

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

V 66 N 23 NOVEMBER 17 2017



**Is not
all of life
worship?**

VISITING OUR SCOTTISH BRETHREN

CLARION KIDS

YOU ASKED



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Worship: Communing with our God

*As you enter the sanctuary,
let your conversation with men cease
and commence to commune with your God*

On a recent pulpit exchange in a neighboring United Reformed Church, I noticed these words printed above the liturgy section of their bulletin, “As you enter the sanctuary, let your conversation with men cease, and commence to commune with your God.” A quick search for the origin of those words did not turn up the source, although it was evident that other churches use the same words in their bulletins. These words did strike me as very appropriate, bringing out what is going on in worship, namely, meeting our gracious God. This is such an amazing event, it calls for our full and undivided attention the moment you enter the place of worship.

But is not all of life worship?

Before elaborating, it is good to address an objection that can arise when we single out worship as meeting with God. Is not our whole life lived in the presence of God? This is sometimes expressed in the words “*Coram Deo*,” meaning, “in the presence of God.” Is the Lord not always near to us through his Holy Spirit? Don’t we derive a great deal of comfort that our God is always near?

We can’t deny that truth. This does not take away, however, that worship constitutes a special encounter with God. The LORD even indicates that in the way he has called one day in seven special, as is expressed in the Sabbath command. He has decreed a day of rest from our regular work to have time to approach him in worship. We can be thankful for that pattern of one day of rest for the sake of worship. In the busyness of life, we do not always have time to focus on our relationship with him. During the day, we need to be on full alert as we attend to our many tasks

in this world, be it in the workplace or at home. When you operate big machinery, that needs your full attention. You will be a danger to all those around you as well as yourself if that concentration is not there. When a mother is busy with her children, that calls for her undivided attention. Of course, there are many opportunities throughout the week to commune with our heavenly Father in prayer, but a worship service is special. Here God is pleased to meet with his people in a special way. In our worship on Sunday, we have the opportunity to join the holy angels in worship around the throne of God, along with all the saints who have gone before us. In worship, heaven and earth connect for a while.

Getting in “the zone”

When we realize we are about to be engaged in an encounter with our holy, gracious God, we will realize that this calls for the preparation of our minds and hearts. We hear of it in the world of sports, where athletes will have their pre-game routines to get focussed on the game. They need to be in “the zone.” This means you must get rid of distractions. No athlete is going to give an interview a minute before the game starts. That would break his concentration.

When it comes to worship, we are speaking of something far more significant, for we as sinners may come into the presence of the holy God, who will soon greet us with the word, “Grace and peace. . .” Soon, we will hear his gospel of salvation proclaimed to us. We need to get ready for this. Anyone who has experienced unexpected delays on the way to church and has had to rush in at the last minute will know that such a rush prevents proper preparation. It is good to sit down for some time, to decompress, to get in

the “worship zone.” It is also hard to focus when your mind is still ringing from the chatter and friendly banter of conversation only seconds before. We may know of those who make a point of always being in church at least twenty minutes before the start of a service. It could be that they want their favourite spot, but for many they sit and think in anticipation of the worship service. The communing with God has begun the moment they sit down.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

This issue begins with “Worship: Communing with our God,” by Rev. Eric Kampen. The editorial talks to readers about getting in “the zone” for worship services: properly preparing our hearts and minds in order to properly worship God.

There are reports on both the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) Synod 2017 as well as a visit by our Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to our sister churches in Scotland.

Issue 23 contains regular columns Treasures New and Old, Clippings on Politics and Religion, Ray of Sunshine, *Clarion Kids*, and You Asked. There are also two press releases.

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Cover photo: *Palace of the Holyrood, Scotland*

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CLARION
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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

2017 SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

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

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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.

Canada

Agreement No. 40063293; ISSN 0383-0438

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Redundancies

It would seem to me that if we would take these words to heart, and the moment we enter the sanctuary we would let our conversation with men cease, and commence to commune with our God, we would see the redundancy of some liturgical practices. I think of the call to worship. Worshipers have heard that call. In response to that call, they have come to church. It is a little late at 10 a.m. to call to worship. If one has been sitting in holy expectation of meeting God, taking the time to pray silently if one so desires, one's mind should be prepared.

Distractions

When we work with the thought that, as we enter the place of worship, our conversation with men should cease, and we should commence to commune with our God, we may want to reflect on some practices that are distracting. We can think of the common practice of handing out bulletins as people enter for worship. It seems like a good idea to catch up on the congregational news. Yet, bulletins are often filled with announcements for many activities and requests for funds for many causes.

It is good to sit down for some time, to decompress, to get in the "worship zone"

This does not enable one to begin to commune with God. It fills the mind with things that need to be done. It can be unsettling rather than relaxing.

The other distraction can be a variety of announcements. As one has come to worship God and one's mind has be-

gun to focus on that, a variety of announcements about all sorts of mundane matters is like throwing a bucket of cold water over a person. Why, in an age with printed bulletins, and many congregations sending them around electronically on Friday or Saturday already, is there a need to break the flow of communing with God that began the moment we sat down? We are always bombarded with information and news flashes. Why do we allow that to happen as we are at the very point of beginning our worship of God?

Silence

Perhaps to truly impress upon ourselves that we are about to engage in worshipping our God, and to help our communing with him, we need to give some thought to

the use of silence. Currently, organists are expected to play right up till the time the consistory walks in. One wonders why this is so. We know the powerful effect of silence in terms of concentrating your thoughts. We experience it when we attend annual Remembrance Day ceremonies and, in the minute of silence, we reflect on those who gave their lives in wars. We even may see it at various occasions where the lights dim and silence sets in as people anticipate what is about to happen. In worship, we will soon have opportunity to make a lot of joyful noise as we sing our praises to our God, but, in the meantime, there is room for growing in holy anticipation and preparation. Sometimes we speak of situations where you can hear a pin drop. When we remember what is happening in worship, anticipating it should create an atmosphere where you can hear a pin drop.

Collection time

While we are touching on the time leading up to the actual worship service, the aspect of communing with God is important to carry through for the whole worship service. A point where the holy concentration is easily lost is when it comes time for the collection. In most congregations, this takes place towards the end of the service. It is hard to maintain the focus on what we are doing. The offering, though, is also part of our worship of God. It will be a good time to reflect on the worship service and, in a sense, prepare to get back to the realities of life that will soon be there after the benediction.

Idealistic but not realistic?

Does all this sound rather idealistic? How are a young father and mother with several young children sitting beside them ever going to manage this? What will a visitor think when the place of worship is marked by a silence on the part of those sitting there? No doubt there will be challenges. Young parents, however, having trained their children to sit still, may actually cherish those minutes leading up to the beginning of the service, finally having the time to get in the zone for worship. As for visitors, we should not hide from them that, in a way, worship is so different from anything they experience in this busy, noisy, self-centred world. In worship we draw near to our holy, awesome, gracious God. We tune out in order to tune in to commune with our God.

So, make it a point on Sunday that, as you enter the sanctuary, you let your conversation with men cease and you commence to commune with your God.





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Walking on Water

"Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus." Matthew 14:29

Have you ever been disappointed in someone? You got your hopes up, but then you found out they weren't quite what you thought they were?

