

# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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**God cares *how* we sing**



**GRIEF AT CHRISTMAS**  
**ORGANIZED DEATH IN THE NETHERLANDS**

## 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

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Our issue begins with Rev. Peter Holtvliwer's article on Passionate Singing in the worship service. He has also conducted interviews with a number of church accompanists, which can also be found in this issue. Stay tuned for a special issue in 2019 on music in the worship service – and if you have something to contribute, take a look at his invitation to submit an article!

As we approach the holiday season, Issue 24 has an article from Rick Ludwig, Funeral Director and owner of Kitching, Steepe & Ludwig Funeral Home, on grief in the Christmas season.

This issue also brings a number of regular columns to our readers: Treasures, New & Old, Church News Review, Clippings on Politics & Religion, *Clarion Kids*, and Ray of Sunshine. There is also an update from the New Hope Orphanage and a letter to the editor.

Laura Veenendaal

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

# Passionate Singing?

## *God cares not just that we sing but how we sing*

Do we sing with passion? In our worship services, do we sing with our hearts and let our emotions come out? Should we? And if we should, what should be the source of those emotions? If God wants us to sing in this manner, what role do the musicians play in helping the congregation to sing emotively?

These are questions I've been pondering since my interview with six fine musicians who accompany congregational singing in our churches (see elsewhere in this issue). They have a concern that we may not be singing with sufficient or appropriate emotion. Some of them are under the impression that passion in the playing or singing of worship songs is even looked down upon and discouraged in our circles.

I had to stop and think: is the quality of congregational singing even on the radar of our elders, deacons, and ministers? To be honest, it wasn't on mine. And I cannot recall that I've ever seen it as an agenda item at any council or consistory meeting. I'm beginning to think we should, though, because as I reflect on God's instructions about singing, it becomes clear that he places a high value also on this part of the church's worship. He cares not just *that* we sing but *how* we go about it. And if our singing is lacklustre or simply lacking in any way, we should ponder ways to improve that.

### **Psalms of lament**

The first step to check on how God wants us to sing is to investigate the Psalms. After all, these are the songs the LORD has given us to sing back to him. As Reformed churches we recognize this and have stated at two general synods that singing psalms should have the primary place in the liturgy of the church.<sup>1</sup> So, do the Psalms express emotion?

The largest category of psalms (with more than 65) are called laments. We sing them often, for example Psalms 22, 42, and 51. They are called laments because they express

a sorrow-filled complaint to God, seeking his aid. There is often a sense of desperation in them, like Psalm 22, "My God, O why have you forsaken me? When I to you, O God, for refuge flee, why do you grant no help and fail to see my tribulation?"<sup>2</sup> The child of God is not only low but is in danger of his life. The emotion here is fear along with a feeling of abandonment. He is in great distress. If you are aware of the lyrics, how can your heart not be heavy as you sing it?

Psalm 42 is a favourite of many, but the predominant note is sadness. Stanza two captures it well: "Bitter tears of lamentation are my food by night and day. In my deep humiliation 'Where is now your God?' they say. Then my soul in sorrow longs for the days when festive throngs walked with me, their praises voicing, to God's house with loud rejoicing." The Holy Spirit through these words is leading us to express the powerful emotions of sorrow, grief, and wistful longing for better days. It would be inappropriate to sing these words without any emotion; it would go against the meaning of the psalm to sing them lightly, much less joyfully. Instead, the lyrics call for a humble, even somber tone, reflecting the feeling of helplessness in the face of enemy attacks. A skilled organist, pianist, or ensemble of musicians does the congregation a service when they play the tune in that manner.

### **Psalms of thanksgiving**

Another major type of psalm is the psalm of thanksgiving. These are songs which express gratitude to God for bringing relief or deliverance from some plight. Such songs naturally follow laments for once the LORD answers his child's pleas, the fitting response is to thank him. In fact, many laments end with a promise to praise God for his anticipated help (e.g. Ps 22:22; 71:22-24), and so poems like Psalms 105, 107, and 111 (all of which are popular in our worship services) help God's people fulfill that promise.

As we would expect, thanksgiving psalms express the emotion of joy. The Spirit has us exhort ourselves in Psalm 111, “O give the LORD whole-hearted praise! In thankful song my voice I raise within the righteous congregation. Great are the doings of the LORD, and all to whom they joy afford will study them dedication.” Psalm 105 puts it

***If we believe  
what we sing,  
how can that  
not come out  
in our tone and  
expression, in  
our tears and  
smiles, in our  
loud jubilations  
or quiet  
sorrow and  
questioning?***

more pointedly, “O thank the LORD with great rejoicing his deeds among the peoples voicing.” Isn’t it clear that the LORD wants us to sing such hymns with passionate happiness, with voices lifted up on high so that the singing comes from deep inside of us?

The apostle Paul also stresses that such thanksgiving praise is to arise out of our hearts: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness

*in your hearts to God*” (Col 3:16). He repeats this instruction in Ephesians 5:19, “Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord *with your heart*. . . .” If our hearts are not in it, then our singing is not pleasing to the Lord. And the heart’s language is feeling or emotion.

## Hymns of praise

The third major category of biblical psalms is known as hymns of praise. They are quite similar to psalms of thanksgiving in that they exalt the LORD, but rather than praising him for a specific instance of deliverance, the hymns of praise glorify him in a more general way, for who he is and for all he’s done throughout history. Some familiar examples are Psalms 8, 33, and 100.

Psalm 33 issues a command: “Rejoice before the LORD, you righteous, and with a new song praise his name. Praise is most fitting for the upright; with harp and lyre declare his fame.” The verb rejoice means to express great joy – how can we do that if our lips are barely moving? Or take Psalm 100, “You lands and peoples of the earth, before the LORD your joy shout forth. Serve him with gladness all your days and come to him with songs of praise.” To “shout” means

to raise the volume! We are commanded to praise, exalt in, glory in, and magnify our God with loud voices packed with the emotions of awe, wonder, love, joy, pleasure, and happiness – are we doing that in our churches? In our families? In our personal worship of God?

## Range of emotions

When you look over all 150 Psalms, then it’s clear that the Spirit of Christ gives us the full range of emotions to express to God in song. John Calvin certainly thought so. In his introduction to his commentary on the Psalms he writes,

I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, “An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul;” for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated.<sup>3</sup>

If we truly sing about grief and sorrow, or doubts and cares, how can we be muted and flat, singing as if we are unaffected? On the other hand, if we sing joyful praise and thanks in the exact same way that we sing about sorrow and struggle, are we even aware of what we’re singing? If we believe what we sing, how can that not come out in our tone and expression, in our tears and smiles, in our loud jubilations or quiet sorrow and questioning? And shouldn’t the accompanists assist us in this?

## Emotive playing

What God teaches us in the Psalms is to sing back to him our emotional response of faith as appropriate to the kind of song: in lament it’s the emotion of sorrow and distress even while we trust in God; in thanksgiving it’s relief and joy; in praise it’s wonder, awe, and appreciation of the LORD. In every case it is emotion driven by the gospel that God hears and *can* help, *will* help or *has* helped his people. God’s people use God’s words (whether the Psalms as the primary vehicle or hymns based closely on the Bible) to sing and pray back to him and it’s these words which are to be the source of these emotions. As we sing these songs, we learn to inhabit the lyrics and make these gospel-driven emotions our own feelings. That means we all need to be switched on to the words we’re singing and the kind of feeling that goes with them. The musicians’ role is to help the congregation express these feelings as we sing.

