

Clarion



Edmonton Welcomes Reverend Mark ten Haaf

Clarion

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What's Inside

This issue leads with an article from our newest editor, Dr. Jason Van Vliet. We are very thankful to have him join us. This editorial is entitled, "Classical Examinations: Who Should Conduct Them?"

In a four-part series from Dr. Cornelis Van Dam, "Children and the Lord's Supper," we have the second installment, which discusses the continuities and discontinuities between the Passover of the Old Testament and the Lord's Supper of the New Testament.

In federational news, there is a report on the ordination of Rev. Mark ten Haaf as well as a MERF mission news article. Issue 2 also brings readers a Treasures, New & Old meditation, the Ray of Sunshine column, a Canticle, a book review, and press releases.

Laura Veenendaal

- 31** Classical Examinations:
Who Should Conduct Them?
- 34** TREASURES, NEW & OLD
- 35** Passover and the Lord's Supper (2 of 4)
- 38** Edmonton Welcomes Reverend Mark ten Haaf
- 40** MERF NEWS
- 42** CANTICLE
- 43** RAY OF SUNSHINE
- 44** BOOK REVIEW
- 45** PRESS RELEASE(S)



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Classical Examinations: *Who Should Conduct them?*

Recently my colleague, Dr. James Visscher, wrote an article that I'm sure caught more than a few eyes. It was called "Classical Examinations" (*Clarion* Vol 68, No 22, Nov 1, 2019). He describes the disappointment and embarrassment we experience when a man fails to sustain one of his exams. Indeed, everyone feels the pain: the student, his family, his fellow students, the seminary, yes, the entire federation.

Pain also causes us to reflect and ask questions. Is there a better way? My colleague makes several suggestions, such as making sure that appropriate text passages are assigned, that the elders are thoroughly involved, and that perhaps more than one sermon could be reviewed. These are all good ideas, worthy of consideration.

At the same time, Dr. Visscher also wonders whether we can streamline the whole process; he writes, "Personally, I am more and more leaning in the direction that the matter of eligibility should be left up to the Seminary to decide and that the churches should be the ones who decide on ordination into the ministry. This means that churches would still have the final say" (p. 624). This suggestion raises some questions. Is there any precedent for this? Would it be an improvement? Mostly importantly, if we leave all three exams – preaching consent, preparatory, and peremptory – within the responsibility of Classis, why would do we do that?

Two simple but insufficient answers

So, why does a classis, rather than the Seminary, decide whether a man will become eligible for call? To begin with, this is the