It happens all the time – and at this point the disciples must have thought this was happening to them. We read in Scripture that after the feeding of the 5,000 the crowds wanted to make Jesus king. Imagine the hype! Thousands of people wanted to make the Jesus we're following king – and with good reason, too! Jesus has just fed them all with five fish and two loaves.

But *immediately*, we read in Scripture, Christ sends the crowds away, tells his disciples to go out to sea, and goes up on a mountainside alone to pray. It seems like a wet blanket. Was the crowd wrong? Were we wrong, the disciples ask?

The answer is both yes and no. Christ is not a king like the crowds and the disciples think. He's not a saviour crafted after our imagination, a political leader or superman. That's never going to do the job. And so Christ has to diffuse this tragic misperception.

But that doesn't mean he isn't a king. He's actually a king in a far greater way that we dare to imagine! That's what the next event in the gospels, when Christ walks on water, is all about. It's not something meant to wow us, but to teach us the critical truth of who Christ is in all of his hidden glory.

As the disciples strain at the oars on the Sea of Galilee, the Lord Jesus walks out on top of the choppy waves towards them. When he reaches the

disciples, they are terrified. Just like we would be, I think. But he says to them, "Take courage, do not be afraid. It is I."

The background to this miraculous sign is first of all the great Exodus from Egypt. The water of the Sea of Galilee is not split in two, but in both instances a path is made where no human could make a way. In Psalm 77 we read that God led the way through the water. And so when the disciples see Christ coming to them, and hear him say, "It is I," or "I AM," they cannot escape the fact that in Jesus God himself has come to bring another exodus, a greater exodus, this time from sin and Satan.

But this is a little different – walking *on* the water, not *through* it. This also has an Old Testament background. In Scripture we read about how God treads the waves of the sea (e.g. Job 9:8). The sea represents evil in all of its chaos and disruptiveness. Pagan myths talked about how creation began when certain gods slew sea creatures. Some of the psalms (e.g. Ps 74, 89) proclaim that this can only be said of Yahweh, the LORD. Only he makes life possible.

So when Christ walks on water, it symbolizes his authority not only over waves and wind, but also over sin and evil in all of its unruly rebellion. It is a sign of what he will merit on the cross – how he will be that King that fights in a far greater way to bring peace and order and new life in a world filled with unbridled sin and hatred and death.

That is wondrous enough! But in Matthew's gospel, we have another addition. Peter steps out of the boat,

makes a few steps on the water as well, but falters and is rebuked by Christ for his little faith. Some have said Peter's request to walk on water is childish. But our Lord doesn't rebuke him. His little faith is rebuked, but not his walking on water. Disciples are meant to follow their Master. We are also meant to walk on water, as we trust firmly in Christ, and we are rebuked for not being able to do this.

What does this mean? Should we head out to the nearest lake? We have been given the privilege and the authority to begin to live as our Saviour lived and even to die as he died. We are to tread the waves of the sea underfoot and bring peace and life, to absorb evil by turning the other cheek rather than stirring it up. We are to love with God's love, be patient with God's patience, be holy as God as holy; to be faithful to others as God is faithful to us. We are also called to be kings who rule with the Word and Spirit of Christ over sin and Satan and who boldly go where no sinner has gone before. Are those impossible things to ask? They are like walking on water.

What do you expect of the Lord Jesus? He has come to do something far greater than we could imagine – to tread the waves of evil underfoot and bring a salvation far greater than any earthly power dares to offer. And what is more: he calls us to come, to follow him, and to walk on water as we look to him!

This meditation was originally published in this magazine in 2006.



A Faraway but Lovely Sister

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In the early nineteenth century, a man would travel from Boston to New Zealand in about five months. Compared to that, a twenty-five to thirty hour trip from Toronto to New Zealand is actually not so bad. Although thirteen hours straight in a tight economy class seat is still pretty long.

However – it brings you to a magnificent land that shows in many different ways the splendour of God’s handiwork. The snow-capped mountains and azure blue lakes on the South Island, the smelly and bizarre-looking geothermal features of the area around Rotorua on the North Island, the lush and dense vegetation of the temperate rainforest, the rugged Pacific coast, but also the green paddocks of Wairarapa, filled with sheep and cattle. . . all this and much more speaks to the glory of the Almighty God, the Creator.

And also in this spectacularly beautiful, but faraway country the Lord gathers his church. Since Synod Smithers 2007, the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) are in a sister church relationship with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ). That’s not very long, and because of the distance, it takes time to become familiar with each other.

One way of doing so is sending delegates to each other’s synods. Unfortunately, the RCNZ rep who was to visit Synod Dunnville in 2016 had to cancel his attendance for health reasons.

Synod Dunnville instructed the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to send a delegate to the next RCNZ Synod, to be held from September 9 – 15 in Palmerston North. And, although not a member of the CRCA, I gladly accepted the invitation of the committee to represent the CanRC.

It was not my first time in New Zealand. Earlier this year my wife and I spent a few months in the country, where I had the opportunity to preach in the Reformed Church of Masterton and a few other places. I was at that time also invited to speak at three Church Polity conferences in each of the three presbyteries.

Background

It was a delight to be back in the country in September and to preach again in Masterton. Some background information might be helpful. The RCNZ is a federation of twenty churches and one church plant, with a total membership of about 3,500. Currently they have sixteen active ministers and five students for the ministry: three at the Reformed Theological College in Geelong (Australia) and two at Mid-America Reformed Seminary. For a number of reasons our Seminary in Hamilton (CRTS) is at this point in time still a bridge too far for students from New Zealand. But who knows. . . ?

They also have three vicars. What’s a “vicar”? you might ask. After you graduate from your seminary, and you want to pursue the ministry in the RCNZ, you are required to complete an internship, which is called a “vicariate,” before you can be examined to be declared eligible for call. As a vicar you work in a congregation for one full year, under the mentorship of an ordained minister and under the supervision of the local session.

You may have noticed the words “presbytery” and “session.” This terminology reveals a unique aspect of the history of the RCNZ. It is mainly an immigrant church, although over the years a significant number of “original kiwis” have joined. And many who do have Dutch roots came from a variety of Reformed churches in Holland. Added to this, in its fledgling years, the RCNZ received strong support from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), with several ministers of the OPC serving in New Zealand. That’s the Presbyterian influence. The RCNZ is one of the very few churches that have the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster as confessional standards.

Conference

The previous synod had decided that a Thanksgiving Conference for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation was to be held prior to this synod. This took place on Fri-

day, September 8 and Saturday, September 9. Dr. Cornel Venema, principal of Mid-America Reformed Seminary, was the keynote speaker, on the theme: “Why the Reformation Still Matters.”

Synod

The opening of the synod was on that Saturday afternoon. This may sound a bit unusual, but getting the preliminary matters, like checking credentials, electing an executive, establishing the agenda, etc, out of the way on Saturday, allows Synod to get down to business right away on Monday morning.

The RCNZ synod does not work with advisory committees, as we are used to. Reports and overtures come with clear recommendations, which are discussed and voted on directly on the floor of Synod. The moderator, Rev. David Waldron, did an admirable job in leading the assembly through eighteen standing committee reports and eight overtures, so that Synod could be closed on Friday, September 15, in the afternoon.

