

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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**How do we measure
our giving?**

***SEMINARY CORNER: WHO'S GRADUATING?
YOU ASKED***

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

This issue begins with the question, "Should Christians Tithe?" In his editorial, Dr. James Visscher looks at Old Testament and New Testament commands and insights on tithing, exploring how we should look at it today.

It is our pleasure to once again provide our readers with an introduction to the men graduating from CRTS in 2018. This year there are four men graduating from the M.Div. and B.Th. programs.

For the rest, Issue 10 is full of regular column reading: Treasures New & Old, Clippings on Politics & Religion, Clarion Kids, Ray of Sunshine, and You Asked. We have a report on mission news from New Hope Orphanage (Indonesia) and a book review.

Laura Veenendaal

CONTENTS

- 263 EDITORIAL**
Tithing or Sowing?
- 265 TREASURES, NEW & OLD**
The First Act of Our Ascended Lord is Pentecost
- 266 SEMINARY CORNER**
Who's Graduating from the Seminary This Year?
- 270 CLIPPINGS ON POLITICS & RELIGION**
- 271 New Hope Orphanage, Indonesia**
- 274 YOU ASKED**
- 277 CLARION KIDS**
- 278 RAY OF SUNSHINE**
- 279 BOOK REVIEW**



Tithing or Sowing?

Money is not exactly a minor matter

Should Christians tithe? In some Christian circles such a question is not even asked. Rather it is naturally assumed that all good Christians believe in and practice the tithe. What this means is that they believe in giving ten per cent of their income to the Lord every year. In other Christian circles the question may be asked but it is not answered with the same degree of firmness or conviction. Tithing is considered optional or a good thing, but it is not raised to the level of dogma.

Now, I am not sure where you stand on this issue. You may be either in the convicted or the optional camp. Still, I think that you will agree with me that here is a subject that is worthy of some serious consideration. After all, money is not exactly a minor matter. How we obtain it, save it, and spend it are all matters of almost daily concern. Closely attached to it is the matter of giving it, donating it, or tithing it. The Bible has a lot to say about all of these things, although our attention this time will be on the tithing or giving aspect. So let's turn to it.

Tithing in the Old Testament

When it comes to the matter of tithing there is no doubt that it receives a considerable amount of biblical press. In the Old Testament there are at least thirty references to tithing. For example, in Leviticus 27 mention is made of a "tithe of the land" (v. 30) and a "tithe of herds and flocks" (v. 31) as belonging to the Lord – the inference being that the Lord should receive ten percent either from your land or your flock. In Numbers 18 more is said. There we learn that the Levites were to receive a tithe in connection with their priestly service in Israel. Seeing that they had to take care of the tabernacle or the temple, and other sacrificial matters, they had no time to earn a living farming or shepherding. Through their tithes, the rest of the Israelites took care of the Levites and gave them the means to serve fulltime for the Lord and the community.

And this tithing was not optional either. In Malachi 3:10, the Lord himself is quoted as saying, "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house." A little earlier in that chapter, the people had asked the Lord, "How have we robbed you?" (v. 8). The answer came through loud and clear, "In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you" (v. 9). The point is obvious: Israel had been withholding its tithe from the Lord and the Lord calls it robbery.

Hence it is plain enough that OT Israel was called to be a tithing nation. The tithe was part of the Mosaic law in general and the ceremonial law in particular.

Did it reach beyond that? There are two other references that seem to indicate that it did. For one, there is the case of Abram who gives "a tenth of everything" (Gen 28:20) to Melchizedek king of Salem. This tenth or tithe was Abram's way of acknowledging Melchizedek's superiority and God's deliverance. Later on, in Genesis 28, reference is again made to the tithe. Jacob mentions it in a vow. He says to God, "And of all that you give me I will give a tenth to you" (v. 22). It would thus appear that the patriarchs too were familiar with the principle of the tenth or tithe.

Tithing in the New Testament

Only now as we move from the Old Testament into the New Testament, a strange and unexpected thing happens. Little or nothing is said anymore about tithing. True, the Lord Jesus mentions it, but he does so more or less in passing. He says, for example, about the scribes and Pharisees that they "tithe mint and dill and cumin" but "have neglected the weightier matters of the law" (Matt 23:23). He also portrays the Pharisee in the parable as saying, "I give tithes of all that I get" (Luke 18:12).

And that is it. There is no command from the Lord Jesus in which he instructs his followers to tithe. Our Lord

is silent on the matter. The same applies to the apostles. Neither Paul, Peter, James, or John make reference to it.

The NT letters tend to divide into two parts. The first part is mostly about doctrine; whereas, the second part is about its application. And it is in that second part that we would expect to find practical instructions about things such as tithing. Only, it is not there. No mention is made of tithing.

The only exception is in the letter to the Hebrews. There in chapter 7 that ancient encounter of Abram with Melchizedek is brought under the spotlight again, and the fact that Abram gave him “a tenth of the spoils” is stated and elaborated upon. Still, a careful reading of the passage indicates that the author is not describing the tithe as some sort of continuous ordinance or requirement. Rather he is using it to highlight the fact that Jesus belongs to a greater, higher, and better priestly order.

Weighing the matter

So what does all of this now mean? Does it mean that tithing is out? Does it mean that if we tithe we are doing it in order to be in step with Abram and Jacob? After all, if the patriarchs did it, we should too? Or does it mean that we should do it because if Israel did it, we should too? Or if Jesus did not specifically condemn it, does this mean that there is an argument from silence here? Is it perhaps that he assumes it and still expects it?

Bigger picture?

Before we form any definite conclusions, it is good to consider the larger New Testament picture. What do we see there? We see that our Lord deals often in his teaching with money and possessions. He does so especially in connection with the Pharisees and their avarice ways. Luke too deals with the subject early on in the book of Acts when the church finds itself in economic crisis.

