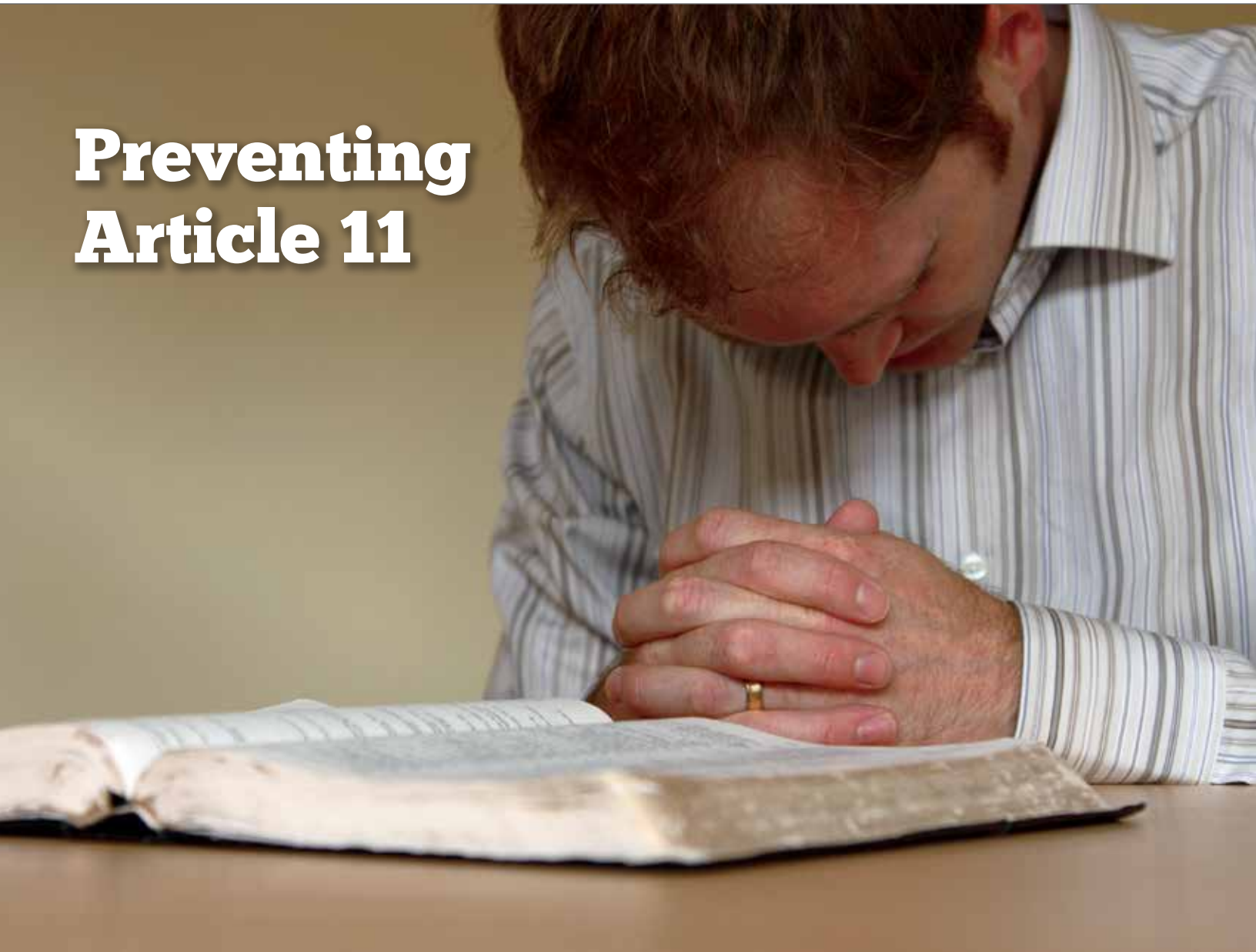


# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

V 67 N 13 JUNE 29 2018

## Preventing Article 11



*A DISTORTED GOSPEL DIVIDES THE CHURCH  
WHEN IS ELIJAH TO RETURN?*

## EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal  
Coeditors: P.H. Holtvliwer, E. Kampen, C. Van Dam, M. VanLuik

## ADDRESS FOR MAGAZINE CONTENT



Clarion  
8 Inverness Crescent, St. Albert, AB T8N 5J5  
Email: editor@clarionmagazine.ca

## ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

CLARION  
Premier Printing Ltd.  
One Beghin Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB Canada R2J 3X5  
Phone: 204-663-9000, Fax: 204-663-9202

**Subscriptions** subscriptions@clarionmagazine.ca  
**Advertisements** ads@clarionmagazine.ca  
**Website** www.clarionmagazine.ca

## 2018 SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

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

## Cancellation Agreement

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.

## 2018 ADVERTISING RATES

Advertisements: \$20.00 per column inch  
Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$21.00 per column inch.  
We reserve the right to refuse ads.

## PUBLISHER

Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd.  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

## Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

We acknowledge the financial support  
of the Government of Canada.



Agreement No. 40063293; ISSN 0383-0438

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:  
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Our editorial comes from Rev. Peter Holtvliwer, and he writes about preventing Article 11 situations, in which a minister is released from serving in a particular congregation.

We are also thankful to have permission to publish an article from the blog "The Wee Flea." Here Rev. David Robertson of the Free Church of Scotland has written about his reaction to the message delivered at the Royal Wedding: "Bishop Michael Curry's Sermon – A Distorted Gospel Divides the Church."

In news, this issue covers the fiftieth anniversary of Maranatha Christian School in Fergus. Issue 13 also has Treasures New & Old, Clippings on Politics & Religion, You Asked, Clarion Kids, Ray of Sunshine, a MERF newsletter, and a letter to the editor.

Laura Veenendaal

## CONTENTS

- 347 EDITORIAL**  
**Preventing Article 11**
- 350 TREASURES, NEW & OLD**  
**Remember Me**
- 351 Bishop Michael Curry's Sermon**
- 354 CLIPPINGS ON POLITICS & RELIGION**
- 355 Maranatha Christian School Celebrates Fifty years**
- 357 MERF NEWS**
- 359 CLARION KIDS**
- 360 RAY OF SUNSHINE**
- 361 YOU ASKED**
- 363 LETTER TO THE EDITOR**



Connect with him on  
 Facebook or Twitter  
 (@PeterHoltvluwer)  
 where he is currently tweeting  
 on Christ in the Psalms

# Preventing Article 11

*Love, meekness, and the willingness to  
 patiently forbear with one another – none of which  
 are natural or easy for us – are easily left in the dust  
 as positions are carved out, demands are put forward,  
 and people dig in their heels*

Sadly, it's becoming an expression among us: "Minister so-and-so has been Article 11'd." That's a reference to Article 11 of the Church Order, which allows for a consistory to release the congregation's minister because they believe he is no longer able to function fruitfully in the congregation. On occasion this may take place with the mutual, amicable agreement of minister and consistory, but generally this is a long, trying, and very painful experience for all involved that few would ever wish to repeat.