Without a doubt the Lord wants us to sing from the heart and with emotion. The emotions will range across the spectrum from sadness to gladness, from distress to confidence,



as elicited by the words of Scripture we sing. It has to be the case, then, like the psalmists of old, that our musicians play the tune in a manner that helps us sing with the appropriate heart-felt emotion. Too often, I think, we either take our musicians for granted or we eye them with suspicion as if they are trying to introduce unbiblical elements in their playing. Let's rather have upbuilding conversations with our musicians and encourage them to help us sing as God would have us sing. Let's pray for them and speak appreciatively of their efforts. Let's talk about these things in our family rooms, consistory rooms, and congregational meetings and work together for improved, heart-felt, emotive singing to our gracious and wonderful God.

### A future discussion

Music in and around the worship services is an important topic, one I hope to come back to next spring, the Lord willing, in a special theme issue of *Clarion*. I'd like it to be a discussion issue, with different points of view laid out on a

variety of matters. So here's an invitation to any reader to write in to me on any (or all) of these three issues: 1) What is the rationale and purpose of pre-service singing? 2) What role does the volume of the music play in accompanying congregational singing? 3) During the offertory, would silence be more fitting than music? Please make your best case in 800-1000 words (per question) and send it to me (pholtvluwer@gmail.com) by the end of January 2019. The most helpful pieces will be considered for publication. Thanks in advance!

<sup>1</sup> *Acts of Synod Chatham 2004* Article 115, Section 6 and *Acts of Synod Carman 2013* Article 173, Consideration 3.6. These acts are readily available online at [canrc.org](http://canrc.org).

<sup>2</sup> These and subsequent psalm lyrics are taken from the *Book of Praise: Anglo-Genevan Psalter* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Premier Printing, 2014)

<sup>3</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* as translated by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Associate Publishers and Authors, Inc., Introduction to the Book of Psalms), p.115-116.



## TREASURES, NEW & OLD

MATTHEW 13:52

Gerrit Bruintjes  
Pastor of the  
Bethel Canadian Reformed Church  
at Toronto, Ontario  
[gbruintjes@gmail.com](mailto:gbruintjes@gmail.com)



# No Condemnation

**"There is therefore now no condemnation..." (Romans 8:1)**

No. Two simple letters, one short word. A world of difference: the difference between slavery and freedom, of death and life. Paul writes in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation. . . ." The difference made

by the little word *no* is life-changing. People spend countless hours, untold resources, and incalculable energy trying to place the little word *no* in front of the word *condemnation*, but God offers it freely in Jesus Christ.

The law of God, both written on the pages of Torah and found throughout the human conscience, daily accuses every person under heaven that they are law-breakers and worthy of condemnation. This condemnation includes a

guilty verdict and the appropriate sentence of death and hell. Romans 3:10-11 says, "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." Condemned is the verdict and every mouth may be silenced, the whole world held accountable to God (Rom 3:19).

How do we find no condemnation? People try to engineer a *not* guilty verdict and avoid condemnation on their own in many ways. Adam and Eve foolishly thought that by hiding through leafy coverings and crouching behind bushes, they could somehow continue to live in no condemnation (Gen 3:7-8). Still today, countless hours are spent trying to cover-up sin, swipe away secrets, smile away guilt, or simply disappear when the searching probe comes too close.

Joseph's brothers tried to engineer the two little letters of *n-o* (condemnation) through the lie. After selling their brother into slavery, they "took Joseph's robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in blood. And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, 'This we have found; please identify whether it is your son's robe or not'" (Gen 37:31-32). Still today, whether through a simple "No, it wasn't me" or through more intricate

deception, we think the lie can lead to *no* condemnation.

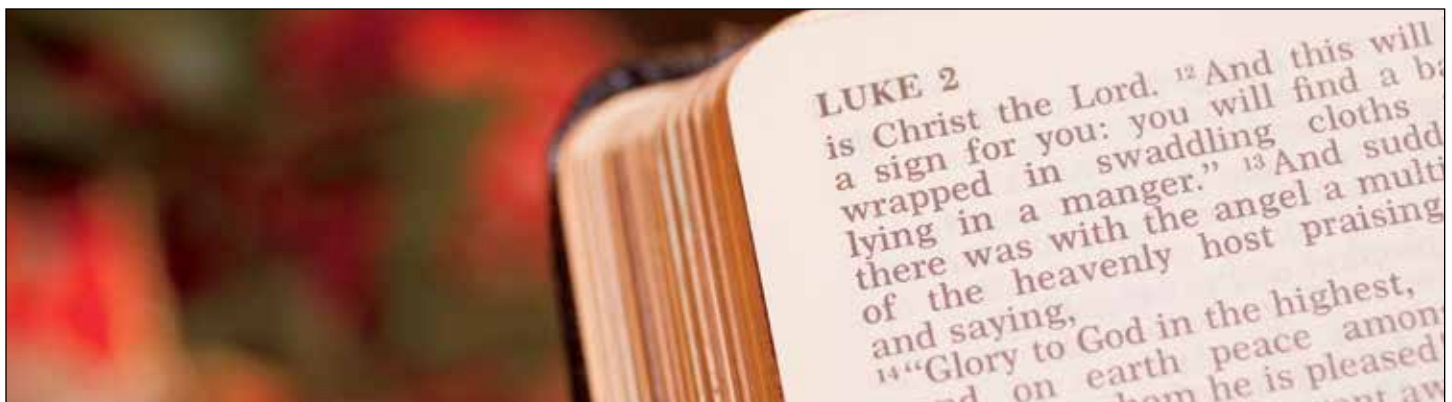
In one more example, Saul tried to self-justify his transgression of offering the sacrifice himself. Through a flurry of excuses, Saul deftly tried to find *no* condemnation in his actions: the people were beginning to scatter, Samuel was late, the Philistines were mustering for war, and he had not yet sought God's favour (1 Sam 13:11-12). The sacrifice had to be done right away and had to be done by Saul; it was the only way; it was the right way. Still today, through excuse and appealing to circumstance, we try to self-justify. And so, countless hours, untold resources, and incalculable energy is spent defending the indefensible. We try to hide the rotting carcass of sin by hiding, lying, and self-justifying. We foolishly hope that the pitiful self-scribbled little *no* will stay taped to the word *condemnation*.

"No condemnation. . . for those in Christ Jesus:" in Jesus Christ, God graciously gives another way. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, came as the perfect Son of Adam, blameless in every way, and never guilty of any charge. He never had to hide what he did, lie about what he did, and could always justify what he did. He was blameless. But that's not all: he came to take on himself our sin. Every charge and condemnation we so fruitlessly worked to

avoid was put on him, and he carried it all to the cross. Therefore, when accused, he opened not his mouth in defense (Isa 53:7); God made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21). What good news! Through faith in Jesus Christ a righteousness apart from the law has been manifested (Rom 5:21-22).

By faith in Jesus Christ, the little word *no* is freely gifted to us so that for us there is therefore now *no* condemnation. Our stinking carcass of sin can be uncovered, confessed, and crucified with Christ. When rightfully accused, rather than pitifully handwriting our own *no*, we can point to Jesus Christ and say these charges have all already been dealt with. In Jesus Christ, we no longer need to defend the indefensible. The constant heavy work of trying to engineer *no condemnation* was lifted from our backs and became the work of Jesus Christ.

As you celebrate the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, find rest from trying to justify yourself before the accusations the words of God's law. Instead sing for joy and take delight in your Saviour who willingly took the work upon himself. He was born in Bethlehem coming to carry your crushing burden and set you free. C



# Time for Grief at Christmas

Christmas is coming. You hear the carols and holiday jingles on the radio. You feel the darkness of winter steadily shrinking each day as the Christmas lights in your neighbourhood increase in tandem, in an effort to brighten the nights in anticipation of holiday festivities. Perhaps your pastor has begun an advent series in your church, the local choirs are beckoning you to join in festive caroling concerts, and your colleagues, family, and friends are beginning to invite you to holiday get-togethers.

