



Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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**WORSHIP ENTAILS FOCUSING ON
THE GOD OF OUR SALVATION**



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The Ascension and Worship

The way to God was open for all God's people through the reconciling blood of Christ

The ascension of our Saviour was a momentous event beyond our comprehension. Where no space craft could go, Christ went. As a human being he passed through the heavens (Heb 4:14) and entered God's presence in the heavenly Most Holy Place (Heb 9:24). He could enter because he had presented the sacrifice of atonement on the altar of the cross. And so with the ascension, Christ entered the Father's presence by his own blood "to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb 9:12, 24-26).

This new reality of the ascension of the Lamb of God (John 1:29) has had a huge impact on the worship of God's people. Prior to Christ's coming, God had lived among his people in the inner room, the Most Holy Place, of the tabernacle and temple. There God had been enthroned above the cherubim. However, no one but the high priest had been able to enter this throne room and appear before God. And the high priest could only do it once a year in order to sprinkle the blood of atonement on the ark's mercy seat so that God and his people could be reconciled. But Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension changed all that.

When Christ presented the sacrifice of atonement on the altar of the cross, the curtain of the Most Holy Place that had restricted access to God was torn from top to bottom. The way to God was open for all God's people through the reconciling blood of Christ (Matt 27:51; Heb 10:19-22).

Hebrews 12 informs us of some important consequences of this new situation. Instead of being faced with God who could not be approached, as on Mount Sinai, now, Hebrews chapter 12 tells God's people:

You have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are

written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (Heb 12:22-24).

Since we celebrate the ascension of our Saviour this week, let us reflect for a moment on this gospel and some of its implications.

"You have come to Mount Zion"

Whereas God's people of Old Testament times had come to a terrifying Mount Sinai that was not to be touched on pain of death, the congregation of the ascended Christ "have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God" (Heb 12:22). Whereas Mount Sinai had been threatening and forbidden territory, Mount Zion is welcoming, thanks to the mediatory work of Christ. But what does this mean? How are we to conceive this?

Approaching Mount Zion as congregation in holy worship means that "we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus" (Heb 10:19). We can draw near to God "with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings" (Heb 10:22). In other words, when the author of Hebrews writes that "you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God" (Heb 12:22), God's Word tells us that today's congregation in corporate worship in faith enters God's heavenly assembly. As those raised to a new life with Christ, worshipping believers may set their hearts not on earthly things, but on the things above, "where Christ is seated at the right hand of God" (Col 3:1).

To put it differently, coming to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem means coming to the place of the temple

where God once lived. The old Mount Zion as God's dwelling place was only a shadow of what was to come (Heb 8:5). It is no more, but the city to which believers have longed to enter for millennia (Heb 11:10-16; cf. 13:14) is now a reality. Indeed, all believers are citizens of this city (Phil 3:20; Eph 2:19) and therefore have the right of entry, the right to God's very presence (Heb 10:19-22)!

That has quite some implications for our communal worship as we by faith go to our God enthroned in the heavenly Zion! It includes coming to "thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly" and to the saints, "the church of the firstborn" (Heb 12:22-23). And so as we worship God here on earth, we go by faith in the Spirit to heaven.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Our Ascension Day issue begins with an editorial from Dr. Cornelis Van Dam. In his editorial he discusses the impact of Christ's ascension on how God's people worship. This issue's Treasures New and Old meditation, from the hand of Rev. Bill de Jong, also focuses on our Saviour's ascension.

In an article originally printed in *Refomatoricsh Dagblad*, "Alarm" brings our readers' attention to the changes that technology and social media can effect in young people. How should a child of God use these things in a responsible way?

Dr. Gerhard Visscher, principal of our Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, introduces three men who will soon be completing their studies at CRTS. Will one of them be your pastor in the future?

Education Matters and Ray of Sunshine are both found on the pages of Issue 9. We also have a letter to the editor and a Mission News insert.

Laura Veenendaal

- 226 EDITORIAL**
The Ascension and Worship
- 229 TREASURES, NEW & OLD**
Celebrating the Real Absence of Jesus
- 230 Alarm**
- 233 Introducing Your Possible Future Pastor. . .**
- 236 EDUCATION MATTERS**
Edu-sketch
- 239 RAY OF SUNSHINE**
- 240 LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

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Angels and saints in joyful assembly

The description of the “thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly” reminds one of the heavenly scene the Apostle John saw with the angels around God’s throne saying: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!” (Rev 5:12). Our songs of praise and worship on earth join the praise of the angels in heaven.

But as we worship, we do so as part of “the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven” (Heb 12:23). When believers worship, they do not worship in isolation, but they worship as members of the church of all ages, in communion with those whose names are written in God’s book of life (Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5).

Furthermore, as we lift up our hearts and minds to heaven, we have also come to “the spirits of righteous men made perfect” (Heb 12:23). These believers have died and are with God in glory, perfected by the one sacrifice of Christ (Heb 10:14). They now inhabit the heavenly city which was their life-long destination. In our worship on the Lord’s Day, when we lift up our hearts to heaven, we are in the Spirit with this multitude.

But, above all, we are also in the presence of God, the judge, and Jesus, the mediator!

