



# Clarion

*509* ASPIRATION *515* UNHINDERED GLORY  
*518* REFLECTIONS ON CRCNA SYNOD 2024

# what's inside

As September busyness kicks in, we present you with a smorgasbord of upbuilding pieces on timely topics such as Calvin Vanderlinde's meditation on thankfulness and Arend Witten's wise guidance on smart phone usage. Jim Witteveen's editorial challenges us to maintain God's original command to exercise dominion over the earth in a culture that frequently wants to elevate the earth over humanity. Rick Ludwig's summary of a recent Gospel Coalition Canada conference brings out clearly the encouragement that our Lord Jesus Christ is unstopably gathering and preserving his church, securing her eternal future.

The church, as we know, is not without her struggles. Dick Wynia, with the help of two CRCNA pastors, reflects on that denomination's recent (and surprising!) synod decisions to stand firm on the Bible's teaching concerning human sexuality. Wouldn't reformation among those churches be wonderful? Let's pray for that while also humbly looking to our own house, for we are not immune to worldly influences. To stay Reformed, we need office bearers who love God, study and know his Word, and are able to shepherd Christ's flock with wisdom and grace, and Eric Kampen's article "Aspiration" is a call for all of us to encourage our young men to busy themselves already now in preparing for such leadership. In another installment of *Churches Outside the PARC*, Eric also shows how easy it is for a church to move along the trajectory of deformation.

Ilse VanderMeulen enlightens us on what life is like for a Reformed believer serving as a registered nurse (thanks to all you RNs for the wonderful work you do!). In other articles you'll find the retirement of Rev. Jan Huijgen commemorated, an account of the Versteeg's recent mission trip to Papua, New Guinea, two book reviews, *Ray of Sunshine*, and *Clarion Kids*. We also begin a new column, *Service Snapshots*, which highlights the work of various of our parachurch organizations. And last but not least we leave you with a longer-than-usual article by Matthew VanLuik addressing the ever-sensitive yet so important issue of how abusers and victims are to be treated within the church. This is an expansion on some of his recent editorials which have elicited reader feedback.

May your reading be blessed!

Peter Holtl uwer

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#### EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor in Chief: Peter Holtl uwer  
E: [pholtvluwer@clarionmagazine.ca](mailto:pholtvluwer@clarionmagazine.ca)  
Managing Editor: Laura Veenendaal  
Contributing Editors: Eric Kampen, Jason Van Vliet, Matthew VanLuik, Jim Witteveen

#### CONTENT INQUIRIES

E: [editor@clarionmagazine.ca](mailto:editor@clarionmagazine.ca)

#### ADMINISTRATIVE INQUIRIES

W: [clarionmagazine.ca](http://clarionmagazine.ca)  
E: [publisher@clarionmagazine.ca](mailto:publisher@clarionmagazine.ca)  
T: 204-663-9000

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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
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# FULFILLING THE DOMINION MANDATE

In November 2021, Sumas Prairie, an agricultural area in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, was affected by serious and destructive flooding. The flood caused millions of dollars of damage to crops, barns, homes, and equipment, as well as much suffering for residents of Sumas Prairie and their livestock. As usual in events such as these, there were a number of scapegoats on hand who could readily be blamed for this “natural” disaster.

A recent study published by the University of British Columbia has proposed its own solution to the problem of flooding in this area. Rather than strengthening the dyke and drainage system that since the 1920s has transformed a large, shallow lake into agricultural land, the group behind the study argues that the farmland known as Sumas Prairie should be allowed to return to its natural state. Doing so, the study’s authors claim, will promote “healthy food systems and ecological reconciliation,” and provide an opportunity to “incorporate indigenous laws and knowledge,” which is “essential for developing more sustainable and just solutions.”

## TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PAGANISM

You may not have heard of Sumas Prairie, and you may not know that the lake was drained in 1924 to create some of the most highly productive and fertile farmland in Canada. But allowing Sumas Prairie to return to its natural state would have a huge negative impact on Canadian food production, and on the livelihood of many. However, for us as Christians, the importance of this story goes far beyond politics and economics.

The UBC report couches its findings in the terms of talking points that dominate much public discourse in our nation—sustainability, “justice,” climate change, and indigenous rights. But at bottom, its rejection of man’s responsibility to exercise dominion over creation is emblematic of what happens to those who hate God, hate his Word, hate his commandments, and reject his wisdom. Among our political and intellectual elites, the Christian understanding of man’s dominion mandate has been rejected and replaced with a pagan philosophy that is ultimately anti-human in nature.

We know that not every intervention that man has made in the created world has had positive results. Whether because of unintended consequences, a lack of foresight, or simply a lack of concern about long-term results of development projects, much damage has been done to creation by mankind. Development

has often been done for reasons that are limited to economics and politics, the true end of dominion long forgotten, and negative consequences result. However, this is not a problem that is inherent to the dominion mandate itself. Rather, it is the result of sin. The true exercise of dominion will always be done with the genuine “greater good” in mind—the glorification of God which can only be achieved by living in obedience to his revealed will.

## DON'T BE EMBARRASSED

When we defend and promote the dominion mandate in relation to the created world, we are very much swimming against the cultural tide. Given much modern thinking about the subject, and the way in which unbiblical ideologies dominate public discourse, it is a challenge to speak honestly and boldly in a biblical manner about our calling to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, exercising dominion over the fish and the birds and every living thing that moves on the earth. The biblical understanding of human dominion over creation runs contrary to much modern thinking to such a great extent that many Christians have become embarrassed about what God’s Word has to say about this subject. This has led many Christians to downplay the dominion mandate, to ignore it, to try to explain it away, or to deny its current applicability completely.

The answer to sinful and destructive domination of creation is not the rejection of the dominion mandate but our renewed commitment to fulfil it. Given man’s fall into sin, this is only possible in Christ. This in turn means that our calling to fulfil the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20) is of the utmost importance in bringing about widespread obedience to the dominion mandate. It is *regeneration* that is the answer to the environmental challenges that we face, and not a return to the ethics of paganism and the divinization of nature. As we bring God’s Word to our increasingly godless culture and encounter opposition, the answer is not to compromise but to boldly stand on the firm foundation of God’s Word. Only there is the solution found. 



**Jim Witteveen**

Missionary to Brazil

Sent by Aldergrove Canadian Reformed Church

[jim.witteveen@protonmail.com](mailto:jim.witteveen@protonmail.com)

# THANKLESSNESS RECTIFIED

*Take care lest you forget the LORD your God . . . lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God – DEUTERONOMY 8:11–14*

The gravitational pull of the sinful human heart is toward thanklessness. This aspect of our fallen condition is expressed not simply by the failure to verbalize a “thank you” or with conduct that is boastful or blissfully ignorant. At its core, thanklessness reveals a spiritual dullness and lack of recognition and appreciation for the abundant goodness and grace of God. Because of this great sin we need a Saviour.

The Bible identifies ingratitude as one of the defining characteristics of a godless and unbelieving life. In Romans 1:21, Paul places alongside pride and idolatry and various forms of depravity and rebellion the fact that mankind “did not honor God or give thanks to him.” Clearly, thanklessness is not insignificant. It must therefore be rooted out and rectified.

This requires us take notice of how thanklessness reveals itself in everyday life. It develops subtly as it creeps into life when hearts grow cold to God and forgetful of his goodness. This gives birth to a failure to acknowledge God and recognize our total dependence on him. It takes for granted his gifts, such as life and breath and health and wealth, or turns them into idols so that we become enamoured with the gifts and forget the Giver. This is exactly what the people of Israel were warned against in Deuteronomy 8.

In addition, ingratitude fails to truly appraise who we are and what we deserve. An ungrateful heart does not view itself as needy except perhaps for a little touch up or a tiny tweak here or there. This dovetails with a sense of expectancy and entitlement in which we think we deserve everything we want and have the right to grumble whenever we do not get it. True gratitude is also spoiled by a prideful attitude which believes that we can take credit for our possessions and achievements or covet the blessings God has given to others.

So how is thanklessness rectified? It begins with a humble heart. A humble heart repents of its sinful thanklessness and recognizes that there is nothing we have that we have not received (1 Cor 4:7). We deserve nothing, but we have received everything in Christ. He died to save us from all our sins including thanklessness and he lived to fulfill all righteousness including thankfulness, which he then imputes to us. When we remember what God has given us

physically and materially, and certainly spiritually and eternally, it will be apparent that we have been abundantly blessed and have innumerable reasons to be thankful always.

God warns against forgetting him and encourages us, even commands us, to live thankfully. This is not because he desires that we perform a divine courtesy. To give thanks in all circumstances is his will for us in Christ Jesus (1 Thess 5:18). This requires us to be mindful, intentional, and committed in expressing thanks in word and deed (Col 3:17). It is our calling to be thankful since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb 12:28). Everything in this life can be shaken and will eventually be taken away. While we are thankful for these things, even though they pass away, our thankfulness is not limited to them. The best is yet to come.

As we scour both the world and the Word, we discover signposts everywhere pointing to the Giver, the One from whom all blessings flow. 

## FURTHER READING:

Colossians 3:1–17

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

1. How do prosperity and poverty both tempt us to thanklessness and how must Christians respond in either situation?
2. Make a list of what you are thankful for. Consider categorizing them under God himself (his nature and work in history and redemption), spiritual blessings (those you have now and those you do not have yet), and temporal blessings (whatever enjoyments you may experience in daily life). Consider turning this list into a prayer of thanksgiving.



**Calvin Vanderlinde**

Minister

Nooksack Valley American Reformed Church

[calvinvanderlinde@gmail.com](mailto:calvinvanderlinde@gmail.com)



# ASPIRATION

ERIC KAMPEN

A question that can be asked of young children is, “What would you like to be when you grow up?” It is interesting to hear their answers. Many youngsters will talk about becoming a firefighter, astronaut, doctor, or operating a bulldozer, or one of many other possibilities. As the children grow older, the question will be rephrased in terms of what one’s aspirations are. Based on the responses, we can say we have aspiring artists, engineers, entrepreneurs, along with aspiring ministers. When one aspires, there is a desire for a certain goal, but the goal has not been reached yet. One who aspires will also be working towards that goal.

Among the aspirations just mentioned is the aspiration to the office of Minister of the Word. There is appreciation and respect for young men who have that aspiration and start working towards that goal by pursuing post-secondary studies. The aspiration for the office of minister is encouraged in Article 20 of the Church Order where it says that “the churches shall endeavour that there be students of theology, extending financial aid to those who are in need of it.” It is also encouraged in regular prayer for the Seminary, as well as prayer that the Lord will continue to stir up the hearts of men to pursue training for the ministry.

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## *Learning is not limited to attending courses*

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### **ASPIRATION FOR OFFICE**

But how would we respond to a five-year-old who says, “I would like to be a deacon when I grow up”? Further, how do we look at an eighteen-year-old, being interviewed by the consistory for profession of faith, who says, “I hope to serve as an elder at some point in my life”? We can take this one step further and ask how we look at a brother in his late twenties who openly states he aspires to the office of deacon or elder. For the five-year old, we may think that, because of his age, he wants to be a deacon because they get to walk around and collect money during the worship service. For the eighteen-year-old, we may think he is talking a bit too old-mannish for his age. For the one in his late twenties, would the openly expressed aspirations make us rather hesitant to vote for him if he is nominated because, well, he seems to want it too much?

When we think of Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 3:1, however, it is with respect to the office of elder that he speaks of aspirations. We read, “The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.” The word *overseer* is one of the terms in Scripture used for the office of elder. It brings out the aspect of supervising and looking after others. This implies exercising some authority over people.

### **ENCOURAGING GODLY ASPIRATION**

It may appear that someone aspiring to this task wants to boss others around. If one aspires to this task to rule over others, it is a wrong aspiration. The right way to see the task of overseeing is that of being a shepherd who protects, guides, and feeds the flock. In the world, the leaders rule over others. In the church, leaders are to serve others by their leadership.

When we take what Scripture teaches about the office of elder, we see that being a leader in the church is pastoral. We hear this in the way Peter tells the elders to “shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet 5:2, 3). This shepherd-like attitude is also true for the deacons. They too are to tend the flock.

In light of Paul’s words to Timothy, it would only seem fitting that, as we value and encourage young men who aspire to the office of minister, we do so no less for those who aspire to the offices of elder and deacon. We should not just smirk when a five-year-old says he would like to be a deacon someday or get uncomfortable

when a brother in his late teens or twenties speaks of his aspirations for the office of elder. Rather, by analogy to what is said about students for the ministry, the churches should see to it that there be students of the office of elder and deacon. Just as the churches will pray that the Lord stir the hearts of men to study for the ministry, the churches should pray that the Lord stir the hearts of men to aspire to and study for the other offices. This prayer is important, for we confess that the Lord will only grant his gifts to those who constantly and with heartfelt longing ask him and thank him for his gifts. If we are not conscientious about this and lay it before the Lord in prayer, we may end up in a situation where we have a shortage of brothers suitable for office.

### **TRAINING FOR THE OFFICES**

If we continue to carry through the analogy between the office of the minister of the Word and the offices of elder and deacon, there is also the aspect of training. Article 19 of the Church Order speaks of the churches maintaining an institution for the training for the ministry. We don’t have such an institution for the training of elders and deacons. To be sure, speeches are given about aspects pertaining to the offices, but there is no comprehensive program.

While it may be appealing to develop a program, there are many logistical problems. For those aspiring to the ministry of the Word, it is possible to devote a number of years to study before entering an office, which will require their full-time attention. For the other offices, one never knows when one may be chosen for office and terms are limited to three years. Further, while aspiring to an office, one never knows if one will ever be called to serve. It is not possible for brothers to take off time from work and family to follow some courses just in case one is nominated, or once one has been chosen to office.

The problem, however, is not as big as it may seem. Learning is not limited to attending courses. Much learning takes place incidentally as one moves through the stages of life. One just needs to take advantage of those regular routines of Christian life which prepare a person for the day he may be called to an office. We can think of regular Bible reading and prayer in the home, diligent attendance at the worship services, and taking advantage of opportunities for communal Bible study. We are dealing here with the basic means of grace. They are powerful tools of the Spirit for our regeneration and sanctification. Further, one would do well to avail himself of good Reformed literature. A subscription to *Clarion* and other Reformed magazines will

bear much fruit if read faithfully. Further, there are many live or live-streamed seminars. Diligent use of these means will provide spiritual food for growth and faith and give awareness of what is living in the churches. An office bearer needs to be informed.