To be clear, it's not that the minister has been unfaithful to his calling or fallen into sin, but that something in the relationship between the pastor and consistory and congregation has broken down and strife is developing. The fault can be spread around but slowly it dawns on more and more people: "Things can't go on like this. Something has to change." Efforts are often made to reduce the tensions, to improve the functioning of the pastor's ministry, but all too often it's too little, too late. Sooner or later the feeling arises that the relationship must be terminated. Enter Article 11.

## On the increase?

There was a time in Canadian Reformed history when this was a fairly rare occurrence, but that seems to be changing. In the thirty years from 1980 to 2010 I can recall only four cases. But in the last eight years there have been five more in relatively close succession. An anomaly? I hope so. But if I look at our brothers and sisters in the United Reformed Churches (who have much the same Church Order as we do), I notice that they too have experienced more

than a few "Article 11" situations in their twenty plus years of existence. And our sister churches in Australia also know of this phenomenon.

Where is this all coming from? There is sin and pride in every heart, so we don't have to look too far. But aren't those sinful inclinations stoked by the culture in which we live? In the West, we are immersed in an age of consumerism, individualism, and entitlement, and it seems to be affecting us in this area as well. As consumers, we are used to shopping around to find what we like. We have little patience for a "product" we don't like. We also think we deserve better.

This can develop on the side of the congregation (I don't like his preaching; he's not a very good pastor or effective leader, and the consistory doesn't do anything about it) but equally on the side of the minister (the people are shallow and unwilling to really work with my preaching; they are too picky, and the consistory coddles the membership). Love, meekness, and the willingness to patiently forbear with one another – none of which are natural or easy for us – are easily left in the dust as positions are carved out, demands are put forward, and people dig in their heels.

## Rethink

There are no winners in this. The end result is a lot of hurt, alienation, discouragement, and even bitterness for many. It marks the minister and his family but also the congregation for years to come. While the released minister remains eligible for call for a few years, a call does not

always come, and he may cease being a minister – bringing more sorrow and loss. Even more, the break-down in relationship does no little damage to the cause of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of displaying harmony, unity, and a society of peace, we show the misery of sinful discord. How can Christ's name be honoured in that?

And people are getting nervous. Congregations wonder: "How can we avoid this and all the misery it brings?" Ministers quietly question: "Could this happen to me?" Or: "Do I want to take a call to a church that released a minister in the past? Risky business!" Prospective students have also noticed this trend. It's already daunting for young men to consider serving the Lord as a minister but as they see Article 11 being invoked to release ministers, it makes them think twice. Can anyone blame them? With a serious shortage of pastors already a problem for us in the federation, we would do well as churches, consistories, and ministers to think through ways to prevent these painful separations by nipping them in the bud and working to create an atmosphere of open, healthy dialogue about issues as they arise.

## Humility

The need for humility should go without saying, but sometimes it gets trampled on by unmet expectations, egos, and a desire for something other than what the Lord has provided. This can cut both ways: the congregation can become dissatisfied with the minister, and the pastor can become frustrated with how the congregation is responding to his ministry – and the consistory can get caught in the middle. Then church life begins to resemble a boxing ring with the minister (and his supporters) in one corner, the congregation in the other, and the consistory trying to play referee. People on all sides are upset.

But we need to ask ourselves: Are we upset about the things the Lord Jesus is upset about? Would Christ share our agitation and frustration about the pastor's ministry? In other words, are our concerns legitimate in the Lord's eyes? If so, then they need to be taken up with the minister and elders and gently, carefully worked on.<sup>1</sup> But if not, we need to humble ourselves and accept that the Lord is at work through this man and sincerely let ourselves be ministered to.

## Personal preferences

We might be disappointed that our minister doesn't preach like Alistair Begg or Tim Keller, but if he is clearly preaching the pure Word of God, is the Lord happy with our discontentment? We might be irritated by our pastor's personality or his manner in the way he makes visits, but

if he sincerely opens the Word and prays with us, is our irritation justified? His method of teaching Catechism could be quite different from anything we've known. But so long as the pastor faithfully teaches the correct doctrine as confessed by the church, does it please God that we are bothered by the manner of his instruction?

The minister we have didn't become our pastor by accident or chance. The call to him was thought about carefully and prayed over much and in all that process our heavenly Father was leading. We have to recognize God's providential hand and specifically the wisdom of the ascended Lord Jesus in giving to us this servant at this time (Eph 4:11–14). Our default starting point as congregants needs to be that we see the pastor as Christ's under-shepherd given by him to minister to our needs, not satisfy our preferences – or do things the way we think they should be done.

## The blame game

And from the minister's side, do I think that it has to be my way or the highway? Do I imagine there is no room for improvement in my preaching or teaching or pastoral work? Do I bristle at any and all criticism? Do I feel threatened by suggestions for change? Humility teaches us that there is *always* room for improvement and that we should expect to grow and change. "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning" (Prov 9:9). In fact, we should *welcome* a development of our talents and sometimes that takes being prodded by a well-meaning critic. The wounds of a friend are faithful (Prov 27:6). Rather than rebuff those who have comments on the way we do things, we should listen carefully and evaluate the legitimacy of the concern or idea. Ask an elder or two to help you with that, to be a sounding board and provide some arm's-length feedback.

Otherwise we end up deflecting criticism, learning little, and playing the blame game. My pride and ego are skilled at turning things around and making everything the congregation's fault. I can easily think: "The people are superficial in their faith and too unspiritual to work with my preaching. They want to be spoon-fed." But if the people come to church honestly looking to be fed by God's Word but regularly leave uncertain about what was said or unedified by my explanation, is the Lord happy that I place all the blame on the hearers? If there are a fair number of students (supported by their parents) who complain they get little out of Catechism class, is it fitting that my only response is that they need to buckle down and get serious about paying attention?



Christ-like humility dictates that before taking the speck out of my brother's eye I first take the plank out of my own. The presence of persistent criticism by sincere church members must lead me to take a good, long, hard look in the mirror. Again, it's wise to invite a couple of capable elders into this self-examination process, brothers who love you but who can also tell it to you straight. It would be good for elders to make a standing offer for this, something the minister can avail himself whenever he feels the need. And then together assess the way you are going about the ministry and how beneficial changes might be made.