In the presence of God, the Judge, and Jesus, the Mediator

“You have come to God, the judge of all men. . . to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel” (Heb 12:23-24). Here we see the ultimate fruit of the ascension of our Saviour as well as the seriousness and joy of worship. When we in faith lift up our hearts to heaven, we appear before God, the judge, before whom we must give an account (Heb 4:13; cf. 9:27). But we also come to the one and only mediator, Jesus, the Christ (1 Tim 2:5) and his blood of reconciliation! Unlike the blood of Abel calling for revenge and curse (Gen 4:10), Christ’s blood speaks a message of reconciliation and peace for it takes sin away. Indeed, the reality of the spirits of righteous men, present before God, who have been made perfect through Christ’s blood, testifies to the work of the Saviour and is of great encouragement to those who draw near to holy God in true faith.

CALLED

Called by the Covenant Canadian Reformed Church of Grassie, Ontario:

Rev. K. Wieske

missionary of Maranatha-Surrey Canadian Reformed Church serving in Recife, Brazil.

Called by the Free Reformed Churches of Southern River and Bunbury, Australia

Rev. R.J. den Hollander

of Winnipeg (Grace), Manitoba

The Aldergrove Canadian Reformed Church has extended calls to

Rev. J. VanSpronsen and Rev. K. Wieske

who are currently serving in Recife, Brazil, as missionaries of the Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church of Surrey B.C. The Aldergrove church is assuming oversight of this mission work in Brazil and has therefore called these men to be its own missionaries.

CHURCH NEWS

Some implications of the ascension and worship

The ascension of our victorious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ should have an enormous impact on our worship, both corporate and individual. When we worship, we come to the heavenly Jerusalem! This means that we lift up our souls to God, to use the words of Psalm 25:1. Or in the words of Colossians 3:1, we “seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” Worship entails focusing on the God of our salvation, and the ascension of the Saviour has made this possible to an extent not attainable prior to his coming.

With the wings of faith we can actually enter into the heavenly Most Holy Place. Yes, faith is needed, both the knowledge and the firm confidence of God’s salvation. Without faith, we cannot go up to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, and have our praises join those of the thousands and thousands of joyful angels. The liturgical form for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper rightly enjoins us to “lift up our hearts on high in heaven, where Christ, our advocate is, at the right hand of his heavenly Father.” After all, the ascension of Christ means that we can ascend in the Spirit by a true faith to heaven and so enter the very presence of God. And before him in great gratitude for his salvation in Christ we may “continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name” (Heb 13:15). What an awesome privilege!





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Celebrating the Real Absence of Jesus

“Do not hold on to me!” (John 20:17)

The bodily ascension of Jesus, for many believers, undoes the glory of his incarnation. What does the incarnation mean but that the Son of God is with us, here on earth? We imagine what it must’ve been like for the disciples to hear the voice of Jesus, to sense his touch, to see his reactions, the look of his eyes, and to become acquainted with his rich human personality. It must’ve been, literally, a slice of heaven.

Even the sense that Jesus once walked on this earth creates a sense of nostalgia that entrepreneurs recognize as a business opportunity. Trips are sold to “the holy land” with the invitation that you can walk where Jesus walked. It’s not quite the same as having Jesus with us, but it’s perhaps as close as we can get. The implication is that it’s really too bad that Jesus is no longer here.

Roman Catholics stutter, theologically, at the thought of the bodily ascension by insisting on the physical presence of Jesus in their celebrations of the Mass. When you hold the wafer, you are said to be holding the body of Jesus. Here am I, in this world of sorrow, but Jesus is with me, in my hand. I can understand the appeal, and I’m sure you can too.

To those who envy the disciples, to those who endeavour to get close to Jesus by retracing his steps in Palestine, and to our Roman Catholic friends, we address the startling words of Jesus to Mary Magdalene on Easter Sunday: “Do not hold on to me!”

“Do not hold on to me!” Really? Poor Mary Magdalene had been so distraught by the death of this man who, like no other, understood her and still loved her profoundly. With tears streaming, she wanders through the botanical garden of Joseph of Arimathea. Can you ever really enjoy the floral beauty of a cemetery? The flowers we plant simply hide the ugliness of death below, like the grim sepulchres of old superficially whitewashed.

“Do not hold on to me,” Jesus says, “I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” Jesus envisions his reunion with his Father, with whom he’d enjoyed infinite glory in mutual and eternal love. Equally staggering is that Jesus’ Father is also Mary’s Father, and the Father of all who put their trust in Christ. In the wake of Jesus’ death, Mary weeps because she’s lost a precious friend. But Jesus reminds her that she’s gained a remarkable family in which he, her Saviour, is her elder brother and God, her creator, is their Father. Jesus is returning to the family home, the Father’s house with many rooms, and he’s going to prepare a place for all his siblings.

I don’t hide from the congregation I pastor my affection for Salt and Vinegar chips. I once entered the apartment of an elderly parishioner for a pastoral visit and saw on the table, at which we’d typically sit, a bowl of Salt and Vinegar chips. Sensitively attentive to my peculiar preferences, this godly woman thoughtfully prepared an environment in which I could enjoy myself.

Hospitality is creating a home for those who are not at home. Elder brother Jesus, sensitive and attentive to our preferences, has gone to Father’s house and is preparing a place for us. The place certainly includes heaven, but extends to include the new earth which we will inhabit with our Father.

