see him, and through this unveiling you become like him.

Following the service, we met for a coffee social, which offered members an opportunity to express their heartfelt congratulations and extend a warm welcome. The day held an extra special touch with the presence of Dathan’s brothers, elevating the joyous atmosphere for Dathan and Katrina, as they joined them in celebrating this milestone moment.

The series of firsts carried into the following week, where we celebrated another milestone—Pastor Pleiter’s first baptism. As we look forward to coming together for the upcoming Lord’s Supper celebration, it’s worth noting that Elm Creek, as a young church, is experiencing these significant “firsts” right alongside Pastor Pleiter. It is a great blessing to now have our own pastor administer the

sacraments of baptism and Lord's supper and present uplifting sermons each Sunday.

## WELCOME LUNCH

On January 20 we hosted a welcome lunch for the Pleiter family. The afternoon was filled with delicious food and engaging activities. The lunch featured an array of soups prepared by volunteers in our congregation, complimented by sandwiches, croissants, and a large selection of desserts.

In a twist of irony (considering the significant presence of dairy farmers among us), it was revealed that our new pastor just so happens to be lactose intolerant! Thankfully, our thoughtful organizers had already taken this into consideration, ensuring a diverse range of options for those with dietary restrictions.

## FELLOWSHIP FUN

In a hands-on activity, Dathan and Katrina embraced the challenge of pairing children with their parents, surpassing expectations by almost flawlessly matching everyone. The next task involved pairing grandparents with their corresponding child/grandchild units. Remarkably, they successfully completed both assignments with barely any help, but did discover a few new family connections within our congregation along the way. Their success showed us their dedication in getting to know each member, a noteworthy feat considering their recent arrival.

Progressing with the festivities, the various catechism classes organized a trivia game featuring questions about Manitoba, and a guess-the-animal sound competition. They even crafted special Bible trivia questions exclusively for Dathan and, to everyone's amusement, some of these questions appeared to pose an even greater challenge than some of those encountered at classis! The afternoon also included a modified "shoe-game," revealing humorous insights into Dathan and Katrina's individual characters.

## HEARTFELT GIFTS, JOYFUL CELEBRATIONS

The elementary school-aged children (and a few younger siblings) had also prepared a special surprise, as they joined together to sing Hymn 1 and the Aaronic blessing. Later, a small choir, made up of various congregation members, performed a rendition of "Be Thou My Vision" and Psalm 134, encouraging audience participation in the last verse.



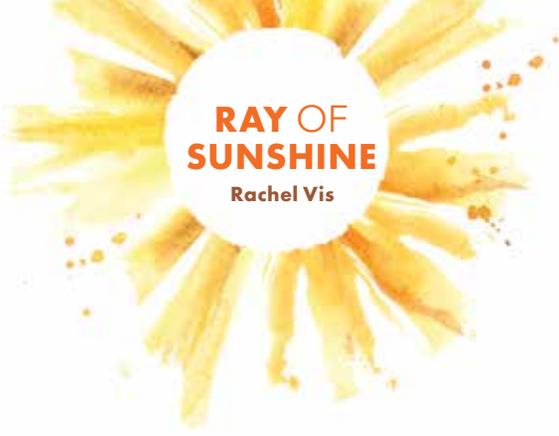
Gifts were presented, including sweaters, hats, and cups gifted by various businesses owners in the congregation. As a collective gesture, the congregation also contributed a deep freezer for the Pleiters' home, along with a coupon book, containing various activities and goods that members would like to share with them. Amidst the heartfelt presentations, poems were read, and moments of laughter were shared. Adding a touch of humour, the Committee of Administration presented Dathan and Katrina with a gift, joking about the decision-making duel of red versus yellow, before presenting the Pleiter family with their very own set of Milwaukee tools. It seems that the C of A has cleverly made their job just a bit easier!

## FINAL REFLECTIONS

Reflecting on all these events, let us draw inspiration from Romans 15:5, 6: "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may, with one voice, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Once again, we extend a warm welcome to the Pleiter Family. In our prayers, may we humbly seek God's ongoing blessings for our congregation, guiding us into a deeper connection with him and nurturing stronger relationships among our members and in the broader community. 🕊

*Jenien Holtland*

Photo credit: Lianne T Photography (Lianne Krogstad)



## RAY OF SUNSHINE

Rachel Vis

# HAPPY BIRTHDAY

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



Eddie and his youngest nephew

### EDDIE VANROOTSELAAR

Hello, I am Eddie VanRootselaar and DV will be turning 31 in May!

I work at a dairy farm and it will be ten years this year. I love my job, I work five days a week there.

I have seven brothers and sisters and I am an uncle to eleven nephews and nieces. In the summer I love fishing and boating and tubing with my family on Lake Erie!

I have been living at the Beacon Home for the past seven years and love it!!! I have my own room that has my farm in it. I have a big barn with my cows and love to grow my own crops in there too.

I coach the Niagara Blues church hockey team, and we are hoping to win the championship! I love being part of the team!

I also am looking forward to going to Anchor Camp in June! We always have a ton of fun—maybe I will see you if you volunteer there this year.

I also really look forward to receiving birthday cards from you all! I never open them up until my actual birthday and then I open them all and my mom reads them to me.

Thank you for reading this and remembering to send birthday cards to those of us in the Ray of Sunshine.

