

# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

V 66 N 19 SEPTEMBER 22 2017



**Thankful for  
the everlasting  
arms underneath**

**CELEBRATE 1517 IN 2017**

**CLARION KIDS**

**YOU ASKED**



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# Give Thanks for the Everlasting Arms Underneath

*How real is God to you?*

Moses' last words to Israel were, "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut 33:27). He spoke these words at a time of great uncertainty for the people. For over forty years Israel leaned on Moses to lead them through the wilderness and now he was about to die and the people were to cross the Jordan River without him. There they would face mighty and powerful enemies. The people were living in uncertain times.

While Israel's circumstances were unique, the reality is that we all live in a world in which we face many uncertainties. History reveals the great pain and misery that mankind has faced through the ages. People faced uncertainties, endured hardships, and experienced horrible plagues and devastating wars.

## Modern challenges

Today we live in a modern world and we like to think that this world is a better place. While there may be great optimism in our society that we can make a better world, this week I was reminded of the great challenges and uncertainties many still face in this world as I met with a couple of families seeking refugee status in this country. They have come to this land to flee problems in their own countries. You can hear the pain in their voices and see the scars in their lives from the weight of misery they are experiencing. It is difficult for many of us to imagine living in a world where you have no place you can call home.

Even when we have a secure place in this world, as we do in this nation, the reality is that we all face insecurities. The neat and orderly life we enjoy today can be set upside down tomorrow. Today the news is all about Hurricane Harvey striking the coast of Texas. Yesterday people were living in their beautiful homes but today many of those homes have been torn apart and destroyed. In a moment,

God sends a horrible storm that destroys the hopes and dreams of many.

## A cry for help

God's people cannot expect to be spared from the troubles of this life. The book of Psalms is one of the most beloved books of the Bible. The Psalmists tell us about their troubles in a way that we can relate to with our own lives. They faced death, they lost loved ones, they dealt with serious health issues, they endured famines and plagues and they faced injustice and persecution. So often God's children cried out to the Lord in heaven, "Come, help us." Today, we live in the most affluent time in the history of the world. The population generally are doing well materially, we have some of the best health care in the world that can alleviate many of our illnesses and we enjoy security and justice in this land. Yet not all is well in North America as hatred and intolerance grows and seems to threaten to tear society apart with violence.

## Discouragement in the face of trouble

At the end of his life, Moses understood the future challenges for Israel. He saw how easily the people became discouraged in the wilderness and turned against the Lord. When hardships arose, they reacted in anger. When there was no food or water they accused Moses of bringing them into the wilderness to die. When they did not have the luxury they enjoyed in Egypt, they demanded that Moses lead them back to Egypt. Moses understood there would be even greater challenges when Israel crossed the Jordan River. There they would face great enemies and if history was any guide, they would become discouraged and rebel against the Lord. The reality is that when we are faced with discouragement and troubles, we quickly respond with anger or bitterness or we become despondent and fall into depression.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Issue 19 celebrates Thanksgiving; Rev. Matthew Van Luik, in his editorial, writes: "The greatest reason for thanksgiving is the assurance that our lives rest in the arms of our Lord." We also bring readers a Thanksgiving meditation.

In this issue Dr. Van Dam has an article on Synod Meppel's decision to allow women to be ordained as deaconesses. He examines and evaluates the grounds for their decision.

The Celebrate 1517 committee has an update for our readers on various projects going on in our federation regarding the celebration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Reformation. In another month we hope to bring our readers a special issue celebrating this anniversary.

The church of Barrhead has a Church Snapshot – if your congregation has not submitted a snapshot, we encourage you to do so! This issue also includes Clippings on Politics and Religion, You Asked, Ray of Sunshine, *Clarion Kids*, and the Education Matters columns.

Laura Veenendaal

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8 Inverness Crescent, St. Albert, AB T8N 5J5  
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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

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			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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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.



Agreement No. 40063293; ISSN 0383-0438

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## A necessary reminder

Moses in his wisdom leaves Israel with this reminder, “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” In his last instructions, he impresses upon Israel that the Lord their God is the God in heaven above and on the earth below (4:39). He is the living God who has revealed his great power to Israel. While the great issues in our society is that it does not recognize the reality of the living God, a greater danger for us is that we no longer recognize the greatness of the God whom we worship. We speak about God, but how does that knowledge resonant in your heart? How real is God to you? We say that God is watching over us but do I also live in a way that this is a reality? We say that God can do all things, and yet I am anxious and I

**God’s people  
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the troubles of  
this life**

worry. Do we live in that assured reality that his everlasting arms are underneath us?

Moses sought to impress the reality of God’s greatness upon the people of Israel. He asked them in Deuteronomy 4:34,

“Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation. . . by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds,” like God did for you in Egypt? God’s outstretched arms are everlasting arms. In faith Israel is to go and conquer the land, fully assured that they will succeed by the power of God’s arm. Jeremiah speaks about the extent of God’s arm, “Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.”

## The everlasting arms

How great is the power of God? Remember, God challenged Abraham to count the stars if he could. Our galaxy is estimated to contain over one hundred billion stars and some estimate there are some twenty-nine trillion galaxies. How awesome. If you take a microscope and examine the complexity of our bodies and you discover smaller systems within smaller ones, that baffles the mind. It is all humanly incomprehensible to our finite minds and yet the arms of God are completely around it all. We cannot even begin to understand the extent of God’s everlasting arms.

And yet, too often our eyes are closed to God’s greatness. Perhaps we are blind to his greatness because we think of ourselves too highly. Great scientists, who see the immensity of the universe are often blind to the greatness of God, because they think of their own achievements too highly. We can be like the little boy who jumps up in the air three inches and shouts, “Look at me!” full of pride at how high he can jump. So we boast about own achievements when they are so tiny in comparison to the greatness of God. The more we understand the awesome power of God the more we see our own limitations.

