

# Clarion



## **Baptized again?**

**WE NEED A KING!**  
**CHURCH SNAPSHOT**  
**YOU ASKED**

# Evangelicalism and Baptism



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## *The moment a child receives the sacrament of holy baptism is an exceptional event*

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When Reformed people leave their home church and start attending evangelical services, something they usually don't immediately think of is the sacrament of holy baptism. Typically they are caught up in the excitement of the new forms of worship they are exposed to and gradually feel more and more at home in their new environment. The issue of baptism is often not in the forefront until they get to the point where they think of becoming members of such an evangelical church. They are then faced with the prospect of needing to be baptized again, for the type of evangelical churches those who leave Reformed churches seem to be attracted to affirm that baptism is for believers only. It is a great tragedy when this sacrament is downplayed or ignored until that point. In this way such wandering members have needlessly deprived themselves of tremendous comfort and more importantly have grieved the God of their baptism.

### **The comfort of baptism**

The moment a child receives the sacrament of holy baptism is an exceptional event. The ceremony itself is very simple. The minister sprinkles water on the head of the infant while pronouncing the name of the child and then saying: "I baptize you into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Yet that short ceremony signifies and seals an awesome reality. With this sacrament, God in heaven comes down, so to speak, and attaches his Name to that of the child. It reminds one of the significance of God's blessing his people in days of old. When Aaron blessed Israel, then he was placing God's

name on the Israelites (Num 6:27). God came to his people and took ownership of them. They were his. Similarly baptism is the official occasion when God places his name on the child and claims that infant as his very own. This is a staggering truth. God Almighty laying claim to a helpless human being and saying: that baby is mine!

And as the triune God takes possession of that child, he solidifies his claim so to speak by giving those unbelievable promises. To be baptized in the name of the Father means that God the Father attests and certifies that he establishes an eternal covenant of grace with that child (Gen 17:7; Ps 105:8-10). God enters into an everlasting relationship before the baby even knows what is going on. He adopts that infant as his very own child with all the privileges that come with that status. He therefore promises to take care of it in such a way that he will seek the best for the child and if evil comes, he will either spare the child that misery or if the child has to undergo it, that hardship will be for its benefit. What a comfort to know this when later in life the one baptized undergoes trial and sorrow. He or she can think of their baptism and take courage. God is in control. He will work it all for good (Rom 8:28)! And this is not all.

The baptism into the name of the Son means that the Son of God promises to wash the sins of that child away with his own blood and have it share in the benefits of his death and resurrection. In other words, the Son promises the infant to be delivered from its sins and so be reckoned as righteous before God (Rom 5:18-19). That means that when that child later falls into sin but earnestly prays to God for

forgiveness, he or she can be assured that forgiveness is being granted. God the Son had promised that forgiveness at the baptism! What an encouragement that is in the ups and downs of life. But there is more.

When a child is baptized into the name of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit promises to live in the heart of the one baptized so that he or she can share in all Christ's benefits, the cleansing from sin, and the daily renewal of life (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph 4:30). As that child grows and travels through this sinful world, battle tested, weary, and sometimes failing badly, the Holy Spirit gives the assurance that when one prays for forgiveness such a person will have the peace of knowing that the sins

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

A new volume of *Clarion* brings readers an editorial from a series that has already started. In this series Dr. Cornelis Van Dam has been discussing various aspects of Evangelicalism. This time the focus is baptism.

We also finish up a series from the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad. For the past few months the CRCA has been profiling federations which whom the Canadian Reformed Churches has connections. It wraps up with an article from Dr. James Visscher on the ICRC.

Our new volume also starts a new column, "Church Snapshot." We hope to give readers the opportunity to get to know each other better. All congregations have been invited to submit a short article so we can see a little about what your church is like.

Issue 1 brings readers a report on the retirement of Rev. Hans Kalkman. There is also a Treasures New and Old meditation, the Clippings on Politics and Religion column, Ray of Sunshine, and two questions for You Asked.

Laura Veenendaal

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## ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

CLARION  
Premier Printing Ltd.  
One Beghin Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB Canada R2J 3X5  
Phone: 204-663-9000, Fax: 204-663-9202

**Subscriptions** subscriptions@clarionmagazine.ca  
**Advertisements** ads@clarionmagazine.ca  
**Website** www.clarionmagazine.ca

## 2016 SUBSCRIPTION RATES

			Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada			\$49.00*	\$ 82.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds			\$69.00	\$102.00
International			\$98.00	\$171.00

\*Applicable GST, HST, PRT taxes are extra.  
GST/HST no. 890967359RT

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## 2016 ADVERTISING RATES

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Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$21.00 per column inch.  
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## PUBLISHER

Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd.  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Agreement No. 40063293; ISSN 0383-0438

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have indeed been forgiven and that life can be renewed (Rom 8:16-17). The day will come when God's children will be presented pure and unblemished before the Lord in the innumerable multitude in life eternal.