If you ever want to visit, feel free to give us a call and join us at the Beacon Home!!! ☺

### MAY BIRTHDAYS

- 1** Clarence Zwiep will be **70**  
c/o Beacon Home  
653 Broad Street West  
Dunnville, ON  
NIA IT8
- 4** Debbie Veenstra will be **50**  
4238 2nd Concession Road  
Sherkston, ON  
LOS 1R0
- 21** Eddie Van Rootselaar will be **31**  
c/o Beacon Home  
653 Broad Street West  
Dunnville, ON  
NIA IT8
- 30** Bernie De Vos will be **49**  
c/o Anchor Home  
361 Thirty Road RR 2  
Beamsville, ON  
LOR 1B2
- 30** Shaelyn Kottlelenberg will be **28**  
c/o Lighthouse  
6528 1st Line, RR #3  
Fergus, ON  
N1M 2W4

# CLARION KIDS LORD'S DAY 44

## THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

The Tenth Commandment talks about coveting. Coveting is another word for badly wanting something. Here it means wanting something that belongs to someone else. The catechism (and also the Bible) says that if we break the Tenth Commandment, we often are led to break the others as well. How does that work? Well, maybe you coveted your sister's iPad so badly that you took it and hid it in your room. Not only did you covet, but you also stole! Stealing was forbidden in another commandment, remember? Or maybe you wanted a remote-control car like your friend's, but your parents said no. You reacted by being angry with them. Not only would you be coveting, you would also be murdering and disrespecting your parents. Those two reactions were forbidden in two other commandments. Do you see how coveting connects with the other commandments? Our sinfulness is so deep, isn't it? This is why it is so important to never stop praying for the Holy Spirit to change your heart! Then, when the Lord Jesus comes back, you will perfectly and thankfully obey all the commandments.

**Thankfully, there are also good things to covet. Fill in the following words on the correct line to complete these texts: consumed, hunger, longing, thirst.**

My soul is \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ for your rules at all times.  
(Psalm 119:20)

Blessed are those who \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (Matthew 5:6)

**We are to obey the Ten Commandments because we are thankful that the Lord Jesus died for our sins. Below is a list of some actions. Draw a line to show if they are thankful obedience to God's commandments or if they are disobeying God's commandments.**

**Thankful obedience to God's commandments**

**Disobeying God's commandments**

Giving money to the poor

Getting angry at your brother or sister

Lying to your teacher about a classmate

Disobeying your parents

Listening to sermons on Sunday

Changing the channel when you hear God's name used disrespectfully



## HEY KIDS!

Do you have questions about something you have read in the Bible or heard in a sermon? Maybe you are wondering about something you have read in a Lord's Day. We have a new column coming called KIDS' QUESTIONS. We warmly invite you to ask Mrs. DeBoer your question! With your parent's permission, email [deboerca@gmail.com](mailto:deboerca@gmail.com) and find your question and an answer in Clarion!

AMANDA DEBOER



WOMEN'S SAVINGS ACTION

FUNDING THE SEMINARY LIBRARY

# WSA Annual Newsletter

*Therefore encourage one another and build one other up, just as you are doing*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

**D**on't you love receiving mail the good old-fashioned way? We do, and we decided long ago that we would continue to send our annual newsletter to our approximately sixty-five WSA church representatives by stuffing envelopes, buying stamps, and addressing each of them personally. We consider it a labour of love.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Last year with those mailings, the committee included a questionnaire to help us understand our reps—both personally and corporately. Our committee really wants to be cognizant of the fact that it's hard to be part of a team that spans across our country and even into the United States! We needed to hear from our reps to find out how we might collaborate better, and whether it be done casually or in a more official way.

The committee spent much time going over all the questionnaire responses; the comments were typed up, categorized, and discussed. The contents were helpful, heartwarming, encouraging, enlightening, and even funny at times. We are thankful for the responses received and it was obvious that both the reps and the committee members benefited from the exercise.

## WHAT COULD WE DO BETTER?

Our representatives were also given the opportunity to share with us the things they thought could be done better. The insights provided have motivated us to: simplify our guidelines, issue tax receipts more quickly, and provide suggestions as to how best collect and tally collection results more efficiently. While electronic banking is convenient, it does mean that money trickles in from many avenues. Our treasurer manages over sixty-five

churches that all send donations throughout the year in different ways, over different periods of time. Long gone are the days when one package came from each church, just once or twice a year. This makes it hard for the committee to give timely updates on what a specific church might have collected from year to year, but we are continuously working with our reps to achieve those numbers in a timely fashion.

## THANK YOU!

Speaking of collecting . . . wow! Last year, under God's blessing, our reps collected \$46,948.43! This amount was surpassed only once—when our reps rose to the challenge to collect \$50,000 in celebration of the WSA's Golden Anniversary. While our reps continue to collect in faith, we have been praying and asking our Heavenly Father, if it be his will, to please give us the means to fill the annual budget. It is never taken for granted and is always so amazing and miraculous to see the funds come in and the needs being met. We are so thankful for our reps, and we give thanks to God for blessing the work of each and every one of them.

