

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

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Clarion

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what's inside

There's a little something for everyone in Issue 6—an editorial by Matthew VanLuik on emotions in worship, a meditation on learning Christ by Richard Aasman, an article by William den Hollander (Jr.) on the power of storytelling, a piece by yours truly exploring whether the Psalms are missional, a review by Dick Wynia on the video series *Into the Light*, which deals with parenting and pornography, and another instalment of *Outside the PARC* in which Eric Kampen informs us about the Bible Presbyterian Church. Lots to learn and ponder in all of these!

We are also pleased to see *New Voices* returning with three works by young adults. Alexa Leyenhorst and Loria Miguel of Credo Christian High School display their visual artistry on a theme verse while Brenna Dykema of Guido de Brès High School presents her written artistry in a historical poem. To all three let me say: well done! As before, I would like to invite English and/or Art teachers from all of our CanRC high schools to consider giving your senior students this opportunity. We love to hear from a range of new voices from the up-and-coming generation. Please reach out to me with any questions (pholtvluwer@gmail.com).

We also have a “new voice” behind the scenes at *Clarion* in our new managing editor, Anna Nienhuis—welcome aboard, sister! She has big shoes to fill but we are confident that under the Lord's blessing things will move along smoothly.

In this issue you'll find the last five profiles of graduating CRTS students—did you know that 2025's class is the largest group of graduates at our seminary *ever*? How the Lord is blessing us with more men to serve in the ministry! Don't forget to check out two letters to the editor, a new song by William Helder, a fresh entry of *Clarion Kids Ask*, and the highlights of recent classes held across the federation in *Classis Clippings*. We can see our Lord busy across, in, and through our federation of churches, working to gather, defend, and preserve his church among us, just as we know he does throughout the world in other faithful churches. It's good to count our blessings. Enjoy your reading!

Peter Holtvliuwer

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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:

Confessionally Reformed
Loving in manner
Attuned to current issues
Readable and Reliable
In Submission to Scripture
Open to constructive criticism
Nurturing Christian living

EMOTIONALISM VS. EMOTION IN WORSHIP

The question often arises whether our worship services need to be more emotionally expressive. We know there are cultural differences in the way people express themselves. For example, Black gospel churches often have lively services in which people exuberantly express their emotions. In more stoic cultures, people are more guarded in expressing their emotions. Should our worship services be more emotionally expressive so that people go home with a more uplifting experience?

The discussion often revolves around whether we should show more emotion during worship. Since worship is a personal engagement with God, it must involve our emotions. The reason the Psalms are a beloved part of the Scriptures is because the psalmists speak emotionally about their relationship with God. Emotions are a necessary part of our worship for we are dealing with our relationship with God. The issue then is not one of emotions versus no emotions, but between emotions and emotionalism.

EMOTIONALISM VS. EMOTION

Emotionalism has been defined as an “undue indulgence in or display of emotion.” Pagan worship often devolves into a frenzy; think of the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, who cry to Baal to send fire from heaven, in contrast to Elijah who calmly prays to God to send fire (1 Kings 18). Clearly this frenzy is not how we are called to worship God and yet we find this kind of emotional manipulation in many charismatic churches. It frequently comes in the form of loud, powerful music by a live praise band, often accompanied by flashing lights.

In our culture there is a tendency to regard things emotionally. The truth is determined by the way you feel. But such emotionalism leads to a distortion of the truth. If you feel uplifted and are dancing in the aisles, it must mean that you have a strong faith but if you are quiet and downcast, you may question your faith.

As human beings we often make decisions based on emotions and our desire to feel good. The reality is that such decisions usually come back to hurt us. While our heart is always involved, our decisions should be determined by our mind. Our emotions flow from the desires of a corrupt heart. In contrast, God comes and speaks to us the truth in his word and his truth must direct us in the decisions we make. Truth arises not from our corrupt heart but from the mind that is renewed by the word and Spirit of God.

GOD’S WORD IMPACTS THE HEART

In the worship service, the mind of God’s people needs to be engaged with God’s word. A preacher who is respectful of the flock under his ministry will not manipulate the emotions of God’s people but will engage their minds in the wonderful truths of God. When the truth of God’s word is being proclaimed, it will impact the hearts of the hearers. The Spirit of God penetrates the hearts of the hearers to the very core of their being and so renews their hearts. The gospel message cannot leave hearts unmoved.

That is why the Psalms reveal a whole range of emotions. We discover tears shed over sin, despair, and depression as well as joy and happiness for forgiveness and deliverance. In the worship service you will find the same range of emotions in the hearts of God’s people.

RESPECTFUL OF VARIOUS EMOTIONS

It is disrespectful of a preacher to manipulate the emotions of the congregation as if everyone must feel the same way. The message will bring different emotions to different people. The message of God’s grace may bring tears to someone dealing with the consequences of their sin, or sorrow in the heart of a new believer who suddenly understands the gravity of what they have done against God; others may experience joy at the revelation of being freely forgiven by God and still others will experience comfort and peace in difficult circumstances.

It is not our emotions that determine the truth, but the truth that must determine the emotions we feel. The preacher himself should not be untouched by the word he proclaims, and he will respect that God’s word touches the hearts of God’s people in many different ways. The worship service must be a place where everyone can process the truth as it touches their own heart. A clear expression of the good news will direct the hearts of God’s people to the Lord their God. Genuine worship draws our hearts to the Lord in humble dependence on his goodness in Christ Jesus – and that should be an uplifting experience! 



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LEARN CHRIST

But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. (Eph 4:20–21)

Ephesians 4:20–24 is talking about real, life-altering change: “to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” Lord’s Day 33 calls it “the dying of the old nature and the coming to life of the new.” That’s big change: the death of the old you and the coming to life of the new you.

In verses 17–19, we read about the life of the Gentiles who “are darkened in their understanding.” Then, starting in verse 25, we read about the life of the “new self.” These two, old self and new self, are as different as night and day. The question is whether we can make this dramatic, life-altering change and keep it up. Is it a matter of trying a little harder to stop sinning and start obeying? You know what? That doesn’t work.

Paul, in Philippians 3, describes his own old self in this way: “as to the law, a Pharisee . . . as to righteousness under the law, blameless.” Paul was the best of the best when it came to the law. But he hated Jesus and was bent on wiping the name of Jesus and his church off the face of the earth. Simply taking the law or commandments of God and trying hard to do them is hopeless and can lead to horrible results.

We need something else. We need *someone* else. This is why, between describing the old self and the new self, Paul makes clear: “But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus.”

It seems a little awkward to say, “you learned Christ.” But this emphasizes that we need to learn more than just the facts about Christ—we need to be drawn into a living relationship with him. In Ephesians 4:15, we read that “we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.” *Growing up into Christ!* Before that Paul writes, “So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Eph 3:17). These are intense ways of describing a beautiful, powerful relationship with Jesus Christ: through faith he dwells in our hearts, and we grow up into him.

Our relationship with Jesus Christ is enhanced by hearing him in his Word, being led by him to the cross where he reveals the truth of how he died for our sins. There, through faith, we die with him to sin and rise to a new life (Romans 6). This leads to being “renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (vv. 23–24). It is only through a living, personal relationship with

Jesus Christ that we hate and flee from sin and delight to live in holiness as God is holy.

We can take an example in John Newton who wrote *Amazing Grace*. He was once a horrible slave trader. By God’s grace he was converted, and his life changed. He became a minister and at one point wrote, “I am not what I ought to be; I am not what I want to be; I am not what I hope to be . . . but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am.” We will never be perfect in this world, but we are changing. We can say, “I am no longer the person I once was.”

We read in 2 Corinthians 3:18–19: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” As we look to the face of God, we more and more reflect his image. That grows over a lifetime.

If Jesus Christ is really and truly in your life; if you know and love him, you will not only be *empowered* to change, but you will *want* to change. Jesus changes everything. He changes you as he dwells in you, and you dwell in him.

FURTHER READING:

Ephesians 4; Romans 6; Lord’s Day 33

FURTHER REFLECTION:

1. What was the real problem for the rich young man in Matthew 19:16–26?
2. As a parent, what is the most important teaching you want to communicate to your children? Would there be a danger in simply emphasizing the rules of a Christian life?
3. How do you understand the expression “learned Christ?”
4. Thinking of John 10:27 can we speak of “hearing Christ?” (Hint: in the Greek, Ephesians 4:21 says, “if indeed you heard him”).
5. What are you going to do to grow in a relationship with Jesus Christ so that you more and more put off the old self and put on the new? 🟢



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THE POWER OF STORY

WILLIAM DEN HOLLANDER

In his famous exploration of justice and the nature of the just city-state, the ancient Greek philosopher Plato (c. 428–348 BC) argued that poets and storytellers should be carefully controlled and their stories wisely regulated, “because they are the ones who shape the character of the young” (*The Republic*, Book III.393d). His point has often been summarized more memorably as: “Those who tell the stories rule society.” Recently the same point has been made even more vividly by Russ Ramsey, who writes, “Story is a trojan horse for truth. It can sneak truth past the gates of our defenses and prepare our hearts to hear things we might have resisted if they had come as mere declaration.”¹ Stories have power.²

I was reminded of the power of stories recently at a session of “Books & Banter,” a brotherhood of readers in my local church in Caledonia. We had met to discuss the last chapters of C.S. Lewis’ *Mere Christianity*. Not unusually, we strayed off topic and reminisced about novels that had shaped our imaginations and deepened our thinking, including classics like Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*, and Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* and *Brothers Karamazov*. One of the brothers mentioned that, while reading Gaston Leroux’s *The Phantom of the Opera* (more famous as a musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber), he was disturbed by the way the effective storytelling led him to sympathize with and root for

¹ Russ Ramsey, *Rembrandt Is in the Wind: Learning to Love Art through the Eyes of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022), 14–15.