Such tremendous promises of course give those baptized the holy obligation to respond to these promises with a life of faith and holiness. God has seen fit to claim those baptized as his own! And while Satan can try to entice God's children away from their Lord to a love for the world, those promises stand and can be appealed to in the struggle of life.

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***God must feel deeply hurt when a Reformed person who has been baptized as an infant were to give such a testimony at his or her rebaptism***

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Considering all this, what now happens when one seeks to be rebaptized in order to join an evangelical church?

### **Baptized again?**

Evangelical churches do not recognize infant baptism. To be a member of an evangelical church therefore means that one needs to be baptized again. Evangelicals believe that baptism is only for believers. This is not the place to argue for or against infant baptism. In the sidebar you will find three helpful books on this issue. The point here is to ask what happens when a Reformed person who has been baptized as an infant seeks rebaptism as an adult.

First, such people forget or deny that God had already claimed them as his very own while they were infants and that the holy name of the triune God was placed on them in the sprinkling with water. To say as an adult that in order to join the church I now need to be baptized again is to deny that God had already made you a member of the covenant community at baptism. Those born of believing parents are included in the covenant, just as Abraham's household and countless others since were included in the Old Testament and New Testament eras (Gen 17:10-13; Acts 16:15; 1 Cor 1:16).

Furthermore, by making church membership a matter of one's own choice in spite of one's prior baptism is a denial of God's grace as seen in that sacrament. Baptism is not a sign or testimony of the faith of the one being baptized. Baptism is a testimony of God's work, God's promises, and God's claim over the one receiving the sacrament.

When one seeks to be baptized again, one is asserting that becoming a church member is based on a human decision and not God's grace. This element of the importance of the human determination to join the church is underlined by the evangelical custom of giving a testimony at one's baptism. In such a testimony the one being baptized typically tells how one found or accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour. God must feel deeply hurt when a Reformed person who has been baptized as an infant were to give such a testimony at his or her rebaptism. It amounts to a denial of the baptism they had already received as an infant, a baptism which signified and sealed that God was the one who had already laid a claim on them and that ultimately it was his work and not theirs that they are believers. Of course infant baptism gives one an enormous obligation and responsibility to seek God and to believe, but this sacrament is a sign of God's grace and not the believer's desire and decision to serve God.

### **The need to maintain the basics of our faith**

Reformed churches of course administer adult baptism in the case of those outside the community of believers who come to faith. But then too, baptism is not a sign of that person's faith but of God's grace and promises. He is the one who has worked faith and brought the new believer into the church (John 6:44, 65).

With the apparent attraction of evangelicalism, it is important to remember the riches of infant baptism. God in his grace has given us tremendous promises in that sacrament. Knowing this sacrament and its comfort and obligations makes us very rich! Why abandon these riches and in the process grieve the God who claimed us in love already from our infancy?



#### **Sidebar**

In discussing infant baptism, it is very helpful to carefully read the Form for Infant Baptism found in our *Book of Praise*. It is a rich document that warrants careful study.

One can also read: P.C. Van Wijk, *You. . . God's Child and You. . . God's Guest* (ILPB, 1999). This book is especially geared to young people. Also very helpful are: H. Westerink, *A Sign of Faithfulness. Covenant and Baptism* (Inheritance Publications, 1997) and Gregg Strawbridge, ed., *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* (P&R, 2003). It contains some fine essays on the topic.





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# We need a King!

## Judges 17 and 18

What's on your list of the worst evils ever? At the end of the book of Judges, this book of downward spiral, the author saves the worst for last. Do the Midianites or Philistines show up again? Do we read about war or oppression? Strangely, it's something entirely different. No foreign enemy looms large. Instead we have a story of a cancer within Israel itself.

Judges 17 begins with a man named Micah who has stolen a large sum of money from no one less than his own mother. She curses the person who did this. When Micah confesses, what do you think she does? Does she discipline him – appropriately, of course – and tell him to give some of the money to the poor? No – she blesses him and tells him to make an image with the silver. “This can't be happening,” you should be thinking.

In short order, Micah has his own image and personal shrine. In the past, images were ways people tried to control divine power. Micah also secures an ephod, a sacred vest with special stones – probably a way to try to divine the future. And then he

manages to snag a corrupt Levite to legitimize it all.

In the end, Micah thinks his happiness is guaranteed. “Now I know the LORD will prosper me” (17:13). Joel Osteen has nothing on this ancient Micah.

Now that would be bad enough. But the story continues. The tribe of Dan comes into contact with this Micah. They decide to make off with Micah's homemade shrine and make it their own. The thief is thefted, to coin a word. And so this rot of false religion spreads to a whole tribe.

Judges 18 is a kind of parody of the conquest of the land. There are spies again (like with Rahab), a city is taken (like Jericho), and a shrine is set up (like the tabernacle in Shiloh). But it's all twisted. Like everything the devil and sinful man likes to do.

In the end we have something truly shocking. It's not the kind of thing you read about in your newspaper or on your homepage. The Word of God points to greater evils than we often see or acknowledge. We discover that the Israelites have become Ca-

naanites. They think they are serving God but their relation to the LORD is no different than the pagans' relation to their gods. It's the same attempt to manipulate divine favour, the same attempt to secure selfish, sinful desires. With as little demand from above as possible.