And yet you feel on the margin, sitting outside staring in at something strangely unwelcoming. You feel the tension between your grief and the Christmas season. The experience of your hurt and loss, the accompanying fatigue and disconnectedness, your frustration and anger at your

## **Christmas expectations just seem to add to the burden**

situation, and your deep sadness seem entirely out of sync with any Ho, Ho, Ho-ing, let alone even the joy you normally experience remembering the birth of your Saviour. It feels like Christmas is not a time for grief. You feel excluded. The boxes of decorations you annually use to brighten your home seem stupid and meaningless.

The family expectations seem like an opportunity to only be disappointed. Giving and receiving gifts are the last things you want to do. This Christmas you are grieving and the season seems like it offers no place for you. If only you could skip Christmas. It seems a bit Grinch-like, but it feels like the only alternative. Let's just get the holidays over with!

If this is how you are feeling, you are not alone. Many people feel the tension between Christmas and their grief. I think part of it is because the holiday hype is unreal for everyone, but normally we can put up with it and easily adjust our expectations as we go. Things are rarely ever as

fun as anticipated, and they always seem to end so quickly. That's just life. This year, however, is different. Perhaps you have never felt this way before in your life. You are hurting. Your faith may feel fragile. Your mind and heart are captivated by what you are missing. Your days are hard and your nights are restless. And only a few people understand and have the patience to hear you out. Everyone just wants you to feel better, be better, act better. Christmas expectations just seem to add to the burden. What can you do about it?

## **The truth**

To begin with, we can admit that this Christmas is different for you. It is not the same as any other Christmas you have experienced. The truth is that Christmas will never be like it used to be for you. Christmas is now a new experience for you just like each new day is, in the new reality of your loss. Life has changed for you. That change is very hard and right now requires most of your energy to not only accept, but also to adapt to. Christmas, with its family gatherings, gift exchanging, dinners, parties, and church festivities intensifies the experience for you. Christmas is a time of love, charity, opening of our hearts to each other, and increased vulnerability. When your heart already feels ripped open and bare for all, you can't even imagine that you can take opening it further and to more people. This Christmas you will need to be realistic about what you can handle.

And yet, you do not have to run from Christmas or submit to the false tension between joy and sadness. In fact, this Christmas may become one of great personal discovery for you. Let's take a moment to explore that before we come back to some practical suggestions for this holiday season.

## **Your Christmas experience**

We often operate under the false understanding that life is all about *either/ors*. We might call to mind the well-

known passage from Ecclesiastes 3 that declares there is a time for everything: “A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time for silence, and a time to speak, a time for love, and a time for hate, and a time for war and a time for peace.”

This makes a lot of sense to us, but we often assume there is a large gap between the two actions so that they stand apart, at opposite sides. Yet reality tells us something quite different! A family may stand at the graveside burying the body of their loved one with a newborn infant in their

arms. While we plant one thing, we may uproot the weeds beside it. We may kill something in order to provide healing for someone. We may tear down a tree to build a house. We may weep in one moment only to find the relief of laughter in the next. The moment between the appropriateness of hugging someone or not may be only a few seconds. The importance of silence in one moment may be to welcome speech in the next. The difference between

the time of peace and war may be a single act. The point is, our experience in life is more often about *ands* than *ors*. There is not a great chasm between our varied experiences but only a fine line. And that knowledge is very freeing for the grieving when it comes to anticipating Christmas. You don’t have to be left on the outside looking in as if you are living worlds apart from everyone else.

You see, Christmas really is much the same. The lines here are also very fine. The Christmas story is about the baby Jesus born into a broken world in order to die to save his people. The birth manger is under the shadow of death. The first Christmas is full of the tension of joy and sadness, giving and taking, finding a place to stay and fleeing, waiting and hurrying, hiding and presenting, resting and running. Your heavenly Father understands your Christmas experience this year very well. He intentionally experienced this with his own Son. A Christmas joy coloured with

grief. A Christmas birth announcement with the foreboding of death. An innocent child weighted with the guilt of all mankind. A Christmas where One entered the world to lose everything himself in order to gain it all for others. Christmas, we can see, is not only about joy, it is also necessarily about grief.

This means, of course, that there is a place for you in your grief this Christmas season. In fact, you may experience more of the depth and breadth of Christmas this year than ever before. Christmas is not only about joy, it is also about our sadness. With Christ filling that fine line between all things, he is able to redeem both sides. The births and the deaths, the tearing down and building up, the moments of silence and of speech. He brings meaning and purpose to all things. Somehow both our weeping and laughing, our embracing and our standing alone, will all lead to our salvation. This doesn’t mean it will be easy. And it doesn’t mean you should do the same things you have always done this Christmas. It does mean that you should be very thoughtful and intentional about what you do for others and yourself this year. This Christmas may also be a time of healing for you and your family. Let’s work that out a bit so that you get the idea.

### Some suggestions

In the first place, time management will be very important. Grieving is tiring physically, emotionally, and even spiritually. Build rest into your holidays and manage your schedule. Decide in advance what you should participate in and what you can set aside this year. You will find that most people will understand this year that you can’t fill all their expectations. Maybe you have always sent Christmas cards to family and friends. This year might be a year to take a break from that. Or perhaps, rather than a Merry Christmas card, a simple Christmas letter to be sent to those closest to you sharing your heartache this Christmas and a request for their prayers would be more appropriate. It will also let your inner circle of support know how you are feeling and help them to be more sensitive to you.

The family Christmas dinner is often one of the most cherished and non-negotiable traditions of the season. This year a place will be empty around the table. Some of you may want to change the tradition for this year in order to take that pressure off. For others this may be a poignant

**Your  
heavenly  
Father  
understands  
your  
Christmas  
experience  
this year  
very well**



## RELEASED

Rev. J.E. Ludwig has been released from Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church as per Art 11 CO and is available for call.

For preaching availability and other inquiries, you are invited to contact him at [jeludwig64@gmail.com](mailto:jeludwig64@gmail.com) or 905-975-1962

## CHURCH NEWS

opportunity with your family to openly speak the name of the one who is missing, to share some of the memories of Christmases together in the past, and to allow for a time of real crying and sharing in the hurt of loss. You will be amazed how weeping and laughing will intermingle as you share treasured memories, real sadness, and the hope of Jesus Christ. I believe that God's Spirit moves most freely among us when we are most vulnerable. Such moments won't make the cover of a Hallmark card, but they may make a deep mark on your hearts and bring your family closer together. You will share in the reality of Christmas joy and sadness.

And then there is gift giving. If this has always been an important expression of love for you, don't give up on it. Maybe just simplify it this year with gift cards and personal expressions of love. Best to avoid the malls with long gift wish lists if you can. There is always next year to shop again when you feel like it. Saying that, don't forget about the younger children or grandchildren. A little effort there will help normalize Christmas for them in a time where they feel the uncertainty of what to do with abnormally upset parents and grandparents. If you don't feel up to it, have a relative or friend do the shopping and wrapping for you. Young children live more in the moment than adults and easily overlook the big picture in favour of the present. No Santa or an empty Christmas tree may be an unnecessary Christmas burden to add to them. That being said, no need to go overboard either. They do understand sadness as well when explained to them and openly shared with them.

What about Christmas concerts, the Christmas day service, and other favourite Christmas gatherings? You will need to pace yourself to prepare for these events and choose which are most important for you to attend. You may go easy on yourself if the fellowship part is too overwhelming and you have to plan a timely exit to avoid crowds. Above all, remember these are not obligations but rather opportunities to help bring you comfort, to connect with your Lord, and to feel the warm concern of the family of faith. Make use of these opportunities as you feel you can. Maybe make an effort to go as a family, or with a close friend for support.