## REMEMBER

Last year we sent a sample bulletin announcement to all of our reps with our March email. It also was a good reminder that there are three easy ways to donate:

1. Place your donation, either cash or cheque (written to Women's Savings Action for the Theological College) inside an envelope and pass it on to your local WSA rep.
2. E-transfer to [wsa@crtswsa.ca](mailto:wsa@crtswsa.ca) (password: crtswsa). *Please include your mailing address and specific church name in the message box* to ensure the donation is attributed to the right congregation.
3. On-line donations via credit card can be made through [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org) (search: CRTS and Women's Savings Action

should pop up). The link can also be found on the CRTS website. Again, *please include the specific church in the box marked "company info."*

Tax receipts will be issued for donations over \$10.00.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

A few other little interesting things we learned from our questionnaires:

One of our churches wanted to share that their WSA rep emails everyone *individually* during her collection campaign. That's dedication!

Of all the WSA representatives that responded to our questionnaire, a significant number of them are over the age of sixty-five. We find this beautiful! Being a WSA rep is a small, easy way to serve the Lord and our community, no matter what age one might be.

Due to geographical limitations, some of our reps have never seen the seminary in person and yet out of their thankfulness for the work being done there, collect for that which they've never seen.

Several reps mentioned that it is more difficult to collect, especially from the younger generation, and questioned how we might once again "stir up" the churches in regard to the need and the work of the Women's Savings Action. Suggestions were offered including reaching out to our ministers, councils, societies, and making the cause personal. Two comments were particularly good reminders that, "Prayer is the most productive piece of pursuing this cause," and we must "Encourage each other to engage in prayer."

Thank you to all that support the work we do. We continue to covet your prayers.

*The Women's Savings Action Committee*

# *The* **ACQUIRED** *Podcast*



In today's column, I would like to take a break from some of the more theological, cultural, or political podcasts I have reviewed in the past and focus instead on the topic of business. The *Acquired Podcast* is a long form show that explores the stories behind many well-known brands and business and seeks to learn what made them so successful.

## **BACKGROUND & PURPOSE**

The podcast is hosted by two technology entrepreneurs, Ben Gilbert and David Rosenthal. Ben co-founded Pioneer Square Labs, a startup studio and venture capital firm based in Seattle, Washington. Prior to that, he worked at Madrona Venture Group, a prominent venture capital firm in the Pacific Northwest. David is a venture capitalist who previously worked at companies such as Google and LinkedIn, where he held engineering roles. David is also recognized for his work in venture capital, having been a partner at Madrona Venture Group, a prominent venture capital firm based in Seattle, Washington. To the best of my knowledge, neither of these men are professing Christians; however, I believe that many *Clarion* readers can still derive a lot of valuable business

insights from their podcast. Of course, I do need to mention the caveat that there is some discretion needed on the language front. It is not a common occurrence (perhaps two to three times in the twenty hours of content I've consumed), but it is something to be aware of.

*Acquired* was started as a passion project back in 2015 that primarily covered technology acquisitions and the stories behind those deals. Over time, Ben and David have honed their craft of storytelling and have branched out to cover many other companies including Walmart, Costco, and SpaceX. Their episodes are typically three to four hours long and follow a narrative structure, typically in chronological order, with both hosts going back and forth in a conversational, yet still very educational, style. Having now consumed close to twenty hours of *Acquired* content, I can say that time flies by listening to the two gentlemen describing the highs and the lows of a Sam Walton (Walmart) or a Jim Sinegal (Costco) as they strive to find a way to overcome the challenges of their businesses or stumble upon a new formula for success.

In a way, as the hosts themselves have commented, *Acquired* is really more of a conversational audiobook than a typical podcast. For anybody interested in the more traditional interview style of podcasting, they have a secondary podcast channel called ACQ2 which features interviews with founders and investors. These podcasts also often serve as a follow-up episode for feedback received from the main channel, and typically involve guests who are experts on the topic.

## BUSINESS, BRANDING, & BEYOND

The show experienced slow growth in the first few years but really began to pick up steam midway through 2020 when they dealt with SpaceX. Since that time the podcast has grown immensely and has reached a much broader audience outside of those within the west coast tech bubble.

Following their surge in popularity, Ben and David have covered many more companies including LVMH, Amazon, Nintendo, NVIDIA, Berkshire Hathaway, Visa, and Nike. They have also covered professional sports leagues like the NBA and the NFL and cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and Ethereum. They have even covered the business and branding empire of mega popstar Taylor Swift!

While the show is aimed at folks who have an interest in the stories behind these companies, leagues, and people—delving into their motivations, strategies, failures, and successes—I do not think that only “business minded” people would find this show interesting. If you are a curious person who enjoys history and learning in general, I think you will benefit from listening to *Acquired*. At the very least, it will give you some more context to understand the retail operations of Costco or Walmart next time you shop there!

Overall, I have learned a lot listening to *Acquired* and I would recommend checking it out and giving it a chance—perhaps starting with a particular company or person you are interested in. If you are interested in engaging further with the *Acquired* podcast community, they have a very active Slack group (over 22,000 participants) where you can provide feedback, suggest episodes, get book recommendations, and much more. 📺