“Do not hold on to me!” Jesus must go, must return to our Father, to complete his redemptive mission. He will go away in his humanity from this earth, our abode, to leave us with something even greater: the presence of our humanity in God’s abode!

Children associate heaven with the skies. Greater theological sophistication leads us to recognize heaven as God’s space which in no way is limited geographically or cosmologically to the atmosphere above. The mystery about the precise location of Jesus, however, does not obscure the certainty of his presence in heaven and therefore the gospel of the ascension. The authors of the Heidelberg Catechism understood the significance with their celebratory exclamation: “We have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that he, our head, will also take us, his members up to himself!” (LD 49)

“Do not hold on to me!” As you celebrate the ascension, remember to celebrate the real absence of Jesus. He’s in heaven with our humanity as a pledge of our similar future entrance into God’s abode, and he’s there to prepare a place for us. What a joy it’ll be to be greeted by Brother Jesus at the Father’s house!



Alarm

Note: This article has been translated with permission from the Gereformeed Kerkblad, De Bazuin 12 December 2012

In the Reformed Daily (*Refomatoricsh Dagblad*) of November 22, 2012 we read an eyebrow-raising article. It was about something that was detected by Mrs. Justine Pardoen. Mrs. Pardoen is editor in chief of the Parents Online (*Ouders Online*) website. This website focuses on issues concerning the raising and teaching of children. The article came from the free paper *Metro* and has most likely been taken over by various other publications, because we heard a question and answer program with this lady on Radio 1 in The Netherlands.

Failing to pass grades

It is true many periodicals publish articles and many discussions are held about topics by various people. What draws our interest and makes this article noteworthy?

Mrs. Pardoen rings the alarm bell over the use of so-called smartphones, the phones with which one can use the Internet, e-mail, and take photos and alter them; the well-known gadgets which young and not-so-young people carry about or hold to their ear.

More importantly, she rang the alarm bell about the connection between the use of these smartphones and the failure to pass grades in high schools, colleges, and universities. For some time now teachers, parents, and experts have established that the use of smartphones contributes to the failure of passing grades and fosters the desire to lower the goals initially set for their education. This connection is so devastating that the education inspectors initiated enquires into this phenomenon. There aren't any numbers as to how pervasive this has become; however, it is clear why Justine Pardoen is ringing the alarm bell. Last month she published a book with the aim to promote a better use of so called "social media" by our youth.

Breath of life

A large portion of young Dutchmen, and probably youth worldwide, in developed society are enslaved by the smartphone and the use of the PC (personal computer). It seems that young members of society spend an average of three and a half hours per day using the smartphone, besides another three hours on the Internet via the PC. All this besides or in place of other necessary things needing to be done; this is totally out of proportion.

A very different generation will grow into adulthood

Mrs. Pardoen further states that one cannot separate young teenagers from their smartphone. Social media has become an essential part of his or her life. They gain almost all their information from it. They maintain contact with their friends and family all day long. This is quite well possible with smartphones. They are not turned off; they are on day and night. Just imagine missing out on something. . . Justine Pardoen uses the expressions "life line" and "breath of life." That is how much influence social media has on the youth. It is indeed their life!

Punishing them by taking away their smartphones in school is not the answer. It causes them to be anxious and makes them feel isolated from the world.

Unfocused

This enslavement to these gadgets diminishes the youth's ability to concentrate during their lessons. Their attention is always partly with their little Internet world. You are not allowed to miss out on any call, even though you can or may not answer it at a given place or time. This greatly decreases the ability to work with undivided attention. It also appears their homework performance diminishes, which calls for additional assistance. Youth also perform increasingly lower than their initial ability.

Their ability to solve problems by thinking things through for themselves also decreases, which is a growing problem for parents and teachers.

It is Mrs. Pardoën's opinion that restricting the time allowed for smartphone use, such as allowing only certain days, is not the answer. This has not been an effective method. No, young ones must learn to make use of this social media in a responsible way so that they are not controlled by it. This is absolutely essential.

New man

The radio discussion also showed a clear picture emerging. Psychologists and psychiatrists are seriously concerned about the future. The program predicted that if this development is not reversed, a very different generation will grow into adulthood – literally a new man. A totally different person, living immersed in social media without any depth, living day by day, uninterested in anything and everything that does not affect him/her, with only a fragmented understanding and knowledge, and only having a superficial social life. A fragmented person has limited capacity to think for themselves and is much more limited in their creativity. They are very limited in being critical and restricted in self-assessment, and do not reflect much on their speech and actions, reading very little and listening even less. These peoples' norms and values adapt to those of their social media, and they gain their attributes from the majority of these contacts. They are dependent on the hypes of the day and are easily manipulated, superficial, flavor-of-the-day type of people.

Different people

It is our opinion that Mrs. Pardoën, along with others, rightly demands attention to these negative developments. When a Bible-instructed believer hears someone speaking about a new man, it will follow that he will immediately perk up his ears, because we already know about a new man. A man who is renewed thorough the Holy Spirit. A man of Christ who will equip himself to listen carefully to the Word of his heavenly Father. One who is constantly busy with his God-given talents and studies the Bible and church history. One who does his utmost to discern what is happening around him and how he needs to biblically evaluate these happenings. One who thinks about his life and how he can show his

thankfulness to God. Who obtains his norms, values, lifestyle from no other place than the Bible – even if that goes against the generally accepted fashions, tolerances, and hypes – but consciously and faithfully lives towards that great day of Christ's return and the renewing of all things. He who passes on the great deeds of the Lord God to the next generation and shows as example during his life the way of God's covenant.