In addition, for our purposes and in connection with tithing or giving, the apostle Paul has a number of noteworthy things to say. In 1 Corinthians 16 he mentions “the collection for the saints” in verse 1 and in the next verse he comments. “On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.” Here Paul is telling the Corinthian believers to set aside, store up, and give. Who are they doing this for? In verse 3 he mentions “your gift to Jerusalem,” meaning that he is referring to a special collection for the very poor believers in Jerusalem. The daughter churches are being asked to come to the aid of the mother church.

There is more. For, in his second letter to Corinth, the apostle elaborates in chapters 8 and 9. He tells the believers there about their fellow believers in Macedonia and the

great contrast in their lives. On the one hand, these believers were so pathetically poor but on the other hand, they were so astonishingly generous. What drove them? It was the fact that they gave themselves first to the Lord (v. 5). God was the number one priority of their lives. Yes, and out of that priority, they gave to others – freely, joyfully, and abundantly. Paul says that they excelled “in this act of grace” (v. 7) or “in this gracious act of giving” (NLT). It was as if they specialized in giving.

How much?

How much did they give? What measuring stick did they use? You might naturally expect them to single out the tithe, but no percentage or fraction is ever mentioned. What is mentioned, however, is what we find in chapter 9: 6, 7 – “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” Notice first the general rule: you will reap what you sow. Sow sparingly, reap sparingly! Sow bountifully, reap bountifully! Notice second the attitude rule: if you give, do it cheerfully. Notice third the sincerity rule: it should come from your heart.

This is now the style of the church of Jesus Christ! Paul even backs it up with another example. It is the church at Philippi. There the apostle describes a time in his ministry when no church supported him either prayerfully or financially. He was all alone. He neither received nor demanded a tithe. But then the Philippians stepped up to the plate and gave him help again and again (4:16). How did he describe their gifts? “A fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God” (v. 18). You see, those Philippian believers knew how to sow generously, sincerely, and cheerfully. And the spinoff? “My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (v. 19).

Tithing or sowing?

So where does all of this leave us when it comes to the matter of tithing? I would say that if any of you are into tithing and believe that God expects your ten percent, such is your prerogative and I respect you for it.

Still, for my part I would choose another way, namely the way of sowing. I would like God to see me as a cheerful sower or as a happy giver. In other words, the level of my giving is not determined by a percentage. Sure, I will keep it in mind; after all, if it served God’s people in the OT, it can still serve me today too. But, at the same time, why be a percentage man or woman when you have the freedom in Christ to be so much more?





The First Act of Our Ascended Lord is Pentecost

Ascension Day and Pentecost are intimately connected. They are connected like the last day of school and the first day of summer holidays – we naturally see them together. In Christ’s ascension he took his place on his throne in heaven, ruling over all things for his church. In the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost we see his first act as the ascended Lord and Christ. Pentecost is an act of power coming forth from the all-powerful King of heaven and earth – an earth-shaking, kingdom-forming act of power. That’s how the Lord Jesus in Acts 1:8 describes what will happen in Acts 2. He says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you” (Acts 1:8). We need to see the event of Pentecost through the words of our King.

The power of the Spirit was there in the Old Testament, but it was not experienced in the fullest – just as Christ was present in the Old Testament, but not in the way he was present after his incarnation. At Pentecost we see that power of the Spirit on God’s people being intensified and expanding in focus. A new era is ushered in at Pentecost – a

new era in the history of redemption. Jesus Christ has ascended to heaven – he is enthroned in power – and he is doing this. That is what Peter says in Acts 2:33 – “Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear” (Acts 2:33). He is building his kingdom – working re-creation – and as his first act he sends the Holy Spirit to his people. Power from on high has clothed the people of God – the Holy Spirit is at work in the kingdom of the ascended King, and he is at work in the subjects of that kingdom – he is at work in the church.

So, what does that Spirit-empowered church – the church filled with power from the Holy Spirit – what does it look like, and what does it do, and what is its purpose? That is what Christ addresses in the second half of Acts 1:8, and it is what we see beginning to happen in Acts 2 and continuing throughout the whole book. Christ says, “And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The

gospel has gone out, and continues to go out, to every corner of this world. That gospel message goes out, invading every dark corner of this world, proclaiming the good news of who Jesus is and calling all people to repentance and new life in him. It does this not simply with persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power as hearts are exposed to the light of the gospel and drawn from the darkness to the kingdom of light – the Kingdom of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 2:4). When you look at the church from the perspective of Pentecost and the power of the Holy Spirit that came upon the people of God, what you see standing before you – what you are part of – is Holy Spirit empowered, “A chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet 2:9). Your ascended Lord is at work in this world through his church – rejoice in what he is doing in you by the power of His Spirit and what he is doing through you in this world.

For further reflection and discussion

1. How does Pentecost impact the way you see what the church is and her purpose in the world?
2. How does Pentecost impact the way you see yourself within the church and within the world in terms Christ being on the throne, in terms of the power of the Spirit, and in terms of your witnessing to Christ?





Who's Graduating from the Seminary This Year?

Perhaps that is a question you have been wondering about, or you have heard other people talking about. Well, the simple answer, in alphabetical order, is: Scott Bredenhof, Darren Feenstra, Cody Swaving, and Sungwon Yoon. As you undoubtedly realize, though, simple answers rarely give you the whole picture, so a few more words may be helpful.

Most of those words will come from the students themselves and can be found below as each student has submitted a brief, autobiographical profile. I'm sure you'll enjoy reading each one as much as I did. Before you fast-forward to their profiles, though, I should explain that three students – Cody, Darren, and Sungwon – will graduate this year from the M.Div. program, the Lord willing. The M.Div. is the main program at the seminary and is intended for those who hope to serve as ordained ministers or missionaries of the Word. The fourth student, Scott, is on track to graduate from the B.Th. program. Generally speaking, this course of study is geared toward those who want a solid grounding in Scripture and the Reformed confessions and history, as well as learning about mission work. (If you're interested in learning more about the B.Th., please look at our website: Programs > Bachelor of Theology.) Graduates from this program can use their training in many different ways, but it normally does not lead to ordination.