Moses leaves Israel with the wonderful assurance that as they move forward into the promised land, they will be supported by the everlasting arms that are underneath. One of the important refrains in the book of Deuteronomy is the command to remember and do not forget the Lord your God. Remember, he says, how the Lord delivered you from Egypt and led you through the wilderness and spoke to you from the blazing fire at Mt. Sinai. Remember how his everlasting arms were ever underneath you.

## The everlasting arms of Christ

Many generations later, the people of Israel were taken into exile because they had forgotten the Lord their God. The people in exile turned back to the Lord when they remembered the Lord their God and recalled the days of old. They ask in Isaiah 63:11, “Where is [the Lord] who brought [Israel] through the sea, with the shepherd [Moses] of his flock? Where is he. . . who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses’ right hand, who divided the waters [of the sea] before them?” Here God’s people are again looking for God to send a shepherd like Moses who will come with God’s glorious arm of power, to deliver them. Israel’s cry for the great shepherd to come and again deliver them was fulfilled with the coming of the great shepherd, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was not like Moses. The arms of Moses failed him when he had to keep his staff in the air as Israel battled the enemy in the wilderness. When his arms were in the air, Israel was defeating the enemy but when his arms became too weary to hold them up, the people began to lose the battle. Aaron and Hur had to help Moses by holding up his arms, but the arms of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, never fail.

Jesus says in John 10 that he is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. He reveals that his arms are everlasting arms, there is no end to his power. He has the power to lay down his life for the sheep and to take it up

again in the resurrection. And so, when the people brought their children to the Lord Jesus, we have that tender picture of the Lord gathering the children into his arms and blessing them. There his arms are under them and in his arms, he will carry them. That is a wonderful reality! Christ's arms are not too short, his arms are not too weak to carry you, but he comes in mercy and promises as your Saviour to lift you from the pit of your sins and misery and raise you up to life. The one who has power to lay down his life and take it up again has everlasting arms. There is nothing too great or difficult for him and therefore our eternal security rests in the arms of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

### **Thankful for the arms underneath**

Our reason for thankfulness rests in the everlasting arms that are underneath. What really matters for our life are the arms that are underneath us. Moses says to Israel, when you enter the Promised Land and drive out your enemies, what is underneath matters. God will drive out your enemies and destroy him. And once Israel is in the land, they will be safe and live secure in a land of grain and new wine. Our security in this world, whether it is God's people in Israel or God's people in the New Testament church, rests in the

arms that are underneath. If the everlasting arms of Christ are underneath, then we have the full confidence that our life is eternally secure.

The greatest reason for thanksgiving is the assurance that our lives rest in the arms of our Lord. That is a reality Moses sought to impress on the people and it is the reality that must resonate in our heart today. In this world, we face many challenges. We enjoy prosperity in this land and yet so many struggle with despair and hopelessness. Our wealth and riches do not give us the stability and joy we seek but we find it only in the everlasting arms that are underneath. Even if our world is set upside down, you cannot fall further than the arms that are underneath, for they will catch you and raise you back up. We praise you, Oh God, and give you thanks for your everlasting arms. In you we are eternally secure.

***The more we  
understand the  
awesome power  
of God the more  
we see our own  
limitations***



# Thanksgiving

***"The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away;  
may the name of the Lord be praised." Job 1:21b***

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Thanksgiving Day! This special day on our calendars is a national holiday. One wonders why we have this day in Canada, for as our country becomes increasingly unbelieving, how do many celebrate? To whom do people give thanks? Rest assured that the media will not tell you! Strange, considering so many folks do enjoy the day by feasting with family and friends.

To whom and for what do people give thanks? Consider who gives us all what we have: family, health, income, food, shelter. As Job said so long ago, it is the Lord who gives! Our thanks for all the blessings of this life must be offered to the Lord our God, the creator and upholder of heaven and earth.

How abundantly the Lord God had blessed Job! Reading from Job 1, we know all that the Lord God had given to him. He had been blessed with seven sons and three daughters. He owned 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 donkeys, and a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

Had the Lord God not promised such abundance to all who believe in him, who walk in his ways? Job was blameless and upright, feared God, and shunned evil. Did not God clearly teach in the Old Testament that a man like Job could count on his blessings?

But Job also acknowledged that the Lord who gives also takes away! Job had not been privy to what happened in the court of heaven between God and

Satan. It was the Lord God who drew Satan's attention to Job. God said of Job: have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like Job. He is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil! Satan countered: does Job fear God for nothing? Satan was saying that Job only believes in God for what he gets from God. Anyone will serve God when God blesses him the way he blessed Job! Job knows better than to bite the hand that feeds him. Take away the blessings, and Job will curse God!

What an accusation Satan makes here! Do we only love God for our earthly blessings? Do we serve him because of his material blessings or out of thankfulness for belonging to him, for being his child? Our sovereign God gave permission to Satan to take everything away from Job. In a single day, Job, the greatest man of the East, lost all ten of his children and all his wealth as one calamity after another struck.

What a terrible blow for righteous and blameless Job! Who could really fathom such horrible losses in a single day? Job grieved his losses. Yet, in the midst of sorrow, Job continued to trust in the Lord. Job acknowledged the Lord God as truly sovereign and did not curse him. Job did not sin, but remained faithful and righteous – the doing of our gracious God. When everything was stripped of Job, who was always there but our covenant God? It is God who upholds Job and brings

those words out of his mouth. May the Name of the Lord be praised! Job did not deserve his children, possessions, or land. He was not entitled to anything. Yet, in his grace, God had given him many material blessings. In his grace God also promised a Redeemer.

What a God we have! In his love, God gave his only Son, that we might live forever as his children. In his Son Jesus Christ we are righteous before God. Jesus Christ was a righteous and blameless and without sin. He did not curse God. Though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor. When he died, even the clothing he wore was taken from him. He suffered! Unlike Job, Christ suffered as a substitute: *for* Job and *for* us all!