Contrast

The contrasts with the new man that the experts are warning against may be obvious. This man living immersed in social media will most certainly have great difficulty living as a child of God. The smartphone people of the new millennia are the men of the new Babel, who allow themselves to be manipulated and have no bond with God. They are the people who are suitable to be governed by the beast of Revelation 13. The devil needs just that kind of people, people without depth, without opinions, and without convictions, to manipulate and perform precisely all the things the Lord forbids.

***This man living immersed in social media
will most certainly have great difficulty
living as a child of God***

These new men portrayed by the radio discussion contrasts totally with the men who know themselves to be under the authority of Christ. Can these developments be reversed? The experts are not optimistic. . . .

Alarm

Yes, it is essential that an alarm is sounded, even if it is with totally different motives. If the young of the church do not learn to use social media properly, we will end up with people in their thirties that still have teenage minds (quoted in the RD), which is not really a Christian motive. Perhaps we should be stirred to action precisely because the alarm did not originally come from a Christian source. Our children, the children of the church, are living in the same world, often attending the same institutions of learning, playing on the same sports fields, and using the same media.

Alarm!

Do we see the dangers? Are parents protecting their children from these dangers? Are they teaching their children to really be new people, in spite of the fact that they will become isolated from the majority? Even to the point that they are laughed at and looked down upon and no longer belong because they are so different?

Answers of faith

Many questions are directed at church members in our day and age, also in the realm of social media. It is not just about some technical developments. No, it is about our worldview and lifestyle. For this, only faith-based answers are important. The answer of Exodus 24:3, when Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and laws, they responded with one voice: "Everything the Lord has said we will do." And of Joshua 1:16; they answered Joshua: "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go." The answer of Romans 8:39, "Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The answer of Revelation 12:6, "The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days."

Are parents protecting their children from these dangers?

The Lord calls us to his service, which leaves only one possible answer: Lord, all you have told us we will do, because we belong to you. We desire to put on the real new man, the man Paul spoke about in Ephesians 4:24, the one so totally different from the old man. Read that once again; the old man Paul talks about is in fact the same person psychologists and psychiatrists are afraid of. The man who does not know Christ. We know Christ, and nothing or no one – also social media – may tear us away from him. With God's help we will make an all-out effort towards this goal and, yes, that will make our lives in the desert more burdensome. Yes, we are prepared to live in the desert for the Lord's sake.



What must we do?

What is our response to this alarm? What is our answer to it? How are we concretely going to work for our youth, which is God's youth, for their lives and their eternity? What about the future of the church and the next generation of church attenders and office bearers? What are we going to do now that we have been warned that the smartphone men will be in a much more difficult state to love the Lord, to serve him, and to live as wedding guests on their way to the great wedding banquet? How does this affect the way we think about Reformed child rearing, and the direction of our family lifestyle? Are we, as God's people, providing faith-based answers? What about our own interaction as family with the modern media; how do we establish limits for our children and giving the youth positive, joyful examples to know what living in the desert really is? What does this warning mean for the maintenance and expansion of Christian schools, and for researching possibilities for our own education institutions? Are we now going on with our comfortable Reformed lives, or are we as God's people going to provide faith-based answers? **C**



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Introducing Your Possible Future Pastor...

As we come towards the end of another academic year at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in Hamilton, Ontario, we are also coming to the time when students request to undergo classical preparatory examinations in order that they might be eligible for call within the churches. In addition to David Winkel, a graduate from the previous academic year who recently became eligible for call, we would like to present you with three more students: Ben Schoof, Calvin Vanderlinde, and Theo Wierenga. The Lord willing, they will all become eligible for call this spring. Below they have each written, in their own style, something about themselves and their families. Enjoy!

For the rest, all is well at CRTS. We have a total of nineteen students at the moment, with the three below in the fourth year, three others in the third year, five in the second year, and eight in the first year. In days when many churches are vacant and more will become vacant, it is a reason for gratitude that young men continue to step up and prepare themselves for the wonderful task of preaching the gospel. There's room for more! If you are thinking about it, we would love to hear from you. Better yet, we'd love to see you. Seminaries sometimes organize a "Seminary for a Day" program as they designate a particular day; I'd like to do one better and invite anyone who is considering ministry to contact me (ghvisscher@crtcs.ca) so that we can organize their personalized "seminary for a day." Or better yet: organize a group and come on out. It means sitting in on lectures, joining us for coffee, enjoying our lively community, chatting with the professors, and seeing that seminary life is quite delightful. Come on over!

May God bless the young men below and their families as they seek what is the passion – to proclaim the glorious gospel of our risen Lord!

