

Clarion



Calling a Minister

SEEING WITH OUR EARS

CLARION KIDS

YOU ASKED



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Calling a Minister

True calling work entails careful scrutiny

From time to time church members get to hear from the pulpit, “Your minister has decided to accept the call extended to him by the church at. . . .” Often these words are greeted with a sigh and followed with the comment, “Here we go again. We will need to call another minister.”

Only how does a church go about doing that? How does a church orchestrate such a procedure? Most members would have difficulty explaining all of the necessary steps that need to be taken. Part of the reason may be that they have not had to do it too often in recent years. Part of the reason may also be that there is a lot of oral tradition surrounding the calling of a minister. True, some of the rules and information are written down in the Church Order, but there are a lot of other things that are not written down. Hence a refresher may be in order.

Appointing a calling committee

The first thing that a church council should do after its minister accepts a call is to appoint a calling committee. Is this required? No, it is possible for a council to act as a calling committee. There are, however, several problems with doing so. The first is that most church councils already have enough to do and should be careful not to add to an already heavy pastoral workload. The second problem is that this may create a certain resentment in the congregation as this is an area in which church members are often craving involvement. They want a say about who will be their next pastor and for Council to keep this activity to itself may create the impression that council is trying to control everything.

As a result, it would normally be wise for a church council to appoint a calling committee. The members of such a committee should, as much as possible, be a cross section of the congregation: young, old, blue collar, white collar. Make it representative in terms of occupation, sex, age, and income.

Also, do not wait too long in doing so. Over the years I have often asked myself, “Why are some churches so slow? They could have appointed a calling committee months ago and gotten the ball rolling, but they dragged their heels. And now, look, the minister or candidate that many of them wanted has accepted a call elsewhere.” If your pastor announces that he is leaving, the next council meeting would do well to set up a calling committee and ask it to go to work. In short, there is no reason to wait until well after the farewell evening to appoint a committee. The acceptance of a call should not be treated as if it is akin to a funeral which often comes with a respectable waiting or mourning period before life can return to normal.

A calling committee at work

Once a calling committee has been appointed, it should get to work. This means that an executive should be decided upon and different tasks should be assigned. Thereafter, it is necessary for such a committee to review the stipulations of the Church Order as found in Articles 4-21. Seeing that they are busy with the calling of a Reformed minister, they need to know how to do this in a Reformed manner. In addition, it is good for the members to be aware of the broader picture of ministry.

Next, the committee should go through the most recent *Yearbook* of the churches and make a master list of all the ministers and candidates who are eligible for call. Although there is no written rule, it is generally assumed that a man who has been less than three years in a certain church is off limits. It also needs to be kept in mind that if you have a called a certain man and received a decline from him, you cannot call him again without the approval of Classis.

After the master list has been compiled, the committee needs to whittle it down. In doing so a lot of factors

need to be considered. They may be placed under the headings of person, preaching, teaching, and pastoring.

With respect to his *person*, the committee needs to ask if he meets the qualification of a good minister as mentioned by Paul to Timothy and Titus. Love and commitment to the Lord, knowledge of Scripture and confession, prayer life, humility, and listening skills are necessary elements.

With respect to the *preaching*, the committee needs to be looking for someone who does it well. Do his sermons give evidence of a

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Issue 10 begins with Dr. James Visscher's editorial, "Calling a Minister." This is a helpful article for any congregation that is vacant. We also have an article from Mr. Apko Nap entitled, "Seeing with Our Ears: The Importance of Listening."

There are quite a few regular columns featured in this issue. Treasures New and Old, Education Matters, You Asked, and *Clarion Kids*. Other articles include a report on Taber's twenty-fifth anniversary, a canticle, a booklet notice, letters to the editor, and a press release.

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deep respect for the Word, real study, serious reflection, and pointed application? Are they clear, logical, interesting, and up to date?

With respect to *teaching*, the committee needs to inquire whether or not the man in mind is someone who can teach both young and old. Is his catechism teaching well received? Do his lessons convey real Bible truth? Is he sensitive to the views, questions, and needs of his students?

With respect to *pastoring*, the committee should be certain that he will be sensitive to the needs and burdens in the congregation. Will he visit faithfully? Will he open the Word and pray with the sick and the troubled? Will he go after the wayward? Will he be there for the lonely, the widows, the elderly, and the handicapped?

Do your calling work prayerfully

All in all, the calling committee has a lot of work to do. But it needs to be done. In the past when I was still a church visitor I would occasionally come across churches who were disappointed with their ministers and then, after asking a few questions, it became apparent that when they called him the necessary homework had not been done. The calling committee did not ask the right questions or contact the right persons. They relied on second hand information or on hearsay. They did not listen to enough sermons or ask a sufficient amount of pertinent questions. For its part, the church council failed to interact fully with the recommendation of the calling committee. True calling work entails careful scrutiny.

A calling committee makes a recommendation

Once all of the hard work has been done, and the members of the calling committee receive the information they need, they should be able to come to some decisions about who to call. They may even be able to come up with a short list in which they identify preference 1, 2, and 3 in that order.

Sometimes the question is asked: “Should a calling committee not present two names to the church council and then ask council to present both names to the congregation?” Generally, this is not done for the simple reason that in this way a church limits its options. If two are presented and one is chosen, what happens when the chosen one declines? Do you then go to the other and say, “By the way, even though you are our second choice, we still want to call you.” Not wise!

No, let the calling committee come with one recommendation to the church council. It will then have to decide whether it supports the recommendation and is willing to present it to the congregation.

The council proposes

Should the church council be in favour of the recommendation of the calling committee, it will need to decide on how it will involve the congregation. For many years and still in a number of churches, it has been a requirement that the man proposed to the congregation needs to win a certain percentage of votes to be called. It may be two-thirds or it may be three quarters. Failure to achieve either sixty-seven percent or seventy-five percent defeats the proposal and thus sinks the call.

But is this the best way? Over the years I heard of a number of calls that did not proceed because someone stood up at a congregational meeting and said some negative things about the proposed man. The result was that he did not make it. Only that is not the end of the story because in several of those cases it turned out that the negative information passed on at the meeting was not true at all. A proposal was sunk on the basis of misinformation.

The result is that more and more church councils are doing away with the vote. A name is presented to the congregation. The reasons for calling him are given. The congregation is asked to respond and ask questions. Answers are given. The church council listens very carefully. It takes what it has heard from the congregation, weighs the remarks at its next meeting, occasionally investigates further if needed, and then decides on whether or not to proceed.

Should Council decide to proceed, it will also need to deal with page three. What is page three? It is a reference to the letter of call. This letter usually consists of pages one and two in which a description is given of the office of the minister, what is expected of him and of the congregation. Thereafter comes page three and the particulars relating to stipend, book and car allowances, housing, benefits, medical, retirement, holidays, and pulpit supply.

