

Clarion

Numbers 10:1-10

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Rev. Klaas Stam is minister emeritus of the Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton, Ontario
cstam@sourcecable.net

Do We Need Mentors?

The ministry of mentorship is on the rise

Let it be clear from the start that I am not against *mentorship* as such. In fact, mentorship is common and functions in many ways among families, friends, and associates. I am sure that everyone can admit to having been mentored at one time or another. What I do question is whether *mentorship* should become an official, organized ministry in the church involving people who are hardly trained for this kind of work.

The ministry of mentorship is on the rise. It fits within our individualistic time. I found some useful information on the Internet, www.stephenministries.org.

Mentorship is a *one to one* relationship of support and help that the members of the church give to each other. It is something like the concrete realization of the communion of saints: we are here to help one another. There is a "mentor" who guides and teaches. There is a "protégé" or mentoree who receives this guidance. It is not meant to be a casual, passing relationship but a form of help which deepens with time until the protégé has overcome personal difficulties and may perhaps become a mentor.

Mentoring has always existed as a form of *apprenticeship*. Someone more advanced in a certain trade helps along someone not so advanced. The point here is that mentoring has become a church ministry with people trained in life skills and experienced in coping with adversity. Mentoring now has a psychosocial and spiritual emphasis.

Professionals and fumblers

The Lord Jesus has entrusted his church to office-bearers, ministers, elders, and deacons, who are called "to prepare God's people for service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph 4:12, 13). In my understanding mentorship is a work that is done by the minister in preaching and the elders and deacons in teaching and visiting.

This does not mean that mentorship can only be done by office bearers. We all support and guide each other in many ways. But I do see a potential problem here: the distinction between the work of the office bearers and the mentors may become somewhat fuzzy-wuzzy.

This new approach to pastoral care may lead to some confusion because the mentors are officially appointed and sent (to the USA) for special training. They will return home to train others as leaders. In reality they have only a week of training, and I wonder how effective this can be. Also, I want to ask the question whether mentoring will be done only by male communicant members or also by women. If I don't ask this question, someone will. I know that mentorship is not meant as an office, but still some members may be rather uncomfortable with it. After all, mentorship is often referred to as a "ministry" and that word tends in the direction of an office.

It is very easy to see the mentors as professionals and the office-bearers as fumblers. The Lord has given office bearers as gifts to his church, and they are responsible to him. I have not yet found where mentors fit in beside the office bearers.

As stated, mentorship has always functioned in some form or another. But a special mentorship that functions in a structured way in the church is a typical example of pragmatist and industrious American innovation, "let's do what works." In a similar way I see the rise of the idea of "coaching" in our post-modern world. You may not really tell people what to do; at most you may *mentor* and *coach*, and then hope for the best.

I suggest that the way of mentorship and coaching may lead to an erosion of the offices that Christ has given to his church, also the office of all believers. Let's leave it to the experts, people will say, a two-tiered system of pastoral care.



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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal
Coeditors: P. Holtvlüwer, E. Kampen, K. Stam, C. Van Dam

ADDRESS FOR COPY MANAGER:

Clarion, 57 Oakridge Drive South, St. Albert, AB T8N 7H2
E-Mail: veenendaal@telus.net

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
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The Stephen ministry

The idea of organized mentorship started in 1975 when the Rev. K.C. Haugk, a pastor and a clinical psychologist, trained nine members of his congregation in St. Louis to be *Stephen* ministers. The name Stephen was used because he was the first *layperson* commissioned by the apostles to provide a caring ministry to those in need (Acts 6). I am not sure about the application of this Scripture passage. When Stephen was appointed, he was no longer a *layperson* but a *deacon*, an office-bearer under the supervision of the apostles.

It does not mean to detract from the responsibility of the office bearers, but it may unwittingly head in that direction

The Stephen Ministries currently is a not-for-profit, trans-denominational religious and educational organization with a staff of forty persons, serving 11,000 congregations world-wide. More than 150 Christian denominations are involved. More than a million

What's Inside

The issue in your hands begins with an editorial from Rev. Klaas Stam on a new trend called ministry of mentorship. In it he questions the need for such a ministry and discusses how it could affect our view of offices within the church.

Dr. James Visscher has written an article on the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. Many may assume that the Holy Spirit's presence and power in the Old Testament was quite limited. Is the Holy Spirit really a New Testament Spirit?

A news article from Toronto CanRC reports on their farewell to Rev. den Hollander as he has reached the time of his retirement.

Issue 21 also includes our regular Treasures New and Old meditation, this time on the topic of reformation as we approach Reformation Day. We also have for you a Book Notice from Dr. Cornelis Van Dam, a letter to the editor, and two press releases.

Laura Veenendaal

people have received Christian care and fellowship through this ministry. If statistics whet your appetite, then here is something to savour.