Ben Schoof

Our story begins with a bang in the picturesque town of Albany, on the South West coast of Australia. I was unexpectedly born at twenty-six weeks old to Len and Rita Schoof. Despite the considerable complications of such a premature birth, especially back in 1986, God's miraculous providence preserved my life. I filled my childhood with reading, and sport with my five younger brothers and two younger sisters, whilst from an early age desiring to be a minister of God's Word. When I graduated from high school at seventeen my family and I moved to the city of Perth, especially to support my siblings and I as we attended university. After a hiatus from study to try my hand at cabinet making and cell phone sales, I enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Western Australia, majoring in Ancient History and Greek.



While all this was going on down South, Danika was born to Peter and Mary Terpstra just a short eighteen months later, in the quiet Perth suburb of Mundijong. The opposite of my family, she was born in the middle of a family of five girls, with a solitary brother to keep company. After briefly considering a career connected with her love of fine arts, she nevertheless graduated with a Registered Nursing degree, a year after me in 2008.

Despite finally living in the same city, Danika and I met on a ski trip - yes, skiing in Australia, of all places! We got to know each other well since the chairlifts we were on had the unfortunate habit of breaking down and stopping for minutes at a time. Since we could see God was leading us to Canada, and specifically to the Theological College in Hamilton, we got married four short days before flying here, to the complete opposite side of the world, with a stop in the exotic Malaysian city of Kota Kinabalu.

In Hamilton, our gracious God has blessed us richly with two wonderful boys, Daniel Brady (born in June 2010) and Ethan James (born June 2012). I especially enjoyed the learning experience that was my internship, completed in Burlington-Waterdown in summer 2012 under the supervision of Rev. Doug Vandeburgt.

We feel richly blessed to have been given the opportunity to come to Hamilton and experience the joys of a new country and climate and the warm fellowship of a sister federation. At the same time we have been encouraged by the support of our family, friends, and church-family back in Australia - never more than a Skype video-call away. Our time at CRTS has been a rewarding experience, and we have learned much. We are excited to see what plans God has for us in the future, and where his call might lead us to next!

Calvin Vanderlinde

It is now our pleasure to introduce ourselves to you, the readers of *Clarion*.

My name is Calvin Vanderlinde. I'm married to my sweetheart wife Jolene and we have one son, named Elijah.

We originate from the Fraser Valley region of British Columbia. Jolene is the youngest of six children born to Paul and Rita Schouten of Langley; Calvin - the third of seven born to Harm and Magdalene Vanderlinde of Abbotsford. We are thankful to the Lord for blessing us with our loving and God-fearing parents who through



their dedicated efforts brought us up to know and love the Lord and who taught us by example to cherish the Reformed faith.

For as long as I can recall I had felt drawn to the ministry, so after high school I pursued further study at the University of the Fraser Valley and at Trinity Western University while punctuating it with periods of employment in horticulture and landscaping. After four years, upon receiving my degree in History, I journeyed on alone to Hamilton to attend Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. However, amidst the heavy workload in my first year at seminary, there was a pretty redhead in BC who was the cause of some diverted attention. To remedy this, in the summer of 2010, we exchanged wedding vows back in BC, travelled across the country together, and settled into married life in Ontario.

Since then Jolene has transitioned from working in the banking industry to being a stay-at-home mom; a task in which she finds much joy and fulfillment. Days are filled with the noise and activity that accompany our eighteen-month-old Elijah.

We have tremendously enjoyed our time here during these seminary years. We are grateful for the studies that could be accomplished, the connections we could make,

and the love and support we could receive. Notably, during my summer internship in 2012 I had the privilege to work alongside Rev. George van Popta among the congregation of Jubilee Canadian Reformed Church of Ottawa. This was an invaluable and enriching experience in which much learning and training could be applied. All in all, there are many we feel indebted to for the kindness, help, and hospitality we've experienced along the way.

It is our hope that wherever the LORD leads us, the training that was received will be used to bring glory to his Name, among those who know him and as well as among those who do not yet know him. There is no other work that we desire to do more than to be busy in the Lord's service for such a purpose, wherever that might be.

Theo Wierenga

Hi there, we are the Wierengas and have been asked to introduce ourselves to the readers of *Clarion*. Since I, Theo, am the oldest our family history begins with me. I was born in 1967 and grew up in Neerlandia, Alberta. Thinking that being a farmer was the best thing going, I decided to attend the Vermillion School of Agriculture for two years and then began farming while working on the side.

In the meantime my future wife, Lidy, was growing up in Aduard, The Netherlands. The Lord brought us together when she arrived in Canada with her parents and siblings in 1988. After our marriage in 1992 we continued to manage a small hog farm together for six years, until circumstances forced us to abandon that enterprise. During those years the Lord blessed us with the birth of our first three children, Ryan, Jeanette, and Corina.

In 1999 we decided to seek greener pastures (although that's hard for an Albertan to admit) and moved to Manitoba. There we lived for ten years while I worked for Walinga Inc. as a machinist and truck driver, and that's



where our two youngest children (Jared and Shawna) were born.

While in Manitoba the opportunity (together with the desire) for further education presented itself. I obtained a degree in History and English from the University of Manitoba and completed my language studies at Providence College and Seminary in Otterburne, Manitoba (south of Winnipeg). Then we made the big move east and at the time of this writing I have almost completed four years at CRTS.

As a family we enjoy hiking and outdoor activities, especially camping. Besides being a full time mom, Lidy also finds time to volunteer for church and school activities. Ryan attends Mohawk College, Jeanette and Corina are in high school (Guido), and Jared and Shawna go to Timothy Christian School.

