

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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"CONSIDER THIS,
YOU WHO FORGET GOD"



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Protestant Popes

Who rules and governs the church?

The Pope of Rome

Recently Pope Francis I, the reigning pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church, made headlines as he visited Cuba and the United States, both for the first time. As usual he delivered a great many speeches, presided over numerous masses, met many dignitaries, and kissed not a few people. In Cuba he sought rapprochement with the Communist Party and with its leader, Raoul Castro. In the United States he stressed issues related to race, justice, and the environment.

Of course, the press failed to report in depth on most of this as they were in a lather about the Pope meeting with Kim Davis, the Kentucky clerk who defied the American legal system and refused to issue marriage licenses to gay couples. Once this news took over the headlines, the denials and protestations poured forth from the Vatican. "It wasn't quite what it looked like," said the spokesmen of the Holy See.

Not the only pope

Still, as all of this was unfolding there is another related issue that deserves our attention. It has to do with the fact that the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church does not have a monopoly on the position he holds. Of course, there have been many popes in the past and there may well be more to come in the future, nevertheless the point that I want to direct your attention to is the fact that Protestantism too has its popes. As a matter of fact it has many, many more popes than does the Church of Rome. It even has popes all over the world, popes with varying skin colours, popes that speak different languages and come from diverse cultures.

What do I mean? Well, think about it for a moment. Who is the Pope of Rome? What role does he play? According to Roman Catholic dogma the Pope is the Vicar of Christ and the successor of Peter. He is the leader of that church. He is said to be clothed with special spiritual pow-

ers, powers that allow him to speak infallibly from time to time. We are told that what he says carries as much weight as what is said in the Bible.

Yet the Pope has more than just spiritual power. He exercises church political power as well. He rules effectively as the supreme head of the Roman Church.

Adding it all up one could say, and I mean no disrespect, but the Pope is the "boss" of this church on earth.

Protestantism

Yes, and here is the connection to Protestantism. For in the many churches who call themselves "Protestant" there are all sorts of bosses as well. There are innumerable men who stand before their congregations on a Sunday morning and declare that they too are speaking infallibly. God spoke to them directly, they claim, and now they are telling the people all about it.

Naturally, the making of such claims has consequences. If your pastor speaks for God in a direct and infallible manner, then you had better listen to him and do what he tells you. If he has these types of "divine connections" then it does not take long for him to increase in power and for people to be awestruck and mesmerized by him. He begins to dominate and people even encourage him in his domination.

The result is that in many Protestant churches around the world we see the rise of pope-like figures. These are men who are placed on a pedestal, whose every word is deemed superior, and who are allowed to exercise unrestrained power and influence. What they want, they get. What they teach is embraced without reservation. The orders they give are said to be beyond reproach and to be met with instant obedience.

The bitter fruits

Now, this situation has created consequences. In the African nation of Nigeria we find certain Pentecostal

pope-pastors being given jet airplanes by their parishioners as a sign of their esteem. In China there are pope-pastors who come to their congregations claiming that the Lord has spoken to them about how the congregation should provide them with a mansion and a Mercedes. In the United States we have pope-pastors leading efforts to build massive worship centres and even erecting statues of themselves on church grounds.

From all over the world we are receiving word that there are large numbers of pastors and preachers in a wide variety of Protestant churches who are not pastoring but pandering, not serving but domineering, not humble but arrogant, not honest but crooked, not holy but immoral. Indeed, in many places pastors are giving their churches bad press and the gospel a black eye.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Our editorial is about church leadership. What should our church leadership look like? Dr. James Visscher speaks about the crisis of church authority and examines what is important in keeping our leadership biblical.

We are coming close to Remembrance Day. From Rev. Klaas Stam we have an article entitled "The Resistance." The Treasures New and Old meditation from Dr. Andrew J. Pol also focuses on remembering sacrifice and thanking the LORD for our freedom.

Readers may remember that Rev. Eric Kampen has been working on a series on churches in ecclesiastical fellowship in North America. He has his final article in this issue, featuring the l'Église Réformée du Québec (ERQ).

Issue 22 has regular columns Clippings on Politics and Religion and Treasures New and Old. There is a report from a Women's League Day, a question for You Asked, and a number of press releases. In addition, there are music and website reviews and a Mission News insert.

Laura Veenendaal

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Cover photo: *The Brooding Soldier Canadian memorial at St Juliaan, near Ypres*

(photo credit: Shawn Veenendaal)

Clarion

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What's the problem?

Why is this so? What accounts for these distortions of the real thing? The first reason as to why this sad state of affairs has arisen relates to biblical ignorance and non-compliance. What I mean by that is that churches are failing to turn to the Bible and to listen to what it has to say about the topic of true biblical leadership. If they would but read and take to heart what the Apostle Paul writes to Timothy (1 Tim 3) and Titus (Tit 2), what Peter says to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20), and what is written in so many other places in the Bible as well, the people in the pew would be demanding quite a different leadership style.

The failure of leadership in so many Protestant churches is directly related to rejecting or ignoring what the Bible says and to accepting and esteeming what the world dictates. It represents a crisis of authority. Who rules and governs the church? Does God or man? Does Holy Scripture or unholy human opinion?

Governance

Yet shunting Scripture aside is not the only problem here. There is another and it relates to church governance. There are countless churches in the world that arise and that never bother to go to the Bible and to inquire about what it says about the structure, the offices, the assemblies, the worship and sacraments, the practices and procedures of the church.

Now in some ways this is amazing. After all, the Bible is not exactly silent on these subjects. It may not give us all of the ins and outs of everything, but when it comes to who really governs the church (Christ), who should rule the church on earth (elders), who should preach and teach (qualified men), who should direct the affairs of mercy (deacons), it is not exactly mute. The same goes for the number and nature of sacraments, the elements and circumstances of worship, the need for biblical instruction, the singing of psalms and hymns.

In light of all this it is rather startling to hear of churches who have senior pastors but no real elders to hold them accountable. Or what about churches that speak often about mercy but have no ministry of mercy in their midst? Or what about churches who have elders who never interact with members or deacons who are more concerned with the maintenance of church property than with the sufferings of the saints?

The way forward

So where do we go from here? It is either in the direction of greater and greater disobedience and abuse of power, or it is in the direction of a return to biblical norms and standards.

Team leadership

What does the latter look like? A number of things come to mind. The first is that there will be a return to team leadership. What I mean is that elders will be elected, appointed, and ordained to rule the flock together with the pastors. No pastor will be allowed to usurp authority, to pursue his own agenda, to claim supreme power, or to fatten his own wallet. Together the pastor and the elders will work as a team - listening to one another, learning from one another, respecting one another. Or, to put it in church orderly language, there will be no lording it over each other.

Servant leadership

Along with team leadership, the Bible also espouses servant leadership. It takes its cue from its Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In Philippians 2 the church is told to look closely to Christ and to note that while he was "in the form of God" he made himself nothing "taking the form of a servant" (Phil 2:6, 7). The most exalted figure in the world opted to serve.