### Selflessness

Our Saviour demands of each of us what he himself first showed us by example: a humble heart that is willing to go low for the sake of the other, that's willing even to suffer and endure hardship so that the other is blessed. Jesus did this for each of us and now insists that we do the same for one another:

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant (Phil 2:1-7 NIV).

Christ didn't let his personal preferences guide him or let the personality quirks of others bother him, for he was intent on doing his Father's will. And though Jesus is the only perfect pastor and preacher who ever lived, and though he had good reason to be frustrated with the way his church responded at times (e.g., Matt 16:9-12), yet he never sat back and said to his disciples, "Suck it up." His response was to give more help and more grace so that they would truly benefit from his ministry (e.g., Luke 23:25-27). He selflessly gave and gave some more to bless the other and that's how we need to be as minister and congregation.

### Pray for each other

A big part of that necessary humility will show up in

our willingness to pray for the other. As Paul makes clear in many of his letters, the minister needs the church's prayers and the church needs the minister's prayers (see Eph 1:15-19 and 6:18-19). This works in at least a few different ways. When we pray for one another – and doubly so when we are having difficulties with the other party – then we are asking our heavenly Father to help bring about *godly* change, that is, change with which God would be happy. Sincere prayer has a way of weeding out our personal preferences, for we know that we can't plead with God to make the minister or the congregation the way *we* want them to be but only the way *the Lord* wants them to be, as he has explained in Scripture.

### Prayer changes us

And while we are humbly on our knees before the Lord thinking about the shortcomings we find in others, it will hit us that we must first turn the microscope upon ourselves and confess our own sins and shortcomings. After all, we know that God does not answer the prayers of self-righteous hypocrites. And once your own sins and weaknesses are fully in view, the sins of others start to look a lot smaller. When grace has washed your sins away in Jesus' blood, you'll be eager to show that same grace toward others.

There's something else that happens when you pray for those who seem to be opposing you or frustrating you in church life: you'll find it harder and harder to be upset with them. If I truly labour in prayer day after day to seek the good of my pastor or my flock, if I ask the Lord God to aid them and bless them, and to restore good harmony with myself and within in the church, how can I get up from my prayer and continue to feel embittered and resentful? Praying for the other party will bring God's blessing upon them and it will not fail to change your own attitude as well.

The above are conversation starters on the topic of preventing more painful, undesirable Article 11s. Much more, I'm sure, could be said. But can we start to talk about it well before there's any trouble brewing on the horizon? Let's work on that atmosphere of humility, openness, and godly self-examination and may God graciously grant us peace and harmony in every congregation.

<sup>1</sup> I have elsewhere written about dealing appropriately with legitimate concerns about the pastor's preaching (*Misusing Matthew 18 – Clarion*, 65, April 8, 2016). The same would apply for his teaching or pastoral care. A minister is not above falling into unedifying ruts and bad habits in his work and when that is evident it ought to be addressed but then with deep care and respect.





# Remember Me

***"According to your steadfast love remember me,  
 for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!"  
 (Psalm 25:7b)***

If you look at Psalm 25:6 and 7 as a small unit you will see that King David first asks the LORD to remember his mercy and love, then *not* to remember the sins of his youth, and then finally simply to remember him.

Lord, don't remember my sins, but don't forget me. Remember me, the one whom you have drawn into your covenant circle. God is no distant judge; rather, he is our covenant God.

There are many places in Scriptures where we are told to remember – we're to remember the Lord, to remember his great deeds of salvation. There was the annual Passover feast, a festival of remembrance of how God had delivered his people from Egypt. The children of Israel were told to set up memorial stones on the bank of the Jordan River. They had their ceremonies – all to help them remember.

Today we have the sacraments to help us remember what God has done for us in Christ and his sacrifice on the cross. One of the weekly tasks of ministers is to remind the congregation of what Jesus has done for his people.

Here we are taught to ask our Lord to remember us. Remember me, Lord! According to your steadfast covenant love, remember me.

There was someone else who prayed that: the one criminal on the cross. Jesus was crucified between two criminals, and the one hurled abuse upon Jesus. He said, "Aren't you the Messiah? If you are, save yourself and us!" The other criminal told him to be quiet since Jesus had done nothing wrong, whereas they were getting the just reward for their crimes. Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Remember me! That's the same as King David prayed – remember me. It's what you can pray: "Jesus, remember me! Don't forget about me!"

Jesus will not. See how he answered the criminal! "Today you will be with me in paradise."

That's where King David is. That's where the criminal is. That's where you will go when the Lord takes you home. Confess your sins like the criminal did, like King David did, and you may

be assured that there is a place awaiting you in paradise.

David prays this for the sake of the LORD's goodness. God is good and has shown his goodness throughout the ages. When the time had fully come, he showed the full resplendent display of his goodness, of his steadfast love, and of his tender mercy by giving us his Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.

You can pray these things, dear reader. If you are lost for words, just pray this Psalm. Or sing or read the Psalm as we have it put to verse in the *Book of Praise*.

When life is a mess, when you are at the end of your wits, ask him to remember you. You, a sinner, someone haunted by the sins of youth, a troubled person, a disabled brother or sister, someone fighting a frightening disease. You, someone experiencing marriage breakup or family meltdown. Recovering from an injury. Lord, remember me – for the sake of your goodness; for the sake of Jesus. Because of what Jesus has done for me. Remember me, O LORD. I know you won't forget me.

## For further study

1. Do you think the criminal was surprised by Jesus' response? Why?
2. Do think the Lord would ever forget you? Why do you answer the way do?





# Bishop Michael Curry's Sermon – A Distorted Gospel Divides the Church

*"But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute." 2 Peter 2:1-2 NIVUK*

The reaction to Bishop Michael Curry's exuberant sermon at the Royal Wedding has demonstrated a great deal about our own culture and even more about the state of the evangelical church in the West today. Even more shockingly for me, it has shown up a fault line in my own orthodox denomination. I have written a more general piece for *Christian Today* that will hopefully be online today, but in this article I want to carefully consider the sermon and the reaction to it from my own tribe (evangelicals) and my own particular subset within it – the Free Church of Scotland. I am genuinely traumatised at what has emerged over the past couple of days and have been lying awake trying to process it. The verse at the head of this article was in my McCheyne reading this morning and has prompted me to write.

Bishop Curry was a superb communicator. He was connected, joyful, enthusiastic, jovial, learned, and amusing. An angel of light.