**Lucas Holtvlüwer**

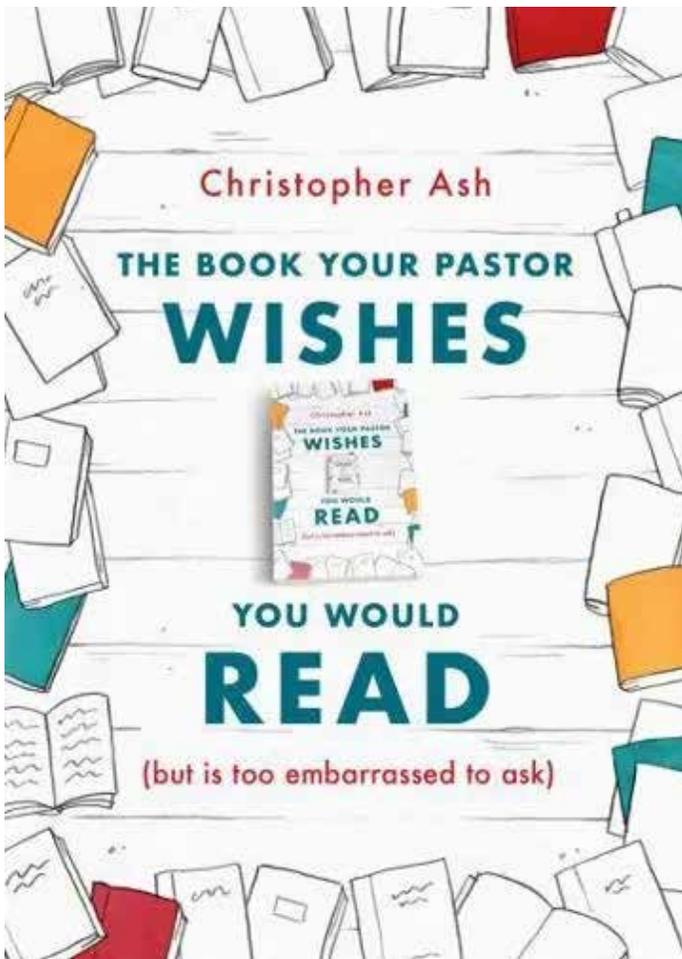
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# DON'T BE EMBARRASSED

RICK LUDWIG



The relationship between a pastor and his congregation is vital to the well-being of a church. Yet, it is often embarrassing to talk about it openly because, like all relationships, it is shrouded in weakness from both sides. In the covert conversations that often take place analyzing how things are going, an imbalance usually skews in favour of the congregation. After all, the minister is there to serve and encourage and care for them. He is the shepherd and they are the sheep. How the pastor is personally doing is of secondary concern, and his perceived well-being is closely linked to the assessment of how good of a job he is doing for the congregation. How satisfied or dissatisfied God's people are with his work usually dominates the discussion. Christopher Ash, former pastor and seminary instructor, puts all the cards on the table with his little book that challenges the church to consider how well they are looking after their leaders for their own benefit.

A summary of this book, rather than a review, will be helpful for the churches to take up the challenge offered in its final chapter: to put right what is wrong in your church or to guard what is right to ensure it does not go wrong. Fostering constructive discussions and prayer at the leaders' meetings, in the Bible study fellowships and small groups, at the coffee socials and around the family table can all serve to self-examine how the relationship in your church is with your pastor. Are you loving and caring for your pastor as well as you can?

*The Book Your Pastor Wishes You Would Read (but is too embarrassed to ask)*, by Christopher Ash. (UK: The Good Book Company, 2019). Paperback. 126 pages. \$13.99 CDN.

## JOYFUL FRUIT

Ash's starting point is Hebrews 13:17, where the writer encourages the Jewish Christians to honour and submit to their leaders as people who will have to give account for their work and so that the work *will be a joy and not a burden* to them. He points out that if the leaders can do their work with joy, it will ultimately be to the congregation's benefit. In other words, a healthy and happy relationship between the pastor and those in the pew bears its own fruit. The opposite can also be true; a sour and sullen relationship is life-sucking and fosters a dry and barren season for the church. The congregation has an important responsibility to ensure that this relationship is good. A lot hinges on this for the flourishing of the church!

The author begins with identifying pastors as people with real life backgrounds, experiences, personalities, and particular gifts that all shape how they will serve in the role. They have feelings and sensitivities, strengths and weaknesses, and often their own family circumstances as well. They are people like you and me. Yet they have a special calling as ministers of the Word and the scriptural expectations are clear: regular preaching of the gospel of salvation within the context of God's revealed purpose and plan in a way that connects with hearts and minds and encourages thankful living; prayer for the congregation, and in doing so seeking to know them individually as well as possible either personally or through delegation; careful watch over the flock and equipping them for lives of service in the kingdom; and finally, also the provision of sound leadership. This is a big and comprehensive task. Ash reflects that it is not a workload that is born ox-like through self motivation, discipline, and by grinding it out. It requires much encouragement, prayer, and loving concern.

## SEVEN VIRTUES FOR THE CONGREGATION

The balance of the book outlines seven virtues of the church member that would benefit the pastor and strengthen this crucial relationship. A brief summary of each one follows.

### Daily repentance & eager faith

The apostle John reports in his short letters the delight of the leaders who find believers *walking in the truth*. This is evident in the life of God's people when they are honest about their sin and weakness and eager to explore God's Word for the evidence of his grace and mercy and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. The congregation is hungry to hear the preaching and share in Bible study and prayer together. There is a palpable vibrancy in these activities each week. The opposite can also be revealing and stagnating, when the congregation becomes lazy and unmotivated in their listening and participation. Getting fellowship and study initiatives started is like pulling teeth and the worship service attendance is lacking

and discouraging. This is a sign of a disintegrating relationship between the pulpit and the pew.