Micah's name means “Who is like the LORD?” But the Israelites have no sense of what it means to know the true God. No sense of his holiness. They have a counterfeit worship, a counterfeit god. And that means things are dark indeed.

Is there any hope? We hear in these chapters a few times the refrain, “In those days there was no king in Israel” (17:6; 18:1). “Ah – if only there was a king,” we should be thinking! A king who doesn't just defeat enemies. A king who gets rid of this sham, this religious rot. A king who establishes the LORD as holy. A king who makes a multitude of true Micahs.

And that is what we have in “the king once born in Bethlehem, our Saviour and our Lord!”



### For Further Study

1. How do you know whether you are truly serving God – or trying to have God serve you?
2. How does Jesus Christ establish the LORD as holy in your life?
3. Are we practical Canaanites – living for the same things as the world around us? What should we seek? What is true worship?
4. Read Judges 17-18 and sing Hymn 41:1-3 *BoP*.

# The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)



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## A brief history

Together with churches in Australia, Ireland, The Netherlands, and Scotland, the Canadian Reformed Churches are among the founding members of International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). The organizing meeting for the ICRC was held in 1982 in Groningen, The Netherlands. The first meeting of the Conference took place in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1985. Subsequent meetings have been held in Canada 1989 (Langley, BC), The Netherlands 1993 (Zwolle), Korea 1997 (Seoul), the United States 2001 (Philadelphia), South Africa 2005 (Pretoria), New Zealand 2009 (Christchurch), and United Kingdom 2013 (Cardiff). The ninth general meeting of the ICRC is slated for 2017 in Canada (Jordan, Ontario).

## Character

From its inception the ICRC has never sought to be more than a “conference” or “gathering” of Reformed churches. It is a vehicle that binds churches together in a semi-official way. As such it is not to be viewed as some sort of super international synod. It is not the kind of body that can order its member churches around, seeing that all of its decision are advisory in nature. At best it is there for the purposes of sharing, supporting, consulting, educating, and encouraging. It is a great forum in which to network together. It is an organization that gives small, young, isolated churches an opportunity to rub shoulders with their larger, older, and more established cousins.

## Growth

From its rather small beginnings in 1982 of eight churches, the ICRC today has a membership of thirty-two churches. It is expected that the 2017 meeting will see the addition of more members. At present the member churches of the ICRC come from all the major regions of the world: Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America. Currently most



of the member churches are quite equally divided between these regions, with the exception of South or Latin America.

It is anticipated that in the future most of the increase in members will come from Africa, Asia, and South America. These are also the parts of the world that are seeing the most growth when it comes to planting of new Christian churches.

## Reorganization

The 2009 meeting of the ICRC in Christchurch saw the approach of almost twenty-five years of existence and this led to the establishment of a committee to review all aspects of the working of the Conference. This committee's report was received and adopted at the 2013 general meeting in Cardiff, Wales.

The result was that a revamped constitution was proposed and new bylaws were adopted. New structures were put in place. It was decided to refresh and expand the ICRC website. The matter of regional conferences came under review and a decision was taken to hold more of them. The various standing committees received new and expanded mandates. The finances of the ICRC were also reviewed and reorganized. Manpower changes took place as well.

## Since then

Since 2013 the new coordinating committee and executive have been hard at work implementing the changes decided upon. An expanded website is now up and running. You can access it at [www.icrconline.com](http://www.icrconline.com). More material is being added to this website on a regular basis.

With respect to regional conferences, one was held in Cardiff, Wales in 2014 to which many of the European members sent delegates. Representatives were also present from churches considering membership. In October of 2015 a regional conference was held in Seoul, Korea. Both

Africa, Europe and North America plan to host regional conferences in 2016. Discussions are also underway to hold a regional conference in South America.

The purpose of these regional conferences is to give member churches in a certain region an opportunity to gather together and discuss both regional and international ecclesiastical challenges and issues. The regional nature cuts down on the size of the meeting, as well as on the travel time and expenses. It also gives member churches a means to get together more often without having to wait four years when there is a meeting of all the members of the Conference.

### Constitutional changes

At the 2017 meeting of the ICRC in Jordan, Ontario, Canada, the revised Constitution will need to be adopted. Quite a few member churches have already approved the proposed changes. Some, like the Canadian Reformed Churches, hope to do so in 2016.

What are these changes? You can see for yourself if you go to the website and read through the documents. The Name and Basis remain unchanged. Under Purpose, there are some minor changes under items 3 and 4.

When you come to Membership you can see some rewording, as well as a new and expanded section dealing with suspension or termination of membership. Also, there is added that if a member church fails to send a delegate to three consecutive meetings, its membership shall ordinarily be terminated. It may also be noted that whereas the present Constitution gives a list of the documents that a church applying for membership needs to submit, such stipulations are now to be found in the Regulations where they properly belong.

