

# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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A close-up, profile view of a woman holding a sleeping baby. The woman's face is in profile, looking down at the baby. The baby is wearing a light-colored onesie and is sleeping peacefully. The background is a soft, warm glow from a sunset or sunrise, with a blurred landscape. The overall mood is tender and nurturing.

**Is the office of a  
nurturing mother  
honourable?**

*SOUTH AFRICA'S SYNOD SOSHANGUVE  
GRAND OPENING OF GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL  
CLARION KIDS*

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Another volume has begun for *Clarion* magazine. Our editorial is from Dr. Cornelis Van Dam, "Saved Through Childbearing." Dr. Van Dam's column, Clippings on Politics and Religion, is also in our first issue of the new year.

We are blessed and thankful to have new meditations being written and coordinated for the Treasures New and Old column. The first comes from Rev. Randall Visscher. *Clarion Kids* continues this year as well.

In news, there are several articles: a visit to a synod in South Africa, and reports on a school opening and a league day.

In addition, there is a book review from Rev. Rob Schouten, looking at the topic of the proper place for technology in our homes.

Laura Veenendaal

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# Saved Through Childbearing

*The beauty of motherhood is not dependent  
on a certain culture or time in history*

On my early morning power walk I sometimes see young mothers carrying their bundled-up sleepy infants to their cars to take them to day care so that their mom can go to her place of employment. There is a lot of pressure on married women in our society today to get out of the house and have their own career, as if being a nurturing mother is not a worthy vocation. Too often in our current secular culture, motherhood and children are regarded as inconveniences that somehow needed to be managed but are actually peripheral to one's personal goals in life. Consequently, one gets the impression that motherhood and receiving children does not appear to receive the recognition and honour that it enjoyed in previous generations.

Yet, the Bible says that “women will be saved through childbearing” (1 Tim 2:15). How are we to understand that?

## **The biblical position of woman denied**

We live in a very individualistic secular culture in which one's personal goals, aspirations, and the quest for “self-fulfilment” trump all else. Needless to say, this development also presents challenges to us as Christians. Are our priorities always counter-cultural in this respect? Each situation is different and also Reformed mothers, although they may wish otherwise, may in some circumstances and for different reasons need to leave their infants and the comfort of their home. My comments in this editorial are not intended to condemn such choices but simply to raise the issue of the current disparagement of motherhood and the role which God ordained for married women who have been blessed with children.

It is not fashionable these days to suggest that God ordained different roles for men and women. In a politically correct world no distinction is to be made. Our current prime minister, Justin Trudeau, even prides himself in having a cabinet with an equal number of men and women, as if one's gender is the critical qualification necessary for the

ability to serve in government. The erosion and, in a sense, the negation of the created differences between men and women is ultimately Satanic, for it is an affront to God's distinctive creation design of male and female, both physically and psychologically. One of the consequences of not accepting God's intention for the basic roles of male and female is an undermining of the family unit as biblically defined with the husband normally being the breadwinner and the wife being the nurturing mother if the Lord grants children. This order is reflected in our marriage form in which the husband's duty is to “work faithfully in your daily calling, that you may support your family and also help those in need.” The wife's duty is to “take proper care of your family and household.”

Now, Satan has been around a long time, and this is not the first time that he has sought to subvert the proper role of husband and wife. Already in paradise at the urging of the devil, Eve usurped the position of leadership that her husband Adam had in their marriage and she thus led Adam into sin. Satan continues working on that ancient agenda. Today we are witnessing an assault on the divinely ordained male role in ecclesiastical office. Many churches have succumbed to the spirit of the age by admitting women to ecclesiastical office and giving them teaching and ruling authority over men in direct contradiction to what God himself has said in his Word.

It may be helpful to consider an apostolic teaching that helps us to see how honourable the office of a nurturing mother is. In his first letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul combines his teaching on the exclusion of women from church office with the blessing of motherhood by concluding “but women will be saved through childbearing” (1 Tim 2:15). To properly understand what is meant we need to pause and first briefly consider the context in which these words occur.

## The woman's place in church

These remarkable words on women's salvation through childbearing immediately follow the apostolic instruction that "a woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" (1 Tim 2:11-14).

To properly understand this prohibition, one must realize that it occurs within the apostolic instruction on aspects of public worship. 1 Timothy 2:1-7 speaks of congregational prayer, verses 8-15 speak of the place of men and women when the church convenes, and chapter 3 deals with qualifications for office bearers. A consequence of this ecclesiastical context is that although women are forbidden to teach or have authority over men in church, this prohibition

does not apply outside the church. Thus we read, for example, of women teaching the way of the Lord outside the worship services (Acts 18:26; Titus 2:3-4).