Thanks to him who was forsaken by all, we God's children are never forsaken by him. Thanks to him we stand righteous before our Father! We have everlasting peace with him. Believing this, we have every reason for being thankful, not just on Thanksgiving Day, but every day. We may have received many gifts from the hand of God in the past year. Conversely, gifts may have been taken from us. Everything may have been taken. Yet we always have what is most important, namely Jesus Christ! By faith alone in him we have our covenant God and Father always holding on to us and caring for us. What more do we really need?

*This meditation was originally published in this magazine in 2005.*





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# How Convincing is Synod Meppel's Evidence for Female Ordination as Deaconess?

At this year's synod in Meppel, our Dutch sister churches decided "to declare that there are Scriptural grounds, next to men, also to call women to the ministry of mercy and therefore to the office of deacon."

Grounds:

1. According to the testimony of Scripture, in apostolic times women shared in the office of the deacons (1 Timothy 3:11, 5:9), and they too were called 'deacons' (Romans 16:1-2).
2. The office of deaconess was also known in the early Christian church. In a number of Reformed churches this office still continues."

Within the obvious limitations of a magazine article, let us briefly evaluate this decision by considering each ground in turn.

## Wives or deaconesses?

The first evidence the synod gave for their assertion that "in apostolic times women shared in the office of the deacons" is 1 Timothy 3:11. This verse occurs in the middle of apostolic instructions on the qualifications necessary to be a deacon. After Paul stated that deacons must be men worthy of respect and so forth, and that they must first be tested, he wrote: "Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things" (NASB).

So the question is: who are the "women" mentioned in this passage? Are they the wives of deacons or are they female deacons? The Greek term in question can mean either "women" or "wives." The term cannot mean "deaconess" even though such a translation is sometimes suggested.

Those who wish to understand the women as deaconesses argue that the word "likewise" suggests that the apostle is moving from discussing deacons to deaconesses.

However, it is just as likely that the apostle means that as deacons must be dignified, so should their wives. It seems odd to go on right after this passage to mention again the qualifications for male deacons in verses 12-13, as if this is a mere afterthought. Such a flip-flop from deacon to deaconess and back to deacon in such a short passage (verses 8-13) is unnatural and unlikely. Furthermore, if the apostle had wanted his readers to know that he was now discussing female deacons, he would probably have been more specific and not used the term that can only be translated as "women" or "wives."

It seems best to understand the women as the wives of deacons. The passage concerns deacons and their qualifications. Those qualifications include that they have spouses who are supportive of the diaconal work. After all, these wives could be expected to be involved in one form or another in their husband's task as deacon by assisting him, especially when ministering to women.

There is no convincing basis to consider the women in 1 Timothy 3:11 as holding an official ordained office in the church. Not surprisingly, virtually all major English Bible translations prefer the rendering "women" or "wives" rather than deaconess or something similar.

## Enrolled widows

As evidence for female deacons, the synod also mentioned 1 Timothy 5:9 which, along with verse 10, states: "Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work" (ESV).

If the criteria for these widows are any indication, these women were probably enrolled to continue their service of good works for which they justly had the reputation. As needed, their work could include taking care of orphans, giving godly advice to young mothers (cf. Titus 2:3-5), and showing hospitality. The question is whether this service of love involved their being ordained to diaconal office.

Those favouring the ordination of women as deaconesses argue that the Greek term for “enroll” can be understood as being selected for membership in a group with a special

task. That task is then understood as an ordained office. Also, it is reasoned that since the apostle has mentioned qualifications for overseer (1 Tim 3:1-7) and for deacons (1 Tim 3:8-13) and discussed elders in 1 Timothy 5:17-19, he must also have been referring to ordained office when discussing enrolled widows in 1 Timothy 5.

These arguments, however, do not convince that a diaconal office is in view. The verb “to enroll” simply indicates making a selec-

tion for membership in a specific group. It has nothing to do with being ordained or appointed to office. The text also makes no mention of this. Furthermore, it was not necessary for widows to be ordained to an ecclesiastical office to do their diaconal work. Since we must not draw conclusions that go beyond the biblical evidence, one must judge that there is insufficient evidence for deciding that these widows were ordained into diaconal office. These were unordained women who served the church with their labours of love. They can be an inspiration for female diaconal work in the church today.

### Who was Phoebe?

The synod’s third biblical reference was to Romans 12:1-2, which reads: “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a

servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well” (ESV)

In this and other translations such as the 1984 NIV, Phoebe is described as a servant which translates the Greek term *diakonos*. This word can also be translated as “deacon,” as, for example, in the 2011 NIV. Which should it be?

It is not enough to simply reason that since the word can be translated as “deacon” therefore it should be in this instance. The word *diakonos* is used many times in the New Testament to indicate a person who is of assistance to someone and is therefore translated as “servant” or something similar (e.g., Matt 20:26; 22:13; Rom 15:8). It is the context that must be decisive in determining whether the person in view is a deacon or more generally a servant or assistant.

There has been considerable debate, which we cannot enter into here, whether Phoebe was ordained in the diaconal office or simply a servant of the church. The fact that this debate continues shows that at the end of the day, there is simply not enough information in Romans 16:1-2 to be able to conclude in any decisive manner that Phoebe was an ordained deaconess. The fact that the New Testament elsewhere gives male qualifications for the office of deacon (1 Tim 3:8-13) and nowhere else identifies a woman as a deacon underlines the dubiousness of concluding here that Phoebe must have been an ordained deaconess.

### Deaconess in the early Christian church

Synod Meppel also invoked church history by stating as a ground that “the office of deaconess was also known in the early Christian church.” In evaluating the weight that can be given to this ground, we need to consider the following facts.

First, there is no evidence that women were ordained as deaconesses in the first two centuries of the early Christian church. This fact indicates that the apostolic instructions regarding the offices in the church as recorded for us in the New Testament did not move the early Christians to ordain deaconesses. Indeed, the late first century *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (15:1) specifically instructed that men be selected as deacons.