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

For those aspiring to office, it is also important to focus on personal spiritual development. With a view to the offices, one will do well to reflect on Paul's list of personal characteristics for office bearers in 1 Timothy 3. Those aspiring to office should hold this up as a spiritual model for the way they live. We can add to this the fruit of the Spirit Paul gives in Galatians 5. It is true that each Christian is to keep in step with the Spirit, but those who lead are to show that they are

making spiritual progress in their lives. Sincere self-evaluation will lead to humble confession and daily prayer for strength to grow in grace and knowledge.

While the things mentioned so far can be applied to all Christians, the aspiration for an office also calls for a more focused approach geared to the requirements of office. An office bearer should be well grounded in Scripture, the confessions, and church polity. Many councils have the practice of working through a book related to the offices. This is a good practice, but these books should not be the first exposure to literature of this nature. The aspiring office bearer should already have a good basic library. What follows is a suggested reading list.<sup>1</sup>

## READING LIST

### DOCTRINE:

- \* *Growing in the Gospel: Sound Doctrine for Daily Living*, J. Van Vliet

### OFFICES:

- Biblical Eldership*, Alexander Strauch
- \* *Called to Serve: Essays for Elders and Deacons*, M. Brown (ed)  
*Church Elders: How to Shepherd God's People Like Jesus*, Jeramie Rinne  
*Deacons: How They Serve and Strengthen the Church*, Matt Smethurst
- \* *Faithful and Fruitful: Essays for Elders and Deacons*, W. Boekstijn and S. Swets (eds)  
*Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons (9Marks)*, Thabiti M. Anyabwile  
*Paul's Vision for the Deacons*, Alexander Strauch

- \* *The Deacon: Biblical Foundations for Today's Ministry of Mercy*, C. Van Dam

- \* *The Elder: Today's Ministry Rooted in All of Scripture*, C. Van Dam

- \* *With a Shepherd's Heart*, John Sittema

### CHURCH POLITY:

- \* *With Common Consent*, W. W. J. Van Oene

### CHURCH HISTORY:

- \* *Sharing in Abraham's Blessing: The Spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem to the End of the Earth*, E. Kampen

### WORSHIP:

- \* *Aiming to Please: A Guide to Reformed Worship*, W. Bredenhof
- \* *Come Let us Worship the Lord*, P. Feenstra

- \* *The Beauty of Reformed Liturgy*, G. Van Dooren

- \* *Worship Matters*, C. Van Dam

### CHURCH MEMBERSHIP:

- Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus*, Jonathan Leeman  
*Devoted to God's Church: Core Values for Christian Fellowship*, Sinclair B Ferguson

### PREACHING:

- \* *Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God's Word Today*, David R. Helm

## PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

The suggested reading list may seem a bit daunting. The key thing to note, though, is that aspiration is not only *desiring* but also *working* to achieve a particular goal. The genuineness of aspirations is shown in the effort to achieve it. By comparison, an aspiring artist who never seeks to develop his or her skill is not truly aspiring.

At the same time, it should be remembered that learning is a process. An aspiring artist or musician will spend years achieving their goal. To reach the goal, they must begin with the basics and build from there. It is the same for those aspiring to an office. To that end, I offer some practical suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Rev. P. Feenstra for some of the suggested titles. I suggest starting with books marked with an asterisk.

First, as we pray for men to aspire to the office of minister, we should pray for men to aspire to the offices of elder and deacon.

Second, just as we commend and encourage those who aspire to the office of minister, we should commend and encourage those who aspire to the offices of elder and deacons. The younger sisters in the congregation could encourage the younger men in this by making it clear that they highly esteem spiritually mature young men who makes servicing the Lord and his church the priority in their lives.

Third, as men training for the ministry are given opportunities for internships, consistories and councils will do well to keep an eye out for men with office bearer qualities and find opportunities for them to serve in the congregation.

Fourth, while as churches we are ready to extend financial aid to students for the ministry who need it, parents and wives can do this on a much simpler level by giving books (such as those listed above) to their sons/husbands on birthdays and other special occasions and encouraging them to affirm their aspiration by reading them.

## CONCLUSION

It has to be realized that aspiration does not mean that one will end up serving in an office. This is true for many other aspirations, as not all are realized. When it comes to an office, one must wait for the time one is called. Just the same, the saying is true that if one aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. When there is that aspiration, when it is prayed for, when there is the encouragement of fellow believers, and when there is a using of the means at hand, the churches will be provided with elders and deacons, along with ministers, to pastor Christ's flock.

May the Holy Spirit stir the hearts of many men to aspire to the



**Eric Kampen**  
Minister Emeritus  
Canadian Reformed Church of Orangeville  
rev.e.kampen@gmail.com

offices in the church and prepare themselves so that when called, they are ready to serve. 📖

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# *Your Brain is a* **MUSCLE**

AREND WITTEN

“Don’t go there.” It’s the advice I received when preparing a talk for a group of Christian young people. Once you start your curmudgeonly critique of social media, they’ve stopped listening. Although I’m confident our *Clarion* readers are more fair-minded, does anyone need to make the argument demonstrating the addictive distracting power of social media anymore? In this article I’d like to defend the thesis that not only is it important to be aware of the damage of digital distraction, but that we can be deliberate in training our minds to concentrate better.

Does it matter if I “doom scroll” while in the grocery line up? While using the bathroom? It’s dead time anyways. Someone might say, “When I need to concentrate on something important, I can get rid of distractions and be laser-focused.”

## **FLOSSING AND DEEP WORK**

Cal Newport would disagree. He’s the author of *Deep Work, Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*. Newport says you might

think of undistracted concentration like flossing your teeth. I know it is good for me and I could do it . . . if I really wanted to. But that is not true. Once your brain has become accustomed to on-demand distraction, it’s hard to shake the addiction, even when you want to concentrate. The brain, he argues, is a muscle.

Now, I’m not sure if “the brain is muscle” can be said with any kind of anatomical accuracy (you can Google that yourself). But it is a helpful metaphor. As biceps atrophy for lack of exercise, so distracting habits like mindless scrolling, compulsive message checking, and undisciplined meandering through the internet diminish our capacity for deep, concentrated work.

I’m conscious as a preacher that it is important for a sermon to have a clear line of thought and not wander around. A significant block of time spent concentrating is needed to draft a sermon manuscript. Similarly, to sit in church and actively listen to biblical exposition requires prolonged focus. Maybe you’ve had the experience while praying that your mind can wander while you bring

your petitions to your heavenly Father. It is not good. Our family relationships and jobs also benefit when we are focused on what is important.

Would it not be helpful to be able to concentrate better? How much time is frittered away through distraction? Is your time being wasted? I use an iPad instead of paper while preaching. Every Sunday morning, unasked for, it gives me a “weekly device usage report.” It is not hard to discover the answer to these types of questions.

## MEDITATION & MARTHA

We can follow this line of thinking further and say that distraction is not innocuous. Scripture calls us to be deliberate about what we fill our minds with. Paul was appealing for this in Philippians 4:8, when he instructed Christians on what to think about. The inspired psalmist often refers to his habit of meditating on God’s truth (Ps 119:15, 48, 78). By meditating he means reflecting deeply, pondering, and turning something over in his mind. Timothy was commanded by the apostle to “think over what I say” (2 Tim 2:7). On the other hand, Proverbs warns against the results of chasing fantasies. “Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty” (28:19). Martha comes to mind when we think about being distracted. She was even gainfully occupied but was missing what was most important at that moment (Luke 10:41).

## PASCAL’S PERSPECTIVE

Tony Reinke in his book, *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You*, quotes Blaise Pascal, the seventeenth century mathematician. Pascal lived without computer or cell phone, yet his observations seem prescient for today. “We want to complexify our lives,” he writes. “We don’t have to, we want to. We want to be harried and hassled and busy. Unconsciously, we want the very thing we complain about. For if we had leisure, we would look at ourselves and listen to our hearts and see the great gaping hole in our hearts and be terrified, because that hole is so big that nothing but God can fill it.” His point is that the human appetite for distraction is high because we are afraid to be silent and think about what really matters. That surely is a fear Christians do not want to share.

So, what can be done to push back against a distracted mind? If you’re persuaded you could grow here, what follows are six practical habits I’ve gleaned:

## BUILDING MUSCLE

1. Don’t start the day with a phone. Give the fresh first fruits of your mind to what is most valuable. Spend time in reading and prayer before checking email and messages.

2. Be deliberate about the internet. Plan, for example, at what times of the day you will check email. When you resist using the internet on impulse it builds will power and weakens its addictive lure. Even if your work requires you to keep abreast with communications every fifteen minutes, it is better to work at that interval than on impulse.
3. Practice memorization. Newport commends memorizing the order of cards in a deck as a cognitive exercise. It is fascinating how ordinary people can learn to perform this feat. But a Christian I think can find more valuable things to memorize. The psalmist speaks of storing up Scripture in his heart (Ps 119:11).
4. Practice interval training. For runners that means mixing short sprints with jogging. For thinkers that means occasionally giving yourself a tight deadline to complete a cognitively demanding task (reading an article, finishing math homework). President T. Roosevelt was apparently known for this habit. The mental pressure has positive results for your powers of concentration.
5. Practice productive meditation. While commuting, walking, doing the dishes—any task that does not require full concentration—assign yourself a definite task to think through. Perhaps plan an email. Or arrange your schedule. Replay Sunday’s sermon in your mind. You’ll find your concentration will drift often. Keep reigning it in. The payoff for this practice is not in what you get done but in strengthening your ability to concentrate.
6. Embrace boredom. Ironically, to be able to concentrate on things that are interesting, you may have to be okay with being bored sometimes. It stands to reason that a mind accustomed to constant novel stimulation will demand it at times when you are trying to focus. So, the tedium of standing in line at the bank doesn’t need to be relieved with a quick look at the news.

## STEWARDSHIP

Our minds are gifts from the Lord that need to be stewarded. As Christians we don’t want to see our capacity to concentrate eroded by habits of distraction. We want to be able to focus to the best of our ability on what is important. In dependence on the Lord there are things that can be done to grow.



**Arend Witten**  
Minister  
Free Reformed Church of Baldivis, AU  
[arendwitten@gmail.com](mailto:arendwitten@gmail.com)



# *Unhindered Glory*

RICK LUDWIG

**D**owntown Vancouver in late April swelled with hockey fervour as the Canucks were back in the playoffs following three years of futility, excluded from Lord Stanley's pursuit. We drifted along with the throng of local fans as we made our way to Westside Church, a renovated theatre in the heart of the city, to attend The Gospel Coalition Canada's<sup>1</sup> annual conference. A much smaller group was gathering there to spend some concentrated time considering the state of Christ's church in Canada through the lens of the book of Acts. The conference theme, "Acts Once Again," turned out to be a call for Canadian Christians to find hope again in the power of the gospel as it goes out by way of the Holy Spirit through the church. While our excitement was more tempered than the fans

in the street, the teaching provided an encouragement with eternal consequences and a promise of the global recognition of the coronation of our Lord Jesus in the future. Thoughts of raising the Stanley Cup on the west coast paled in significance and grandeur.

Over three days, a number of pastors on the TGC Council presented tailored messages on select passages from the Acts of the Apostles. Michael Reeves, president and professor of theology at Union School of Theology in Bridgend and Oxford, United Kingdom and author of several books, including *Delighting in the Trinity*, was a guest speaker of note, making two plenary presentations. Interspersed were some breakout sessions on a variety of topics of interest including Christian writing, recruiting and

<sup>1</sup> TGC Canada is a fellowship of evangelical churches in the Reformed tradition deeply committed to renewing our faith in the gospel of Christ and to reforming our ministry practices to conform fully to the Scriptures. Pastor Winston Bosch of Streetlight Christian Church has a seat on the TGC Canada Council. <https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/>

# Acts ONCE AGAIN

APRIL 22–24, 2024 | VANCOUVER



developing young pastors, growing women's ministry in the church, a pastor's mental health, welcoming singles, and evangelism in the public square, to name a few. Rather than try to do justice to each presenter's work, I will share an overall impression I walked away with from the teaching that stirred my heart in the face of what often seems like a crumbling church landscape in Canada.

## POWER FROM ABOVE

At the opening of Acts, following the ascension of Christ, the disciples are left staring into the sky, intently looking to see if Jesus would reappear. The angels corrected them by reminding them that Jesus will return in the same way, but not yet. However, power would come from above as the Holy Spirit descends already in Acts 2. And the initial response to this outpouring is the strengthening and surging growth of the church. The health and function of the church would require embracing something new for this group of Jewish converts. A new basis in the apostolic teaching founded on the fulfillment of Old Testament promises in the revelation of Jesus Christ. A new fellowship going beyond common history and ethnicity, spontaneously forming through the alliance of repentance from sin and embraced faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour. A new pattern of worship that did not include sacrifice, or class/gender/race differentiation, but deeper fellowship in the breaking of bread, first day of the week worship gathering, and a sharing of

resources. And a new source of energy through the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, with a doubling down on prayer and a focus on the preaching of the Word with the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper as the means of grace. We were encouraged to not rush past Acts 2, as this is where we learn of the deep roots of the church. Acts 2 had to happen before Acts 17 was possible!

## WATCHMEN ON THE WALL

The question was asked, "How does this early formation of the church fit in a post-Christian context?" Interestingly, over half of Canadians still claim some Christian connection but many have become steadily disconnected from the church, particularly in the last generation. This group, now reaching mature adulthood, who were brought to church and Sunday school as children, have dropped the practice of regular worship and have left their own children biblically unschooled and unmoored from the church, purportedly leaving them free to choose for themselves. This is also a cohort who is now restless and dissatisfied with the culture and whose children are growing up searching for greater purpose. The message of the gospel is as poignant today for bringing meaning and hope as it was in the Greek and Roman culture at the time of Christ's ministry. The churches were encouraged to be *watchmen on the wall* and give the Lord no rest in our prayerful pursuit of the Canadian people through the ministry of the local church.

## THE CHURCH IS CHRIST'S

While all this revealed a solid underpinning for the church in Scripture, something more striking began to emerge in the cumulative teaching. The church *belongs* to Jesus Christ so it will always be *secure*. The church *exists for the glory of God*, and *he will be glorified*. We spent a little time looking at Jesus's warning about the leaven of the Pharisees in Luke 12, which is essentially *self-reliance* and *self-glorification*. The church that loses focus on her purpose and the source of her power becomes a haven of hypocrisy. That means it still looks like a church but brings glory to man rather than God. It is not life-giving. It leads to spiritual death. This also extends to the broader culture. The earth is the Lord's! The story of Herod's death in Acts 12 is alarming. Herod persecuted Christ's church, killing James and imprisoning Peter as a show of his power. He oppressed the food-insecure nations around him and basked in their subservience and resulting adulation. For his hubris, God struck him down in an instant and his body was consumed by worms until he died! "But the word of God increased and multiplied" (Acts 12:24). The contrast is emphatic. This is a teaching that should both steady and confront the church of Christ, particularly in the face of growing apostasy in mainstream churches and in our society at large.