He expects the same of his followers. The Apostles Paul and Peter understood this well, as did the other New Testament leaders. They were not adverse to calling themselves "servants," even "slaves" in the service of Christ and his people. In other words, they did not lust after palaces or covet fancy cars and speedy jets. They did not ride around in pope-mobiles. They were servants. They looked like them. They talked like them. They lived like them.

Shepherd leadership

Why, we can even ratchet it up a notch and say that to team leadership and servant leadership, there needs to be added shepherd leadership. What's the difference between a servant and a shepherd? A servant is someone who serves others. A shepherd is someone who is even willing to sacrifice himself in the service of others.

This emphasis becomes obvious when we listen to the Lord Jesus speak in John 10. There he makes it clear that in the eyes of a true shepherd the sheep matter more than the shepherd himself. He leads, feeds, and bleeds for them. Why, he is even willing to risk his life for them (John 10:11, 15, 17). In short, the sheep come first.

Imagine now for a moment what a witness it would be if churches and churches leaders everywhere adopted and exhibited this threefold approach to church leadership? What a witness it would be in this selfish world! What a blessing it would be in so many struggling churches! What a glory it would bring to the name and reputation of our great God and Saviour!





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Forgetting God – Remembrance Day 2015

Consider this, you who forget God. . . . (Psalm 50:22)

Sacrifices

I remember visiting a war cemetery in The Netherlands and standing at the graves of Canadian soldiers. There were rows and rows of them, with plaques indicating name, age, rank and where they were from. I recognized names of cities and towns in Canada. Those young men fought for the freedom for others. They died far away from their homes and loved ones. Statistics from textbooks can never truly render the enormity of their sacrifices and the chilling reality of their deaths.

It's a human tendency to focus on the present and the future. But what is past is often forgotten. To counteract this tendency, we have "Remembrance Day." The annual ceremonies are important, "Lest we forget. . ." and take our freedom for granted.

On Remembrance Day it is also important to consider the goodness and grace of the LORD, our God, to us. He blessed the Allied war effort and restored to us the gift of freedom. It was part of his unfolding

plan for the course of human history. Underlying this all is his plan for our liberation from the tyrannical power of sin and death through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

How are we responding to this?

Our awesome judge

Psalm 50 reminds us of the mighty God of heaven and earth, the LORD who established a bond of love with his chosen people. He gave them the gift of freedom in the Promised Land and came to live in their midst, in Zion (v. 2). He calls them to account for what they have done with their freedom. As their awesome Judge (v. 6f.) he reveals two fundamental deficiencies in their lives.

At first glance, all seems to be well. They have been diligent in offering sacrifices (v. 8). Nevertheless, there is a problem. They have simply been going through the motions instead of expressing true thankfulness to him as "the Most High" (v. 14).

The second issue is that although they know God's law very well and

are capable of reciting it (v. 16), they haven't been living accordingly. The LORD exposes the underlying problem: "You hate my instruction and cast my words behind you" (v. 17). This has become visible in such sins as theft, deceit, and slander.

Whether these issues are characteristic of two different groups of people or of the same individuals, they face the real possibility of divine judgment. The LORD warns them, "Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with none to rescue" (vs. 22). But there is still good news! The way of escape from judgment is still open! It is the way of faith and repentance. What does this involve? The LORD wants them to obey him as they have promised and to call on him in times of trouble (vs. 15). The same applies to us. Remember who the LORD is and what he has done for us. Accept his instruction and rely on his help. That is the way to a restored relationship with God. That is the way of salvation (vs 23).



For Further Study

1. Why do we tend to forget the past? How does this have potential to impact our faith life?
2. "Forgetting God" is strongly linked to sinning against him. How should we therefore learn to combat sin our lives?
3. Observing certain rituals or simply saying the right words are not enough to ensure salvation. What else does "remembering" the LORD and honouring him involve? What role does prayer play in this?

The Resistance



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Every year around Remembrance Day we rightly put a poppy on a lapel or jacket. I often lose my poppy before I get to church, but I am a little clumsy. Happily, there are always people eager to restore the poppy to its prominent place.

The poppy is especially important for those who served in the military and may be considered as *veterans*. We have parades with the veterans as honoured guests for their service in liberating Europe. So it should be.

What I often noticed is that the members of the armed underground resistance are not or hardly mentioned. The resistance was a formidable force to help citizens hide from Nazi occupiers, shelter Jews, and enable people to receive access to food.

Recognition

In my man cave or erstwhile study I have an official document which reads, "The President of the United States has directed me to express the gratitude and appreciation of the American people to K. STAM for gallant service in assisting allied soldiers to escape from the enemy." It is signed (in pen and in ink) by "Dwight D. Eisenhower, General of the Army, commanding general of the United States Forces, European Theatre." It also has an official stamp from the operational headquarters of the European US zone.

For those who collect ephemera this document has double significance. First, it is a *military* document, for it is signed by an important, most-decorated general. Second, it is a *political* document because the man who signed it himself went on to become the President of the United States of America.

Klaas, eh? Have no fear; the K. Stam in this document is not I. I have no claim to fame. Klaas Stam was my uncle, however, after whom I was named and with whom I boarded from 1965-1970 during my studies in Kampen. He was the head of the Resistance Group which operated in

Zwartsluis in the heart of The Netherlands. His story and that of others in that area was later retold and published. The commendation given by Gen. Eisenhower was for the help and assistance afforded to American pilots and crew members whose planes were downed or crashed above The Netherlands on the way to Britain after bombing runs over Nazi Germany.

The resistance in Zwartsluis was instrumental in smuggling American and other flyers back to Britain via France and Spain. My Uncle Klaas has a similar commendation given by a British Air Marshall on behalf of the RAF and the British government.

Decorated by Prince Bernhard

I have another item of worth in my cave. It is a photograph of my father-in-law, Evert Kraal, receiving the Dutch Resistance Memorial Cross from Prince Bernhard, for gallantry against the occupying Nazi forces. Evert Kraal was responsible for guiding freed prisoners in the dark to safe houses.

This occasion was the attack on a prison to free important resistance fighters. If the captives were tortured to talk, the entire group would be eradicated. After an attack on the prison, the area would be crawling with SS soldiers and a reliable guide was very important. It was extremely dangerous work: if you were caught with an escaped prisoner you were both shot on the spot.

Think of their wives. These women never asked where their husbands would be that night. It was better not to know. But many prayers went up to heaven by the wives and mothers of the resistance fighters. Great was the relief and gratitude when these men returned home safely.

The Nazis were always enraged when prisoners escaped. After the killing of an SS officer at my Uncle Klaas' farm, the Nazis assassinated the chief surgeon of the hospital in the town of Meppel, the Mayor of Wanneperveen, and anyone else who was available. The immediate task

was to find a place where these people could be hidden so that later they could be moved elsewhere.

The picture shows the Dutch prince giving a congratulatory hand-shake to Evert Kraal after receiving the medal of valor. Evert Kraal survived the war. His brother Jaap, my wife's uncle, did not. After the altercation at my uncle's house, where an SS officer was shot and killed, Jaap was arrested, imprisoned, and executed. His name, picture, and story are in the National Resistance Record, "Lest We Forget." His young wife became an instant widow and stayed unmarried all her life.