Next, the section dealing with Authority has also been expanded. It is now called Nature and Extent of Authority and reads, "It is understood that the Conference is not a synodical, classical or presbyterial assembly, and therefore all actions and decisions of the Conference, other than those with respect to a church's membership in the Conference (*Constitution, IV*), are advisory in character and may in no way curtail, restrict, or intrude into the exercise of the jurisdiction or authority given to the governing assemblies of the member Churches by Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church."

Finally, under the heading of Amendments to the Constitution one will also find some changes. Again, these represent not so much a change in substance as in wording and terminology.

### EXAMINATION SUSTAINED

Examined by Classis Ontario West on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and declared eligible for call:

**Br. Tim Schouten** and **Br. Steve Van Leeuwen**

### CALL EXTENDED

Called by the Canadian Reformed Church of Coaldale, AB:

**Rev. J. Huijgen**

of the Canadian Reformed Church at Attercliffe, ON.

Called by the Pilgrim Canadian Reformed Church at London, ON:

**Candidate Tim Schouten**

Called by the Flamborough Canadian Reformed Church:

**Rev. D. Wynia**

of the Vineyard Canadian Reformed Church in Lincoln, ON.

### CALL DECLINED

Declined the call to the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott, Australia:

**Rev. A. Witten**

of Vernon, BC.

### CHANGE OF WORSHIP TIME

Effective Jan. 3, 2016 the morning service at **Grace Canadian Reformed Church of Brampton** will begin at 9:30 am.

Due to renovation, the **Attercliffe Canadian Reformed Church** will worship in the Dunnville Canadian Reformed Church building, starting January 10, 2016. The starting times for the services are 11:00 AM and 3:00 PM.

## CHURCH NEWS

It may be added that thus far these proposed constitutional changes have attracted no dissent or disagreement from any of the member churches. Hopefully such will also be the case when Synod Dunnville meets in 2016.

### The next conference

The next general meeting of the Conference will take place, the Lord willing, from July 13-19, 2017 with meetings being held in the Immanuel Reformed Church and the Heritage Christian School, Jordan, Ontario. The United Reformed Churches of North America will be the host church. A prayer service will be held on the evening of July 12, 2017.

It is hoped that the church members of the member churches in the Niagara area: the Canadian Reformed, Free Reformed, Heritage Reformed, Orthodox Presbyterian, and United Reformed Churches will open up their homes and host the more than one hundred delegates and observers that will be coming from the four corners of the globe. It promises to be a truly cross-cultural experience for all and a testimony to the growing catholic character of the Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **C**

# Blessings Christian Church Hamilton, Ontario

Blessings Christian Church, a “daughter” of Cornerstone, Hamilton, was instituted on Sunday January 4, 2015. This took place in a service led by Pastor Bill DeJong, then still the minister of Cornerstone but since May 1 of Blessings itself. The first members (203 in all, of whom about half were communicant ones) came all from Cornerstone. Since then various people from neighbouring churches have joined us, and by the time of writing (November 4, 2015) the membership had increased to 270 (146 communicant and 124 non-communicant). We also are privileged to welcome each Sunday a good many visitors. Most of these are from other Reformed churches, but some people from the wider Hamilton community are also finding us. We meet in the Seventh Day Adventist church on the corner of Concession Street and Upper Wellington, a location that is easy to reach by bus, also from downtown.

As the numbers I gave already suggest, the percentage of non-communicant members (which means primarily children and teen-agers) is perhaps higher than in



most of our sister churches. Indeed, Blessings is a youthful congregation. A study of our general demographics makes this clear. The number of seniors (65 and over) is very small; that of people in their sixties and fifties is a bit larger, but the great majority of the Blessings members are in their forties and younger. The large number of young children no doubt contributes to the fact that, as a guest told me, we come across as a “lively congregation.” It’s not just the children, though, the adults are “lively” as well. Each Sunday before the morning service we have a get-together of members and guests where refreshments are served, and we meet again before the evening service. In the summer, these socials take place outside on the parking lot, and in the winter we meet in the church basement. And a lot of welcoming and introducing and lively talking takes place on these occasions!

The aim of these get-togethers is twofold: to strengthen the relationships among church members and to welcome and get to know our guests. The second goal is not unimportant. A member of the Federation of Canadian Reformed Churches, Blessings calls herself also







missional, and as such promises, as you can read on the website, “to serve God as a faithful church, to serve our neighbours with Christian charity, and to bring the gospel to others in Hamilton.” For newcomers, going to an unknown church can be daunting and intimidating, and these pre-service “socials” serve our members as an important means to welcome guests and put them at ease. Blessings also sings a variety of traditional and contemporary hymns accompanied by piano, guitars, drums, and sometimes flute and violin. This pre-service singing is very much appreciated by the congregation, not least by the younger members.

The missional intention of our church also means that we show love and care for the city, and so attempt to fulfill the biblical command that “we do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of

believers.” Therefore members of Blessings are invited to cooperate with organizations providing Christian charity in Hamilton, such as Anchor, Streetlight Ministries, Micah House, the Neighbour to Neighbour food bank, 541 Eatery, and Christians against Poverty to name a few. Often these activities are organized by the so-called small groups into which our congregation is divided. Pastor Bill further offers an Inquirer’s class three times a year to instruct guests who want to know more about the faith.