## CHURCH LIFE

The teaching in Acts also provided instruction in a number of practical areas of church life. The story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 is a beautiful illustration of how the gospel crosses cultures. This African, a man who had cultural standing, found no place for himself in Jerusalem as he went to enter the temple of the Lord. In Old Testament terms he was only worthy of castigation and expulsion. He stood outside, cut off. When, at the Spirit's urging and the Ethiopian's request, Philip revealed Jesus Christ to him in the scroll of Isaiah 53, he not only received access to God, but also the one who would take his place, carry his sorrows, and cover his blemishes. There was nothing now that prevented him from being baptized! He was no longer without inheritance or generation as he entered the family of God. He was welcomed based on Christ's merits in the new covenant in his blood.

Acts 15 gives an example of how to deal with trouble in the church. It includes instruction to not only pay attention to the issue or the problem at hand but also to how it is handled. The first response of the church at Antioch over a difference of opinion about circumcision was to move towards the church at Jerusalem to seek clarity amongst the leaders, discern the gospel, and then agree to teach the churches together. Rather than draw a quick

battle line, the energy went into engaging each other with the goal of clarity and unity.

Acts 20 includes Paul's instruction to the Ephesian elders on how to care for the church of Christ. The church, also in Canada, can come under harsh scrutiny and attack, and Paul warns about the presence of fierce wolves entering the sheepfold. Vigilance for the sake of the sheep and pastoral love is at the heart of church leadership. As a result, the Ephesians loved Paul dearly as their pastor, and wept at his departure!

## A GLORIOUS REFLECTION

The conference included many songs of praise, declaring the truths of God's Word for his church and his assurances. Prayers were lifted up that God's name would continue to be proclaimed faithfully in Canadian churches and that people's hearts would turn back to the Lord. Perhaps most encouraging was the reminder of God's blessing for his people in Numbers 6. God is not reliant on the church for his glory. His glory is self evident and self giving. He not only claims it, he also bestows it on his church, the bride of Christ. The glory of his face shines on his people. The story of Acts is worth revisiting for the church time and again. The book closes with a thoroughly battered Paul, under Roman guard, once again rejected by his Jewish brothers, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance. This gives the church perennial hope as we reflect the radiance of Christ through thick and thin, faithfully sharing the gospel, and waiting for the great day of his return on the clouds of heaven. The future is secure for the church, also in Canada, because of our Lord Jesus.

*Shine Jesus shine,  
Fill this land with the Father's glory  
Blaze Spirit blaze, set our hearts on fire.  
Flow river flow  
Flood the nation with grace and mercy.  
Send forth your word.  
Lord and let there be light. ☪*



**Rick Ludwig**

Streetlight Christian Church, Hamilton

[rludwig@kitchingsteepeandludwig.com](mailto:rludwig@kitchingsteepeandludwig.com)



# *Reflections*

## **ON CRCNA SYNOD 2024**

DICK WYNIA



**A**s relayed in the previous article (Issue 11), to the surprise of many within and outside of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, three successive synods (2022, '23, and '24) have made and confirmed decisions which seem to reflect a change in the denomination's direction and return it to a firmly confessional path. Synod 2022 received the Human Sexuality Report, which discussed a range of sexual practices, including homosexual sex, premarital sex, the use of pornography, and transgenderism, and presented recommendations which embodied the historic biblical teaching about sexual morality; the synod adopted the recommendations.

There was little controversy about most of what the report had to say except when it came to same-sex relationships. It identified homosexual sex as sin against the seventh commandment, and clarified that according to Lord's Day 41 of the Heidelberg Catechism it is condemned by God as unchastity. As a result, any member who favours the acceptance of same-sex relationships is not eligible to serve in church office, and any "affirming church" is not eligible for affiliation with the CRCNA.

While it is impossible at this point to speak in any detail about how these decisions will affect the denomination or its possible direction in the long term, it is safe to say that they are creating a great deal of discussion and debate throughout the denomination, and that they will have a significant impact on the CRCNA in a number of ways.

## HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

In order to get a sense of how this apparent change in direction came about, and the implications of the decisions, I spoke with two CRC pastors (Rev. Ken Benjamins, serving the Calvin CRC in Dundas, ON and emeritus pastor Rev. Lambert Sikkema, serving the Visalia CRC in Visalia, CA). What follows is a summary of what I gleaned from that discussion along with my own thoughts.

As the CRCNA entered into more formal discussion about LGBTQ issues, several organizations were formed within the denomination, each representing members who stood on opposite sides on these issues. On the "traditional" side is The Abide Project ([abideproject.org](http://abideproject.org)), whose mission statement says, "For the sake of the true Gospel, the faithfulness of Christ's Church, the glory of God, and the good of His people, we strive for the Christian Reformed Church to uphold the beautiful, Biblical, confessional, and historic understanding of human sexuality in doctrine, discipleship, and discipline." The Abide Project has held several regional and denomination-wide conferences and produced a number of podcasts and articles on various topics related to the issues of human sexuality and life in the denomination. Rev. Benjamins is a member of The Abide Project's leadership team.

There are at least two organizations on the other side: All One Body and Better Together which, like The Abide Project, have produced blogs, articles, and videos explaining and promoting their opinions on human sexuality and how the CRCNA should deal with LGBTQ issues.

All One Body promotes the acceptance of same sex relationships: "All One Body promotes unrestricted participation in all areas of church life by all members who confess Christ as Savior and Lord without regard to sexual orientation or gender

identity. We seek to challenge the voices of fear and accusation that condemn and exclude, that marginalize some and privilege others. We will create generous and grace-filled spaces in which we can all be informed by direct personal engagement through the sharing of our stories" ([allonebody.org](http://allonebody.org)).

Better Together takes a different approach; its aim is to encourage the churches of the CRCNA to accept and tolerate one another, in spite of the significant differences on issues of human sexuality: "We give thanks that God uses the context of our relationships to form and shape us evermore into his likeness. Therefore, we reject any prioritization of secular individualism, schismatic divisions, and actions that sever relationships over matters that do not determine our salvation. Instead, we commit to growing in relationship with each other so that we may better live into Jesus' greatest commandments to love God and love one another" ([bettertogether.church](http://bettertogether.church)). According to pastors Benjamins and Sikkema, Better Together acknowledges that the churches should be guided but not bound by the confessions.

Both Revs. Benjamins and Sikkema believe that the efforts of The Abide Project played a significant role in the decisions of the latest synods. Some have accused The Abide Project of manipulating the synod, but Rev. Benjamins stresses that the organization recognizes and honours the deliberative character of the synod, and that its aim was to provide information that would help classes in selecting delegates to synod and to provide tools for delegates to help them assess issues of human sexuality on the basis of the confessions of the CRCNA. Revs. Benjamins and Sikkema are also convinced that the stance promoted by The Abide Project, and taken by the synods, is the position of the vast majority of members of the CRCNA, and that the progressive position represented in All One Body and Better Together is held by a small minority.

## THINGS HAVE CHANGED

It's not simply a matter of numbers, however. Rev. Sikkema spoke about what he called a change in the "centre of gravity in the CRC." Members of the CRCNA will often speak about "Grand Rapids" (Michigan) the way Canadians speak about "Ottawa," because for all intents and purposes, on a denominational level at least, Grand Rapids is where the leadership of the CRCNA live and work. The headquarters of the various mission, relief, equipping, and publication ministries of the CRCNA are located in Grand Rapids, along with the denomination seminary and Calvin University, which is closely tied to the CRCNA.

These organizations are all located in one of the five classes in the Grand Rapids area, Classis Grand Rapids East, which is

among the most “progressive” classes in the denomination. Eight of the eighteen “affirming churches” listed on the All One Body website are found in Classis Grand Rapids East. According to Rev. Sikkema, the influence of “Grand Rapids” and specifically Classis Grand Rapids East, has pushed the denomination in the progressive direction that it has been following in recent decades. However, pastors Benjamins and Sikkema believe that the recent synodical decisions on human sexuality show that “Grand Rapids” is no longer the “centre of gravity” in the CRCNA.

When I asked them how this came about, both pointed to two particular factors: one is the general trend among the younger generations in Western culture toward more conservative and traditional social and moral positions. As leadership in the CRCNA is transferred from the older to the younger generation, a noticeable shift in a “conservative” direction is also taking place. The second factor to which they pointed is the influx of “ethnic” churches and ministers who have joined the CRCNA in recent years, drawn by the teachings of the Reformed confessions and Reformed church polity.

According to Revs. Benjamins and Sikkema, these churches and their leaders have been a great blessing to the denomination, because their allegiance to the denomination is not based on shared history or generations-long membership in the CRCNA. Rather, their commitment is to the CRCNA’s confessional foundation and its understanding of biblical church government. They are helping to restore a true understanding of what ought to unify the churches of the denomination and have given hope for a sustained revival and reformation in the CRCNA.

## HOW TO IMPLEMENT DECISIONS?

When the CRCNA decided that the position it has taken on issues of human sexuality has confessional status, that raised a number of practical questions for the denomination. How would the decisions relating to human sexuality, especially with regard to same-sex relationships, be applied, practically speaking? What could be done to ensure that “affirming” office bearers and their councils would work to resolve their status: by the office bearer’s views being brought into line with the confessions, or by the office bearer presenting a “confession-revision” *gravamen* to the broader assemblies, or by the office bearer being removed from his office? How would the synod’s decision that “affirming” churches should publicly repent or be disaffiliated from the denomination be worked out?

Undoubtedly, the synod had to find some way to help the churches to address these issues. Synod 2024 declared, “All office-bearers from churches in non-compliance, by actions or any form of media, be placed on limited suspension. That suspension would include a loss of ability to send delegates to classis, synod, the Council of Delegates, or other CRCNA agencies”<sup>1</sup> and that “churches, members, and office-bearers that have declared themselves to be in the status of one in protest with ecclesiastical intent shall be entered into the process of discipline according to the procedures set by Synod 2024 and existing Church Order.”<sup>2</sup>

Adherents of Reformed church polity will not be comfortable with the notion of a synod applying discipline to churches, members, and office bearers. While we may sympathize with the synod, as it looked for a practical way to have its decisions applied among the churches, in principle this approach raises serious concerns. Under Christ, the consistory is the final authority in the church, and the consistory is the body charged with the exercise of discipline. When broader assemblies begin to exercise discipline, they act in a hierarchical manner, assuming authority for themselves that they do not possess, according to the principle of Reformed church government. There are also concerns with this approach on a practical level: might not future broader assemblies use this as a precedent, to carry out unlawful discipline? The implications of taking this approach, both in the short- and long-term, remain to be seen.

Revs. Benjamins and Sikkema acknowledge that these are significant issues but see few alternatives. Essentially, something had to be done to bring the members, office bearers, and churches into conformity with the teaching of the confessions. It is hard to expect affirming churches to lead affirming members and office bearers to renounce their views or resign from membership or office. By the same token, in some situations at least, it’s hard to expect classes to work toward the repentance or disaffiliation of affirming churches. Rev. Benjamins also pointed out that the synod, recognizing the issues surrounding the exercise of discipline by broader assemblies, appointed a study committee to consider these issues and to report and make recommendations to Synod 2026.

The synod instructed the General Secretary of the CRCNA (Rev. Dr. Zachary King) “to prioritize the development of resources to help classes and churches navigate the process towards repentance and restoration or towards disaffiliation.” It provided him with the following guidelines: “These resources and defined process should be in the hands of classes by November 29, 2024. Churches may

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/Advisory%20Committee%208D%20-%20Majority%20-%202024.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/Advisory%20Committee%209A%20-%202024.pdf>

continue in the process, provided there is continued momentum towards repentance and restoration ... or towards the disaffiliation process as outlined in the Church Order, Article 38-f. . . . This process is intended to be completed in one year from the beginning of the limited suspension. A classis may lengthen the suspension for up to one additional year provided the church is participating in the process. The entire process may not exceed two years.”<sup>3</sup> Classis clerks have recently received the General Secretary’s first communication, which provides advice as to how synod’s decisions affect various functionaries (e.g. classis clerks and treasurers, church visitors, classis counselors, and interim committees, etc.).

Revs. Benjamins and Sikkema acknowledge that it is impossible to predict how this will all play out. In addition to the impact these decisions have on the status of some office bearers and churches, there is a question of how they might affect the denominational ministries. According to Rev. Sikkema, as a group the Canadian CRCs are generally more progressive than the American CRCs. For some time, there have been those in the Canadian CRCs who have been promoting the formation of a separate Canadian CRC, and these decisions may play a role in that effort. Rev. Benjamins, for his part, believes that support for the establishment of a separate Canadian CRC is not strong among the Canadian churches.

## REFORMATION IN THE CRCNA?

I asked pastors Benjamins and Sikkema if, in their minds, these decisions heralded a broader return to a stricter adherence to the confessions in the CRCNA, and whether there might be reconsideration of previous decisions about, for example, women’s ordination (since the mid-1990s, the CRCNA has allowed the ordination of women to all offices). They both believe that the denomination has turned a corner, making a clear and explicit

commitment to operate and be bound by the confessions. They also see these developments as the work of the Holy Spirit in the CRCNA and pray that they are indicators of spiritual revival in the denomination.

However, with respect to a possible reconsideration and retraction of the decisions that allow for the ordination of women, they weren’t ready to make any predictions. They see the decisions about homosexual sex as a step in the right direction, and are very thankful for them, but they believe that the CRCNA’s discussions and decisions have been focused on LGBTQ issues “in themselves,” not as part of a broad reformational agenda. That was also the impetus for the formation of The Abide Project, and the main focus of its efforts. In that respect, it’s interesting—and perhaps somewhat revealing—that two of the members of The Abide Project’s leadership team are ordained women. Still, Rev. Benjamins certainly didn’t rule out the possibility that this would become a topic of discussion among the members of The Abide Project, and ongoing efforts to encourage a thoroughgoing submission to the confessions.