These are but a few ideas, and they are not meant to be prescriptions for you. They are simply encouragements for you to not bypass Christmas, but to take the opportunity to meet your grief in this Christmas season and to make room for it. Christmas has room for your grief. At our "Handling the Holidays" event at the funeral home we have handed out some small lapel pins in the past. They are a small cluster of forget-me-nots. We encouraged people to wear the pin over the holidays for two reasons. In the first place to remind yourself that your loss and grief are a part of your Christmas holidays this year and there is no need to deny that. And secondly, if someone asks you about your pin, you have an opportunity to take a moment to share that burden and hopefully you will receive some understanding and encouragement in return. It may be a knowing look, a hug, a word of encouragement, or even a word of prayer. Remember that your Father in heaven who knows all and sees all is loving and gracious to you. He sends his Spirit through the actions of others with purpose.

One other way we share our grief at our annual event is candle lighting. Some people have asked me leading up to this event, "Why light a candle in memory of our loved one, what will that help?" It is a fair question. Lighting a candle for your loved one won't help them a bit. In fact, they don't need help if they are safe in the presence of their Saviour and, like you and me, are waiting for his return. Instead, light the candle for yourself as you remember your loved one. This may be for you the first step to acknowledging that this Christmas has room for your grief and you are not alone. As you sit down and see the many lit candles you will see that the experience that often makes you feel alone is a common one shared by many. We are a community of grievers, and each year that community grows. Yet, we don't grieve without hope. Our Christ has come and is coming. He has made all the difference and gives us hope for today and tomorrow. The lines between life and death, joy and sadness, are not blurry for us. They are made clear for us in the Christmas event so that we can sing with David: "The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance" (Ps 16:6).

I wish you the Lord's blessing and peace in the midst of your sadness this Christmas.

C



Connect with him on Facebook  
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where he is currently tweeting  
on Christ in the Psalms

# Musicians Reflect on Psalm-Singing

## *Thoughts on Sing! 2018 and Genevan Tunes*

### The Sing! Conference

In early September 2018 my wife and I were able to take in the Getty's second annual Sing! Conference in Nashville. Keith and Kristyn Getty are an Irish husband and wife team who are internationally renowned as Christian singers/song-writers. Their songs include the popular "In Christ Alone" and "The Power of the Cross." In 2017 they embarked on a five-year project to host an annual conference designed to focus attention on the need for Christians to sing more and better as families and especially as congregations.

In 2017 the focus was on the importance and value of singing. The main points were the need for the songs to reflect rich theology, timeless artistry, and for them to be sung with heart-felt passion. This year, with more than 7,500 in attendance, the theme was about singing the Psalms. The Gettys and their many fine speakers were keen to promote the singing of the Bible's Psalms in the worship of the church, something much of evangelical North America is unfamiliar with.

### Introducing the musicians

Also attending Sing! were a number of musicians from several Canadian Reformed churches who regularly accompany singing in church. I had the opportunity to sit down for an evening with six of them (five of whom also play in the praise band Strength & Song—see inset) to hear their reflections on the conference and to talk about the state of psalm-singing in our own churches.

The six I spoke with range in ages from mid-twenties to mid-thirties. They have been accompanying congregational singing for at least four years with a variety of instruments, including piano, guitar, bass guitar, violin, and flute. It was a pleasure to chat with Ryan DeGelder, Ty Heemskerck, Matt Ludwig, Lor Poort, Lisa Smouter, and Val Vanderbrugghen.

As more of our congregations move away from being led in singing strictly by the organ, and as discussions take place about the future of the Genevan melodies, I thought it would interest our readers to know what the up-and-coming generation of accompanists think about the Psalms in the church's worship. The occasion of the *Sing!* conference provided a natural opportunity for such a conversation. What follows are the questions we discussed and my summary report of their responses.

### What was your favourite part of Sing!?

All the musicians echoed Lor's sentiment that the passionate singing experienced at the conference was something to cherish. Ryan and Lisa added that being in a room with thousands of Christians from a range of denominations, all singing from the heart in praise of the Lord Jesus, was a physically moving experience. Hearing people all around break out into four-part harmony was a pleasure to the ear and enhanced the beauty of the singing. Val was very encouraged to see other believers get excited about the possibility of singing psalms in worship and it gave her a renewed appreciation for the heritage we have in our churches.

Ty was intrigued by the technical workshops on instruments, sound, and lighting. On a more general level, he was struck by the emphasis that musical leaders in church are there to serve the singing and *not* to perform. Matt was pleasantly surprised to learn that there are more resources on singing the Psalms than he previously realized. He found it wonderful to discover that there is an array of existing tunes, settings, and arrangements that could be explored and used.

### What were the Gettys hoping to accomplish and did they succeed?

To the six musicians it looked like the Gettys were aiming to light a fire beneath the Christian community in North

America to get back to Scripture in the lyrical content of the singing, and specifically to use the songs God has given the church to sing back to him – the Psalms. Their impression was that the Gettys succeeded in this, at least for the 7,500 attendees. There was a lot of positive buzz on social media about singing psalms in worship. Keith and Kristyn Getty seem to be leading a trend or movement toward putting the Psalms to contemporary arrangements for congregational singing. This was evident in the new Psalm-based songs heard at the conference by other Christian musicians like Shane & Shane, Matt Merker, Matt Boswell, and the Kaufmans.

### **For the band Strength & Song, what was your main take-away?**

Until now, the band has been making its own arrangements of hymns that are in the public domain. The conference made clear to them for the first time that there are also many poetic *psalm* lyrics in the public domain (e.g. the Scottish metrical psalms), which opens up new possibilities for them to develop original tunes to such psalms. These would be for singing in praise events outside church worship services and perhaps one day (if they would be thought good enough!) possibly within congregational worship.

### **For individuals (as worshippers), what was your main take-away?**

The Sing! Conference stressed and showcased that singing to God involves your whole being – heart, soul, and mind. This reinforced and validated for the musicians the use of genuine

musical expression in the context of corporate worship to help bring out the emotions that are inherent in the words being sung. Singing with emotion, the group felt, is sometimes lacking in our home congregations. They emphasized that singing should come from the heart (as well as from the mind), that it should thus be emotional, and that the music should support that. What they have noticed sitting in the pew is that the singing seems at times to lack passion, that the congregation's heart doesn't sound like it's in it.

Why would this be? They feel that partly it's because people generally are often not thinking about the words they are singing (which are themselves filled with a variety of emotions). Partly too, some feel that expressing emotion while singing is frowned upon by a majority of church goers, a sort of taboo in our circles. Another reason for this, the group believes, is that the music at times does not serve the lyrics of the songs as well as it could. Psalm 23 of the *Book of Praise* was raised as an example of a tune (which is sad and melancholic) which does not fit well with the lyrics (which express confidence and comfort).

The six friends spoke of their concern that, ironically, singing in our families and churches seems to be underappreciated and under-valued. It's ironic because, traditionally, Reformed people have been strong proponents of congregational singing and yet there seems to be much complacency about lack-lustre singing. No one seems to care if families don't sing at home or if the men don't sing in church or if the congregation sounds flat and tired on a consistent basis. This is precisely the opposite of what was emphasized and experienced at Sing!, and something they wish could be changed in our congregations.

### **How do you understand the role of the musician in the worship service?**

Whether the music leader is using a single instrument or is part of an ensemble involving multiple instruments, the single most important thing is that the congregation feels supported in their vocal line, enabling them to sing with certainty and confidence. The musician's main job is to assist and support the singing of the congregation. The musician is never *performing*, never there to draw attention to him/herself, but to serve the singing to the glory of God. Like a skillful preacher gets out of the way of the message he's bringing, a good musician will get out of the way of the music he/she is playing.