### Committed belonging

The growth of unity in faith is a marker of the maturing of a church. While the weekly preaching and teaching reaches individual ears, it is aimed at the body of believers. A great encouragement to the leaders is when it is clear that the congregation receives the preaching and encouragement with an eye for each other. A sign of a healthy church is the congregation functioning as a body, serving each other out of the love received in Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit. It is a tremendous boost for a pastor when his visits and follow-ups in the congregation are not filling a void but are a supplement to a robust and welcoming congregational life. When the concern for the church is a mutual one, a pastor does not feel like he is walking in isolation, but alongside his congregation.

### Open honesty

Perhaps the most glaring evidence that a church is unwell is when everyone asserts to the pastor that everything is fine. No issues here! The apostle Paul chided the church at Corinth for hiding from him while he and other leaders had openly shown them affection and a loving frankness. This is a two-way street and does require the pastor to "lower the drawbridge" and give something of himself to also live under the preaching as well. The encouragement in this is when the congregation responds in kind and moves away from pretense to a more honest self-assessment and repentance. Efforts to impress the minister with a veneer of religion usually end up being discouraging for all, where sharing and confession (in confidence where necessary) lead to a deeper bond and a real experience of God's love, mercy, and forgiveness. Like Jesus, the pastor is seeking to serve those who need healing, not the self-sufficient or self-righteous.

### Thoughtful watchfulness

Paul encouraged a young Timothy to be diligent in *progressing* in his role as a pastor. In fact, he told him it should be evident to his congregation and he should give himself wholly to it. How does this happen? Through an incessant workload and a nose-to-the-grindstone attitude? Seasons of study, rest, and refreshing all serve to equip a pastor for his work and they should rank high on the leadership's list of priorities and be well advocated to the congregation. They should also be a priority and expectation for the pastor. Lack of attention to this leads to stagnation and a stationary congregational life with no progression. It may inevitably lead to regression. Thoughtful watch over the doctrine and life of a minister is not simply a matter of scrutiny and critique, but one of upbuilding and encouraging and equipping. This includes

generous financial support for both daily needs as well as opportunities for improvement. And it is not simply a matter of the money, but also the enthusiasm that comes with it to ensure that it happens. Everyone should be excited when the pastor is refreshed and re-tooled.

### Loving kindness

“A little kindness goes a long way” is a well-known expression that also resonates between a pastor and his congregation. A temptation may be to run a church business-like, checking all the boxes to measure ministry success along the way, but this hardly fits the type of sensitive and personal work that is required of a minister. A minimal kindness is expressed in the diligent running of a church and fair treatment of the pastor. Loving kindness is the overflow of care for a pastor and his family, where the congregation is eager to look after them, protect them, encourage them, and express their thankfulness to God for them. This is not only manifested in a well-organized operation, but spills over responsively from the hearts of God’s people. It is displayed in a sensitivity to the needs of the minister and his family, and an ungrudging courtesy and kindness towards them in many practical ways.

### High expectations

To have low expectations for the pastor is not a kindness from the congregation. The Scriptures call him to a noble task and the church leaders and members should also expect that. This is different from expecting the pastor to be superhuman or to place him on a high pedestal. It does mean guarding their reputation and promoting their work to the best of our ability. It also requires honest accountability with the church leadership when things are lacking. Not gossip and dissatisfaction, but equipping, encouraging, and expecting what is reasonable and profitable for the church. Church leadership is not for the spiritually lazy and rarely benefits from a laissez-faire approach. Exalting God’s name is serious work for the whole congregation with the pastor.

### Zealous submission

Do we expect the pastor to lead the congregation or is he simply one of a number of elders, with a specific role limited to preaching and teaching? There is no doubt that the scriptural guidelines for the work of the elder and minister overlap here. However, relegating the pastor to a ministry employee of the church is not the biblical model. He is a significant part of the leadership of the church with a specific role that requires an eager submission by the congregation. That submission is not absolute but is shaped

and curbed by his submission to God’s Word and his shepherd’s heart. A pastor who lords over his congregation will face much resistance while the one who leads to green pastures and quiet waters and who is faithful to accompany through the shadowy valleys brings soul restoration for the people of God. On the other hand, a pastor who is unwilling to lead will soon be found wanting by the other leaders and the congregation. Encouraging a pastor to take the lead is very important.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

The second last chapter debunks the idea that the pastor should remain at equal distance from everyone in the congregation to maintain impartiality. Pastors (and their spouses and families) are people too! They need friends. They also need close friends or confidants. This is not a role for everyone in the church. It is an important role for some members and others should not begrudge it but rather encourage it. Allow the pastor to get to know the congregation and decide who is best suited to support him personally and be brought into a closer bond with his family. This is a healthy development that should be highly respected by a congregation who cares for their minister. Set jealousy aside and be thankful for the pastor and family who is well supported in the bond of loving and close friendships.