The counsellor

There is one more aspect to calling that is often overlooked. It has to do with the role of the counsellor. At the end of Article 4 of the Church Order it states, “When a vacant church extends a call, the advice of the counsellor shall be sought.” Now, that sounds somewhat weighty but the fact is that often it does not function very well.

The point here is that a classis appoints a counsellor for each and every vacant church in its region. This counsellor

is supposed to advise a vacant church. This means that the church can ask him for suggestions as to how to go about calling a new minister, whom to call, request input as to what should be in the letter of call, obtain his signature on the letter of call and thus make it official. You might say that in this way Classis tries to see to it that everything is done in a proper and orderly fashion.

The reality, however, is somewhat different. In many cases a vacant church hardly consults its counsellor at all. They just go to him for his signature. Thus he often acts as little more than a rubber stamp. Pity! It would be better if a vacant church requests a counsellor because

it realizes that it will need his wisdom and experience for the calling process to go smoothly. So involve your counsellor more!

In conclusion

This editorial comes at a time when a considerable number of men are or soon will be available for call. What a blessing this represents in the life of the churches! At the same time it also represents a challenge to all of you vacant churches out there. Do your calling work prayerfully! And do it well to the honour of the Lord and the blessing of your local church!



BOOKLET NOTICE

How Should Christians Approach Origins?

Professors John Byl and Tom Goss have teamed up to produce a very helpful booklet of some forty-two pages with the title, *How Should Christians Approach Origins?* Since our very identity as human beings is at stake, the debate continues unabated about whether we are descendants of apes as mainstream science claims. Science is held in awe. It has given us modern conveniences, such as cell phones and modern medicine to keep illnesses at bay. So science can be trusted, can it not?

The authors note that there are two types of science. Operational science deals with the present reality and tests and verifies ideas that lead to the production of modern inventions. Historical science attempts to reconstruct the past on the basis of certain theories which are derived from current observations. While operational science works with verifiable data, historical science by its very nature has obvious limitations since it cannot verify the accuracy of its historical reconstruction of the past. We do, however, have an accurate record of what happened in the past with respect our origin – namely, the Bible, God's Word. God was there at the beginning. He is the Creator and his Word can be trusted.



This booklet draws out the implications of these notions in a way that is understandable for the average reader. It discusses the place of miracles, the relationship of science to Christianity, and the untenability of evolution as an explanation of our origin.

If the theory of evolution is accepted, then the historicity of the biblical Adam must be denied. Some, like Tim Keller, try to accommodate evolution by affirming that Adam and Eve were historical individuals but had animal ancestors and were part of a larger population. However, to question the plain sense of the opening chapters of Scripture has enormous negative implications and can ultimately lead to an undermining and denial of the Christian faith.

There is far more in this compact but informative publication than can be mentioned here, including the evaluation of the scientific evidence, the similarity of humans and chimpanzees, chronological issues, and the clash of worldviews. The booklet concludes with a list of resources for further study. It was published by Word Alive Press in 2015 and is available both in hard copy as well as in Kindle. Highly recommended!



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The Heavenly Exchange Rate

"I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others."

(Mark 12:43)

It's not easy to get a campsite in BC's Okanagan Valley in the summer. You'll want to book now. Particularly this year. More Canadians can be expected to vacation in Canada and more Americans travel north. Why? It's a nice place to be sure. But the exchange rate also has something to do with it. People know their loonies aren't worth as much south of the border. In this passage in Mark, Jews from all over the world travelled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. While in the temple Jesus gives his disciples a lesson in the exchange rate of heaven. He sits down opposite the place where the crowd is putting their money into the temple treasury. They see some people put in large amounts, and then a poor widow walks up. Clunk, clunk. She has put in two copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.

The Lord Jesus knew things about people without being told. This woman had put in all the money she

had that day. Literally two *lepta*. Lepta means "thin."

Jesus calls his disciples and says "this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others." Why is her money worth so much?

Look closely. Notice that she did have *two* thin coins. She could have kept one in her pocket and used it to buy a crust for the day. But she gave them both. Why? She did this because she wanted to. Every Jewish male had to pay half shekel for the temple. But not her. So she did this only because she wanted to. It was a free will offering. During the Passover believing Israelites remembered how God saved them from slavery in Egypt. This was her way of saying, "I love you. I belong to you. Thank you for your grace." Others gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, the text says literally, she put down her "bios," her life (v. 44).

In a few short days Jesus would literally lay down his life. He would

give the greatest gift that anyone could ever give, not his livelihood but his life. Jesus was the true Passover lamb. And that is why God's people love him. He has rescued us from slavery to sin and Satan. He has paid for us, not with silver or gold but with his precious blood. At Passover this widow remembered how God rescued her from slavery in Egypt. We remember how Christ let his body be broken and blood poured out for us.

As our hearts are captured by that truth, then and only then will we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (v. 30).

That is the basis of heaven's exchange rate: love.

It does not matter whether you are financially comfortable, or whether you are in debt right now. The Lord does not look at you the way other people do. He looks at your heart. Do you love me, with all your heart with all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength?



For Further Study

1. Do you give generously of your first fruits to the Lord even when money is tight?
2. It may be easier to give a lot when you are financially comfortable but how do you know that this gift represents your love for the Lord?
3. Someone has said about this passage: "It's not what you give but what you keep that the Master is counting." Is that true?

Seeing with Our Ears: The Importance of Listening

“The Message in the Bottle”

The following is a version of a parable written by Walker Percy:

A man finds himself castaway on the shore of a remote island. The castaway is aware that his real home lies somewhere across the sea. But he does not know where. He does not recall how he came to be left on the island. The islanders are of little help in this regard, for they know no other place than the island. The castaway is welcomed into island life and soon he makes the very best of the situation. He gets a job, builds a house, marries a wife, and raises a family. He enjoys the local art, cinema, music, and literature. He becomes a useful member of the community.

The castaway is also an enthusiastic beachcomber. He has noted that glass bottles occasionally wash ashore and that some of these bottles have messages in them. He takes an interest in these bottles because he hopes that one of them someday will contain some clue as to where he came from. The contents of such a bottle might tell him who he is. But he finds that most of the messages are bits of scientific information, or historical reports related to island life. Or, the bottles contain other scraps of information that have nothing to do with his quest for identity.

As much as the castaway learns about life on the island, and as settled as his life is, the critical question about his identity remains. “Where do I come from?” If he cannot somehow answer this question, he will never succeed in knowing himself. The castaway must be extremely careful with the various bits of knowledge he happens to find across the island. He must not make the mistake of confusing scientific knowledge, or information that only relates to the particular knowledge of the islanders, with knowledge that really helps him in his search for identity. He must not forget that the only knowledge appropriate for his quest must somehow come from “across the sea.” He must also not become complacent to the point where he feels so at home on the island that he stops finding out where he comes from. If he becomes complacent, he will have lost himself.