² Many of the thoughts in this article were refined by discussions with my students at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in a recent course (Advanced Hermeneutics and New Testament Exegesis), in which we spent much time together in the Gospels, exploring and delighting in the power and depth of God’s stories.

the title character, a murderous monster whose terrible and violent jealousy leads him to abduct the woman he loves. Such is the power of stories.

HOW STORIES SHAPE THE WORLD

It's not just that stories take us temporarily into another world where we are at the mercy of the storyteller, subject to emotions the narrative is designed to stir up. Stories also have the power to shape our world or at least shape the way we see it.

In his recent cultural analysis of the anti-Christian culture of the west – a disturbing, convicting, and motivating read – Jonathon Van Maren highlights how the LGBT agenda was furthered most effectively by means of storytelling. He highlights as a key example the NBC sitcom *Will & Grace*.³ This show, which featured a gay lawyer as one of the title characters, first aired in 1998 and ran for eleven seasons. At the height of its popularity, some seventy-five million Americans tuned in to watch the weekly episodes. As they watched this eminently likeable character their defenses were lowered. It's no secret that this was precisely the aim of the architects of the LGBT revolution, who set out to shift the culture through these subtle and devious means, knowing that a Trojan horse would be more devastating than a frontal attack.

It ought to make us wonder: how are we—in our often unthinking, uncritical, unconscious consumption of entertainment—being catechized into secular worldviews? What storytellers (musicians, authors, screenwriters, poets, comedians, social media influencers) are shaping us and our children and our world? The eighteenth-century Scottish writer, politician, and patriot Andrew Fletcher gave us the proverb, “Give me the making of a nation's ballads, and I care not who writes its laws,”⁴ but the case of *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which opened the door to same-sex marriage in 2015, demonstrates that a nation's ballads and stories can cause even the laws to be rewritten.

STORIES & METANARRATIVES

The success of storytelling depends not simply on the power of the individual stories themselves, but on the fact that they operate within a larger story, often called a metanarrative, that claims to make sense of the world. These broader story frameworks are behind and below every aspect of popular culture.

I suspect that many readers of *Clarion* will be familiar with the classic children's storybook *The Little Engine That Could*. The

theme of all the retellings of that story, beginning already in the early twentieth century, is the same. A train is stranded on a high mountain because its locomotive has broken down. Only the little engine is found willing to try take the train over the mountain to its destination. He succeeds in his seemingly impossible task only by sheer determination, inspiring himself with the refrain, “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can.”

The story of the little engine is cute and memorable, but the underlying metanarrative is worth questioning. What is the ultimate story it tells about the world? Benignly, perhaps, it can be seen as an encouragement towards perseverance and hard work. But, more subversively, it could be recognized as a precursor of Disney's present day (*ad nauseam*) mantra, “Anything is possible if you believe in yourself.” It also resonates with the triumphalist manifesto of the Olympics, “Higher, faster, stronger,” ultimately rooted in a progressive worldview which insists that things are getting better and are going to keep getting better, if only we can “imagine there's no heaven . . . no hell below us, above us only sky.” These lyrics, penned by Lennon in 1971, floated over the Seine River at the 2024 Paris Olympics opening ceremonies and have become the anthem of the secular age, reflecting an ideology already there in *The Little Engine That Could*. We can save ourselves, thank you very much.

It's interesting to compare the longevity of *The Little Engine That Could* with another you may be familiar with: the Little Golden Book *Tootle*, first published in 1945. If you read reviews of this classic online, you'll quickly notice that it hasn't aged as well. *Tootle* tells the story of a little locomotive attending train school, who discovers that he loves cavorting in the meadow rather than staying on the rails. When the teacher, Bill, discovers Tootle's secret, he devises a successful plan to get Tootle back on track. Tootle learns his lesson and eventually realizes his ambition to become a Flyer on the New York-Chicago route. It's a wise and experienced Tootle who shares this advice with younger locomotives, “Stay on the rails no matter what.”

If you know anything about contemporary culture, you'll realize that this message fits a story world that grates against the one our secular prophets are creating. And so, more recent Google reviews of this classic story abound with strident critiques of the tyrannical strictures that society places on people, about the oppressiveness of rules and regimes. Tootle, they say, should be free to go where he pleases.

³ Jonathon Van Maren, *How We Got Here: A Guide to Our Anti-Christian Culture* (Norwich: Christian Heritage Press, 2024), 118.

⁴ Andrew Fletcher, *The Political Works of Andrew Fletcher*, ed. John Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.123. Thanks to Jake Torenvliet for drawing my attention to this proverb.



Because of the power of stories, and their influence on the world in which we live and on ourselves, we need to be (more) adept at recognizing the stories of our culture and the metanarratives that inform them.

Because of the power of stories, and their influence on the world in which we live and on ourselves, we need to be (more) adept at recognizing the stories of our culture and the metanarratives that inform them. Stories reflect a view of reality. Though the stories of our culture may be secular in name, they are deeply religious. And so, we need to ask what gods our culture's stories serve, what destinies they promise, what hopes and dreams they inspire, what "salvation" they deliver. But, more than that, we need to know the gospel as the only true story—the "true myth," as C.S. Lewis memorably put it⁵—that confronts all the secular

metanarratives and provides the ultimate answer to the aching desires that drive the bankrupt stories of our culture, the themes to which they return time and time again: "the search for love, riches to rags and rags to riches, heroic self-sacrifice, the quest for home."⁶

THE GREATEST STORY

It shouldn't surprise us that stories have this power. God is the ultimate storyteller, and we are created in his image. Scripture is God's revelation first and foremost within the context of the true metanarrative. While we encounter different forms of literature within the Bible, not only narratives but also letters, laws, and lyrical poems, even these non-narrative genres are set within the broader context of redemptive history.

As Reformed theologians and preachers, we have always emphasized the necessity of understanding the Word of God in light of the history of salvation. This is because we recognize that the gospel, the good news, is fundamentally a story. The gospel is the true story of what God has done, what God is doing, and

⁵ C.S. Lewis, "Myth Became Fact," in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 177–1983.

⁶ Daniel Strange, *Plugged In: Connecting Your Faith with What You Watch, Read, and Play* (Epsom, Surrey: The Good Book Company, 2019), 69.

what God will do. It is the ultimate story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. And it is only here in this context that we find ourselves, with our own stories of what God has done, is doing, and will do.

Too often the Bible has been reduced to a set of rules, a series of propositions, or a collection of loosely related stories, when all these only make sense within the story God has designed and is still busy telling. That's why I love some of the more recent children's storybook Bibles that make it abundantly clear that we can only make sense of God's revelation if we see that "every story whispers [Jesus's] name" and that beneath the many stories is the one, wonderful story of God's "Never-Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love."⁷

THE ULTIMATE STORYTELLER

Since God himself is the great storyteller, it's not surprising that when the Son of God took on human flesh and dwelt among us, he was the master of story. Already long before Jesus was born, the psalmist Asaph prophesied of him that he would "open his mouth in a parable" (Ps 78:2). The parables of Jesus effectively illustrate the power of story. They were so often a Trojan horse that snuck past his opponents' defenses. They frequently came with "a sting in the tale," a punchline that undermined the assumptions of the audience in unexpected ways.⁸ Just think of the parable of the Good Samaritan and its unlikely hero. But the power of the parables was even more profound than that, because they revealed the secrets of the kingdom of heaven to some, but veiled them to others, so that "seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand" (Luke 8:10; cf. Isa 6:9–10). Jesus used stories to open and close the kingdom of heaven.

The parables also show the power of illustrating deep theological truths with story. Luke tells us of a particular moment in Jesus' ministry when the Pharisees and scribes grumbled at the fact that tax collectors and "sinners" were coming to Jesus. "This man," they complained, "receives sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2). How did Jesus respond? He didn't give them a dogmatic lecture on total depravity and their own need for salvation (not that there's anything wrong with those!). He didn't call them out for their hypocrisy (although he did that on other occasions). He

didn't instruct them in their need for repentance and faith (not directly). He opened his mouth in parables, three precious, memorable, powerful stories about the love of God for the lost, a love that pursues, seeks, finds, and rejoices over repentant sinners. Who can forget the parable of the prodigal son? How many times have you heard or read it? Does it ever get old? The power of the parables is that they put flesh on the teachings of Scripture; they clothe the propositional truths of God's Word.