The reason for the prohibition of women to teach or to have authority over a man in church is the order in which Adam and Eve were created. In other words, their roles are rooted in creation and therefore apply for all times, regardless of the local culture. It means that also today this biblical injunction is in force. The order of creation cannot be changed and women are therefore excluded from the authoritative teaching office in the church. Furthermore, when Eve took charge and assumed leadership, she led Adam to join her in her sin when he also ate the forbidden fruit. Her leadership led to the disastrous fall. This is another reason God's Word (1 Tim 2:14) tells us why "a woman should learn in quietness and full submission" (1 Tim 2:11) to the teaching office bearer. In other words, women should follow the example of Mary who sat at the foot of her Saviour and listened to his teaching (Luke 10:39). It is an enormous privilege to hear the gospel and to learn about what God has revealed to us. That privilege is fully accorded to both men and women. The Bible promotes the

education and growth of women in the things of the Lord. They are by no means excluded or considered of second importance. Both male and female are children of God who fully and equally share in the blessings of salvation. There is neither "male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). But there are divinely ordained distinctions that need to be maintained.

The apostle has no desire to portray women as inferior members of the congregation with his reference to Eve's sin and concluded his instruction on the place of women in the church by saying "but women will be saved through childbearing." What does that mean?

## Saved through childbearing

We have just seen that these words come within the context of determining the correct role for women in the church. The apostle noted that Eve once fell for Satan's temptation and was deceived with all the subsequent horrible events. She had fallen into the clutches of the evil one. But, the point seems to be that she can be saved from the devil if she would stick to her God-given role, duties, and obligations. That appears to be the gist of the text's meaning when the apostle, immediately after mentioning Eve's falling into sin continues with the words: "but women will be saved through childbearing" (1 Tim 2:15a). And lest this be interpreted to mean that women will be saved simply by sticking to their God-given role, the apostle adds: "If they [i.e. the women] continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety" (1 Tim 2:15b).

To understand the biblical text here, one should realize that the term "childbearing" refers to more than simply giving birth. A woman's task in being a mother does not end with childbirth but in many ways rather begins at that point. The term "childbearing" is used here to indicate the mother's role with all that this entails in having a family, such as raising the children and managing the home. Giving birth is a divinely ordained function of women and not of men. This female capability thus highlights the different roles that women are meant to have. By focussing the attention on childbearing, the apostle also underlines that being a mother is a most honourable and beautiful task. It is also an enduring task throughout all times. It is not dependent on a certain culture or time in history. It is part of God's design at creation. Only women have been designed to be able to bear children.

When the apostle emphasized the importance of childbearing, he was also speaking out against the depreciation of marriage and motherhood championed by the false teachers in his day (cf. 1 Tim 4:3). The apostle's words

***One of the consequences of not accepting God's intention for the basic roles of male and female is an undermining of the family unit***

also go against the denigration of marriage and the gift of children rampant in our culture. While our culture under-values motherhood, the apostle promoted motherhood. He even basically says that if mothers stick to their God-given calling as mothers and focus on that, they will be

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saved from the snares of Satan into which Eve fell, provided of course “that they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety” (1 Tim 2:15). Obviously this does not mean or imply that women must bear children in order to be saved from Satan’s deceit. Elsewhere the apostle Paul wrote in a positive way of the un-

married state (1 Cor 7:1-5). God calls women into many different callings in life which can be used in his service. The purpose in 1 Timothy 2 is not that all should be mothers, but the point is that women should honour the role that God ordained for them and to make that point, the apostle used the example of being a mother. By doing so, he underlined the blessing of motherhood.

## **The blessing of motherhood**

Receiving children is a tremendous gift from the Lord. It can never be taken for granted. Indeed, to be a mother is a privileged calling which is to be embraced. Through the birth of a child God has entrusted to the parents a new member of the covenant community whom they may with much prayer and under his blessing teach and instruct in the ways of the Lord.

To be sure, the task of being a mother can be very demanding. I’m no authority on the subject, but I can imagine that mothers feel challenged when they need to multi-task in arduous circumstances and remain clear-headed and focussed on the issues at hand. Being a mother can also be frustrating and feelings of self-pity and being tied down too much can arise. But, God has also given mothers tremendous promises of being there for them in all circumstances of life. Think of those beautiful baptismal promises! Christian mothers are children of a great Father who will provide for them and who can cover all their shortcomings and sins with the blood of the lamb.

Mothers can also be encouraged by the fact that God is also using them to increase the church in a very special way. Mothers may not have time for special evangelistic efforts, but they are doing their part according to God’s plan for their role as mother. Being a Christian mother means being in a special service of love for the risen Christ who gathers his church, also by way of the cradle. It means being counter-cultural in a most meaningful and profound way. C





# Enlisted for Christ

***No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. 2 Timothy 2:4***

No doubt we have all heard of the importance of reflecting and meditating upon Scripture. There are treasures in Scripture which remain hidden to us if we read over them too quickly. We can see this clearly in 2 Timothy 2:4-7, where Paul delivers a series of proverbs or images meant to encourage Timothy and other believers to “be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (v. 2) and “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (v. 3). Instead of explaining these images, Paul simply says, “Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.”