Walker Percy comments:

Then what should he do? He should be what he is and not pretend to be somebody else. He should be a castaway and not pretend to be at home on the island. To be a castaway is to be in a grave predicament and this is not a happy state of affairs. But it is very much happier than being a castaway and pretending one is not. This is despair. The worst of all despairs is to imagine one is at home when one is really homeless.

Catalogue speech

This Christian parable is retold in a book entitled, *Dialogue, Catalogue & Monologue*. The book is written by Dr. Craig Gay, an emeritus professor from Regent College. I used this book heavily and borrowed much from it for this article. It is a book about words. Dull? Boring? Not at all! Words are of the essence; the quality of the words we hear and speak all but determine the quality of our life. Could this be an exaggeration? In Matthew 12:36, 37 Jesus said, “I tell you that you will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word you have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Dr. Gay leads us on a discovery trail to what he calls the *catalogue* use of language. He used Walker Percy’s parable *The Message in the Bottle* to introduce catalogue speech and what its limitations are. Catalogues are typically informative lists of information, like dictionaries and encyclopedias, as well as listings of goods and services. The aim is to present all possible knowledge and information.

But what does catalogue speech look like, or rather, sound like? It is the language encyclopedias offer from cover to cover: information, information, and more information. Information speech is also the language used in schools, particularly in colleges and in universities. It is overwhelmingly present in the mass-media and on the Internet. It is universal. Catalogue speech offers so-called objectivity and is often very useful, interesting, and informative. Catalogue language has been extremely

practical and has given rise to any number of remarkable technical accomplishments. It also allows us to work more efficiently and more effectively. At this time, catalogue speech, by providing ever more information technology, ushers us into a new era of supposed unparalleled comfort and convenience.

So far, I have only written about what catalogue speech is and how it functions, but not about matters always absent on its radar. Catalogue language does not provide answers for our deeper questions, such as: where do we come from, who are we, and what is our destination?

Finding the rationale for the absence of answers to existential questions in catalogue speech requires some further digging. Here we enter the very complex world of speech/language development.

In doing so, we would do well not to underestimate Satan's primary role as master language manipulator who, from the beginning, has been twisting words and asked, "Did God *really* say. . . ?" And still today Satan keeps trying very hard to rule over the domain of catalogue language. It pleases him when people never ask themselves, "Who am I?" or "What is my destination?" He is delighted when people exclusively think about their comfort and convenience. He is content when people do not realize that they are castaways, indeed. He watches with great pleasure when people think that the *island* provides all they will ever need. The Father of Lies gets ultimate satisfaction when he has conned people into thinking that they are at home so that they never even question that they may actually be homeless.

Monologue speech

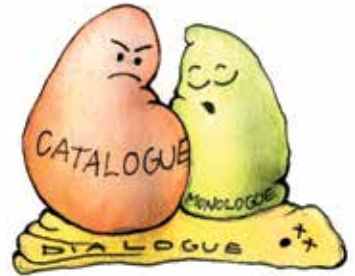
In monologue speech there is only one speaker, one active voice. In a long speech, a speaker monopolizes the conversation. Monologue speech is used in order to control. It also destroys conversation.

In his book, Dr. Gay also explains how contemporary culture is not only full of catalogue speech; monologue language can be heard everywhere, too. In commerce, for instance, words and speech are crafted not to communicate but rather to influence consumers. Advertising, of course, wants our business, our money. Of the thousands of words that reach our ears and eyes, a growing percentage is commercial. We are flooded not simply by catalogue speech, but also by the manipulative language of monologue.

And to make things worse: manipulative monologue speech and narcissism live comfortably together in one and the same house.

Dialogue speech

To be in Dialogue's position as a beleaguered and downtrodden doormat, experiencing the weight of those two bullies on top of you, has to feel very unpleasant. Hardly any place to stand up for yourself; no room for being *yourself*.



What could be done to liberate Dialogue from its trampled position? Does it need help to do so? What kind of help is needed? We asked a professor. He agreed that something had to be done to restore Dialogue to health. He suggested that Dialogue should:

- be *wrenched* from under the weight of these two oppressing beings;
- receive a place to *stand*;
- have its own free position on the mat in order to start *pulling*.

How do you start wrenching out from under such a load? Can catalogue speech be pushed off the mat? Or are these two bullies simply too much for tiny, trampled Dialogue? Is that task too overwhelming for petite, stepped-on Dialogue? How much pushing should be done? Which attempts would work? Is Dialogue perhaps not brave enough for the fight? Should the experts of dialogue language concede defeat and pack it in?

How do you find a place to stand on that almost totally occupied mat? Could the exploding of a self-made bomb quickly help to create some extra standing room on that mat? A bomb would probably not help that much; it would only cause some local damage, because catalogue language is so. . . global.

Could you perhaps bore a deep hole and drill a tunnel to the Chinese capital, in an attempt to escape Monologue's presence? Even if you would drill a tunnel all the way to Beijing, you would still be confronted with the worldwide presence of monologue language after you had crawled out of a hole on Tiananmen Square. Again, monologue is so. . . universal.

Besides our modern, default mode of using violence first, we need to consider another factor as well. We needed to exaggerate the size and influence of both bullies to some extent, as we wished to expose their existential emptiness. Catalogue speech will never reach below the surface of things and give no deeper satisfaction. Let's be honest about it. It has now become "virtually"

impossible to live our modern lives without catalogue and monologue speech. Modern life brought convenience to our fingertips so that we can consume, pay bills, buy and sell from the comfort of our couch. Our main goal here is to restore dialogue to health as much as possible. The bullies might lose some of their universal power as the richness of real communication is rediscovered, practiced, and taught.

Attentive listening in an inattentive culture

“The Importance of Listening” is the subtitle of “Seeing with Our Ears.” We took the reader on a perhaps slightly uncommon journey to find an answer as to why attentive listening is under siege. First, we listened to a modern parable which clearly showed where, in general, mankind is “at” today. Via this parable we found a major culprit for the decline in listening competency: catalogue speech. In our next step we informed the reader about what catalogue language is and what its limitations are. Monologue speech, especially in advertising, was presented as another threat to dialogue. The two bullies, Catalogue and Monologue, trampled Dialogue as much as they could. The word “dialogue” means “conversation.” In a conversation we listen. We are created to listen to God and to each other. So, listening is of extreme importance. If we step on Dialogue, we trample on listening.

As attentive listening is under threat in our inattentive culture, we begin to ask important questions. Is our listening to God and to each other perhaps also being threatened? If that is the case, what should we do?

In the remainder of this article we will present an example of attentive listening, show what listening does allow, and ask the question whether we are indeed living in the midst of a listening crisis. In the final part of this article we will clarify its title.