All this concern for the city and its inhabitants does not mean that the congregation itself lacks care and instruction. A very important element at Blessings is the small groups which all communicating members are expected to attend weekly. They are also attended by the pastor, the elders, and the deacons. At present we have twelve such groups; each group has approximately twelve people in it. It is here especially that we get to know each other, learn to look after each other, pray with and for each other, and study Scripture together. In this way the small groups (and therefore most of the adult members) are studying the same part of Scripture on a weekly basis. In addition, there are the normal catechism classes, various youth groups, and of course the church services. The latter take place at 10:30 am and 6:30 pm. The evening (or Vesper) services are so-called “learning services,” and the Catechism is preached here. Blessings has set as goal to finish the entire Catechism each year, and it looks as if she will reach that goal for the present year. If you are in the Hamilton area, come join us for worship. If not, check us out online at [www.blessingshamilton.ca](http://www.blessingshamilton.ca).



# Islam and Deception



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Islam teaches that a Muslim can deny his faith and commit acts that are blasphemous and illegal for Muslims if they are at risk of significant persecution or if it promotes the cause of Islam.<sup>1</sup> Simply put it means that a Muslim can lie if that is advantageous to him and/or promotes the cause of Islam. In an interesting article on the Middle East Forum website (Sept 24, 2015), Raymond Ibrahim, an Islam specialist, highlighted this doctrine of *taqiyya*. He noted that according to Sami Mukaram, one of the world's best authority on this issue, this teaching is held by all branches of Islam.

Unfortunately this reality is denied by mainline Western media. To be critical of Islam is not considered politically correct and one is soon accused of being Islamophobic. A case in point is the way the American presidential contender Ben Carson was attacked for suggesting that Muslims lie in order to achieve their goals. But Ibrahim notes that "There's much to be said here. First, considering that the current U.S. president has expunged all reference to Islam in security documents and would have Americans believe that Islamic doctrine is more or less like Christianity, it is certainly refreshing to see a presidential candidate referencing a little known but critically important Muslim doctrine."

Ibrahim gave several examples including this one from Turkey. A group of Muslims, including three women, pretended to be interested in Christianity, attended church, and even participated in baptism ceremonies. Why? In order to collect information about the pastor and his family, their home, as well as the church, in order to attack them. Two had attended the church for over a year. Indeed, the pastor said they were like family to them. Happily this plot was thwarted by police and those involved were arrested. But it illustrates how far fanatic Muslims will go to kill Christians. Tellingly, they have the blessing of the Islamic faith for such deception.<sup>2</sup>

Another example of such deception is from the time Ronald Reagan served as president. In an article on his own website (Oct 7, 2015), Raymond Ibrahim tells how Pakistan's president admitted to deception. "Back in the 1980s, Muhammad Zia ul Haq, the president of Pakistan, explained to Ronald Reagan how it was no problem for the Pakistanis to sign the Geneva agreements and yet continue supplying weapons to the Afghan jihadis ('freedom fighters') combating the Soviet Union. Why wasn't it a problem? According to Zia, 'We'll just lie about it. That's what we've been doing for eight years.' He added, 'Muslims have the right to lie in a good cause'.<sup>3</sup>

This testimony from a Muslim president is more credible than that of an Islamic university professor in California, Abou El Fadl, who claimed that "there is no concept that would encourage a Muslim to lie to pursue a goal. That is a complete invention." Ibrahim wryly noted that it apparently never occurred to the reporter using this testimony to discredit Carson that "El Fadl himself may have been exercising, in Zia's words, his Muslim 'right to lie in a good cause' – in this case, to prevent Americans from ever being suspicious of Muslim individuals and organizations in the U.S."

If such a practice is embedded in Islam, honest discussion in the public square becomes very difficult. Only if Muslims who migrated to the West disown not only by word but also by deed Islamic deception and Shariah law in general will such public discourse for society's common good discussion be possible.

<sup>1</sup> Relevant passages in the Qur'an include: 2:225; 3:28;16:106; in the Hadith, e.g., Bukhari 49:857; 84:64-65.

<sup>2</sup> More on this subject can be found at [http://www.raymondibrahim.com/islam/the threat of islamic betrayal/](http://www.raymondibrahim.com/islam/the%20threat%20of%20islamic%20betrayal/)

<sup>3</sup> *From the Cold War to a New Era: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983 1991*, p. 280.

# Retirement of Pastor Hans Kalkman

On Good Friday, April 3, 2015, the congregation of the Canadian Reformed Church at Calgary gathered together not once, as is custom, but twice. The first was in the morning to hear the glorious gospel of salvation as we remembered that our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified to pay for our sins and to reconcile us to God. Later that evening, together with family, friends, and other guests, the congregation gathered again, this time to bid farewell to Pastor Hans and Gerda Kalkman on the occasion of his retirement from the ministry.