As you'll read below Sungwon Yoon and his wife, Hyohyeon Jeong (we just call her Anne), hope to return to Korea. Scott and Annemarie Bredenhof are speaking with two B.C. congregations about the possibility of working in Mexico. The other two graduands will be looking to classis exams, either right away or perhaps after taking the opportunity to help out in a congregation first to gain some more practical experience. Enjoy reading the profiles!

For the rest, I can provide you with a brief update about the seminary. We presently have twenty-two students enrolled, seventeen in the M.Div. program and five in the B.Th. and Dipl.Th.St. programs. The Registrar has been busy

with new applications for next year, and although the final number is not settled yet, it's safe to say that we're on track to admit more students into our freshmen year than the number of those who will be graduating. So, the coffee room will be a bit cozier next year... and that's a good thing. May the Lord bless our graduands and may he also draw more men to study for the ministry.

Darren Feenstra



Hi, my name is Darren Feenstra and this is my lovely wife, Laura, and our little guy, Aziah (or Zi, to keep things easy). Well, here we are approaching the final countdown of our time at seminary! What we thought would be a long four years has flown by and left us spinning. But more on that later; I will try here for a little chronological organization.

I was born in Guelph, the youngest of six in a minister's family. Most of my childhood I spent roaming the countryside of beautiful Owen Sound. I feel very blessed to have had these years with solid Christian upbringing within a tight-knit community. But things can't stay the same forever so, after one gruelling year of homeschooling for Grade 9 (gruelling for my mom because of me), we picked up our

roots and headed south to Grand Valley and to Emmanuel Christian High school in Fergus. I do believe that my dad had ulterior motives here, as he proceeded to marry off his remaining children in these years.

And I was not immune. I met Laura in high school, though we went to the same church as well. And despite the fact that we had a chemistry class together (pun intended), it took me a while to notice her as she was a grade above me. We even went on the same bus. Yet my only memory was that one day, when it was raining, she tromped on the bus with rubber-boots (decidedly not high-school fashion at the time) and I thought to myself, “Hey, that is one practical girl. What a keeper!” So, from then on, I think my subconscious pushed me in her direction. We started dating when I was in my second year of university and were married a few short weeks before heading to Hamilton to begin seminary training.

The journey into the seminary was not a straightforward one for me. Growing up as the son of a minister, I would receive comments about following in my father’s footsteps. So, I decided early on that this was the last thing I would do; working at a car dealership, selling sweet cars, that was more up my alley (at least in grade four). But God had different plans for me. As high school ended, one of my best friends pulled me along into preparatory studies for seminary at the University of Waterloo and, to my chagrin and shock, I found I was enjoying it.

While in seminary, Laura and I felt more and more confirmed that this was the right direction for us. Not that seminary did not come without its trials; I did have to battle doubts here and there whether I should continue pursuing the ministry. But, by God’s gentle nudging and the support of loving family, friends, classmates, and profs, I am now in the final stretch. And it has been good! Through our seminary years we developed friendships and encouraging relationships. We had the honour of being shown “the ropes” by faithful servants of God’s word while in internships here in Ontario, BC, and on the other side of the world, where God is working in PNG. We welcomed Zi into this world in my third year and are looking forward to welcoming another little one this June. We have learned so much about the grace and goodness of our Saviour and yet we can see that we have only scratched the surface of what it means to know him. So, we are eager to serve him as a new page of our life unfolds, wherever that may be. Praise him, from whom all blessings flow!

Cody Swaving



Hi! I’m Cody, the sixth child of eight, born to Ken and Debbie Swaving in the picturesque town of Fergus in the rolling hills of Ontario some twenty-four years ago. I grew up on a two-acre lot in the countryside, sharing the land over the years not only with cats and dogs, but also rabbits, cows, chickens, goats, and even a pig and a horse. I attended school at Maranatha Christian School and Emmanuel Christian High in

Fergus. I first resolved to study for the ministry at a young age after a particularly good sermon on Joshua meeting the commander of the Lord’s army. While I no longer recall the details of the sermon, the desire stuck with me throughout school, and so I headed off to the University of Waterloo to pursue a B.A. in Classical Studies, although the welders, painters, machinists, and supervisors at Walinga in Fergus helped ensure an academic education wasn’t the only one I would receive.

Three short years later, I found myself in Hamilton at the doors of the Seminary, undergraduate degree “in hand,” so to speak. The next four years would be a blur of activity and studying for which I felt woefully unprepared. Yet God, in his infinite wisdom, placed me with excellent men and women to help guide and shape me throughout my time at the Seminary. From the professors who taught and mentored me and the catechism students who listened (mostly) to me on to the classmates who sweated with me and the housemates who put up with me. I served with the Roots Team for four years, working alongside a variety of youth groups in Ontario to prepare conferences and events for Christian young people. I also had the privilege of serving on staff at Campfire! Bible Camp for two years in the summers after my internships with Rev. Slaa in Smithers and Rev. Harryvan in Kiev, Ukraine. My final internship with Rev. Poppe in Winnipeg especially was immensely beneficial: leading worship, visiting with people (especially over dinner), attending meetings, and discussing ministerial life.

Through it all, God has been so good. From writing papers to preparing sermons, from discussing (debating) with classmates to praying with the same, from sweating over due dates to relaxing Friday afternoons, from being frustrated with exegetical questions to praising God for the treasures of his Word, he is so incredibly gracious and good. He continues to provide and to sustain. It is incredible to look back and see the Spirit of God working through mere man to create and cultivate a beautiful and Christ-centred atmosphere here at the Seminary for us to grow in strength and in wisdom that we might become more and more like our Lord and Saviour. I look forward to seeing where the Lord will lead me in the years to come, as this chapter has drawn to a close.