First let me begin with the general evangelical reaction. I wrote the following for *Christian Today*:

In one sense the sermon was wonderful. Bishop Curry was passionate, articulate, humorous and he even mentioned Jesus, the Bible and the love of God (55 times!). And people loved it. Piers Morgan tweeted: "Wow. Still reeling from Rev Curry. What a moment. What a guy!" Ed Miliband – "Rev Michael Curry could almost make me a believer." As predicted on *Christian Today* it seems as though the British really did fall in love with the loveable bishop. And it wasn't just the public, nor the liberal Christians and LGBT activists who loved him. Those of a more con-

servative bent were quick to join in. The conservative blogger Cranmer tweeted: "When the Church is liberated from staid sermons and formulaic motions to spontaneous expressions of joy and heart-bursting love, the world sits up and listens. God bless you, @BishopCurry, for proclaiming the love of Christ so passionately to two billion people." Many other conservative evangelicals from Krish Kandiah to Amy Orr-Ewing, from Scottish Free Church Presbyterians to Sydney Anglicans were equally commendatory. It was, and is, as many pointed out, an opportunity to talk about Jesus and to share the Gospel.

Archbishop Welby (Church of England) was ecstatic. "The use of language to communicate the gospel of Christ just blew the place open. You could see people get caught up and excited about it." This was preaching the gospel.

## The Free Church

There were many reactions to the sermon. I came across this interesting and informative post from our friend, Sam Logan:

*I had the great privilege of preaching twice today for the Free Church of Scotland congregation of Uig/Staffin on the Isle of Skye. After the service tonight, there was a "Fellowship Time" at which members of the congregation and Susan and I talked about "things." One of those things, a subject raised by a leader of that congregation, was the sermon from yesterday's royal wedding. I mentioned the divergent opinions I have seen regarding that sermon posted by Free Church ministers. Overall, I would say that the majority opinion expressed tonight was strongly positive. I find it VERY educational to listen to and to be educated by committed evangelical Reformed Christians from cultural contexts different from my own.*

I found it very educational as well. I was really disappointed that our own people did not show discernment in assessing the sermon. But then when I consider that several Free

Church leaders tweeted their support and appreciation for the sermon, I am not that surprised.

*I'm grateful for Bishop Michael Curry's sermon today. There was plenty in it to point people to Jesus, and I pray that many people who watched that sermon will discover Jesus for themselves as they read or listen to the Bible as a result of the sermon.*

*Having read the sermon I couldn't find anything of deism in it or any other heterodoxy, and there were plenty of pointers to God's redeeming love in the life and death of Jesus. There is no better way to bring people to faith than to woo their hearts by telling them, reminding them and re-reminding them of the amazing love of God in Christ.*

Others have commented that it was such a powerful message and it should get people to reading the Bible. Still others that even if it wasn't spot on we should take the Philipians 1:18 attitude "But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached." But that is the key question – was Christ preached? Was the love of Christ preached?

It wasn't.

### **1) If it had been, it would have been the first time that the preaching of Christ met with worldwide commendation!**

Everyone loved it – from the atheist Ed Miliband to the LGBT activist Vicky Beeching. Liberal and Evangelical alike sang its praises. It was such a post-modern meaningless sermon that anyone could take any meaning they liked. Listen to what Jesus says: "Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets" (Luke 6:26).

### **2) It was hypocritical**

Bishop Curry was at a wedding that upheld the traditional Cranmer prayer book (and biblical) view of marriage as being between a man and a woman – and which expressly said so. Yet he does not believe that – and has been active in getting the reference to procreation and to man and woman removed from the prayer book in his church. Incidentally his province is meant to be under the discipline of the whole Anglican Church, yet the Archbishop of Canterbury not only invited him but also enthusiastically endorsed him. Biblical Evangelicals within the Church of England have been well and truly shafted! It is important to grasp that Liberals like Curry use words in different ways – we need to ask, what does he mean by Jesus, love, and the cross. We may be hearing one thing when he is saying another.

### **3) It was unbiblical**

The sermon cited 1 John 4:8 out of context. I know that he did not have time to do all of this, but there is no way

that the little he did say is reflective of the letter he took it from. Just to mention a few things:

a) *Sin* – John sets the whole of the Cross-against the background of sin. Bishop Curry did not mention sin once. "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1:8).

b) *The Atonement* – John tells us that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. That forgiveness for sins comes from that. "Jesus is the atoning sacrifice" (the propitiation, turning aside the just wrath of God against sin) "for our sins, and not only ours but the sin of the whole world" (2:2). "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters" (3:16). "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (4:10). When Curry spoke of the cross, it spoke of it as sacrificial, as exemplary, not as *the* atoning sacrifice. We too can be sacrificial, and it is that sacrificial love that is redemptive and changes the world. Can you see what he is doing? He is turning the cross from being *the* redemptive work to it being an example of redemptive love that we can all show. He is teaching us that we can save ourselves and indeed save the world by just having the kind of love that Christ had and following his example. That is not the gospel. It is the antithesis of the gospel.

c) *Obedience* – Obedience was left out of the marriage vows. It was also left out of the sermon. Which given that it was a sermon about love and love is defined as obedience in his text is a big miss! "We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands" (2:3). "If anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in them" (2:5). But the Bishop said nothing about obeying the commands of God. Imagine if he had said this: "This is love for God, to keep his commands" (5:3). Do you think for a moment he would have had such a positive response?

d) *Loving the world was commended, not condemned* – "Do not love the world, or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them" (2:15). "See what great love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called the children of God! And this is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him" (3:1). Bishop Curry made no distinction at all between Jesus and the world. So the world loved his message. If he had preached Christ, the world would have hated it. As it is, the world loved his message, because it pushed all their buttons.

e) *Beware False Teachers* – "Many antichrists have come" (2:18). "Do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (3:7-8). "Do not believe every



*spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”* False teaching, false spirits, the devil being at work. Again, none of that was mentioned. The whole concept of evil and the devil’s work was not part of the picture at all. But our battle is not against flesh and blood. Nor against Donald Trump. It is against sin, self, and Satan.

*f) There is a great division between those who know God and those who don’t* – “Whoever does not love, does not know God, because God is love” (4:8). Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (5:1). If you don’t know Jesus, you are not born of God. And if you are not born of the God who is love, you cannot love in the way that John is speaking about.