## Farewell evening

The Master of Ceremonies for the evening, Garrett Hoeksema, opened with prayer and the reading of Psalm 1; then presented a brief summary of Pastor Kalkman's road to the ministry and his ministerial career, starting with Hans and Gerda's marriage in 1970 (only eight months later Hans was drafted into the army), their move to Canada in 1982, helping start the Orthodox Reformed Church (now a member of the URCNA) in Edmonton in 1989, Hans' studies at the King's College in Edmonton, their move to Dyer, Indiana in 1994 (to study at Mid-America Reformed Seminary), graduation in 1997, Hans' call to Menno, South Dakota to serve as pastor in the RCUS, their move to Canada (because of an expired visa) in 2004, then to his call to Calgary in 2005, where Hans was installed in January 2006, and where he served until his retirement.

During the evening, letters of congratulations (along with many invitations to preach) from a number of the churches in Classis Alberta were read. Providence church in Edmonton included a reminder of the time that Pastor Kalkman filled in during the sabbatical of Rev. Aasman. Several churches sent delegates who also offered congratulations (as well as invitations to preach). Rev. Pols of the ORC in Edmonton was unable to attend due to illness, but offered congratulations as well as recalling that he participated in Pastor Kalkman's ordination

in Menno. Letters were also received from Bethel United Reformed Church in Calgary as well as the Calgary Free Reformed Church.

The evening featured entertainment, including a Bible Trivia game entitled "Not Quite Jeopardy," featuring categories such as "Shakespeare or Scripture" (contestants had to identify whether quotes were from the King James Version of the Bible or from the works of William Shakespeare), trivial Bible trivia, and Pastor Kalkman trivia. The results were close, but in the end Pastor Kalkman (with considerable help from Gerda) was declared the winner and presented with a quintessential Canadian prize – a gift card to Tim Horton's. The Women's' Bible Study put on a "Pass the Gift" game, the gift being a decorative barrel for Gerda's sunroom.

Other entertainment included the students from Tynedale Christian School performing a selection of pieces including the school theme song "The Servant Song" as well as a piano and organ duet ("It Is Well With My Soul") performed by Karen van Ellenberg and Courtney Boessenkool.







Gifts for Hans and Gerda included a photo album put together by Carolin Helder, a World War 2 coffee table book from the catechism classes and, from Council, on behalf of the congregation, a Garmin GPS unit.

At the end of the evening, Eric Vanderveen, chairman of Consistory and Council, spoke on behalf of the congregation. He reminded us how God uses preachers to gather his people and to fulfill his covenant promises also in Calgary, and, in Calgary, also in the Canadian Reformed Church. He thanked Pastor Kalkman for his preaching, catechism teaching, new believer classes, meetings, visits, and pointed out how each week we could leave with the LORD's blessings. To be sure it was not always easy, but we could always see Pastor Kalkman's desire to serve God and to do his will. It is Christ's church – he has always been gathering, defending, and preserving his church, and that is our confidence as we part ways. He closed with Psalm 92:14, expressing the prayer of the congregation that Pastor and Gerda will continue to bear fruit in their old age.

Finally, there was an opportunity for Pastor Hans and Gerda to say a few words. Hans recalled their welcome evening nine years ago, how at that time they also received a gift of a photo album, and how much change there has been in the congregation during that time. He thanked the congregation for the time he and Gerda could spend in Calgary – a blessed time. He also thanked those with whom he served in Consistory and Council, noting that although it was not always easy, there was

always the recognition that we served as brothers, and this made the meetings much easier. He expressed what a privilege it was to teach the young people – catechism students and pre-confession students – and reflected on the “Servant Song,” which the students of Tyndale also sang at the welcome evening and which has become one of his and Gerda's favourites. He closed by saying that although they will be moving to Edmonton, the congregation in Calgary will be out of sight, but never out of his heart.

The formal part of the evening ended with the singing of “How Great Thou Art,” followed by the official closing by elder Mike De Groot.

### Farewell sermon

The following Sunday, Easter Sunday, Pastor Kalkman preached his farewell sermon, using Ephesians 3:14-21 as the text. He opened by pointing out that he didn't really know how to preach a farewell sermon, since any sermon must be the Word of God. Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3 is Pastor Kalkman's prayer for the congregation, but also our prayer for him. We and all believers at all times and all places are God's family. No matter how far removed from one another we are one family, together serving the Lord and being recipients of his love and grace. Though we are too weak to stand by ourselves, Christ dwells in our hearts, through faith, and from God's love our love flows back to the Father, to our neighbours, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and even to our enemies. We will never understand God's love for us, only that it is infinite. We may, however, discover and experience God's love, and together with the saints we may share God's love for us and in turn share with others how we have experienced this love. It is a love that serves, a love that turns enemies into the bride of Christ.

In this prayer we ask for much, but we cannot ask for too much; Paul ends his prayer with a doxology, assuring us again of God's almighty love and power, able to do all things abundantly, far more than we are able to ask. God's power has brought us from darkness to the light, and continues to work in us, enabling us to pray for one another. To God be the glory forever – he gave us his beloved Son, who revealed him to us.