Stethoscope

Since this is an abridged version of a more complete article, we will only present a few essential aspects. Attentive listening is key to genuine dialogue. An instructor in a management course wanted to give his students a very clear idea about what attentive listening really is. He invited them to bring an object to the next session that would symbolize attentive listening. The next time, the instructor entered the meeting room with a stethoscope around his neck. For him the stethoscope stood for attentive listening. Using a stethoscope, a doctor listens very attentively e.g. to the heartbeat of an unborn child.

Oncologists

What does listening allow? Dr. Susan Phillips reported the following from a Canadian study about oncologists and the way they grieve about the death of their patients. Many of these oncologists were not given an opportunity to deal with their grief. Most participants in the study said that this was the first time that they had talked about their grief. The study concluded that many oncologists went through a variety of difficulties: feelings of failure, self-doubt, irritability and sleeplessness. When an opportunity was created to discuss their grief about the deaths of their patients, the average symptoms of their difficulties decreased. They became healthier professionals as well as persons through the listening opportunities they received.

Listening crisis?

In a recent publication of the *International Listening Association*, the question was asked whether we live in the midst of a crisis in listening. The following example was presented: a couple is sharing a meal in a restaurant, but not their thoughts. While they ate, they only texted and hardly spoke a word to each other.

The newest book of Sherry Turkle, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*, was recently reviewed in the *Guardian Weekly*. The commentator called it a disturbing study.

In a recent draft report about mission in Central and Eastern Europe, an instructor sighed about his theological students, “They are image-driven instead of logos-driven.”

Seeing with our ears

Biblical theology does not place an emphasis on sight and seeing, but the prophets and apostles are more concerned about our need to listen to God. “In the beginning was the Word. . .” (John 1:1). Only as we become obedient to the voice of God will we begin to see things as they really are. Therefore it is wise to listen to Martin Luther’s advice, “We should learn to see with our ears.”

This abridged version of “Seeing with Our Ears” was written in order to stimulate a discussion in our communities about the importance of listening. The original version, including suggestions for discussions at home, at school and at church, is available at nappini7@hotmail.com. **C**



Taber Celebrates Twenty-Five Years

Did you know that Taber is the corn capital of Canada? This area's industry is largely reliant on the agriculture sector. Because of this, the weather is often a topic of conversation in Taber. It is often said here, if you don't like the weather in southern Alberta, just wait five minutes; it will probably change.

On February 5, 2016 this was no different. The weather was also the topic of the evening, as the gusty Chinook winds were blowing in some unseasonably warm temperatures to Taber. But there was more, there was an air of excitement in the Taber congregation. This was the night when we could get together to celebrate the Lord's goodness and faithfulness to the Taber congregation for the past twenty-five years.

Marion Bareman emceed the evening, wherein the fellowship committee had chosen Psalm 100:5 as a theme text. "For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations." As the oldest male member of our congregation, John Tams led us in opening prayer. John Bareman then gave us an historical overview of the past twenty-five years.



What began as a seed in November 1983 to start a congregation, did not actually take root until January 20, 1991 when the congregation at Taber was instituted. Rev. Wielenga preached at the institution: "Jesus Christ reveals to his disciples how he will gather his church for his kingdom" (Matt 16:17-20). The seed that was planted twenty-five years ago took root. Despite the changes in the weather or the work that we do, we can see that God is unchanging. He is good, he has been, and still is faithful to his promises to us in Taber, also these past twenty-five years. He is the one planting the seeds, making them grow and bringing in his harvest.

The church began worship in Parkside Manor, in Taber. One of the members led the singing by plucking single notes as accompanist. From there, we moved to the Elks Hall, where our first pastor, Rev. van Popta preached. This memorable hall had a pulpit located under a giant elk head, covered by a sheet each Sunday so as not to cause a distraction. (It could be argued that the sheet was just as much a distraction – we all knew what was under





it.) With the blessing of the Lord, and the help of many volunteers, we took up residence in our existing building in June of 1996. Shortly after, the van Poptas said good-bye and headed out east. Our pulpit was not empty long, when the Lodders moved in. We could witness the laying on of hands when candidate Lodder was installed as minister. He served the congregation until 2005. The church was vacant for three years until the Jagts came from Ottawa in 2008, making quite an adjustment moving from city life to rural Alberta. Rev. Jagt accepted a call to Fergus in June 2014. About a week later, we heard the news that Candidate Vandergaag had accepted the call to Taber. The Vandergaag family packed up and headed out west in November 2014. Once again, we could witness the Lord's goodness in raising up men to preach the good news, when Pastor Vandergaag received the laying on of hands and was installed into the ministry here in Taber.

Although none of our former pastors could be in Taber to celebrate with us, they sent along their well wishes. Representatives passed on greetings on behalf of the church in Coaldale and Trinity URC in Lethbridge. Mike Tams read letters of congratulations from our sister churches in Classis Alberta.

Many different groups in the congregation had been busy preparing for the evening. The children of the congregation entertained us with a song and an acrostic poem, "THANKFULNESS." The youth group pitted the VanderDutchies against the Saints in a church trivia game. Do you admit that you know there are thirty-six lights in the sanctuary? Does that mean you haven't been paying attention in church? Jessica VanBostelen shared how we have reached out to many children in the community and planted the seed of the gospel through the Son Shine Bible Time story hour. We could then sit back and enjoy a couple of pieces by the choir. The ladies from Tuesday morning Bible Study were undecided on what to wear to the celebration. They came out modeling some outrageous outfits, outlining the latest spring fashion, which can only be found in Taber. As the evening came to a close, we joined in song with *Great is Thy Faithfulness*. Rev. Vandergaag was busy eyeing the table spread with appetizers, so he kept his closing remarks short, thankful to learn about some of the history here.

The Lord truly has been good to us, and we are thankful that we can share the wonders of his grace also to the next generation. May he continue to gather his harvest here in Taber.





George van Popta
Minister of the
Jubilee Canadian
Reformed Church
at Ottawa, Ontario
gvanpopta@gmail.com

On Mountains and in Valleys

1. On moun - tains and in val - leys, on earth and in the air, high
 2. The eyes of faith - ful Fa - ther see eve - ry - thing in love. Who -
 3. All crea - tures of this pla - net, all fish of lake and sea, the
 4. I glad - ly boast of weak - ness for God is al - ways near. When

5
 in the heavn - ly man - sions, our God is eve - ry - where. No
 ev - er trusts his pow - er God will bless from a - bove. He
 birds high in the heav - ens, the beast of field and tree, God
 I am weak and wea - ry I'll not lose heart nor fear. When

9
 mat - ter where we jour - ney, where ev - er we may go, our
 hears the lit - tle spar - row and clothes the gras - sy field. His
 feeds and guides and nur - tures by day and through the night. All
 hands of good com - pan - ions prove weak and pow - er - less, my

13
 God is al - ways near us, his care he al - ways shows.
 gifts to eve - ry crea - ture are eve - ry - where re - vealed.
 liv - ing things cre - at - ed pro - claim his awe - some might!
 com - fort is in Je - sus for he my soul will bless.