## CALL DECLINED

Declined the call by the Providence CanRC in Hamilton, Ontario:

**Rev. John Bouwers**

of the Immanuel URC in Jordan, Ontario

## CHURCH NEWS

Second, ordained female deacons only appeared later in the third century in the Eastern church. The third-century Syrian church order, *Didascalia Apostolorum* (chapter 16) explained the necessity for female deacons. They could visit and help women especially in corporal works of mercy in sickness. Also, female assistance was needed at the baptism of women for reasons of modesty. Finally, deaconesses were to educate newly baptized women in Christian purity and holiness. However, not all Eastern churches accepted the idea of female deacons. By the end of the eleventh century, deaconesses had basically disappeared from the Eastern church.

Third, there is no positive evidence of deaconesses in the Western church until about the sixth century. The ordination of women as deaconesses was not widely supported and frequently prohibited. In the Western church, a special order of unordained widows helped in the baptism of women. However, eventually the order of widows and the function of deaconesses were absorbed into the monastic movement. Female deacons disappeared by the twelfth or thirteenth century in the Western church.

In light of the above, the appearance of deaconesses in the early Christian church is not very convincing as a justification for ordained deaconesses today.

### Deaconesses in Reformed churches

As justification for ordaining female deacons, Synod Meppel stated: “The office of deaconess was also known in the early Christian church. In a number of Reformed churches this office still continues.”

The synod is in error to suggest that the office of deaconess continued from the early church until today. Deaconesses disappeared from parish churches before the Reformation of the sixteenth century and after the Reformation there was also no continuous ordination of women as deacons in Reformed churches.

Calvin wanted widows to serve in a second rank office of deacon. These women were not to be ordained. During the time of the Reformation Calvin’s idea found little support because the biblical data did not convince the churches of the necessity of deaconesses. An exception was a decision made at an unofficial gathering of Reformed ministers known as the Colloquy of Wesel (1568). It thought it suit-

able that women be ordained as deaconesses. But the first official synod of the Reformed churches in The Netherlands which convened in Emden (1571) made no mention of female deacons in their church-orderly decisions. Nevertheless, in 1573 the congregation of Wesel had four ordained female deacons to take care of the poor, sick, and expectant mothers. However, the Synod of Middelburg (1581) decided not to ordain women deacons. Should female help be needed for the diaconal ministry to sick women, then the wives of deacons or other capable women could be called in to help. Female deacons did continue to function for some time in various places, but they were not ordained.

The movement to ordain women as deaconesses in Reformed churches in The Netherlands and America started in the twentieth century. This movement met opposition on biblical grounds but eventually many Reformed churches ordained women into the diaconal office. In Canada, the church of L’Église réformée du Québec allows for the ordination of female deacons, but whether the practice is biblically justified is currently under discussion in this church.

### Conclusion

Synod Meppel’s appeal to Scripture and early and Reformed church history is not convincing in terms of justifying the ordaining women to the office of deacon.

Needless to say, such a conclusion does not mean that women cannot use their gifts in diaconal ministry. They certainly can and they can do so in many ways. Those gifts are needed! But that’s another topic.

Resource: For more detailed information on the material covered in this article, see Cornelis Van Dam, *The Deacon* (2016), chapters 6 and 8.

**The movement  
to ordain women  
as deaconesses  
in Reformed  
churches in The  
Netherlands and  
America started  
in the twentieth  
century**

# Faithful to His Word: Celebrate 1517 in 2017

On behalf of the  
Celebrate 1517 Committee,  
Dr. Ted Van Raalte





**FAITHFUL TO HIS WORD**

celeBRATING 1517 IN 2017

The Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) and Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College (CCRTC) would like to invite all those with artistic abilities to help us celebrate 500 years of reformation!

You can help us and enrich your community by creating a research essay, poem, song, story or storytelling, or by making a piece of visual art in celebration of this 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We hope your talents will contribute to celebrations in your area around October 31, 2017 and that afterward you will submit your artwork to us for possible publication in a celebratory book.

For more information and to get some exciting new dramas or pieces of music for school bands or local ensembles check out: [covenantteacherscollege.com](http://covenantteacherscollege.com) OR [canadianreformedseminary.ca](http://canadianreformedseminary.ca)

 CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  COVENANT CANADIAN REFORMED TEACHERS COLLEGE

DIET OF WORDS | E. DELPEREE

Early in 2017 an article in *Clarion* announced some joint plans of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary and Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College regarding the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. Since October 31 is now little more than a month away, we would like to provide a little more encouragement via this update for everyone to celebrate this anniversary. Please go to our respective institutional websites and click on the colourful banner “Faithful to His Word: Celebrating 1517 in 2017.”

## Commissioned music

Several things have been done to stimulate local celebrations of God’s faithfulness. While we have not and will not be organizing local events, we have commissioned two pieces of music for use at such events. Kent Dykstra’s “Arise” is based on Psalm 68 and has now been played by at least one high school band and a summer camp of strings musicians. Select musicians from the summer camp also participated in a recording session of this piece, which we have ready to go live on the CCRTC and CRTS websites on October 31. Martin Jongsma’s “Reformation Suite” is based on Martin Luther’s “A Mighty Fortress.” Like “Arise,” it has been arranged for school band, as well as for organ. All of the music can be found under “commissioned music” at <http://www.canadianreformedseminary.ca/news-and-events/celebrate-1517/Celebrate-1517-Home-Page.html>. You can download all the music for free, but please do attribute it to its respective composers.

## Commissioned drama

Our websites also host “commissioned drama.” Five plays were written by Dr. Deanna Allan (née Smid), assistant professor of English and Creative Writing at Brandon University (recently, a representative of her institution interviewed us warmly about this commission). We are aware of a number of high school clubs and other groups that will be performing one or more of these plays. The plays are great; hopefully you will be able to enjoy them in your vicinity!