The governing idea is that the *laity* must be trained and involved in the care of fellow members. The use of the word "laity" in this context stands in contrast to the word "clergy." This does not mean to detract from the responsibility of the office bearers, but it may unwittingly head in that direction. Frankly, I do not like the use of the word "laity" as opposed to clergy.

Stephen Ministries rightly stresses that it is a *confidential* ministry. What a care receiver tells a Stephen minister remains strictly *confidential*. There is also a twice-monthly supervision meeting to ensure that the best possible care is given. But even then the names of the care receivers and specific details are never divulged or discussed. Top secret, if you can

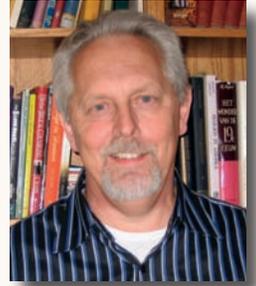
believe it. Without confidentiality, the whole system falls apart.

I understand the need for confidentiality and supervision. I am not sure if the method of Stephen Ministries is realistic. I understand there must be utmost confidentiality among the ministers and ward elders, but even that is hard to maintain.

Sometimes a matter must be discussed in a broader circle where confidentiality is not so easy to preserve. "A gossip betrays confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret. For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisors make victory sure" (Prov 11:13, 14). Advisors may not be gossips. All elders must preserve the strictest confidence.

Do we need mentors in the way described above? Or should we reevaluate the offices that the Lord has given? I'd like to see some more discussion on this point.





Rev. Hans Kalkman is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Calgary, Alberta hanspkalkman@gmail.com



MATTHEW 13:52

Being Thankful for the Reformation

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

(1 Peter 2:9)

It was not the blissful sound of ringing church bells but the loud cracks of hammer blows that twice introduced massive changes in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first and the most important time, hammer blows interrupted the status quo of a church that had all but become completely apostate, when Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross. The Old Testament church, lost in human traditions, would soon be reformed by the New Testament church. This was not only a church-changing event, but it changed the world.

The second time hammer blows introduced a great change was about fifteen centuries later on the thirty-first of October, 1517. Then the Lord raised a man by the name of Martin Luther to nail to the doors of the castle church in Wittenberg his protest against the heresies of the church. And although this time the hammer blows did not introduce a change as universal as the first, it again renewed a church which had become grossly untrue to her calling and purpose.

Just one man and a few sheets of paper were all that the Lord needed to cause the reformation of his church. That it was not in the first place Martin Luther but the Lord who caused this change is evident from the enormous speed with which Luther's ninety-five theses spread throughout Europe. Just think about it: in the early sixteenth century there was no Internet or email, no

telephones, no modern mail service, and travel was slow and dangerous. Yet it took only two weeks for the message conveyed by the theses to spread throughout all of Germany, and in two more weeks they had spread all over Europe – even the Pope in Rome had read them – and they were soon translated into all the major European languages.

It was a marvelous event, caused and driven by the King of the church, who had promised that the gates of hell would never prevail against it. A marvelous event it was, but also the beginning of a tremendous struggle. Satan was not about to give up his hold upon a church he had so firmly in his grip. He mobilized his forces, which was the established church of that time together with the state, the Holy Roman Empire, in an attempt to crush all and everything that opposed him.

But all of Satan's attempts proved to be in vain, in spite of the rivers of blood and tears that he caused. Christ yet reformed his church. And from these same rivers of the martyrs' blood emerged a church that was purged from its corruption and ready to be a light in the world again. What a marvelous gift is the great Reformation! It is a precious blessing that the Lord has also given to us.

And what a great incentive and responsibility we are now given, to cherish the Reformation by being faithful to the gospel and the Lord's call to be a light to all

those around us. This means being a light, not only by being faithful to the teaching of the Bible, but as God's "chosen people and royal priesthood," by declaring the Lord's praises to all who live around us. We must do our best to make the gospel look attractive by our loving and caring ways, forgiving and humble attitudes, peaceful and compassionate behaviour in our society. Our fellow workers, fellow students in school or colleges, our neighbours—in short, everyone we come in contact with – must see what it means that we're a royal priesthood and a holy nation.

It's true that this is a much different kind of life than the majority of people in our society lead, and that means many people will reject us and the message we communicate with word and deed. But we are "a people belonging to God." Let us pray every morning again that the Lord will give us the strength to lead that different life, and that he will also bless it, so that we will have the opportunity and courage to give an account of the hope that is within us.

In this way, let us show our thankfulness to the Lord for the great Reformation and for his continued gathering, defending, and preserving of his church. Let us live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse us of doing wrong, they may see our good deeds and glorify God on the day that he visits us. 



Dr. James Visscher is minister emeritus of the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley, British Columbia
jvisscher@telus.net

The Spirit and the Old Testament

Often when the person and work of the Holy Spirit comes up for discussion there seems to be this assumption that while the Spirit is very active in the New Testament, his presence and power in the Old Testament was very limited. Some would even go so far as to say that the Spirit was largely absent from the Old Testament.