So, while the CRCNA has answered some important questions, many questions remain unanswered. It is heartening to see these developments, and we pray that in his mercy, by his Word and Spirit, the Lord will continue to lead the CRCNA back into the way of faithfulness to the confessions and his Word. 



**Dick Wynia**  
*Minister Emeritus*  
Vineyard Canadian Reformed Church, Lincoln  
[dick.wynia@gmail.com](mailto:dick.wynia@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/Advisory%20Committee%208D%20-%20Majority%20-%202024.pdf>

# *The Presbyterian Church* **IN CANADA**

ERIC KAMPEN



In the previous two articles dealing with churches not members of NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council), the focus was on Reformed churches that have shared roots in the Netherlands. In this article, the focus will be on a church which shares Reformed roots in a broader sense, as well as sharing the same country as the Canadian Reformed Churches, namely the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC).

## **HISTORY**

When we consider the shared Reformed roots, the PCC would have been one of the most likely churches Dutch Reformed post-World War II immigrants might have considered joining. After all, Presbyterian churches are indebted as much as Reformed churches to the reformational efforts of John Calvin and others in

Geneva. The term Presbyterian refers to the manner of governing the church through elders. A Reformed church is presbyterian in church government and a Presbyterian church is Reformed in doctrine. It is one of the developments in history that the name Reformed was used for Reformed churches on the European continent, while the name Presbyterian was used for Reformed churches especially in Scotland.

As many people from Scotland were among the early settlers in the country now known as Canada, it is not surprising that Presbyterian churches were established. While initially the settlers continued the many ecclesiastical divisions that had developed over various issues in Scotland, the nineteenth century witnessed unification. The process culminated in 1875 in a union that resulted in the Presbyterian Church becoming the largest Protestant denomination in Canada, with congregations stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It had some 600,000 members, 600 hundred ministers, and more than a thousand congregations. In the Canadian setting, this movement towards unity was stirred up by the reality of living in a huge country with a widely dispersed population, where it simply was not sustainable to transplant the many, often petty, divisions from the home country.

In the first part of the twentieth century, there arose a movement to bring unity among the Presbyterian Church, the Methodists, and Congregationalists. This movement culminated in the establishment of the United Church of Canada in 1925. While 60% of the Presbyterian Church joined in this union, some 40% decided to continue as the Presbyterian Church in Canada. A dispute arose with those who left to join the Union of 1925 about the name Presbyterian Church in Canada, and for some years they identified themselves by adding the word “Continuing.” In 1939, the courts agreed that they were entitled to use the name Presbyterian Church in Canada.

While the Acts and Proceedings (A&P) of all the General Assemblies from 1925 to the present are available via the PCC website ([www.presbyterian.ca](http://www.presbyterian.ca)), it is difficult to glean detailed membership data from the early years. This data is easy to find from 1960 onward. Membership is listed in terms of communicants and households. Baptisms are listed as well, but no total number of baptized children is listed. The membership at the end of 1960 was 198,881 communicant members in 142,310 households. If one assumes a ratio of an equal number of non-communicant to communicant members, this means it had a membership of at least 400,000. Membership numbers peaked in the mid-1960s. By 1970, communicant membership was down to 186,584. At the end of 2022, it was down to 66,632 communicant members. At present, when the count includes adherents (regular attendees but

not members) and children, there are 102,000 members over 780 congregations (*Presbyterian Connector*, Spring 2024).

## WHY NOT IN NAPARC?

Seeing the Reformed and Presbyterian pedigree, one may wonder why the PCC never was involved in NAPARC. One reason was that, at the time of the founding of NAPARC, the PCC had already opened all the offices to women, an automatic disqualifier even if the PCC would have requested membership. As was evident in the removal of the Christian Reformed Church after they opened all offices to women, such a move was and is seen as incompatible with Scripture.

The issue of opening the offices to women had come to the PCC General Assembly (GA) initially in 1953. The GA of 1966 declared all women eligible for ordination. While at first ministers could excuse themselves from involvement in ordination of women, the Acts and Proceedings of 1982 (p. 512) indicate that this option was no longer possible. It stated that “ministers and elders already ordained and inducted within the Presbyterian Church in Canada have freedom of belief on the question of the ordination of women but do not have the freedom of action. By virtue of their ordination vows all are obliged to exercise full ministry including active participation in the ordination of women.” In this it is evident that it was far ahead of developments in both the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church of America.

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION ETC.

As the issue of LGBTQI+ has been playing a role in developments in the CRCNA and the RCA, it merits consideration how this is playing itself out in the PCC. As it is well documented on the PCC’s website, it is easy to trace this history and observe the change of thought on this matter.

First, it is to be noted how back in 1969, “the Board of Evangelism and Social Action communicated approval of the Government of Canada’s proposed legislation to remove homosexual acts between consenting adults in private from the Criminal Code.” This was adopted by the following General Assembly. This did not mean that approval was given to same-sex relationships. Study and discussion from the years 1985–1994 concluded same-sex sexual relationships as being “departures from God’s created order.”

Only a few years later, a committee was appointed to clarify the roles of homosexual and lesbian persons in the church. The GA of 2003 concluded that “homosexual orientation is not sinful and the PCC does not limit its members on the basis of sexual orientation, but could on the basis of sexual practice.”

In 2015, the issue was again on the table of the General Assembly, and it culminated in the decision in 2021 to change the PCC's theology and practice regarding marriage. At one place it is stated that "The PCC holds two parallel definitions of marriage and recognizes that faithful, Holy Spirit filled, Christ centered, God honouring people can understand marriage as a covenant relationship between a man and a woman or as a covenant relationship between two adult persons. That congregations, sessions, ruling and teaching elders be granted liberty of conscience and action on marriage" (A&P 2021, p. 583–584).

## DOWNWARD TRAJECTORY

It also decided that congregations and presbyteries may call and ordain as ministers and elect and ordain as ruling elders LGBTQI+ persons (married or single) with the provision that liberty of conscience and action regarding participation in ordinations, inductions, and installations be granted to ministers and ruling elders (A&P 2019, pp. 5, 47–52).

How much the PCC has bought into the LGBTQI+ agenda is evident in the following decisions of the 2023 General Assembly:

- That the Moderator write to Global Affairs Canada to express support for the efforts of the Government of Canada to stand with the LGBTQI+ community in Uganda and around the world and for its call on the Government of Uganda to revoke its 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act, and to call on the Government of Canada to do everything possible to support the LGBTQI+ community in Uganda and around the world by working with partners supporting communities in situations of vulnerability and persecution.
- That the Moderator work with the Canadian Council of Churches to prepare and issue a unity statement by Christian leaders in Canada in connection with ending harm and violence towards the LGBTQI+ community.
- That the International Affairs Committee and the Life and Mission Agency Committee work together to allocate \$50,000 to agencies that help to settle people who identify as LGBTQI+ and seek refuge in Canada.
- That congregations be encouraged to consider responses in their local communities to acts of hate and harm towards the LGBTQI+ community and sponsorship support of LGBTQI+ refugees (A&P 2023, p. 23).

This brief overview indicates a complete reversal over a period of only a few decades. While at one point it was said same-sex

sexual relationships were a departure from God's created order, it has come to be seen as on par with the covenant relationship between a man and a woman.

It is noteworthy that the language of liberty of conscience and practice is used. It was also used with respect to women's ordination but eventually liberty of practice was removed and only liberty of conscience was left. It is disconcerting to see such a radical reversal even more in light of how under the heading of "What Do We Do?" it is stated that "As a reformed church, we rely on the truth and inspiration of Scriptures for God's guidance into the future—a future that we approach with wonder and anticipation, knowing God is with us."

## OTHER ISSUES

When one peruses the PCC website, one notices matters that would seem to go far beyond the task of the church. This is evident under the Social Action button on the website. Here one will find topics like Ecological Justice, Indigenous Justice, Social and Economic Issues, among others. When one follows the links, it will be evident how the church through its Moderator (spokesman for the church) seeks to address the civil authorities and seems to add its supportive voice to many government policies.

## WEAKNESS & CONFUSION

While the PCC has a rich ecclesiastical history and a considerable web presence, when one sees the slow membership decline, it is a feeble, fading voice. From what has been described, it is evident that the PCC does not offer a truly prophetic voice, but simply echoes the wisdom of the world.

When one considers how mainline Christian churches seem to simply echo the ways of society, while there are other churches that seek to speak according to the Scriptures, the Christian community offers a confused witness in our society.

At the same time, the Word is there and where the Word is, the Spirit is. May the Spirit turn the hearts of many to go back to the foundation of Scripture. 



**Eric Kampen**  
Minister Emeritus  
Canadian Reformed Church of Orangeville  
rev.e.kampen@gmail.com

# MEET MARIEKE

## *Registered Nurse*

ILSE VANDERMEULEN

*Clarion is interviewing various professionals in our Reformed community to highlight how they are serving the Lord in their particular industry or calling. In this issue we interview Marieke Hummelman (age 26), registered nurse at the Pediatric Emergency Room at British Columbia's Surrey Memorial Hospital.*

### **BACKGROUND**

Marieke earned her high school diploma at Providence Reformed Collegiate in Komoka and a Bachelor of Sciences in Nursing at Trinity Western University in Langley. She also obtained an advanced certificate in Pediatric Emergency Specialty Nursing from the British Columbia Institute of Technology. Marieke has volunteered as a camp nurse at Stepping Stones Bible Camp in Deroche, BC, and is involved with their Health & Safety Committee. She is married to Jamie, and they welcomed their first baby in July.

### **TELL US ABOUT THE WORK YOU DO**

Typically, I work twelve-hour day or night shifts at the Pediatric Emergency in Surrey as a registered nurse. The Emergency Unit in Surrey's hospital is separated into adult care and a pediatric unit for children up to seventeen years minus one day. This allows us to be specialized. Kids are anatomically and physiologically very different from adults: children are not "little adults." Even amongst the age ranges care can be very different. If a baby under three months gets a fever, we take that very seriously and do a lot of interventions because their immune system is so much smaller. A common cold for an adult can be an ICU admission for a baby.

In the teenage population, we see a lot of mental health situations, including overdose and suicide attempts. That is very hard emotionally for us as caregivers.



At the Emergency Unit, you never know what to expect and it depends on the role that I have on that shift. As a nurse, you can be on triage, room care, or trauma care. As a triage nurse, I register kids who come in and prioritize the acuity with a scoring system. If a child is very sick, we find room space so we can monitor the patient. When I am a room nurse for the day I take care of these patients. If I am the trauma lead, I have to organize a team when a very sick child comes in, chart what is happening, and delegate tasks to care for the patient.

### **WHAT ARE SOME OF THE JOYS OF DOING THIS WORK?**

Each of the roles at the Pediatric Emergency Unit comes with its pros and cons. I like the management role of the trauma care, being the go-to person and supporting other nurses. I also enjoy dealing with parents and children in the rooms because you build a bit of a deeper relationship with them. It's nice to have a variety of work. I moved up into each of the three roles quite fast when people told me I was ready; that was encouraging.

Working as a triage nurse was anxiety-provoking for me, because I am the person at the front desk, and I have to recognize

right away what care is needed when a child walks in. The responsibility of that is quite intimidating. I'm starting to like it because you can set a certain tone in the waiting room. The other night I had at least thirty children in the waiting room and people were on edge . . . I thought, who am I to be in charge here? My voice was shaking, but I made an announcement to explain the situation: we are very busy, and there is a wait time, but parents with concerns about their child's breathing can come up and talk to me. That helped to ease the tension and a grandmother with a very sick child came forward and we could help them right away.

Being there for people is very rewarding to me. You see them on the hardest days of their lives. My empathy and my skills can make a difference and that feels very good. Kids are very resilient. They can come in very sick, you use your toolkit of medical interventions, and an hour later the situation can be very different. That is amazing to see! And when a parent looks you in the eye and says: "thank you so much," that is heartwarming.

### **WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES OF YOUR JOB?**

The days can be so different from each other. Some days we deal with common colds and coughs and broken bones, and some days we deal with death. We are always over capacity. On a busy day, we see 150 to 180 patients. During winter months we can see anywhere upwards of 250 patients a day. To put this in perspective: we have ten medical beds and twenty chairs. The unit is created to see seventy children a day, so that tells you how much pressure there is! At times we are overrun and we've had conversations about setting up a tent outside or redirecting people to the coffee shop to wait. You feel stretched thin, providing care while in a very chaotic situation. I have thought of quitting this job because of all this stress. But if I don't do it, who will?

The death of a child is the hardest thing to deal with. That stays with you the longest. The feelings and emotions that come over you are so hard, but you need to be there for the parents first and keep your emotions inside as a professional.

To see people on their hardest days also means that I see a lot of brokenness. Especially mental health struggles in teenagers and young people are difficult. A sixteen-year-old who lives on the street with a three-year-old son. My perspective on the world has changed so much. I realize I grew up sheltered in a Reformed family, going to a Christian school and church on Sundays. Surrey is full of rough people, and it can be hard to see the sin and brokenness in so many lives with drugs, alcohol, abuse, and broken relationships. These teens need so much help, but don't always

appreciate the care they receive. It's challenging to communicate to them that they are in a safe place and are cared for, while they yell at you things I never thought I'd hear in my life!

### HOW DOES YOUR FAITH HELP YOU?

After a difficult week at work, it is so good to hear an encouraging sermon. To see the bigger picture of life again through the gospel helps me to be rejuvenated to go back to work again.

It is hard to leave work at work. Especially in the beginning, I went over everything that happened in my day over and over again. There was so much processing in my head. With time and experience, I can handle this better, but prayer has helped me tremendously with this anxiety. There is a certain spot on my way to work where I start to pray: Lord, help me to deal with what this day will hold. Prayer before and after my shifts calms me down.

Also, it is such a blessing to recognizing that the day does not depend on me: God is in control. He gave me gifts and talents to care for these patients, but their lives are not in my hands. In health care you run the risk of thinking that what we do will determine the outcome with all our skills and tools. But at the end of the day, the outcome is in his hands.

More practically, it has been helpful to connect with people at church. My default is to keep all my thoughts and emotions inside of me. I think others won't understand the stress, because they don't know what my job entails. And many of my friends are young parents and I don't want to scare them with what I see at work. There are other emergency nurses at my church, and it has been good to reach out and talk to them. We end our Bible study

evenings with a personal prayer and it has been encouraging to ask for prayer and explain some of the challenges I'm facing in my work so others understand it better.