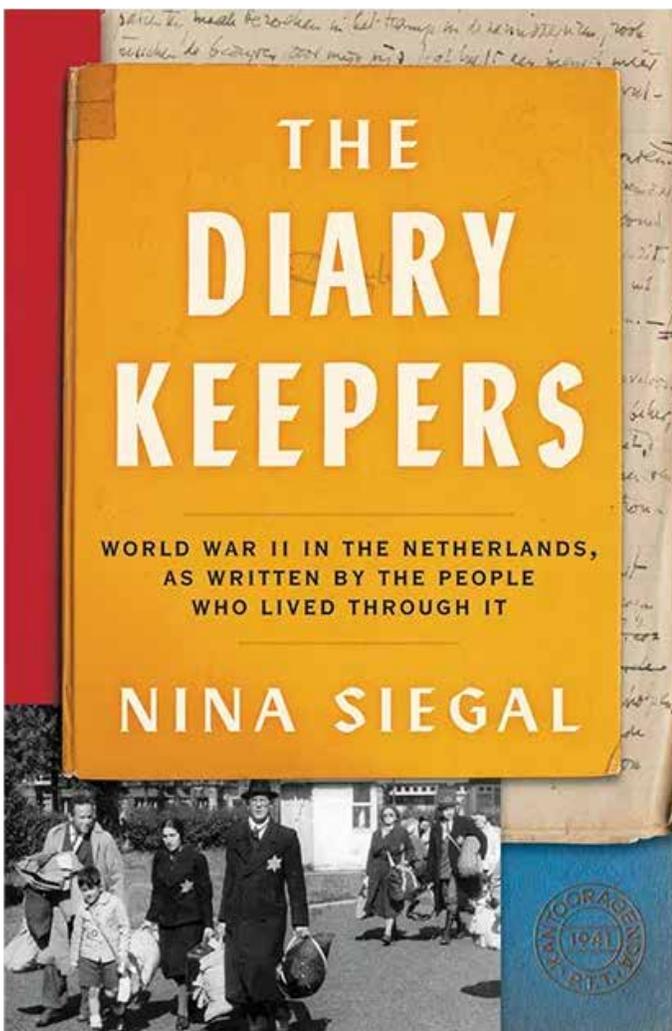
Christopher Ash is right in suggesting that this is often an embarrassing conversation for a pastor to have with the elders and more specifically with his congregation. Some readers may even be busy thinking at this point about what they would include in a book entitled *The Book Your Church Member Wishes the Pastor Would Read (but is too embarrassed to ask)*. It is also embarrassing for a congregation when the relationship with their pastor has soured. In my daily work I enter many churches of various denominations and it is quickly evident when the love between pastor and congregation has grown cold. It is also very sad. What is most embarrassing for all is that we defame God’s Name when this happens. We can all do better in caring for our pastors and committing to make their work a joy and not a burden for the benefit of God’s people and for the glory of his Name. Let’s take up the challenge of this little book! 📖



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# DUTCH WORLD WAR II HISTORY IS MORE COMPLEX THAN YOU MIGHT THINK

WES BREDENHOF



Like many readers of *Clarion*, my family roots are in the Netherlands. Both sets of my grandparents emigrated from there in the early 1950s. My Opa Bredenhof had tales to tell of his experiences in the Dutch resistance during World War II. I grew up with the impression that all Dutch people loathed Germans, many of them were involved with the Underground, and many others hid Jews from the Nazis. The Dutch were invaded and occupied by the Nazis in 1940, but when the Canadians finally arrived to liberate them in 1944–45, everyone rejoiced.

But I later discovered this to be a one-dimensional view. Before and after the German invasion, there were Dutch citizens who were Nazis. Sadly, many of them were also Reformed church members. It is estimated that, in 1936, 8000 confessing members of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands were members of the Dutch Nazi movement. It's true that the Synod of 1936 decided that church membership was incompatible with being a Nazi, but many ignored this decision and others openly disagreed with it. A grandson of Abraham Kuyper took things one step further. Along with some 20,000 of his fellow Dutchmen, Willem Kuyper joined an SS unit—working as a propagandist, he died for the Third Reich on the eastern front.

*The Diary Keepers: World War II in the Netherlands as Written by the People Who Lived Through It*, Nina Siegal. (Ecco: New York, 2023). Paperback. 527 pages. \$24.99.

When we're personally involved, we have a tendency to look at history through a filter. The good is accentuated and the evil is filtered out. Journalist Nina Siegal's book *The Diary Keepers* confronts us with a dose of the multidimensional reality about Dutch World War II history. Some people were courageous in their resistance, some were selfless in their sacrifices, but others were opportunistic at best and cold-hearted Nazis at worst.

In Amsterdam one finds the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies. This organization houses an impressive archive of over 2000 diaries from the Second World War. From this collection, Nina Siegal chose nine diaries to represent the Dutch experience of the War. She relates: "I was seeking a range of perspective, not many but various. I wanted to juxtapose and balance voices from the occupation period and provide a rounded view of the war. I also hoped to explore gray zones, territories of moral indecision, and moments of social collapse" (p. 30).

Three of the diarists were Jewish, two of whom survived the war. The others include a Nazi collaborator and a Christian woman (Elisabeth van Lohuizen) who made every effort to save as many Jews as she could. Her family were members of the Dutch Reformed Church (NHK) in Epe, Gelderland.

Besides the diary entries, Siegal has several chapters of journalistic observation and reflection. The last few chapters are especially interesting as she wrestles with the way the Dutch people came to terms with the German occupation in the years

following. One thing that particularly surprised me was how the Dutch government did little to advocate for the Jews during the war: "Meanwhile, no Dutch government intervention on behalf of the Jewish community came from the exiled national leaders in London, nor were there any instructions from Dutch civil administration officials at home in the Netherlands" (p. 358). After the war was not much better, as "several newspapers ran articles warning the surviving or returned Jews to show appreciation to resistance helpers, lest they solicit additional antisemitism" p. 463).