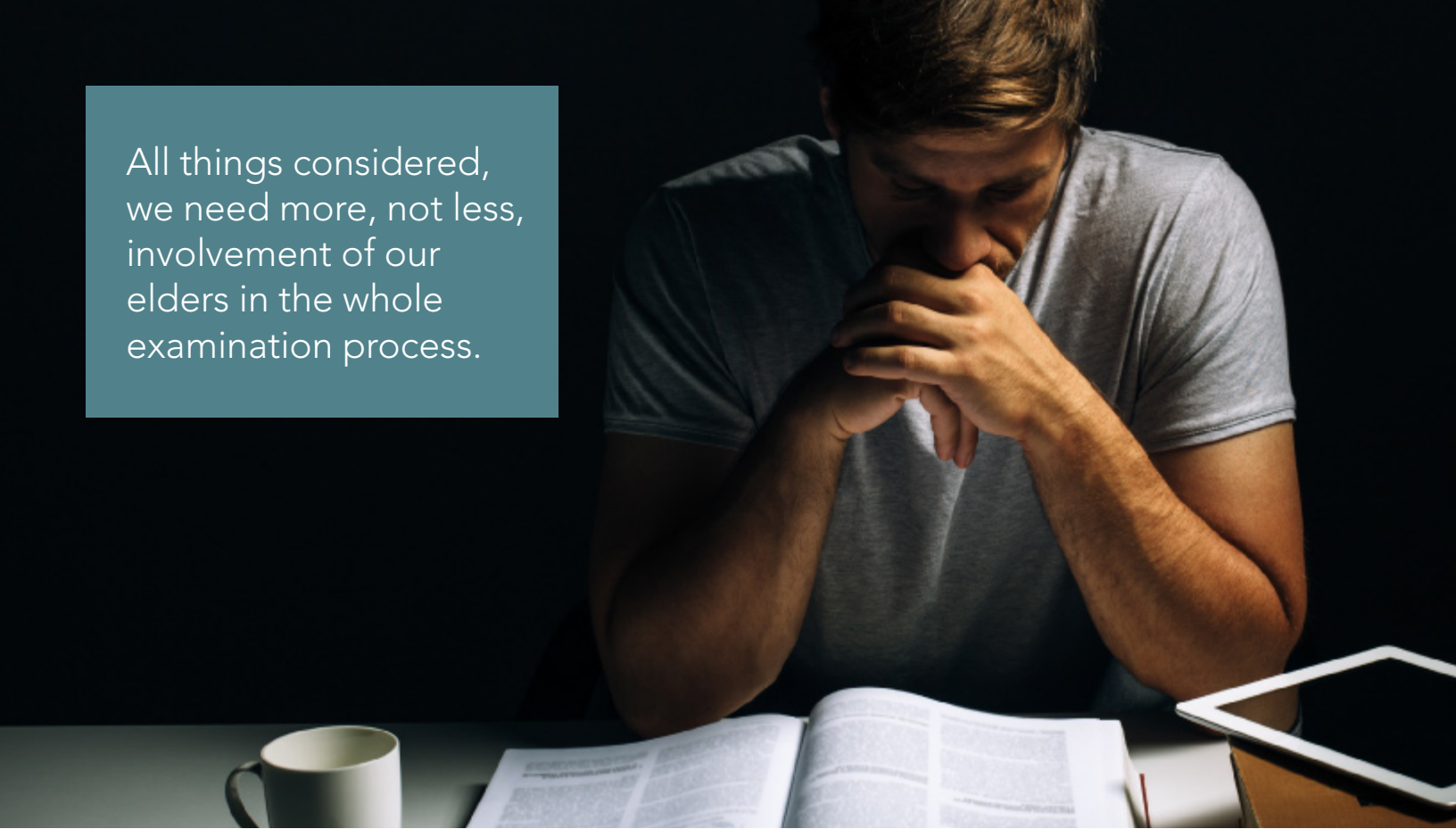
arrangement we have by common consent. In Article 4.B.1 of our Church Order, we all agree that "only those shall be declared eligible for call within the churches who have passed a preparatory examination *by the classis in which they live*" (CO Art 4.B.1). Of course, following due process, we could change the Church Order (CO 76), but would such a change lessen the embarrassment, or merely alter who must deliver the disappointing news, if that is necessary?

Furthermore, doing this properly would mean more work for the professors at the Seminary, even though at first glance it might not seem like it. Someone might ask,

"After the professors have been with these men for four years, and given them so many assignments and exams, could the faculty not just have one meeting at the end of it all, review the overall progress of each graduating student, and decide whether he has what it takes or not?" But it's not quite that simple.

During the seminary program, the material that the students learn is given piece by piece and course by course. As you would expect, students are then also tested piece by piece and course by course. An eligibility exam, though, has a different character to it. At that point, we want to see whether a man can

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pull it all together and function well in the ministry for years to come. There is a certain comprehensive quality to classical examinations that is not found, in the same way and to the same degree, in the regular exams at the end of each semester. Consequently, if the Seminary would take care of examining for eligibility, and if we want to maintain the same kind and quality of this examination, then we would need to ask our Seminary to do some extra work and work through some kind a more comprehensive testing for those students seeking to become eligible for call.

However, for the sake of argument, let's assume that we change the Church Order and ask the Seminary to organize an appropriate and equivalent eligibility exam, would our federation be in a better place than we are now? I do not think so. Let's dig a bit deeper and find out why.

The involvement of elders

Interestingly enough, the original Church Order of Dort (1619) did not spell out any agreement about eligibility exams. It only stipulated that after a man had been called by a certain congregation, he could not immediately enter the ministry of the Word. He first had to undergo "the examination or investigation both of doctrine and life which shall be done by the classis in the presence of the deputies of the synod" (Art. 4). Today we call this the peremptory or ordination exam.

However, since the original Church Order of Dort did not speak about an earlier, eligibility exam, different practices developed over time. In fact, the churches of the Secession (1834) had the custom that the curators, or Board of Governors, of their seminary did the eligibility exam, and this practice was carried over to North America in the early history of the Christian Reformed Church. So, there is historical precedent for Dr. Visscher's leaning.