### WHAT DO YOU BRING TO THIS ROLE AS A REFORMED BELIEVER?

In my work, I truly realize the value of life: each person, no matter what brokenness patients face or what life choices they made, their life has value because they are created by God no matter how tainted by sin. That comes into play in my job in how I treat people [laughs] . . . no matter if they yell at you!

I can show my faith by communicating kindness and taking an extra twenty seconds to see what someone's concern is, recognizing that everyone is important. Also with my coworkers: I might not talk much about my faith during busy shifts, but they notice I am a Christian. And actions speak louder than words.

As a Reformed believer, I have peace. I trust that the outcome of my work is up to God. That knowledge gives tremendous comfort, especially when a patient passes. When that happens, it's not my fault, or the doctor's fault. We do what we can, but this was meant to be. It is all part of God's plan. **C**



**Ilse VanderMeulen**  
Elora, Ontario  
[ilsevandermeulen@hotmail.com](mailto:ilsevandermeulen@hotmail.com)

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# RETIREMENT OF

## *Rev. Jan Huijgen*

On the chilly Friday evening of April 19<sup>th</sup> at Coaldale Canadian Reformed Church, congregation members as well as guests in attendance bid a grateful farewell to the beloved Rev. Jan. Huijgen, his wife Dinnie, and their son Lars. The evening was well attended with members of the congregation as well as other guests.

### FOND FAREWELLS

Chairman of the council Joel Vandermolten opened the evening with the reading of Psalm 33 as well as prayer. He read from a poem titled *The Man at The Gate of The Year*. In the words of this poem, we say “God knows. His will is best. The stretch of years which winds ahead . . . are clear to God.” For Rev. Huijgen and his family, this chapter of their life has ended and a new one begins.

After Joel’s opening words, Rev. Van Leeuwen from Calgary gave a farewell on behalf of Classis Alberta. He pointed out that the theme of the work of a pastor is to proclaim the Word of God. He thanked Rev. Huijgen for his continuous contributions of wisdom and insight to classis as well as to church visits. On behalf of the Calgary CanRC, Rev. Van Leeuwen gave a personal thanks for helping the spiritual well-being of his church and the friendship shared within the ministry. Letters from the two CanRCs in Edmonton were read, expressing appreciation to the retiring minister for his diligence in church visits and for being a faithful servant of the

Lord throughout his ministry. Hope was also expressed that he would find fulfillment in a new season of life.

### A FEW LAUGHS

After the letters were read, we moved to a more comical farewell from the church’s women’s Bible study group. This was through a catchy lyric, wishing the Huijgens a “see you later.” One lyric was particularly important for our minister: “. . . with Kleenex and *dropes* in tow.” He seemed to always have a pack of Kleenex on the pulpit when he preaches. They also mentioned Dinnie Huijgen’s singing abilities in the choir and thanked her for her sometimes “false” contributions.

Rev. Gerard Veurink took the spotlight and spoke on behalf of the Barrhead church, wishing a congratulations and blessing in Pastor Huijgen’s retirement as well as the continuance of service in a new place. He encouraged the elders during the time of vacancy ahead. Joel Vandermolten took a moment to list lighthearted benefits of aging: when you buy something new it won’t need to be replaced; everything just starts to click . . . when you walk, when you sit and stand. The list goes on. He then welcomed Irene Leffers, who spoke of her family’s time spent with Lars; he touched the hearts of so many people with his bright attitude and joyful spirit, and he will be greatly missed among the congregation.



The congregation sang Hymn 78 while the Coaldale Canadian Reformed Choir, some students from CCS, and Julianna Bouma on the flute assembled for two beautiful pieces of music, “There is a Redeemer” and “I will Serve the Lord All My Days.” The second focused on serving God in all of life—a beautiful story of the life of a Christian in service to God.

Paul and Yolanda Schoen shared their story of their trip to Ontario and their visit to the Huijgen’s new house in Fergus through several pictures, a little narration, along with a few jokes in between. Janita Veurink, representing Coaldale East Bible study, expressed thanks through a short pass-the-gift game: each wrapping had a little note on it describing something about someone, and whoever had the gift passed it on to the person that it could be describing. In the end it ended up in the hands of “the person who blows his nose the most while on the pulpit.” As the crinkle of paper was heard through the crowd, everyone waited with anticipation: two coffee table books on Western Canada and the Rockies.

## APPRECIATION & ENCOURAGEMENT

Trevor Hofsink thanked the minister for the work he has done for the Taber church and wished him well in his forthcoming new service. “Behind every good preacher is a great woman,” he said, thanking Dinnie for being a great helper for her husband and thanking Lars for the joy he brings everywhere he goes. The youth group then presented the family with a gift basket for their new chapter of life. This was followed by singing Psalm 134 after which Winston Hoogerdyk sang “Friends are Friends Forever,” accompanied by Sylvia Hofsink—a very personal and touching solo!

Rob Van Middlekoop on behalf of the church council presented a gift to the family and shared some information on Rev. Huijgen’s work. He has been with Coaldale church for eight years. In that time there has been 106 births, 116 catechism students, 79 professions of faith, 27 weddings, 9 funerals, and approximately 550 sermons. From the council, a picture of the Lethbridge train bridge

was gifted to the family, a beautiful reminder of the work of human hands done for the glory of God.

Rev. Huijgen’s son came up and thanked the congregation for being part of his family and being the family that they didn’t have while they were here. The life of a minister’s child means lots of moving and lots of busy schedules. They started their life in Holland and then they moved to Fergus, Smithers, Cloverdale (for a family vacation where it was “just us,” Dad got to cook, and Mom got a break). Later they moved to Burlington where the kids continued in their schooling. Then some children had enough of the moving, and one by one the home became quite empty. The Reverend and his wife and Lars moved on to Attercliffe where they didn’t see much of their family; then they ended up in Coaldale.

Rev. Huijgen finished off the evening with a final farewell and some words of reflection and encouragement. He thanked the congregation for caring for Lars and making him feel welcome; he kindly mentioned Coaldale as the family he didn’t know he could have. “It is never a goodbye for a family of faith” he said, pointing out Moses’s farewell—“it is about confidence in the one whose hand we take. We give thanks to God for all of you, are praying for you, for your labour of love. May your lives be filled with joy and may the God of peace sanctify you and may you be kept blameless in body and soul. Go forth in the strength of the Lord knowing he is faithful.” He ended the evening with a word of prayer asking for courage, wisdom, and strength to do all the tasks that are ahead, knowing that in the Spirit we will never be truly separated.

Reverend, you and your family will be greatly missed among the congregation! We thank you for all the work that you have done in faithful service. With love we echo the words: “The LORD bless you and keep you, the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you, the LORD turn his face towards you, and give you peace.”

*Meaghan Diek*

# Update

## FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA

HENRY AND RITA VERSTEEG

We greet you from Sentani, Papua! On May 2, we flew with Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) pilot Mike Brown from Sentani via Okhika to Manggelum. Okhika is a village in a mountain valley about a thirty-five-minute flight away from Manggelum. I (Rita) found myself gripping the edges of my seat and praying for the pilot's guidance to safely fly our aircraft into this remote village. We stood (sat) in awe of the expertise of the MAF pilots who daily fly through these awesome but very high and steep mountain ranges! Since Manggelum now has a long one-kilometre asphalt airstrip, we were able to land there rather than on the usual wide and deep Digul River with the float plane.

### VISITING MANGGELEM

We were warmly welcomed to Manggelum in their traditional style and escorted to our house where we were met by a number of guitarists (on regular guitars, home-made guitars, and a huge two-stringed guitar) and others singing a Wambon welcome concert. There were many hugs, handshakes, and tears, and people introducing themselves as a son or daughter or a grandchild of so and so whom we knew and had passed away. We had not been to visit this church for nine years.

It is amazing how large the village has become! When we first came to Manggelum in 1978, there were only about five houses. Now there are fifty-plus homes divided over six districts in Manggelum. Many homes are now built with a cement floor and walls with windows, some having plank walls. The church building is also going through quite a rehab. Almost everyone has electricity in their homes powered by 350 large solar panels just outside Manggatiga.

Clockwise from top left; Yan and Sila; aerial of Manggelum; walking from the airtrip to our house; Manggelum church building.







The congregation of Manggelum.

Our house is now part of the village of Manggelum. We enjoyed having Hengki and Johanna Keringerre and their family of two boys and a girl as neighbours across from us. Hengki was one of the team of Bible translators of the Wambon Bible consisting of Genesis and the New Testament, the other OT books to be completed at a later date. Hengki has a university degree in teaching and teaches a number of subjects in the Manggelum Elementary School including religion. Yohanna, a kindergarten teacher, has started teaching a kindergarten class using our house!

In our daily walks, we regularly passed by the Medical Clinic in Manggelum which is run by the government. They apparently have twenty personnel with two doctors, a number of nurses, and a few other medical personnel. It sounds wonderful but, in reality, half the personnel at any given time may be away to pick up their wages and goods in Tanah Merah, a day's travel by long boat. There were only two staff at the clinic while we were there. The local people were not very complimentary with their comments about medical care. The sick would only get three days of medicine to cure their tropical sores or other medical issues. An hour before we left Manggelum we heard that one of the women was in labour. She was expecting twins but since the two staff present were men, they would not help her with the delivery. We pray that she may at least have received the help of someone who cared and that her babies were safely delivered.

## PERSEVERING ELDERS

Saturday morning Henry met with five elders who were present in the village. There is a minister and an elder-evangelist and six elders. Sadly, the minister has fallen into sin, having committed adultery. The office bearers immediately suspended him from service. The minister is giving the elders a hard time. He feels that once he has paid the compensation for his "error," he can continue in ministry. However, the elders wanted to deal with this matter biblically and by following the church order, which requires him to be deposed from the ministry via classis. The elders showed significant maturity. Two have been elders for many years and are giving good leadership and training to the others. The elders refused to let themselves be intimidated by the pastor. As you can imagine, this is a very difficult time for the elders and congregation, for which they request much prayer and wisdom.

Hengki Keringere is not only an ordained elder but has been appointed by the elders to be their evangelist. Hengki is a humble man and has a servant heart. He has been giving catechism classes to the youth and also led a profession of faith class, which the minister failed to do. He preferred to visit the five church plants in the outlying villages of Manggelum. Thankfully, Rev. Rokotkay from Klokam, an outlying church plant of Manggelum, was willing to administer the sacraments, Lord's Supper, and adult and children baptism at the river.

The brothers asked Henry to preach on Sunday, which he did from Acts 1:6–11 since Thursday would be Ascension Day. He spoke about how the disciples were to be instrumental in establishing the kingdom of Christ. Yet Christ used simple, uneducated fishermen who not only heard the Lord Jesus's teachings but also saw the Lord Jesus's lifestyle. So too each church member can be and should be instrumental in furthering Christ's kingdom through witnessing about him in teaching others and in their Christ-like lifestyle.

The church was full despite the fact that only about 40% of the local residents were in the village at that time. This is because parents go down to Tanah Merah during the school year for further education of their children, grades 7–12. The locals said that during the holiday when all the parents and children are back, the church is overfull with many people standing outside. For that reason they have begun to build a second building in another district in Manggelum. The congregation presently consists of 384 members (147 communicant; 237 baptized only) while many in the village also come to hear the gospel being preached. May they too be moved by the Spirit to commit themselves to Christ for his glory and their salvation!

We had a wonderful time of worship and fellowship with the brothers and sisters in Manggelum. We thank the Lord that we could be there for them at this time, encouraging them through difficult times. Many said that they remembered the words we said as we stood on the floats of the float plane back in 1995 when we were about to board the plane and so continued to hold on to the faith despite hard times. May the Lord hear their prayers and give them strength to remain faithful to him. We are thankful for the strong office bearers.

## IN SENTANI

When we returned to Sentani, we had an opportunity to meet with Rev. Yan & sr. Seli Wambrauw. From him we learned a lot about the spiritual life of the church of Waena and the Reformed Churches in Papua as a whole. There is much reason for praise for the Lord has allowed more than 100 churches and church plants to spring up! However, there is a great lack of preachers and particularly ministers. We pray that the Lord will bless the churches as more young men are attending two of our Reformed seminaries established in Sumba and Kalimantan Barat.

Rev. Wambrauw was not available the day we arrived back on the coast. That is because he was at the Justice department. The issue is that the person who signed documents on behalf of the

church when we bought the Waena church property in the 1980s claims that the land is his because his signature is on the documents. The original documents which the Department of Justice require are no longer where they were supposed to be and thus this matter is now in the hands of a lawyer.

We see again that where the Lord is building his church, the devil is nearby ready to break down the Lord's work. But the Lord is almighty and faithful, and we trust he will bless those who fight for him. Again, this matter is in need of much prayer.

Lastly, both in the interior and on the coast we constantly received requests for books: Bibles and Psalm books, as well as *The History of Salvation* and *The Simplified Catechism* books. There is great need for more books. They are available on the coast, but the primary issue is the cost of flying the books to the interior, which is very expensive.

## PRAISE & PRAYER

### *Praise:*

1. For safe and blessed visits to the churches in West Papua, Indonesia.
2. For amazing church growth and expansion into new areas and strong leadership/elders in the churches.
3. That the people of Manggelum may now have Genesis and the New Testament in their own Wambon language.

### *Prayer:*

1. That means may be found to cover the cost of flying Bibles, Psalm books, and course material to the interior churches.
2. That the minister who sinned may repent of his sin and peacefully accept being deposed from ministry for glory to God, the edification of the church, and for the sake of his own salvation.
3. That more young men may be moved to become pastors as there is a great lack of ministers of the Word.
4. That the elders continue to give strong leadership and that members of the congregations continue to hold on to the faith in the face of severe challenges.
5. That justice may prevail so that the Waena church may retain ownership of their property, church building, and manse.
6. That the medical system in Manggelum may improve so that infant and child mortality rate will decrease. 🙏

*Henry and Rita Versteeg*  
*Henry is missionary emeritus of Bethel*  
*Canadian Reformed Church, Toronto*

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This new column gives opportunity for para-church organizations within the CanRC community which render valued Christian service to present to our readers an annual update or snapshot of their activities. Organizations desiring to use this space are invited to reach out to the editor. Our first article is from the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund.

# CRWRF—

## *Survive to Thrive*

You are blind. Your family treats you as a disgrace and a help-  
less burden. A life wasted. The people around you believe you  
to be cursed. You cannot read or write, and your parents cannot  
send you to school. There is no money, no purpose, and no safety.  
No future.

This is the experience of many visually impaired people living  
in Togo, Africa. As one of the poorest countries in Africa, there is  
little support for those learning to survive without eyesight, let  
alone thrive.