Speaking of flesh, Scripture calls the incarnate Son of God

The parables also show the power of illustrating deep theological truths with story

"the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Heb 1:3) and "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15). In Christ, God has spoken "in these last days" (Heb 1:2) most fully and completely. And so, the stories about the God-man Jesus Christ in his birth, his ministry, his suffering, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, his kingly and high priestly entrance into heaven, his outpouring of his Spirit, and his ongoing work in and through his church—these are the stories that are and belong at the very heart of God's redemptive history. It's not for nothing that the fourfold Gospel lies at the centre of the Scriptures, as the keystone of God's revelation,⁹ the center point of history, the story within the story that makes sense of it all, past, present, and future. May this old, old story be the one by which we measure all other stories, our theme not just in glory, but here and now as we confess: "I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love. I love to tell the story because I know it's true; it satisfies my longings as nothing else can do."¹⁰ 



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⁷ Sally-Lloyd Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name* (Grand Rapids: Zonderkidz, 2007); see also Marty Machowski, *The Gospel Story Bible: Discovering Jesus in the Old and New Testaments* (Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2011); Kevin DeYoung, *The Biggest Story Bible Storybook* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2022).

⁸ Roy Clements, *A Sting in the Tale* (Lisle: IVP, 1995).

⁹ For the metaphor of the keystone, see Jonathan Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 231.

¹⁰ "I Love to Tell the Story," accessed March 3, 2025, https://hymnary.org/text/i_love_to_tell_the_story_of_unseen_thing.

NEW VOICES



LORIA MIGUEL

Andrea

Spray paint, acrylic paint, Sharpie

I created this piece of artwork to illustrate our theme text Psalm 9:10 “Those who know your name trust in you, for you Lord have not forsaken those who seek you.”

I used Rust-Oleum painter’s spray to create a vignette. Next, I messily painted people using simple and quick brush strokes and ended with Andrea in the center in full colour and then outlined everything with a Sharpie.

I created this piece of art because I wanted to express how I interpret Psalm 9:10 through my painting. I focused mostly on the last part of the verse, the fact that God will

not forsake us if we seek him. People may hate us, they may walk away from us, disown us or abandon us, but God will never do that. We may have dire sins, we may drink a lot, be addicted to substances that are bad for us, love the things of this world, or be incredibly messy, mixed up and broken, but that doesn’t stop God from loving us. When we repent from the things that tie us down and hinder us from experiencing God, he is overjoyed and welcomes us with open arms. When God sees you, because of Christ’s sacrifice, he doesn’t see your sin, he’s not affected by how many people hate you, he sees you in full colour while everything else is grey. I used colours to create emphasis on Andrea as she looks up toward God despite everything. She’s messy and sinful, people are walking away from her, and yet she’s still seeking God, and God is still seeking her.

ALEXA LEYENHORST

The Good Shepherd

Pencil and Acrylic Paint

“Those who know your name trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.” Psalm 9:10

Using acrylic paint and pencil, I created an image portraying the theme verse (above). I mixed dark colours of acrylic paint to make the cliffs and rocks in the background look very dark and foreboding because it portrays the Valley of the Shadow of Death (Ps 23). I drew the shepherd and the sheep in pencil to contrast the paint, because they are the focus.

The shepherd represents Jesus holding his hand out to the sheep; the sheep represents us sinners. The sheep is seeking Jesus after being led astray into the darkness of sin. Jesus is in light colours, contrasting the dark colours of the valley. The “headband” on the shepherd’s head is blood red because Jesus spilled his blood to save us. His hand is coloured to make

him seem more human because he became human to die for our sins. The wrap on his cloak is painted white to show that Jesus is pure and sinless. His staff represents the part in Psalm 23 where it says, “your rod and your staff they comfort me.”

The shepherd (Jesus) is holding out his hand at the opening of the Valley of the Shadow of Death to show that he was waiting there and did not forsake the sinner that strayed away from him but patiently waited for the sinner to come back to his welcoming arms.

I chose a shepherd and sheep to represent Psalm 9:10 because the verse mentions God never forsaking us. In my mind, shepherds never forsake their sheep, and the good Shepherd Jesus will leave the 99 sheep to find the one that was missing.

When I look at this artwork, I feel very comforted knowing that I will never be forsaken, and that Jesus is always with me and will always be there for me when I get back on the right path. I feel very loved knowing that God is always going to accept me back with open arms even though I ran away.

ECHOES OF HOPE

Ruins stand like ghosts in the hushed streets,
whispering stories of loss
Skeletons of a past life
Before a banner of shadows, crimson and black,
Fluttered like a storm cloud
Leaving hatred and destruction in its wake
Famine stalks the earth
Taking whatever it can for itself
The war may be over, but death is not
Everything is a reminder
Fields scarred with history Mothers without sons
They whisper to themselves “What now?”
And turn to the horizon
Where a new land speaks of promise
With heavy hearts, they pack memories like fragile glass
Boarding ships to leave behind their past
Dreaming of Canada
Hope springs up like a tentative flower, ready to bloom

BRENNA DYKEMA

Historical Poem

Guido de Brés Christian High School

Explanation:

The topic I chose for my poem was the aftermath of World War II which caused people to immigrate to Canada. This topic is significant to me because my grandparents on both sides emigrated from the Netherlands to Canada and if they hadn’t done that I wouldn’t be here in Canada. I think people should know that even after the war things didn’t go back to normal right away. The theme I wanted to convey in my poem is how powerful hope can be. Even after a war that wreaked havoc and destruction, they could still have hope for a better life in Canada. In my poem, I used personification when I said “Famine stalks the earth.” I used four similes: “like fragile glass”, “like ghosts”, “like a tentative flower” and “like a storm cloud.” I also used a metaphor when I said “a banner of shadows” to represent the Nazi flag.





ARE THE PSALMS *Missional?*

PETER HOLTVLÜWER

When singing the Psalms in church, do you ever think: how would non-Christian visitors or even those new to the faith react to the words? Are they a turn-off in some way? Do the Psalms make newcomers feel unwanted perhaps? In short, are the Psalms rather un-missional because something in them inhibits the work of evangelism?

I began to ask myself these questions when I noticed that some Canadian Reformed churches which self-describe as “missional” appear to shy away from singing the Psalms. Even though as a federation of churches we’ve agreed that the psalms shall have the “predominant place” in the liturgy of the church,¹ yet from all that I can observe, our missional churches seem to have a very strong preference for singing hymns and contemporary worship songs. It is not that psalms are avoided entirely but they are much more sparsely selected than other songs. Is it because some think that the Psalms have little to do with Christ’s missional command to his church to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19)?

With these questions in mind, I decided to take a closer look at the Psalms to see if and how they relate to the church’s mission to the nations.

THE KING LOVES THE NATIONS

We don’t have to go very far into the Psalter before we run into the nations. In Psalm 2 the Lord says to his anointed king (ultimately referring to Jesus Christ), “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession” (Ps 2:8; see Rev 2:26–27). Immediately this shows both God’s rule over the nations and his intention to do good to them. As the book of Psalms moves on, God’s kingship over all peoples of the earth comes out as a major theme. Psalm 24:1 shouts, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.” We sing in Psalm 47:2 that the Lord is “a great king over all the earth” and again that “God reigns over the nations” and “God sits on his holy throne” (v. 8). Psalm 113:4 says, “The Lord is high above all nations and his glory above the heavens! Who is like the Lord our God who is seated on high?”

The psalms reveal still more: this majestic king loves and cares for his world. Psalm 33 declares, “He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord” (v. 5). That’s very missional, isn’t it? Your unbelieving friend singing psalms like these beside you in church can’t miss the implication: not only does God have power over all peoples but he’s also very concerned *for* all peoples, including me! Think of how Psalm 8

would resonate with someone who’s trying to figure out the kind of God we Christians believe in:

“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.” (Ps 8:3–6).

In a world which tells people that they come from an amoeba in the sea and descend from monkeys and are on the same level as animals, Psalm 8 proclaims the good news that God has made *all* humans special. God created them in his image and set mankind as rulers over the world—that gives people dignity and purpose! The theory of evolution or the ideas of atheism offer no rhyme or reason for life, no reason to keep living when life gets tough, but being a Christian does, and the psalms proclaim this.

Psalm 145 also says much about the LORD’s providential love for all: “The LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing” (vv. 14–16; see Ps 104:10–15). All of this shows a God who is very involved and concerned for his creation, a God who cares for the littlest and least of the animals all the way to the height of creation, human beings. When a visitor sings a song like that and realizes that it’s a psalm out of God’s songbook, he starts to get the message: *God has his eye upon you. He provides for you and cares for you. You should pay attention to him.* And that’s a great opening for a follow-up conversation after church.

THE KING CALLS THE NATIONS

The Psalms do more than show God’s concern for the nations. The Lord also *calls* the nations to come to him. The promise to Christ in Psalm 2 (above) is developed into an earnest call to all peoples. For instance, in Psalm 33:8, it says, “Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!” In several closely connected psalms (65–67), shows his desire for the nations to place their trust in him. In Psalm 65:5 we hear, “By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.” Then Psalm 66:1 exhorts not just Israel but “all the earth” to “Shout for joy to God . . . sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!” Psalm 66:4 takes it for granted that the Gentiles

¹ *Acts of GS 2004*, Art. 115, 6.3. See also my article outlining the history of this principle since the Reformation in *Clarion*, Vol. 73, April 26, 2004. As an aside, predominant psalm singing is also the fixed position of the URCNA, FRCNA, HRC, NRC, and the FCS among others.

will heed this call: “All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name.” David and the other psalmists wanted the nations to see Yahweh as God not just of Israel but of them too—the one only true God of all peoples!

The inspired poets prayed for God’s blessing over Israel for a very missional purpose: so that the nations might see God’s kindness and grace toward Israel and be drawn to worship Yahweh. Psalm 67 brings this out powerfully:

“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, *that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations*. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth” (Ps 67:1–4; emphasis added).