Why do I mention these people? Not because they are relatives. To me these men like Klaas Stam and Jaap Kraal (with countless others) gave all to save some. They knew the risks and trusted in God. I mentioned them because I closely knew some of these men and can verify the accuracy of their accounts. I never met Jaap Kraal but his story is part of our family's heritage.

They should be remembered. Nowadays people will quickly give men and women who help others the title of "hero." But the Resistance fighters would never consider themselves as such. They simply went about battling the enemy wherever they could. When you asked resistance fighters about their war experiences, they'd rather not speak about them. Some pointed only to Proverbs 24:11 "Rescue those who are being led away to death, hold back those staggering towards slaughter." That is a passage one should read on Remembrance Day. Many Jews and others were killed by the Nazis. But many were rescued by the Resistance.



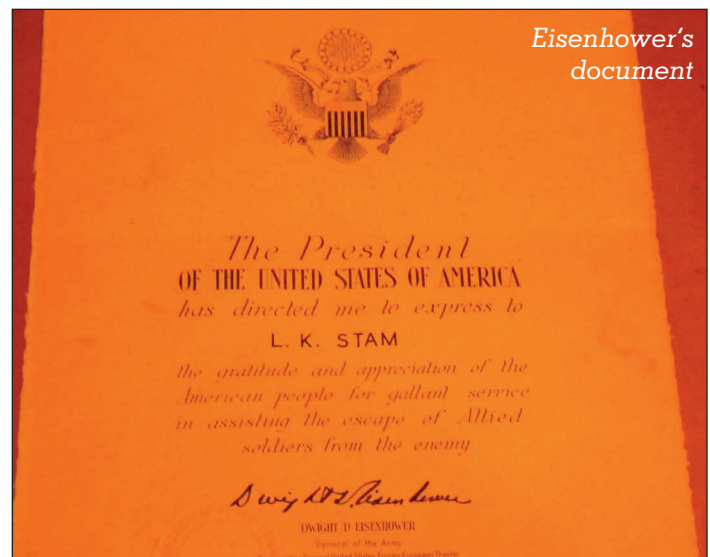
Evert Kraal being congratulated by Prince Bernhard, whose back is towards the camera.

The task of the church

Today we live in a free country. This is an undeserved privilege of God's grace. There is no occupying force in Canada. Initially, as The Netherlands was defeated by the *blitzkrieg* of the German Wehrmacht, some Dutchmen felt they had to recognize and obey the new (German) government. They saw the German government as a just judgment of God over their sins. That is a story in itself.

But the majority did not. The people acknowledged the Dutch government which had fled to and was reconstituted in England. The Nazis were not considered a legitimate government. The Dutch kept their allegiance to Queen Wilhelmina of Orange and her war cabinet.

What is a church to do in these circumstances? First, it must recognize the lawful government and urge the citizens to be faithful to the government-in-exile. Second, it must pray that the illegitimate government be removed and justice be returned in the land. Thirdly, it must act to protect the occupied people in sabotaging the occupying army. This, too, was dangerous work.



The facts prove that many Europeans were faithful in opposing the cruel enemy. Many of these people were murdered without a proper trial and then executed at the break of dawn. More than 200,000 Dutch civilians died during the war. Remember them.

Klaas Stam and Evert Kraal have long since passed away. But their works follow them. Our task on Remembrance Day is also to remember the brave men and women of the resistance who gave their lives for the freedom of their country-men. *And may God keep our land glorious and free.*



The History of Contact with l'Église Réformée du Québec (ERQ)



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A tale of a big sister and a little sister

When you divide the total membership of the Canadian Reformed Churches by the number of instituted churches (fifty-five), you get an average church size of about 330 members. In reality, you will only find a few churches this size. It is more helpful as a median figure, as about half the churches are smaller and half are larger.

In light of these figures, the Canadian Reformed Churches certainly come across as a very big sister in comparison to l'Église Réformée du Québec (ERQ). It currently has five congregations in the province of Quebec, with a total membership of about 350 members. This means that at least twenty-five Canadian Reformed congregations are the same size or larger than this small federation. The whole ERQ is not even half the size of the largest church in the federation, which has a membership of 745.

As the history of our contact with the ERQ is contained in General Synod Acts and Committee Reports, going back to Synod Abbotsford 1995, it will be helpful to briefly review the history of this federation, the history of contact leading up to the establishment of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF), and developments since the establishment of EF. The difference in size is good to keep in mind with a view to reflecting as to whether, as Canadian Reformed Churches, we have acted as a loving big sister, ever ready to give advice when asked, or perhaps we have come across as a rather overbearing big sister.

History of l'Église Réformée du Québec¹

The ERQ was established on November 6, 1988. At its founding, it consisted of nine small congregations, with eight spread across the Province of Quebec and one in Ottawa. It came about as the fruit of a combined effort of

the Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC), the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), and the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA), to spread the Reformed faith in a province dominated by Roman Catholicism. The Presbyterian Church of Canada, which had some English-speaking congregations in the province, had the leading role.

Those involved in the work of spreading the gospel sought to establish a distinct, independent French-speaking Reformed church in Quebec that would continue to cooperate with the supporting churches. The foundation for this was laid by forming a Council of Reformed Churches established through the mission effort of the three cooperating church bodies, which would then be able to mature into an independent Reformed church.

The formal institution in 1988 meant a definite break from the Presbyterian Church of Canada. There were two main reasons for this break. The first pertained to the ordination of women to the offices in the church. The Presbyterian Church of Canada had opened the offices to women in 1966, but it allowed its ministers freedom of conscience and practice, so that they did not need to participate in services where women were ordained if this was against their conscience. This changed in 1982. Ministers were allowed to have freedom of conscience, but not freedom of practice. The second reason had to do with the contrasting vision between those doing the actual work, who were seeking to establish confessional churches, and those in position of leadership especially in the PCC, who favoured a pluralist, non-confessional church.²

The involvement of men from Presbyterian and Reformed backgrounds helps us to understand the confessional basis of the newly formed church federation. They adopted the Westminster Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism.

History of contact leading up to ecclesiastical fellowship

The history of contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches can be traced back to 1994, when the church at Ottawa submitted a report to a Classis Ontario North concerning its contact with the ERQ. It made known the request of the ERQ to establish an official relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. This classis considered that the Church at Ottawa had provided enough information to conclude that the ERQ could be recognized as a true church of Jesus Christ. It sent a request to the general synod scheduled for 1995 to give this matter to the proper committee to continue this work, with a view to entering into ecclesiastical fellowship. The synod held in 1995 was hesitant in moving towards a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship since the ERQ was in the same country. It also felt the need to do a more thorough investigation. It appointed a special committee with the mandate to discuss the differences in confession, church polity, and worship and the ERQ's relationship with the CRC and PCA.