Text: George van Popta © 2015
 Tune: Cornelis de Pauw, 1739-1803

OP BERGEN EN OP DALEN
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Derek Stoffels

Principal of the
Ebenezer Canadian Reformed School
in Smithers, British Columbia
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What is SLOYD?

In British Columbia a redesigned curriculum, called the BC Education Plan, is being implemented over the next several years. The changes presented are not unique to BC. Many North American jurisdictions are discussing and implementing similar ideas. Why? In the 1950s Sputnik led to a new legislated emphasis on math, science, and engineering in education. Today, concerns about economics are driving educational change. Companies like Apple or Google are seen as the model for building a successful economy. For many people Apple is synonymous with creativity and entrepreneurial behaviour, which are central to the changes being proposed. Two of the most well-known proponents of the current directions in education are Ken Robinson and Yong Zhao. The BC Ed Plan website summarizes their thrust well:

BC's Education Plan is based on a simple vision: Capable young people thriving in a rapidly changing world. To achieve this, we need an education system that better engages students in their own learning and that fosters the skills and competencies they will need to succeed. The focus for this transformation is the movement to increasingly personalized learning, which is enabled and supported by quality teaching and learning, flexibility and choice, and high standards.

In this article I am writing about the hands-on aspect, which is the aspect that gets a lot of attention in the BC media when reporting on the BC Ed Plan. As parents and as supporters of Reformed Christian schools, you may be wondering how this direction should affect our schools. My thinking about this follows an interesting and varied path which I will relate here. It may seem disconnected at first, but I will bring it together at the end.

Shop class in high school – No

It all began a long, long, time ago, back in 2010. In the fall of 2010 I walked into the public library, like I do every couple weeks, and went to the section where new

books are featured. A book by an author named Matthew Crawford caught my eye and I took it out and read it. It is called *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry Into the Value of Work*. At that point I was of the opinion that shop class could wait for post-secondary when a career decision is made and that prior to that time it was something a parent could encourage and arrange for their children, at least more easily than arranging a language arts or math lesson. After reading Crawford's book I began to revisit my thinking to see if it needed adjusting.

Sloyd was basically shop class but with a twist

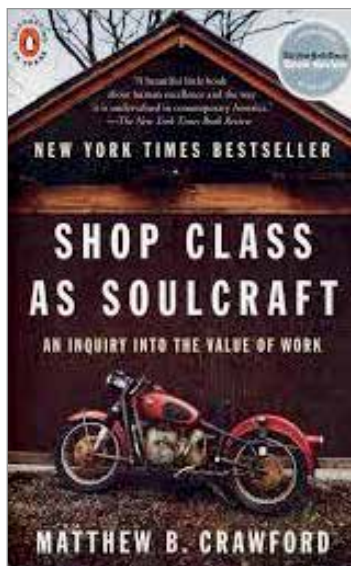
In 2011 the BC provincial government announced the BC Ed Plan and the plan had a heavy emphasis on personalized learning as well as hands-on activities. That led me to revisit the book *Shop Class as Soulcraft*. Linking it to the BC Ed Plan reawakened my thinking about the place of shop class in school.

Shop class in high school – Nah

For the next four years my subconscious mind rolled the thoughts around but I never got much further. Like a number of other Reformed schools we were going through a growth spurt and needed to add basic classrooms. A room dedicated to shop seemed beyond reach. There were lots of other things to think about, shop classes were not a graduation requirement, the BC Ed Plan seemed stalled, and the biggest factor, I did not see how it fit in the school's vision statement. I was aware that some Reformed schools had shop classes but I had never explored how they connected those to their vision of Reformed education.

During those five years I came across a program called *Run, Jump, Throw (RJT)* which was aimed at helping children to develop good physical skills. I tried off

and on to get information on this program and in 2013-2014 tried several times, without success, to get a workshop organized for it. Finally in late 2015, we hosted a workshop designed to introduce us to RJT. The key point from RJT is that there is an optimal developmental opportunity between the ages of six through twelve for children to learn movement skills and that the three basic actions of running, jumping, and throwing are ideal to give kids the necessary basis for successful development in other sports once they reached age thirteen and up.



During those years I also took out every issue of *Fine Woodworking* magazine from the library. In a number of issues a man named Doug Stowe had articles, typically focussed on making boxes. (Hang in there, this is going somewhere.)

Shop class in high school – Maybe

In August of 2015 two things happened. Again the BC Ed Plan made my news because of the provincial government's unexpected announcement that the BC Ed Plan for K-9 was to be implemented effective September 2016. Interestingly, right around that time, I walked into the local public library once again and saw that Matthew Crawford had written another book. It is titled *The World Beyond your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction*. I took it out, and over the next month and a half, I read it. In this book Crawford argues that we are increasingly out of touch with reality due partly to a loss of *agency*. He defines *agency* as being able to see the effect of your actions. A key assertion he makes is that agency is crucial to how we come to know and understand the world. He attributes our loss of agency, in part, to how things are made more and more to be resistant to our tinkering. For instance the simplicity of an older engine is gone. Engines now have a hood under the hood. Some new cars don't even have oil dipsticks. Many objects require specialized screwdriver bits to be able to disassemble them, making people less likely to tinker.

Within our lifetime we likely won't even need to drive the car; it will do so itself.

Crawford's second book is not an easy read. Part-way through it, I went to the final chapter to read it and see if it would help motivate me to continue reading. It did because the book ends with a quote from Doug Stowe (the box maker) and it was about education. He was quoted as saying that "Without the opportunity to learn through their (he is referring to young students - DS) hands, the world remains abstract, and distant, and the passion for learning will not be engaged." The statement was too sweeping to accept as it stood, so I checked out the footnote and came across Stowe's blog, "Wisdom of the Hands," where he wrote about this and pointed to something called *sloyd* as part of the solution. I had seen *sloyd* knives in the Lee Valley catalog and had bought one for my son many years ago but had no idea what *sloyd* referred to. I was interested enough to do some research on this strange sounding thing. It turns out *sloyd* was basically shop class but with a twist. It was intended to be taught starting in Grade 1. It had a very intentional sequence of projects and a very intentional aim, which was that working with your hands would provide essential connections to enable kids to succeed in other subjects by having a better understanding of how things work.

***He wanted to encourage schools,
including independent schools,
to plan more hands-on opportunities
into the lessons***

The most recent related event occurred on October 27 when I attended a government-organized meeting and got to hear an excellent and inspiring presentation from Larry Espe, who is the provincial Superintendent of Skills and Careers. He made clear that he wanted to encourage schools, including independent schools, to plan more hands-on opportunities into the lessons. One of the comments that he made was that many kids in schools nowadays live in downtown condos and never engage in hands-on activities or have contact with the physical outdoor life and the activity that is part of that. They live in finished houses with finished garages, have nowhere to build a tree fort and never pick up a hammer because there is no need for one.