The prayer of Psalm 67 receives an initial answer in Psalm 126:2 where, as the Jewish exiles are set free to return to their homeland, this miracle is noticed with wonder by the Gentiles: “then they said among the nations, ‘The LORD has done great things for them.’”

The gospel call to the nations is very strong in the psalms. “I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds” (Ps 57:9). Notice how David sings *to the nations* of God’s steadfast love and faithfulness—the very thing we do when we speak of Jesus to our neighbours. What is the sending of Christ to save sinners but God’s greatest act of love and faithfulness to the world he created? We have this same anthem ringing out in Psalm 108 (see v. 3) and in the shortest of all psalms, Psalm 117:1: “Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him all peoples! For great is his steadfast love toward us!”

Psalm 72 is a prayer for God’s special, anointed king—whom we know is ultimately Jesus Christ (see Luke 1:32–33; Rev 17:14)—to establish his rule not just in the land of Israel but over all the earth. That prayer in verse 1 asks, “May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him!” Singing these psalms is a great incentive for us speak to our neighbours about God’s love and faithfulness which is available for them too. And when we bring our contacts to church and sing these songs, they hear the message *from God’s own mouth* (the psalms being uniquely God-given songs, his revelation) that God is calling them too to believe and worship him. They will hear of a loving, caring God who rules all peoples and wants them to be blessed under his rule!

There’s still more. There is a group of psalms called Kingship Psalms (93–100). Many of them exhort not just Israel but *all people* to sing the LORD’s praise. It comes out very jubilantly in Ps. 96:1, “O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth! . . . Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds to all

the peoples.” Psalm 98:2 says it this way, “The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.” And the well-known and loved Psalm 100 sings out, “Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!” (See also Psalm 148:11–13).

Jesus didn’t invent the missionary calling but rather came to enact it in fullest measure.

Everywhere the Psalms declare that God is genuinely concerned for all nations and wants them to come to know him and enjoy his salvation. In fact, Jesus’ very command to his disciples in Matthew 28 is rooted in this missional calling woven throughout the Psalter as well as God’s earlier promises to the patriarchs. Jesus didn’t invent the missionary calling but rather came to enact it in fullest measure. The same God who inspired these psalms is the same God who sent his Son, and the same God who commands us not just to *sing* to the nations but to go out and *preach* to them, *call out* to them, and *make disciples* of them. For this reason, singing and reading and praying the Psalms *with* all nations is a perfect fit.

THE KING SAVES THE NATIONS

Not only does God call out to the nations in the Psalms, he promises *to bring the nations in*—or at least many from every nation. As we saw, God announces this major promise right at the beginning of the Psalter in Psalm 2:8, which helps set the tone for the whole book. There’s a two-sided coin here in Psalm 2: on the one hand the nations are pictured in opposition to the LORD and his anointed one, whom we know is Jesus Christ. The peoples scorn God but God laughs at their puny opposition (see vv. 1–6). But then in verse 8 comes this extraordinary decree and amazing promise of grace where the LORD says to his royal Son, “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.” Despite the hatred and opposition of the nations—opposition that Christ will crush with his rod of iron (v. 9; see Rev 19:11–21)—yet there will also be a selection or remnant of all the nations that *will come* to Christ in faith and humble submission. The closing warning of Psalm 2 to, “Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and you perish in the way” is a gospel call for the nations to repent and embrace Jesus as king. And God’s

promise in verse 8 guarantees that many among the peoples will do exactly that.

Psalm 2's promise is actually the direct background to Christ's command in Matthew 28. The nations *will be* Christ's heritage and possession. The terms "heritage" and "possession" in the Old Testament were normally applied only to Israel. Psalm 2 prophesies that they will one day be applied to the Gentiles—and ever since Pentecost this has been coming true. In fact, all our missionary activities are based on this promise in Psalm 2:8—isn't that a great comfort and encouragement? We can be nervous at times about speaking of Jesus to our neighbours or starting a church plant or going out as an ordained missionary. We can wonder whether we'll say the right things or if our efforts will make any difference. But, in Psalm 2, God has promised Christ that the nations *will come in* and *be given to him*. You and I can relax about the results and simply focus on getting the gospel out to unbelievers. God will convert or not convert according to his ancient plan but in the end a multitude from every tribe and tongue will be gathered in faith around the throne of the Lamb (Rev 5:9–10).

The promise of Psalm 2 is not a one-off in the Psalter. We find it stated repeatedly. For example, consider Psalm 22:27, "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you." You can hear in that an echo of God's promise to Abram to bless all the families of the nations through him, a promise which has been coming true ever since Christ came (see Gen 12:1–3). Psalm 45:17 is also quite plain: "Nations will praise you [the LORD] forever and ever." There is nothing equivocal about that—the Gentiles *will* praise the LORD! The unbeliever hears that there is a place for him in God's kingdom and the believer hears that many will respond in faith—very missional indeed!

Psalm 82:8 recalls Psalm 2, "Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!" Psalm 86:9 is very pointed, "All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God." Something much the same is said in Psalm 102:15: "Nations will fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth will fear your glory." Notice how it's more than just citizens of the nations; it's also kings who will recognize the LORD for who he is. That comes out again in Psalm 138:4, "All the kings of the earth shall give you thanks, O LORD, for

they have heard the words of your mouth, and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD."

And perhaps the granddaddy of all the psalms emphasizing

Wouldn't the missional impulse of the entire Psalter. . . be a refreshing blessing for those whom the Lord brings in to worship him?

that the missionary call will absolutely be heard and believed by the nations is Psalm 87:

"Glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God. Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon; behold, Philistia and Tyre, with Cush—'This one was born there,' they say. And of Zion it shall be said, 'This one and that one were born in her'; for the Most High himself will establish her. The LORD records as he registers the peoples, 'This one was born there' (vv. 3–6).

Isn't that beautiful? The Sons of Korah list a number of surrounding nations, including some of Israel's worst enemies like the Philistines and the Babylonians, and God says that he will make these people residents of Zion! He will make these former enemies members of his church. They will be born—that is to say, born again—in Zion and the LORD will call them his people. Any new believer who wants to grow in faith and come to know God and Jesus Christ more and more cannot fail to be deeply moved by a psalm like that. Wouldn't the missional impulse of the entire Psalter, not to mention the many other teachings of God found there in the Word of God in song form, be a refreshing blessing for those whom the LORD brings in to worship him? 🕊



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The Bible Presbyterian Church

In the most recent article about churches outside the PARC, the focus was on the Protestant Reformed Churches. This group of churches is invited to send observers to the annual meetings but is not a member of NAPARC. Another group of churches in this category is the Bible Presbyterian Church (BPC). At present, this group consists of about 30 churches, with a total of about 3500 members. The churches are spread throughout the US, with one congregation in Edmonton, AB. They have been sending observers to NAPARC for many years. This article will look at its history and distinctives, which may shed light on why the BPC is content to remain in the “Invited Observer” category.

HISTORY AND HISTORICAL CONNECTION

The beginning of the Bible Presbyterian Church is closely linked with the formation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in 1936. The OPC was formed in reaction to the theological liberalism that had become dominant in the mainline Presbyterian Church in the USA. This theological liberalism was evident in questioning the inspiration of Scripture, the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, his supernatural works, the nature of the atonement, and Christ’s resurrection from the dead. It soon became apparent, however, that there were significant tensions among those who had formed the OPC over two main issues.

The first issue pertained to eschatology, that is, the doctrine of the last things. Some embraced a premillennial view of our Lord’s return. In this view, it is said that the Lord Jesus will return to earth and usher in a thousand-year reign of peace. It is said that after this age the unbelievers will be raised, and the new heaven and earth will be ushered in. While there was supposed to be room for divergent views of the millennium, some felt that their views would not fare well in the newly formed OPC.

The second issue pertained to the use of alcoholic beverages. The prevailing thought in Presbyterian circles had been that, while drunkenness was forbidden, it was permissible to drink alcoholic

beverages. Some, however, felt that Scripture called for complete abstinence from alcohol. This mindset reflects the strong temperance movement that had been present since the mid-19th century.

The result of this tension saw a group of men leave the General Assembly of the OPC in June of 1937. In their official declaration to associate together in a new church called the Bible Presbyterian Church, they gave as reason the apostasy of the Presbyterian Church in the USA. This glosses over their separation from the OPC, which had been formed for that very same reason. The founding Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church was held in 1938.

The history of the BPC since its founding has been scarred by four divisions. The first occurred in 1956. On the BPC website it states that “the issues had to do with the kind of agencies the church would have Synod-controlled vs. independent agencies.” At issue here seemed to be the question of Synod-controlled mission boards and a seminary versus independent organizations. The BPC does not have denominational organizations for mission or theological training but does recommend organizations worthy of support. In addition, it mentions that “there was a desire for greater latitude in the area of cooperation—a less rigid separation.” Another factor was personality conflict with “some resenting the strong, outspoken leadership of Dr. Carl McIntyre.” It seems that this led to a considerable reduction in size, but exact numbers could not be found.

A second split occurred in 1970. This appears minor, as only two churches left. The issue seems to have been one of allowing liberty with respect to eschatology. This group, known as the American Presbyterian Church, accepts only premillennialism.