In its report to Synod 1998, the committee highlighted many positive aspects. The fact that the ERQ had the Westminster Confession as one of its documents was put in perspective with reference to the contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), in which it had been established that the differences between the Westminster Confession and Three Forms of Unity do not prevent fellowship. Fact-finding, however, was overshadowed by fault-finding. It was noted that in the ERQ the office of deacon is open, in principle, to all communicant members. The office of deacons, however, does not have any authoritative function. They do not form part of ruling council of the church. It was also noted that the ERQ has only one worship service each Sunday and occasionally allows ministers from other church federations to preach. Further matters mentioned were practices concerning supervision of the Lord's Supper, the level of knowledge of Reformed doctrine expected before profession of faith, and the lack of standardized liturgical forms. Though the ERQ made a request to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship, the 1998 synod declined this request. It was felt that such a relationship was not possible since the ERQ was only in the beginning stages of developments and had not articulated a position on such matters as liturgical forms, order of worship, and supervision of the Lord's Table. It mandat-

CALLED

Called by the Canadian Reformed Church at Grand Valley, ON:

Candidate Randall Visscher

EXAMINATION SUSTAINED

Sustained his peremptory examination at Classis Manitoba on October 9:

Candidate Rick Vanderhorst

CHURCH NEWS

ed the committee to discuss the various issues mentioned above, as well as the observance of the Lord's Day, supervision of the Lord's Table, and the desirability to adopt liturgical forms.

In its report to the 2001 synod, the committee gave evidence of having discussed all these matters extensively. The explanations put the differences in the context of a young and growing church federation. The possibility of women serving as deacons was not seen as a serious problem since the office of deacon functioned under the authority of the elders and deacons had no authoritative position. It was clear that language and cultural differences did not make it feasible to recommend the ERQ become part of the Canadian Reformed Church federation. The 2001 synod indicated that the issue of deacons and deaconesses, liturgical forms, order of worship, Lord's Day observance, the difference in rules for EF, and the question of federative unity had been discussed sufficiently and did not need further discussion before establishing EF. The synod decided that the three items that needed priority for discussions were supervision of the pulpit, confessional membership, and fencing of the Lord's Supper. It was also indicated that the differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards would need to be discussed, using such documents as the Evaluation of Divergences, which had come about through contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In focusing on these topics, one can see how discussions leading up to contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church were introduced into the discussions with the ERQ.

At this point, there was an interesting twist in the discussions. It is clear that the Canadian Reformed synods had been setting the agenda for discussions. The brothers in the ERQ responded that they did not have a mandate from their synod to discuss these matters. The ERQ synod of September 2002 instructed its Interchurch Relations Committee that they should only discuss these matters once, as Synod, they had come to a conclusion on these matters. As such, there was no development on the issues mandated by the 2001 CanRC synod. The Canadian Reformed synod held in 2004 simply repeated the mandate of the previous synod.

Information in a report to the synod held in 2007 indicated that church life was developing in the ERQ. The ERQ, however, did not let its agenda be dictated by Canadian Reformed synods and was moving at its own pace, seeking input from the committee for contact in dealing with various matters. The committee for contact with the ERQ recommended to enter into EF and to continue discussions on existing differences within that relationship. A number of churches objected to that approach, suggesting that all matters should be resolved before establishing EF. Thirteen years after the ERQ requested ecclesiastical fellowship, the 2007 synod accepted the recommendation of the committee and decided to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship. At the same time, it mandated the committee to discuss differences when appropriate.

The decision of the 2007 synod reflects the conclusion reached in relations with other churches that differences need not be resolved in order to establish ecclesiastical fellowship. At the same time, the mandate to discuss differences when appropriate indicated an unwillingness to accept that there are differences and pushed towards uniformity in understanding and practice. This part of the mandate cast a shadow over the relationship. This is evident in developments since 2007.

Developments since the establishment of ecclesiastical fellowship

The report to the 2010 synod gave evidence of lively dialogue between the respective CanRC and ERQ committees about a wide variety of topics. The synod noted, however, that one area that had not been subject of dialogue was the matter of supervision of the pulpit. Even though this synod did not include this issue in the mandate, it is evident in the report to the 2013 synod that dialogue had taken place about various matters, including supervision of the pulpit. The committee indicated that they had also responded to requests for input on various matters being dealt with within the ERQ. Such dialogue helped lead to a better understanding of the particular situation in which the ERQ found itself.

It is evident from the Acts of the 2013 synod that a number of churches were not content with this level of interaction. There was a desire for continued vigorous discussion on various issues, some churches even calling for admonishing the ERQ with respect to some of its practices. The result was a mandate that reintroduced topics that had been discussed extensively over all the years of contact, such as the matter of supervision of the pulpit, admission to the Lord's Table, and women deacons.

Equals as ecclesiastical sisters

When one surveys the history of contact with the ERQ, it is worth highlighting that at no point did a synod mandate a committee to evaluate the ERQ in light of the marks of the church as confessed in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession. Rather, it follows the pattern of contact with other churches where fact-finding turns into fault-finding, followed by a tenacity in discussing differences, as evident in repeating similar mandates synod after synod. Just when one would think there was nothing new to say about an issue anymore, it was reintroduced in committee mandates, as is evident in the mandate of Synod 2013. From the synod decisions, it appears that, as federation, there is great difficulty in accepting that other churches are not and need not be mirror images of the Canadian Reformed Churches, but that the Lord of the church works with each in their own historical context. With respect to the ERQ, it is remarkable that they have waited so patiently for the Canadian Reformed Churches to respond to their invitation in 1994 to enter into an official relationship and the request for ecclesiastical fellowship in 1997. It is also remarkable that they have been willing to devote their very limited manpower and resources to these discussions. Keep in mind that the largest congregation in our federation is double the size of their whole federation, which by now is down to only five churches. Yet, they have patiently pursued the relationship.

As one who has served on the committee for contact with the ERQ for nearly nine years, I have been able to witness the growth in the relationship since entering ecclesiastical fellowship in 2007. The conversations, thankfully, moved beyond the narrow list of topics that have been discussed to the point that nothing new can be said anymore, but the only thing left to do is say it louder.

It remains to be seen what direction the next synod, scheduled for May 2016, will set for the relationship. The ERQ may be a little sister and we are a big sister, but the relationship has worked best when approaching one another as equals before the Lord. It is to be hoped that, despite our size difference, the direction decided upon will work with the principle of being equals as ecclesiastical sisters.

¹ A detailed account of the history can be found at <http://www.erq.qc.ca/english/ourhistory.html>.

² See Jason Zuidema, *The Life and Thought of David Craig*, (Toronto: Clements Academic, 2008), 99-123.





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New Threat to Freedom of Speech

The Quebec legislature has been holding special consultations on a new bill (Number 59) entitled “An Act to enact the Act to prevent and combat hate speech and speech inciting violence and to amend various legislative provisions to better protect individuals.” According to Professor Salim Mansur of the University of Western Ontario in London and others this piece of legislation is a blatant attempt to limit free speech. Why would a Canadian province want to limit freedom of speech? What is the need for a new act to combat hate speech?

Professor Mansur explains in the *National Post* (Sept 1, 2015) that “Bill 59 apparently is the response to a proposal made by the Quebec Human Rights Commission to provide it with tools to initiate lawsuits against those who publicly engage in ‘hate speech.’ At present only individuals may bring lawsuits on the grounds of discrimination under section 10 of the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. It is Premier Couillard’s contention that Muslim terrorism is brought about by criticisms of Islam. From this follows the view if such criticisms are disallowed then terrorism will end. And Jacques Fremont, president of the QHRC [Quebec Human Rights Commission], has been public in stating he would sue those who ‘write against. . . the Islamic religion. . . on a website or on a Facebook page.’”