The Lord has blessed us over the years, and we are thankful for the support and encouragement we have received from the churches during my years of study. We pray for the Lord's continued blessing in the months and years ahead. C





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Edu-sketch

The Lord continues to bless Reformed Christian education throughout our country. At this time of year schools across the land are finalizing their staffing arrangements and preparing budgets for the next fiscal year. While the fiscal challenges are always present, it is a demonstration of God's faithfulness when the financial responsibilities can consistently be met each school year again. The Lord blesses our faithfulness to our parental task of instructing children in the way that they should go.

The League of Canadian Reformed Schools in Ontario reports in the summary of its meeting of February 22: "It was noted with thankfulness that Glancaster school society plans to open a Christian elementary school beginning in September 2015 D.V." Soon there will be an additional school added to the family of schools. May God guide this endeavour and may the faithfulness of Christian parents continue to receive his blessing.

It is interesting how the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also sees the important role of parents in education. The principal in Smithers, British Columbia, makes reference to the 2012 OECD report *Let's Read Them a Story! The Parent Factor in Education* (this article can be accessed at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264176232-en>). This report identifies different ways that parents can support their children's school experience: first, reading books to children when they are just beginning school; second, talking with adolescents about topical, political, and social issues. The report suggests that "children of involved parents are more motivated to learn for learning's sake, and have more control over their academic performance because they adopt their parent's positive attitudes towards school and learning" (p. 13). It is important for us not to take the work done by the schools for granted. The education of covenant youth still remains primarily the task of parents. This includes setting aside the time necessary for helping the children in their academic pursuits, which

will, in turn, be an opportunity for forging strong relationships with your children. Once again, if we are faithful in our tasks, the normative result will be a blessing on our labours.

"Why" questions

Along somewhat similar lines, a Credo Elementary School teacher in Langley, BC, Jerry Scholtens, writes an interesting article where he answers the "why" for Christian schools. He does so by putting the normative of Christian education in proper perspective. He writes,

The norm is that this world is God's world. And so the question of why do we need Christian schools is backwards. Why would we want to educate our children in anything other than Christian schools? If the norm is Christian, Godly education, then why would one send children to a pagan, ungodly school? And here to me is the rub. We as Christian school supporters are not the ones who are going on a radical tangent. We are maintaining the thrust of the original educational purposes set out many years ago. It is with the secularization of the school system that our society has broken faith with what the school system was really intended for.

This quote correctly stresses that it is God's Word and his standards that are the norm for our education, and it also stresses that anything contrary to these norms stands in opposition to God and his standards. Those parents choosing to send their children to a secular school are ensuring that their children are being taught there where counter-normative is the new norm.

Another "why" question was also answered by means of our school magazines. Kent Dykstra, principal of William of Orange School in Surrey, BC occasionally hears, "Why do we hafta learn this?" Instead of answering with the typical "you need this for getting a job later," he takes a different perspective. "Here at school, we learn

things that you *don't* learn on the job. . . . So if school is not a job-training institute, then why school? My short answer: school doesn't train you for work, it is something that helps train you for *life*. . . Why do we hafta learn this? – To help equip you for a life of service in God's kingdom." The fuller context of the article makes it clear that a life of service in God's kingdom does not exclude gainful employment, but that there is much more to Christian education than simply getting ready for the

It is with the secularization of the school system that our society has broken faith with what the school system was really intended for

work-force. That perspective is fundamentally different from the educational perspective of many. Is it not interesting how the OECD is extremely concerned with education? They see education as a means to an economic end, but we need to see education as a tool that is being used to develop a child in his life of service in God's kingdom. It's a radically different perspective.

Leadership

Another way that schools help to equip students for service in God's kingdom is by giving them opportunities for service. Many of the schools have a student leadership team in contrast to the older model of student council. In the past a small number of students were elected to organize the events for the year, but increasingly schools are moving away from this election process and are having students apply to be a member of the student leadership team. These teams not only organize events, but they also receive training in leadership and are encouraged to include other students in leadership activities. There is a shift from a small student council doing the work for the student body to a team of student leaders working with the student body. As a case in point, Neerlandia's principal reports:

This year we have also begun a new leadership program – seven leadership teams that are in charge of a specific domain: school rejuvenation, athletics, assemblies, fundraising, yearbook, events, and service.

Each team is headed by a senior student who is in charge of creating an agenda, leading the meeting, and guiding the decision making process. Committee leaders also meet once a week to go over how to run a committee and more importantly learn more about what the Bible teaches us about leadership.

Perhaps our churches will benefit from this shift in our schools and will see more people readily equipped for areas of leadership in the churches.

Speaking of Neerlandia, this school has made a change of practice regarding memory work. "Now instead of each grade learning a different song, grades 1 and 2 and grades 3 through 6 will learn the same song. The list will rotate every year so that by the end of grade 6 all the songs will have been learned." There may well be many practical reasons for this change and perhaps other schools that are reviewing the memory work schedule can inquire of Neerlandia why they made such a change. My only concern is the practice of reviewing the songs learned in previous years. Hopefully there is a concerted effort to ensure that songs learned in one year will be reviewed so that they are not forgotten.