*The Diary Keepers* isn't a Christian book, but it's a book that Christians can nonetheless appreciate. It's about a history many Reformed people share. It's important to read it and understand how easily not just hatred, but even mere indifference, can lead to horrible crimes against humanity, even in a nation with such a respectable Christian heritage as the Netherlands. But reading it will also acquaint you with the courage of brave Dutch people who did what they could to stand up against the horrible injustices of Nazism. With stories of antisemitism on the rise as I'm writing this, it seems like we always need to be reminded that evil must be resisted. 



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BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED  
**THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

*January 11, 2024*

The chairman of the board, Rev. John Louwse, led in opening devotions. The governors were all present. Dr. Jason Van Vliet was present as principal. Administrative assistant Leanne Kuizenga was present to take the minutes of the meeting.

Information was shared about the personal circumstances of emeriti professors, as well as widows and families of professors.

The agenda for the meeting was established. The minutes of the regular meeting held on September 7, 2023 were approved. Outstanding matters on the action log were reviewed.

### DECISIONS & REPORTS

1. A proposal to standardize how to celebrate milestone events at CRTS was adopted.
2. A sub-committee appointed by the board proposed a formalized procedure for selecting a new principal for CRTS. The normal term of a principal is nine years, and the board is responsible for initiating a process well in advance of an upcoming general synod which is responsible for appointing the principal. Some suggested qualifications for a principal are outlined. The selection process will involve input from governors, faculty, staff, and students. The board approved a Procedure for Selecting a New Principal, Guidelines for Visits with Faculty and Staff concerning a New Principal, and a Student Survey concerning a new Principal. The sub-committee that proposed this policy is asked to develop a policy for the appointment of a vice-principal.
3. The Deputies Theological Training of the Free Reformed Church in South Africa have communicated with the Foreign

Bursary Fund about the support of South African students studying at CRTS. The board approved an updated memorandum of understanding outlining the way South African students will be financially supported. The expectations for financial support from Canada remain the same, and the board thanks congregations for their generous support so far. The memorandum of understanding also specifies that one of our professors will visit the South African churches once every three years to strengthen the bond between CRTS and the South African churches.

4. A letter was received from sister Dini Gootjes, expressing her gratitude for the support of the CRTS community in the illness and death of her husband, the late professor Rev. Dr. Nicolaas H. Gootjes.
5. An invitation was received from the In Trust Center for Theological Schools, in collaboration with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), inviting CRTS to participate in a survey on board composition and governance within theological schools. The board decided to ask our administrative assistant to follow up and make arrangements for our participation in this survey.
6. The Publication Committee requested to have our librarian, Margaret Alkema, appointed to this committee as a full member. She was appointed to the publication committee.
7. A draft letter regarding the need for new professors to serve at CRTS was approved to be sent to the Councils of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. The purpose of this letter was to make the churches aware of the need for

future professors, and to encourage them to support those pastors deemed qualified for further studies. With the letter the board sought feedback from the churches about the merits of establishing a bursary fund to support students who pursue an advanced degree, and how such a bursary should be funded.

8. The Deputies for Training for the Ministry of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia presented an extensive letter laying out their vision for a seminary in Australia, summarizing the challenges they face, and asking for clarity from the board in our willingness to assist them in establishing an affiliate of CRTS in Australia. After a thorough discussion, the board appointed the committee dealing with this to draft a response to the Australian deputies.
9. The Academic Committee passed on the minutes of their past meeting. They were received for information.
10. Rev. John Louwse and Dr. Jeff Temple reported on lecture visits to CRTS on November 21, 2023, as well as on visits with professors. This report was received with thankfulness.
11. The Finance and Property Committee provided minutes of the recent meetings they held. They were received for information.
12. One of the requirements of ATS upon CRTS's last re-accreditation was to provide a report on CRTS's stance on and plan for

diversity. According to ATS's own standards, we are required to value, define, and demonstrate diversity within the context of our mission, history, constituency, and theological commitments. The board is thankful that within ATS room is given for seminaries to define their own understanding of diversity rather than having others define diversity for us. An interim report was provided suggesting the following Stance on Diversity:

The Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) rejoices in serving the needs of Christians with diverse historical, socio-economic, geographical, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

In line with our purpose and Scriptural basis (*Statement of Institutional Purpose*) CRTS is committed to training students who come from different backgrounds in order that they are equipped to proclaim the promise of the gospel universally and without discrimination to all nations and people to whom God in his good pleasure sends the gospel (cf. Psalm 87:4–6; Isaiah 40:1–5; Matthew 28:19, 20; John 3:16; Galatians 3:25–29; Belgic Confession, Article 27; Canons of Dort I, 3; II, 5; III/IV, 78).

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>>	MY BROTHER
>>	MY CHILD
>>	MY GRANDCHILD
>>	MY NEIGHBOUR



CRTS seeks to reflect this commitment to diversity by giving special attention to the diverse perspectives of the people from different backgrounds with whom the supporting Reformed churches interact in their ministry. CRTS also upholds this commitment in planning, education and formation of students, adoption of policies, offering student services and implementation of administration. The board adopted this Stance on Diversity.