The Bill does not mention any religious group requiring special protection from hate speech. But as Mansur notes: “Apart from Muslims, no religious group has demanded any criticism of religion and religious group should be considered ‘hate speech’ and proscribed.” Mansur also notes that “the intent of Bill 59 is ironically consistent with the global agenda of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) pushed by Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey and Islamist organizations worldwide. Since the late Supreme Leader Grand Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran pronounced his religious decree in February 1989 calling

for the death of novelist Salman Rushdie as punishment for insulting the prophet of Islam, the push by the OIC at the UN to legally restrict and globally ban criticism of Islam as ‘defamation of religion’ has intensified.”

It is telling that Mansur, himself a Muslim, considers Bill 59 “a slap in the face to those Muslims who chose to live in Canada precisely because it is a free society.” He then gives a personal testimony: “As a Muslim born and raised within the world of Islam, I experienced the debilitating effects of the closed society on people, and how their aspirations for freedom are daily crushed by a culture suspicious of and punishing any new thinking as subversion of religiousbased customs.” He goes on to note that “most Canadians and Westerners are unaware of instructions drilled into the impressionable minds of Muslim boys at a very early age in schools by mullahs or religious teachers.” They are taught that idolatry, unbelief, and apostasy “are crimes against God deserving of death, and that it is obligatory on Muslims to execute this punishment. They are taught any rule of law apart from Shariah is sinful and illegitimate, and that it is obligatory on Muslims to establish Shariah rule wherever they can and persist in the effort until the whole world eventually submits. The result of such teaching, and the culture that perpetrates it, is the ideology of jihad that glorifies terrorism as the cult of martyrdom.”

Bill 59, should it ever become law, will benefit radical Islam. Could this become another example of creeping Shariah law in Canada? So far no Canadian political leader has spoken out against it. Moderate Muslims have. Another one is Tarek Fatah who noted in the *Toronto Sun* (August 25, 2015) that “we will do everything we can to make sure Quebec’s Bill 59 does not pass. But if it does become law, the first complaint to the QHRC will be against Islamist mosques for spreading hatred against Jews and Christians. That is a promise.”



Fifty-Second Annual Fraser Valley League Day

On June 17, about 150 ladies from fifteen different congregations got together for the fifty-second annual Fraser Valley League Day. It was held on the south side of the border this year so many had to brave the border to head to Lynden American Reformed Church. After opening and an official welcome, Johanna Houweling brought greetings from down under by reading a short letter from the Free Reformed Women Bible Study Societies of Australia.

Gerda Jacobi, from Yarrow Canadian Reformed Church, gave a thought-provoking speech about redeeming our time for the days are evil. We learned that time is a created entity and was divinely designed. God created the twenty-four hour cycle and every morning invites us to begin again and every evening presents us with opportunity for reflection and rest. God also designed the Sabbath rhythm, teaching us to pause from our labours.

She explained that redeeming our time means living life consciously, intentionally, and thoughtfully. We



May Krabbendam
introducing the speaker

must be intentional with how we spend our time or else our sinful nature will become the default owner and decision-maker concerning how we use the precious windows of time we have available. Our priorities can get diluted and taken over by constant disruptions and interruptions. Pride, perfectionism, guilt, worry, and anxiety can also take over. We can't manage time, but rather need to learn to manage ourselves.

Gerda Jacobi concluded her speech with practical ideas for managing our time. Having clarity, a clear focus, intention, and vision will help us prioritize the important things in our life. It's necessary to be clear on principles, values, and essentials. It's okay to say no to some duties and obligations and we should learn when to say no. We need to reduce distractions and "tolerations" that can be fixed or avoided. She advised us to use "reverse engineering" to complete some tasks effectively. For example, preparing for a restful Sunday does not begin on Saturday night, but rather all week in advance.



Welcome from Stephanie Bareman from Lynden ARC



One of the small group discussions

The speaker reminded us of the comfort found in Matthew 11:29-30, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

We broke off into small groups to discuss the speech and then walked over to Cornerstone Christian School where we enjoyed a delicious lunch prepared by some

ladies from the Lynden congregation. We had a general discussion and Gerda Jacobi answered questions after lunch. Overall, the day encouraged and motivated us Christian women to use our time wisely.

If you are interested in listening to Gerda’s speech, it can be found on the Lynden American Reformed Church’s website at <http://lyndenchurch.com/sermons>.



Lunch at Cornerstone Christian School



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Creation Without Compromise

It's a sign of our changing times that I now feel the need to write my first "website" review. While printed books remain important resources for learning and growing as Christians, more and more of us find our basic information via the Internet on blogs and websites. There are some distinct advantages to this: 1) the material is instantly available to any connected device world-wide, free of charge; 2) writers can interact much more quickly with developments in their field of writing and so keep their readers well-informed.

Orthodox on origins

These advantages are being put to good use by the editors of the new website Creation Without Compromise (CWC; www.creationwithoutcompromise.com). As its title suggests, CWC is concerned about the biblical doctrine of creation or "origins." The four editors are Dr. Ted VanRaalte (of CRTS), Rev. Jim Witteveen, Mr. Jon Dykstra, and Dr. Wes Bredenhof (all members in Canadian/American/Australian Reformed churches). The "About" page states that they are "committed to the historic Reformed understanding of Genesis and believe that a failure to maintain the orthodox position not only attacks biblical truth in general, but the gospel of Jesus Christ in particular." The purpose of CWC is to "provide support to those who share our concerns."

While it is not stated on the "About" page, it does not take long in reading through the weekly blog postings and various articles that the primary concern of CWC is to defend against the error of theistic evolution. Theistic evolution (sometimes called: evolutionary creation) is not easy to define but involves the idea that God created the world, including human beings, using the process of evolution. This position is held by Christians who accept certain key tenets of secular science (e.g. that higher life forms – in-

cluding humans – have evolved, over a lengthy period of time, out of lower life forms) but reject another tenet (that there is no God and such a process is essentially "self-propelled"). Theistic evolutionists deny "evolutionism" but accept the theory of "biological evolution" and in this way try to marry the beliefs of main-stream science with the teachings of Scripture. CWC seeks to point out the errors of such a position and how it undermines the trustworthiness of the very gospel of Jesus Christ.

To me, this is the most beneficial aspect of CWC – a head-on engagement with arguments put forward by theistic evolutionists and their sympathizers. Readers can then judge for themselves, with the Bible as their guide. For too long, the debate has been rather one-sided on the Internet. An influential website like www.biologos.org, with its long reach into the broader world of Reformed scientists and theologians, has been overtly pushing theistic evolution for some time and gone largely unchallenged. Meanwhile, within our own federation, the blog reformedacademic.blogspot.ca has been opening this same door for several years with its many suggestions toward that position.

While Dr. John Byl has done an admirable job defending against theistic evolution (especially from a scientific point of view) on his space at bylogos.blogspot.ca, his has been a lone voice in the wilderness (at least with respect to the internet) until now. The theologically-trained editors and authors of CWC are a welcome addition and will help balance the debate also in the crucial area of exegesis of Scripture. After all, any position must stand or fall on the basis of God's Word.