Sungwon Yoon



Hello, my name is Sungwon Yoon and my beautiful wife is Hyohyeon Jeong. It is our pleasure to introduce ourselves to you, the readers of *Clarion*.

We are both from South Korea and really enjoy living here in Hamilton with the great fellow student body. You might wonder why we came here to study the Word of God, instead of attending seminary in South Korea. There is a background for this decision. If you don't mind, I will explain our background as briefly as possible. Before we came to Canada, both of us belonged to RCK (Reformed Church of Korea), which is a young and small Reformed federation. From the late 1990s, some ministers gathered together to study Reformed Theology and a few years later, they decided to establish a Reformed federation to serve the Lord in the Reformed tradition. They accepted the Three Forms of Unity and Dort Church Order, and also translated the *Book of Praise* into Korean. That was not an easy step for our cul-

ture, there were many hardships until now. But, the Lord is gracious, he still guides us and keeps us, so that we can gather together to serve the Lord.

When I made the decision to enter seminary, ministers thought about which seminary is best for us, and noticed CRTS can be best place to learn about Reformed Theology. Thus, they suggested applying CRTS to me. At first, I was quite nervous to attend this seminary, I was worried about many things and living in Canada. But, that fear proved groundless. I have really enjoyed studying here with the best professors, faculty, and fellow students.

I am now coming to the end of my time at the Seminary; along with my faithful wife we are waiting for a new chapter in God's plan for our lives. If the Lord's willing, we hope to go back to Korea and serve the churches in our home country. But we are sure that we will miss our time in Hamilton and never forget the Lord's grace upon us and all your help.

Scott Bredenhof

Hi! I'm Scott Bredenhof and this is my lovely wife Annemarie and our two kids, Lewis (2) and Elizabeth (1). Baby number three is due in August and will surely keep our hands full. I suppose the relevant questions to answer are: "How did we get here?" and "Where are we going?"

God's grace has been all over my life right from day one. God-fearing parents instructed me in his Word and a church community did the same. Hard work was learned in the dairy barn and resting in the Lord was learned in the church pew on Sundays. A Reformed education provided a biblical worldview and catechism classes supplied a framework for my faith. But a fish doesn't know it's in water, and in the same way God's grace can seem so normal we forget how amazing it is. I think this was true for my life as well. It's not that I ever lost my faith, but it was missing something. If I was to pinpoint exactly what it was, it was this: a clear and comprehensive grasp of the good news of Jesus Christ and its transformational effect upon every aspect of life. This life-altering truth crystallized in my mind during a short-term mission trip to Ecuador where I witnessed firsthand how the gospel was transforming lives and communities. I still remember the moment on that trip when I decided I wanted to spend my life making Jesus known. The journey from that decision till today has not been straightforward, nor easy, but I can see how the Lord has blessed me through it all, especially in his provision of a wife who shares a desire for mission work. Somewhere along the way I realized I needed more theological education than my



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Called by Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church in Burlington, ON:

Rev. Ian Wildeboer

former missionary to Papua New Guinea

CHURCH NEWS

podcasts could give, so I applied to CRTS for the Diploma of Theological Studies. I've since switched to the Bachelor of Theology program and look forward to finishing this spring.

Our years at seminary have been both transformative and challenging. I've been able to soak up the wisdom of the professors and have been encouraged and sharpened by my fellow students. Our family has grown by three and parenthood has a way of schooling you with some hard lessons. Internships at a church plant in Niagara Falls and at a First Nations reserve in Alberta have provided us with valuable ministry experience. I've also struggled with my health over the years and have wrestled with my limitations. Many

times I have felt in over my head, but I've learned to keep my feet planted on the Rock. And that's really the best thing about seminary: You immerse yourself in the truths of God's Word and see how God shapes and moulds you into a tool he can use.

So where are we going? At the moment we are working on plans to minister in Querétaro, Mexico under the oversight and with the support of the Mission in Mexico Board of Abbotsford and Vernon Canadian Reformed churches. We are praying the Lord blesses our plans and we know wherever he leads, he has promised to be with us always. His grace knows no end.

C





Helping the Palestinians

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), with a budget of about \$1.25 billion, is dedicated to providing Palestinians with aid. The Trump administration is now withholding \$65 million out of the American's total annual contribution of over \$360 million. What are we to think of that? An enlightening article by Middle East specialists Asaf Romirowsky and Alexander H. Joffe helps put matters into perspective. They argue that, in the long run, continued aid to the Palestinians hurts their cause. Reducing aid is a necessary first step to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Two key factors prolong the conflict: the ideology of "refugees" and their ever-inflating numbers.

The UNRWA first defined a Palestinian refugee as someone whose "normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict." Under this definition there were about 700,000 refugees. But the definition of a refugee has since expanded. "The children or grandchildren of such refugees are eligible for agency assistance if they are (a) registered with UNRWA, (b) living in the area of UNRWA's operations, and (c) in need." The result is now a total of over five million Palestinian refugees.

Another factor that swelled the number of refugees is the UNRWA's resistance to resettling Palestinians in other Arab countries where other Palestinians are found. Instead, the UNRWA encouraged the perception that "refugee status for Palestinians is central to their identity and culture, no matter where they are in the world, and that the international community must support them and their descendants in perpetuity." The UNRWA educates each new generation that the Palestinians have a "right to return" to Israel. Palestinian leadership encourages the fantasy that Israel will somehow disappear one day so that everything can revert back to the time before the state of Israel came into being. But Israel is not likely to cease to exist. And so "you can see how the skyrocketing number of refugees,

coupled with the demand that they be resettled in Israel, makes UNRWA into a force that perpetuates – rather than solves – the Palestinian crisis."

The UNRWA should be "putting political pressure on countries to integrate Palestinians, who have lived there for decades. This would be a better strategy than continuing to fund an agency solely designed to maintain them in limbo."