The reports cover a variety of topics, some of which would never appear on the agenda of our general synods: like reports on Overseas Mission, the ministers & wives conference, the Calvinist Cadet Corps, the National Diaconate, and the Emeritus Savings Fund.

Let me highlight a few things that may be of interest for our readers.

Missionaries are under the supervision and care of a local session, but the Overseas Mission Board (OMB) is involved in the missionary activities by assisting the local churches. In its report the OMB expressed its thankfulness for the excellent cooperation with the Bethel CanRC of Toronto, and the Free Reformed Church of Armadale on

the mission field in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

On behalf of our Synod Dunnville I could assure the brothers that this gratitude is mutual. The work of Rev. Alan Douma and his wife Odette in PNG is greatly appreciated.

Church relations

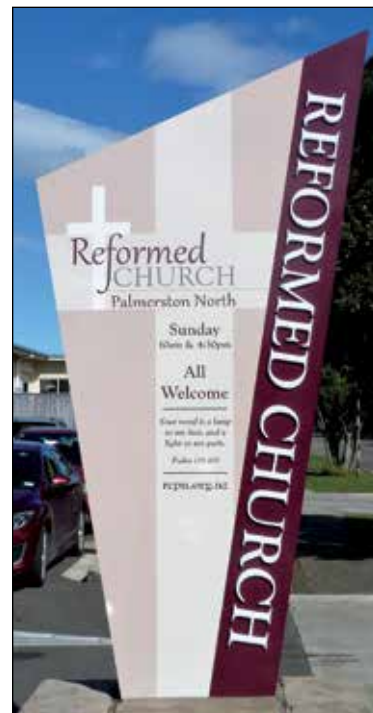
As at our synods, also in New Zealand much attention is given to relations with other churches.

The RCNZ enjoys ongoing stable sister church relationships with the OPC, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, the United Reformed Churches, the CanRC, and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA). At this synod a new sister church relationship was established with the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia, a small church with about ten congregations in S.E. Australia.

It is true that contact between the CanRC and the RCNZ on the level of deputies and synods has been minimal. At the same time – in a meeting with the Interchurch Relations Committee and in several personal conversations it became clear that many in the RCNZ have come to appreciate the relationship with the CanRC. Despite the distance, people do travel between the countries. And over the last two years several retired CanRC ministers have served as interim pulpit supply in the RCNZ, which has been a blessed experience.

Can we strengthen those ties? I am sure we can. We can call each other's ministers, invite conference speakers, swap articles between *Clarion* and *Faith in Focus*, and perhaps we may spark some serious interest for studying for the ministry at CRTS.

In 2015 our Australian sister churches entered into a sister church relationship with the RCNZ. At Synod Palmerston North the FRCA were represented by Revs. Alkema and Pot, as first-time official fraternal delegates. It was encouraging to notice that this relationship is quite rapidly developing into a strong and warm bond, with increasing mutual appreciation. Members of both federations travel



Church sign Palmerston North



Church building Palmerston North



back and forth, there have been a number of pulpit exchanges, RCNZ ministers have provided pulpit supply in Western Australia, and young people from both sides of the Tasman Sea got together for a joined youth camp.

It was a sad moment when Synod decided to suspend the sister church relationship with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (RCN). For several years already the RCNZ had the same concerns about the developments in the RCN as have been expressed by the CanRC and many other Reformed and Presbyterian churches around the world. The readers may remember several articles on these matters in *Clarion*.

The decision of Synod Meppel (in June 2017) of the RCN to admit women to be ordained in all ecclesiastical offices, and the way in which the Bible is read to justify this decision, led the Interchurch Relations Committee to recommend this step and Synod adopted it unanimously. Although a sad moment indeed, I must say that the discussion had a brotherly tone and that it was dealt with in a respectful atmosphere.

Concluding remarks

It was a joy to experience the fellowship of faith at the Synod of the RCNZ. I felt very much at home, not only among the brothers in the Lord I met at Synod, but also among God's people in the congregation where I spend both Sundays.

It was a privilege to see the Holy Spirit at work in the humble submission to God's Word, the respectful man-

CALL ACCEPTED

Accepted the call extended to him by the Canadian Reformed Church of Abbotsford, BC:

Rev. Dave de Boer

of the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church of Chatham, Ontario

CALLED

Called by the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church in Smithville, ON:

Rev. A. Witten

of the Vernon Canadian Reformed Church, Vernon, B.C.

CHURCH NEWS

ner in which the brothers worked together and listened to each other, the moving devotions by ministers, vicars, and elders, the intense prayers, especially at a few tense moments, as well as the robust singing to the glory of God from their beautiful song book *Sing to the Lord*.

There is much to be thankful for in this sister church relationship with a faithful and true church of the Lord Jesus Christ, fully committed to the Scriptures and to the Reformed faith summarized in the great confessions of the Reformation.

Sometimes people wonder. . . why do we maintain relationships with churches around the globe? The world is a big place, and our manpower and resources are not unlimited. Well, as we face the same challenges as Reformed churches in a post-christian society, we do have opportunities to support each other.

But there is more. It is good to be reminded that we are part of something that is much bigger than our own ecclesiastical comfort zone. We see a glimpse of God's universal building project – his holy catholic church, and of what we confess about this church.

Meeting the Bride of Christ in this lovely sister of ours is a visible reminder that the glorified Son of God continues to gather, defend, and preserve the church, in the unity of the true faith, till with our own eyes we will all see the multitude no one can count.



Visiting our Scottish Brethren

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Introduction

It had been five years ago, in 2012, that the last Canadian Reformed delegation visited the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) and the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC). And so the Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad (CRCA), in line with the mandate given to it by General Synod Dunnville 2016, decided that it would be good for two delegates to visit the General Assembly of the FCS and the FCC. At Synod Dunnville, I had been appointed to serve in the CRCA and this was my first trip in that capacity. I was accompanied by Dr. John Vanderstoep of Surrey, BC, a recently retired member of the committee and a member of the previous delegation to Scotland in 2012.

Edinburgh

We set off from Vancouver airport on Thursday, May 18, 2017 and arrived in Edinburgh on the following day early in the afternoon. Coming from a small town in northern BC where there is much natural beauty but little tangible older history, I must say that suddenly finding myself walking through the streets of medieval Edinburgh was somewhat of a shock to the system, though a pleasant one. Edinburgh is a bustling city and the old downtown core is filled with interesting historical sites. The highest point is occupied by the castle which is an impressive sight and one of the oldest fortified places in Europe (according to the tourist literature). As you walk through the outer gates into the castle, you meet the statues of Scottish freedom fighters William Wallace and Robert the Bruce, who fought against the English in a struggle which would last for hundreds of years.

Various points of reformational historical interest could be seen as we walked through the castle and followed the Royal Mile down through the old city. Opposite St. Giles' Cathedral is the John Knox House, where John Knox is said to have lived during the last years of his life while he was minister in Edinburgh (1559-1572). Also of special interest is the Greyfriars Kirk, just a short way off the Royal Mile. At

this church, in 1638, the Covenanters signed the National Covenant which was a pledge to uphold and defend the true religion of the Bible and the teachings of the Reformers over against Roman Catholicism. It also set forth that the church should be free of control by the civil government. Some time later, the Covenanters were repressed and suffered horrible persecution for their beliefs.