While we look then to the Lord for true illumination, it is helpful to understand what things were like for a soldier in Paul’s day. The life of a soldier in the ancient Roman world was one of great difficulty. It was a life lived with the hope of great gain after a long struggle. Roman soldiers at that time signed up for twenty-five years of active service, making a modest wage while risking death or dismemberment. However, if they served faithfully and survived those twenty-five years, they earned

a one-time retirement bonus that was equivalent to the pay for thirteen years of service. A good soldier would keep his eye on the prize awaiting him, much like a good Christian needs to stay focussed on the gift of eternal life, which is ultimately granted to us after our time of service in the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Paul notes to Timothy, “No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.” In many places in the Roman Empire, the commanding officers were responsible for recruiting the men who would serve in the units under their charge. The one who enlisted you was in authority over you, and he wanted you focussed on your military duties and not on civilian ones. In order to encourage this, Roman soldiers were not legally permitted to marry during their time of service. The army did not want soldiers becoming closely connected with local women or with the civilian societies in which they were placed. As soldiers of Christ, we are to be focussed in the first place on pleasing our commanding officer, our Head,

and not become overly attached to the world in which we serve under him.

Roman soldiers sometimes developed a bad habit of trying to extort and otherwise abuse members of the local population, bringing about resentment and discontent. In the Roman Empire, the only way to deal with such abuse was by going to their officers. Historians have uncovered a number of complaints coming from civilians, directed to Roman military officers, requesting that the injustices committed by their men be corrected. A good soldier was one who did not create such trouble for his commanding officer. As believers, we ought to be careful that our conduct does not harm the reputation of our commanding officer.

As Christians, we are called to please the one who called us to this life, Christ Jesus, who has enlisted us into the kingdom of God. It is easy to lose focus and prioritize things which will make this life more comfortable for us, but we are to remember that our first loyalty is to be to our Saviour, who has claimed us for himself and brought us into the kingdom of his Father. **C**

## For Further Study

1. What kinds of “civilian pursuits” threaten to entangle us today?
2. What kinds of actions please the one who has enlisted us?
3. Read 2 Timothy 2:5, 6. What are these images meant to teach us?

# South Africa's Synod Soshanguve

The thirty-ninth synod of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA) was held from August 7 to 11, 2017. It was hosted by the mission FRCSA congregation of Soshanguve North, just outside Pretoria. Already the Sunday before Synod began, there was a prayer service in the Soshanguve North church, led by Dr. A. J. deVisser and assisted by Rev. P. Magagula, missionary of another FRCSA mission church in the area. Though there was a distinctly “non-western” feel to this delightful service, the remainder of Synod proceedings felt relatively “traditional.”

The meeting facilities for the week of Synod were comfortable and authentically African. We slept, ate, and assembled in meeting halls where the thatch of the roof material was on full display. We were housed at a very comfortable resort called Pure Joy Lodge; the venue ensured ample opportunity for productive formal and informal discussions.

Delegation to the synod was noteworthy. Eight of the twelve South African delegates were white, two were black (more correctly identified: Sotho-speaking) from the Pretoria area, and two were coloured (mixed descent) from the Cape Town area. Interestingly, the foreign delegates also had mixed backgrounds: from Australia Rev. 't Hart and Rev. Hagg (who grew up in SA and was considering a call back to SA. . . he declined); from The Netherlands Rev. Schreuder and Alexandre Pedro (who was born in Angola and thirty years ago fled as a refugee to The Netherlands); from our churches Dr. de Visser (who spent a good bit of his childhood as well as missionary life in SA), and American/Canadian me. All in all, Synod was a truly multi-cultural experience.

Though the foreign delegates were welcome to provide input on the topics under discussion, chairman Rev. P. Boon made sure that the FRCSA delegates were heard first; foreigners were invited to contribute at the end of the second round of each discussion. For most topics three rounds were sufficient to determine the wishes of those gathered.

Almost all of the synod proceedings took place in the English language. However, delegates were free, if necessary, to use another language which was summarily translated. Most of the singing was in English, frequently from our *Book of Praise*. As at any general synod, a wide range of topics required the attention of the delegates. One of the two classes brought forward a request for advice regarding celebrating the Lord's Supper to members unable to be in attendance in the regular worship services. Slightly modified rules for synods were adopted. Some proposals regarding internal matters like the liturgical forms, Bible translations, and form prayers had to be dealt with and appeared not to be overly onerous.

## Ecclesiastical relationships

As anticipated, relationships with other federations was a big topic. The first few below were concluded quite quickly; the latter ones took considerable time.

- A proposal from one classis to work towards establishing sister-church relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand was turned down for practical reasons; the small (approximately 1500 members in total) federation doesn't have the means to maintain relationships with churches all around the world. Instead, Synod decided to extend an invitation to the RCNZ to attend the next synod of the FRCSA and rejoice in their faithfulness.
- Great thankfulness was expressed for the continued faithfulness and good relationships the FRCSA can enjoy with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia as well as with our Canadian Reformed Churches. Parenthetically, I was assured that the FRCSA was not only appreciative of our presence – they are also confident in the anticipated faithfulness of our federation; after all: they “sent” one of their missionaries to a position of influence in our churches.