Next to the melody, the player(s) need to be mindful of the lyrics and skillfully play according to the message being

*Strength & Song started as its own entity in the summer of 2014. Initially the idea was to form a band to play more generally-known Christian songs of praise with a focus on outreach evenings.*

*Over time the band's focus became less on outreach and more on stimulating the singing of God's praises. This eventually led to the recording of O Tidings, a CD of traditional Christmas hymns.*

*Copies are available for \$10 (plus shipping) from [strengthandsongband@gmail.com](mailto:strengthandsongband@gmail.com). You can also follow them on Facebook.*



communicated in the words (e.g. a joyful, boisterous style for praise stanzas compared to soft and sad for laments). The variety of both instruments and methods to serve congregational singing is part of God's boundless creativity, which is something to enjoy and celebrate in praise of the Lord. Part of that variety includes falling silent at times and letting the congregation sing *a cappella*.

Another important concept is that playing for congregational singing is not a practice session for beginners; it needs to be done competently so that the congregation is well-assisted. This is not to discourage beginners but rather to stress that a great deal of dedication and practice must be put in and that it must be taken seriously. Certainly, beginners need to start somewhere – but the attitude must be one of dedication to serve the singing with high-quality playing.

Each of the artists also spoke about the challenge of knowing how to prepare to play a given song because of uncertainty in how the minister intends for it to connect with the sermon or otherwise function in that spot in the liturgy. There are times when musicians find themselves without knowledge of the coming message or the minister's purpose in choosing certain songs, and so sometimes they have been ill-prepared for the accompaniment. The way they had rehearsed the song did not match the way the song should have been played and sung on that occasion. The musicians would love to have regular conversations with the ministers about what songs he is choosing and why, so they can better prepare. They also feel the need for more communication with the consistory and the congregation on how to improve congregational singing.

**The Gettys stressed the need to sing the Psalms. We do the same in Reformed churches. Leaving the tunes aside for the moment, what do you think about this principle?**

All agreed that one of the blessings we have in our federation of churches is that all 150 Psalms are put to music and available for congregational singing. The Lord has given his people 150 songs and we should be singing them!

**Should psalm-singing be as close to the scriptural text as possible or should the psalm lyrics be re-written from the perspective of their NT fulfillment in Christ?**

The musicians felt that it was good to have both. The Psalms as originally written already do speak of Christ (in a foreshadowing way) but it will take more effort on the part of the worshipper to understand that. In this the minister



*Matt and Ty and other members of Strength & Song leading singing at the WOW Conference at Redeemer, May 2016*

can be a big help in pointing out the connection and teaching the congregation how to make the link for themselves. The Psalms also have their own internal cohesion as songs of lament, praise, or thanksgiving and are intended for God's church to sing, so they should be kept and sung as close to the biblical text as possible. At the same time, having hymns based on the Psalms which overtly speak of Christ are also valuable, educational and comforting (e.g. Luther's *A Mighty Fortress* or Isaac Watts' *Jesus Shall Reign*).

**What are the pros and cons of the Genevan tunes?**

On the positive side, many of the Genevans are both beautiful and fitting for the words. The tunes themselves are also flexible enough to allow the musician(s) to play the same melody with alternate chords to better match the words as the psalm unfolds. Lyrically, there is often sadness (lament) at the beginning of a psalm and thanksgiving praise toward the end, and many Genevan tunes allow that emotion to be reflected in the way the melody is harmonized.

On the negative side, there are also some Genevan tunes which do not fit the psalm's words very well or which, due to their complexity and unfamiliarity, are difficult for the congregation to sing (e.g. Psalms 11, 23, 120). For those psalms, other melodies could be found (and there are



a number in existence already) or written so that all the Psalms can be sung fittingly to the Lord, with the intended emotion and feeling that the words of Scripture evoke.

The discussion went beyond singing the Psalms to also singing hymns from wider Christendom. The players also felt that our churches should be open to singing theologically sound hymns that are known and sung by many Christians around the world. Our ministers at times will reference these hymns from the pulpit and yet we can't sing them in the worship service because they are not in the *Book of Praise*. That seems contradictory and unnecessary. Having such familiar hymns would also help new-comers adapt to our services.

### Do you see a future for the Genevan tunes?

All six musicians were in agreement that yes, on the whole, the Genevan melodies definitely have a future. Aside from the concern about some mismatched tunes/lyrics, the Genevans are beautifully appropriate and should be kept and used. The Sing! conference actually served to encourage the group with what we have in the Genevan melodies. It was also stressed how valuable it is that so many of the Psalms put to these melodies are known and sung across the generations in our churches. It is a great blessing that grandkids can sing with their parents at the bedside of an ailing grandparent the same Psalms known and loved by



*Most of the group (minus Ty) taken at last year's conference, Sing! 2017, in front of the Nashville skyline (Ryan, Matt, Val, Lisa, baby William, Loretta - L to R)*

the grandparent. Sometimes, that's the only communication an ailing loved one can still grasp (and even sing themselves). While it will be good to add melodies to the Psalter, we should keep a base set of tunes covering the 150 Psalms so that we can sing them from one generation to the next.

### Concluding thoughts

Personally, I found this conversation very enlightening and edifying. It is a fact that changes are underway in our churches with respect to the use of more instruments in the worship services. More than a few voices can be heard expressing dissatisfaction with the Genevan tunes while others have a passion for the whole collection, and so it is good to talk over these issues. Changes in worship bring tensions. But we can prevent worship wars if we dialogue with one another, understand each other, and humbly work toward biblically sound answers, bearing with one another in love. I appreciated the honest candour in which this group, as part of the new generation of accompanists, spoke with me and it opened my eyes to see the songs in church from the side of the musician and the particular challenges they face. Most of all, I am deeply grateful for the commitment of these brothers and sisters to humbly serve the singing of the congregation to the glory of God alone.



*Matt, Ty, and Val (along with Strength & Song) leading singing at the Campfire! banquet in the Spring of 2015*



# CGK Classis Agrees to Women in Office

The *Nederlands Dagblad* (Dutch daily Christian newspaper) of October 18, 2018 reported that Classis Apeldoorn of the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* (hereafter CGK – the Dutch sister churches of the Free Reformed Churches of North America) has agreed to the request of the CGK congregation at Arnhem to allow women to serve in the offices of elder and deacon.

On the face of it, this classis decision appears to be quite a surprising and unexpected development since, back in 1998, the CGK Synod formally and clearly decided against women in office. So how is it possible that now, twenty years later, a classis within that federation of churches would permit the ordination of women?

Throughout The Netherlands, Reformed churches of different federations have been working together here and there locally in various ways, sometimes also having joint worship services. This has been happening between the CGK, the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken* (hereafter NGK – the churches which resulted from the split within our Dutch sister churches in the 1960s) and our Dutch sister churches (hereafter RCN – the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands – liberated).

The CGK congregation at Arnhem has been working together with the NGK since 1995. For the last twenty years, this particular congregation has been broadly supportive of women in office and they have been patiently waiting for the time when this would be permitted. The NGK had permitted women to serve in all ecclesiastical offices already in 2004. This CGK Arnhem church also worshipped together with the RCN congregation for the afternoon worship services. Since 2017, the RCN has also permitted women to serve in office in the church. This increased the pressure in the CGK congregation to also allow women in office.