CALLED

Called by the Neerlandia (North) Canadian Reformed Church and by the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church to serve as second minister::

Candidate Gerard Veurink

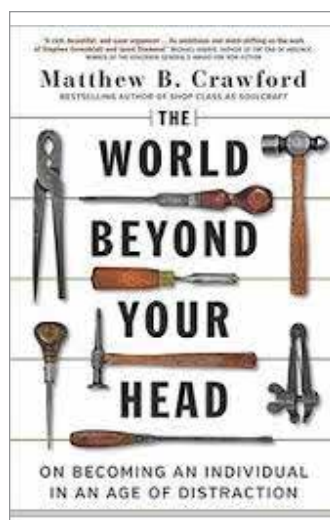
CHURCH NEWS

Hopefully it is becoming clear how all these different threads are coming together. For me they come together in the context of my ongoing thinking about the vision statement of the school. What will help us as a school society to best achieve our shared goal of equipping God's covenant children with the tools they need to function as prophets, priests, and kings? We know that God made man and made great diversity part of mankind. We know that he expects us as church, parents, and school to help his children develop their talents to the utmost, in conformity to his Word. We know that there are limits to our resources. God expects us to do the best we can with what we have within the bounds of responsible stewardship. Also different tasks belong to church, home, school, and individuals. Schools have a more limited role than parents. We know that the world is changing. Technology and beliefs are changing the way we live.

Shop class – revised and repurposed

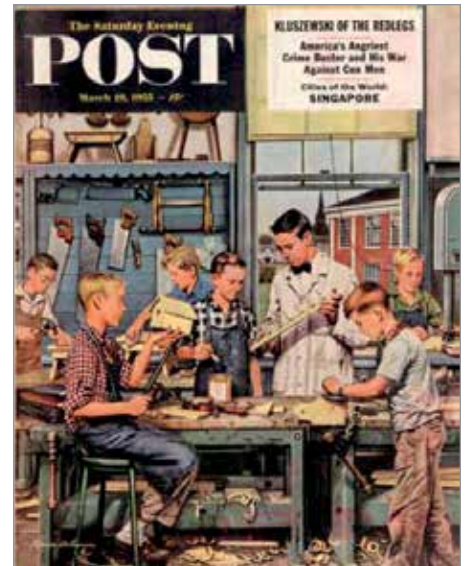
So when I look at all these threads, the challenge is to determine how they fit together. If Stowe is right, then maybe shop class has an important carry-over effect on other learning. If RJT is right about the optimal developmental window to learn physical movement, maybe a similar window exists for learning manual skills to allow transferring that learning to other areas of learning. If Crawford is right, maybe society has changed enough that shop class activities are needed to teach a sense of agency. In the BC Ed Plan it is not shop class that is promoted so much as hands-on learning. If Stowe and

Crawford are right, then the BC Ed Plan's focus on a more personalized and more hands-on culture is something to consider. On the other hand, our Bulkley Valley culture, as well as that of many of our Reformed churches and schools, is very different from the downtown condo culture Espe referred to. We tend to be more rural in our school populations.



As a result, we may think that this does not apply to us because we live in a more natural physical reality than many urban children. Stowe would disagree as would educators such as Froebel (originator of kindergarten) and Montessori. Most kids in the Bulkley Valley still live in a place where agency

is part of their life. Going for firewood, feeding the woodstove, fishing, hunting, building forts etc. all have clear effects on reality. However, we would be wrong to think we are immune. Crawford in his second book says that North Americans live more and more through representations instead of physical reality. What he means is that we experience more and more of life via what he call engineered experiences. Some examples he gives are computer games, pornography, advertising, food, and social media. We don't call someone, we text them. That is choosing representation over contact/reality. On the Al Jazeera Rebel Geeks page, I recently came across the following quote. "Unlike the kids fiddling with audio leads and cassette tapes, the modern digital experience makes us feel like omniscient superheroes whose every half-thought is anticipated and obeyed." That has consequences. Agency will teach the falseness of that.



North Americans live more and more through representations instead of physical reality

My purpose in writing this article is to provide information and spark thinking and conversation about how we learn and how we might need to change how we teach. I would encourage you to take out and read Crawford's books, Stowe's blog, look up *sloyd*, or pursue threads related to this that you notice.



Abraham and Isaac

Genesis 22

When Abraham and Sarah were very old, God gave them a son and they named him Isaac. They were very thankful. One day God told Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham was very sad but he was ready to listen to God. He trusted that God would keep his promises. He took Isaac up on a mountain and told him that God would provide a sheep to sacrifice. Just before Abraham sacrificed Isaac, God called STOP! God was happy that Abraham was always ready to listen to him, even if it meant losing Isaac. Then he showed Abraham a sheep stuck in the bushes. They offered it as a sacrifice to God and then went home together.

Matching

Draw lines to connect important words from the story!

- | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Sheep | Abraham's son |
| 2. Isaac | Abraham _____ God |
| 3. Stop! | Abraham was _____
Isaac was safe |
| 4. Trusted | Animal sacrificed |
| 5. Thankful | God said this to Abraham |

Go to www.clarionmagazine.ca to print and colour this picture!



Double Puzzle

Unscramble the words to solve the mystery word!

CAISA

					1

SEOMIRP

							3
5							

RABHAAM

							2

CESFICIAR

									4

RUTTS

--	--	--	--	--	--

1	2	3	4	5	

by Emily Nijenhuis

Re: Higher Assemblies or Broader Ones?

(Rev. John van Popta)

I read this article with interest, especially in view of the upcoming Synod Dunnville. While I share Rev. van Popta's concern with synodicalism, I don't come to the same conclusions as he does when examining the record on the issue of Bible translations.

The flaw in Rev. Van Popta's analysis is that he takes Synod 1995 as his starting point. If, instead, we start with Synod 1977, we see that the historical pattern has indeed been for synods to limit the churches to certain translations.

Synod 1977, which mandated the CBT to study the NASB and NIV, noted that "pending this study, only the use of the KJV and the RSV is in the freedom of the churches" (Art. 105).

Article 111 of Synod 1980 records a decision to recommend the RSV to the churches, but "to leave it in the freedom of the Churches to use the KJV and the NASB if the acceptance of the RSV meets with insurmountable objections."

In view of the foregoing, the decision of Synod 1998 to leave it in the freedom of the churches if they feel compelled to use other translations that received favourable reviews in the reports is not a departure from past practice. Synod 2007 clarified this decision by identifying these translations as the NKJV, NASB, and ESV. This decision was not "contrary to fact" and the use of the word "approved," while not found in the 1998 decision, was consistent with its meaning.