It is noteworthy, though, that both in The Netherlands and in North America, the churches involved purposefully moved away from having the seminaries involved in eligibility exams. Instead, they agreed that it was better for the churches to take care of this themselves. Especially instructive in this regard is the key reason that the Christian Reformed Synod of 1937 decided to shift responsibility for these exams away from its seminary and into its ecclesiastical assemblies. Their Synod stated: "Under the present system (Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary declaring Candidates) our Eldership has no part in this very essential work."¹ I agree. If the elders would not be involved in eligibility exam, we would be missing a very important element.

As the elders have supervision over the ordained ministers of the Word (CO Art 22, last sentence), so the elders should have supervision over the to-be-ordained ministers of the Word. Their input and insight are invaluable. True enough, compared to professors at the seminary they may not be as fully trained in all the ins and outs of exegesis and sermon writing. But they

¹ Idzerd Van Dellen and Martin Monsma. *The Church Order Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1941), p. 26.

know what is orthodox and what is not. Added to that, since they are busy in their local congregations, they know what is edifying and what is not. Elders have a keen, at times almost intuitive, sense of whether a man can pull it all together and faithfully feed a congregation from the pulpit for years to come. Moreover, this is precisely what the eligibility exam is all about.

Of course, if the seminary would do the eligibility exam, elders would not be completely out of the picture. They would still be involved in the final, ordination exam. However, all things considered, we need more, not less, involvement of our elders in the whole examination process.

Initial and final say

As Dr. Visscher rightly notes, if the ordination exam is done at classis, “churches would still have the final say.” But it is a rather late moment in the whole process for the churches to have their say. By this time, the candidate has already received and accepted a call from a certain congregation. He has visited them and, even in a short period of time, already developed surprisingly strong emotional bonds with that congregation. If the man is married, and has children, the same is true for his family. Sure, everyone understands that it’s all in the Lord’s will and time, but the fact of the matter is that at least initial plans for a potential move are likely underway.

True, so long as the churches conduct the ordination exam, they still have the final say. If necessary, the churches can still put on the brakes, so to speak, even at this late moment in the process when everyone is so deeply and emotionally invested. But is that the best we can do? Would it not be far better for both the Seminary and the churches to have an additional, a direct, and, even more importantly, an earlier opportunity to put the brakes on, if that is what must be done?

Taking this a step further, not only is it better for the churches to have an initial and a final say, I would also respectfully submit that the classis is actually better suited for this specific task, not only so that the elders can be fully involved, but also so that everything will be kept as fair and objective as possible.

Coffee is thicker than water?

Blood is thicker than water. That curious English idiom expresses the truth that family bonds are tight, and it also implies that family members have a hard time being truly objective about their own blood relatives.


At the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, we are not all blood relatives, but we are very close. We are a community of some thirty people who spend a significant portion of our waking hours together. We sing together, we pray together, we study together, often we laugh together, sometimes we cry together ... and every weekday, we all have coffee together at 10:30... precisely. All told, it cultivates a very strong, almost family-like, bond.

That bond is beautiful and enjoyable. But it does not make it any easier for us to be entirely objective about each other. Sometimes we may be far too hard on each other. We see a certain weakness in another member of the “family” and we cannot easily let it go. Other times, we hesitate to say what we really should say because we do not want to hurt the feelings of someone who has become quite close to us.

Please do not misunderstand, we want to be fair and objective. As faculty at the Seminary we also pray about that together, especially when we’re busy marking exams. But professors are weak and sinful people, just like everyone else. The closer the bond, the harder objectivity becomes. Blood is thicker than water, but coffee (properly brewed) can be pretty thick, too. I could be wrong, but I honestly think that delegates to a classis, who come from various congregations in a certain area, will have an easier time being objective than a group of professors.

Conclusion

More things could be mentioned, but perhaps this will suffice for now. The Seminary fulfils a special, servant-like role for the churches. Future preachers and pastors need a solid, thorough training. The churches give the Seminary the task of providing that training. Under the Lord’s blessing, may our Seminary focus on doing that in the very best way.

But once the training is done, the process of deciding whether a man enters the ministry of the Word, or not, is best left – in its entirety – within the responsibility and authority of the churches themselves. The advantage of this system, as we presently have it, is that it keeps these two roles very clear and distinct. The Seminary trains men for ministry while the churches consistently hold the keys that open, or close, the way to the ministry. Even if it takes a bit more time to work through the process, that clarity is definitely worth it. 

The Sceptre

"For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous." (Psalm 125:3)

One of the symbols of a king's power and authority was the sceptre he held in his hand. Remember the sceptre of King Ahasuerus. Esther 4:11 says: "If any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law – to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden sceptre so that he may live." The king's sceptre was a matter of life or death.