At the end of Royal Mile is the Palace of the Holyrood. The name "Holyrood" refers to a relic which is supposed to have been part of the cross of Jesus. Legend has it that King David I, son of Queen Margaret, was out hunting near Edinburgh and was almost killed by a stag, when he saw his mother's "Black Rood" between the antlers, after which the stag suddenly went back into the forest. As a result, he founded the Holyrood Abbey in 1128. In the early 1500s, James IV built a palace next to the abbey. This palace remains a royal residence to this day. When we were there it was closed to the public because HRH Princess Anne was staying there during the week of the General Assembly. She is the Lord High Commissioner of the Church of Scotland; this national church was also having its General Assembly at this time. It is quite ironic that directly opposite this old and stately royal palace, on the other side of the street, stands the Scottish National Parliament with its ultra-modern architecture. Although there has been much conflict and bloodshed in the past, it is good to see that the British royals and Scottish nationalists are now able to co-exist peacefully.

Sunday worship

On Sunday, May 21, we worshipped in the morning at the Edinburgh-St. Columba's FCC. Rev. Robert McCurley of Greenville, South Carolina led the worship service. (The FCC have a North American presbytery consisting of several churches throughout the United States; the small congregation in Smith Falls, Ontario is considered a mission post.) He preached on Luke 23:39-43 about the conversion of the criminal on the cross, next to Jesus. He stressed how this showed the abun-

dant grace of the Lord that this man was given faith literally moments before his death but also emphasized the urgency of the need to repent today, that we must not presume upon the Lord's kindness that there will always be tomorrow for there may not be. The FCC sings the psalms exclusively in worship without any musical instruments. A precentor (known in Dutch as a *voorzanger*) leads the congregation in singing the psalm according to the tune which has been announced. A wide variety of tunes are used including some Genevans. In the FCC worship services and at their General Assembly, they stand to pray and sit to sing. This is done in contrast to the FCS, who stand to sing and sit to pray.

In between services, we were treated to an elaborate and delicious dinner at the residence of Rev. James Gracie (the minister of the Edinburgh-St. Columba's FCC) and his wife and their daughters. Rev. McCurley and an elder from his church were also present; we could enjoy a time of good Christian fellowship. Rev. Gracie then brought us to the St. Columba's FCS in old town Edinburgh, for the evening service.

The minister of St. Columba's FCS is Rev. Derek Lamont, who was also going to be the moderator for the FCS General Assembly. He led the worship service that evening and preached on Proverbs 8:22-31. In his sermon, he made the point that Jesus' beauty came through his holiness. So much of what the world calls "beauty" is only fleeting and temporary. He exhorted us to follow Jesus and to live a life filled with the beauty of holy living. In this worship service, we sang a mix of psalms, led by a precentor, and hymns, accompanied respectfully by a small band of several musical instruments. We spoke with a number of those who attended, including a couple who had recently come from the Church of Scotland, due to concerns about its unbiblical direction. We discovered that this is happening more frequently these days. The FCS is seen by members of other churches as a church which seeks to be faithful to the Word of God and as a good new church home for them. We were thankful for an encouraging day of worship with our brothers and sisters in the FCC and FCS.

Edinburgh Theological Seminary

On Monday, we visited the Edinburgh Theological Seminary, formerly the Free Church College. We were kindly given a tour of the facilities by the secretary and administrator, Mrs. Heather Watson. The seminary has recently expanded its operations and enrolls quite a few students, both from within and outside of the FCS, in a variety of programs, including undergraduate, graduate, diploma, and certificate theological studies. The quality of theologi-



St. Columba's Free Church of Scotland, where the FCS General Assembly was held.

cal education is maintained at a high standard. The following quote from Principal Iver Martin's recent annual report gives a sense of the vision of the seminary,

The current healthy enthusiasm for evangelism and church planting within the Free Church must not take precedence over robust, thorough theological education. Evangelism is much more than a one line message. The more theologically grounded we are, the more equipped we will be to bring the gospel to the lost. Cutting theological corners amounts to a short-term strategy and to ultimate disaster. In our hurry to reach people with the gospel it is sometimes tempting to sacrifice theological depth on the altar of pragmatism; and while vigour may appear to arouse short-term excitement, an absence of rigour will spell disaster in the longer term.

It is encouraging to note both the desire to reach the lost and to maintain theological depth. May the Lord bless the work of the seminary as it trains the next generation of leaders in the FCS and beyond.

General Assemblies

The sad reality of the two church federations, FCS and the FCC, is that they meet at their respective General Assemblies at the same time, making it challenging for visitors from abroad to take in their meetings. We decided that we would separate for the Monday opening evening service, with Dr. Vanderstoep visiting the FCS opening service, held at the St. Columba's FCS, and with me visiting the FCC service, held at the Liberton Kirk. We would then stay together for the rest of the time, visiting the FCS assembly on Tuesday and Thursday and the FCC assembly on Wednesday. This worked out well. Dr. Vanderstoep brought fraternal greetings from the Canadian Reformed Churches

to the FCS General Assembly while I did the same to the FCC General Assembly on Wednesday.

A special highlight was the visit of HRH Princess Anne to the FCS General Assembly at the end of its proceedings on Thursday at noon. She addressed the assembly on behalf of the Queen and thanked them for their continued work and commitment. She indicated that it was her pleasure to assure her Majesty of the Church's "loyalty and affection for her." Her visit (along with most of the other General Assembly sessions) can be viewed at the St. Columba's FCS Youtube channel. Both the FCS and FCC General Assemblies prepared and delivered Loyal and Dutiful Addresses to her Majesty the Queen.

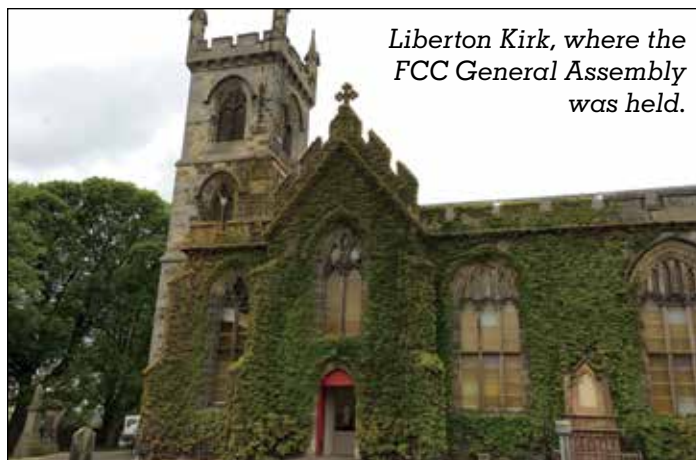
The General Assemblies essentially take two and a half days. They are run quite differently than our General Synod. As they meet every year, there is less material to work through and the reports and recommendations are all done ahead of time before the assembly starts. This means that, at the General Assembly, on the whole, there is opportunity for limited discussion and minor tweaking only. There is very little, if any, committee work done during the assembly as happens at our synods. It was our observation that the decisions of the General Assembly generally followed the recommendations submitted to the assembly. In what follows I would like to highlight some of the matters that were dealt with at the two General Assemblies.