In this light, the decision of Synod 1995 to "leave it in the freedom of the churches if they feel compelled to use another translation" is the exception, not the norm.

While the question of whether synods should be limiting the churches to certain translations is an open one, the charge that synods have become more hierarchical over the years in this matter is not supported by the historical record.

*Kent Dykstra
Cloverdale, BC*

Response

Dear Editor,

Br. Dykstra points to earlier 1977 and 1980 synod decisions, but he fails to see how the 1995 decision set a new standard. As I wrote in my article, in its 1995 report the Committee on Bible Translations noted how the Australian churches used strong language authorizing the use of certain translations, and warned against it. The 1995 synod, heeding that warning, now left the matter in the freedom of the churches. True, earlier synods had in the past restricted the use of Bible translations, but in 1995 we turned a corner. A new course had been charted. There no longer was this restriction. This of course was the correct decision, since the matter of Bible translation is not regulated by the Church Order adopted in 1983.

Furthermore, if the 1995 Synod decision to leave the matter of Bible translation to the freedom of the local church was, as Br. Dykstra maintains, "the exception, not the norm," let someone appeal that decision. In the meanwhile, it stands as settled and binding by virtue of Article 31 of the Church Order. It was a decision based on a properly commissioned report, that was duly circulated to the churches, which in turn had opportunity to interact with it. We should also note that after the 1995 synod, no church appealed the new freedom. If we are to return to the wording of 1977 and 1980, let there be a properly commissioned report, or an overture, or an appeal, to overturn the 1995 decision. It is improper for synods to overturn decisions without the matters coming to their agendas by legal ways.

Br. Dykstra attempts to defend his thesis by suggesting that, "the word 'approved,' while not found in the 1998 decision, was consistent with its meaning." But that precisely underlines my point: words not found in decisions are retroactively inserted because later synods interpret those decisions to mean that which they do not explicitly



say. And most certainly, I think, Br. Dykstra would agree with me that the wording of the 1998 decision was *not* consistent with the meaning of 1995 decision.

No church, or report, or overture, has suggested that the 1995 decision was wrong. But yet the synods and committee reports have let more and more restrictive terms creep in to their language. We drift from “freedom,” to “approved,” to “authorized,” and two decades later in 2016 we end up where the 1995 report precisely warned against going. Slowly but surely synodicalism creeps in, and the broader assemblies become higher ones, restricting freedom of the local church in unauthorized ways! Beware, lest we forget our history.

John van Popta

Dear Editor:

In Rev. Kampen’s editorial, “Are we on the Same Page” on March 11, 2016, he makes a few valid points on the importance of reading Canadian Reformed material. Certainly, as members of this federation, we want to have “a finger on the pulse” regarding topics of concern within the federation, to see new developments at the various churches and to gain a Reformed perspective in regards to the worldly news we hear daily.

However, what appears to be missing is this: If an individual follows the prescribed method by Rev. Kampen, they can still struggle to find that stimulus for conversation with other believers and display those feared withdrawal symptoms. While Rev. Kampen’s intentions are good, may he be missing the point?


For many, the issues do not stem from what people know or from what they read; rather, the issues are sparked from their interactions with their fellow Canadian Reformed members. When people speak out with questions and concerns to those they trust and promises to follow up are not honoured, or the comments given in response are references merely to the Three Forms of Unity or to the Church Order without being shown biblical reasoning for the how they got to their conclusions, the itch to know more and a desire to find answers elsewhere begin to emerge. Those going off to read material that has not been “Canadian Reformed approved” are doing so for largely two reasons: To expand their knowledge base, or to discover the answers to questions that have not

been addressed from the church. For example, I can read *Killing Calvinism* by Greg Dutcher (*Clarion* reviewed, so presumably acceptable material) to understand how we are perceived in the larger religious world with an eye to find improvements in how to interact positively with others, or I can read it with an aim to criticize the church for its failings; adding fuel to the fire for my withdrawal symptoms. Conversely, when the book *Divinity of Doubt* by Vincent Bugliosi (not approved, even after reading the author’s bio) is given to me to read by an old co-worker, I may read it to understand why he doubts the existence of God, not because I am looking for a reason to renounce theism for atheism.

So what then is the point? Well, it can be summed up by asking, “What is our desire?” As *Desiring the Kingdom* by James Smith (reviewed by teachers in *Clarion*; deemed acceptable) points out, we all desire something, and how we act and live our lives shows those around us what we really desire. So when the desire to have more people read *Clarion* is to “be on the same page,” or is viewed as the only way to have a common ground for our conversations, or is to immunize our members from ideas not prescribed by the Canadian Reformed Church to avoid withdrawal symptoms, this desire is actually reinforcing some of the many reasons why people have chosen not to read this magazine.

It should be our desire to stimulate thought in a Godly and brotherly fashion. Our desire for common ground should be rooted Christ, not only in the Canadian Reformed way. Articles written in fear of other churches or in fear of others being led astray do not open the readers’ mind to see the wonder of Christ, they merely side track readers from the true importance: to read the Word of God, to be able to have an answer to our faith that is rooted in Scripture, and to be able to come alongside our brothers and sisters where they are in their walk of faith, and to understand their struggles. Through this – by the Holy Spirit – we can all then merge onto the same page. When we stop worrying whether or not everyone thinks alike and start pointing each other to Christ, *Clarion* can then be a joy to read again, enlightening our minds and thereby become an interest to read again by those whom have long since become disenchanted.

In Christ,

Darren Versteeg, St. Albert, AB 

Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication.

Submissions need to be less than one page in length.



William den Hollander
Minister emeritus of the
Bethel Canadian Reformed
Church of Toronto, Ontario
denhollanderw@gmail.com

Q I would really appreciate it if you would write something about the work of the Holy Spirit. Could you then address the question how the Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts and minds of sinful people? I am thinking especially about those frail human beings, those who through our fall into sin in Paradise, are burdened with retardation, with dementia, to the point of not knowing whether they are coming or going. How does the Holy Spirit dwell in them, in these husks of humanity, with their limitations?

A When we confess in LD 20 that the Holy Spirit is, together with the Father and the Son, true and eternal God, and *“also given to me,”* we are speaking about an awesome reality. God, given to me, dwelling in me, and working in me, faith in Christ and all his benefits, to comfort me, and to remain with me forever! It’s a total marvel and cause for great thankfulness! We instill these words in the hearts of our children, who memorize them not only but also express their truth in the prayers they pray at table and at their bedside. Indeed, for the Lord Jesus says, “Let the children come to me and do not hinder them!” We apply these words to our children as well who have limitations, like mental retardation, Down’s Syndrome, or the like. We pursue in them, too, a childlike love for the Lord, a joy in the worship of God, and a special place among the communion of saints in the schools and in the congregation. We teach them the singing of psalms and hymns, and we rejoice when we see their childlike faith expressed by them! These, and others like them, are all included in this wonderful confession which says, “He is also given to me.”