A third split occurred in 1984. It appears that Dr. Carl McIntyre wanted a resolution passed on a specific version of premillennialism. When this was not done, he walked out, followed by 16 others. Eventually, issues were worked through, and reconciliation took place in 2001.

A fourth division seems to have taken place in 2008, when the South Atlantic Presbytery of the BPC separated from the BPC. According to one source, this was because the BPC established formal relationships with the OPC.

DISTINCTIVES

In reviewing the history, two distinctives have already come to the fore, namely, the BPC's premillennial eschatology and its stance on abstinence with respect to alcoholic beverages.

With respect to its premillennial stance, it should be noted that the BPC modified two articles of the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF). Their version of Article 32, "Of the State of Man After Death, and the Resurrection of the Dead" reads,

At the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, such living persons as are found in him shall not die, but be changed; and all the dead in Christ shall be raised up with the self-same bodies, and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever. The bodies of the unjust shall, after Christ has reigned on earth a thousand years, be raised by the power of God to dishonour.

Their version of Article 33 has as title "Of the Last Things," as compared to the traditional "Of the Last Judgement." It reads,

God hath appointed a day (which in Scripture in reference to the last things may represent a period of time including the thousand years following the visible, personal and pre-millennial return of Christ) wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ...

According to the BPC website, the current status on the coming of Christ is that the BCP "as a Synod, holds to the premillennial return of Christ. However, it recognizes that eschatological opinions are not a part of our required system of doctrine, and rejoices to work with churches and ministers who hold to other eschatological beliefs."

Another distinctive to note is the emphasis on freedom of conscience. This is evident in the opening section under the History tab on the website. It has as heading, "What are we doing today." It concludes by stating,

The Bible Presbyterian Church is unique among American and European Reformed churches. We are free to walk under the Presbyterian principle that God is the Lord of the conscience, so our local congregations all have a flavor of their own in worship and ministry activities. The Scriptures provide our only regulations when it comes to worship. BP worship is marked by a vibrancy that comes from each communicant bringing his or her own offerings before the Lord with a full heart, within the bounds of the Word of God.

A final distinctive to note is the emphasis on separation. The bar for fellowship is set quite high. There is a willingness to cooperate with others in missions and education, but for full fellowship, there must be acceptance of its premillennial and abstinence positions.

OBSERVATION

To venture some comments, emphasis on the conscience is always problematic. It is true that no one can compel one's conscience to go against the clear teaching of the Word of God. At the same time, the stress on our conscience easily leads to placing the conscience above the Word of God. Talk of freedom of conscience easily becomes a case of each man doing what is right in his own eyes. The appeal to freedom of conscience has contributed in large measure to the endless splintering in Protestant churches. The numerous divisions in the BPC would seem to be another example of this. Christians do not live by the motto of, "Let your conscience be your guide," but "God's Word is our Guide."

HOPEFUL PRESENCE AT NAPARC

When one considers the premillennial eschatology, the abstinence from alcoholic beverages, and the emphasis on purity in associating with others, it would seem that the BPC would not truly feel at home at NAPARC. None of the member churches hold similar views. Furthermore, its revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith in Articles 32 and 33 puts them at odds with the basis of NAPARC, where churches are expected to subscribe either to the Westminster Standards or the Three Forms of Unity. Still, the fact that the BPC has a formal relationship with the OPC and has sent observers to NAPARC for many years indicates that the BPC may find its isolated position too isolated and longs for increased fellowship with faithful Reformed churches.

NAPARC's practice of inviting certain churches to send observers amounts to extending the right hand of fellowship, acknowledging spiritual unity. It is up to those invited to follow through and reciprocate by seeking to become a member of NAPARC. With the Lord's blessing, someday we may see the Bible Presbyterian Church not just as an observer church, but as a member church. 



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CRTS 2025

Graduate Profiles

Editor's Note: What follows is Part 2 of our two-part presentation of upcoming Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) graduates.

JOSHUA SCHOUTEN

Hello brothers and sisters, my name is Joshua Schouten. Pictured with me are my beautiful wife Maaïke and our two beloved sons, Elias (1.5) and Jacob (2 months). My story begins in London, Ontario where I was born and raised. Maaïke was born in Bergambacht, the Netherlands, from where her family emigrated to Watford, Ontario, where she grew up. We first met at Covenant Christian School in London where we both received our elementary education. We attended Providence Reformed Collegiate for our high school years and, despite incessant badgering from our older siblings, no romantic interest developed.

As the sixth of eight children, I thank God for the many opportunities I had to learn from my older siblings growing up. I observed their strong work ethic and dedication to whatever their hands found to do, and I soon joined in the scuffle and kerfuffle of their spirited debates at home. I also spent a lot of time tagging along with my older brother whenever I could. When he got into farming and started an excavating and demolition company, I was right there with him every chance I got. Throughout this time, I benefitted from a wide range of experiences at work, from driving tractors on the farm to working on large demolition projects. I became fascinated by the gifts and abilities that God gives to man to work with his hands, to raise up and to tear down, to develop and build, to grow crops, and raise livestock. I was (and still am) intrigued by how things work—what goes into designing and building all things mechanical and structural. When I graduated

high school, enrolling in the engineering program at Western University seemed like the logical thing to do.

Though I had not seriously considered pursuing seminary education up to this point, there were many things which God providentially used to steer me in that direction. Most notably, throughout my high school education, wise teachers prompted me to use God's gifts to me by pursuing gospel ministry. I also grew in my love for studying God's Word and learning Reformed doctrine and I became convinced of the importance of the preaching of the gospel. So it was that, during my first year of university, I began to wonder if engineering was the path that I was to pursue. Despite my resistance, the Lord worked in me a desire to become a minister of his Word. And so, instead of enrolling in a second year of engineering, I worked for a year and then returned to Western University to study early modern philosophy and biblical languages, graduating with a Liberal Arts degree in 2021.

During this time, Maaïke and I began to take a romantic interest in one another and started dating in July of 2020. Once Maaïke had graduated from Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College and I had graduated from Western, we got married in July of 2021 and moved to Brantford, Ontario. That September, Maaïke began working at Hope Reformed Christian School in Paris, Ontario, and I began my studies at CRTS in Hamilton. Two years later, in July of 2023, the Lord blessed us with the birth of our son Elias Johannes, and in December of the following year, we welcomed Jacob Cornelis.

In addition to these blessings in our family life, there has been much to give thanks to our heavenly Father for in these past four years. It has been a privilege to study under the tutelage of such godly and learned men and to get to know the faithful saints who support this seminary and its students in so many ways. Aside from the joy of learning about the rich history, doctrine, and practice of our churches, it has been a delight to study the wondrous works of our God and to proclaim the excellencies of Christ to his covenant people. This is the privilege that I have had in teaching catechism for 2 years in Ancaster and training under faithful ministers on various internships, first with Rev. James Sinke (Bethel URC, Woodstock), then with Rev. Clarence VanderVelde (Rehoboth CanRC, Burlington) and then with Rev. Joe Poppe (Redeemer

CanRC, Winnipeg). I am thankful for the wisdom, guidance, and encouragement of these men which has been invaluable to me in learning to craft sermons and shepherd Christ's flock.

I am also thankful for our churches and both humbled and encouraged by their eagerness to hear God's Word faithfully proclaimed. The Lord Christ is truly at work among you! What an awesome privilege to be an instrument in his hands as he gathers, defends, and preserves his church. To that end, this spring I hope to present myself for preparatory examination in Classis Ontario West, and Lord willing, be declared eligible for call in the Canadian Reformed churches. Whatever the Lord's plan for us may be, to him be the glory both now and forever! 🇨🇦





ADRIAN TAMS

Hello, brothers and sisters! I'm Adrian, and with me are my lovely wife Alisha, our two daughters Abigail (3) and Lillian (2), and our newborn son Thomas.

At our house, you might notice two pairs of eyes peering from around the corner. These girls are a little shy at first, but they will warm up soon. They're an inseparable duo, who spend their days reading and colouring while toting and doting on their baby dolls (and their new baby brother).

As for my wife and I, we met at a wedding in 2018. While I was serenading the newlyweds with one of Alan Jackson's greatest hits, I was sweeping a beautiful bridesmaid off her feet! My career as a wedding singer never took off (surprisingly . . .), but my relationship with Alisha did (thankfully!). She's stood by me ever since. We share a love for reading, hiking, and tending houseplants, but most of all, for Jesus Christ. Alisha has been my deeply treasured companion in the faith.

It was not a smooth road to seminary for me. I grew up in Taber, Alberta with my four siblings under the loving guidance of my believing parents. Though they raised me in the faith, I was a wayward and wandering teenager. After I graduated from high school, I worked as a labourer in stone masonry for a couple of years, and then began studying for a degree in psychology at Mount Royal University in Calgary. During this time, I drifted in my faith and lived a worldly life. I sometimes wish I had a more

dramatic turn, but change happened more slowly. Still, I share the apostle's confession, "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain" (1 Cor 15:10). Though I once strayed away, his Holy Spirit steadily worked in my heart both a heartfelt joy in God through Christ and a desire to do God's will.

I initially intended to work towards a career in law or psychology, but the Lord had other plans for me. At the prompting of an elder, I attended an open house at the seminary that led me to reconsider my use of the talents God gave me. I resolved to begin the steps toward seminary, but the Lord established my path. At every point along the road, the Lord has upheld me. I soon transferred to McMaster University in Hamilton so that I could study the biblical languages there (and to be closer to Alisha, whom I had just started dating).