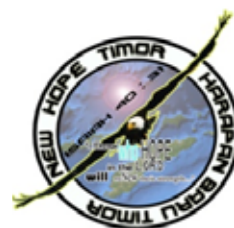
A major problem for the Palestinians is their corrupt and incompetent leadership "whose fantasies, violence and rejectionism have been a disaster since the 1920's." Trump is doing the Palestinians a favour by withholding some money. It is time to move on. New leaders are needed and the Palestinian Authority needs to be reformed so that real progress can be made "towards creating a state that treats Palestinians with decency, not as refugees but as citizens, and which is capable of living in peace alongside Israel."

What is often forgotten is what happened to Jewish refugees after Israel declared independence in 1948. After invading Arab armies failed to obliterate the new Jewish state, the humiliated Arab nations took revenge on their own Jewish citizens. Iraq, for example, confiscated Jewish assets and expelled them. These Jewish stateless refugees were forced to go to Israel and leave all behind. They also have no right to return to what was always their home, although Jews have lived in what is now Iraq for over 2,600 years. War does enormous damage and some of that cannot be undone. It is time for the Palestinian leadership to learn that lesson, accept the existence of the State of Israel, and take proper care of their people.

Sources used: Asaf Romirowsky and Alexander H. Joffe, "How Aid to Palestinians Hurts Not Helps the Peace Process" (January 22, 2018) Middle East Forum website; Edwin Black, "When Iraq Expelled its Jews to Israel - the Inside Story" (June 6, 2016) *Front Page Magazine* website.



New Hope Orphanage, Indonesia



Many of you are familiar with the New Hope Orphanage, which was set up in response to the great needs observed by Dethan family when they began mission work in Timor. The Smithville Board of Mission Aid would like to share with you a recent report that we received from the Coordinator of the New Hope Orphanage. This report will give you a good idea of the daily life of the children who live there, the loving care and support they are given, and the miraculous way that the Lord can use this support beyond the walls of the New Hope Orphanage. Although the home is on the other side of the world from many of us, we can see that their everyday struggles are very relatable to our struggles here. It is wonderful to see the Lord working in the lives of the children and counselors in Timor.

Coordinator's report

We are thankful to report that the large New Hope family continues to run well over the past year. It requires a lot of discipline and scheduling to keep the home on track, but in this too we are thankful that we have a great team of enthusiastic counsellors that works well together in accomplishing this. As counsellors we all take shifts to ensure that someone is always there for the children, and at the



same time check on task schedules being completed. Each counsellor has been assigned to a number of children, keeping close track of their whereabouts and ups and downs. For the daily running of things, we have regular meetings to arrange the schedules for the following tasks:

The counsellors are focussed on the following things:

- To deal with special needs of the children
- To make sure that the children do their daily work
- To connect with other counsellors sharing the joys and struggles that they are going through with the children under their care
- Making sure that the monthly and weekly programs of the home are running smoothly.

Activities of the children that need to be overseen everyday:

- Morning and night devotions
- Bible study after the evening meal
- School progress





- Catechism Classes
- Church activities
- Contact with the families of the children (especially with those that need more attention)
- Cleaning
- Cooking
- Animal care
- Gardening
- Independent studies
- Homework

Facilities

Currently the new boys' dormitory is being built. We are very much looking forward to having this building being completed, since right now living quarters for the boys are very "shaky" in the literal sense! The girls' dormitory is still serving well, however the strong winds during the rainy season have caused a nearby coconut tree to fall on the roof of the girls' one and only bathroom, which is now roofless. The same counts for our kitchen roof, which is made from second hand roofing material. Large parts of the roof have been eaten away by rust and as a result we are having hard time. Especially in the rainy season it is very hard to get a meal cooked.

Security and interruption

Everything at the home is run according to a schedule; our rule is that children should not go out without permission from the counsellors. Visitors (families/friends) are not allowed to go in children's room without permission. A

problem that we are facing is that the location of the home is very open – which makes it easy for visitors to come in without any notice – resulting in some problems.

It is easy for the children to slip out of the dormitory without asking permission. Unfortunately, we had a couple of occasions when strangers were scaring the girls at night. Although there was no harm physically, it has traumatized the girls. It would be ideal to have a fence around the property for security purposes.

Health

In terms of health, we are thankful to report that we have had no major illnesses to deal with in the past year. Hair lice has been a problem several times but was dealt with promptly.

All in all, we are grateful for the working together of this family. On the whole, everyone is very positive and willing to work together. In cases of discipline, as counsellors we are glad that we are able to deal with and resolve the issues in the home. Only on a few occasions has a matter been brought to the board and advisors. There is good teamwork as well between the counsellors and the parents/caretakers. This is crucial for our relationship with the children and we make it a priority to keep an open line of communication with the parents/caretakers. On the whole, we receive very encouraging feedback from the parents/caretakers, who express their thankfulness for the fact that their child is being loved and taken care of. It is with God's help and guidance that we are able to continue this amazing task of being "parents" to this large household.





From the Board of Mission Aid Smithville

Prayer requests

- The children living at the New Hope Orphanage and their personal & spiritual struggles
- The coordinator and counsellors caring for these children on a daily basis
- The academic studies of the children living on the home
- The building of a new dormitory to house the children

We are currently in need of ~\$20,000 to cover our operational budget on the New Hope home for 2018 and to finish the dormitory re-build. In addition to your prayers, we covet your financial support in this endeavour.

If you wish to financially support the children living in the New Hope home all cheques will need to be written to:
"Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund"

Earmarked "New Hope" and mailed to:
Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund
PO Box 85225, Burlington, ON L7R 4K4

Or donations can be accepted online by following the link below and hitting the "Donate Now" button and selecting "5-New Hope-Timor"
<http://www.crwrf.ca/prayers-and-support/donations/>

~ All donors will receive a receipt for tax purposes ~

We wholeheartedly thank you for your past support and covet your prayers and support as we move forward.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

In Christ,
The Board of Mission Aid Smithville
(bomasmithville@gmail.com)





Q What to think of circle prayer or popcorn prayer?