Therefore, the Arnhem CGK felt that it could bring its quandry to their classis. After much deliberation, Classis Apeldoorn decided that the Arnhem church was permitted to have women serve in the offices of elder and deacon. The basis for permitting this, even though the federation as a whole does not permit women to be in office, was a decision taken at the CGK Synod in 2013 regarding the special circumstances of congregations who are working together with the NGK and the RCN. When the synodical decisions of the NGK and RCN would conflict with a synodical decision of the CGK, then a local consistory is to “seek a way [out of this di-

lemma] which will serve to build up the unity of the congregation and which will, as much as possible, honour the intention of all the [synodical] decisions.” The consistory is to put its decision, which conflicts with the synod of the federation of which it is a part, to the judgment of classis. This is what the consistory in the Arnhem CGK did and Classis Apeldoorn judged that since there is broad support for women in office in the Arnhem CGK, it is “understandable that the consistory decided that the edification and unity of the congregation was best served by opening the offices to women.”

Not everyone in the CGK, however, is pleased with this decision of Classis Apeldoorn. Rev. Peter Buijs, the chairman of the previous synod, does not think that this decision is understandable. He points out that the decision of 1998 that only men are to serve in ecclesiastical office is still in force in the CGK. Further, Synod 2016 noted as a consideration that “in congregations which are working together [with other federations] the least far-reaching Church Order applies.” The implication is that moving to women in office is more far-reaching than not doing so. Buijs suspects that this deliberation of Synod escaped Classis Apeldoorn’s attention.

In the *Reformatisch Dagblad* (Reformed Dutch daily newspaper) of October 25, 2018, it was reported that Dr. Herman Selderhuis, professor of church history and church polity at the Theological University of Apeldoorn, hopes that Classis Apeldoorn will quickly take back their recent decision before appeals would start to come in from the churches. Since this classis decision has implications for the federation as a whole because it went against a decision of Synod 1998, it is possible, in Selderhuis’ judgment, for any church or individual in the CGK to appeal it. Selderhuis’ concern is that Classis Apeldoorn has directly contradicted a clear synod decision against women in office and therefore has gone against something which has been previously agreed to. Such a direct contradiction with Synod 1998 goes beyond what the aforementioned provisions of Synod 2013 were meant to provide for. Moreover, in this case, it concerns the explanation of Scripture and is not simply a matter of the practical aspects of church life.

It will be interesting to see how this matter will unfold in the CGK in the next while. We hope that the CGK will remain true in their commitment to Scripture.



# New Hope Update

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you HOPE and a future.’” Jeremiah 29:11*

*(Words of comfort to welcome the new arrivals at the New Hope Orphanage.)*



It is the time of the year again when the newbies enter the New Hope household, children to love, cherish, provide, and care for. They come from all corners of the NTT province, from different backgrounds, different languages, and different looks. Yet the one thing they have in common is that their families are not able to care for them because of financial difficulties and, most often, broken homes. These young children with huge smiles on their faces come with their burdens hidden carefully behind thick walls. It is not by chance that they ended up at New Hope. We are convinced by what the Lord says through Jeremiah, that he has a plan for these children, giving them HOPE and a future. Please pray for these children that they may adjust to their new lives, schedules, and friends at New Hope. Please pray also for the house parents and counsellors who will need a lot of time, wisdom, and patience to get to know these children and dig through these thick walls, comforting and giving hope through God's Word.

## Yanti's story

Yanti has been a resident at New Hope since 2012 and finished high school during this time. She was born and raised in the village of Ayotupas, otherwise known as “Headhunter quarters.” In terms of family life, she had no idea what it meant to have a father and mother taking care of her. She lived with her grandmother, and on occasion her mother would pop in to check up on her. Mother works on and off as a migrant worker in Malaysia, and she has several other children with different dads. Although Yanti stayed with her grandmother, there was no emotional stability and sense of security at all for her growing up. Sadly, this is the case for so many Timorese children; the impact is huge, affecting them psychologically for a lifetime.

At New Hope the counsellors strive to fill this gap, reaching out to these children, giving them assurance, encouragement, and love. The children are taught discipline



and respect, they are challenged intellectually, and most important they are trained in God's Word.

You would think that by filling in the “gaps,” these children will be full of gratitude and appreciation. Unfortunately, it does not work this way for most of the children. The damage has been done and cannot be completely reversed. Early childhood, the most important time for parents to shape their children and instill core values and principles, cannot be “redone,” and these children grow up with an emotional void. As a result, they do not value the best efforts of their caregivers, and things are taken for granted with little or no appreciation. This is a hard lesson to learn for those involved in working with these children. Caregivers are hurt when they expect thankfulness, gratitude, and success automatically. Yes, there is no doubt that children benefit from having stayed at New Hope, but it just is not always visible right away. God works in his way, and in his time.



To come back to Yanti's story, all through high school she kept having episodes of what seemed to be epilepsy. However, after several thorough health examinations, nothing showed up and the doctors concluded it was a psychological reaction to her past. After her high school graduation, she enrolled in STAKRI, pursuing the religious teacher degree. She seemed to really enjoy this; however, one morning she got up and left, leaving everyone wondering as to why and where she was going. The counsellors tried contacting her mother, but without results. About a year later we received a phone call from a doctor asking whether we knew Yanti? Well, yes. . . . Would we allow Yanti to come back to college and allow her to stay in the home again?

Well, that question needed a bit of explaining, of course, and so it was that Dr. Efi and the Head of the Social Department in Kupang came for a visit to bring Yanti back. We were very confused as to how they connected to Yanti and showed such care for her well-being, which is rather unusual for high government officials. It turns out that Dr. Efi was having lunch at a small diner one day where Yanti worked. She noticed her tear streaked face, and asked if there was anything she could do for her. Out came the whole story of her past, including having wasted her opportunity to study at STAKRI. She expressed how she had been trying to be in touch with her mother, who refused to have anything to do with her; this led to an emotional breakdown from which she tried to run away.

Dr. Efi immediately suggested that Yanti come stay with her and allow her to help get things sorted. Yanti agreed to

this and moved into her new temporary quarters. Dr. Efi is a devout Roman Catholic and tried to convince Yanti to also become a member of the Roman Catholic Church. Yanti came along for mass but was not impressed and mentioned this. Many discussions followed, which Dr. Efi found hard to deal with, for she did not have answers or arguments to many things that Yanti brought up, such as the worship of idols and praying to the saints. Dr. Efi said: "I have to acknowledge that I am very jealous of Yanti's faith, she is very strong even though she is poor material-speaking. I would like to study the Bible more."

Dr. Efi is currently continuing her education to become a specialist and therefore has to spend considerable time in Jakarta. She is not able to care for Yanti at the same time, and therefore had hoped that Yanti could be placed in a Roman Catholic work place, where she had a close friend. Since Yanti had so many objections to the Roman Catholic teachings though, it was decided that it might not be in Yanti's best interest. Therefore Dr. Efi sought us out and asked us to please allow Yanti to continue her studies at STAKRI.

Yanti had to backtrack a bit and is currently enrolled in the second semester. She is very thankful that she has been given another opportunity, and at the same time recognizes that the Lord has brought her through this difficult time.

Communication between her mother and family is still a struggle, but she is able to give that a place and focus instead on her studies and serving the Lord. She is very active in leading the kid's club in Dalam Tuak congregation and







also involved with young peoples and other church activities. It is such an encouragement for all involved in New Hope Orphanage to see how the Lord works in miraculous ways. We so easily give in to doubt and wonder whether the work we do is of any use. However, through testimonies such as Yanti's, the Lord shows us with the words of Isaiah that his Word is never spoken in vain.

*"So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:11*

STAKRI is the Reformed Theological training centre, training young men to become pastors and young men and women to be Reformed teachers. On behalf of New Hope, I would like to thank you for your continued support in so many different ways.