Since a king's sceptre was a symbol of his power, when we read in Psalm 125 about "the sceptre" of wickedness, then we are to understand that "wickedness" is being personified as a powerful king. How ghastly! The sceptre of King Wickedness! Wickedness ruling like a king over the land!

Wickedness often prevailed over the land. The time of the judges was a dark period for the children of Israel, marked by wickedness, apostasy, and subjugation by godless nations and kings.

Things got worse during the time of the kings, for they often led the charge in doing wicked things. When the kings were wicked, the people did not stand a chance, but followed the bad example of their kings. It was because of the sin of the kings that the children of Israel were driven into exile, and the land that God had allotted to his people was ruled by foreign kings.

And yet we have this promise of verse 3: The sceptre of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous. How do we make sense of that promise in light of exile, occupation, and the reign of the wicked?

Well, you know that there was a return from exile. After seventy years, under faithful men such as Ezra and Nehemiah, God brought his people back to the land and told them to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. And they did. God had allotted the land to his people, and he let them move back. But it did not last forever. Because of unbelief and disobedience, the land was repeatedly overrun by hostile forces until it was finally occupied by Rome.


What is going on? Also in this we see and hear a call and cry for a better king and a gracious sceptre. It is a cry for our Lord and King Jesus Christ.

We read about this king and this sceptre already in Genesis 49:10. When Jacob is blessing his sons, then he says of Judah: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet." Jacob was talking about our Lord and King Jesus Christ.

Balaam also spoke of King Jesus and his sceptre, in Numbers 24:17: "A star shall come out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth." Balaam saw the coming of Jesus who, as a king, would come bearing his sceptre of authority and power.

Jesus has come. He bears his sceptre and rules over the kingdom. The kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, and we belong to it. And yet wickedness still rules and reigns in the world. There is so much wickedness. I don't need to give examples of it. "What is going on?" we ask. Will it ever end? Yes it will.

Jesus came once, and he is coming again. Psalm 2 says that he is coming again and he is going to have a sceptre in his hands with which he will destroy those who love wickedness, smashing them like pottery. But he will take unto himself those who acknowledged him as king.

Love Jesus the Shepherd King! Then for you his sceptre will not be a rod of destroying iron but a staff of comforting kindness. 

For further study

1. Read Psalm 110. Who is being sent forth from Zion with a mighty sceptre?
2. Read Hebrews 1:8 in its context. Who is bearing a sceptre here?



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Passover and the Lord's Supper

(Part 2 of 4)

When the question is asked why children cannot attend Lord's Supper since they could attend the Passover, one needs to recognize that there is both continuity and discontinuity between the two.¹ The continuity is evident in the fact that the Lord Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper during his last Passover meal (Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-15). Elsewhere Christ is called "our Passover lamb" (1 Cor 5:7). Central to both the Passover and the Lord's Supper is the command to remember the great acts of salvation that God has done for his people (Exod 12:14, 26-27; 1 Cor 11:24-26). However, in spite of the obvious elements of continuity, we also need to recognize major points of discontinuity.

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Christ's command and not the hasty flight from Egypt so many centuries ago.

Christ thus used the bread of the Passover in establishing one element of the Lord's Supper, but he also employed something that was not part of the original Passover. For that feast, the Lord