- With many personal connections between The Netherlands and South Africa, there is a very close relationship with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands and the FRCSA. It was with sincere sorrow that Synod adopted a similar position as our Synod Dunnville had, putting into suspension the rules regarding attestations and welcoming Dutch ministers to FRCSA pulpits. Synod acknowledged that the current relationship is untenable because of the new hermeneutic becoming evident in various ways in the RCN.
- A proposal was submitted “to continue contact with the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA = “Dopper”) on a national level in view of strengthening the bond in the unity of the Reformed faith.” Though much time was spent discussing differences, the committee was instructed, besides continued investigation in various areas, to “actively assist congregations in their local contacts with RCSA congregations.”
- A second national federation with whom some FRCSA congregations have significant contact is the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (NG Kerk in Afrika). This is a federation of mainly black (Sotho-speaking and other languages) churches who seceded from the large Dutch Reformed Church a few decades ago. (See <http://www.ngka.co.za/> for further information.) Continued contact was encouraged, in order to support (members in) those churches in their search for real Reformed church polity. Synod also encouraged local activities between these

churches in the future. There was deliberate acknowledgement of the reality that moving forward, their FRC-SA federation needs to interact meaningfully with these other much larger South African federations.

### Other challenging topics

Another challenging topic Synod had to deal with was theological education. Profound appreciation was evident for the close relationship between our CRTS and the FRC-SA, especially as it is evident they no longer can expect young men to study in Kampen. After grappling how best to direct non-white students, Synod instructed deputies to work towards the appointment of an “anchor theologian” to provide coordination and assistance to their young men interested in studying for the ministry. Our CRTS will continue to remain involved. The financial consequence is that federational assessments for theological education increased from a nominal level to one comparable to our own.

Finally, challenges associated with actively working in a mission context close to home required extensive discussion. One component of that discussion was to deal with a request to allow “tentmaker ministry” to function amongst the missionary congregations. Synod determined that if a church wished to pursue such an option, she should simply use the options available within the framework of the Church Order, and perhaps identify alternate verbiage such as “teaching elder.” Another component related to their mission is the amount of money that is received from foreign sources. Their mission activities are substantially fi-





nancially dependent on foreign sources. Though no breakthrough solutions for this reality came forward, it is clear that the FRCSA is not comfortable with such arrangements; discussions will continue.

## Impressions

A noteworthy feature in the FRCSA is a meeting of the churches at the half-way point between the general synods. This meeting, known as an “indaba,” is not a decision-making one, but is purely for discussion purposes. Hence, ideas by the deputies are floated at the indaba, and then refined or altered for presentation at the general synod. This is a fairly recent phenomenon in the churches, and seems to be an appreciated vehicle for ongoing discussion and reflection. As was the case in most previous recent synods, there were very few votes taken; the goal was to achieve consensus. Remarkable!

Both of us took the opportunity to visit a variety of schools, church services, and special projects of the FRCSA. Dr. de Visser preached several times, and both of us could gather with the FRCSA saints around the Lord’s Supper table. One ministry both of us visited – at different times – was the Reformational Study Center, which receives assistance from our federation of churches, and deserves our

continued support. Also, these interactions beyond the synod were encouraging and stimulating.

Throughout our visit, we could personally experience the warmth of the communion of saints in many ways. As representatives of our federation, we were assured time and again of the appreciation that the FRCSA has for our federation. Given the size and (increasing) isolation that the FRCSA feels in the wider world, our federation does well to continue to foster and increase meaningful relationships with them. In that regard, it was wonderful to interact with Rev. Johan Bruintjes as a delegate at the synod. It was also encouraging to hear that some Canadian retired pastors are being requested to spend some time amongst the churches there.

Though Synod Soshanguve was completed within a week, it was a long week with weighty discussions. There was abundant evidence of mutual submission to the Word of God as confessed in the Reformed confessions and a united desire to serve the churches for their good and for God’s glory. May the Lord continue to bless this small and faithful federation of churches, and bless the relationship we may have with them.

**C**



# The Proper Place of Screen Technology

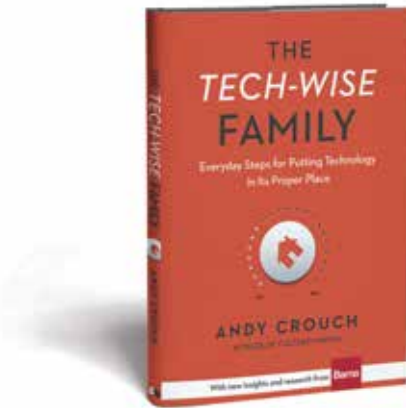
**“The Tech-Wise Family. Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place”  
by Andy Crouch**

**(Baker Books, 2017)**

This book of 220 small-sized pages is about the proper place of screen technology in family life. The author sees technology as a wonderful gift of God which has opened up amazing new possibilities for human life. At the same time, he is very concerned about the way in which our computers, televisions, phones, and other devices tend to overwhelm and degrade our lives. In this book, Andy Crouch shares with us the radical choices and commitments which he believes are necessary to keep technology in its proper place as a useful aid for human flourishing.