FCS

The Mission Board reported the completion of a strategy document entitled "Reforming the Church for Mission" which hopes to stimulate the members of the church to be more engaged in the work of spreading the gospel in local communities. The desire is expressed that each member will have a heart for this work to reach the lost rather than it being seen only as a task for a committee in the church.



FCS General Assembly in session.



Liberton Kirk, where the FCC General Assembly was held.

The FCS is active in church planting efforts in various parts of Scotland. Some growth in various locations is encouraging. The matter of Christian education as well as supporting parents whose children are in state schools has the attention of the Board; it is hoped that this matter will be explored more fully in the coming year.

Various foreign mission projects are reported on. Activities are occurring in Latin America (Lima Theological Seminary in Peru and Rev. Dr. Manuel Renno in Colombia), South Africa (Dumisani Theological Institute and Free Church of Southern Africa), India (church plants by the Presbyterian Free Church and Christian schools in Lakhnadon and Chhapara), Israel (mission among Jewish people in Israel), Asia (Central Asia, Nepal and Turkey), Italy (Rev. Gavino Fioretti in northern Italy), and Cambodia.

The FCS maintains ecumenical relations in different categories with various federations of churches in the UK and abroad. The developments in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) with regard to women in office and same sex relations were noted with sadness.

The General Assembly this year was deeply affected by the tragic death of Rev. Dr. Iain Campbell in January 2017. The churches were urged to remember all those affected in prayer that they might receive healing and restoration. The report of the Board of Ministry had a special focus on the spiritual welfare of ministers and their families. It was noted that "more than 10 per cent of those who have been ordained in recent decades have left ministry because of resignation, burnout or moral failure." Paul David Tripp's book entitled *Dangerous Calling* was commended as a helpful resource in dealing with these challenges. The report urged ministers to know themselves, be diligent in heartfelt private worship and prayer, and hold themselves accountable with caring brothers in the faith.

FCC

The report of the Ecumenical Relations Committee referred to the prayer of Jesus Christ in John 17 that God's people would be one and the desirability that the spiritual unity among believers would also be expressed in outward unity in a church federation. The report states, "We believe this outward unity. . . should be promoted and pursued where possible between denominations without compromise of the Truth revealed in Scripture." Further, there are warnings against a "false ecumenicity" at the expense of the truth as well as an "unbiblical separatism." The report notes a number of contacts with North American churches and goes into some detail about its concerns with the apparent drift of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) toward women in office.

Mission projects in the UK as well as Europe are reported on. In addition to the work of Donald John Morrison in the UK, this work takes place in Northern Ireland (Ballyclare and Doagh), Spain (Barcelona, Miranda, and Bilbao), France (Pau), South America, and London. Further afield, mission work is also being done in Zambia and Sri Lanka. It is also noted that the FCC congregation of Smith Falls, Ontario is currently receiving the services of the retired Rev. John Roke of the United Reformed Churches in North America.

It was striking to hear how involved the FCC is in addressing the Scottish Parliament and other authorities on matters of public, religious, or moral concern. Some of the topics addressed are: same-sex marriage, organ and tissue donation, recent changes to the Child Protection system, objections to certain techniques in connection with *in vitro* fertilisation, abortion, the departure of the UK from the



John Knox House

EU, and the UK's relationship with the Vatican. Clear support for the UK leaving the EU is expressed as that would cause the UK to be independent of allegiance to another "earthly institution," would weaken ties to Roman Catholicism and move toward a situation in which the allegiance of the nation would be to the Lord.

Closing thoughts

It was good to be present at the General Assemblies of our Scottish brethren. We could get to know some of the people within the churches and could witness their desire to re-

main faithful to the Scriptures and the Reformed faith as summarized in the confessions. The gospel of the grace and mercy of God in Jesus was proclaimed clearly and permeated both the content and the tone of the General Assemblies. From the above, one can also sense that the FCS and FCC have a different history than we do, which results in some differences in practice and emphasis in various matters. This is to be expected and does not affect the fundamental unity that we have with them in the faith. We are thankful that we may have the bond of ecclesiastical fellowship with them.

At the same time, it must also be acknowledged that we experienced profound sadness at the division between the FCS and FCC (which occurred in 2000). It appears that the two federations have drifted apart more and more over the intervening years. While, as far as we can tell, they share the same faith and theology, there were disagreements concerning the application of certain principles of church government as well as liturgical and musical differences which could not be resolved in a satisfactory manner. As outsiders, we will never be able to understand all the intricacies of the situation. The brokenness, also in Christian churches, is all too evident in church history, also in our own context. The church will continue to struggle until the day that she becomes the church triumphant at the return of her Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!



Greyfriars Kirk, where the Covenanters signed the National Covenant in 1638.



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Protecting Freedom of Worship

The Canadian federal government is moving to eliminate outdated laws which have either been struck down by the court or simply don't function anymore in current society. That's commendable. Remove the clutter of obsolete legislation. However, Bill C-51 as it now reads will also strike from the law books offences which are still current and which protect freedom of worship by ensuring that worship can be carried out peacefully.

Clause 14 of this Bill would remove the protection that ministers and those who worship currently have under Section 176 of the Criminal Code which reads as follows:

Obstructing or violence to or arrest of officiating clergyman

176 (1) Every one who

- (a)** *by threats or force, unlawfully obstructs or prevents or endeavours to obstruct or prevent a clergyman or minister from celebrating divine service or performing any other function in connection with his calling, or*
- (b)** *knowing that a clergyman or minister is about to perform, is on his way to perform or is returning from the performance of any of the duties or functions mentioned in paragraph (a)*
 - (i) assaults or offers any violence to him, or*
 - (ii) arrests him on a civil process, or under the pretence of executing a civil process,**is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years.*

- (2)** *Every one who wilfully disturbs or interrupts an assemblage of persons met for religious worship or for a moral, social or benevolent purpose is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.*

Why the Liberal government would eliminate provisions which protect ministers and worshippers from interference and disturbance is not clear, especially since these laws are not unconstitutional and hate crimes against churches and mosques are on the rise. Indeed, as André Schutten of ARPA pointed out in Light House news, this law is still being used and it protects all faiths, including the Muslim faith.

Over against the argument that without this law people can still be charged with criminal trespass, André Schutten noted that such an argument shows "total ignorance of what a worship service is. . . . It's a public worship service. So, you know, we can't exactly criminally charge protestors who come to a church service if we're so public about our worship. Our worship is open to the public; we want other people to be able to come. They're welcome in our church buildings. We want them to hear the Gospel."

As the ARPA website notes, the good thing about the current criminal code is that judges have specific guidelines that can guide their judgment. "Furthermore, while we enjoy relative peace between religious groups in Canada, that has not always been the case, nor should we assume that it will continue. . . . As Canada welcomes more people of diverse faiths and conversations around controversial cultural issues increases tension, it is likely that we will have greater need for section 176, not less, in the coming decades."