After graduating, we continued on to CRTS. I am thankful for all that I have learned in the past four years. My professors have instructed me patiently and carefully while setting a godly example, inviting me to imitate them as they imitate Christ. My fellow students have been a daily source of love, sharpening, and encouragement, whether praying beside me at Monday morning prayer groups, as my fearsome "opponents" in thesis defense, or elbow to elbow in the lunchroom.

I'm especially grateful to our churches for providing opportunities to learn and grow. In particular, Rev. Mark ten Haaf and Rev. Richard Aasman in Edmonton (Providence), who introduced me

to life in the ministry, Rev. Rudy de Vries in Kingston (Redemption Prison Ministry) who allowed me to accompany him on Bible studies, visits, and chapels, and Rev. Julius Van Spronsen in Edmonton (Immanuel), who guided and instructed me through my first preaching, pastoral visits, and consistory meetings. Internships and family have given cause for many road trips, and Alisha and I value the many memories we've shared traveling across the country several times. We look forward to settling more permanently though!

Over the last 4 years, God has richly blessed our family. We've settled into seminary life and built routines here. I've been blessed with the opportunity to teach catechism in Ancaster and Grassie churches in the past two years. We've come to love this community, the seminary, and our church in Ancaster. It's a bittersweet feeling, knowing we will leave the seminary soon yet looking forward to going to classis in June, Lord willing. We are excited to see where he will guide us next. God, our God, blesses us. To him be the glory! 



FRED STRUIK

Hi, I'm Fred Struik, and this is my beautiful wife Alexandra (Alex). We graduated high school together in 2010 (I'll let you figure out how old that makes us), and we've been married for 10 wonderful years now. In that time, we've been blessed with many children, about half of whom have gone before us into glory (whom we can't wait to meet there one day), and others who sit around our dinner table and make our home very fun and very loud. You'll see pictured Josie (8), August (6), Luther (4), and Bethany & Fraser (2). In the meantime, we've also welcomed our son Hayden into the family, born on February 24, 2025.

I grew up in the distant western reaches of the CanRC: Surrey, BC. I'm the second of four children to my loving and godly parents. I'm blessed to have a very typical, "boring" story: born and raised in the church, attended catechism, and went to our covenant schools. And yet, though this trajectory is typical, it turns out that it wasn't boring at all. God was hard at work on me during those years, nourishing and growing my faith, and they were years filled with the excitement of discovering ever more deeply his truth and his love. My story is one of God's remarkable faithfulness through the generations.

Credo Christian High School plays a particularly important role in my story. It was there that I first laid eyes upon the history teacher's daughter who would one day become my wife; it was in those halls that I developed deep

and lasting friendships; it was under that school's banner that I competed in basketball and track and field; and it was to those burgundy-coloured hallways that I one day returned to serve for five years as a teacher.

Though I worked my way through university by doing my best at farming, landscaping, and agricultural construction, the truth is that I'm not very handy, and it was in teaching that I felt I was truly at work using the gifts God had given me. At Credo, I taught English (my undergrad degree) and Bible, and it didn't take long for Bible teaching to become my passion. Teaching Bible was an incredibly spiritually formative experience for me, and was also a major factor in my sense of God leading me to seminary.

The pull to pursue ministry was an urge against which I struggled for some time, because I was reluctant to leave teaching behind. I loved and still deeply cherish those years as a teacher. I'm grateful to all my colleagues and to the admin there who encouraged me both in my teaching and my preparations for seminary, and most of all to my students, who were so very patient with me as I developed my teaching (and, let's be honest, often preaching) skills in the Bible classroom. Those experiences of sharing the faith with the next generation are memories I will always treasure. Nevertheless, eventually God's nudging became too obvious for us

to deny any longer, and we soon found ourselves packed up and traveling across the country.

It was no easy thing to uproot and leave behind our families in the Fraser Valley, but God has blessed us immensely in these years. Our family has grown—in number, in love, and in van-size. These four years have flown by, but in the meantime, we've developed wonderful friendships, and Hamilton has truly become home.

During the course of my studies, I was privileged to enjoy internships with Pastor Phil Grotenhuis (Pathway), Pastor Rolf den Hollander (Living Light), and Pastor Winston Bosch (Streetlight), as well as filling a vacant pulpit in Caledonia for a summer. I cannot overstate how much of a blessing these times were for me, and how much they've contributed to my growth. A special thank you to these men and congregations, as well as to my professors for all their wisdom and mentorship.

After this semester ends, I hope to present myself to classis to undergo my preparatory exam, and so we stand at the door of another new beginning. As we contemplate this wide-open future, we do so with much excitement (and some trepidation!) of what the Lord has in store for us next. We trust that no matter where and what he calls us to, he will use us as instruments in his hand to bring glory to his name. *Soli Deo Gloria!* 

MARC VERMEULEN

Hello, brothers and sisters in Christ. It is an honour to be able to introduce ourselves to you! We are Marc and Hannah Vermeulen. We have been blessed with two wonderful children, Josiah (2yrs) and Matthias (8mos). It is humbling to be writing this bio, as a fourth-year student looking ahead to graduation, and beyond that, to service in God's church, if that is his will. Indeed, all praise and glory belong to him!

Allow me to share something of how God has providentially guided me and my family to this point. I was born in Albany, Australia, into a covenant family. I moved, or rather was moved, to Canada at five years old, when my dad decided to pursue studies at the seminary. Little did I know that I would one day follow in his footsteps. Having grown up largely in the Hamilton area, my Australian credentials are a bit rusty, and I have long since lost the cool Australian accent. Growing up in a big family was such a blessing, and I owe much to my parents' care and instruction.

It was during these formative years that I met my now wife, Hannah. We attended the same Christian schools and were friends for much of that time. Hannah and I dated while we were studying

at university. Hannah pursued teaching, while I studied classics and the biblical languages. During the summers, I worked on a local farm where I learned much about pressure washing, driving tractors, and of course, drinking coffee . . . good to have those transferable skills.

Hannah and I were married before the Lord and his people in June of 2021. She continues to be such a blessing to me, keeping me grounded and encouraging me to press on. She is truly a wonderful mother to Josiah and Matthias. I can say for certain that I would not be where I am today without her by my side.

Growing up as a minister's kid, the thought of pastoral ministry was somewhere in the back of my mind, but I only started seriously considering it in my early university years. I decided to take the biblical languages to have that door open. I enjoyed studying the languages and continued to grow in my love for God and his Word. After prayerful consideration and receiving encouragement from those near to me, I enrolled at CRTS.

I began my studies at CRTS with much uncertainty—was I up to the task? Was pastoral ministry for me? But through the four years of study God has been so good to me and our family. He has

strengthened my desire and conviction to study God's Word and to proclaim it faithfully. God provided classmates who have encouraged and sharpened me along with a good dose of friendly ribbing. He has allowed me to sit under the teaching and mentorship of professors who have been a source of knowledge and wisdom. I am especially grateful for my mentor, Dr. Smith, who consistently reminded me to fix my eyes upon God, trusting him in all things.

I have also been richly blessed by the internships I could experience. I am indebted to Rev. Rolf den Hollander (Grimsby CanRC), Rev. Arend Witten (Baldivis FRCA), Rev. James Sinke (Woodstock URCNA), and Rev. Tim Schouten (Prince George CanRC mission work). In these internships, I was privileged to see God at work in

his church across the world. I was blessed to learn from the wisdom of these godly mentors, to visit with members of Christ's flock, to teach catechism classes, and to proclaim the glorious truths of his Word. All of these have been opportunities to grow, not only in my abilities but especially in dependence upon my heavenly Father.

Now, as we near the end of our time here at CRTS, we are looking forward to what God has in store for our family. I hope, by the grace of God, to present myself before classis at the end of June to become eligible for call. God has been faithful and will continue to be faithful. "Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him" (Jer 17:7). 



QUENTIN VANDERMEULEN

Hello there, I'm Quentin Vandermeulen. If I've been on your pulpit, you may remember me as the young man who preaches in cowboy boots. My distinctive footwear says more about me than one may realize. I purchased my first pair of boots after my first semester of seminary as a way of reminding myself where I came from and where I'm going. I grew up on a farm outside of Carman, Manitoba, which was hard to leave behind. The boots testify to my origin, but also to my future of sojourning. In ministry, I may have many homes, but my eyes are on my true home (Heb 11:10). By these boots I am reminded where God has led me and where he has promised to bring me.

My first home was in Carman, where I was born the youngest of five boys. I was aptly named Quentin, which means fifth son. I was raised in a loving Christian home and went to a Christian school. When I was small, I wanted to be a minister but also a farmer. I look back on doing chores fondly, but if you ask my family, they might say I tended to wander off when the real work started. I was a teenager when I began to enjoy working both at school and in the local Co-op grocery store. I forgot about ministry in these years. So, after graduation, I chose to pursue a career with the Co-op. Within a year, I received management training and was offered a job running a grocery store in Treherne, Manitoba.

Treherne is about a 45-minute drive from Carman, although I doubt that places the town on the map any better. While sojourning in this town of about 800 people, I learned things like finance, time management, community relations, and leadership. Over three years I learned what life looks like without God as I was integrated into this unchristian community. I was confronted by my own need for God as well, and I called to him, and he answered me. God began to work a deeper love for him in me through his Word. While I was beginning to feel a soft voice calling to share the gospel, I also heard a louder voice. In God's providential time, our federation put out a call for young men to consider the ministry. I heard this from the pulpit and felt compelled to pursue a higher education and maybe a higher calling.