*In Christ,  
on behalf of the New Hope Board in Timor,  
Femmy Dethan-Bouwman*

### Prayer requests

Please pray for:

- The Children sponsored by New Hope
- The Counsellors who care for the children in the dormitories
- The Dethans as they continue this work and spend time in Canada on furlough
- The spreading of the gospel and the growth of strong Christians in Timor.

### Message from the Smithville Board of Mission Aid

We would like to thank all those who are able to financially and prayerfully remember the work being done in the New Hope Orphanage in Timor. We have and continue to receive the financial support necessary to continue to support these projects. Please continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ in Indonesia. At this point in time we are still in need of sponsors. Please consider sponsoring a child for \$50/month or make a one-time donation to New Hope.

Donations for New Hope can be accepted online by following the link below and hitting the "Donate Now" or "Donate Monthly" button and selecting "5-New Hope-Timor" <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/id/58213/>.

*You can also send your financial report via a cheque. Cheques need to be addressed to:*

**"Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund"**  
earmarked "New Hope" in the memo line.

### Cheques can be mailed to:

Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund  
PO Box 85225, Burlington, ON L7R 4K4

**~ All donors will receive a receipt for tax purposes ~**

*In Christ,  
The Board of Mission Aid Timor* **C**





## Organized Death in The Netherlands

As Western civilization becomes more and more secularized and essentially neo-pagan, the effects are felt in every aspect of life, including the value one places on human life. The scourge of abortion and euthanasia is a terrible testimony to the fact that in far too many instances such life is considered dispensable. Perhaps nowhere else is the horror of legalized euthanasia more evident than in The Netherlands.

Bruce Bawer, who has kept a pulse on developments in Europe, has underlined the slippery slope that Western society is on. Back in 2014, euthanasia (killing with a doctor taking the lead) was only allowed in Belgium, The Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Now it is also allowed in Colombia and Canada. Elsewhere euthanasia is illegal but physician-assisted suicide (where a doctor helps in the killing) is permitted in Switzerland, Germany, South Korea, Japan, and in a number of American states.

“The Netherlands and Belgium don’t just allow euthanasia for adults. In those countries, terminally ill persons as young as twelve years old may also choose to be put to death.” Bawer continues that “there are the cases of people who aren’t physically unwell but are nonetheless considered expendable. In the Netherlands, people whose only illness is psychological are allowed to check out with the help of a doctor.” There was the case of “a 29-year-old Dutch woman named Aurelia Brouwers, who ‘suffered from anxiety, eating disorders, depression, psychosis, and a history of self-harm.’ Brouwers asked to be put to death, and her doctors complied.”

Bawer correctly notes that responsible doctors do not help kill people, but try to help them get better. “But that’s apparently an old-fashioned view in the Netherlands, where abetting the self-slaughter of the mentally unstable is a growth industry: in 2012, there were 12 assisted suicides of mentally ill persons; in 2014, 43; in 2016, 64; in 2017, 83. In addition, 169 people in the Netherlands were euthanized last year on the grounds that they were afflicted with dementia, even though most of them were in the early

stages of memory loss.” Furthermore, “people have been euthanized for being autistic, suicidal victims of sexual abuse, or addicts. Other victims have suffered delusions or heard voices.”

Some, like Dutch Dr. Cassy Fiano-Chesser, are sounding the alarm. She warned that “we’re getting used to euthanasia, that is exactly what should not happen. We’re no longer speaking about the exceptional situations that the law was created for, but a gradual process towards organised death.” Reacting to these gruesome developments in The Netherlands and Belgium, “The American Psychiatric Association has condemned the physician-assisted suicide of mentally ill individuals. . . . In every country that allows physician-assisted suicide, the same kind of chilling mission creep has been observed: laws originally intended solely to permit doctors to dispatch the terminally ill have eventually been invoked to justify the snuffing out of people who are in tip-top physical shape, especially psychiatric patients.”

An infamous Dutch case concerned a seventy-four-year-old woman with dementia who earlier in her life had said she would want assisted suicide when the time is right, but later repeatedly said she wanted to live and did not want to die. Thus, when the family and the doctor thought that she should go, the woman herself “proved uncooperative, struggling so much when the lady doctor tried to administer the lethal injection that the latter had to ask the patient’s family ‘to hold her down’ while she stuck the needle in.” Practically speaking, in The Netherlands people can be euthanized “at any time, for any reason” and in some cases even against their will.

What is frightening is that the list of afflictions considered severe enough to warrant death is growing longer by the year. The future consequences of Canada’s own new euthanasia law do not look promising.

Sources used: Bruce Bawer, “Organized Death in the Netherlands” (August 14, 2018) on the website of FrontPage Magazine.





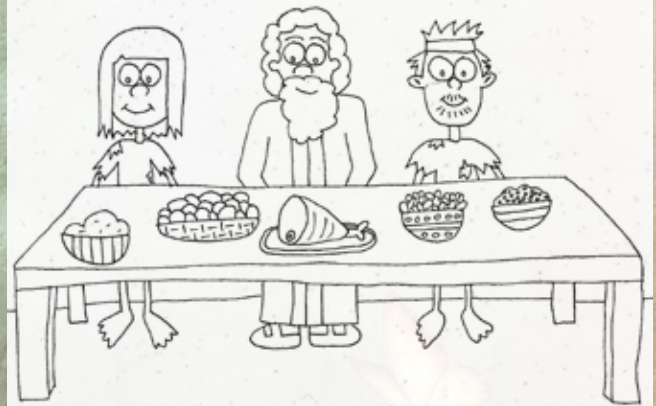
# Clarion Kids

## The Parable of the Wedding Feast

**Matthew 22:1-14**

Jesus told the people this parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. He sent out his servants to call the people who were invited, but they would not come. They were too busy with their own lives to attend the feast. The king was angry and told the servants to go out and invite whoever they could find. The servants brought everyone who they found into the wedding feast so that there were many guests. The busy guests in this parable are just like people who are too busy for God. God must always be the most important thing in our lives.

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



### Word Search

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

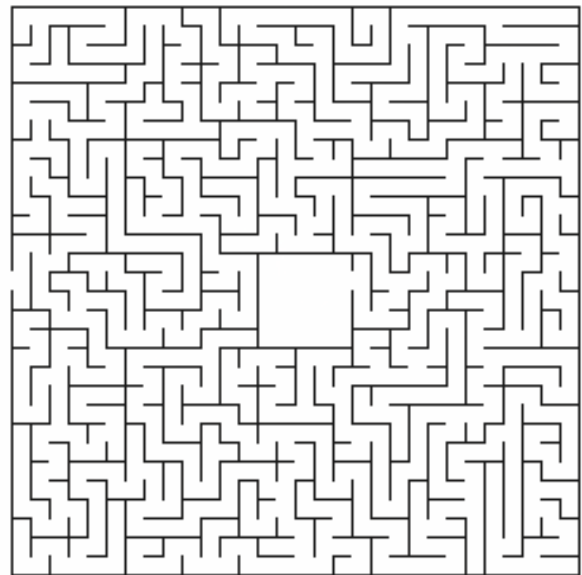
Angry  
Guests  
Parable

Busy  
Important  
Servants

Feast  
King  
Wedding

### Maze:

Help the king's servants find some guests to invite to the wedding feast!



by Emily Nijenhuis

## Cynthia Blokker



Hello! My name is Cynthia Danielle Blokker! But you can call me Cindy. I celebrated my thirtieth birthday this past year on September 15. I live at home in London, Ontario with my parents (Henry & Pamela Blokker), and my precious dog, Angie. I have three married sisters, which also means I have three brothers-in-law and thirteen nieces and nephews.