Imagine if Bishop Curry had said to the young couple: “It’s great to see your love, but there is a greater love, and you really need to know that love. You need to know the God who is love. You need to trust and accept his atoning work of sacrifice. You need to show your love by obeying his commands (including being faithful to each other). You need to watch out for the evil in your own heart, and that from the devil. Always look to Christ” But he didn’t (even though the Cranmer’s Anglican liturgy recognizes all those things); and he couldn’t because he does not believe that. He disobeys God’s Word, denies his atoning sacrifice, and does not teach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **So what does the fact that so many good Christians and pastors accepted this as a “gospel sermon” tell us?**

It teaches us that the world has had a far deeper impact on our general thinking than we realize. We just seem to accept its premises.

It teaches us that we should not use the world’s methodology. I know that there are some who think that just because Jesus is mentioned and the Bible quoted, this is a great thing, and even if he was not especially orthodox, we can use this as a kind of marketing tool. Whilst I agree that we should use every opportunity we can get, we should not justify or accept false teaching just because it can be turned for good. It is very dangerous to say to our people that a sermon which gave a false view of the cross, a wrong view of salvation, and was preached by a man who denies the Bible as the Word of God, is somehow to be celebrated as something that points people to Jesus. Which Jesus?

It teaches us that we need to be on our guard. The false teachers that Peter mentions were not people who were open in their heresy. They “secretly introduce destructive heresies.” Paul warned the Ephesian elders, “I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will

arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears” (Acts 5:29-31). The devil is subtle. Most churches gradually decline – they don’t usually make one big jump. We need to walk the straight line – never deviating one iota from the Word of God – whether to legalism on the one hand, or liberalism on the other.

We should not be surprised. Remember what Jesus said: “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?” (Matt 7:15-16).

The lesson of the churches in Revelation is that even faithful churches with hard working people can be deceived.

To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. I know where you live – where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, and who was put to death in your city – where Satan lives. Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

A teacher who calls sexual immorality “love” is following the teaching of Balaam, not Christ.

I would appeal to my fellow evangelicals, especially those who are in church leadership. Don’t be deceived. I know I can be deceived – I have been in the past and I pray that the Lord would deliver me from that in the future. And don’t let the flock which God has entrusted you with be deceived. Stick to the Word, discern the spirits, and be bold and courageous in standing up against those who come either as roaring lions or as angels of light – and preach to us another gospel and a different Jesus.

Finally – I don’t believe that two billion people heard the gospel in this sermon. The only people who heard the gospel in it were Christians who already know the gospel. Instead of rejoicing in the crumbs we get from heretics, we should be seeking to learn more of Christ ourselves and get out there and tell the world about the real Jesus – one person at a time!

*This article was originally published on Rev. Robertson’s blog, The Wee Flea, and is reprinted with permission.*





## A Cabinet Post for Loneliness

Early this year, British Prime Minister Theresa May appointed to her cabinet a minister of loneliness. That's right, there is now an official cabinet position called Minister of Loneliness to tackle the social and health issues caused by social isolation.

This appointment constituted the government's acceptance of the first recommendation of the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness. This Commission was named after British Member of Parliament Jo Cox, who suffered from loneliness before she was murdered in 2016.

Research by this Commission showed that the United Kingdom, with a population of about sixty-six million, has more than nine million people who always or often feel lonely. Furthermore, around 200,000 older people have not had a conversation with a friend or relative in more than a month and up to eighty-five percent of young disabled adults – eighteen to thirty-four-year-olds – feel lonely. These figures are astounding.

In response, the government has begun to develop a cross-government strategy on loneliness by bringing together different levels of government, public services, the voluntary and community sector, and businesses “to identify opportunities to tackle loneliness, and build more integrated and resilient communities.”

In the background to all of this, there is, from the perspective of the government, a looming health issue and the costs associated with that. As Jason Daley notes in an informative *Smithsonian* article, research has shown that “extended feelings of loneliness can lead to high blood pressure, heart disease, chronic inflammation and even dementia. It strikes people regardless of age, gender or situation in life.” Indeed, “loneliness can kill. It's proven to be worse for health than smoking 15 cigarettes a day.” According Daley, the American Psychological Association thinks that “up to 40 percent of Americans over the age of 45 suffer from chronic loneliness.”

Canada is not immune to the problem. Its most recent census (2016) shows that twenty-eight percent of all house-

holds consisted of people living alone, making it, for the first time, the most common type of household, even more prevalent than homes with couples with or without children, singleparent families, multiple family households, and all other combinations of people living together. Aggravating the problem is that people are staying single longer. In Quebec the average for the first marriage for men was at about thirty-three years and at almost thirty-two for women. On-line shopping also keeps one from meeting other people.

We are living in an increasingly individualistic culture and one of its byproducts is increasing loneliness. But should government be taking over the problem? The government has certain responsibilities for the health of its citizens. But, at the same time, the long arm of the state is becoming ever longer and more intrusive. Happily, even the editorial board of the liberal *Toronto Star* acknowledges that “Canada need not go so far as to create a ministry of loneliness.”

What government can do is to safeguard that one organization that combats loneliness like no other, the Christian church. The fellowship of the saints in Christ is the ultimate solution to loneliness. Also in this respect, government therefore has as its responsibility “the protection of the church and its ministry in order that the kingdom of Christ may come, the Word of the gospel may be preached everywhere, and God may be honored and served by everyone, as he requires in his Word” (Belgic Confession, Art. 36). When freedom for Christians flourishes and biblical norms are encouraged, the beauty of God's glorious gifts of marriage and family can be most effectively promoted against the current decay of these institutions, a decay abetted and encouraged by current government policy.

Sources used: Official “Press release: PM commits to government-wide drive to tackle loneliness” on gov.uk website;

Jason Daley, “The U.K. Now Has a ‘Minister for Loneliness.’ Here's Why it Matters, *Smithsonian Magazine* on smithsonian.com (January 19, 2018); Star editorial board, “Governments should tackle growing problem of loneliness” at thestar.com.

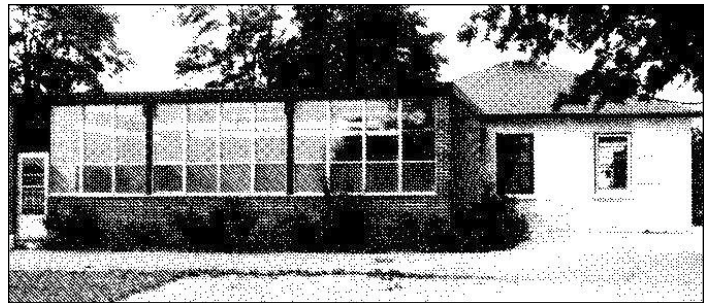


# Maranatha Christian School Celebrates Fifty Years

*“Then you shall let your children know” (Joshua 4:19)*

It was sixty-one years ago, on October 18, 1957, that a small group of brothers and sisters met to start a school society in the Fergus area in order to provide Reformed Christian education for their children. A three-member board was chosen with the mandate to look into the possibility of starting a Saturday school and later expand it to a day school. They read from Joshua 4, where the LORD commanded Joshua and the people of Israel to set up a memorial of stones with the single purpose of prompting questions from their children and consequently giving opportunity for those parents to explain God’s work in their lives and their world. This day school dream came to fruition and this year celebrates its fiftieth anniversary.