Pastor and Gerda, we will miss you, and we wish you the Lord's blessings in your retirement.



Note: In the future *Clarion* will not be accepting reports of events such as these that are more than six months old.





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# Q

**In Matthew 24 we read about the signs of the time; and in verse 22 it says, “for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.” Does this mean the number of days, or the length of days?**

**I was listening some time ago to Radio Commentaries and they were of the opinion that it means the length of days. Now it’s hard to imagine that every clock and time keeping device can be changed without anyone noticing it. But then, with God everything is possible, and it does say: “Those days will be shortened.” How are we to read it?**

# A

That with God everything is possible, also in regard to the “length of days,” could indeed be illustrated with the events described in Joshua 10: 12-15: “The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day.” The author adds however,

“There has never been a day like it before or since. . . .” The expression the Lord Jesus uses in Matthew 24:22 (Mark 13:20) is exceptional indeed. The Greek word for “shortening” is only here used in connection with time. But then, in various places indications of time are expressed in a symbolic or figurative way more often (e.g. Daniel 12:7, “It will be for a time, times and half a time;” and verse 11f, “From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished . . . will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1, 335 days.” Also in the NT, in the book of Revelation we find such indications of time that need not be taken literally but speak about periods of time).

In Matthew 24 the Lord Jesus is speaking about a time of tribulation, of persecutions, that will be very severe. Humanly speaking, surviving such a time would seem impossible! Then the Lord Jesus is saying that if that time of trials and tribulations wouldn’t be shortened, no one would escape the destruction. This truth and real-

ity applied to the immediate situation of the destruction of Jerusalem, the genocide of the Jews, as well as to the persecutions of the Christians by the Romans; it also applies to any and every time of tribulation. For instance, as Dr. Jacob Van Bruggen writes in his NT Commentary on Matthew, “If God had not shortened the days of Hitler, there wouldn’t have been a Jew left in the end.” In a prophetic perspective to Jesus’ words, however, we could say this about every persecution of the people of God: “If it were not for the fact that the Lord shortened the days, even the elect would have succumbed!”

From Daniel’s prophecies concerning the end times, as well as those revealed to John at Patmos, we may take comfort of the beatitude: blessed is everyone who has not succumbed but who continued to *await his Saviour!* God’s elect may have sighed and groaned and cried out in despair, “I can’t keep this up, I can’t put up with this any longer, this suffering is too heavy, too hard,” yet *blessed* they are when they persevered in the midst of tribulation, injustice, and suffering! Only by faith they’re able to endure, comforted also by the knowledge that their times, their days, and hours are in God’s hand. Thus they do have to endure and they will persevere in the assurance that the day of their deliverance will come. Unexpectedly God will end their plight and grant relief, by *shortening* the days of their suffering!

Q

**The LORD gave Solomon a conditional promise (1 Kings 9:1-9) because if he did not abide by the LORD's commands, disaster would follow: his son would not be on the throne, Israel would be cut off from the land, and the temple he had just built would be burned. After his death ten tribes were taken away (1 Kings 11:9-11). My question is: Was the end of nationhood, Israel's captivity, and the burning of the temple (2 Kings 24, 25) as well as Luke's exclusion of his name from Jesus' genealogy also fulfilment of the promised consequences of Solomon's disobedience?**

A

Solomon's reign, though glorious and glamorous at first when he projected himself as the prince of peace, did indeed end up in his fall and failure. As Solomon's heart was divided, so was his reign, his people – and his country also would become divided. The beginning of it could be seen during his life time already. The preparations for the demise of his kingship in the next generation were made already when Ahijah gave ten strips of his garment to Jeroboam as sign that Solomon's kingdom would be decimated. Thus Solomon's kingdom would be disgraced: his kingdom will be given to a "servant" of Solomon; one of his subjects, Jeroboam, gets the throne. Solomon, the glorious king of peace, was humiliated. The kingdom, however, would continue for the sake of David, the servant of the LORD. David's line would continue and David's name maintained (Luke 1:32b, 33b); a shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse (Isa 11:1).

Already right after the pronouncement of the LORD's judgment, however (probably by a prophet, possibly Ahijah as well), we hear how the LORD tempers his wrath and moderates his punishment by these three declarations: the division won't happen in *his* life time, his house won't lose *all* the tribes (Judah remains), and his kingdom won't be without Jerusalem (though it was situated in Benjamin). The kingship will be continued, and the temple service in Jerusalem for the sake of the atoning sacrifice to the LORD, will be prolonged! This modification of the punishment (for the sake of David, no doubt!) shows that the questioner's derived conclusions aren't correct. It's true that Israel went into captivity, and that the temple was burned, and that Luke doesn't include Solomon's name in his genealogy of Joseph, but that's *not* for reasons of Solomon's sin. Solomon's sin became Israel's sin, namely the sin of idolatry and adultery, so that Israel was punished for *its* unfaithfulness to the covenant and *its* rebellion against the LORD.