Is such an assumption correct? Is this what the Old Testament teaches? Is the Holy Spirit really a New Testament Spirit?

An in-depth look at the Old Testament proves that such a conclusion misses the mark. Indeed, there is ample indication from the Old Testament itself to indicate that the Holy Spirit was very much present then and active in the world and in the life of God's people.

To support such a contention we will consider the Spirit in relation to five important areas: the world, the people of God, the Word of God, the offices in the church, and the future.

The Spirit and the World

Upon turning to the opening pages of the Old Testament, it does not take long before the reader comes face to face with the Holy Spirit. Genesis 1:1-2 states majestically, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

What these verses tell us is that the Spirit of God was active already at the beginning of time and very much involved in God's great work of creation. The writer of Genesis describes him as "hovering over the waters." In other words, he is compared to a bird hovering over its prey or watching over its young. He is very much present, active, and attentive when it comes to the creation of the world.

Still, we are told about the Spirit's involvement with creation not only in the book of Genesis, but also in the book of Psalms. In particular, Psalm 104, that great Psalm on creation, comes to mind. It states,

These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth (v. 27-30).

Here we cannot escape the impression that the Holy Spirit is also the creating Spirit. It is not just God the Father who fashions the created realm, the Spirit does so as well.

In addition, notice that Psalm 104 describes the Spirit as doing more. He is also very much involved with the work of renewal. He is said to "renew the face of the earth." This must mean that he is also the sustaining Spirit. He insures that all created things continue to exist, to receive their food, and to thrive. Creatures everywhere and of every kind look to God to supply their daily needs and it is the Spirit who makes it happen.

As further support for all this, one may also think of Psalm 33. Although the Spirit is not mentioned there by name, his involvement is surely being alluded to when the psalmist states, "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (v. 6, 9).

The Spirit and the people of God

From dealing with the Spirit's role in the world, we move on to his role with respect to the people of God. Before we zero in on that, however, we should first

consider the Spirit's role with respect to man as such. Genesis 2:7 speaks about this when it says, "The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."

Now there has been considerable controversy about this verse and a lot of it has to do with the fact that the King James Version translation renders the last part of this verse as "man became a living soul." Such a translation, however, is questionable and a more accurate wording is "a living being" or "a living creature."

Only this in turn raises the question, "What is it that makes man a living being?" According to Genesis, it has everything to do with "the breath of life" that man received from God who "breathed into his nostrils."

But what is this breath and where does it come from? Job 33:4 gives us the answer when it states, "The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life." This identification of life with breath and breath with the Spirit is further supported by Genesis 6:3, where God is quoted as saying, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years." Hence the Spirit is mankind's life-giver.

Yet he also gives more, for as well as life, the Spirit also gives ability to man. One can think here of special artistic ability, as in the case of Bezalel and Oholiab. When it came to properly decorating and adorning the tabernacle, these men were "filled with the Spirit of God" (Exod 35:31) and they received the skill needed to "do all kinds of work as craftsmen, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen and weavers – all of them master craftsmen and designers" (Exod 35:35). Beauty, skill, and artistry are all linked to the Spirit.

Another ability that the Spirit bestows is leadership ability. This becomes evident as one reads through the book of Judges. Who empowers Othniel (3:10), Gideon (6:34), Jephthah (11:29), and Samson (13:24, 25; 14:6, 19; 15:14-15)? Their bravery, courage, and determination are all connected to the Holy Spirit. The same goes for King Saul. Both before and during his kingship, the Spirit plays a prominent and enabling role (1 Sam 10:1, 6, 9, 10). Conversely, when Saul's kingship goes into decline, it is directly linked to the withdrawal of the Spirit (1 Sam 16:14; 18:10-11).

As a counterpart to Saul, one can look too at Moses. He too receives leadership gifts from the Holy Spirit; however, in his case leadership is coated with humility (Num 12:3). Such humility was not home grown. Rather, it too was Spirit given (Num 11:16-17).

Thus it can be said that not only does the Spirit give life to all people, He especially gives life (new life) to God's people and fills some among them with special abilities and gifts.

The Spirit and the Word of God

From the New Testament we know that the Spirit is also active when it comes to the Word of God. After all, 2 Peter 1:20, 21 states forcefully, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Here the Apostle Peter is not so much presenting a new truth as he is reflecting on an old truth. Indeed, his case is largely built on what took place in the Old Testament.

So what did take place in the Old Testament? There the Holy Spirit often spoke through the ministry of men called prophets. Of these the first and, in some ways, the greatest was surely Moses. Numbers 11 relates how the Spirit rested on Moses and how it enabled him to prophesy.