## Visual arts, poems, story, essays, and song

Most or all of our Christian schools have plans for some kind of celebration. We would really like to encourage the principals and teachers and students to invest time in learning about the Great Reformation and reflecting on what they’ve learned via entries in the visual arts, in story and storytelling, in poems, in research essays, and even in song. Guidelines for submissions in all five of these art forms can be found on our web pages. Note that while your deadline for local celebrations would likely be around October 31, we are giving you (or your teacher) until December 15 to send your entries to [Celebrate1517@gmail.com](mailto:Celebrate1517@gmail.com). After that we will form adjudication committees.

## Commemorative book as end goal

In order for this project to reach its goal of a good quality coffee table commemorative book that celebrates the Reformation, we need lots of high quality work sent to us. Imagine a book on your coffee table, with your own poem or pencil drawing or story or research essay! What if it opened with a song that you had written? Entrants from all ages and walks of life are encouraged – you should find a category that fits you. Please note that “advanced open” does not require an “advanced” age, but is for those not currently being schooled, but having skill in a particular art form. The song category, for which the guidelines appeared more recently, is open to collaboration. Check it out!

Help us celebrate  
**500 years**  
of reformation!

For more information check out our websites:  
[covenantteacherscollege.com](http://covenantteacherscollege.com)  
OR [canadianreformedseminary.ca](http://canadianreformedseminary.ca)

CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Covenant  
CANADIAN REFORMED TEACHERS COLLEGE

## Faithful to his Word

The Celebrate 1517 Committee is praying that our work will help all the Lord’s people rejoice in his faithfulness as we give thanks for him working renewal in his church. Martin Luther did not know that 500 years later people all over the world would be thanking the Lord for what he did; he was just trying to be faithful to the Word of God in his time and place. That’s exactly what we’re called to do as well, and we can always do so in the confidence that the Lord himself will always be faithful to his Word.





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# Why do the Left and Feminists Make Excuses for Islam?

This question is asked in John Zmirak's article in *The Stream*, a conservative Internet daily. His answer in short is that both the political left and Islam have a common enemy in Christianity and Western civilization as built on Christian foundations.

This may sound unreal, but have you ever wondered why feminists are not rallying against what they know to be the atrocities that traditional Islam subjects women to, such as child marriage, genital mutilation, and honour killings? Have you ever asked why politicians on the political left constantly downplay terrorist violence and threats and keep saying that Islam is a religion of peace? Or, why would gays "pretend that Christianity is just as intolerant as Islam? Why treat Muslims as another oppressed minority, instead of potential aggressors?"

"What if a fringe Christian group advocated Islamic practices?" Zmirak asked. "You can bet that leftists, feminists, and gays wouldn't march alongside them. They wouldn't demand that millions of members of that church be welcomed to our country. They wouldn't call criticism of Christian honourkillings or wifebeating 'Christianophobia.'" Yet millions of Muslims come to the West and faithfully raise Muslim families, not Western ones. "Yet the left in America [and Canada] and Europe rallies to Muslims. These Muslims, we're told, are not people who choose to hold to an intolerant creed. No, they're victims of Western, Christian 'bias.'"

Zmirak comes to the conclusion that "leftists, feminists, and 'mainline' Christians who back them have identified the enemy. It is orthodox Christianity and the society which it built up in the West. . . . And there is literally nothing on earth that today's left hates more than traditional Western society."

Whatever may divide the left, "they're united by common rage at what the West is and has been for centuries. To tear it down, they're willing to work together. They can sort out their differences later." Muslims hate the West. Islam has become an ally for the left in its assault on Christian values.

Zmirak notes what a dangerous ally Islam is for the left. It is much stronger than any of the components making up the left which "are merely parasites on the body of the West. They're Christian heresies, if you will. . . . But Islam has its own powerful metaphysical system. It breeds fervent warriors. It has a 1300 year track record of attacking and subjugating Christian countries. Unlike feminism, among its followers Islam raises the birth rate. Unlike gay activism, it attracts normal 'macho' young men. Unlike socialism, it works, after a fashion."

Zmirak notes that Islam can indeed be your best ally to tear down the traditional West. "So keep on importing millions of angry young Muslims into Western countries. Keep demonizing those who criticize Islam. Just don't think too carefully about what will happen next. Here's a hint: The angry leftists and feminists who helped bring down the Shah of Iran didn't end up running human rights commissions. They landed in Khomeini's prisons."

There is truth in Zmirak's analysis. In Canada we also see a strong push against traditional Christian values. Anything that breathes Christianity is apparently fair game, such as Trinity Western University's desire to open a law school. But that which is completely contrary to biblical principles and sound family values is promoted and glorified. Think, for example, of the homosexual lifestyle. Obscene gay pride parades even attract prominent politicians who shamelessly participate. Christian values can be eroded and maligned. But don't criticize Islam. Then you can be accused of being Islamophobic. The passing of anti-Islamophobia Motion 103 in Canada's House of Commons this past March does not bode well for the future and underlines Zmirak's point. More about that next time.

Source: John Zmirak, "Why Leftists and Feminists Make Excuses for Islam: It's the Enemy of their Enemy" (March 29, 2017) on the website of *The Stream*.



# The Canadian Reformed Church at Barrhead

In the heart of Alberta, surrounded by farmland and nestled between the Two Mile Corner and the Four Mile Corner, you will find the town of Barrhead. If you are heading north through town on the main road, continue through the set of traffic lights, turn right at the UFA, continue past John's Plumbing shop to the end of the road, and there you will find the Barrhead Canadian Reformed Church. These are the kind of directions you will receive in a small town (pop. 4579).

Barrhead began as a stopping place on the Klondike Trail, the main route from Fort Edmonton to points northwest, and was especially well-travelled during the Klondike Gold Rush. The industries that drive the economy in the area today are primarily agriculture, oil and gas, and forestry. We are surrounded by fertile farmland and wooded areas dotted with small lakes and rivers; the majestic Rocky Mountains are a four-hour drive to the west (close enough for some die-hard skiers to make a day trip!). A traffic jam in Barrhead (usually caused by slow-moving farm equipment) will add no more than five minutes to your commute. Alberta is known as the sunniest part of Canada, and the variety found in our climate has something for everyone! If you like hot and sunny, we have it. If you like two feet of snow or -40, we get that too. We certainly feel blessed in this beautiful part of God's wonderful creation!