Essi, the oldest child of a family of five, fell sick in grade 12.  
When she suffered a severe reaction to the medication prescribed  
by doctors, she was left completely blind. “I was devastated, terri-  
fied, and could not stop crying . . . my parents as well as myself  
thought my world had come to an end. I lost hope in life.”

What options did they have in this situation? The family didn’t  
have the funds for special training for their daughter. It felt like  
a lost cause. Essi writes; “Two years later, however, I heard about  
the Centre for the Blind (CESA) of Lomé in the area. I attended it,  
and it gave me a new hope both spiritually and socially.”

### HELPING THE BLIND

With the help and enthusiasm from a few members of the Langley  
Canadian Reformed Church, CRWRF has recently started  
supporting the Lomé Centre for the Blind. This is a development  
project whose aim is to teach visually impaired people of all ages  
how to thrive as God’s image bearers. The Christian Centre has  
been around since 1993 but has been struggling to find enough  
funding to support themselves and their growing student body.

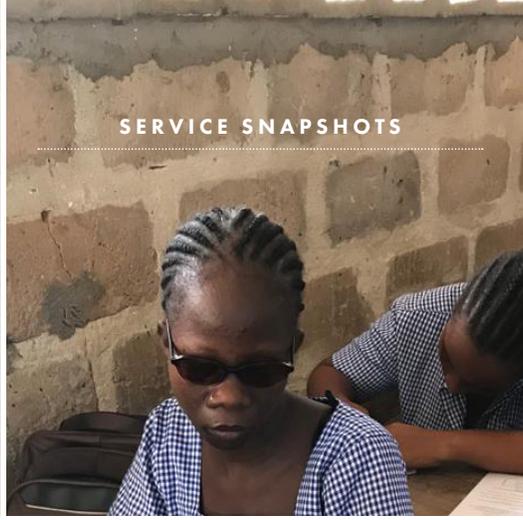
They start by learning how to read and write in Braille, how to  
use a computer, and how to move around using a white cane. With  
these basic skills mastered, the younger students are then often  
able to join the children in the local schools. The older students  
can move on to specialized vocational training, with the aim of  
being hired or starting their own business. Others are encour-  
aged to go on to complete a bachelor’s degree, which often can  
guarantee them a job in civil service.

The staff at the Centre are Christians and the gospel is  
proclaimed every day through prayer and Bible reading. Many  
of the staff members are blind themselves and are able to support  
the students with deep empathy. “Daily Bible study and prayer  
had strengthened my faith in God’s amazing salvation work for  
us in his Son Jesus Christ. It also was for me a source of new life  
and new hope,” Essi recalls.

### LOCAL CHURCH INITIATIVE

How did this Centre come to be? William Doulome, now a member  
of Langley CanRC and a visually impaired native Togolese himself,  
remembers what it’s like to grow up in Togo. Going blind in Grade  
1 due to illness, he didn’t receive any education until the age of 17.  
By God’s grace, he was taught by the Village of Light—the first  
school for the blind in Togo—and was the first blind student in  
the country to graduate high school. He was inspired to spread  
this specialized training to others, alongside the love of Christ, so  
Doulome and other former students from the school established  
the new Centre in Lomé.

SERVICE SNAPSHOTS



Top left; Koffi, CESA Principal; students Mercy and Fidele; Second row: Essi, former student, and secretary Rebecca. Bottom row: Class pictures and group photos.

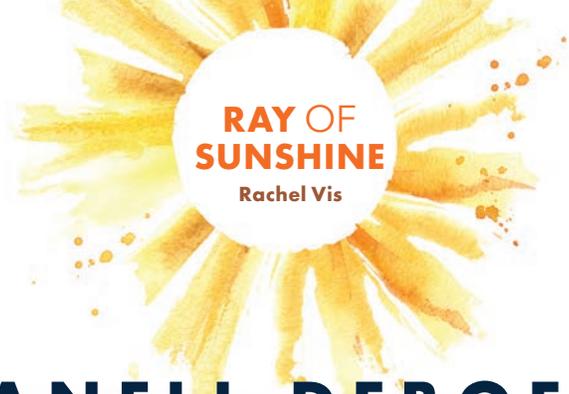
Because of the severe poverty in the country, many students require help with transportation to the Centre and need sponsorship to cover the costs of their studies. There are also operational costs, staff salaries, and expensive specialized educational equipment. CRWRF is working to ensure that every child has access to this life-changing education.

Essi was able to graduate from the Centre, finish her high school studies, and recently finished her bachelor's degree in literature. We praise the Lord alongside Essi for such blessings! Please uphold these brothers and sisters from Lomé in prayer as they navigate the unique challenges facing those living without eyesight.

CRWRF is thankful to be able to support and serve one of our local Canadian Reformed churches in this way. Our aim is to

serve as a bridge between supporting churches and local partners involved in relief and development work. Is your church connected to a Christian-motivated relief or development project overseas, and would like CRWRF's assistance in areas such as project planning and evaluation? We would love to hear from you. We pray that we may continue distributing your generous support wisely and effectively for the benefit—indeed, thriving—of our distant neighbours, and to the glory of our heavenly Father. 🇨🇸

Sara Kingma  
CRWRF Administrator  
[admin@crwrf.ca](mailto:admin@crwrf.ca)



**RAY OF  
SUNSHINE**

Rachel Vis

# JANELL DEBOER

Hi, my name is Janell DeBoer, I live in St. Anns on a farm with my dad and mom and sister. I also have one other sister who lives out West, and a brother who is married and has three children. They live right across the road from us which I love, because I love spending time with them.

I enjoy playing games with my family. A few of our favourites are Skip Bo, Ticket to Ride, and Catan. I am thankful to have a pool in our backyard and love going in it with my niece and nephews!

During the school year I work at Attercliffe Canadian Reformed School. I help many of the teachers out with different jobs around the school. I help with marking and listening to memory work in grades 1 and 2. Last year I helped in kindergarten with work stations. I help out in the library every Thursday, helping kids find books.



At home I enjoy doing many puzzles. Since this summer began, I have done six. I am working on my seventh! (It's now the beginning of August.) Last year I completed a 2000-piece puzzle that kept me busy for quite a while! I also enjoy latch hooking projects and making cards.

I go to Attercliffe Canadian Reformed Church. I enjoy going to church every Sunday and having fellowship with the members there. I attend women's society every other Wednesday morning during the study season.

This past June I attended Anchor Camp. I had a great time! I especially loved hanging out with the many great volunteers and campers there. I also enjoyed singing at the chapel every morning.

Thank you for all the birthday cards I get sent every year, from all over, I always look forward to them.

## OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

**3** Janell DeBoer will be **34**  
6311 Silver Street RR #2  
St. Ann's, ON  
LOR 1Y0  
Email: janell.db90@gmail.com

**3** Jeanette Wieringa will be **30**  
6674 Wellington Rd 7  
Elora, ON  
NOB 1S0

**6** Henry Vander Vliet will be **57**  
c/o Anchor Home  
361 Thirty Road RR 2  
Beamsville, ON  
LOR 1B2

**8** Lindsay Kottelenberg will be **34**  
c/o Lighthouse  
6528 1st Line  
RR 3 Fergus, ON  
N1M 2W4

**13** Nancy Schipper will be **68**  
c/o Beacon Home  
653 Broad Street West  
Dunnville, ON  
N1A 1T8

**17** Alan Breukelman will be **58**  
2225, 19th Street  
Coaldale, AB  
T1M 1G4

**21** Cameron Dantuma will be **32**  
c/o Lighthouse  
6528 1st Line  
RR 3 Fergus, ON  
N1M 2W4

**22** Nelena Hofsink will be **64**  
Bethesda Clearbrook Home  
32553 Willingdon Cr.  
Clearbrook, BC  
V2T 1S2

**28** Mary Ann De Wit will be **68**  
#4 6560 Vedder Road  
Chilliwack, BC  
V2T 5K4

*Happy birthday to all of you celebrating a birthday in October!  
We wish you the Lord's blessing in the year to come.*

Rachel Vis

# CLARION KIDS LORD'S DAY 51

Let's say your friends played tag and left you out. That would be wrong! Your friends would need to ask God for his forgiveness. And they would be completely forgiven. But did you know that God loves it when you forgive them too? Sometimes that can be hard! Especially if your feelings were very hurt. So that's why the Lord Jesus taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors." **Debt** is usually money that needs to be paid to someone. For example, if your parents didn't pay for the electricity they use, they would be in debt. People in debt are called **debtors**. We are all debtors before God. Our debt is our sin. And God is so good. Jesus's blood was shed on the cross for us. It's only because of the Lord Jesus that we can ask God to forgive our debt of sin. And so, because we are forgiven, we should also ask God to help us forgive others who have done wrong to us.

## DEBTORS

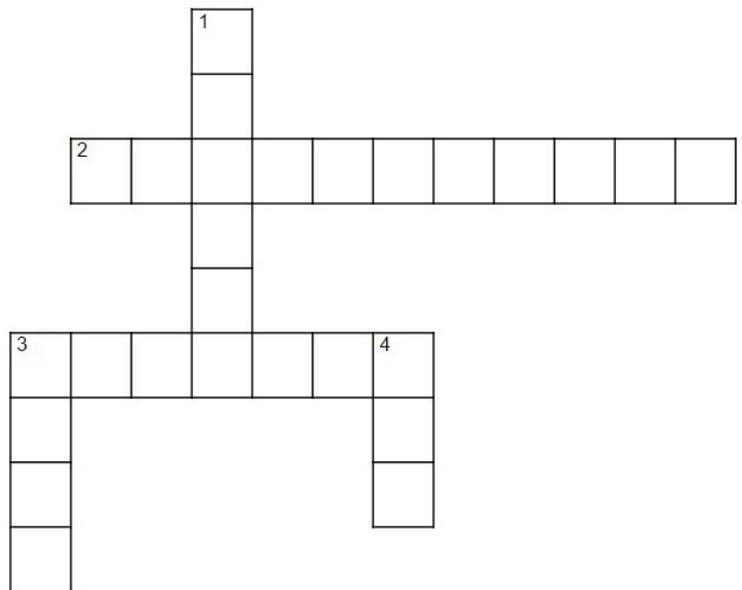
Do you see the word debt inside the word debtors? Colour in the word debt.

### Across:

2. What we need to show to others
3. Someone who is in debt

### Down:

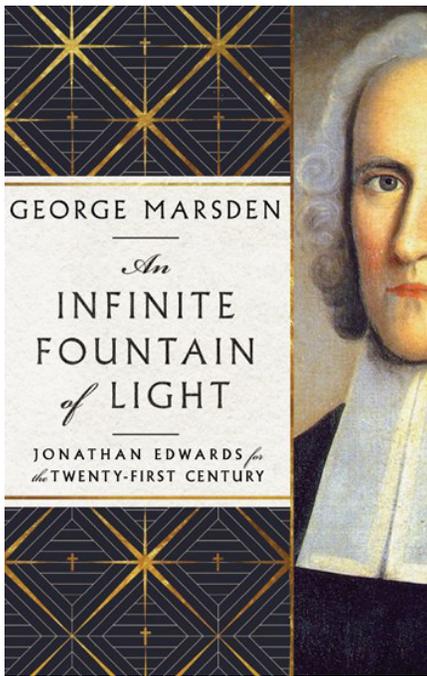
1. He died to pay for our debt of sin
3. Something, usually money, that is owed to someone
4. Our debt before God



## 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



# A TRANSLATION OF EDWARDS FOR TODAY

*An Infinite Fountain of Light: Jonathan Edwards for the Twenty-First Century*, by George Marsden. (Downers Grover: IVP Academic, 2023). Hardcover. 164 pages. \$30.62 CDN.

Some have described Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) as North America’s greatest theologian of all time. Certainly he was prolific, profound, and, at times, creative. His influence continues, especially through popularizers like John Piper. A reputable Edwards scholar, Presbyterian historian George Marsden, is also responsible for raising his profile. Among other writings, he’s authored not just one but two biographies on Edwards, one longer and one shorter.

One of the problems with Edwards is his language. As an eighteenth-century English writer, Edwards was at times wordy and opaque. Marsden observes that Edwards often needs translators for today and he aims to be one such translator in this volume.

Marsden does two main things in *An Infinite Fountain of Light*. First, he helps us understand Edwards in his own context. He does that in an engaging way via two of Edwards’s famous contemporaries, Benjamin Franklin and George Whitefield. The second thing he does is to help us understand some key points of Edwards’s theology and how they bear on us today.