So why does the Liberal government want to remove a law that historically protected Christian worship? Yet, the federal government has recently passed an anti-Islamophobia motion that seeks protection for Muslim worship but the Liberals refused to include protection for Christianity and other faiths. Is the current desire to delete section 176 another example of disdain for Christianity?

Bill C-51 has passed second reading. ARPA, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and others are lobbying the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights which is reviewing the bill to get Clause 14 removed. You can also do your part to protect your minister and the full freedom of Sunday worship from disruption by using ARPA's EasyMail. And, let us not forget to pray for the Lord's blessing on all efforts to safeguard our Christian liberties.

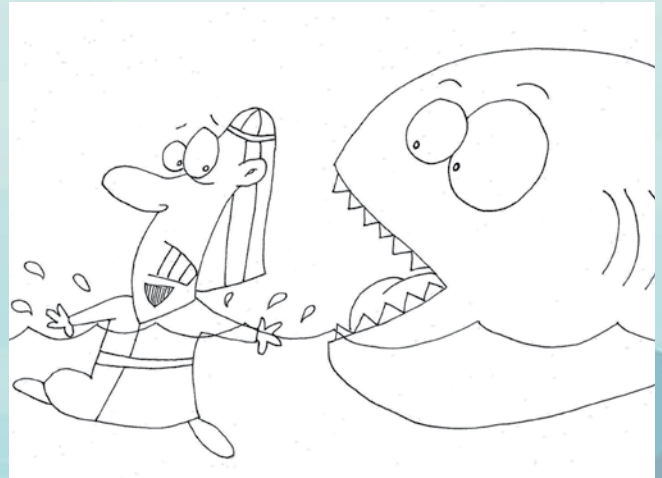
Sources used: The Government of Canada Justice Laws Website; Light House News on the ARPA website; the website of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.



Jonah

Jonah was a prophet. God told him to go to the city of Nineveh and tell them to repent because they had been very sinful. Jonah was afraid of the people of Nineveh, and decided to run away on a ship instead. God sent a huge storm and Jonah knew that the storm would only stop if the sailors threw him overboard. When they did, the storm stopped and God sent a huge fish to swallow Jonah. After three days, the fish spat him out, safe and sound. Then Jonah knew he could never run away from God. He went to Nineveh and told the people to repent. They listened to Jonah and repented, and God forgave them.

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

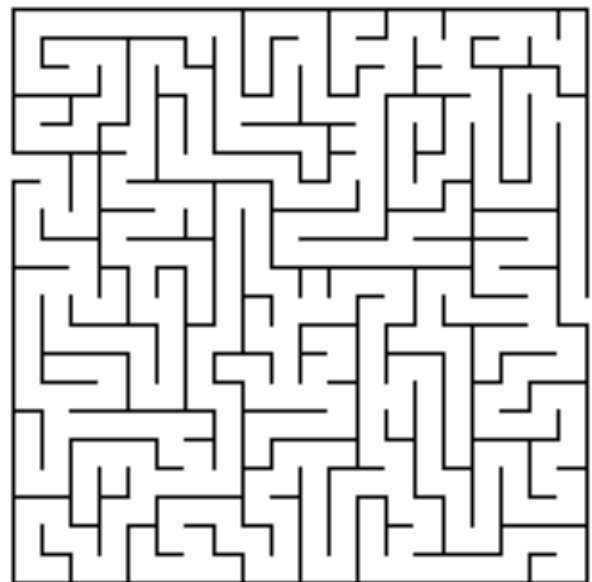


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Fish	Jonah	Nineveh
Overboard	Prophet	Repent
Sailors	Storm	Three

Maze: Help Jonah get to Nineveh!



by Emily Nijenhuis

The Lord has blessed us with a wonderful church community. All across the world we are able to celebrate Christ together; no matter how close or far away we are, no matter how small or big, young or old. May we all strive to be a ray of sunshine in each other's lives, showing the light of Christ in all that we do. The Lord loves each and every one of us with our unique talents and abilities. Let us all ask for strength from him to use each of our own talents and abilities in our everyday walk of life.

What is the Ray of Sunshine?

Here at the Ray of Sunshine we are able to celebrate the birthdays of those in our church communities who have a disability. We have many fellow church members who have a disability, whether it is physical, mental, or developmental. Here we can celebrate their birthday with them, and learn more about them. Each person has their own unique beautiful story. Through the Ray of Sunshine we can know who is celebrating a birthday and we also can learn more about each of them by the biographies written about them.

With the birthdays written here, we can personally send birthday greetings to our fellow church believers. A visit whenever possible means so much. You also could just send them a card; these gestures mean so much to each and every one of them. You could also maybe do this together as a group or society. Let us all show our love and support to everyone near and far.

If you know of a fellow church or family member who has a disability and would love to have their birthday submitted in the Ray of Sunshine I would love to know more about them!

Let us continue to encourage and take care of one another as we live in this present world. Each of us has been given a different task and different abilities. May we continue to be a ray of sunshine to everyone around us.

*But now, O LORD, you are our Father;
We are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.*

Isaiah 64:8

December birthdays

10 James Kamminga will be 33

c/o Cornerstone Christian Care
Box 367
Carman, MB R0G 0J0

15 Julie Kamminga will be 29

c/o Cornerstone Christian Care
Box 367
Carman, MB R0G 0J0

Happy Birthday to both James and Julie! May the Lord bless you with many more years in his care.



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

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William den Hollander
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Q Were people surprised by John's approach with baptism?

Matthew 3:11 mentions baptism for the first time. As far as we know, nowhere in the Old Testament is baptism mentioned. Wouldn't the people have questioned that: This stranger, in the desert, with weird clothes, baptizing?

A Baptism is characterized in the New Testament as a “cleansing by the washing of water” (Eph 5:26), or by the “washing” of regeneration (Titus 3:5). The connection is rather obvious between baptism as “a cleansing by the washing with water” and the washings prescribed for the Israelites in the *Old Testament*. In the OT, washings were related, first of all, to the service in the tabernacle and temple. They were required for the priests before they could perform their service in the LORD’s holy place (Exod 29:4), as they were for the Levites (Num 8:6-7). All Israelites as well often had to wash themselves in order to participate in the service of the LORD (Lev 15). People had to be cleansed before appearing in God’s sight! A special kind of cleansing was required for those who had been healed of their leprosy (Lev 14:1-9). Even away from God’s presence in the sanctuary, the Israelites had to be cleansed by the washing of water (Gen 35:2; Exod 19: 10; 2 Sam 12:20). The OT washings had a special eschatological meaning as well (i.e. with a view to the future of Israel) (Ezek 36:25, 27). Their washings, therefore, were more than ceremonial practices; they symbolized the deeper meaning of their need for cleansing by the LORD God himself. Hence *baptism* (John’s, Jesus’, and the NT sacrament of baptism) is the fulfilment of the OT *washings*.