It was in this town that our faithful God and Father called together a group of believers to institute a church in 1961. The Canadian Reformed Church at Barrhead was instituted on January 1st of that year, with an initial membership of approximately twenty-six. Our congregation's most substantial God-given growth spurt began in 2006 with 170 members and ended in 2012 with 298; we now stand at 335. In October of 2015 we held our first worship service in our new church building, and it has indeed been a great blessing for our congregation.

After a twenty-year vacancy, although pastored by Rev. C. Van Dam on an equal basis with Neerlandia from 1971-



4, Rev. E.J. Tiggeelaar accepted our call in 1981. Rev. Tiggeelaar served as our pastor until his retirement in 2012, and still serves our congregation as well as the neighbouring churches in various capacities. Our current pastor is Rev. Calvin Vanderlinde, who accepted our call and began his ministry in February 2014.

We are thankful for the good relationship that we have enjoyed with our neighbouring churches in Neerlandia. This close relationship is realized on a daily basis as we all share in the blessing of the "Covenant" Canadian Reformed school located in Neerlandia, where the children of our congregations enjoy the awesome privilege of an education that is always focused on the only infallible textbook we have – the Bible! The United Reformed Church in Neerlandia as well as the three CanRCs in the Edmonton area, just ninety minutes away, have been a big part of our church community as well, with regular pulpit exchanges and cooperative efforts in conferences, youth retreats, and the like.

A congregation that is predominantly made up of younger families, there is always something going on, and



our active Church Life Committee ensures that there are plenty of opportunities to exercise the communion of the saints at functions such as the Canada Day picnic, Car Rally, and New Year's Day potluck, with our Ladies' Aid always hard at work behind the scenes. Our Evangelism Committee is also faithfully spurring us on with a presence at local community events such as the Summer Street Festival and the Christmas Parade, as well as leading services at the seniors' care facilities.

We have several Bible study groups that meet regularly, so there are plenty of opportunities for us to get together and build each other up as we study God's Word. Although we have a great variety of members in Barhead – old and young, short and tall, teachers, farmers,

carpenters, welders, mechanics, hairdressers, ministers, and more – we share so much. We work together, we play together, we eat together, we share our joy and our sorrow, but above all – we share the common bond of faith in Christ. We are so thankful for the many varied gifts that our Lord and Saviour has poured out on the members of our congregation, gifts that we can use to his honour and glory as we see anew, morning after morning, his great mercies! How great is his faithfulness!

If you come to visit and worship with us, we hope that you will feel welcome. The coffee is on every Sunday morning, and our host family is ready and willing to help you out if you need a place to go for lunch. Better yet, move here – new members are always welcome!







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# Reformed Education is Covenantal (Part 1)

As I stumble along, thrown off by my arch enemies' offences, often failing to trust God's providence and act on the office he gave me in Christ, how can I serve others? I may have moments of feeling good about something I did – but even then, my conscience comes nagging: *Yes, but... who should it be for?*, when I took praise that was rightly God's. For relief, I must turn, again, to Psalm 103 and seek his Spirit. Bless *the Lord*, O my soul!

There were other stumblers whom the Lord yet used for his purpose. Adam and Eve fell, but their task and future hope remained. Noah stumbled, but the Lord upheld the ancient mandate, and vowed to never again curse the ground because of sinful man. Likewise, Abraham, Moses and Aaron, David and Solomon, Isaiah and Jonah, Peter and Paul. . . each of them sinned, in conflict with their confession, and jeopardized their relationship with God; yet, God used them for his purpose.

Scripture explains why God dealt with people in mercy, compassion, and justice. Muslims cite Allah's often repeated mercy and compassion – but he is also almighty, capricious, and deceptive, and, at their funerals, they can but pray for the best come judgment day. We are rich: For us to be adopted by God as our loving Father, he gave his Son, Jesus Christ, who gave up everything to rescue us and take our punishment, and his Spirit to work faith in us. While repulsive to Muslims, *this is the power of God and the wisdom of God* (1 Cor 1:23-24), and it spurs us on to works of gratitude, as prophets, priests, and kings, with implications for and beyond the covenant community.

## Covenant

This is the covenant, that, while we were yet sinners, God bought us for this price, establishes a loving relationship with us, provides for us from the count of our hairs to eternal life, and asks us to respond by trusting him and living for him, loving others like he loved us first – all in and

through Christ. Here is the assurance we confess in Lord's Day 1: We made a mess of things, but he delivers us, comforts us, and makes us willing workers within a loving covenant communion of imperfect saints (LD 21). Being God's covenant people is what defines us and our children; it is the community in which they grow up and to which they belong, by grace, and which is committed to mutual support from conception to old age and beyond – with word, deed, and prayer. This Old Testament model retains its relevance today.

Israelites about to enter Canaan had experienced the effect of unbelief in and rebellion against this very covenant. Two-million-or-more who disbelieved Joshua and Caleb forty years earlier had died without seeing the promise fulfilled. Yet, true to his Word, Yahweh had not only shown his wrath, but also just gave them the realms of Sihon and Og, and it was fitting that his covenant expectations were now made explicit again, so they would reject all forms of disbelief and idolatry, and trust him only. He reminded them of their fear and trembling at hearing the covenant expectations at Mt. Sinai: "Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!" (Deut 5:29) He added his loving imperative to love him with all their heart, soul, and might, and to pass the words of this covenant on to the next generation, at all times, in every place: "Hear O Israel, and be careful to do them that it may go well with you" (Deut 6:3).