In the introduction, he gets our attention by stating, “You don’t have to become Amish, but you probably have to become closer to Amish than you think” (p. 29). To be a thriving family, he says, you will have to make intentional and principled choices which most of your neighbours are not making and which even people in your church are not making. You’ll simply have to dare to be different.

He puts the whole book on a good foundation by spending the first chapter discussing not technology but family. To understand the place of technology in a family, we need first to understand what a family is for. The answer he gives is that family is for the forming of persons into people of wisdom and courage. While this is hardly a comprehensive answer, it is well-stated and forms a good basis for the rest of the book. Toward the end of the chapter, he states: “We are going to have to commit to make every major decision, and many small decisions, on the basis of these questions: Will this help me become less foolish and more wise? Will this help me to become less fearful and more courageous?” (p. 68). According to Crouch, technology, with all its gifts, “poses one of the greatest threats ever conceived by human society to the formation of wise, courageous persons that real family and real community are all about” (p. 62).



Chapter two shows how care in “shaping space” in our homes can serve to nurture a family culture that is less technology-driven. If we push technology and cheap thrills to the edges of our homes and bring to the centre the things which nurture community and creativity, we will have a powerful counter-measure to the pull of technology. The reader’s mind is filled with enticing visions of children so engrossed in crafts, books, games, and playing musical instruments that they simply forget all about the enticements of the screen culture. The idea is to fill the centre of our homes with things that reward skill and active engagement.

Sabbath rest can also serve to ensure that technology remains our helpful servant instead of our domineering master. If Netflix, Facebook, Instagram, and all the rest of our digital world follow us into our rest day, Sunday soon becomes just another day. In chapter three, the author makes a strong case for voluntary abstention from technology for the biggest portion of our day of rest. Instead of letting screen time dominate our Sundays, we should make time for reading, family walks, games, and having guests in our home. He also encourages a daily rest from technology for at least an hour; he suggests that the dinner hour is the ideal time to turn off our devices and put them away for a while.

In the next chapter, we are encouraged to make sure that our devices go to bed before we do; along the same lines, our devices should have a different bedroom than

their owners. Families should find a central place in the home into which all devices are deposited before bedtime – which may mean buying an old-fashioned alarm clock to help you get up on time. As for when we wake up in the morning, the author exhorts readers to do something useful before checking their phones (p. 120). Wouldn't we all be doing better if we took time for our morning prayers and breakfast before we reconnect with the digital world?

Chapter five makes the recommendation that children should have little to no exposure to screen time before they reach double digits. Children, we are reminded, are wired to explore the world through their senses; they thrive when they play in “tactile, creative, self-initiated, and self-sustaining ways” (p. 132). Technology actually makes things too easy for children. It asks too little of them and makes the world too simple (p. 129). Chapter six makes the case that while technology can provide a short-term solution for boredom, on the long-term it exacerbates the problem because it dulls people to the wonder of the natural world and diminishes their creative energy. Instead of using our devices in a passive way – just to fill the time or to keep children occupied – we should resolve that the screen stay off and blank unless we are using it together and for a specific, creative purpose.

As everyone knows, technology frequently undermines meaningful conversation. In chapter 7, Crouch refers to research which indicates that most conversations take about seven minutes to really get going (p. 157). Up until the seven-minute mark, the talk is usually routine and mundane. Somewhere around the seven-minute mark, someone will take the conversation to a new level. Where can we find seven or more minutes of time to talk? Why, in our cars, of course, as we drive from place to place with family and friends! Many parents can testify that the one-on-one time in the car has yielded memorable conversations. For these reasons, Crouch suggests that we see our cars as screen-free zones.

Chapter eight tackles the difficult problem of Internet pornography. It's sobering to learn that at least thirty percent of all Internet traffic is porn and that sixty-two percent of all teens have received a nude image on their phone. Reality is that we live in a porn-saturated culture and it's having a devastating effect on faith, relationships, and

## **CALLED**

Called by the Pilgrim CanRC of London, Ontario:

**Rev. C. Vermeulen**

of the Free Reformed Church at Darling Downs, Australia

## **CALL DECLINED**

Declined the call extended to him by the St. Albert Canadian Reformed Church:

**Rev. Abel Pol**

of the Chilliwack, BC Canadian Reformed Church

## **CHURCH NEWS**

family. Crouch talks about the sheer folly of giving young people devices with completely unregulated access to the Internet (p. 175). He says this is asking for trouble because teens are simply not able to handle the pipeline of porn that comes with 24/7 access to the Internet. Needed are filters and unrestricted parental overview (including knowledge of all passwords) of the Internet activity of young people. At the same time, he writes: “All addictions feed on and are strengthened by emptiness. The best defense against porn is a full life” (p. 172).

Chapter nine promotes family worship and particularly singing in our Christian homes. Rather than letting recorded and amplified music take over our lives and worship, families should learn to sing together (p. 183). Singing allows us to powerfully express our faith in an amazing union of mind, body, and spirit and it has the effect of deepening our faith and our godliness. Finally, in chapter ten, Crouch emphasizes the value of being personally present at key moments in the lives of people we love and cherish. In our mediated world, it's a big deal to just show up (p. 199)!