Although it is true, as the questioner states, baptism *per se* is not mentioned in the OT, there is yet another practice that was commonly known in the days of John the Baptizer, namely the *proselyte baptism*. We read about it in the commentaries on the OT laws and decrees (e.g. in the Talmud). Proselyte baptism was the baptism required of a Gentile who became a Jew. A proselyte was a “newcomer,” literally, a recent convert, one who was brought over from one religious belief to another. The “newcomer” had to be baptized (washed, cleansed) just as the Jews were being washed, cleansed. The “newcomer” or Gentile had to observe the same as the Law required of the Israelites (Num 15:15) – the proselyte was washed (baptized!) a week after his circumcision, when his wound had been healed. At that time the proselyte was instructed in some of the weightier and lighter matters of the law, after which “he plunged himself and came up;” and behold, he was an Israelite in all things (cf. Paul’s description of baptism in terms of dying to the old self and rising to the new self, Rom 6:1-14).

As this proselyte baptism was being in use in John’s days, it was not strange at all when John started baptizing, namely his baptism unto repentance and forgiveness of sins (Jer 31:34)! In fact, also John’s baptism had this eschatological overtone (as in the OT washings, cf. Ezek 36: 25, 27), proclaiming as he did the coming of the kingdom of heaven. “Repent, and prepare the way of the Lord,” John was saying, upon

which people from far and near would come and be baptized. John presented himself in the apparel of Elijah (2 Kgs 1:8), thereby fulfilling the OT prophecy and promise of the coming of a second Elijah as well (Mal 4:5). Yes, even the fact that John preached in the wilderness had its own meaning and purpose, seeing how the people of Israel came to Canaan through the wilderness and given the prophecy in Hosea 2:13 that in the

last days the LORD would bring his people in the desert again and speak to its heart. At that time there also was the expectation that the Messiah would come from the desert, hence John was there to prepare the hearts of God's people for the coming of the Messiah, and thus for the coming of the kingdom of God! In short, there was nothing strange, unusual, or surprising in John's preaching, baptizing, place, and apparel!

Q What about unions today, can Christians join them or not?

What about Christians forming or joining a union: can they or can they not? Is there a discerning biblical view on unions?

A The matter expressed in this question is a complex one. It's a sensitive issue, and one which has a history that hasn't always seen the necessary clarity, justice, and insights regarding this complexity. As in many ethical matters, the Bible does not give cut and dried answers that will solve every problem or clarify every nuance. Although scriptural principles can be applied to such aspects as authority, justice, labour and labour relations, voluntary associations of men for various positive societal purposes (hospital boards, workers' guilds), and the like, the practical consequences of these principles in matters of contracts, employer-employee relations, strikes, and rights and freedoms cannot always be discerned easily.

The phenomenon of a "union" for the purpose of collective bargaining can be recognized in the situation as revealed in 1 Kings 12: 3-4, the people of Israel discussing

with Rehoboam his policy and approach to government. The Bible does not judge whether this was right or wrong. Another example that can be adduced from history is the trade "guilds" in the Middle Ages. They served to help one another, make rules for training new members, maintain a high level of skill and workmanship, etc. Likewise, today there are the associations that serve to protect the profession, the professionals, and their "products" or services (e.g. doctors, lawyers, accountants, pilots), and membership is voluntary. Basically, a union is an organization engaged in regulating employer-employee relations and requiring several essential elements, such as a constitution approved by members, and not being employer dominated or influenced.

In any and every labour relationship there should be an agreement, or contract, between the employer and employee which is the result of mutual negotiations. Such a contract can be continued or terminated by both parties, according to the terms set out in the contract. In a larger business,

however, it is very difficult for the management to deal with a great number of employees on an individual basis. Collective bargaining is more efficient; hence, if the union or association is simply assisting the employer and employees in terms of establishing mutually agreeable terms of contract and allowing collective bargaining as opposed to individual contracting, it benefits both parties. Included in these contract talks should then also be matters of justice and fair treatment (James 5:4), pay, vacation, working hours, and minimum safety standards. If and when such labour regulations and agreements are achieved through reasonable and peaceful negotiations, this may only benefit both parties in a labour relationship. In the Old Testament already the LORD provided several laws regarding workers, concerning their wages, exploitation of workers, hired men (Lev 19:13; Deut 24:14; Isa 58:3; Mal 3:5).

When we hear the name “unions,” generally speaking this meets with reservation and rejection. Traditionally unions have consistently pursued adversarial relationships with employers. The existence and performance of a Christian labours association (CLAC), for instance, shows that an approach of cooperation rather than confrontation, of conciliatory bargaining for practical purposes, does not violate scriptural principles. Before we reject a certain organization or association, therefore, and condemn those who join it, we should first study its constitution and history to see how they reach their goals. What does the constitution say about the obligations of the members; what forms of commitments are required in order to join the association; are there commitments required which Christians cannot make (e.g. complete allegiance and total commitment, participation in strikes, walking the picket line, etc. which would be against God’s

call to work faithfully and promote the neighbour’s good – the employer’s, fellow-worker’s, communities’ well-being)? A blind allegiance to the dictates of the executive and the vote of the membership contravenes the exclusive demands of God (first commandment) and of Christ (Matt 10:36; 16:24) as well as our total submission to the Word of God (1 John 4:6); no one can or may serve two masters. Obligations, however, have to be considered on their own merits: e.g. some are trade associations and organizations of workers in a certain area of science, technology, and academic pursuits to exchange expertise and experience and to administer matters of common interest.

Many more aspects could (and should) be considered when considering the question of joining or forming a union; more than can be addressed within the format and limitations of this column. First and foremost among them are related to the place of a Christian in their participation: does it require disobedience to the Lord (Acts 4:19; 5:29), violation of conscience (Rom 13:5; 1Tim 1:19); a yoke of slavery that replaces the yoke of Christ (Matt 6:24; Gal 5:1), or an unequal yoke with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14), or does it put up an obstacle among the brotherhood of faith (Rom 14). Also, in regards to labour relations, the Christian should insist upon freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom of conscience, and freedom to dissent in a situation of strikes or financial support with union dues for purposes that are in conflict with God’s Word or our faith. From past experience, however, I know that obtaining exemptions from these and other practices are possible, yet requires consistency among the members, faithfulness to Scripture and confessions, and a willingness to stand up for our constitutional rights.



**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 Northern Ontario, held September 21, 2017, at the building of Fergus Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church

The assembly began with singing, reading of God's Word, and prayer. All the churches were properly represented and Classis was constituted. Rev. D. Pol served as president, Rev. M. Jagt as vice-president, and Rev. E. Kampen as clerk.

All the churches were properly represented and Classis was constituted. Reports were given on church visits to the following churches: Brampton, Fergus Maranatha, Grand Valley, Guelph Living Word, Guelph Emmanuel, Orangeville. These reports were received with thankfulness.

The church of Orangeville reported that the archives kept by Owen Sound were found to be in good order. The classical treasurer's report was received showing a healthy bank balance. It was also reported that the books of the classical treasurer had been checked and were found to be in good order.

A report from the Needy Churches Committee indicated there was no request for assistance. An audit of the books of this Committee indicated they were in good order.

The churches answered in the affirmative that the ministry of the office bearers is being continued and the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured (Art. 44 C.O.). In closed session, Classis dealt with a request for advice in a matter of discipline.

Greetings were received from Rev. Doug Bylsma of the OPC and Rev. Bernard Westerveld of the ERQ.