***Each of them  
sinned, in  
conflict with  
their confession,  
and jeopardized  
their relationship  
with God; yet,  
God used them  
for his purpose***

Deuteronomy shows that to “be careful to do them” translates into blessings for their good. It is to *circumcise the foreskin of their hearts, to no longer be stubborn, but to love the fatherless, the widow, and the sojourner – for God is God of gods and Lord of lords, and to him belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, and the earth with all that is in it.* It is to take this covenant seriously – even to the point of stoning a relative who would distract from it, and duties towards straying people in other towns. It is a call to help the poor, and for regional cooperation to address evil (Deut 13, 15, 17). These are the ancient paths Jeremiah reminded the Israelites to follow centuries later (Jer 6:16-19). To do otherwise was to avoid the green pastures and still waters of Psalm 23, invoking God’s dreadful curse (Deut 10, 11, 27, 28).

## New Testament

What it means to be a covenant community resonates in the New Testament. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 has been called a guide for living in the covenant, and indeed there are blessings, curses, explanations of the ancient paths, and an urgent call to take this seriously. Not all are blessed in the beatitudes; there is no threat of stoning or destruction – but unless one takes Jesus’ words to heart and *wisely builds his house on a rock, when the rains fall and the floods come and the winds blow and beat on that house, it will not stand, and its fall will be great.* These promises and obligations still echo in Philipians 2.

There are many examples of the application. People receive *in-situ* gifts of healing, sustenance, and lodging (Acts 4, 5, 16). In 1 Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 9 we read of gifts for needy churches *elsewhere*. Peter gives God’s message of grace and peace to the *scattered* Christians in Asia Minor, stressing their imperishable inheritance in heaven and who they are in Christ: Born again, a living hope, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession. . . in order that they may proclaim God’s excellence and show good deeds. The urgency remains:

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s

varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet 1:1-9, 2:9-12, 4:7-11)

The pattern of and reason for care for others in (and out of) the covenant is well-established.

*This first section establishes two foundational points: The covenant permeated the lives of every Israelite in the Old Testament era; in the New Testament, the covenant continues to be normative for all new testament Christians. Next time, we focus on the need to continue to teach the children of believers in a covenantal manner.*



## David Van Veen

David VanVeen was born and raised in Fergus, as youngest of seven children. He has lived in Fergus most of his life, other than about ten years. Just after Dave turned forty, he was able to move



back to Fergus, to “his stomping grounds.” It was exciting to move to Lighthouse, the Anchor Home where he lives with seven other housemates, because it was right next door to the place where Dave grew up.

Dave has various activities outside the home. Two days a week he works at Fergus Auto Recyclers, where he mostly strips wires. He helps out at Bibles for Mission one day a week. Another morning he assists a senior of the congregation in his woodworking shop. We are thankful that Dave is also a big help around the home. He cuts lots

of lawn, vacuums the vehicles, and is our main snow shoveller. Once Dave gets going on a job, you can count on it that it will be well done, for he is precise and meticulous. However, he goes his own pace, for he really believes that “haste makes waste.” He usually takes pleasure in doing these tasks on his own and you will see him smiling and laughing as he works.

When he was young, Dave did lots of walking with his father. He still has this love for walking, since it “clears his head.” Down the trail he’ll head to town where he will look around, make a visit to Tim Hortons, and then saunter back home, or stop in to see a sibling. From his mother, Dave learned to play scrabble, so every evening he will be ready for a game. Whenever Dave hears the piano, he will dash upstairs with his recorder eager to join in. Dave enjoys a good discussion with “one of his old classmates” or those who come to visit. Often you will find him playing pool on his own, improving his skills. Dave also spends time being creative: doing some writing, gleaned information from here and there, or writing some poetry. He has written a piece especially for you, and hopes you will enjoy it:

*Our Canadian country of Canada is celebrating the Canadian 150<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2017.*

*Let the nation of Canada be glad and sing for joy.*

*The Canadians in the celebration of our national birthday praise you, O God.*

*Happy birthday, Canada, and Canadians. We as Canadians are patriotic and enjoy gardens of our life.*

*To be in a garden can be refreshing. Flowers also reflect life to its fullest.*

*Colourful and bright, a wonderful delight. Roses are red and violets are blue.*

*Who crowns you with steadfast love, and mercy.*

*The water fountain refreshes the air in this garden.*

*Your Word is a Lamp to my feet and a Light to my path.*

*He has made his Light to shine upon us. . . the ray of sunshine.*





## October birthdays

- 3 JANELL DEBOER will be 27**  
6311 Silver Street, RR 2  
St. Ann's, ON L0R 1Y0  
Email: janell.db90@gmail.com
- 3 JEANETTE WIERINGA will be 22**  
610 Belsyde Avenue East, RR 4,  
Fergus, ON N1M 2W5
- 6 HENRY VANDER VLIET will be 50**  
c/o Anchor Home  
361 Thirty Road, RR 2  
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
- 8 LINDSAY KOTTELENBERG will be 27**  
c/o Lighthouse  
6528 1st Line, RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 12 LEONA BARENDREGT will be 33**  
Box 2601, Smithers, BC VOJ 2N0
- 13 NANCY SCHIPPER will be 61**  
c/o Beacon Home  
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 17 ALAN BREUKELMAN will be 51**  
2225 19th Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4
- 21 CAMERON DANTUMA will be 25**  
c/o Lighthouse  
6528 1st Line, RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 22 NELENA HOFKINK will be 57**  
Bethesda Clearbrook Home  
32553 Willingdon Crescent  
Clearbrook, BC V2T 1S2
- 28 MARY ANN DE WIT will be 61**  
#4 - 6560 Vedder Road, Chilliwack, BC V2T 5K4

Congratulations to all of you celebrating a birthday in October! We hope you all have a wonderful birthday celebrating with family and friends.