The book contains many fascinating statistics, graphics, and charts created by the Barna group through a special research project done in partnership with Crouch. These are seamlessly integrated into the book and serve to strengthen its impact. Another factor that increases the appeal of the book is the “Reality Check” which concludes each chapter; these contain personal comments by Crouch in which he shows how his principles play out in his own household.

Crouch is an astute student of our culture. His writing is lucid and his arguments persuasive. Readers can feel the challenge posed to them by the author, but he writes like a friend who has come alongside of us to help us figure out how to deal with the rapid advance and intrusion of technology in to our homes. This book is highly recommended for individuals and families who desire to bring their use of technology more fully under the Lordship of Christ. **C**



## Different Directions

After a year of President Donald Trump, Canada and the United States are moving in different directions. Two important areas come to mind: abortion and the place of Christians.

### Abortion

Shortly after his inauguration, Trump ordered the defunding of the International Planned Parenthood Federation and other organizations promoting foreign abortions. Subsequent restrictions limited funding to any international health organization promoting and doing abortions thus increasing the money involved from \$600,000 to nearly \$9 billion.

In April Trump signed a bill allowing states to refrain from giving federal funds to organizations that provide abortions, including Planned Parenthood. This was the first major national pro-life bill in more than a decade. The Trump administration also stopped funding the United Nations Population Fund, which has ties to abortion programs such as China's onechild policy (which became a twochild policy in 2015). Furthermore, Trump appointed pro-life advocates to key positions in the Department of Health and Human Services. A bill to prohibit abortions of an unborn child after twenty weeks (H.R. 36) has passed the House of Representatives and is now before the Senate. The administration strongly supports this bill.

The situation in Canada could not be more different. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said that those who are against abortion are not welcome in the Liberal party. He has also ordered that all Liberals vote for abortion should the need arise regardless of their religious beliefs. When Trump announced that he was not funding foreign abortions, Trudeau promised that Canada would increase its financial support for that purpose.

### Place of Christians

Trump has prioritized the admittance into America of persecuted Christians who endure much hardship in Muslim countries. This is not a priority for Canada's Liberals.

On May 4, 2017, Trump signed an executive order which makes it easier for churches and other non-profit organizations to speak their mind on current political issues. Pastors,

for example, should not fear that their sermons might be examined for being politically incorrect in speaking to the moral issues of the day and in the process have their church lose its charitable status. Trump promotes the notion that freedom of religion extends to both persons and organizations. "Americans do not give up their freedom of religion by participating in the marketplace, partaking of the public square, or interacting with government" and government "may not restrict acts or abstentions because of the beliefs they display." Congress needs to approve this May 4 executive order for it to have full legal effect.

Also, "the Trump administration expanded religious and moral exemptions for mandated contraceptive coverage under Obamacare." This action is in agreement with the American Supreme Court's unanimous ruling that government cannot fine religious groups for following their faith.

While Trump is safeguarding the freedom and place that Christians and churches have historically enjoyed, Canada's Liberal government was attempting to remove criminal code protection for ministers and those worshipping so that they could attend church without being disturbed (see *Clarion*, Nov 17, 2017, p. 649). Happily, as ARPA reported on its website, the Justice Committee decided to leave that section of the criminal code alone "after receiving overwhelming response from the public and our supporters." The protection from harassment will now also probably be explicitly expanded to cover all religious gatherings of whatever faith.

Trump is aware of the incompatibility of fundamentalist Islamic values with historic American culture and wants to be more careful in admitting Muslim immigrants. Trudeau on the other hand is captive to multicultural ideology. His Liberal government has also shown disdain for Christianity and Christian values, caters to Islam, and thus supported a dangerous Motion 103 which condemns Islamophobia and could result in limiting freedom of speech, perhaps especially for Christians (see, e.g., *Clarion*, October 6, 2017, p. 568).

Source: Unless indicated otherwise, direct quotes are from "The Big List of 149 Trump Accomplishments" on [www.wnd.com](http://www.wnd.com)



# Grand Opening of Grace Christian School – September 16, 2017

Two years ago, we shared with you that Grace Christian School opened its doors for the first time on September 8, 2015. Since that first day in Burlington, Ontario, numerous committees and individuals have been pouring time, energy, and resources into the preparations for our brand new school building in Millgrove, Ontario. The completion of this beautiful facility in time to open our doors on September 5, 2017 was a significant milestone in the history of our Burlington/Flamborough school society, which goes back more than fifty-five years. It was therefore fitting to celebrate this momentous occasion and praise God for his blessings.

On Saturday, September 16, the day of our grand opening celebration, the school gymnasium was filled to capacity as Mr. Ray Kampen, in his role as MC, opened the event. He began by reflecting on the Lord's blessings with the reading of Psalm 78:1-7, and a prayer of gratitude for God's faithfulness. We were honoured to have several distinguished guests present to convey their congratulations and reflections.