Classis made various appointments. Among them, appointed to the Appeals Committee are brs. Archie Bax, with Jake Bouwman and Rob Span as alternates. Delegated to Regional Synod East of November 8, 2017 are brs. Archie Bax and Riemer Faber and as alternates, brs. Charles Groen and Joop Feenstra. Rev. J. Chase and Rev. E. Kampen are appointed as minister delegates with Rev. D. Pol and Rev. M.H. VanLuik as alternates.

The church at Fergus North was appointed to convene the next classis, scheduled for December 8, 2017. The chairman noted with thankfulness that the meeting could be conducted in a brotherly manner. The meeting ended after singing and prayer.

Rev. M. Jagt Vice-president at that time

Press Release of Classis Manitoba convened in the Canadian Reformed Church of Carman West on September 22, 2017

1. On behalf of the Canadian Reformed Church of Carman West, Dr. A.J. Pol called the meeting to order. He read from Psalm 87 and spoke some appropriate words, requested that the brothers sing Hymn 46:1, 4, and led in prayer. He welcomed all present, in particular Candidate James V. Zekveld, and the deputies of Regional Synod, Rev. R. Aasman and Rev. J. Slaa, as well as Rev. B. Cochran who was present as fraternal delegate from the Providence Reformed Church in Winnipeg (URC).
2. The credentials of the delegates were examined by the brothers from the convening church and reported to be in order.
3. Classis was declared constituted.
4. The following officers were appointed:
 - a. President: Dr. A.J. Pol
 - b. Vice President: Rev. J. Poppe
 - c. Clerk: Elder L. Toet
5. For memorabilia it was mentioned that the Lord took home Dr. J. DeJong, former professor at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, on April 15. Rev. S.

- Vandeveld declined a call from the Pilgrim CanRC in London. The church at Winnipeg Redeemer extended a call to Candidate James Zekveld to serve as missionary, which has been accepted. The ongoing vacancy in Denver was remembered and this church was wished the Lord's blessing in pastoring the flock and in their search for their own pastor and teacher.
6. The deputies of Regional Synod and Rev. B. Cochran were seated. Rev. J. VanRietschoten (an emeritus minister in our midst) was welcomed as an advisor to Classis. Brother J. Kuik, as Deputy of Classis for Neighbouring Classes and Presbyteries, was also seated.
7. The agenda was adopted after a few adjustments.
8. At this Classis Candidate James Zekveld, who has accepted the call extended to him by the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church of Winnipeg, presented himself for a peremptory examination. Classis examined the documentation, and found all to be in order.
9. Candidate Zekveld proceeded to read Zephaniah 3:11-20, and to deliver his sermon proposal on this text. In closed session, Classis deemed this sermon proposal sufficient to continue with the rest of the examination, and the deputies of regional synod gave their concurring advice.

10. Candidate Zekveld was examined in exegesis Old Testament, exegesis New Testament, knowledge of contents of Holy Scripture, doctrine and creeds, church history, ethics, church polity, and diaconiology. During this examination the chairman welcomed Rev. R. Anjema as a fraternal delegate from the Providence Reformed Church (URC) in Winnipeg, and Peter Veenendaal and Ron Vanderzwaag as Deputies of Classis for Neighbouring Classes and Presbyteries. They were seated. Classis went into closed session to evaluate the exam. It deemed the exam sufficient, and the deputies of regional synod concurred, opening the way for Candidate Zekveld to be ordained as Missionary. The president thanked the deputies of regional synod for their presence at Classis and giving concurring advice in the examination of brother Zekveld. The support for the Zekveld family was examined, and deemed to be sufficient.
11. The president communicated the result of the examination to Candidate and sister Zekveld and the audience, and wished Candidate Zekveld the Lord's blessing as he is ordained and takes up his work. The president read from 1 Timothy 4:11-16, invited all present to sing from Hymn 50:1, 4, and led in a prayer of thanksgiving. He read the Form of Subscription, and Candidate Zekveld was asked to sign it, indicating his willingness to preach and teach the Word of God as summarised in the Three Forms of Unity. He did so. A certificate of admission to the ministry of the Canadian Reformed Churches was issued. Rev. J. Van Rietschoten was thanked for his participation as advisor at Classis. Classis adjourned and an opportunity was given to congratulate Candidate Zekveld. Classis appointed Rev. H.J. Vanderhorst to be present at the ordination of Candidate Zekveld and pass on Classis' greetings.
12. The Deputies for Contact with Neighbouring Classes and Presbyteries presented a written report with supporting documentation. Brother Jacob Kuik made some explanatory comments. A letter of greeting was received from the stated clerk of Classis Central US. Our deputies are active in maintaining contact with Central Classis of the URCNA, the Northern Plains Classis of the RCUS, and the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the OPC. The OPC has established a congregation in Grand Forks, North Dakota, and Classis requested the deputies to do a write-up about this in the Manitoba Church News. Classis expressed its thankfulness to these brothers for their diligence in maintaining contact with churches in ecclesiastical fellowship. Intercessory prayer was offered for each of these churches.
13. The Committee for Aid to Needy Churches presented a report. The suggested assessment for the coming year is \$40 per communicant member, a decrease from \$60 in 2017. Classis approves this level of support. The church of Denver expressed their sincere thanksgiving for the on-going support of the churches in Classis Manitoba.
14. The Church for Auditing the books for Aid to Needy Churches (Winnipeg Redeemer) reported that the books were found to be in good order.
15. The Committee for Students of Theology presented its report. The churches continue to encourage our men to consider studying for the ministry. Various young men who have expressed interest in pursuing studies at our Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary are being mentored.
16. Rev. B. Cochrane brought greetings from the Providence Reformed Church. He expressed thankfulness at the outcome of Candidate Zekveld's examination, and appreciation for the close bond between our churches. Our fraternal delegates were thanked for coming, and prayer was offered for our sister churches and our unity in the faith.
17. Question Period according to Art. 44 C.O. was held. Two churches asked for advice in matters of discipline. Concurring advice was given to these churches.
18. Correspondence. Our treasurer, brother Henry Veldman, asked to be relieved of his duties as treasurer after seventeen years of service. His request was granted, and a letter of thanks will be sent. Classis appointed sister Wilma Bergsma as treasurer.
19. Appointments.
 - a. The convening church for the next classis is the Emmanuel American Reformed Church of Denver, to be hosted in the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church. Classis is scheduled to be held, the Lord willing on December 15, 2017, at 3:00 pm. Alternate date: March 23, 2018 at 3:00 pm.
 - b. The suggested officer for the next classis is:
 - i. President: Rev. H.J. Vanderhorst.
 - c. Various standing committees, examiners for ecclesiastical exams, classical deputies, and church visitors are appointed.
 - d. The following delegates were appointed to Regional Synod West, November 6, 2017: As ministers, Rev. J. Poppe and Rev. S. Vandevelde, with Dr. A.J. Pol and Rev. H.J. Vanderhorst as first and second alternates; as elders Gerry van Dijk and John Toet, with Henry Slaa and W. (Bill) Raap as first and second alternates.
20. Personal question period was held.
21. No censure according to Art. 34 of the Church Order was necessary.
22. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release approved for publication.
23. The vice-president requested that the brothers sing from Hymn 45 and led in closing prayer.

For Classis Manitoba, September 22, 2017

J. Poppe, Vice-president at that time