It also tells us that some of the Spirit that was upon him was given to the seventy elders who are to lead the nation of Israel with him. Furthermore, Moses expresses a most fervent wish "that all of the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them" (v. 29). Moses would like nothing better than to see a whole nation of prophets; that is, he wants all of the people to be filled with the Spirit.

Did his wish come true? Not in his lifetime. Nevertheless, the LORD did continue to send prophets or men endowed with the Spirit to Israel. In and through them the people were instructed and heard the Word of the LORD.

Yet, what the people heard was often the Word of God in its condemning power. One thinks here of the prophet Micah who declares, "But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin" (3:8). Repeatedly, God raised up prophets and sent them to his people and he did so especially

in times of apostasy and injustice. He sought their repentance and return to faithfulness.

Sadly, however, these prophets themselves often failed to function as good and faithful messengers. In various places in the Old Testament these men are accused of being negligent in their duties because of their drunkenness (Isa 28:7-8), sexual immorality (Jer 23:14), greed (Mic 3:11), weakness (Jer 6:14-15), and compromising ways (Ezek 13:6-7).

The Holy Spirit was very much present and active in the Old Testament

At other times God takes men who are foreign to his people and uses them. In this category one is led to think in particular of Balaam, son of Beor and a Midianite. He is a man who has no desire to be the mouthpiece of the God of Israel and he certainly is not interested in being a mouthpiece of blessing upon Israel. Nevertheless, this is what the LORD turns him into. Using his sovereign and all powerful will, the LORD has Balaam bless the people of Israel not once but three times (see Numbers 22-24).

Overall, it becomes clear in the Old Testament that the LORD is in control when it comes to revelation and that nothing and no one can withstand him when he wants his will made known. He discards crooked prophets, uses foreign prophets, and instills strength in weak prophets, and in the end he causes his will to come to his people. Earlier we referred to Peter who writes about men being carried along by the Spirit. How apt an image! In some way the Holy Spirit is like a mighty river and the men whom God uses to reveal his will are like men in a boat that is being carried along by a strong, powerful, and unstoppable current.

The Spirit and the offices in the church

Although we have alluded to it already, more needs to be said about the Spirit's role in relation to the various offices in the Old Testament. What is an office? It is a special task or function that God assigns to certain people in his church. In other words, this is not a matter of someone volunteering or setting themselves apart. Neither is it a case of the community setting them apart. No, it is God who does the setting apart. He creates the particular office. He determines

its character and its duties. He also insures that the appointed people receive the ability that they need to meet its requirements.

How does he do the latter? Again, here we need to think of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who equips kings, priests, prophets, and judges.

With respect to judges, we read about Othniel, "The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war" (Judg 3:10). What applies to him applies as well to the other judges in Israel. The Spirit gave them courage, insight, zeal, and strength.

With respect to the prophets, we read about Jahaziel son of Zechariah, that "the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel. . ." (2 Chron 20:14). The LORD used him to prophesy victory over Moab and Ammon to King Jehoshaphat and to the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

With respect to priests, we read about Aaron being anointed when Moses is told, "Take the anointing oil and anoint him by pouring it on his head" (Exod 29:7). And what is anointing? It is an outward ceremony pointing to an inner reality. As the olive oil is poured out and flows down upon Aaron's head and robe (cf. Psalm 133), so the Holy Spirit flows into his life and heart and equips him to serve the Lord.

The Spirit of God was active already at the beginning of time

With respect to kings, we read about many instances of their being anointed: Saul (1 Sam 10:1), David (1 Sam 16:13), Solomon (1 Kgs 1:39), Joash (2 Kgs 11:12), and others. Furthermore, we have a song which describes what this anointing is supposed to do for the king.

"Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness. . . He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; he will crush the oppressor. . . For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight" (Ps 72:1, 4, 12-14). Justice, safe-keeping, and compassion, all belong to the task and office of the king and it is the Holy Spirit who endows them.

Yet not only does the Holy Spirit endow the king, as well as the other offices in the Old Testament, he also promises to do the same and more for the coming Servant-King. Indeed, we can hear him speaking prophetically in the book of Isaiah,

“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor. . .” (Isa 61:1-2).

In the New Testament we meet the fulfillment of these words of Jubilee in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 4:18-19). Furthermore, at his baptism by John in the Jordan River, we see Christ anointed by the Holy Spirit into his three-fold office as the greatest prophet, priest, and king.

The Spirit gives new life to God’s people

Interestingly, the Heidelberg Catechism teaches that when someone is “a member of Christ by faith” he or she comes to “share in his anointing” and is thus enabled to function in his or her own right as a prophet, priest, and king in the service of the LORD (Q/A 32). The Spirit who equips his special servants in the Old Testament and who has equipped God’s greatest Servant in the New Testament is still at work today equipping the servants and people of the LORD everywhere. His work continues and his work has expanded immeasurably.

The Spirit and the future

There are at least three places in the Old Testament that also give prominence to the Holy Spirit with respect to the future.