## A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

*If there are any address or other changes that I need to be aware of please let me know as soon as possible.*

**Rachel Vis**

731 Lincoln Street, Wellandport, Ontario L0R 2J0  
tom.rachelvis@gmail.com • 905-329-9476



## Daniel and his Friends

### Daniel 1

Daniel was a young man who was chosen by the king to receive special treatment after the Israelites were taken into captivity in Babylon. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were three of Daniel's friends who were also chosen. The king wanted them to have the best food and wine. Daniel knew, however, that the Babylonians did not worship God. He knew that the meat they ate had been sacrificed to idols. Daniel and his friends decided to eat only vegetables and water, because they did not want to disobey God. God blessed them for their faithfulness and took good care of them.

Go to [www.clarionmagazine.ca](http://www.clarionmagazine.ca) to print and colour this picture!



#### Matching:

Draw lines to match up important words and phrases from the story.

Daniel	Meshach
Mishael	Abednego
Azariah	Belteshazzar
Hananiah	Shadrach

by Emily Nijenhuis

#### Word Search

S	L	M	P	Z	I	C	O	H	B
L	E	E	E	E	T	G	U	C	A
O	Y	L	I	S	E	G	Y	A	B
D	L	N	B	N	H	C	V	R	Y
I	P	T	D	A	A	A	N	D	L
M	D	E	U	P	T	D	C	A	O
X	B	D	H	Z	L	E	Q	H	N
A	V	K	J	U	W	D	G	S	W
F	A	I	T	H	F	U	L	E	D
S	D	N	E	I	R	F	N	I	V

Abednego	Babylon	Daniel
Faithful	Friends	Idols
Shadrach	Meshach	Vegetables

William den Hollander  
Minister emeritus of the  
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## Q Will this world be destroyed in the end of time?


*Recently one of my old King James Bibles resurfaced and I was reading Ephesians 3, which ends with "Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen." I used to believe that the world would one day be destroyed by fire (2 Pet 3:10), but I have since discovered a different explanation based on God's promise to Noah in Genesis 8:21-22, where he promises that never again will he punish the ground for the sake of man, as long as earth endures seasons will not cease. Now when I read Psalm 93:1, Psalm 89:36-37, Psalm 104:5, and Ecclesiastes 1:4, it seems to me that the earth is a fairly permanent fixture. My question is: will this world be destroyed, changed, or rebuilt? Is the fire literal or figurative?*

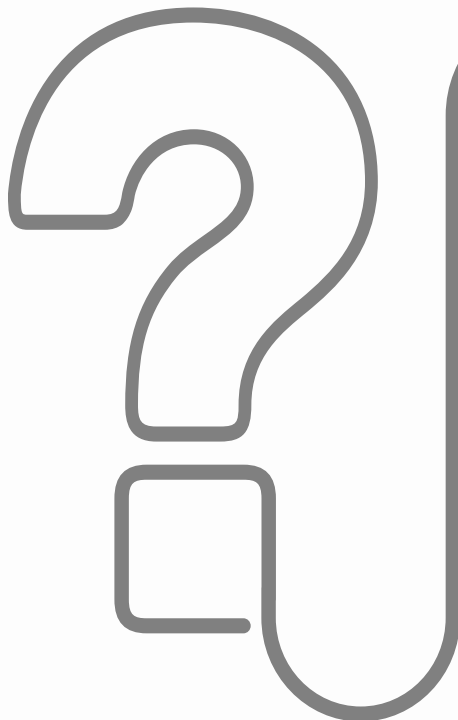
A It will be good indeed to have a closer look at 2 Peter 3:10, which is a text that created difficulties for many. In the most widely accepted text it says, "The earth also and the works that are upon it *will be found*." The NIV and the NEB are based on this text, which translate the expression, however, as "will be laid bare," because of the obscurity of the expression "*will be found*." Other translations follow an amended text, which changed the expression from "*will be found*" to "will be exposed." Nevertheless, with most Reformed scholars we prefer the more difficult reading, namely, "And the works that are upon it *will be found*." In the immediate context, also, and in the context of the Scriptures, it is clear what Peter is saying: The Lord will come on the clouds and gather all his loved ones to himself. At the *same* time, he will come with his *fire* of judgment by which he will refine the elements of which the universe consists, a refinement of the earth also, as gold and silver are refined, purging it from all defilement, sins, and uncleanness.

This is how we confess it in Belgic Confession Article 37 too, "Our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, bodily and visibly, as he ascended, with great glory and majesty. He will declare himself judge of the living and the dead and set this old world *afire* in order to purge it." How that will be and what it will entail, we don't know, but Peter does extend the attention to what comes after the fire of refinement: "And the earth and the works that are upon it *will be found*." In that perspective Peter is in line with the other apostles, who expressed as well that the works that were performed on it will follow those who worked them. On that premise, we can see Peter use the same word in verse 14, where he encourages the believers, saying, "Therefore, beloved. . . be diligent to *be found* by him without spot or blemish, and at peace, and count the patience of our Lord as salvation. . . ." That's in line with his words in verse 11, "What sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be *set on fire* and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!"



The fire of God's judgment will *find* the works that are upon the earth: the works of the wicked will be destroyed and the earth will be purged of all wickedness and defilement; also the works performed in God's service will be *found* by the fire, some of it will turn out to have been wood, hay, or straw as building products in the church building for God (and that will be *burned*, 1 Cor 3:12-15), but whatever work was done in obedience to our King *will be found* and refined and will follow (Rev 14:13). The text does not speak of total destruction, annihilation, or discontinuation, about the replacement by another earth, but of continuation on this earth, a *renewed* earth!

Thus, Peter's words are a pastoral encouragement, an incentive for a life of fruitfulness in anticipation of its contribution to the kingdom of God. For through it the Father is coming to the completion of his work! His kingdom comes, and the works that we have done in that kingdom stay; *they will be found*! How? We don't know exactly, just as we don't know how God will come from the seed we sow in the earth to the grain, or how he comes from the body we bury in the earth to the glorified body he will raise. Yet, as we confess, "He will raise *this my flesh*!" Likewise, he says, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labours, *for their deeds follow them*." 



**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](mailto:denhollanderw@gmail.com)**

23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0