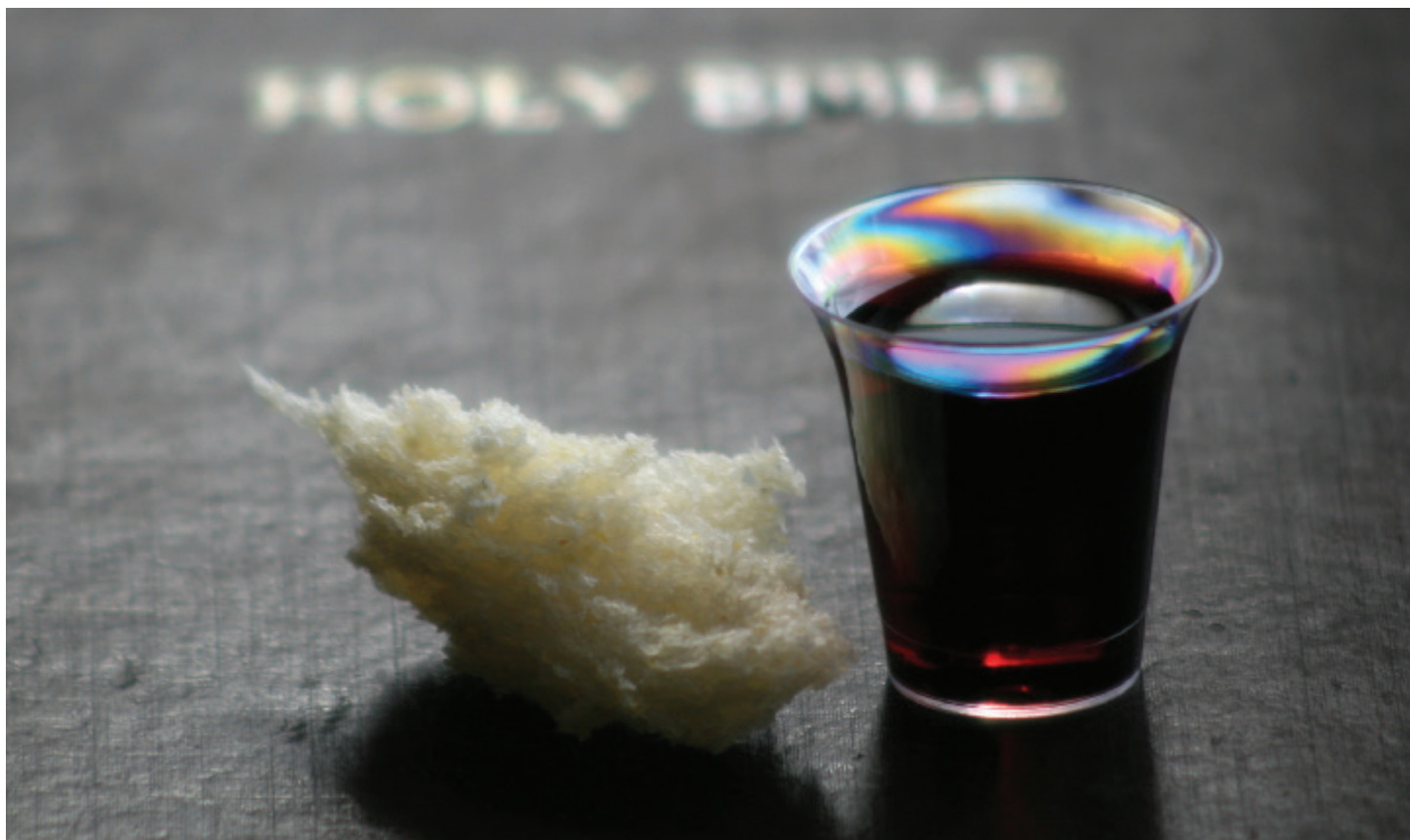
God had only included and specified three elements: the lamb, the unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs (Exod 12:8). For all these elements, there was an explanation (cf. Exod 1:14; 12:13, 39). Eventually cups of wine became part of the official Passover ritual, but the Lord had never specifically asked for this. But now Christ included this element of wine in the Lord's Supper. The apostle Paul in recounting the institution of the Lord's Supper speaks of "the cup of blessing" (1 Cor 10:16). This may have been the third cup in the Passover meal as it was celebrated in the time of Jesus. The

Lord Jesus also connected this element to himself. When he gave the cup to his disciples he said: "Do this in remembrance of me!" (1 Cor 11:25) Christ, however, said more which underlined the newness of what he was instituting. He also said of the wine: "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many" (Mark 14:24) and "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:27-28). These words, too, must have been a shock to the disciples. If one thing was ingrained in the Israelite mind, it was that the drinking of blood was strictly forbidden (e.g. Lev 17:11). By introducing this meaning to the cup, the Lord Jesus divorced the Lord's Supper decisively from the Passover feast in which no blood, not even symbolically, was shared with the guests at the table.

The Lord's Supper is not a Christian Passover

The Lord's Supper is not a Christian Passover feast. It is, rather, a fulfillment of the Passover and cannot be equated with it. The unleavened bread of the Passover was "the bread of affliction" because Israel "came out of the land of Egypt in haste" (Deut 16:3). Christ, however, gave this element of the Passover a new meaning. Instead of relating the bread to the afflictions of Egypt and the hasty departure of the Israelites to freedom, Christ broke the bread and said "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24). These words must have been startling to the disciples. Here was something completely new! The bread was now identified with Christ's body (cf. John 6:35-58) and taking and eating it was to make them remember Christ's sacrifice of himself. Him they had to think of when breaking the bread according to

1. This article is part of a shortened and popular version of a chapter that will appear in the forthcoming publication of the speeches of the 2019 CRTS conference which had the theme: "'Do Not Hinder Them:' Children and the Church."