The first place is to be found in the book of Isaiah. There we come across the following future prediction: “Till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high and the desert becomes a fertile field and the fertile field seems like a forest. Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field. The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever” (Isa 32:15-17).

In this passage the prophet Isaiah is led to look into the future and what he sees is the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and along with it a restoration and revival in the created realm. Field and forest will both be rejuvenated.

The Spirit is at work equipping the servants and people of the LORD everywhere

Notice, however, that something else will happen as well. There will be a blossoming of justice and righteousness. In other words, a renewal of creation will be combined with a return of two of the most blessed values in the kingdom of God, namely justice and righteousness.

Obviously, this will be quite a development. Only it will not end there for together creational renewal and value renewal will lead to a most blessed result, which is peace. “Shalom” will return to the land.

Another place that speaks about the future and the work of the Spirit is found in the well-known chapters of Ezekiel 36 and 37. In chapter 36 there are the memorable words, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Ezek 36:27, 27). Here we move into a very personal application of the Spirit. If Isaiah directs his attention at the bigger picture having to do with creation and kingdom, then Ezekiel is more concerned with the actual renewal of the children of the kingdom. He envisages them receiving new spirits and new hearts, and all because the Spirit will live in them.

As for the next chapter in the book of Ezekiel, it takes this motif and works it out even more. There the children of Israel are likened to a cemetery, an exposed and well-weathered cemetery. The bones of the dead lie out in the open for all to see and they are very dry. In short, these people are far gone.

But then the Spirit of the Lord begins to work. The word of the LORD goes forth like a breath of the Spirit and infuses new life into this valley of bones. The bones begin to join, tendons and flesh appear, skin covers them and life is breathed into them. As the Lord says to Ezekiel, “I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you

will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD" (Ezek 37:14).

Here Ezekiel has a message for the remnant who are in exile and the message is that there is hope for them. God has not forgotten them and the Spirit will revive them. They will have a future when the exile is over. Yet not only then, for there is a sense in which this prophecy about the Spirit extends far beyond the post exilic period and gives hope to God's people in the New Testament and beyond. No doubt it forms part of the background for Paul's words to the Romans, "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you" (Rom 8:11). The Spirit who gives life to Israel and who raised Christ will also give life to believers everywhere.

All of this leaves us with one final Old Testament passage to consider when it comes to the Spirit and the future and it can be found in the book of Joel. It too is a famous passage and reads, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions" (Joel 2:28). Joel originally directed his words at God's wayward covenant people and informs them about the coming locust plague as the judgment of God on their sins. Thereafter he calls on the people to "rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity" (Joel 2:13). Thus the announcement

of judgment sets the stage for a call to repent, a call in which God appeals to his people as their covenant God ("return to the LORD your God") and pleads with them on the basis of his honour (v. 17b). Should the people respond in this way, God will lavish forgiveness and restoration on them (2:18-27).

Yet there is also something else that he will lavish on them and that is a wondrous and bounteous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. No longer will the presence and power of the Spirit be manifested in a few lives. In the future it will become manifested in many lives – young and old, male and female, servant and master. They will all prophesy and dream dreams.

But when will this happen? Scripture tells us that the fulfillment of these words of Joel happened during the latter days of the new covenant and more specifically on Pentecost day. Then and there the Apostle Peter quotes these words of Joel (Acts 2:17-21). At that time the church will be transformed and the Spirit will be the prime Transformer.

Together then Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel point forward to a fuller and richer coming of the Holy Spirit to the people of God. The future is rich with promise.

Now, there is much more that could be said about the Spirit in the Old Testament. Suffice it to say, however, that the little that has been passed along in the chapter should be sufficient to keep you from ignoring His presence and under-estimating his impact during this span of time. Already then his work was great and glorious, essential and enormous, inspiring and influential.



Don't Miss Out!

NOW IS THE TIME TO PREPARE YOUR YEAR END ISSUE ADS

The deadline for ad submissions in the year end issue is

November 12

Toronto Bids Her Pastor Farewell

Sunday, June 24 was a day of change for the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto, as after sixteen years of serving the Toronto congregation as her pastor and teacher the time had come to bid Rev. den Hollander farewell. During these years Rev. and Mrs. den Hollander and family had developed strong bonds and friendships with the blessing of the Lord. Rev. den Hollander during his ministry in Toronto was very actively involved with each and every member of the congregation and gave a tremendous amount of guidance and love as he carried out his pastoral duties.