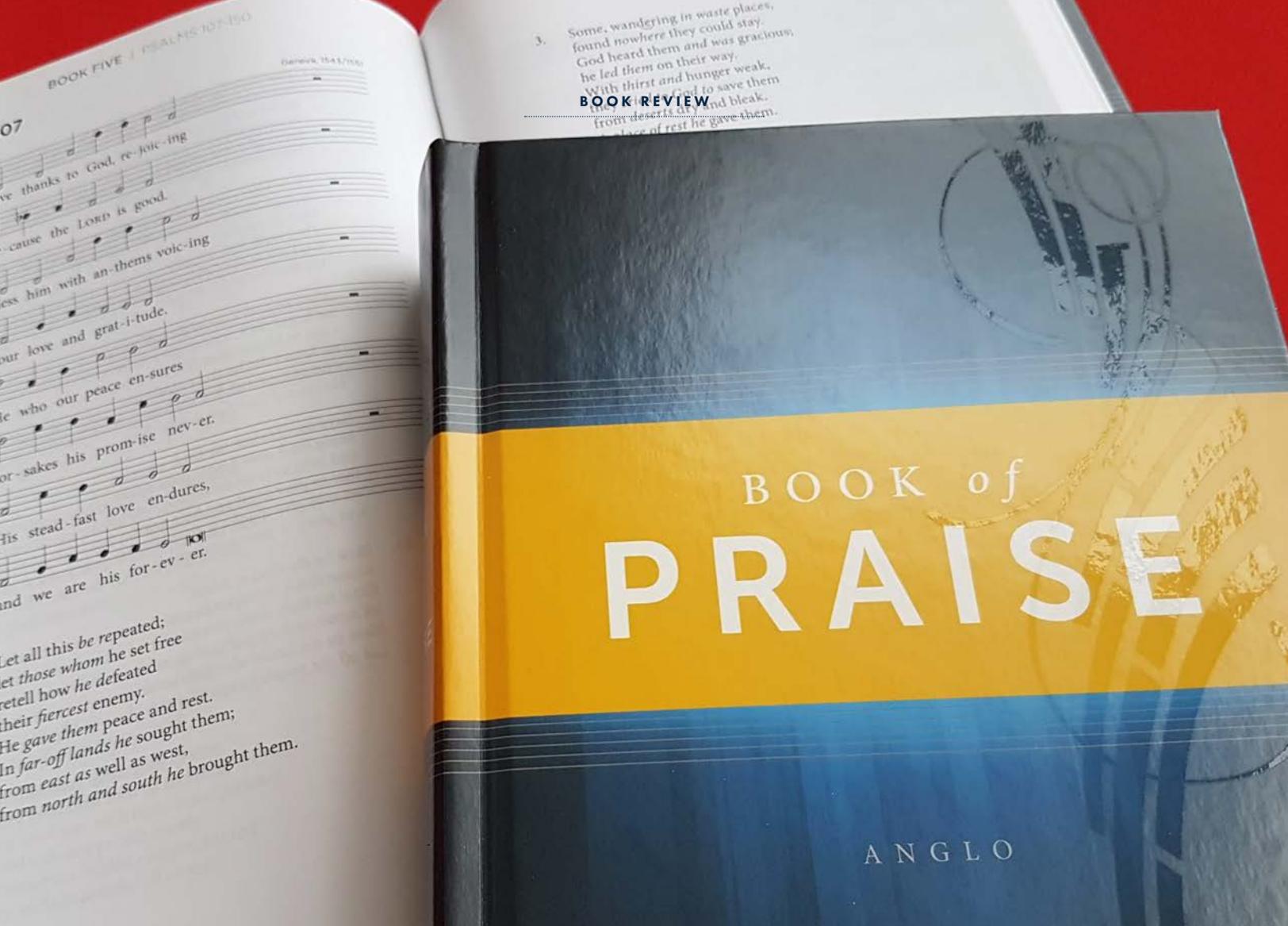
With regard to the latter, Marsden explains Edwards’s understanding of the beauty of God. For Edwards, this wasn’t something to be considered merely in an intellectualistic way. Contemplating the beauty of God, as he is revealed in nature and in Scripture, is meant to lead us to what Edwards called “religious affections.” Writes Marsden, “The affections he is thinking of are most essentially the sort of *love for a person* that brings joy unspeakable” (p. 106). God’s beauty is something to be experienced. Edwards aptly compares it to the difference between hearing about the sweetness of honey and actually tasting it for yourself.

The author acknowledges some of the issues with Edwards. Most notably, Edwards probably owned slaves, even though he was “explicitly antiracist” (p. 14). But there are other issues which remain unmentioned. There is an ongoing debate in Reformed circles about the degree to which Edwards can be described as Reformed. In his *Systematic Theology*, Princeton theologian Charles Hodge (1797–1878) expressed concerns about a pantheistic tendency in Edwards’s theology. Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) wrote in his *Reformed Dogmatics* about Edwards aiding “the cause of Pelagianism.” In our own day, more than one or two Reformed theologians have cautioned us about Edwards’s doctrine of justification and the mystical bent of his pietism. Edwards can’t and shouldn’t be ignored, but Reformed readers should be aware of some of his theological missteps.

At the beginning of *An Infinite Fountain of Light*, Marsden writes that “Looking to the most profound insights of Christians from another era can be an especially helpful way to gain perspective on our own needs in our own era” (p. 3). Edwards was a theologian of gargantuan stature with plenty of profound insights. Marsden succeeds in translating some of those insights into a language we can all understand. 



**Wes Bredenhof**  
Minister  
Free Reformed Church of Launceston  
[bookreview@clarionmagazine.ca](mailto:bookreview@clarionmagazine.ca)



# PSALM SINGING IN THE CANRC

*The Impact of Psalm Singing in Corporate Worship in the Canadian Reformed Churches: Perspectives of the Congregants,*  
by Jan Frederik Ezinga. (Doctor of Worship dissertation for Liberty University, Lynchburg VA, 2024).

As the Canadian Reformed Churches continue to age, we're beginning to see more interesting research about different aspects of church life. While there has been more research at master's degree levels, in 2021 we saw the publication of Mariia Alekseevskaiia's Ph.D. dissertation on CanRC education. Now this year, we have Frank Ezinga's work on psalm singing.

Now, before going any further, let me assure you that though this is an academic work, it isn't going to be out of reach for the average adult reader. It's speaking about a world with which we're familiar, using language that many of us have grown up with. Not only will you find it accessible, I'm quite sure you'll find it fascinating.

But who is Frank Ezinga and what qualifies him to write this thesis? If you live in the Lower Mainland of BC, he probably needs no introduction. He has been the long-time organist of the Langley Canadian Reformed Church. He is a consummate professional at his musical craft. The church has been richly blessed with his breadth of experience, height of knowledge of things musical and Reformed, and depth of passion for meaningful Christian worship.

Frank wrote this thesis as the culmination of his studies for the Doctor of Worship degree at Liberty University. He began his research hoping to answer two main questions about psalm singing in the CanRC:

1. What do twenty-first century Canadian Reformed congregants in British Columbia understand about psalm singing?
2. What factors influence twenty-first century Canadian Reformed congregants' perspectives on song selection?

To answer these questions, Frank had a research pool of 2,689 communicant members in the CanRC congregations in BC (and the two churches in Washington state). Out of that pool, 316 people responded to his research survey. Frank acknowledges that this is a limited data set, but he thought it was most workable to focus his attention on one geographical area. Moreover, 316 participants still provide a large enough pool to reach some legitimate conclusions.

So, what kind of questions did Frank ask? Here are three of them:

- Why do you think we sing psalms in corporate worship?
- What value, if any, can be found in our church's practice of psalm singing?
- Do you think singing all psalms in corporate worship is a valuable practice in today's culture?

You'll notice how these are open-ended questions. Frank was looking for a sentence or even paragraphs in response. That makes the results more difficult to analyze, but it does allow participants to have the nuances of their views heard.

Without giving too much away, what surprised me most about Frank's findings was how the majority of respondents were positive about psalm singing in general. I'm not sure what he was expecting, but when I began reading it, I was expecting that perhaps it would swing the other direction. Frank writes:

Most congregants are like-minded regarding the conceptual aspects of the purpose and value of singing the psalms in worship. They share the same priority of psalm singing in worship as the first-generation Canadian Reformed Churches and agree with their church's confession about who determines the elements in corporate worship. However, some opinions differ about the practice of psalm singing in worship, the selection of songs in worship, and what or who determines corporate worship. (p. 110)

It appears that there remains a hopeful future for psalm singing in the CanRC, at least in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest.

If you're an office bearer in the CanRC, I think this research will prove interesting and helpful. It may even inspire consistories to do similar surveys in their own congregation—with today's tech, that's certainly feasible. Finally, please note that Frank's work isn't available in any bookstore. However, you can download it as a free pdf from Liberty University: <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/5697/> 



**Wes Bredenhof**

Minister

Free Reformed Church of Launceston

[bookreview@clarionmagazine.ca](mailto:bookreview@clarionmagazine.ca)

# *Victims and Abusers:* NAVIGATING BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS

MATTHEW VAN LUIK

Recently I wrote an article, “No Longer Victims,”<sup>1</sup> which provoked some reaction about the relationship between the abuser and the victim. The focus of that article was on the victim and how in Christ one can move on in a spiritually healthy way. I did not address the issue from the side of the abuser nor the need for justice, so this gives me an opportunity to address this more broadly. Some might interpret the title “No Longer Victims” to mean that we should act as if we were never victims and therefore the abuser does not need to bear the consequences for his/her abuse. Criticism has often been raised that in the church the abuser receives support from the church community, while the victim feels they are left to deal with the shame of what has happened on their own. There is no doubt that often the church has quickly accepted an apology without the expectation that they bear the consequences of their actions, or that justice is done. Even worse, an apology may be accepted without evidence of true repentance.

## THE NEED FOR JUSTICE

The church needs to deal with two realities. On the one hand, it needs to deal with those who are guilty of abusive behaviour. While God is a God of love, compassion, and mercy, he is also a God of justice. Yes, God is merciful to sinners, but that does not mean there are no consequences for what the sinner has done. If someone destroys a relationship through abusive behaviour, they cannot expect the relationship to be restored with a quick apology. A truly repentant person will recognize they cannot demand the relationship be restored, for the consequence of their actions will often make it impossible. Leaders in the church must also be careful not to insist that such relationships be restored quickly. There will be situations when they must judge that the situation is not ripe for restoration. Abusive behaviour is not quickly corrected with an apology. The hard work of making change only begins with an apology.

<sup>1</sup> See *Clarion* Vol. 73.8, p. 327. See also his earlier related editorials in Vols. 72.14 and 73.3.

Jesus Christ made very clear in Matthew 18:15ff that sin in the church is not to be tolerated but needs to be confronted. This is the well-known rule that if a brother or sister has sinned against us, we are to confront the sinner with their sin, so that we may win them over. Often Christ's rule is used to say that when a sinner repents, then there are no other consequences. Repentance does not do away with the need for justice. True repentance acknowledges the need for justice to be done. A murderer who repents does not say that he should be allowed to go free but acknowledges he must serve the just penalty for his sin. The same is true regarding abuse. The one who repents of abuse must accept the just penalty for their sin. The church must seek the repentance of sinners, to restore them to God and to the fellowship of believers, but it must also maintain that the sinner bears the just penalty for their sin.

Believers often work with the concept that once a person repents and is forgiven the matter is now finished. We recall that when God forgives, God says he will no longer remember our sins. God's basis for doing so is that justice has been served by Christ who paid for our sins. So, the abuser who truly repents can be assured that their sins are forgiven by God; but that does not take away the need to bear the consequences for their sins. A murderer may be forgiven by God and have eternal life, and yet justice demands that he pay for his crime. Paul writes in Romans 13:4, "For the one in authority [referring to the civil government] is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer." Christians are not exempt from the authority of civil rulers, but we too must bear the consequences of our wrongdoing.

When believers have committed a crime according to the law, then it is clear from Romans 13 that we must also be held accountable by the law. In the case of physical and sexual abuse, the law not only determines guilt through an investigation and trial but it also determines the penalty for a crime. Here we are not dealing with a lawsuit in which we claim we have been wronged by someone (which is a civil matter), but with a criminal offence. The government prosecutes crimes to maintain justice in the land.

The more difficult matter for the leaders in the church are cases of emotional abuse where much wisdom needs to be applied. Emotional abuse is about manipulating others through guilt or threats. What parent has not been guilty of using manipulation to have their children act a certain way and which spouse has not been guilty of doing the same? Here there is a need to determine the degree to which this happens, whether there is serious abuse by one of the parties that will have consequences for the relationship,

or whether it is a situation where the elders must help the parties to relate in a healthier manner.

## **SUPPORT FOR THE ABUSED**

On the other hand, the church must not only interact appropriately with the abuser, but also with those who have endured abusive actions against them. The church is called to support victims of abuse, to help them heal from the damage of the sinful actions against them. The point of the article, "No Longer Victims," is to help us move beyond a victim mentality in which shame and anger continues to dominate our heart. There is hope for the abused believer, for in Christ it is possible to live free from fear and shame.

It seems to our natural human heart that the abuser is powerful, but when we learn to trust the Lord Jesus, we experience that he is greater than any human being; in Christ my life is secure. Healing takes place as we learn to trust Christ (as it does in every aspect of our life). There are different reasons why abusers can assert power over others. They may simply have the strength to enforce their will with the use of violence, or they may have a position of authority or influence they can use to control other lives. Abuse is the result of people using the leverage they have to take from others what they desire for themselves. They wield power through the instrument of fear and intimidation. Once they lose the ability to create fear, they no longer have the leverage to control the lives of others.

Christ teaches us to maintain healthy boundaries in our relationships. Relationships do not just suddenly break down; they break because healthy boundaries were never put in place in the first place. The abuser as the dominant person will already set the terms for the relationship at the beginning and the weaker party submits to those terms for various reasons. This is not done consciously but couples will simply slide into an unhealthy relationship that over time becomes more and more poisonous. This is the reason it is difficult to restore such broken relationships, for neither party understands what a healthy relationship looks like.

The dynamic will be different in the case of child sexual abuse. The abuser takes advantage of the innocence of a child who has not yet developed the skills to protect themselves. The abuser has crossed a clear boundary set by God knowing that the child is vulnerable to manipulation by threatening or guiltting them into keeping silent. Not only has a child not yet learned about boundaries but they have no way to maintain those boundaries even if they were aware of them.

## **BOUNDARIES SET BY CHRIST**

Much more can be said about boundaries, but it will be helpful to reflect for a moment on the boundaries in our relationship with Christ. Christ sets the pattern for the relationship between husbands and wives, between parents and children, and in every other relationship structure, at school, work, government, etc. Christ himself set the example when he came to this world, not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45). Because he understood our need for deliverance, the Lord gave his life for us. He did so because he cared deeply for us. Compare that to the devil, who abuses everyone under his power. The devil uses all mankind for his own evil purposes, but Christ sacrificed everything, even his life, because of his love for us. Christ did not come to use us to fulfill his selfish desires; he came to love us and care for us. We in turn now experience the greatest joy when we submit our life to him, for we feel secure under his care.

The head of a counseling department once said to me in a discussion about the Song of Songs, “the man in the Song is safe.” Why? Well, here is a man who does not abuse his wife but cares for her and she in turn loves to live in the safety of his love. Within our families, parents must love their children and protect them, and children will then in turn find their security and peace in the loving care of dad and mom. Parents must teach their children by modeling for them what healthy boundaries look like in their own relationship. When children learn healthy boundaries, they are less likely to fall into unhealthy relationships later. They will learn not to allow others to trample over the boundaries they have set.

## **HEALING FROM THE PAIN OF ABUSE**

So how can someone who has endured the pain of abuse be set free from the shame and pain of their past? In our culture, victimhood is embraced; people are encouraged to live with anger and resentment and the desire for revenge in their hearts. The result is a complete breakdown of the social fabric of our society. Christ directs us to a better solution. In the first place, with Christ it is possible to overcome our fear for others. When we learn that there is no reason to live in fear of others because of Christ, we can begin to establish and maintain healthy boundaries. A healthy boundary is not one in which you put up a wall behind which you hide your feelings or emotions. When we come alive in Christ, it means that we can begin to face our fears and face those who have hurt us. The role of the church is to support such a person to courageously live out their life through their relationship with Christ.