Belgic Confession Article 14

There is another significant part of this website that is worthy of mention, namely the proposal (and ensu-

ing debate) to change Article 14 of the Belgic Confession in order to better combat the error of theistic evolution within our federation. The original proposal came from Providence CanRC (where Dr. Bredenhof served as pastor until quite recently and Dr. VanRaalte is a member) and is in the process of being considered by the churches in advance of the upcoming Regional Synod East. There has been public critique and discussion on this proposal also in the pages of *Clarion* and most of that discussion is posted on CWC.

I do have a few questions at this point: does this particular proposal truly belong on this website or at least in the manner presently displayed? It is placed as the centre button, given a place of prominence. It's the page with the most documents attached and looks like the nucleus of CWC. Yet, isn't this proposal something from one of the *churches* and being dealt with by the churches, and not something that belongs to the *individuals* who happen to edit CWC?

Also, isn't this proposal something quite specific to the Canadian Reformed churches whereas the website is aiming at a more general Reformed audience? And when this proposal is decided (one way or the other) by the upcoming regional synod or, if it continues on, at the next general synod, will it not cease to exist as a proposal and then be placed in the history books? And if a synod should decide against adopting this proposal, will CWC keep this proposal as its centre-piece? It seems to me that this particular proposal is of a temporary nature and ill-suited for its current role on this website.

I would think that it would be better for CWC to make mention of Providence Church's proposal by linking to its website (where the documents are also found). Then, as editors have done, they may argue for its merits on CWC but would avoid the risk that the proposal itself dominates and defines CWC as a website. Whatever happens to the proposal at regional or general synod, theistic evolution still needs to be actively combatted and that, in my view, would better serve as the main and ongoing concern of CWC.

Resources

This website is quite new but already contains some helpful articles related to the defence of the literal reading of Genesis 1-3 by such scholars as our own Dr. C. Van Dam and Rev. Paulin Bédard of l'Église réformée du

Québec (ERQ), each of whom has published separately on this topic. You can even find two books on Genesis 1-3 (one on evangelism, the other a collection of Reformed sermons) offered as free downloads. Several helpful book reviews are also usefully gathered here. Over time I imagine these resources would only grow.

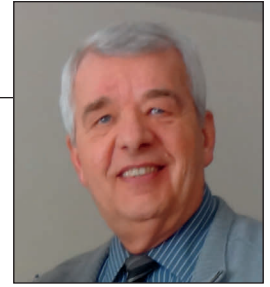
Improvements

Do I have some suggestions for improvement? Two come to mind. The first pertains to the organization of the website. It is in need of a clearer, more intuitive arrangement of articles and blog postings and a more obvious and convenient way to locate older postings. For example, what is the difference between a "blog" entry and an "article" on this website? Some pieces listed as "articles" have been posted as "blogs" – are they simply interchangeable? The editors have been posting what appear to be blog entries once each week (which is a great pace to keep things fresh) but how do you find back older postings? And if a reader is interested in the postings of one particular author, could they not be arranged or at least "found" in a complete list through the search function? Presently that is not the case. As the website grows, such organization will become even more important.

Secondly, what do that authors mean by the reference to the "historic Reformed understanding of Genesis?" What specifically is the "orthodox" position? I could not find this spelled out anywhere, nor did I see any references to any confessions of Reformed or Presbyterian churches to fill out this claim. What is meant by this precisely? What are the limits of such an understanding? Is there a range of acceptable nuances (meaning: within the pale of faithful exegesis of Scripture) in one's understanding of Genesis? Also, why single out Genesis? Is the doctrine of creation or the matter of origins limited to Genesis or does it involve all of Scripture? I would encourage the editors to bring clarity to such questions.

Despite a few critiques, I am thankful to the men who have bravely taken a stand against what I believe to be a dangerous error. This website is quite helpful and encouraging to those confronted by the often confident, self-assured claims of theistic evolution. I would encourage all readers to book mark and regularly visit *Creation Without Compromise* and become fully informed on these issues.





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Q During a family discussion we spoke about the difference between one’s calling and one’s job. A comment was made that someone’s daily job/career, such as carpenter, lawyer, doctor, farmer, etc., is a job because one can take a different job when so desired. To be a minister of the Word, father/mother, or husband/wife was said to be a calling; something one is bound to for life, something that cannot be changed. We’re not sure whether Ephesians 4:1, which speaks about the calling of the members of the church at Ephesus to live and work together in unity and to grow together in maturity, is at all applicable to this question, but this text came to mind as well.

A *Definitions*

The point under discussion in this family conversation is worthy of closer scrutiny for sure! Let me start out by addressing the matter of *job* and *calling*, or the distinction that’s made as “vocation” and “profession.” These two terms are well-known to us; they’re two words denoting a distinct understanding we have about jobs. In the case of certain jobs we speak of the vocational kind while for others we use the word profession to categorize them. The dictionary, too, distinguishes between the “training in a skill or trade” as vocational training, while it speaks of professional in the case of a “specialized and often long and intense academic preparation.” In daily reality we speak of carpenters, plumbers, welders, and electricians as the vocational jobs, while we speak of the professions of dentist, lawyer, and engineer, for the other.

Interestingly, however, the two terms also have another meaning, given by the dictionary as well. A more common word for vocation is “calling” [lit.], while the word profession is well-known to us in the meaning of “vow,”

or “a public declaration of faith.” The word vocation in regards to an occupation has a long history already. We need to go back to the Middle Ages to make the interesting observation that the word *vocatio* was used to denote the work of a *spiritual* nature, e.g. the work done by monks, priests, and other clergymen. They had a special *vocatio*, a special *calling*. It’s surprising to note, therefore, that at that time the word vocation applied to occupations of a *spiritual* kind, while today the jobs involving *manual* labour are called vocational. On the other hand, and that makes it even more interesting, the jobs which in the Middle Ages were considered not spiritual but *worldly*, were called an *officium*, i.e. an office; a word which we today use primarily for the more special category of ministers both in church and in politics, or for other spiritual leaders.

Connotations

In other words, the terms which used to express the (Roman Catholic) distinction between nature and grace, namely office and vocation, have turned to their opposite connotations in our present day understanding. And the remarkable aspect in this is the fact that this process has taken place under the influence of the Reformation! Luther,

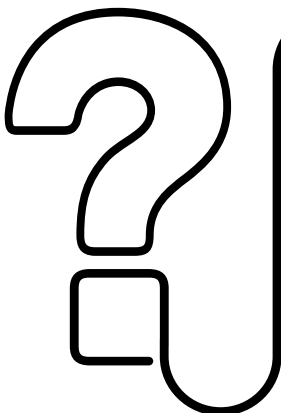
first of all, rejected that distinction between *officium* (worldly labour) and *vocatio* (spiritual labour). Luther, very correctly, stressed the scriptural understanding, namely that someone's *officium* (i.e. someone's labour in this world) *is* his vocation (i.e. *is* his spiritual calling). Luther outrightly rejected the dualism of the Roman Catholic Church! Your office *is* your calling! Putting it this way, it may ring a bell familiar to us from the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 49. Luther's understanding is reflected in this Lord's Day about the petition "Your will be done," which says: "Grant also that everyone may carry out the duties of his *office* and *calling* as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven." In our daily task, in whatever occupation we have, there is a *vocatio*, a calling! Martin Luther went so far as to use in his Bible translation the German word for occupation, *Beruf*, translating it as "calling" (e.g. in 1 Cor 7:20), in order to express this connection between the calling (*rufen*) the Christian has in his job (*Beruf*).