In some of our Reformed churches, prayer meetings are being held where members join in prayer together. This is done in small groups of people praying out loud and each taking a turn as they go around the circle (circle prayer) or whoever spontaneously likes to contribute to the prayer (popcorn prayer). Can we find any evidence of this kind of prayer in Scripture? Where does this type of prayer come from?

A It is important with regard to this question to use the correct names for the particular pursuits of prayer. Meetings where members join in prayer together have long been a common practice in Presbyterian churches: on Wednesday-evenings the congregation (or part of it) comes together for meditation and contemplation the way we read about it in Acts 2:42, “And they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” This may refer to the worship services in which prayers have a major place; it can also be applied to the weekly meetings for prayer, Bible study, and mutual upbuilding. An example of a “prayer meeting” can be found in Acts 12:12, where we read about a meeting in the house of Mary “where many were gathered together and were praying (for Peter who was imprisoned).”

Prayer meetings are also known as meetings for “corporate prayer,” i.e. a meeting in which a body of believers comes together, who are united in faith, in a bond of fellowship, and who in all humility, confidence, thankfulness, and truth “in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let their requests be made known to God” (Phil 4:6). They (plural), “with confidence, draw near to the throne of grace, that they may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need,” according to Hebrews 4:16. This time of need may occur in

a family, which then comes together for prayer for a specific need, or a group of members bringing a specific need among the congregation before the Lord. As long as it’s not done “to force” God but in the unity of a true faith, for not the number of members is important or the kind of group, but the focus on a particular need they share, which they bring before their good and gracious, their caring and compassionate God who is able and willing to hear and to help in time of need!

Corporate prayer also is very common in the context of a meeting of the church council, consistory, classis, synod. After hearing a number of home visit reports (consistory), or church visitation reports (classis), or upon the discussion of an appeal (synod), the meeting seeks God’s throne of grace with thanksgiving and praise (Col 3:16), for supplication and petitions (Eph 6:18, 19), and for mutual encouragement (1 Thess 5:25). Also, in meetings of a mission board or school board (ed. comm.), at times when the specific need for new workers is pressing, or a new project is initiated, a time of special prayer is most appropriate. At a recent meeting of the ARPA Canada Board and staff, a special time of prayer was held in which members took turns expressing thanksgiving and praise for a variety of distinct blessings considered in this annual meeting. These are all good examples of “prayer meetings” that could also be called “prayer circles.”

Such prayer meetings must be distinguished clearly from the so-called “circle prayer-gatherings” in which people stand

together in a circle around a house, a bed (in which someone is seriously ill), or around an office building (of a business in trouble, or where an unemployed member has applied) to claim God for that case or place. Such circle prayers for all sorts of purposes have been advocated, for instance, in a book *The Circle Maker*, by Mark Batterson, in order to claim God for that person or place. This type of prayer pursues, in an almost magical way, to manipulate God through a specific formula, ritual, or prayer. We cannot by certain actions give prayer more power or authority. Nowhere in Scripture are we assured of our ability to claim something for ourselves or by ourselves. It's superstitious rather than scriptural. God knows our needs, hears our prayers, and responds to them according to his will and way and wisdom, in his grace and goodness and love!

Also, the practice of so-called "popcorn prayers" are not a scriptural notion nor do they have their basis in God's Word. In the practice of "popcorn prayers," people are sitting in a circle and invited to come up with a one-sentence petition or expression. It's made into a "game" even in which the prayer leader pronounces a sentence and someone in the circle responds to it with a one sentence "prayer." Popcorn

prayers aren't prayers at all but impulsive utterings or mutterings, rather than prayers that are contemplated in accordance with God's Word (LD 45). Paul's exhortation to pray "with the mind" applies here too, rather than the expression of feelings or sentiments "popping" up in the heart. This is not to say, of course, that there cannot be short prayers at certain special moments, like cries for help, cries in distress, like Peter's cry, "Lord, save me" (Matt 14:30), or the publican's saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13), or the criminal on the cross, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42).

As long as our prayers are sincere, humble, in faith, and with confidence, we may pray (Eph 6:18-20) "at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication," individually or corporately, in our "closet" or in the Bible study society, "making supplication for all the saints" (individually or collectively, at home or abroad), "and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel," (for ministers, missionaries, teachers, professors), or for the sick, the lonely, the suffering, the afflicted, etc., in faith, humility, and with thanksgiving!

Q May home visits be done by one or two elders?

In some of our churches home visits are done by one elder instead of by two. Is this not against Scripture (Deut 17:6, 15; Matt 18:16)?

A In answer to this question, we should realize that this is not a matter of either/or, but of and/and. Indeed, there are situations in which an elder could make a visit by himself. In special situations and at special occasions such visits can be and may be made with much fruit and with good effects. For example, when a new member has entered the congregation an acquaintance visit by a single elder (the assigned ward elder) would be an effective way of getting to know the new member or family. A visit like that he could even make together with his wife, while still making it

"formal" by closing the visit with reading and prayer. At special occasions such as anniversaries, a birthday of an elderly member, a sickness, or graduation, to mention a few, it could be opportune occasions to become better acquainted, build a greater relationship, or share God's Word of comfort and encouragement at times of joy, concern, or sorrow. Also in follow-up of an official home visit it could be advantageous and helpful to go back and address in a more personal and intimate visit a matter of concern or a perceived problem in the family or with a particular member of the family. This, too, will enhance the special relationship between the elder and the member(s) in his ward.