It began with a one dollar monthly commitment from every society member, of which there were eight. It took three years before the Saturday school materialized. Christian religion, Bible history, Church history, and Science from the Bible were taught Saturday mornings. It took eight years of Saturday school before a day school was



*Maranatha Christian School, Fergus, 1968*

purchased and officially opened on August 28, 1968. The students from the Saturday school handed in name suggestions for the new day school. Several names such as Samuel, Simon Peter, and Rehoboth were considered, but the society agreed to Maranatha Christian School. The student’s rationale was: “Maranatha means the Lord will come soon. This does not mean that the Lord will come today, or this week, or this month or even this year. It simply means that we should be prepared at any time.”



*Current students  
and staff 2018*





*Original Board members:  
Klaas Sikkema and Harry Bouwman*

The first building for Maranatha Christian School was located on 2nd Line, Fergus and was purchased for \$5300. A principal and one teacher were the educators of its twenty-nine students in grades five through eight. By 1970, student enrollment was at fifty-eight and there was need for an addition. The added space allowed for the increase of grades three through eight. In 1977, the board proposed grades one through ten and Emmanuel Christian High School was established, educating grades nine and ten, while grade eleven and twelve students were transported to Guido de Brès High School in Hamilton. Growth continued; in 1986 a piece of land outside Fergus was purchased and Maranatha Christian School's current building was constructed. With the addition of kindergarten and grades eleven and twelve this school building continued to burst at its seams at various times during Maranatha's history. Consequently, in 2009 the Guelph members of Maranatha established their own school, Cornerstone Christian School, Guelph.

nerstone Christian School. In 2016, Emmanuel Christian High School, which had shared space with Maranatha up to that point, purchased their own property.

Currently Maranatha Christian School has 226 students, nine full time staff, nine part-time staff, and a membership of 204. Who would have ever imagined fifty years ago when it was a struggle to meet a \$10,700 budget that Maranatha would someday have a budget of \$1,396,900.



*Emmanuel Christian High School, Fergus*

Yet the budget continues to be met because it continues to be the heartfelt desire of Maranatha's membership to fulfil their promises made at the baptism of their children to bring them up and educate them in the fear of the Lord. After fifty years of growth we can only express with complete thankfulness, "Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness" (Psalm 115:1).



*Cornerstone Christian School, Guelph*





www.merf.org



## Ethiopia Update



On April 2, new hope for peace and stability came to Ethiopia with the inauguration of the first ethnic Oromo prime minister, a 41-year-old Christian of Muslim background, Dr. Abiy Ahmed.

With 105 million people, Ethiopia is the second most populous African country and growing fast. This multi-ethnic country is landlocked by Eritrea and Djibouti on the Red Sea and Somalia on the Indian Ocean. Other neighbors are Sudan, South Sudan and Kenya.

### Complexity

Although only 35% of the population, the mainly Muslim Oromo people are

the largest single ethnic group in Ethiopia. At 27%, Amhara people are the second largest, whose kingdom ruled Ethiopia seven centuries, until the 1974 fall of Emperor Haile Selassie. It embraced a form of Christianity dominated by superstitions and unbiblical elements. Most Ethiopian Christians today still identify with this traditional church.

From 1974 to 1991 a Communist regime suppressed all religious affiliation. This was overthrown by the current Federal Democratic Republic guaranteeing freedom of religion. However, the past few years it faced escalating civil unrest resulting in hundreds of deaths and thousands

*Ethiopian ladies measure grain.*

of imprisonments, especially of ethnic Oromo people who felt bypassed. In February, this led to the sudden resignation of the previous prime minister. *Pray that the new government will bring peace and stability.*

### Diversity

Ethiopia is a vast country of very diverse environments on both sides of rugged mountains with over 80 ethnic language groups. It has been a leading African kingdom since Bible times. Acts 8 records the dramatic conversion to Christ of a leading Ethiopian official journeying



homeward. The gospel continues to spread. Today nearly 20% of Ethiopians call themselves evangelical Christians, but there is little Bible knowledge and few truly qualified spiritual leaders.

### Strategy

In Ethiopia, METF seeks to both share the gospel and strengthen believers in God's Word through shortwave radio broadcasts in three major languages: Amharic, Oromo and Somali. Much needed basic Christian literature is being translated and



*Gospel broadcasting.*

printed in these languages. Biblical training is also carried out through regional conferences. Emergency diaconal aid has helped brothers and sisters suffering from persecution and those in severely drought-stricken areas.

### **Gospel Broadcasting**

Currently both Amharic and Oromo gospel broadcasts present the basics of biblical faith following Louis Berkhof's *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*. The Amharic translation of this small book is in final review in preparation for publication. Praise God for good feedback from listeners:

*"Thank you for your program concerning the authority of Scriptures. It challenges me to give priority to the Word of God in my life and ministry." Lemma from Sululta, Oromia*

Somali gospel broadcasts share the good news in Christ with Somali Ethiopians, who are 6% of the population. Except for a number of small quiet fellowships, all are Muslim. The programs can also be heard in neighboring Somalia and beyond. Weariness with sufferings from radical Islam is creating new openness to the gospel. *Pray for many to come to faith in Christ and to grow in grace. Also, pray for wisdom and protection to the broadcasters who do secret field visits. As Somali refugees are spread across the globe, pray for the development of internet gospel broadcasting to reach them.*

### **Word and Deed**

Emergency diaconal aid of basic food stuffs to fellowships suffering hunger in severely drought-stricken areas took much time and

effort over the past two years. Despite this, last year the Westminster Shorter Catechism was translated and printed in Oromo and Somali languages. This year the team is able to give more attention to developing the literature ministry. There are many opportunities for literature distribution, such as in hospitals, to MERF broadcast contacts and at the biblical training conferences.

Literature in the Oromo language is especially lacking, so it is exciting that both the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism have just been translated to Oromo and are ready for printing.