As I stated earlier, our present day term vocation does not have this connotation of calling any longer. The meaning has become very plain, superficial; an everyday synonym for job: vocation. It's a fruit of our present day pragmatism and materialism. Life has become very business-like, money-oriented, that we have lost to a great extent the practice of thinking about backgrounds, principles, and deeper meanings behind terms; spiritual values, especially, are under-valued! The difference between vocations and professions are often expressed in terms of "more-or-less money." *Our* understanding of our position in society, however, is one of calling, stewardship, and determined by the standards of God's Word! The Christian's labour should be a labour-in-the-Lord! As all of life is a life in-the-Lord!

Divine calling

Indeed, here the epistle to the Ephesians enters the picture in the chapters 4 and 5, where the position of every Christian, every marriage, every family, and every employment is a matter of calling in-the-Lord. Yes, we must see every task, job, vocation, and profession spiritually, as a *divine calling* and in accordance with the Word of God (cf. 1 Cor 15:58)! Hence, in response to the questioner's point of seeing a difference in the fact that certain callings can be changed while others can't, we must see it more as a matter of "how do you see your job, your work, and your position before the Lord," in the light of his Word. Then also the work and position of a doctor, lawyer, a labourer with the gifts and talents as electrician, carpenter, or mechanic is a calling that is for life!

John Bunyan has shown this so beautifully in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, where he presents the faithful Christian as a plodder in his rags. He plods and sweats from morning till evening. It's not a very nice sight. But an angel is holding above his head a heavenly garland, which means to say: it is a royal child, a crown prince by the grace of God! That's how we learn to see our place in the shop, in the office, on the land, and in the study. Modern man does not see work, their job, vocation and profession, this way any longer. It is decisive, therefore, in what style and with what standards we do our work. Even the most humble and simple job is fulfilment of a divine vocation! Thus a Dutch poet can say about the work of a maid (Gerrit Achterberg; translation mine): "Someday God will find her in his courts, going through the golden streets to his throne, beating with the brush on the dust pan. Symbols (with an s) becoming cymbals (with a c) in the hour of death." C



Is there something you've been wanting to know?

An answer you've been looking for?

Ask us a question!

Please direct questions to Rev. W. denHollander

denhollanderw@gmail.com

23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0

Press Release of Classis Ontario-West Sept. 16, 2015 in London, ON

On behalf of the convening church at London, Br. F. Oostdyk welcomed the delegates, called the meeting to order, and led the opening devotions. A number of matters were remembered in prayer: the departure of Rev. W. Bredenhof to Tasmania, the call extended to Rev. R. Vermeulen by London, the installation of Rev. J. Louwerse in Hamilton Cornerstone, Drs. J. DeJong and Dr. N. Gootjes and their families, Prof. J. Geertsema, and the new academic year at CRTS. The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. Classis was constituted. The officers suggested by the previous classis and by the convening church took their place: Rev. D. Deboer as chairman, Rev. B. DeJong as clerk, and Rev. J. Ludwig as vice-chairman. The convening church was thanked for its work in preparing for classis. Rev. W. Van Hal, retired minister of the URC in Woodstock and member of CERCU, was welcomed and seated at the table as a fraternal delegate.

After the adoption of the agenda. Br. Steve VanLeeuwen requested to be examined in order to be declared eligible for call within the churches. The required documents were presented after which he delivered his sermon proposal on his assigned text. After discussing the proposal in closed session, Classis deemed it sufficient to continue with the rest of the examinations in OT exegesis, NT exegesis, and doctrine and creeds. After deliberating in closed session, Classis decided that this part of the examination was not sufficient. Br. S. Van Leeuwen was informed of this in a pastoral way.

Br. Randall Visscher requested to be examined with a view to being declared eligible for call within the churches. The required documents were presented. Br. R. Visscher delivered his sermon proposal on his assigned text. After discussing the proposal in closed session, Classis deemed it sufficient to continue with the rest of the examinations in OT exegesis, NT exegesis, and doctrine and creeds. After deliberating in closed session classis decided to declare him eligible for call. In open session the brother was informed of classis' decision and he promised not to teach anything in conflict with the Word of God as summarized in the confessions. After prayer opportunity was given to congratulate him.

Question period according to Article 44 of the CO was held. The chairman asked the three questions contained in that article. All the churches answered that the min-

istry of the office bearers was being continued, and that the decisions of the assemblies were being honoured. The church of Ancaster asked advice in a case of discipline. Advice was given. The church at Providence requested that Rev. J. Ludwig be appointed as their counsellor during their vacancy. This request was granted. The church at London requested advice in a case of discipline. Advice was given. The church in Grand Rapids asked advice regarding a request from the Palmetto Fellowship to become a house congregation under Grand Rapids. Advice was given.

Br. J. Bruintjes requested a one-year extension for permission to speak an edifying word. This request was granted.

After the supporting documents were presented Classis decided to approbate the call extended to Rev. J. Louwerse by the church of Hamilton Cornerstone.

A report of the classis treasurer was tabled recommending that the assessment be increased from \$3 to \$4 per communicant member for the calendar year 2016. This recommendation was adopted.

The church at Ancaster, which administers the Fund for Needy Churches, presented its report. Its recommendation to financially support the church at Grand Rapids for the remainder of the year of 2015 and for year of 2016 was adopted.

The following appointments were made:

1. Delegates to RSE, Nov. 11, 2015 Revs. J. Ludwig and D. Deboer; with alternates Revs. B. DeJong and J. Poort (in that order); Elders, P. Engbers and A. DenHollander; with alternates J. Temple and B. Harsevoort (in that order).
2. The convening church for the next classis is Chatham which will be held on December 9, 2015 (alt. date: March 9, 2016) in their church building.
3. The suggested officers are: Rev. B. DeJong (Chairman); Rev. K. Kok (Vice-chairman), Rev. J. Louwerse (Clerk).
4. Committee of Examiners: Rev J. Ludwig and Rev. K. Kok (alt: Rev. B. DeJong).
5. Church visitors: Rev. J. Ludwig and Rev. K. Kok (alt: Rev. B. DeJong).

Personal Question period was held. Censure ad art 34 was not deemed necessary. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release approved, after which Rev. D. Deboer led in closing devotions.

*For Classis Ontario-West,
Rev. J. Ludwig (Vice-chairman at that time)*

Press Release of Classis Niagara, September 16, 2015, held in the Canadian Reformed Church of Smithville

At the appointed time a delegate from the consistory of the convening church (Smithville) opened the meeting in a fitting Christian manner. The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. Classis was constituted, the executive was seated, and the agenda, duly modified, was adopted.

In agreement with the Church Order, the churches were asked whether the ministry of the office bearers was being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies were being honoured, and whether assistance was required in any matter of church government. All churches answered satisfactorily. No church requested assistance in matters of discipline.