Words of farewell

Rev. den Hollander preached his farewell sermon on 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:7, using as focal point 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. The text starts out with words of reminiscence, which is something we as congregation will certainly be doing during this service and into the evening. Rev. den Hollander tied this in with his inaugural sermon, Romans 1:8-15, which says "I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong. . . , " that is both pastor and congregation may be mutually encouraged by each



other's faith. Then in today's text Paul puts it this way: "When I came to you. . . I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." Paul did not come with brilliance of speech and wisdom of man – human wisdom; no, he brought the testimony of God and what he has done in Jesus Christ. That is the message that was proclaimed to us through the ages and also here in Toronto. Paul continues by remembering when he first came to them in weakness and fear. This is to highlight the fact that the power of the gospel which he proclaimed was done in the power of the Spirit. All boasting is to be done in Christ. This gives comfort to preachers today as well. No one can boast or take credit for working faith. The outcome and fruit is from the Spirit, whose power works through the proclamation of the gospel.

Following the sermon Rev. den Hollander spoke personal words of farewell and thanksgiving as our pastor and teacher. He led us through his years in



the ministry, having begun in the congregation of Winnipeg, and then on to Orangeville, and finally to the congregation at Toronto. Rev. den Hollander stressed that through every experience, challenge, and step on the way God has had his purpose and gave him the strength to do his work from day to day and that all praise must go to our Triune God.

Farewell evening

After enjoying a light supper that was served by the action committee, we once again gathered in the auditorium for the farewell evening. Our MC for the evening was Br. Jack Vanderee, who kept things running smoothly. Many presentations were made, by young and old, with almost every member of the congregation participating – all expressing the love and care the congregation has had for Rev. and Mrs. den Hollander over the past sixteen years. Ministers in the Toronto area were given an opportunity to express personal words of appreciation and encouragement for the relationship they had with Rev. den Hollander. It is very obvious that church unity was very near to Rev. den Hollander's heart. As the evening was coming to a close, Rev. den Hollander and Mrs. den Hollander were given the opportunity to express their



thanks to the congregation, both for the relationship that had developed over the years as well as for the well wishes and the gift that was presented on behalf of the congregation. Br. H. Kampen closed with prayer, which was followed with refreshments and a time of personal farewells and words of encouragement as Rev. den Hollander enters into retirement. . . wishing him God's blessing in whatever task he finds himself in, as Rev. den Hollander had already mentioned interest in continuing his ministry to the glory of our Heavenly Father. C

Programming of Life

Donald E. Johnson's book, *Programming of Life* (Big Mac Publishers: Sylacauga, AL, 2010), along with the visually attractive DVD, is a must-read and a must-see for all biology students and is accessible also for those not into biology. The author has two Ph.D. degrees, one in Computer and Information Sciences and the other in Chemistry. Reading this fascinating and stimulating book makes very clear that life is truly a mystery on the biological level. Johnson shows how each cell of a living organism has thousands of interacting computers. Each one reads and processes digital information, using digital programs and digital codes to communicate and translate information. Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, has written: "Human DNA is like a computer program but far, far more advanced than any software we've ever created" (50). So where did the programming and information found in living cells come from? The study of biological organisms

Book Notice

Cornelis Van Dam

Dr. Cornelis Van Dam is professor emeritus of Old Testament at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in Hamilton, Ontario
cvandam@canrc.org

involves both physical science and information science and each must be investigated using the principles that apply to its own field. Yet current scientific theory attempts to use physical science to explain the information side of life. This practice has no scientific justification for functional information cannot be generated by physical properties.

More details on this book and DVD (which can be viewed on-line) can be found at <http://programmingoflife.com/> and <http://www.scienceintegrity.org/>. This material is highly recommended, especially for science students and scientists. It takes you where the evidence directs and encourages thinking outside the current scientific box. C

Dear Editor:

In his very informative editorial, "Love-in in Lawrenceville" (July 6, 2012), Klaas Stam goes off the deep end by stating in the second last paragraph: "Many appeals were sent to the Christian Reformed Churches, to resolve differences. These appeals were cast aside as worthless." Let's take a walk down memory lane.

From the Acts of our Synod 1962, we learn that Synod appointed some brothers with the instruction to contact the CRC synod, outlining our concerns. A copy of this correspondence is to be mailed to all CRC consistories (*Acts of Synod 1962*, p. 37).

The Acts of our Synod 1965, article 177, p. 35, inform us that the CRC synod of 1964 has appointed a committee "to communicate with Canadian Reformed churches, with a view to establish a closer relationship with these churches."

Our Synod of 1965 appoints four deputies to take up contact with the CRC committee. Under Article 31, p. 64 of above synod, we read Synod's instructions to our deputies, outlining the issues to be dealt with (see p. 64, no. 2 ABC and D).

Acts of Synod 1968, p.43, indicate "some positive results with regard to 1908 "Conclusions of Utrecht" and the 1924 "The 3 points of Kalamzoo." This refers to 2B of Synod 1965.

From the Acts of Synod 1971, we glean that the CRC synod of 1969 acknowledged that their synods of 1946, 1949, and 1950 did make "judgment by implication." We had been battling this issue with the CRC from day one. On page 98 of the same acts, point 8, we notice the following: "Is it not true that the contact between our committees which has resulted in the removal of the obstacles, A, B and D, mentioned in the Acts of 1965, leaves but one remaining point of discussion. Point C of the mandate was not resolved" (see *Acts of Synod 1974*, p. 92). The result was that the CRC disbanded her committee.