13. Positive feedback was given by ATS approving our report on Assessment of Programmatic Student Learning Outcomes. This was received with thankfulness.
14. A survey was conducted of students who graduated from CRTS in 2019 and 2020. The feedback was generally positive, for which the board is thankful!
15. The Governance Committee requested the board to participate in the review of CRTS's governance documents as part of a report to ATS due in 2025. The board agreed. A suggested revision to the role of the Registrar was approved.
16. A Principal's report was received. It outlined the real practical benefits of the renovated facilities, with increased space, light, opportunities for fellowship, and the use of Zoom technology. The Finance and Property Committee is planning to renovate the office wing of the seminary this coming summer. Faculty and staff are blessed with health to be able to do their tasks. Special mention was made of how well Dr. Reuben Bredenhof has adjusted to his new role and how thankful we may be for his service at CRTS. By and large the twenty-nine students enrolled at CRTS are doing well. All the recent graduates have received and accepted calls. We are expecting seven more graduates in this coming year, the Lord willing. It also appears, as much as that can be determined, that we will be receiving a larger incoming class again this September. Dr. C. Van Dam, former professor of Old Testament, had another book published: *In Holy Service: Essays on Office, Personal and Ecclesial*.
17. The principal submitted a report on how his workload could be reduced. The board is grateful for this report, as it has been concerned about his workload. The board asked the principal to work on implementing the suggested proposals by working with the Senate and staff.
18. Dr. Theodore Van Raalte submitted a proposal for a full sabbatical from July 15, 2024 to January 15, 2025. Arrangements were made to teach one of his freshmen courses and for other professors to care for students under his mentorship. Dr. Van Raalte proposes to use most of his time to finish writing an ethics textbook. The proposal was approved by the board.
19. The Senate proposed an amended Latin Admission Requirement to the Master of Divinity program. The recommended path is for students to take two semesters of Latin at university. Alternatively, they are required to take twelve lessons of Derek Cooper's Basics of Latin, an online course. Generally, students enter seminary with either a strong or a weaker knowledge of English grammar, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. This affects their ability to exegete Scripture and to write papers and sermons. In addition to the ongoing use of various Latin terms and sayings in various areas of biblical and theological studies, another key rationale for maintaining a Latin pre-requisite is that it provides students with a simple introduction to the structure and grammar of various languages using the same alphabet and significant vocabulary overlap with English. The board gave the Senate leave to implement this.
20. Dr. Reuben Bredenhof reported on his attendance at the Mid-America Reformed Seminary Centre for Missions and Evangelism "Beyond the Walls" Mission Conference. This report was received with thankfulness.

### PRESS RELEASE & CLOSING

The completion of the press release was delegated to the vice-chairman in consultation with the executive and the principal. Brother Peter Vandersluis closed the meeting with prayer.

On behalf of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary,  
*Rev. Joe Poppe (Vice-chairman/Corresponding Clerk)*



# CLASSIS NORTHERN ONTARIO

*February 2, 2024*

On behalf of the convening church Rev. Theo Wierenga opening the meeting in a Christian manner. We remembered in prayer the continuing vacancies in our classis, and the churches who have recently received ministers; a blessing was also asked over the exam of br. Vanderlinde. After examining the credentials and finding them to be in good order, classis was declared constituted. Appointed as officers were Rev. Eric Onderwater as chairman, Rev. Bryan Vanderhorst as vice-chairman, and Rev. Jeff Poort as clerk.

## PEREMPTORY EXAMINATION

The Orangeville Canadian Reformed Church had requested a peremptory examination for candidate Mark Vanderlinde. The required documents were found to be in good order and classis proceeded with the examination.

Br. Vanderlinde presented his sermon proposal on Titus 2:11-14. In closed session, classis, with the concurring advice of the deputies from Regional Synod East, determined that the sermon was sufficient to continue with the examination. At this point the students in grades 5-8 from DACS were welcomed to the meeting. Br. Vanderlinde was then examined in the areas of Old and New Testament exegesis, knowledge of Holy Scripture, Reformed doctrine and creeds, church history, ethics, church polity, and diaconology. In closed session, classis, with the concurring advice of the deputies from Regional Synod East, judged that br. Vanderlinde had sustained his examination. Br. Vanderlinde was informed of this in open session and opportunity was given to congratulate him and his wife. Rev. Onderwater led in a prayer of thanksgiving for br. Vanderlinde and the church at Orangeville and Hymn 84:1 was sung.

Classis approbated the call extended to br. Vanderlinde by the church at Orangeville. His ordination is scheduled for February 25,

2024, and the church at Grand Valley was appointed to represent classis at the ordination.

## QUESTION PERIOD, CORRESPONDENCE AND APPOINTMENTS

Question period according to Article 44 of the Church Order was held. The churches reported that the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued and the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. One of the churches requested the judgment or help of classis for the proper government of their church.

A letter was received from the Bethel United Reformed Church of Woodstock, ON, informing Classis in accordance with the Golden Rule Comity Agreement of NAPARC of a church plant they are establishing in the Mitchell area.

A discussion was held regarding a letter from Fergus Maranatha summarizing the input of the churches concerning the interaction of classis with the Committee for Ecumenical Relations. Fergus Maranatha was tasked with bringing forward a formal proposal to a future classis.

Classis approved an increase to the monetary assessment of the churches to \$6.00 per communicant member in light of the funds needed for the upcoming 2025 general synod.

Classis appointed the church at Fergus Maranatha as the convening church for the next classis to be held on June 21, 2024, or the evening prior in the case of a short agenda.

Question period was used. The chairman thanked the brothers for their brotherly cooperation. The acts of classis were adopted and the press release approved. The chairman led in a prayer of thanksgiving. He then declared this assembly closed. 

*Rev. Bryan Vanderhorst,  
vice-chairman at that time*