Mr. David Sweet, the Member of Parliament for Flamborough-Glanbrook, is a familiar face for many in our school community. He commented on the importance of Christian schools such as ours in creating great Canadian citizens, and thanked the staff and board for stewarding the students to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. He referred to the words of Psalm 72:8 ("May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth"), from which the Latin quote "*A Mari usque Ad Mare*" inscribed on the Peace Tower was taken, noting that Canada was built on Christian values. He concluded by warmly wishing us God's blessings.

Mr. Ted McMeekin, the Member of Provincial Parliament representing the school's riding, began by noting the word "unity" on the word wall behind him, and quoting Psalm 133:1: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" He expressed thankfulness that although it may have been challenging at times, the efforts towards



amalgamation of two school societies and constructing this facility were always careful, prayerful, and vigilant. He challenged us to be accountable for the giftedness God has given each of us, and to educate children to know and use their God-given talents to build strong communities and change the world. He promised to pray for our community and for the young people who walk through these halls, and ended by giving praise to God for his goodness.

Mr. Fred Eisenberger, the mayor of the City of Hamilton (of which Flamborough is a part), also began by referring to the word wall, stating that he is a strong proponent of creating a society based on Christian values such as these (e.g. respect, kindness, humility, grace). He expressed the opinion that no one looks after the hearts of children better than Christian educators, and thanked the board, financial supporters, and all the committees involved in our endeavour to educate children for a successful future as citizens in this world.

As the Councillor representing our ward at the Hamilton City Council, Ms. Judi Partridge was an energetic advocate throughout the process of building our facility, ensuring that the process was steered through City Hall and the right people were connected to clear any obstacles that



were met along the way. In Ray's introduction of Ms. Partridge, he expressed appreciation for her work on our behalf. Ms. Partridge in turn expressed her gratitude for the many years of efforts and collaboration leading up to this day, and for the integrity and patience of those she worked with most closely. She also noted that God's plan was for this project to come to fruition under the leadership of the board of directors, and that it will benefit our children and their children.

After a letter of congratulations from the board of Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College was read, our principal Mike VanderVelde delivered his thoughts on "what makes a house a home." He began by sharing some anecdotes and photos to capture the energy and excitement of the first two weeks in our new building. He observed students discovering new places and ways to play; he noted the interactions of students with each other and with teachers, and the mingling of parents; he appreciated the love that is felt in all of this, and the generosity of the community in their willing contributions to the building of this school. Above all, it is the love and grace of Jesus, our Lord and our Saviour, which lives in us, and makes this beautiful new house into a home where we can live out this love and grace towards each other.

Mr. Marcel Kampen, Chairman of the Board, was the final speaker. He recognized and thanked those whose efforts and commitment made possible the completion of this significant capital project. Key contributors included those overseeing or performing tasks that varied from fundraising to financing to construction to interior design to information technology to moving (twice), but this list is only the beginning. Marcel expressed appreciation for Ray Kampen's leadership and tireless work as chairman of the board throughout the amalgamation process, and also ac-

knowledgeled with gratitude the capable leadership of Gary Aikema, who volunteered his time and expertise as project manager. Marcel noted that Reformed Christian education is a community commitment, and both this education and this building project were made possible by the contributions and sacrifices of the entire community today and in the years past. He concluded by thanking our Heavenly Father for guiding and blessing us throughout this process, and for enabling us to tell the next generation of his praiseworthy deeds and the wonders he has done.

For the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the speakers were joined by Lori Hulzebosch (school vice-principal), Jeff Breukelman (chairman of the Building and Development Committee), Gary Aikema (Project Manager), and, last but not least, Jessica Beijes (the oldest student enrolled at GCS this year), who capably carried out her role as official ribbon-cutter. The program ended with singing the doxology and our national anthem, and a closing prayer led by Rev. John VanPopta, pastor of Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church in Burlington (one of our four main supporting churches).

After the official program, we were treated to a delicious lunch catered by a community member's restaurant and funded by the PTA. The opportunity to tour the school and mingle with others, which had already started before the official program, continued well into the afternoon. It was a beautiful day of praise and thankfulness to God for allowing this project to be completed. Our prayer as we settle in to our new home is that it will be a place of educational excellence, where students achieve their learning potential, grow in spiritual discernment, and glorify God in their lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God for his blessings and his grace!



# Ontario Woman's League Day

## Opening

On a cold, wet fall morning, Wednesday, October 11, 360 ladies and eighteen nursing babies from all over Ontario, from the United States, from both the Canadian and United Reformed Churches, made their way to Hamilton for the fifty-sixth annual Ontario Woman's League Day. We started the morning with our voices raised in singing praises to our Heavenly God with Psalm 121:1-3 and our heads bowed as Wendy Koster, our League Board President, led us in prayer.

There are always a few business matters that need to be dealt with each League Day before getting to the main speaker. A few of the business matters worthy to share here are that Sonya Post was thanked for her ten years on the board as Recording Secretary and that Elsa DeGelder was welcomed to take her place for the next five years. We were all reminded that next year will be Wendy's last year as President and that we will be looking for a new League Board President. It was requested to keep names in mind of who would be willing and able to take this task over.