A number of meetings took place over a period of six years, with positive results. I believe that the author of this editorial owes the CRC an apology.

Yours in his service,
Martin Kampen, Burlington, ON

Response

Thank you for your letter. It's good to receive some feedback. For the information of our readers, M. Kampen was a member of the Committee for Contact with the Christian Reformed Church. That is why he knows more than others about the contacts with the CRC.



I restrict myself now to the Synod of New Westminster 1971. The Acts of this Synod contains the report of the Committee for Contact with the Christian Reformed Church (Supplement X pp.93-95). This Committee reports, "since little progress was made and few reactions were received, this Committee did not have much to report to the Churches. Once a Press Release was published." The CRC did not out rightly refuse to discuss the matter of correspondence, but in fact technical problems prevented any meaningful discussion. Once again it was reiterated by our Synod that the matter of discussion with the CRC was originated by the Canadian Reformed Churches to achieve unity. The CRC did not really show much interest in this matter, changed the status of contact, and our Synod Toronto 1974 decided "to discontinue the contact with the Christian Reformed Church as until now was maintained. . ." (*Acts* p. 56). A final appeal to the CRC would be drafted and sent. This appeal can be found as Appendix VII of the *Acts of the General Synod at Coaldale*, pp 102-115. Interesting reading, try it. No meaningful response was received to this last appeal. To continue contact as before with the goal of unification would be futile.

Br. Kampen is correct in that some (initial) agreements were reached. But the whole picture is that the contacts failed miserably. No apology is necessary. Jumping off the "deep end" is exciting and harmless if one knows how to swim.

Klaas Stam

Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication.
Submissions need to be less than one page in length.

Press Release – Classis Pacific East, September 13, 2012

Brother Kurt Louwse opens Classis on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Church of Chilliwack. He reads Ephesians 2:1-10 and all sing Hymn 4.

Aldergrove reports on the credentials of the delegates. All primary delegates are present. Rev. S. Swets is present on behalf of the URC of Abbotsford, with credentials.

Classis is then constituted with all the delegates present. The officers are appointed, with Rev. A. Witten as chair, Rev. W. Wielenga as clerk, and Rev. J. Roukema as vice chair.

After the agenda is adopted, the chairman welcomes candidate Pol and receives his credentials. Candidate Abel Pol is examined by Classis. Classis is satisfied with Candidate Pol's exam and the deputies of Regional Synod agree that the exam was satisfactory. Classis approves the call extended to candidate Pol by the Canadian Reformed Church of Chilliwack. The Chairman congratulates Abel Pol and thanks God for blessing his preparations. All sing Hymn 8 and then congratulate candidate Pol.

Classis considers the overture submitted by the Canadian Reformed Church of Abbotsford to be submitted to Regional Synod regarding a change to some of the wording of Article 3 of the Church Order. A motion is put forward to defeat the overture. The motion is seconded and approved by Classis.

Classis considers a second overture submitted by Abbotsford with respect to the format of synod decisions and acts. Classis accepts the overture and decides to overture the Synod to change the wording according to recommendation submitted by Abbotsford.

The committee for needy churches reports that there have been no requests for support from any of the churches.

Classis is thankful to God that all the churches report that the ministry of the office bearers is being maintained and that the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured.

Abbotsford asks for the advice of Classis according to Art. 44 of the Church Order and receives it thankfully.

Chilliwack also asks for the advice of Classis according to Art. 44 of the Church Order and receives it thankfully.

Classis appoints Lynden for the convening church for the next classis to convene Dec. 6, 2012, with alternate date being March 7, 2013.

Classis hears Rev. Swets address Classis on behalf of the URC in Abbotsford. Rev. Swets congratulates candidate Pol and announces that the next URC classis Western Canada is on November 8 and 9. He asks that the Canadian Reformed Churches remember this classis in prayer.

Opportunity is given for question period and censure. These are not used.

The Acts and Press Release are adopted.