*Please pray that publications will be especially helpful to small fellowships without pastoral care.*

### **Biblical Training**

Last year some biblical training was given to pastors of the East Shewa Evangelical Fellowship and a three day training for students from all over the country at Jimma Summer University which are in a largely Islamic areas. Already this year, two or three day training events on discipleship and children's ministries were held for churches in three different Oromo towns: Debrezeyit, Woliso and Modjo. The Modjo seminar included participants from churches in 21 different districts in a 150 km radius. *Pray for this and future training in God's Word to bear good fruit.*

*"I will make mention of Egypt and Babylon to those who know Me, Behold, O Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia: This one was born there."*

*— Psalm 87:4*

An introductory Bible Guide pamphlet printed at the end of 2017 in Amharic, Oromo and Somali has been much appreciated and already reprinted several times.



*Modjo church hosted regional biblical training*

### **MERF-Canada**

Thank you for your faithful support!

Please make cheques payable to MERF-Canada and send them to the address at the bottom of the page.

Online donations can be made to Middle East Reformed Fellowship (Canada) Inc. through [www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org)



# Clarion Kids

## Jesus Heals Many

**Matthew 9:1-8, 18-38, Mark 1:21-34**

While Jesus was preaching and teaching on earth he also performed many miracles. Many people came to Jesus who were very sick, and he made them well again. He healed men, women, and children who were blind, unable to speak, sick with fevers, paralyzed, and even one who had died. Jesus was able to do these things because he is the son of God. Many people believed in Jesus when they saw how he was able to heal people. They praised God and worshipped him. Everyone told their friends and neighbours about him and more people came to be healed.

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



### Word Search

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

Believed

Blind

Fevers

Healed

Miracles

Neighbours

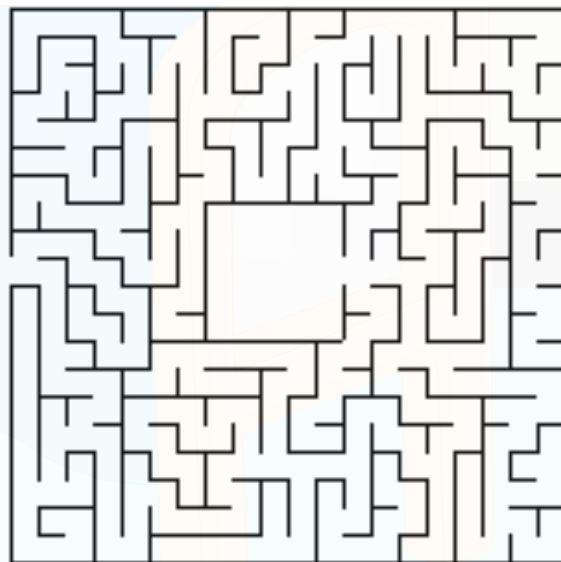
Paralyzed

Sick

by **Emily Nijenhuis**

### Maze

Trace the path that people took to tell their friends and neighbours about Jesus!



## Derrick Vanderhorst



*Derrick all ready to go to work at U-Haul*

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Derrick Vanderhorst. I live at Twin Oaks in Burlington with my fellow residents Ron and David and Graceful Grace. My parents live in Burlington. I have three sisters and two brothers, and most live close by. One brother lives in B.C. I also have twelve nieces and nephews, three of which live in B.C. I am thankful to technology because I can FaceTime with my brother on my iPad. I will be turning thirty-one this year.

I also enjoy going to my jobs every day. I work at U-Haul two days a week. There I clean the trucks and trailers so that they are ready for the next rental, the office, and the bathroom. I also enjoy keeping people healthy at Shoppers Drug Mart. I also work there two days a week. On Wednesdays I volunteer at Select Sprinklers by keeping the yard clean of weeds and I also keep the shop nice and clean. In the afternoons on Wednesdays I cut the grass at lots of people's houses.

I am looking forward to going to Anchor Camp for two weeks. I have been going there for many years now. I have made a lot of friends there. I have a lot of good memories from Camp. I love to pull lots of pranks on some of the counsellors and fellow campers. One year we hid all the sleeping bags. A couple of years ago I was "evicted" from camp. My suitcase was packed and waiting for me at the gate when we came back from an outing. By the time you read this I will be back from there and back to my busy work schedule.

I am a member of the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church in Burlington. Our minister is my cousin-in-law, Reverend T. Roukema. His wife, Alisa, is my cousin. I enjoy worshipping my God there with my brother and sisters in the Lord.

We have had a lot of games nights here at Twin Oaks. I love to play games. We have small Bible study groups from the churches in Burlington come over to visit with us. They also bring lots of yummy baking.

Thanks for taking the time to read this.

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow.*

Derrick

## July Birthdays

### 4 James Buikema will be 57

c/o R. Jager  
627 Maple Avenue, Burlington, ON L7R 1M7

### 14 Sarah Vandergugten will be 23

23 Jane Street, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

### 20 Charlie Beintema will be 43

29 Wilson Avenue, Chatham, ON N7L 1K8

### 20 Derrick VanderHorst will be 31

c/o Twin Oaks  
3217 Twin Oaks Crescent, Burlington, ON L7M 3A8  
Email: derrickvanderhorst@gmail.com

### 25 Joel Slomp will be 33

316 Church Road, Apt 102, Spruce Grove, AB T7X 0G2  
Email: joelrslomp@gmail.com

### 25 Julie Ostermeier will be 30

c/o Harbour Home  
42 Spadara Drive, Hamilton, ON L9B 2K3

### 29 Janine Kamstra will be 33

6 Tyler Bay, Oakbank, MB R0E 1J1

Happy Birthday to everyone celebrating a birthday in July! 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







## Q When is Elijah to return?

*In a TV program a minister spoke about the return of Elijah according to the prophecy of Malachi. He said that Elijah would return to earth before the return of Christ. He mentioned that Jesus himself had confirmed this. Although I know that we should always be prepared for Christ's return by faith and repentance, I did not know that Elijah would have to return first. Could you give me more clarity on this?*

A In Malachi 4:5, 6, the prophet seeks to move God's people to repentance and remorse. For that purpose, Malachi summarizes his entire prophetic message in these closing verses: Look *back*, he says, to the covenant-making at Mount Horeb and give a central place in your life to the Law of Moses; use it for the scrutiny of your life and as a guide for a life in love, thankfulness, and obedience toward the LORD and your neighbour, as redeemed children of God. Look *forward*, Malachi also proclaims, to the fulfilment of the promises of redemption, the coming of which will be heralded by the sending of Elijah, the prophet. Thus, Malachi highlights the two giant figures in the OT history of the LORD's people, Moses and Elijah. The LORD had spoken to the fathers in the Law and through the prophets, hence the end of Malachi's prophecy served well as ending to the entire Old Testament.