The matter of pastoral visits or visits by office bearers (minister, elder, or deacon) should be a point of discussion, discernment, and discretion at consistory meetings. Ministers most often make their pastoral visits alone (or together with his wife, depending on the purpose or occasion of the visit), while in certain circumstances it would not be wise to do so (e.g. single sisters). Elders, too, could preview certain visits and ask some advice of their colleagues regarding the wisdom of making the visit alone or with a fellow-elder. Sometimes a visit by two elders is experienced as intimidating by a single member, causing them to close up and reluctant to speak. In situations like that it can happen easily as well that the elders end up talking together, and thus missing the purpose of that visit. In certain situations, it may be advisable to have the minister and an elder, or an elder and a deacon visit a member or family; whatever is most conducive with a view to the purpose and nature of the visit. In the work of the office bearers there can be many an occasion where a visit by a single office bearer will suffice. In the event, however, that his findings in the visit show that the problem or reason for the visit is more serious, it would be best to return for another visit with a fellow-office bearer.

This is where the texts as mentioned in the question become relevant. When we are dealing with the official annual

home visits or with the special visits in which matters of discipline come in the picture, we ought to maintain the scriptural inference that such visits should be made by two. The “official” home visits are made to inquire or to interview or to investigate into the spiritual well-being and life of God’s people in their relationship with the Lord, their interaction with the preaching, and their fruitfulness in a godly life in their family, in the church, at work, and in the world, etc., the testimonies and findings of which must be reported by two witnesses (2 Cor 13:1). It is also to the advantage of the elders that they assist each other in the visit, complementing each other’s insights and wisdom (two know more than one), and sharing with the member or family the spiritual experiences of each elder. However, when matters of discipline are in order, there is the rule that two or three witnesses are required; as the Lord Jesus reiterates in Matthew 18:16 the requirement of Deuteronomy 19:15, “A single witness shall not suffice against person of any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed.” This important Old Testament principle was especially used to protect innocent people from the death penalty (Deut 17:6), but in Deuteronomy 19:15, the LORD God broadened this principle for all offenses with which one could be charged (also cf. 1 Tim 5:19, in connection with an accusation against an elder).



**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

Build Your House on the Rock

Matthew 7:24-29, Luke 6:46-49

When Jesus was teaching the people, he compared listening to him and obeying him to a wise man building a house on a rock. When rain and storms come, the house stands strong and firm on the rock. But if anyone hears Jesus's words and does not listen to him, that is like a foolish man building a house on sand. When wind and rain hit a house built on sand, it will fall over and break. That means that we have to trust in Jesus and obey him, so that when difficult things happen in our lives we can stand strong and firm, like the house on the rock.

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



Word Search

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

Foolish
Rock
Strong

Listen
Sand
Trust

Obey
Storms
Wise

Matching

Match the following words to the wise or the foolish man. Which one should you try to be like?

Foolish Man

Wise Man

Listen
Disobey
Sand
Strong
Rock
Fall down
Obey
Not listen
Weak
Stand firm

by Emily Nijenhuis

Rose Malda



Introducing to you to Rose Malda; she will be celebrating her birthday in August.

Greetings, salutations and massive bear hugs to all of you. My name is Rose Malda. I am sixty years young and live at Mount Nemo Nursing Home in Burlington, Ontario. My God-given task of Volunteer Life Enrichment Technician - yelling happily during hymns, giving out bear hugs to unsuspecting staff members, and softly rubbing hands, arms, and heads (especially bald ones) during times of quiet introspection - keeps me very busy these days, but I am always happy to take time out to meet with the media.

Owing to a bout of spinal meningitis at the age of three months, I have lived life hampered by slow intellectual development. Even after sixty years, I speak very few words and communicate mostly by pointing and grunting. My thinking appears to be in line with my fifteen- to eighteen-month-old great-nieces and nephews. But that does not mean I don't think at all. Often, during times of solitude, I wonder where my mother and father are. They used to visit so faithfully but first my dad and then my mom stopped dropping in. And we used to have so much fun together. We could play peekaboo and look at the colourful birthday and Christmas cards that people sent me over a cup of tea for hours on end. As I have little realization of passing time they never fade into past tense, so I simply keep waiting for them to show up. My siblings take turns visiting once a week and one of their children may drop in with their kids every so often but what's missing? I guess there is nothing that can fully take the place of a mother and her unconditional love. This is the general plight of the aging handicapped, when everyone else's life moves at a much faster pace than ours. While nothing beats a quality relationship, quantity comes in as a close second. Visits from individuals, families, men's and women's study clubs and youth groups go a long way in filling the gap and are always appreciated.

Please don't get me wrong though. Life is good here at Mount Nemo. I live in the company of excellent people, am looked after by a fantastic group of volunteers, support workers, nurses, and doctors and receive delectable meals three times a day (even if they are pureed and mixed with medications). There is even a rumour going around that a bunch of people are working on building an entire new home for us. I ask God to preserve these men and women, along with the host of other behind-the-scenes workers and volunteers, for all of us here as well as future generations.

Wait a minute, I think I see my brother coming in for a visit. I'll begin with a bear hug and then start into rubbing his progressively smoothing head. Gotta go. . . .

June Birthdays

17 JOAN KOERSELMAN will be 61

2113-16 Avenue, Coaldale, AB T1M 1J8

20 LARS HUIJGEN will be 27

2629 Aspen Drive, Coaldale, AB T1M 0A2

26 DEVON NIEZEN will be 18

454 St George Street E, Fergus, ON N1M 1K8

30 BEVERLY BREUKELMAN will be 56

2225-19th Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4

Happy Birthday to everyone celebrating a birthday in June! We wish you the Lord's blessing in the year ahead and a wonderful day with family and friends.