The point in my previous article is that as God’s children we no longer need to live with a mentality of victimhood. Christ can set us free from those destructive emotions. Now, we need to clarify what it means when we say we should not let anger, bitterness, resentment, or the desire of revenge rule in our heart. Does it mean that it is wrong for a victim to feel any of these emotions in their heart? The answer is no—these are proper responses to being sinned against by others. The way forward is not to suppress these emotions, for God gives them for our own protection. When the Lord Jesus experienced the sin of the people in his life, the gospel tells us on many occasions that he became angry and even warned the people of impending judgement.

When God became angry with his people because of their actions against him, he responded by calling them to repentance. God’s anger does not lead him to seek the destruction of all mankind, but he calls mankind to turn back from their evil and sinful ways. Imagine if God allowed anger, bitterness, and revenge to consume his heart. It would turn God into an angry and vengeful God, which would lead to the destruction of all mankind. God never overlooked the sin of man, but he offered hope through the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, anger is part of the healing process for the victim. If you do not feel anger when you are sinned against, then you will not be motivated to call such a person to repentance. On the other hand, if you let anger and shame consume your heart with a victim mentality, it will destroy your soul. Christ has shown us a better way. It is to love our neighbour. Love never excuses or overlooks sin, but it seeks the spiritual well-being of everyone, even of those who have hurt us terribly. It is the power of Christ that turns our angry and hurting hearts to hearts that care for the eternal well-being of others. The gospel message is a message of hope that restores joy and peace to broken and hurting hearts (HC, Q/A. 107).

## **SUPPORT OF THE CHURCH**

While the church has not always handled each situation well, I have seen elders on numerous occasions support someone who has been abused by calling their abuser to repentance.<sup>2</sup> I referred to this in my previous article when I wrote that we must learn to “serve our abusers in love.” In an earlier article I pointed out that every believer is called to seek reconciliation. There is no need to seek reconciliation with someone with whom you have a good relationship. Reconciliation is needed where relationships have been broken by sin and abuse.

<sup>2</sup> During the writing of this article, it came to my attention that many consistories have taken the Church Cares course, “Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused.”

To love your abuser does not mean you must like the kind of person they are, but you must care for their soul. When Christ commands us to love our enemies, he does not mean we are to like what they are doing or support them in their evil, but that we seek and pray for the salvation of their soul. Love should never be understood to mean that we overlook the sins of others or that we must put aside the need for justice. Although Christ loves us, he still calls us to repentance and holds us accountable for our sin. When we truly repent, his promise is that we are forgiven. To be forgiven does not mean that we do not need to pay the penalty for our sin. In Christ we are free to forgive those who have abused us, but it does not mean that they do not need to endure the consequences of what they have done. True repentance accepts the penalty for sin, and it trusts that one day they will be set gloriously free in Christ.

While the ideal is that a broken marriage relationship be reconciled, the reality is that an abusive relationship cannot be quickly restored as if nothing has happened in the past. A man who has abused his wife cannot demand that she return but must accept that his past actions have consequences. True repentance means he accepts that he cannot demand his wife to return. If he continues to place such a demand on her, he engages in the same abusive and manipulative actions as in the past. True repentance acknowledges that I don't deserve anything and accepts the consequences of our actions.

For those who have been abused, serving those who have hurt you out of love does not mean you must return to the old abusive kind of relationship. Love does not mean that I must let someone hurt me again, but it seeks true and genuine change in the life of the abuser. The church has often demanded that couples reconcile by getting together again before they are ready. That is expecting two limping people to learn to walk properly again. In some cases, living together again may be possible, but it will mean that the victim has learned to set out and maintain healthy boundaries. For the relationship to flourish, it will mean the previously offending spouse, having truly repented, respects those boundaries out of love. When such is not the case, the relationship will flounder.

## THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE

Here we should reflect on the nature of true repentance. We often live with the idea that when someone repents, suddenly everything

in their life will change for the better. That is not the reality. In Lord's Day 33 we confess that "true repentance is the dying of the old nature in which we more and more hate and flee from sin and it is the coming to life of the new nature in which we love and delight to live according to the will of God." The fruit of repentance is not perfection, but a constant and heartfelt battle against the evil desires of our heart. An abuser may sincerely repent of their abuse, but the reality is that such a person must daily fight against and overcome the sinful inclinations of his heart. What has changed is that he now clearly sees the sinful desires of his own heart and recognizes that he must learn a whole new way of dealing with his relationship. For that reason, the church also needs to recognize there is no quick fix to broken relationships. You cannot expect two limping people to suddenly walk without a limp and asking them to do so will only lead to greater frustration.

## CONCLUSION

In this life we all struggle to maintain healthy relationships. Our selfish desires mean that we often overstep proper boundaries. On many occasions we do not maintain a proper boundary because of our fear for the other person and at other times we step over that boundary out of selfish desires. We have a perfect example in our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ in his love always serves us with our eternal well-being in mind and he seeks that we serve him out of love. Christ will never overstep the boundary by demanding from us something that is unjust, yet we often act in ways in which we hurt our Lord. When we grieve him, Christ responds in love, by calling us to repentance to restore us to himself. It is only in complete and humble submission to Christ that we can maintain and enjoy the relationships that we have in our marriages, our families, and the church. 



**Matthew Van Luik** *Minister*  
Canadian Reformed Church  
Brampton, Ontario  
[mvanluik@rogers.com](mailto:mvanluik@rogers.com)

**JENNY RAAP – VAN DIJK NEE KUIK**

April 17, 1930 – July 16, 2024

Drenthe, the Netherlands – Carman, Manitoba  
predeceased by her first husband – Joe van Dijk 1990  
and her second husband – Sy Raap 2020

*“Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

**Trudy and Peter Veenendaal**

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Melanie and Theo Beijes, *Timothy, Katie, Addison, Maxwell*  
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Trevor and Kelly Veenendaal, *Lars, Tatum, Corbin, Soren*  
Owen and Arlene Veenendaal, *Kinsley, Mitchell, Lewis, Oaklyn*  
Regan and Jon Vaags, *Ruby, Callum, Georgia, Jensen*

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*Skyler, Kenzie*



1974 - Oct 12 - 2024

We give thanks to our Heavenly Father for his love and care over our parents and grandparents through 50 years of marriage!

**DICK AND DINA LODDER (NEE PENNINGA)**

*Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances*  
1 Thess 5:16

- Greg and Jolene Lodder Belwood, On  
*Jayden, Isaac, Kylee and Arianna*
- Ian and Henrietta Lodder Fergus, On  
*Tyson, Leah, Addison, Morgan and Craig*
- Randy and Karen Lodder Dakar, Senegal  
*Maia, Levi, Judah, Luca and Silas*
- Scott and Marija Lodder Guelph, On  
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- Patricia and Derek Reinink Arthur, On  
*Bree, Curtis, Logan, Natalia and Blake*
- Curtis George Lodder†

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Send your application to:

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Attention: Mrs. Anita Van Rootselaar,  
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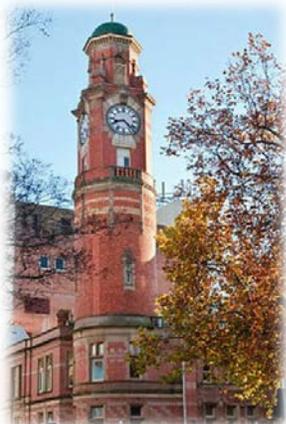


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For further information, please contact the principal, Mr. Jason Heemsker (principal@guidodebres.com or 905 574 4011). If you are interested in applying, please submit a cover letter, resume, two reference letters (including a pastoral reference from your minister or an elder in your church), and a written statement of your view of Christian education to principal@guidodebres.com.

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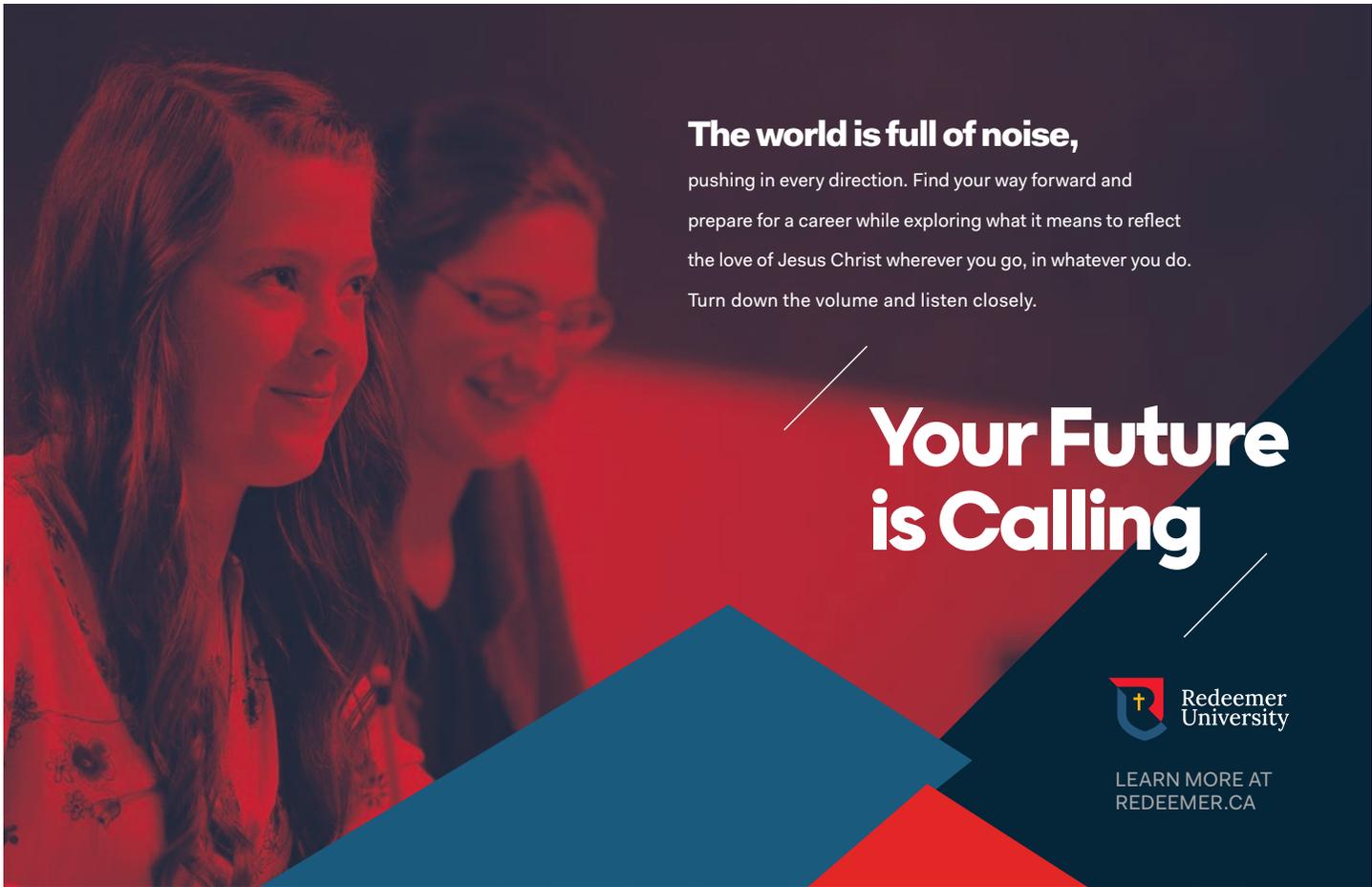
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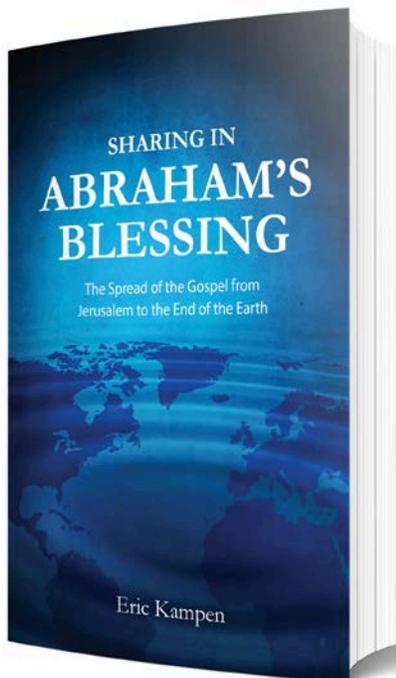
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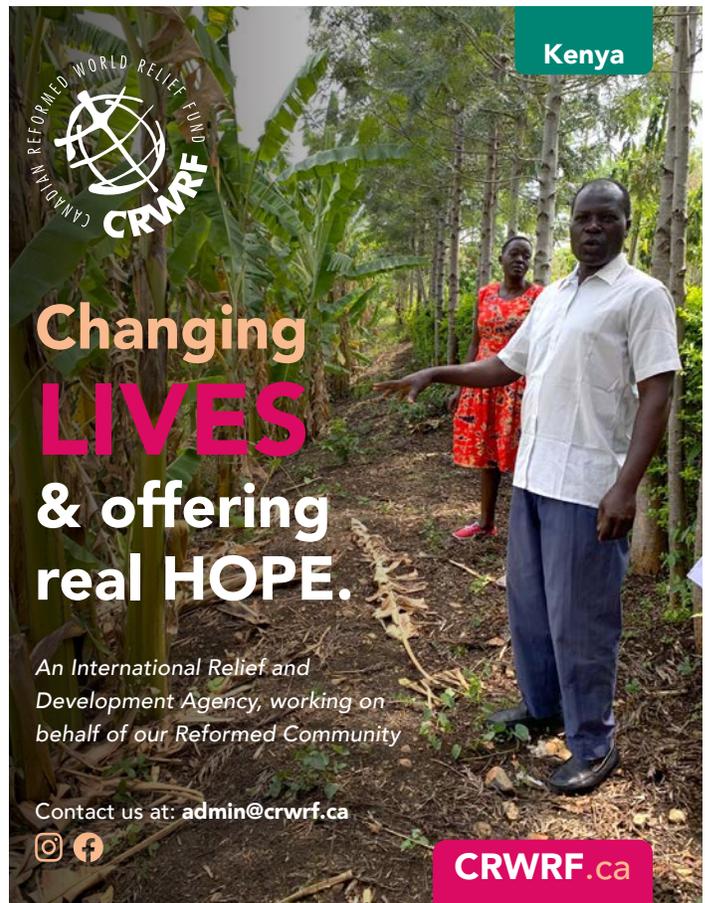
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