At the same time, Malachi prophesies and promises the coming of the herald of the LORD, who would convey the grace and judgment of the LORD to his people. So, this herald to come, this Elijah, the prophet: *who is this man?* Is he the first Elijah? Will the prophet return who ascended to heaven with chariots and horses during the critical days of King Ahab? Among the Jews, many leaders have thought so; also Christians later on, who lived in a strong anticipation of Christ's return, believed that this was the case

(i.e. that even though John the Baptist was the forerunner, the *real* Elijah was still to come!). The Lord Jesus, however, made it abundantly clear that Malachi was not speaking about the first Elijah but *characterized* the herald and his performance by this *name*. Malachi very likely meant here the same person of whom he says in 3:1, "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me."

In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus points out that it is *John the Baptist* who is meant here (Matt 17:10-13). The angel Gabriel had said about him to his father Zechariah as well, "He will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children" (Luke 1:17). Then in Matthew 11:14, the Lord Jesus said, "And if you are willing to accept it, *he is Elijah*, who is to come." The fact that John the Baptist himself denies that he is Elijah (John 1:21) is not in conflict with this. John wanted to impress upon his opponents there that he is not the Elijah of the Jewish fantasies! So the messenger, whom the LORD will send to herald the coming of the Lord, will appear *as* Elijah. Indeed, the LORD gives him to help his people prepare, yet God's gift denotes shame. Elijah must be identified with the days of Ahab and Jezebel, days of apostasy. Those were critical days in which the LORD placed his people before the crucial choice at Mount Carmel. Without Elijah's ministry, Israel would have succumbed to the powers of heathendom. Calling the herald to come by the name of Elijah implies,

insinuates if you will, that the LORD equates Elijah's days with Malachi's time!

Although the LORD's people thought quite highly of themselves and their restored temple service to the LORD, in the LORD's eyes they are people who need another Elijah. They need a *man like him* to call them back to the Law of Moses, to the covenant with the LORD. He needs to expose their apostasy, their unfaithfulness, and their lawlessness before the Day of the LORD, the day of judgment, comes. That call itself, however, is the LORD's proclamation of grace! As the evangelist Luke will report concerning the performance of this Elijah, John the Baptist, in conclusion to John's words of impending judgment, "So with many other exhortations he preached *good news* to the people" (Luke 3:18).

He will be called "Elijah," because as herald he needs to perform in the *spirit* and the *power* of Elijah (as Gabriel intimates). As zealous as Elijah was in his struggle to call the people to repentance, so *this* "Elijah" will come in the same *spirit*, with fire and brimstone from the LORD, in order to move the people to repentance! Yes, it will take the *power* of Elijah as well, to bring God's people to this point. Indeed, as the questioner indicates, that says something to us as well, about our readiness for repentance, about our openness for the call to return to the LORD. It takes the Word of the Lord in the power of the Lord to cause us even to consider the need for repentance. We need to look *back* at the Law of the LORD for that; we need to look *back* at the cross of Golgotha for that. In the light of Christ's death on the cross, the judgment over our sins, over our unfaithfulness, our sloppiness, our laxity, and our indifference, is proclaimed! It's an appeal to repentance and return to the LORD in a life of love and obedience in thankfulness! That's the lesson we learn in Malachi's message, in John the Baptist's performance, and in the apostolic call for the anticipation of Christ's return!

#### CALL EXTENDED

Called by Grace Canadian Reformed Church at Brampton in partnership with Bethel Canadian Reformed Church at Toronto, Ontario

#### Rev. Ian Wildeboer

(former missionary to Papua New Guinea), to assist these congregations in reaching out with the good news of the gospel to their communities.

#### EXAMINATION SUSTAINED

Examined by Classis Northern Ontario on June 1, 2018 and declared eligible for call:

#### Br. Darren Feenstra

#### NEW CHURCH IN CLASSIS PACIFIC EAST

By the Lord's hand, a new church (American Reformed Church at Nooksack Valley) will be instituted on July 8, 2018. The worship services will be at 10am and 2:30pm at Nooksack Valley High School, 3326 E. Badger Road, located on the junction of State Route 9 and State Route 546. Visitors are welcome!


#### CALL EXTENDED

The Free Reformed Church of Armadale, Australia has extended a call to

#### Candidate Darren Feenstra

for the mission work in Papua New Guinea.

### CHURCH NEWS

Indeed, Malachi's prophecy wasn't just fulfilled in the coming of John the Baptist, preparing the coming of the Christ. It *was* fulfilled in that John the Baptist *was* the Elijah prophesied by Malachi, so that we *don't* have to expect another Elijah to come before the return of Christ! This coming of the Lord still continues; he is still coming to his day of judgment in Christ. Yes, from Revelation 11 we learn that *we*, as the Lord's *witnesses* in the last days, may do so in the *spirit* and *power* of Moses and Elijah as well! Before the great and terrible day of the LORD, we are called to herald! 



**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**

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Re: What to think of circle prayer or popcorn prayer?

May 18, 2018 edition of Clarion

The *You Asked* article concerning circle prayer or popcorn prayer may leave the reader with the impression that some Reformed churches are praying in an unscriptural manner. The writer wisely begins the article with the caveat that it is important “to use the correct names for the particular pursuits of prayer.” Regarding the definition of circle prayers, in my experience in Reformed church circles they are not the prayers as outlined in the article, but more aptly described as chain prayers where one in the group begins the prayer and the others add to or complete the prayer. These are often done while sitting or standing in circles holding hands with bowed heads as part of the prayer fellowship. The goal of these prayers is generally to pray about a particular event or issue affecting the whole group with the benefit of a variety of contributors so that individuals in the group may also pray over each other in a particular and personal way. With respect to popcorn prayers, the name is somewhat of a misnomer in that it may suggest rapidity,

spontaneity, and confusion. My observation is that these prayers are used in an appropriate group setting which allows the participants, under the guidance of a leader, to add personal reflection to a prayer. For example: a teacher leading a prayer of thanksgiving and inviting the students to speak to something they are particularly thankful to God for. Those participating are invited to think carefully about the purpose of the prayer before it begins. Those who don’t have anything to add are welcomed to remain in silent prayer as part of the group. An additional benefit of both circle prayers and chain prayers is that individuals are encouraged to participate in prayer and, through the mentorship of others, the fear of praying with and in front of others can be overcome in the security of the group prayer.

I believe that both of these prayer exercises fit within the detailed description of biblical scriptural prayers as well outlined by the writer in the article. These prayers should be a reason for thankfulness and not raise alarm in the churches.

Rick Ludwig  
Waterdown, ON

*Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication.  
Submissions need to be less than one page in length.*