League Day isn't League Day without having an ILPB table. This year the board representative, Trish Gelms, gave us an update with the latest at ILPB. She shared specifically about the new name "The Study" and the new web site: [thestudy-books.com](http://thestudy-books.com). Beautiful catalogues were on the tables for all the women to browse and a table with books was set up in the foyer so the women could flip through books before purchasing some quality Reformed books for their home library.

As tradition has it, we sang the League Day Song. This was followed by the opportunity to open our Bibles to Romans 8:18-30 and praising God by singing Hymn 65:1, 3, and 4.

## Speaker

Wendy Koster then welcomed our speaker for the day: Sabrina Jaspers. Sabrina openly shared her life story and how the Holy Spirit worked in her heart and brought her to God. How amazing it is to see how the Holy Spirit brings God's children to himself! We can see this in the life of Sabrina, where as a teenager she was strongly opposed to any-

thing related to Christianity and on this day, this Wednesday morning, she stood in front of 360 women encouraging them in the ways of our Lord. Through her story, her hope was that we would see that God uses everyday people in his plan and that we need to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

After sharing details on her life and her opposition to Christ, she gave examples where she could tell that the Holy Spirit was leading her. One day she met her husband-to-be and he took her to his church. From there, she was welcomed and invited into homes and included in events. She stressed that it is very important to be yourself. We need to be open and show hospitality. Mentoring others does not mean that we have to do anything formal and organized.

Sabrina spent some time talking to us about how we all have different gifts and that we have to find what we are good at and do it. Encourage others. Send a note or write them a card. Lead if that is your strength. Sometimes it is even a good idea to step down so someone else can step up.

She spoke about helping two age groups, namely, the young moms and those care-giving for their elderly parents. Young moms need encouragement and compassion. Help them. Support them. Those taking care of their elderly parents also need prayer and encouragement. Ask the Lord





to use you for good. Ask, "What do I have to offer?" Sabrina ended on a note saying that God has a plan for each one of us in his story of redemption. God is working something in your life. He has it covered.

This brought the time of Sabrina's speech to a conclusion. Together we could then sing with joy to our Father. We sang Psalm 68:1, 4, and 8.

After hearing the speech and seeing how God works, we were able to discuss this at our own tables with other women. How beautiful it was to hear all the chatter going on as our minds were surely at work and we were ready to encourage each other in our daily tasks and in reaching out to those around us.

## Afternoon

But all this talking also makes everyone hungry. Thankfully lunch was ready to go with an abundance of food waiting for us. Deb Alkema opened our lunch with prayer. Lunch gave everyone a great opportunity to discuss, meet up with old and new friends, and enjoy food. And unlike previous years, there was an abundance of food that resulted in the caterers even having left overs! (It's not a wonder the ladies organizing for next year booked the hall right away!)

The end of lunch and socializing meant the beginning of the afternoon, and that is traditionally cued with the pianist starting to play "O Canada." Slowly but surely all the women join in with singing. This year was no different as our lovely pianist, Rianna Koster, started playing "O Canada," women started to sing and our afternoon then began with the reading of Hebrews 10 and Ephesians 3.

We were led in prayer and once again we sang praises to God by singing Psalm 139:1, 2, and 13.

This afternoon we did not have a speaker but we could enjoy opportunity to continue to sit at our tables and go over a page of discussion questions. Each table had their own discussions and then some tables shared their discussion points or asked further questions with all the women. What a blessing it is to be able to spend all this time discussing God's Word and encouraging each other in our walk of faith with our Heavenly Father.

But, as always, the day eventually comes to an end. Wendy Koster once again took her place at the podium where she could wrap up the day with a few brief announcements.

She was pleased to announce that we collected \$2,765.85 for Anchor Association. Thanks was given to Vineyard Canadian Reformed Church women for all their hard work in putting together League Day. The hall was thanked for their great accommodations and their wonderful food! Rianna Koster was acknowledged for being the pianist for the day. The ladies also showed their gratitude to Sabrina Jaspers for her willingness to speak, and Elsa deVries for guiding the afternoon discussions.

Our final song was Hymn 49:1-4 and Trish Gelms closed our day in prayer.

Let us always hold these days dear to our hearts where God allows us as women to come and worship him and study his Word together. It was a day set aside for him and a day to encourage each other on our earthly journey towards our heavenly destination. To God be all honour and praise! C



# Clarion Kids

## The Christmas Story - Part 2

### Matthew 2

A little while after Jesus was born, King Herod heard the news. He was afraid that this new king would try to take over his throne, so he sent wise men to find out where Jesus was. He told them he wanted to worship Jesus, but he was lying. The wise men followed a star and found Jesus, and they gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They were very happy to see Jesus, and they worshipped him. God warned the wise men in a dream not to tell Herod where Jesus was, so they returned home secretly. God knew that Herod would try to hurt his son, but God protected him.

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



### Word Search

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

Dream

Herod

Star

Gifts

Jesus

Wisemen

Gold

Myrrh

Worship

by Emily Nijenhuis

### Maze

Help the wise men follow the star so they can worship Jesus!