Programs

Continuing our transition from the more philosophical to the more practical, it is interesting to learn of the practice of Timothy Christian School in Hamilton, Ontario. They are using Rubicon Atlas, which is a web-based program used for curriculum mapping. One of their teachers explains it, and I summarize:

They [Rubicon] have designed a program where we can enter our entire curriculum securely online – scan in worksheets and attach links to the unit; displays key features of the curriculum such as performance indicators, enduring understandings, essential questions, content, skills, assessment. . . etc.; Why? – this program helps maintain institutional memory, as teachers join and leave the school, helps avoid gaps and redundancies in our program, it supports strategic planning, it helps teachers to be organized and reflective in their planning and teaching etc.

It will be interesting to see how this tool enhances the school's work. Hopefully this program is a meaningful investment and a tool that will be readily used to its intended purpose. This is another practice that I hope we

will hear more about. Has the tool met its purpose? Have teachers bought into the program as well as hoped? Has curriculum become less redundant? Has student learning improved? Perhaps this sharing of programs and the analysis of them is another area where our schools can assist each other. This program sounds great and may have many great benefits.

"Why do we hafta learn this?"

Another program adopted by a different school, Cornerstone in Guelph, is the PM Benchmark system. Their school bulletin states:

This is a standardized test that gives objective feedback on student performance, indicating actual reading level. The staff in the junior grades will be implementing this assessment system for grades 1-4 to see if students are reading at grade level, and if not, to offer intervention as early as possible to prevent later problems.

Closely associated with reading is writing, and Credo Elementary School in Langley, BC had an informative session with Diane Cruchley. She "came alongside language arts teachers to wrap our collective teacher heads around the reality that 'our boys don't want to write, write the minimum, or don't write well. Both boys and girls needs twenty-first century skills, but, the average Grade 12 boy still writes only as well as the average Grade 8 girl.'"

Perhaps our churches will benefit from this shift in our schools

There has been an increasing focus on boys' literacy as of late and there is an understanding that boys and girls learn differently as do individual students. Thus, there is an increased focus on *differentiated instruction*, an area of study for many of our schools. By this we mean that we can't teach a single set of content in the same way to all the students and expect that they will all learn the content. We need to teach the content in different ways



so that the different learners will have an opportunity to grasp it. This is not only true for the content, but also for what the students do to demonstrate their learning.

In closing

Finally, I would like to conclude this Edu-sketch with another growing concern that is felt among the schools, even at the elementary level. Ron de Haan, vice-principal at Credo Christian High School in Langley, BC, speaks of the new challenge of cell phones with data plans. He notes that,

Some cell phones are basically mini-computers with unlimited access to the Web. So, while the school can manage what happens on its computers, it is up to the home to make decisions about the purchase and monitoring of Internet access via cell phone data plans. . . . A fair question is: Parents, do you know what your kids have accessed via their cell phones?

Let us continue to be diligent in ensuring that our children use the tools with which they have been equipped for their intended purposes and in a Christian manner.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Arthur Kingma akingma@echs.ca



*“Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. . . .
The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD thunders over the mighty waters. . . .
The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.” Psalm 29:1, 3, 11*

Psalm 29

*Mighty ones, your homage bring
to the Lord, the awesome King!
His the power and glory be;
bow before his majesty.
Over waters rolls his thunder;
lightning tears the clouds asunder.
Hear God’s voice resound in splendour;
tremble at his might and grandeur.*

*Cedars shatter, forest fall,
mountains shudder at his call.
Like a calf leaps Lebanon,
like a wild-ox Sirion.
God’s voice, flames from heaven flashing,
with the roar of thunder crashing,
shakes the wilderness, and broken
lie its oaks when he has spoken.*

*Thunders roar and lightnings glare;
God’s voice strips the forest bare.
In his temple courts all cry:
“Glory to the Lord on high!”
He who reigns as King forever
sits enthroned on flood and river.
May the Lord give strength and power,
peace upon his people shower.*

Have you ever heard people refer to Mother Nature? This morning as I was listening to the radio and when I heard the weather man announce the weather, he referred to Mother Nature giving us rain and snow and freezing rain and thunder storms. Today we experienced the flashing of lightning and the occasional thunder crash and though this might be a weather pattern that can be predicted by the weather man, we know that it is not the result of Mother Nature. Who gives us the weather we experience? God does. We, like King David in Psalm 29, can give glory to God when we do witness his power. God, who created the world with his word, also controls nature by his word. Thunderstorms and other weather patterns are evidences of God’s power. We can conclude, when we read and sing this psalm, that the Lord rules as King forever and is able to bless his people. We also can be encouraged

when we witness God’s power because he shares his power with us. The power that God uses to raise a storm is available to help us, who trust in him. Just as God can cause a storm to be still (think of how Jesus calmed the wind and the sea), so too can he bring peace to his people. Is it not wonderful that we worship God? Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. All things come from God, our weather too, and not from Mother Nature.

God also causes a change in our personal calendars by giving us birthdays to celebrate. We are thankful to him, our heavenly father, for granting you another year in his service. We wish you a wonderful day celebrating with family and friends. May you continue to find your strength in our great God and may you be blessed with his peace.