A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

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

Rachel Vis

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





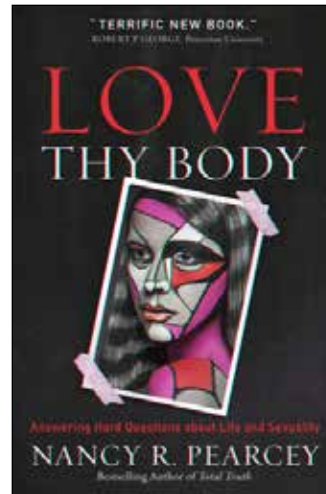
Love Thy Body

**Pearcey, Nancy R., *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality*
 BakerBooks, 2018, hardcover, 335 pages.**

The current moral confusion around God's creation gifts of human life and sex is astounding. What would have been inconceivable just a few decades ago, such as the growing acceptance of gay marriage and transgenderism is now being pushed into mainstream thinking. Even Christians are buying into some or all of it. How could this be? What is our response as Christians to be?

In her latest book, Nancy Pearcey brings biblical clarity to the moral morass that the western world finds itself in and points a way out of this wasteland. In her introduction and important opening chapter, she shows that at bottom one's approach to the moral issues of the day depend on your worldview. As she argued in an excellent earlier publication, *Total Truth* (reviewed in *Clarion*, January 5, 2007), the biblical notion of a single truth encompassing all of life is no longer held in our society. Thus, for instance, morality does not qualify as objective truth. For example, I may consider something wrong, but it's my personal view. It cannot be classified as objectively true for all people. Only what science asserts as true counts for everyone.

Since such a fragmented dualistic worldview undergirds current secular thinking, Pearcey devotes her first chapter to "to map out the two-story worldview through an overview of the most salient moral issues" (18). Pearcey does this in a very easy-to-understand manner by using concrete examples, such as abortion. According to secular science, the baby in the womb is a biological organism that is expendable. It may be human life, but it is not a person. It deserves no legal protection. A pregnant woman who is Christian will disagree. She will assert the truth that the child she is expecting is a person, but those with a dualistic worldview will not accept that as a truth that applies to all those who are still in the womb. In this way of showing dualistic thinking, Pearcey touches on euthanasia, homosexuality, and gender dysphoria. These issues are dealt with in more detail in the chapters that follow.



Pearcey convincingly suggests that a common underlying reality in these moral hot-button issues is secularism's disrespect and even hatred of the human body. She appropriately gives the first chapter the title "I hate Me" and this explains the title of the book. Scripture, however, presents us with a very high view of the body. When God created the first human, he made him after his image to be his representative on earth. Each person is given a specific body and gender by the Creator. The risen Christ is in heaven with his human body and one day his people will be on the renewed earth in physical bodies. So, love and cherish the body you were given. Doing this has enormous implications for all the moral flashpoints of today.

Chapter two fleshes out the issue of abortion and shows how our current secular culture, government, and the courts have taken over the dualistic worldview in denying the personhood of unborn children. There are even cases of botched abortions with a baby being born alive and then left to die. In one instance such a baby even survived for twenty-one days but is nevertheless not protected by law and left to die. "Because the mother had decided to abort him, 'the fetus in this case was not a person whose life state law could protect'" (55). Science can affirm that the baby is a human being but cannot affirm that it is a person. That is a value or moral judgement which can vary. Such a dualistic worldview justifies the evil of abortion. Pearcey reminds us that the early Christian church was also confronted with the horror of abortion and their response gives us valuable lessons on how to be countercultural in our time as well.

In her third chapter, Pearcey tackles the topic of euthanasia. Again, the issue is what constitutes a person? Essentially the same arguments that seek to justify abortion are

used to promote euthanasia. If a person is no longer able to reason, live a fulfilling life, or have emotions, then one can make the moral judgement that such an entity is not a person but just a body, a collection of cells, which should be unplugged. This dualistic approach saves on health care costs and the organs can be harvested. Pearcey offers great biblical insights in opposing the current euthanasia mindset, illustrated with some telling contemporary examples.

The next chapter, "Schizoid Sex: hijacked by the hookup culture," addresses how the dualistic worldview undergirds the sexual revolution and its tragic consequences. Also Christians are impacted. Pearcey gives hope with a wholistic biblical view of the body and sex. She also clearly explains God's plan for his creation, the fall and redemption, the place of the family, and more. She also sensitively includes topics such as being single and the consequences of being divorced with biblical insights.

The next two chapters address the homosexual and transgender narratives and how they demean the human body, as simply raw material on which the autonomous person imposes his judgment and will, including the de-

termination of his or her gender. These chapters are full of solid biblical teaching and clear examples from real life to make her point. She is also sensitive to the real anguish and heartache that is present in this area and gives biblical hope and perspective. She again shows how an unbiblical dualism is causing much grief.

In the final chapter, Pearcey considers the social and political philosophy that is driving Western culture to undermine the family unit and biological bonds and to strive for relationships solely built on contracts and choices we make. Again, this is another expression of the devaluation of the body and the blood relationships that should bind us together. With examples, also from Canada, she shows how the state is enabling this thinking through legislation and undermining the family unit.

This is an excellent and informative book which serves as a reliable guide to understand the current godless culture and how to respond to it biblically. The book is well-footnoted for those interested in further readings. She also further enhances the value of this book by providing questions for discussion. Highly recommended!



NOTICE OF CONVOCAATION

General Synod 2019 is slated to be convened by the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Edmonton on May 14, 2019. A prayer service will be held on Monday, May 13, 2019, at 7:30 PM at the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church building. Synod Edmonton 2019 will commence on Tuesday, May 14, 2019, D.V.

All material for Synod should be send to the attention of the Synod Organizing Committee at the address of the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Edmonton:
21112 35 Avenue NW, Edmonton, AB T6M 2P6
email: clerk@synod.edmontonimmanuel.ca



According to the GUIDELINES FOR GENERAL SYNOD all material for Synod should be received by the convening church (in digital format, and five paper copies) no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of General Synod. Material received after this date shall ordinarily not be added to the agenda unless Synod is satisfied that the reasons given for later arrival are reasonable.