Press Release Classis Central Ontario, held on September 14, 2012 in Burlington

1. On behalf of the convening church at Flamborough, Rev. J. DeGelder called the meeting to order. He read Psalm 131 and led in prayer. He then asked the brothers to sing Psalm 139:1, 2, and 3. He welcomed the delegates.
2. The credentials were examined by the delegates of the convening church and found to be in good order.
3. Classis was then constituted. Officers were: Rev. G. Nederveen, chairman; Rev. J. DeGelder, vice-chairman; and Rev. J. L. vanPopta, clerk.
4. The following memorabilia were mentioned:
 - Rev. C. Kleyn was installed as missionary in Toronto and has in the meantime arrived in PNG.
 - Rev. H. Versteeg has been in Canada on furlough.
 - The chairman wished the church at Toronto God's blessing as they work on fulfilling the vacancy for a minister of the Word, after the recent retirement of Rev. W. den Hollander.
5. The agenda was adopted, after adding a number of reports that were not listed on the provisional agenda.
6.
 - a. Reports were read of church visitations to the churches of Burlington Ebenezer (April 30, 2012), Burlington Fellowship (May 10, 2012), Burlington Waterdown (May 7, 2012), Flamborough (May 7, 2012), Ottawa (May 25, 2012), and Toronto (May 3, 2012). Classis received these reports with thankfulness to the Lord for his many blessings in the churches in Classis Central Ontario, as reflected in the reports.
 - b. Classis received a report from the church of Burlington Fellowship on the inspection of the classical archives. The archives were found to be complete and in good order.
 - c. Classis received a report from the treasurer, Br. H. Sloots. The treasurer recommended that the assessment be left at \$2.00 per communicant member. Assessment for Regional Synod East for 2013 is \$ 1.00 per communicant member. Classis

- adopted the recommendation and the churches will be assessed \$3.00 per communicant member. Appreciation was expressed for Br. Sloots' many years of faithful service as treasurer.
- d. Classis received a report from the church of Burlington Waterdown indicating that the books of the treasurer have been inspected and found to be in good order.
 - e. Classis received a report from the Committee for Needy Churches. The Committee recommended that the assessment for 2013 be reduced from \$14.00 to \$7.00 per communicant member to support the church in Ottawa. A new committee member needs to be appointed since Br. L. Kampen's term is expiring. Classis adopted the assessment with much gratitude for the increasing numerical and financial growth in the Ottawa congregation. The delegates from Ottawa expressed appreciation for the ongoing support of Classis.
 - f. A report from the church of Burlington Waterdown of the audit of the books of the Committee for Needy Churches had not been submitted and will be presented at the next classis. The chairman led in prayer to give thanks and praise to the Lord for his rich blessings in the churches.
7. In the question period according to Art. 44 CO all the churches answered the first two questions in the affirmative and the third question in the negative.
 8. The church of Toronto requested pulpit supply in particular for the Sundays that the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated. Classis decided to provide pulpit supply for one Sunday per month beginning in January 2013.
 9. Upon request of the church at Toronto Classis appointed Rev. W. den Hollander as counselor of the Bethel church in Toronto, according to Art. 45 CO.
 10. In closed session Classis dealt with an appeal.
 11. Classis made the following appointments:
 - a. Convening church for the next classis, scheduled for December 14, 2012 (or March 8, 2013): the church at Ottawa. Suggested officers are: Rev. D. Vandenburgt, chairman; Rev. G. Nederveen, vice-chairman; and Rev. J. DeGelder, clerk.
 - b. Committee of Examiners:
 - * Co-ordinators: W. den Hollander and G.Ph. vanPopta
 - * Exegesis OT: G. Nederveen
 - * Exegesis NT: J.L. vanPopta
 - * Knowledge of Scripture: J.L. vanPopta
 - * Doctrine and Creeds: J. DeGelder
 - * Church History: W. den Hollander.
 - * Ethics: D. Vandenburgt
 - * Church Polity: G. Nederveen
 - * Diaconiology: G.Ph. vanPopta
 - c. Church Visitors: J. DeGelder, W. den Hollander, G. Nederveen, J. L. vanPopta
 - d. Church for taking care of the Archives: Burlington Ebenezer
 - e. Church to inspect the Archives: Burlington Fellowship
 - f. Treasurer: Br. H. Sloots, alternate G. Nordeman
 - g. Church to audit the books of the Treasurer: Burlington Waterdown
 - h. Committee for Needy Churches: K. Baartman (2013), E. Jans (2014), L.J. Kampen (2015).
 - i. Church to audit the books of the Committee for Needy Churches: Burlington Waterdown.
 - j. Observer Free Church of Scotland: Rev. W. den Hollander.
 - k. Delegates to Regional Synod-East, scheduled for November 14, 2012:
 - elders: L. Jagt and L. Kampen
 - alternates: W. Horsman , A. Blokhuis, and P. Broekema.
 - ministers: Rev DeGelder and Rev. Vandenburgt
 - alternates: None. If one of the two delegated ministers is not available, the first alternate of the elders will attend.
 12. Question period was made use of.
 13. Censure according to Art. 34 C.O. was not needed. The chairman expressed his appreciation for the brotherly cooperation and harmony.
 14. The Acts were read and adopted, after which the Press Release was read and approved.
 15. The chairman requested the singing of Hymn 6 and led in thanksgiving prayer. He then closed Classis Central Ontario of September 14, 2012.

*For Classis Central Ontario
of September 14, 2012
Rev. J. DeGelder,
vice-chairman of that Classis* 