This is one of the great promises signified and sealed to us by Holy Baptism. We may share this rich reality with all our children, also with those with limited abilities. We may comfort ourselves with this wonderful reality, even when our child will never be able to express much of it or make it their own. God has claimed them for his own; and for some this means that they can never refuse or reject this great promise. Yet, God is faithful and steadfast in his love for them very much and will never leave them or forsake them, but he will complete for them and with them what he has begun by giving life to them and this special place in his covenant with them! Then the work of the Holy Spirit may also show itself in a (very) limited way; yet, as many have witnessed and testified, we may see a great love and joy and care and compassion as fruit of the Spirit in their life nonetheless!

Our confession also means that wherever we are or go the Holy Spirit is always with us. He works in us, or with us, with great power. He does his work very *personally*. He is the third Person of God and he works in us *as person* too, who knows us! He knows what we need; he knows our strengths and weaknesses. He knows what gifts he gave us, in order that we develop them as much as we are able, that we employ them and use them for

the glory of God and the well-being of the neighbour. This applies to each and every one of those who belong to him; hence, we may observe it as such a tremendous blessing when we also see our handicapped brothers and sisters engaged in activities and employment that's suitable for them! Thus we see that the Holy Spirit is very much interested in us, engaged in our life, and involved in our work, our development!

It's this wonderful and miraculous work which the Holy Spirit works out in us and with us, and certainly not without us. He works it out in us as a *person*, and he works it out *among us* as a people. That's an important aspect in the work of the Holy Spirit as well. Even when one of God's children is not able to do much himself anymore, or has lost all abilities and awareness of his existence due to Alzheimer's or dementia or the like, then there still is the work of the Holy Spirit *with them* and *for them* by the *community* and among the communion of saints. It can be seen again very clearly what source of love and joy and what cause for love and joy a mentally handicapped child can be in the midst of a family and congregation! Through my visits at a nursing facility in the places I served, I can also testify of the working of the Holy Spirit in the evidence of love, mercy, care, and

dedication displayed by the nursing staff and caregivers! This, indeed, is great comfort, unawares for the patients, but also for their loved ones!

Much more could be mentioned in this regard concerning the work and involvement of the Holy Spirit. Yet, we must also note in all honesty how difficult such a reality still is. When Paul, therefore, in Romans 8, heard the sighing in creation, he also heard the sick, the suffering, and the dying. He heard the terminally ill, who were wrestling with the way of God in their life. Yes, not only them, we too sigh many a time, because of the awareness of sin, of misery, of imperfections, and of brokenness in life (physical, mental, emotional, social, etc.). Then we must read closely what the Apostle Paul heard in all this sighing. He heard a *prayer*! He heard those who cry "Abba! Father!" They *pray*, even though their prayer is weak, because the work of redemption in their life is still so limited. Yet, then we may know that the *Holy Spirit sighs with us*, pleads for us, perfects our prayer and intercedes. The Spirit comes to our aid with groans that words cannot express. He does so all the way, until the end. Then there will be an end to our sighing, and God will wipe all the tears we have shed for our ailing loved ones from our eyes!



**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 Niagara held on March 9, 2016 in the Spring Creek Canadian Reformed Church of Tintern

Opening

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. Peter Holtvliwer opened the meeting by welcoming all present. He requested that we sing Psalm 67 followed by the reading of the same. After reflecting on the message of the psalm he led in prayer, making special note of the health of Sr. Dinie Huijgen, who was recently given a clean bill of health, the receipt and acceptance of the call extended to Rev. Jan Huijgen by the Coaldale CanRC, the imminent vacancy of Attercliffe, the receipt and decline of the call extended to Rev. Dick Wynia by the Flamborough CanRC, the preparations for General Synod May 2016 by the church at Dunnville, the passing away of Rev. Klaas Stam, former minister serving in this classical region, and the ongoing health concerns of Drs. Jack De Jong and Nicolaas Gootjes.

Examination of credentials and constitution of Classis

The credentials were examined by the convening church and found to be in good order. It is noted that all the primi delegates are present except for from the church at Grassie, their alternate being in attendance. Upon the examination of the credentials, Classis was declared constituted.

Appointment of executive officers

The suggested officers from Classis Niagara September 16, 2015, Rev. Jan Huijgen as chairman, Rev. Rolf den Hollander as vice-chairman, and Rev. Peter Holtvliwer as clerk were appointed. The chairman thanked the church at Spring Creek for their preparations. He also welcomed Rev. Ryan Kampen as observer, expressing the prayer that the Lord would allow him an opportunity to continue serving in the churches.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as received at Classis.

Question period (Art. 44 CO)

The chairman asked the questions according to Art. 44 of the Church Order. Each of the churches indicated that the ministry of the office-bearers was being continued, and the decisions of the major assemblies were being honoured. Only the church at Smithville requested advice in a matter of discipline. The remaining churches did not request the judgement and help of Classis for the proper government of their church. Classis entered closed

session to deal with the request of Smithville. After some discussion concurring advice was given.

Reports

In closed session, church visitation reports were given of visits held at the Canadian Reformed Churches at Attercliffe, Dunnville, Grassie, Lincoln, Smithville, and Tintern. It was noted with gratitude that all reports could conclude with thankfulness that things are being done according to the Word of God, that the office-bearers are fulfilling the duties of their office and calling faithfully and that the Church Order is being observed.

The Deputies for Contact with Neighbouring Classes/Presbyteries submitted a written report on their attendance at the meeting of the OPC Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario on Friday, September 18, 2015 (9:00am - 3:00pm) at the Grace Covenant OPC in Sheffield, Ontario. A request was made to ensure such reports are sent to the convening church in a timely manner so that they can distribute to the local churches to review it. The reminder was duly noted. The report is received with gratitude.

Appointments

According to the schedule, the church of Attercliffe is appointed as the convening church for the next classis. It will be convened, D.V., on June 15, 2016 (or if deemed not necessary then, Sept. 14, 2016). The suggested officers are Rev. Dick Wynia as chairman, Rev. Peter Holtvliwer as vice-chairman, and Rev. John Van Woudenberg as clerk. Due to the upcoming departure of Rev. Jan Huijgen who was one of the organizers for examinations, Rev. Dick Wynia was appointed to join Rev. Peter Holtvliwer on the committee.

Personal question period

Personal question period was made use of.

Brotherly censure (Art. 34 CO)

With gratitude the chairman noted the good harmony at the meeting and deemed brotherly censure not necessary.

Adoption of the Acts and approval of the Press Release

The Acts were read and adopted and the Press Release approved for publication.

Closing

The chairman closed the meeting by requesting the singing of Hymn 67:1, 7 and leading in prayer.

*For Classis Niagara March 9, 2016,
Rev. Rolf den Hollander, vice-president at that time* 