In three quick years, I earned a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Manitoba. Over these three years, I wrestled with the thought of going to seminary and becoming a preacher. My heart convicted me to apply as my desire to serve grew stronger. I was accepted at CRTS and so I packed up the box of my little red truck with all my possessions and moved to Hamilton, Ontario.

Through the last four years, God has blessed me inside and outside of the seminary. I have grown in my knowledge of God as well as my desire to proclaim his gospel. I had many wonderful internships that took me across the world, with Dr. Jeff Temple



in Hamilton, Rev. David Pol in Papua New Guinea, and Rev. Axel Haag of the FRCA in Western Australia. Most recently, I completed a preaching internship with Rev. Tyler Vandergaag in Guelph. I was enriched by all these internships and learned a great deal from these men and their church families.

I have come a long way in these cowboy boots and the Lord has guided me in the good times I've mentioned but also in the challenges that I haven't mentioned. I know that where I have been God has been with me, and wherever I go I trust that God will lead me.

The Lord willing, this summer I hope to continue growing in my aptitude for pastoral ministry by leading worship in the Caledonia Canadian Reformed Church here in Ontario. Recognizing that gospel ministry is a high calling, this fall I will prayerfully consider returning to Classis Manitoba for the preparatory exam, in order to become eligible for call in the churches. 

CLARION KIDS **ASK!**

How does God love us?

- Everly, Grade 1

Hello Everly,

Do you know the song "Jesus loves me"? If you sing it, you will sing the words: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. . . ." So we need to look in the Bible to see how God loves us.

In the Bible, the apostle John writes that God *is* love. Everything about God is love. When God made the beautiful world and then made Adam and Eve to live in the world, it was because God *loved* them. When God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments, it was because he *loved* them. God saved Israel so they wouldn't be slaves in Egypt because he *loved* them. God wanted his people to know him and know how to obey him.

There are many, many stories in the Bible that show how God loves his people. Do you know what the most important story is? It is that God loved his people so much that he sent his son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins. That is how much God loves his people!

God loves us because he is our Father. Even when we sin, we can say sorry to God and ask him to forgive us—and he will, because he loves us!

Mrs. Veenendaal

Email your question to editor@clarionmagazine.ca
and watch for the answer here in the *Clarion!*

REVIEW: INTO THE LIGHT

PARENTING &

PORNOGRAPHY

In view of the constant warnings about an epidemic of addiction to pornography among Christians, and the reality of easy access to pornographic material on the internet, my wife and I have sometimes confessed to each other that we're thankful we don't have to raise children in this time in our culture. Christian parents today face a particularly intimidating set of challenges when it comes to navigating their children's access to, and use of, technology.

The reality is that pornographic material is readily available on the internet, and the electronic devices that grant access to the internet are both numerous and ubiquitous. "Everyone"—including children of elementary school age—has a smart phone; more and more of us have smart TVs, laptops, tablets and numerous other electronic devices in our homes. Almost all of us make use of the internet and these devices; we can hardly imagine life without them. Still, many of us don't really understand how the technology works, that is, how the material gets into your homes and into your children's hands.

SHINING LIGHT IN DARKNESS

The tentacles of pornography reach deep into human hearts and are capable of getting a death grip on them. Marriages are destroyed, and families suffer collateral damage. Even if watchers escape addiction, they don't escape the harm: they "greatly offend God, incur the guilt of death, grieve the Holy Spirit, suspend the exercise of faith, severely wound their consciences, and sometimes for a while lose the sense of God's favour" (Canons of Dort, Ch. 5, Art. 5). The producers of the documentary *Into the Light* (intothelightministries.ca) have produced a new series of nine presentations entitled "Parenting and Pornography." You can watch the trailer for the series on their website.

The goal of the series is to equip and encourage Christian parents not simply to "porn-proof" their children but, more positively, to prepare their children to serve the Lord and their spouses in this dimension of their lives. The various speakers in the series attempt to work out the implications of the command of Deuteronomy 6:4-9, specifically in teaching our children the truth about sexuality, encouraging parents to speak openly and positively about the way in which we may use the gift of sexuality, and the positive purposes for which God has created us as male and female image bearers.

SERIES OUTLINE

The first video (The Vision) featuring Abbie Halberstadt aims to "encourage (parents) to teach their children about God's good design." In two episodes devoted to the role of the parent, Jonathan Holmes shows how "being made in the image of God is essential in teaching children about sexuality" and he "addresses the responsibility God has entrusted to parents. He also walks through how our own upbringing influences the way we parent." This is followed up with strategies for getting to know your children's hearts and tips on how to regularly speak about sexuality in day-to-day life. He also incorporates discussion on the importance of the local church.

In Episodes 4 and 5 (The Design), Andrew Walker "teaches about the Genesis blueprint for sex, gender, and marriage, and . . . offers a clear vision that parents can teach to their children." Walker then speaks on common lies about pornography and sexuality in the church and culture today, as well as addressing "why a biblical understanding of embodiment is so important to raising children who embrace God's good design."

In episodes devoted to The Child, Julia Lowe "helps parents think through how to proactively speak to their children about sexuality and the dangers of pornography in age-appropriate ways."

She also “walks through how parents can live out and speak of God’s good design in the daily rhythms of life.” Lowe speaks about how to recognize signs that your child may be watching pornography and how to intentionally draw them out in conversation. She offers example situations for how parents can talk about God’s design for sexuality in everyday life.

In the final episodes (The Home), Justin Witmer Early “offers a theology of technology and practical steps for how parents can intentionally protect their home from pornography.” Early also walks through the importance of establishing wise digital habits and use of technology in your household before offering “ten wisdom practices for technology protection and family formation.” He stresses the importance of “forming children into lovers of God and neighbors in the realm of tech habits.”

TECH RESOURCE

An added practical resource offered by Into the Light is TechSafe,¹ described by its creators as “Tutorials for protecting every device in

your home.” They promise that “you don’t have to be a tech wizard to protect your home! . . . These tutorials will equip you to safely live with and enjoy your technology to the glory of God.”

These resources will inform, encourage and equip parents with Bible-based wisdom and practical advice to help them talk to their children about God’s good design for sexuality and the dangers of pornography, preparing their children to stand firm in the face of the challenges they face in this culture. 



Dick Wynia

Minister Emeritus

Vineyard Canadian Reformed Church, Lincoln

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¹ intothelightministries.ca/techsafe

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»	MY FRIEND
»	MY BROTHER
»	MY CHILD
»	MY GRANDCHILD
»	MY NEIGHBOUR



Prayer for My Children

1. In - to your lov - ing hands do I com - mit my chil - dren.
In nev - er - fad - ing script that noth - ing can de - lete,
there, on your palms, O Lord, en - grave their names for - ev - er,
for Sa - tan is in - tent on sift - ing them like wheat.

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

2. When I must let them go, hold on to them, embrace them.
Lord, shield them with your strength, surround them with your care.
You know how viciously the world will scorn and hate them
if they its worldly goals and values do not share.
3. I do not ask that you should spare them every sorrow,
but comfort and console them every time anew.
For your name's sake, O Lord, preserve them in your covenant
and let them never, never be estranged from you!

Text: William Helder, 2023

Translation of "Gebed voor mijn kinderen," by Geeske Wiersma-le Grand, 1969

Tune: W. A. Mozart, Amadeus

letter to the EDITOR

Dear Editor,

There have been three mentions of the war in Ukraine in *Clarion*. In one of them, an editorial by Jim Witteveen, he writes, "You don't want to say that you stand with Ukraine? Why not? That must mean that you love Vladimir Putin and support what he's doing!"

Now, I understand what he was saying at the time and the context, but I believe it *is* time to say we stand with Ukraine. There was no justification for Russia to invade Ukraine. No provocation. Some people say Russia was provoked by NATO expansion. No. NATO expanded because of Russian aggression. Sovereign nations who want to join NATO should be able to do so. It is called freedom.

Some people say Ukraine is corrupt. First, how is this relevant? Second, every former Soviet republic is corrupt, but Ukraine is fighting it. Ukraine wants to join NATO and the European Union and so cannot be corrupt. Russia is corrupt but is not fighting it.

But, why should this matter to Christians, why write about this in a Canadian Reformed magazine? Because it is our Christian duty. Psalm 82:3-4: "Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." Isaiah 1:17: "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow."

Defend the weak. Uphold the cause of the oppressed. Defend them, take up their cause. Deliver them from the hand of the wicked. Seek justice. Pray for Ukraine. Stand with Ukraine.

Respectfully yours,
John de Jong
Kelowna, BC

letter to the EDITOR

Dear Editor,

In his article “RCNZ Synod 2024” (*Clarion*, 7 Feb. 2025) Rev. J. DeGelder says, “The [RCNZ] federation has roots in the continental (Dutch) Reformed tradition.” Continental? Yes. Dutch? Yes. Reformed tradition? No. A “Reformed” church “governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it” (BCF 29) and the word “tradition” implies that such behaviour is passed down. The RCNZ’s “roots” do not reflect that.