I was born with Prader-Willi Syndrome. It is mainly an eating disorder, so I have to measure and journal all my food, but I am always hungry. Sometimes celebrations are hard because there are so many cakes and cookies and goodies. I have to work very hard at the gym to keep my weight under control. I cannot be alone, so Mom and Dad always make sure that someone is with me. But my whole family helps me in lots of ways because they all love me.

I love to swim, mostly in a pool, and do pool aerobics with my sister. I have a busy schedule of workouts, volunteering at the Mission Thrift store, and I also volunteer at a public school, Eagle Heights, and I work on Friday's at Bed Bath & Beyond.

I love doing crafts, puzzles, and playing games on my computer, and reading books on CD, scrapbooking, making cards, and horse riding lessons. I also like to go for walks and go for a bike rides. I love all the animals.

I have spent a few weeks a year at Harbour Home and I love the staff and other residents. We have fun together, studying, doing crafts and going on outings. Maybe someday

I can live there. This past year I went on my third year to Anchor Camp. I had fun and already look forward to next year.

I belong to the Pilgrim Canadian Reformed Church in London and I like going to the host family every Sunday where I enjoy the communion of saints. The congregation is so caring and nice.

*"Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! For his mercy endures forever."* Psalm 118:1

Cindy

## December Birthdays

### 10 James Kamminga will be 34

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

### 15 Julie Kamminga will be 30

c/o River Road Place, 440 River Road  
Winnipeg, MB R2M 3Z9

Congratulations to James and Julie, who are each celebrating a birthday this December. We wish you a wonderful birthday with family and friends, filled with God's love.

I would also like to wish everyone a blessed Christmas season, where we can all celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May we all thank him for the many blessings he has given us and look to him for all things.

## 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





## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Dear Editor and Rev. den Hollander,

We are writing in response to the recent “You Asked” section in the September 21 edition of *Clarion*.

We were a little disappointed in Rev. den Hollander’s answer to the question regarding the Trinity Psalter Hymnal (TPH), as we had only a very small understanding of how and why the TPH came to be. The questioner was concerned about losing our Anglo-Genevan Psalms to the TPH and so we decided we needed to learn more about the hymnal.

From my understanding, the TPH was borne as the result of a combined effort of the URCNA and the OPC. The URCNA had previously been working together with the CanRC to create a combined songbook that we could use and so further our moves toward unity. However, the URCNA dropped out of this effort and undertook to create its own psalter hymnal, the TPH. They wanted a song book “unique to the URC. . . to foster unity among the congregations” working together with the OPC “promoting unity with a closely related sister denomination” with the hope of having a broader impact on the Reformed churches worldwide (Michael Kearney, the URC/OPC Psalter Hymnal Project, [urcpsalmody.wordpress.com](http://urcpsalmody.wordpress.com)). In sum, the TPH is the result of the URCNA moving away from working together with the CanRC, turning to work with the OPC to create a new song book for use in Reformed churches.

The URCNA is adopting the TPH for, what we could find, a few key reasons. First, to help their federation establish a unique identity. The URCNA has been using the blue Psalter Hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church and were wanting a song book that better reflected their beliefs. The TPH would also give the URCNA a more complete psalter and hymnal section with relatively contemporary English language. A new song book would also help the new URCNA churches to distinguish themselves from other denominations.

In sum, the TPH was created by the URCNA and OPC to fill what they saw as a gap in their liturgy. It was not made to fill a gap in the CanRC liturgy. Unless there is gap. We would argue there isn’t.

Rev. den Hollander attempts to explain that the *Book of Praise* isolates us from the broader Christian world, but we would argue that the BoP does not isolate us at all but rather gives the CanRC a rich and historic identity. We have a rich

heritage in the Anglo-Genevan Psalms in these melodies that were created specifically to fit the text of each psalm.

Rev. den Hollander mentions that using the *Book of Praise*, singing the Genevan tunes, sets us in a “class apart, causing isolation.” We’re curious what he means by “a class apart.” And what kind of isolation is meant here? A kind of isolation that hinders the CanRC members in their spiritual growth? Would adopting the TPH be out of concern for the current membership?

At the end of Rev. den Hollander’s answer comes a line that truly astonished us: “It can be difficult to learn to sing [the tunes] let alone truly love them.” Do our children love going to church in their early years or maybe even their teen years? Often our three-year-old would rather stay home and play. Our children must learn to love the gospel message and corporate worship, as would any newcomers. Or do we need to adopt a different method of church as well to make it more attractive for newcomers and younger members? Our school children learn the words and tunes starting already in kindergarten, and these children learn to love them. Truly loving the Psalms we sing is not only dependent on the tunes. We could recite them for that matter. Our love for singing Psalms will not increase with different tunes just as our love for church and hearing the gospel will not increase by changing the worship service. It is the message of our singing, the worship of our God, and the love of the gospel that is important.

We sing psalms and hymns in the worship service for our edification, not our entertainment or to inspire emotions and feelings per se. So then, preference should be given to the Psalms, as they are the inspired Word of God, and to hymns built upon texts taken directly from or derived from Scripture, not those that stress personal experiences of faith and personal adoration of God.

We’d like to close with a quote from an article written by Dr. A.J. de Visser and published in *Clarion* in 2012, a short six years ago.

We do not need to deny that there is difference in quality among the Genevan melodies. Most melodies are excellent, beautiful, singable, fitting to the words of the Psalms. Other melodies do not have those excellent qualities. On the whole, however, the Canadian Reformed Churches have inherited a real

treasure from The Netherlands, and ultimately from Geneva: A complete collection of metrical versions of all the Psalms on melodies that enables the congregation to sing God's praises with reverence and dignity. It is a collection worth keeping ("The Genevan Psalter- 450 years," *Clarion* 61 (2012):332-334).

*Ard and Deanna Doornbos, Barrhead, AB*

## Response

I thank Ard and Deanna for their feedback on the answer I gave to a question that expressed *concern* for the "danger" of us losing our much-loved *Book of Praise* with the Genevan tunes for the Psalms. In response to this letter to the editor, I should first and foremost wish to state that I too love the *Book of Praise*, love the psalms and hymns, as well as many of the Genevan tunes. I fully agree with the summary and conclusion of Dr. de Visser that "it is a collection worth keeping."

In my answer in the column "You Asked" I did not have to deal with matters such as liturgy, adopting a different method of church, giving preference to the Psalms, etc. In that regard I wholeheartedly agree with Ard and Deanna! And I can also assure them that the members in the UR-CNA and OPC give preference to the Psalms (as articulated specifically in their Church Order too!), instill a love for them in their children, and doing so for the same reasons as articulated in the letter to the editor. Therefore, there

need not be any concern for some kind of "danger" in that regard at all!

The concern about the learning to love the singing of the Psalms did not pertain to the children at all, but rather to the inquirers, the newcomers, the outsiders, who have not had that privilege of growing up with it and learning to love the Psalms as sung with the Genevan tunes. Therefore, in my answer I did not only seek to undo the fear for the perceived danger of losing the *Book of Praise*, but I only made the suggestion that we could increase the *selection* of available psalms and hymns by using some of them from the TPH. These may have familiar tunes while yet singing psalms and hymns that are *also* faithful to God's Word and the confessions.

Finally, the aspect of the Genevan tunes setting us in a class apart, causing some unnecessary isolation, should not be viewed to imply any of the concerns expressed by brother and sister Doornbos. It's just a fact that retaining the Genevan tunes *only* gives us a place among the Reformed denominations in North America (sister churches that is!) which, though unique and beautiful in itself, sets us apart with a selection of tunes that are not familiar, attractive, or loved outside of our federation. Hence, in conclusion, we should preserve the inherited treasure of the *Book of Praise* while approving also a new treasure that will be the heritage in our sister churches in North America.

*William den Hollander*

*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.*