Birthdays in May

- 1 Clarence Zwiep will be 59**
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 4 Debbie Veenstra will be 39**
4238 2nd Concession Road, Sherkston, ON L0S 1R0
- 10 Rob De Haan will be 48**
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
- 21 Eddie Van Rootselaar will be 20**
1488 Highway 3 E, Dunnville, ON N1A 2W7
- 30 Bernie De Vos will be 38**
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2

A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

If there are any address or other changes that we need to be aware of, please let us know as soon as possible.

You can contact us by the following means:

Mail: Corinne Gelms

8301 Range 1 Road, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

Phone: 905-957-0380, email: jcorgelms@porchlight.ca



Letter to the Editor

With regards to Rev. Lodder's recent article "Thirty Reasons to Stick with the NIV," I would like to respectfully voice certain concerns I have with his arguments. I have grown up with both the NIV84 and later the ESV, and personally have had no problems with the transition, in fact appreciated it. ESV footnotes are manageable and not overwhelming, providing alternate translations for certain words, including the one that can mean both "brothers" and "brothers and sisters" (where appropriate, of course), so I don't really see the issue with the ESV being less gender specific (point 25). That being said, what does alarm me is the philosophy behind the dynamic translations.

In points 23 and 26, Rev. Lodder suggests that the ESV is a moderate revision of the RSV, and implies that since the RSV was judged inferior to the NIV in 1995, so should the ESV be. Some research has brought me to a completely different conclusion: "The translators of the ESV used an existing translation (the RSV) as a stylistic starting point as they translated the Hebrew and Greek texts."¹ "Stylistic starting point" is a long way from "moderate revision." Some of the *dynamic* translations, on the other hand, including the NIV, "completely replace the original phrases with their subjective interpretations."² The Bible is the Word of God, not a commentary.

I would argue that churches would be doing us young people and children (point 11) a greater disservice by giving us a subjective translation with controversial texts than by giving us a translation that is perhaps harder to follow and requires extra study (commentaries, for example, or perhaps some extra time spent in the catechism room) to understand context. Don't underestimate our intelligence; many of us love to study. We are excited to delve deeper into the *literal* Word of God, rather than being spoon-fed ideas and updates on all the most recent theories in biblical scholarship. In our church we have used the ESV for a number of years, and as I see it, the young people here hardly have a smaller or lesser understanding of the Bible than do our NIV-reading counterparts. We do make use of both the ESV and the NIV84 in Bible studies, but the NIV is more often taken with a big grain of salt. At the Burnaby Bible Study as well, where we have a number of guests from outside of the Canadian Reformed churches, the use of the ESV is appreciated. I think the "far-reaching consequences" Rev. Lodder

mentions are an exaggeration. Should we be discouraged from using certain terminology in Bible translations and Bible study discussions simply because the words are archaic and not used in everyday conversation? After all, do students speak the same way they write their academic essays?

A final point: Dr. Mark Strauss serves on the committee of the NIV. One wonders whether he is being completely objective in his arguments.

Some readings I would suggest:

Introductions to both the ESV and NIV translations.

Kevin DeYoung's *Why Our Church Switched to the ESV* (Web and book). <http://huiiothesian.wordpress.com/2011/09/07/free-book-why-our-church-switched-to-the-esv-by-kevin-deyoung/>.

R.C. Sproul's *Why We Use the ESV* (cited in endnote).



*Esther Souman
Willoughby Heights*

Response

Thank you, Esther, for sharing your thoughts on, and experiences with, Bible translations. Your determination to embrace the hard work of Bible study, without being spoon-fed, is commendable. There are many others, including young people like you, who approach Bible study just as zealously and earnestly, even if they do not use the ESV as their primary Bible translation. I am glad, however, that they do not all take the NIV84 with "a big grain of salt." I suspect you were using hyperbole when you mentioned that your church's Bible study groups do. Let the reader judge whether such a summary dismissal of the NIV, which most Canadian Reformed Churches have been using for almost two decades, is warranted.

To caricature the NIV as a "subjective translation" which spoon-feeds "ideas and updates on all the most recent theories in biblical scholarship," and which completely replaces the original phrases with subjective interpretations, is provocative. But it is not true. In the first place, that would be impossible, since various recent theories do not always agree. In the second place, where is the evidence for this caricature? If you have drawn this conclusion from the article, you have misunderstood it.

To praise the ESV, furthermore, as “the *literal* Word of God” is to exalt it to a level that no English Bible translation has ever attained, or ever can attain, since the English language is different in so many respects from the language of the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. A literal translation of the Bible would be almost impossible for most people to decipher profitably. With every translation, there is a certain amount of interpretation required. Dynamic equivalent translation, in fact, when it is carried out skillfully, offers a more accurate rendering of the original manuscripts and idioms than a literal translation.

Many of us, despite preferring the NIV, will continue to consult the ESV – along with the NASB, NKJV, and other orthodox translations – for Bible study and sermon preparation, with due appreciation and respect. Hopefully, churches, families, and Bible students who prefer to stick with the NIV will be accorded that same respect, and still be granted this choice.

Theo Lodder

¹ R.C. Sproul, “*Why We Use the ESV.*” [ligonier.org](http://www.ligonier.org/reformation-study-bible/about/why-esv/). (n.d.), <http://www.ligonier.org/reformation-study-bible/about/why-esv/>.

² *Ibid.*



*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.*