The church at Smithville notes that there are no needy churches within Classis Niagara, and suggests that the committee responsible for the Fund for Needy Churches be disbanded. The Regulations require that Classis appoint a church responsible for receiving requests from potential needy churches, and so Smithville's request is denied.

In closed session a church visitation report was received concerning a visit made to the Vineyard Canadian Reformed Church in Lincoln last April. This report was received with gratitude.

A report from the Treasurer notes that there are sufficient funds to cover the costs of Classis. An audit is also received from the church of Grassie concerning the Treasurer's fund, with all found to be in good order. The

treasurer is discharged from his work concerning the year covered.

A report was received concerning the Archives of Classis indicates that the archives are in good order. The archive church and the auditing church were thanked for their diligence in fulfilling their tasks.

A report was received from the deputies responsible for Contact with Neighbouring Classes & Presbyteries. This report concerned a visit to the latest URC classis. It was received with gratitude.

Appointed as convening church for next classis is Tintern, on December 16 (with March 9, 2016 as alternative date). Appointments were made for church visitors and examination organizers. To Regional Synod the following were delegated to attend: Brs. C. Bouwman and R. den Hollander (alt: D. Wynia and P. Holtvlüwer – in that order); Brs. C. Feenstra and A. Schutten (alt: L. Kingma and H. vanderVelde – in that order). Deputies for Contact with Neighbouring Classes/Presbyteries were reappointed, viz, Brs. B. Gritter and F. Ludwig. Outgoing classis treasurer, Br. D. vanAmerongen sr., was reappointed for the coming year.

After opportunity was given for Question Period, the chairman expressed that in his opinion the delegates had behaved in such a way that no censure was required. This was noted with gratitude.

The Acts of Classis were read and adopted, as was the Press Release.

Rev. Holtvlüwer led the assembly in concluding devotions and prayer, and closed the meeting.

*For Classis,
C. Bouwman, vice chairman*

Press Release of Fifth Asia-Pacific Regional Conference of the International Conference of Reformed Churches, 13-16 October 2015

As agreed at a meeting of the delegates from the Asia Pacific region at the ICRC meeting in Cardiff, UK in September 2013, the fifth Asia-Pacific Regional Conference of the ICRC was hosted by the Independent Reformed Church in Korea with the theme of the Sacraments.

Delegates were accommodated in the Hoam Faculty House at Seoul National University which is on the bus route direct from Incheon Airport. Each day the delegates were conveyed the eighteen kilometres to the facilities of the Riverside Church at Anyang south of Seoul where also most meals, including breakfast, were provided by a happy and capable staff of volunteers.

Each of the ten ICRC churches in the Asia-Pacific region was represented. Observers were also present from several other churches along with representatives of ICRC

member churches in The Netherlands, Canada, USA, and South Africa who have mission interest in the region. Including about seventy delegates from the churches, the total number attending the Conference was about 170.

The Conference was opened with worship conducted by the Independent Reformed Church, the host church which had co-ordinated the organization of the Conference. Farewell greetings were then brought by Rev. John Goris who had been the Convener for Regional Conferences of the ICRC for many years. Rev. Dr. Rowland Ward, the Convener appointed in September 2013 by the ICRC Cardiff, expressed appreciation for Brother Goris' long and faithful service given unobtrusively and beneficially since 1997. Dr. Ward outlined the aim of the Regional Conference to benefit the wider church, particularly through producing useful materials for village pastors following the meeting. We need to remember we are here to serve the church.

While the major papers had been provided in electronic form before the Conference, all participants were provided with two properly bound volumes of these along with the text of most devotions and church introductions. These documents had been translated into Korean. This was of great benefit for the Korean brothers, and the translations were also projected on a screen for the benefit of the significant number of men and women from the Independent Reformed Church who were present during most sessions.

The theme was the Sacraments and this was addressed in several ways: through three devotions at the beginning of each day, ten devotions during the sessions by those representing their church federation, three evening lectures (by Rev. Professor Dr. Mohan Chacko, Rev. Dirk van Garderen and Rev. Professor Dr. Hae Moo Yoo) and three Bible studies, prepared by Rev. Professor Heon Soo Kim, and group discussions on these. These, especially the last paper, stimulated considerable discussion. Clearly, the programme was very full but it worked very well, and it is hoped that the object of the Conference mentioned above will be fulfilled.

The organization of the Conference by the Independent Reformed Church in Korea has set a fine benchmark for the future. As well as valuable opportunities for networking, there was a visit on Thursday to Holy Covenant Independent Reformed Church and Press in central Seoul where a wonderful lunch was provided. A visit was also paid to Yanghwajin Foreign Missionaries Cemetery in Seoul and a closing festive meal and concert was held on Friday evening. A wonderful team of helpers has ensured smooth running throughout the Conference. New relationships have been made and old ones renewed and strengthened. We give thanks to the Lord who blessed the gathering and gave us the privilege of learning and praying around his Word. C



Dennis Teitsma, *Organ Offertories: Thirty Short Pieces in a Variety of Modes and Keys* (Winnipeg: Premier Printing, 1990)

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The offertory in the Reformed worship service has always been a somewhat awkward moment – it is also a distinctive component, as the Heidelberg Catechism points out (LD 38). Music has traditionally been used in some fashion during this part of the worship service. In the past, a psalm or hymn was sung, usually with a sufficient number of stanzas to “cover” the offertory.

Mr. D. Teitsma has recognized that for many organists the offertory music presents a considerable challenge. They are called upon to provide music, but it may easily turn into “muzak,” unless careful preparation is given also to this element of the service. Mr. Teitsma acknowledges that a partita on the song that follows the offertory is to be preferred over a series of preludes. The reason for this is that in a partita, each of the variations is autonomous. However, a prelude or introduction to a

psalm or hymn invites the congregation to sing, and thus leads up to it. To string three or four of these together would result in an awkward time filler indeed.

As a practical alternative, Mr. Teitsma has provided a book of thirty absolute (i.e. non-chorale based) compositions, each with a duration of circa two minutes. He has aimed to write these in all modes and keys of the tunes used in the *Book of Praise*. These two-minute pieces can be followed with a prelude, introducing the song that follows the offertory.

There are some nice works in this collection, and their difficulty level ranges from easy to medium. Although chorale-based music during the offertory must be given priority, this book provides a welcome alternative to trying to improvise music to “cover the offertory,” and it does so in an efficient manner. Instead of having a repertoire of over 150 chorale partitas on all the psalm and hymn melodies in the *Book of Praise*, these organ offertories hand the organist thirty pieces which can be effectively used. The conscientious organist will, of course, broaden his repertoire with chorale-based works as well, since ministers have a certain preference for psalms and hymns frequently re-occurring modes and keys. To hear the same offertory for several consecutive Sundays, simply because the song following is once again in G, would be unacceptable.

Mr. Teitsma must be thanked for making available this useful resource. Together with a repertoire of chorale-based compositions, *Organ Offertories* will supplement one’s “offertory music.” Church organists will no doubt welcome the flexibility it gives them to provide organ music during the service, and which can be prepared in advance.

C

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