As far as the genealogies are concerned, we must observe first of all that Matthew does include Solomon in

his genealogy (1:7). As far as Luke's genealogy is concerned, however, we note that he had different motives to submit the genealogy the way he does. In the genealogy of Jesus' father Joseph we see that Joseph was a descendant of David alright, but Luke shows that Joseph was *not* a descendant of the governing line of Solomon to Jeconiah (just one familiar name is mentioned, Zerubbabel, Sealthiel, who was a royal without a crown), but of the unknown line of Nathan to Neri. Joseph indeed is a son of David, but *not* in a glorious way! Luke lets the line of Joseph via David return to Judah, Abraham, Noah, to *Adam*, showing that Joseph was "just" a man, descendant of Adam created by God. Thus Jesus, too, is presented as "just" a man like we are, yet the second Adam, or the last Adam (as Paul calls him). Hence, we see that Luke's motivation for the genealogy he composed is not to imply a punishment to Solomon but to present Jesus as a true man, who became our Saviour!

What the above does show us clearly is this: the necessity for and the coming of the true Prince of Peace: A king greater than Solomon is here! The faults and failures of Israel's kings prophesy of the true King whom they foreshadowed (weakly). Jesus was true and righteous man, and his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom that will never be rent from him! Solomon was wise, but Christ is Wisdom; Solomon built a temple, but also altars to false gods, and his temple was burned with fire, but Christ is the true temple as well as priest and sacrifice! Christ is the Prince of Peace and of his dominion there shall be no end. Christ is true and righteous man and true God who makes those who profess him for their king, wise and peaceful, prosperous, and righteous by faith in him!

*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. den Hollander  
denhollanderw@gmail.com

23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0



So we continue our journey learning about the Harbour Home in Hamilton. These next two residents both live a very busy and fruitful life. You can see how the Lord has blessed them with a wonderful home to live in and many opportunities. May the Lord continue to bless them both in their roles at home and in the community.

## Jack Dieleman



"I keep everyone in their place" says Jack. Jack is continually cracking jokes, and making everyone laugh. Jack is very easy to talk to but also has a very sarcastic sense of humor, liking to poke fun of everyone.

He has Spina Bifida from the waist down. He is still very mobile, and independent.

Jack loves kids, has been working with them since he was fourteen. In the past Jack worked at a sports camp for Toronto parks, helping others for fifteen years. Then for four years after that he worked at a special needs camp in Burlington. Both of these places he was working with kids and helping them grow and learn new skills.

He lived in the Lighthouse Home for six years before he moved to Harbour Home. Jack is thankful to the Lord for the new home that he has been given, the staff, fellow residents and good health.

He is having challenges getting a job that he wants. He was hoping that when he moved to Hamilton he could find a good job. He is continuing to search for a job near to his new home. Even though he has no paying job, he still keeps very busy. He volunteers at Timothy school in the kindergarten class every Tuesday and Thursday. Every Friday he volunteers at Calvin Christian School, in grade three. He reads to the children, supervises the children one on one, and helps the teachers with odd jobs. Thursday nights he also helps with cadets.

Jack takes pride in his very own fish tank, he enjoys maintaining it and showing it off.

## Lisa Alkema

Lisa loves her new home in Hamilton; she has moved from many different homes in lifetime, but feels quite settled in Hamilton. Lisa keeps very busy day to day from work, to helping at home, to fun activities. She works at Tim Hor-

ton's in Hamilton every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Every Monday she volunteers at Deer Crossing, helping with bingo, putting the balls in the right places. She is a big helper around the house, helping with groceries, doing lots of baking, making homemade bread, cleaning windows, putting dishes away, and wiping the tables. Every Thursday Lisa, Jason, and Ben deliver seventy-eight papers behind their house. Tuesday mornings she goes to women society. Thursday nights is spa night, Friday and Saturday night is movie night. Once a month she enjoys a visit her parents in Dundas. She also loves going on her iPod in the evenings, and does face-time with her family.



So as you can see, Lisa never has a dull moment, always keeping busy!

If you ever ask Lisa what she would like to do for fun, she would immediately answer, "Let's go shopping!" Like most other women Lisa loves to shop, and she also likes to go for hikes.

When I asked Lisa what she was thankful for, she said "Lots, God has given me this house to live in and nice people to work here. I am also thankful that I am able to get around more because I live in Hamilton."

Lisa is wonderful to talk to, always has a smile on her face, and has a willing hand to help wherever she is needed.

## February Birthdays

### 6 **TREVOR BUYS will be 36**

c/o Anchor Home  
361 Thirty Road  
Beamsville, Ontario LOR 1B2

### 12 **CONNIE VANAMERONGEN will be 51**

c/o Anchor Home  
361 Thirty Road  
Beamsville, Ontario LOR 1B2  
Email: conniev1965@gmail.com

### 24 **FRED LUDWIG will be 64**

c/o Beacon Home  
653 Broad Street West  
Dunnville, Ontario NIA IT8