The RCNZ have their roots in the “synodical” false churches from which Christ graciously liberated those who later instituted the CanRC and FRCA. The early Dutch migrants who instituted the RCNZ, on the other hand, were mainly from, and clung to, the Dutch synodical churches which had persecuted the true believers, hierarchically deposing and dismissing office bearers who refused to proclaim false doctrine. The RCNZ, along with their Australian sisters, the (C)RCA, continued their sister relations with the Dutch false churches, calling ministers from these churches for many years.

Successive FRCA synods expressed concerns about the RCNZ. The 1962 FRCA Synod (Art 18) decided to place “serious warnings” in several Dutch church papers, urging potential migrants not to migrate to New Zealand because there was no true church there (see Appendix 1). Rev. G. van Rongen subsequently did this on behalf of Synod 1962 (see, e.g. *De Reformatie*, 3 March 1962, p. 168). Whilst much more could be said about this, the above shows that it is wrong to say that the RCNZ federation has its roots in the “Reformed tradition”.

With brotherly greetings,

Jelte Numan

FRC Mt Nasura

Comments from Rev. Jan DeGelder:

I appreciate the opportunity to comment briefly on br. Numan’s letter.

1. With “having roots in the Reformed tradition” I referred to adherence to the Reformed Confessions from the 16th and 17th centuries, as maintained in the 19th and 20th centuries. From the beginning the RCNZ have never embraced the doctrinal decisions that, with hierarchical abuse of power, were forced upon the Dutch churches in 1942/1943, and which led to the Liberation of 1944.
2. Br Numan writes that “the early Dutch migrants who instituted the RCNZ were mainly from the Dutch synodical churches.” D.G. Vanderpyl, in his book *Trust and Obey*, which is about the history of the RCNZ, speaks about “a sizeable number” that had come from the liberated churches (page 36, note 32). Without exact numbers it will remain difficult to interpret “mainly” versus “sizeable.” And the question is, of course: how relevant are those numbers 75 years later?

CLASSIS CLIPPINGS

What follows are clippings from the press releases of recent classes across the federation for the interest of our readers. Each press release can be found in full at canrc.org.

CLASSIS PACIFIC WEST – APRIL 3, 2025

Preparatory Exam: Br. Tony Zheng's request to be declared eligible for call within the Canadian Reformed Churches was the next item of business. Br. Zheng presented his sermon proposal, which classis deemed sufficient for the exam to continue. Br. Zheng was examined in the areas of Old Testament, New Testament, and doctrine and creeds and was asked to present his motivation for seeking the ministry. Classis deemed his responses sufficient and decided to declare br. Tony Zheng eligible for call within the Canadian Reformed Churches for the period of one year (with the possibility of extension). Br. Zheng promised not to teach anything which is not in accordance with Scripture as summarized in the Reformed Confession and was given a Certificate of Candidacy. The assembly sang the doxology and the chairman led in thanksgiving and prayer.

Mission Updates: Langley-Refuge will be hiring Elder Babar Masih, who served as an ordained Reformed pastor in Pakistan, as mission worker for local outreach to the South Asian community in the BC Lower Mainland. Oversight of the work will be exercised by the Langley-Refuge Council through the Panah Mission Board; the latter would, the Lord willing, eventually transition into a church council. A translation project has been started of the *Book of Praise* into Urdu, Hindi, and Punjabi.

CLASSIS PACIFIC EAST – MARCH 6

Church visit reports: Reports of visits to the churches of Aldergrove, Lynden, and Vernon were received.

Question period was held as per Article 44 of the Church Order. All the churches reported that the ministry of the office bearers is proceeding and that they are honouring the decisions of the major assemblies. Two churches requested and received advice in matters of church government and pastoral oversight.

CLASSIS ALBERTA – MARCH 13

After determining that the necessary paperwork was in order, classis proceeded with the peremptory exam of candidate Josh Peters. Following his delivery of a sermon proposal on Genesis 22, classis deemed the sermon sufficient to continue the exam. After examining him in the required disciplines, classis, with the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, determined that he had sustained the exam.

Rev. Matthew Van der Woerd passed on greetings on behalf of Classis Western Canada of the URCNA. Church visitation reports were received for Providence, Immanuel, and Barrhead. Classis received a letter from the appointed contact with the provincial government and archivist.

A proposal from Taber was adopted to correct a typo in the regulations. A proposal from the church at Neerlandia to change Article 58 (Church Order) was rejected. The questions from CO Article 44 were asked with seven of the churches answering "Yes, yes, and no." Pulpit supply was granted every six weeks to the vacant churches, with Rev. Veurink to draw up a schedule. Concurring advice was given in a matter of discipline. Advice was provided on the matter of church boundaries. Classis then dealt with an appeal in closed session.

CLASSIS MANITOBA – MARCH 28

Rev. Joe Poppe welcomed the delegates to Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church for the spring classis...in the snow. The meeting was opened with reading Scripture (Colossians 1:1-14) and singing (Hy 63: 1,2). Several items of memorabilia were remembered in opening prayer: the vacancy of Ambassador CanRC, the call

extended to Dr. Wes Bredenhof (FRCA Launceston) by Grace CanRC, and the emeritus ministers and their wives: Rev. and Mrs. Klaas and Nettie Jonker, Dr. and Mrs. Andrew and Inge Pol, and Rev. and Mrs. John and Agnes Van Rietschoten. Gratitude was conveyed for the continued work of Dr. Andrew Pol, filling the pulpits of the vacant churches in the classis.

Classis tabled a proposal by Grace church regarding the classical assessment schedule. For the benefit of church bookkeepers, it was recommended that the classical assessments be set at the fall classis. The proposal was adopted.

Question period was held, as per Article 44 of the Church Order, and various matters of church governance were discussed in closed session. Following question period, elder Art Veenendaal offered a word of prayer for the churches.

Opportunity was given to Rev. Rich Anjema of Providence United Reformed Church to address classis. He expressed gratitude for the collegiality, unity, and opportunity to work together as Reformed churches in Manitoba. The president expressed thankfulness for the good relationship we enjoy and for Providence's involvement in the regular pulpit exchanges.

CLASSIS NORTHERN ONTARIO – MARCH 19

A church visitation report was received with thankfulness. Question period was held, according to CO Article 44. All the churches affirmed that the ministry of the office bearers is being continued and that the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. Advice was given to one church regarding proper church government.

A proposal was adopted to change the classis regulations regarding the invitation of fraternal delegates and observers. A letter was dealt with in closed session.

CLASSIS CENTRAL ONTARIO – MARCH 21

Several emeritus ministers were remembered in prayer, particularly in regard to their health: Rev. John van Popta, Rev. George van Popta, and Rev. Chris Bosch. Also remembered were those still serving actively in preaching or mission support: Rev. Versteeg in Papua New Guinea, Rev. William DenHollander at Rehoboth URC, and Rev. George van Popta with a ministry to the Karen people group.

It was noted that Hamilton-Blessings, Hamilton-Mercy, and Flamborough-Redemption are searching for second pastors. Burlington/Waterdown-Rehoboth and Burlington-Ebenezer are now worshipping together while maintaining distinct congregations as they move towards a merger. Also noted was that Rev. Bruintjes declined a call to Hamilton-Cornerstone.

Article 44 & advice: All churches answered yes, yes, no to the questions in Article 44, with the exception of Ottawa-Jubilee, who plan to make an appeal to general synod. Toronto-Bethel made use of Question Period for two separate matters. The first was concerning the best way to approach a licensure exam for a candidate with English as a second language, preparing to spread the gospel in the Mandarin-speaking community. The second item related to appointments to broader assemblies and committees of ministers not actively involved in ministry in a local congregation (i.e. missionaries, chaplains, ministers emeritus). Advice was given for both matters. Hamilton-Mercy had a question regarding a pastoral matter, and received advice in closed session.

CLASSIS NIAGARA – MARCH 19

Two letters were received from the church at Smithville. The first was a request to be relieved of their appointment at Classis Niagara December 13, 2023 to investigate the truth of concerns that churches are not following the decisions of the major assemblies. They suggest that instead, any church which is concerned ought to communicate directly with the churches in question before bringing this to the broader assembly. Classis grants their request.

The second letter was a request to approve the call which Rev. C. Swaving accepted to the Hope Neerlandia Canadian Reformed Church as per Church Order Article 9. After reviewing the necessary documents, Classis approved the call. Smithville was then also granted their related requests that Rev. C. Bouwman be appointed as church counsellor as per Church Order Art.45 and that pulpit supply be granted for one Sunday a month beginning May 1, 2025.

Classis received a brief report from the Committee for Examinations that two students from CRTS, brothers Todd Linde and Marc Vermeulen, requested preparatory examinations in June. Arrangements are being made to accommodate their request, awaiting the date suggested by this classis.

Classis received a report from the Deputies for Contact with Neighbouring Classes/Presbyteries. It was noted with thankfulness that the deputies had opportunity to visit several local classis meetings of the URCNA over the last couple of years. Where unable to attend in person, fraternal greetings were emailed. Also noted with thankfulness is the continued good relationship with the Armor OPC in Orchard Park, NY. A brief discussion is held with the attending deputy who sought clarity on their mandate.

In closed session, church visit reports to the churches of Attercliffe, Dunnville East, Dunnville West, Grassie, Grimsby, Lincoln, Niagara South, Smithville and Tintern were received with thankfulness. 