More needs to be mentioned, however, in considering the significance and background of Christ's establishing the Lord's Supper. With the cup, the Saviour alluded to another Old Testament event and meal when he said of the wine: "This is my blood of the covenant" (Mark 14:24) and when he "took the cup, after supper, saying, 'this cup is the new covenant in my blood'" (1 Cor 11:25). The expressions "my blood of the covenant" and "the new covenant in my blood" would have reminded the disciples of the confirmation of the covenant as recorded in Exodus 24. In that chapter, we read that God invited Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel to come up Mount Sinai to the Lord. However, before that happened, sacrifices were made and Moses read the Book of the Covenant to Israel. Then he took half the blood of the sacrifices "and threw it on the people and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in

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accordance with all these words'" (Exod 24:8). After that, the select few men invited by God went up the mountain and had fellowship with God. "They saw the God of Israel" and "they beheld God and ate and drank" (Exod 24:10, 11). Thus, when Christ said at the institution of the Lord's Supper "this is my blood of the covenant," he clearly had in mind that awesome event of the blood of animals being sprinkled on God's people as "the blood of the covenant" and the accompanying meal. But he himself was now the one providing this blood with his sacrifice on the cross and so initiating the new covenant in his blood for the forgiveness of sins (Matt 26:28; 1 Cor 11:25; Heb 9:11-28).

This reality places Christ's sacrificial death in a far wider framework than only the paschal offering. It also refocuses the issue of children participating and makes the argument for their inclusion at the Lord's Table on the basis of a Passover analogy far

less persuasive. After all, the Passover is only part of the background of the Lord's Supper. There was also that unique meal at Mount Sinai. It was a foreshadowing of the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The significance of that meal before the face of God for the Lord's Supper must not be underestimated.

Christ's death as remembered in the Lord's Supper is therefore not only the fulfillment of Passover lamb, but also of the meal that took place on Mount Sinai. But one can go further. The Lord's Supper is in fact the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament sacrificial service which signified the forgiveness of sins that made life with God in the covenant possible.

Since the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper refer more broadly to reconciliation and covenantal fellowship with the living God as also alluded to and seen in the sprinkling of blood and the meal with God at Mount Sinai, an element which the Lord's Supper brings to the fore much more forcefully than the Passover is the communion one has with the Lord and with each other (1 Cor 10:16-17). This emphasis on communion with the living God is not specifically associated with the Passover nor reflected in the words spoken at that meal. But the notion of communion is certainly central in the Lord's Supper as a fulfillment, not just of the Passover, but also of the meal in Exodus 24 and indeed of the entire sacrificial service of the old dispensation. "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor 11:16-17)

In terms of the discontinuity between the Passover and the Lord's Supper, it is also noteworthy how the apostle John consciously placed a distance between the Passover meal and the Christian faith. In his gospel he speaks of the Passover as "the feast of the Jews" (John 6:4; also 2:13; 11:55), suggesting that Christians no longer identify with this feast. It is, for John's Christian readers, a Jewish festival. Christians now have something quite different in the Lord's Supper.

The place of children

Considering all of the above, it is surely not only simplistic but unwarranted to say that children should partake of the Lord's Supper simply because they partook of the Passover meal. The Lord's Supper is not a Christian Passover as if you can equate the two in some way. The Lord's Supper is a new sacrament with

new requirements and what is true of the one is not necessarily true of the other.


In this connection, it is good to note that already in the Old Testament there were divinely directed changes in the celebration of the Passover which made the attendance of children

optional and not a high priority. As we saw in the first article, while the Passover was originally for the entire family, the Lord had removed it from its immediate family setting once Israel was in the land of Canaan and placed the celebration in the larger context of the family of Israel as a nation. The celebration was taken from the home and moved to Jerusalem. Only mature males were obligated to attend.

The new sacrament of the Lord's Supper is also not a family event but a congregational

feast, which takes place during a worship service. In view of the Old Testament Passover analogy, it should not be surprising if the Lord did not obligate or expect every single member of the covenant community to attend. Indeed, Scripture makes clear that a limitation has been put in place with the Lord's Supper.

With the progression of the history of redemption and the fulfillment of the Passover in the Lord's Supper, the Lord restricted attendance to the Table of the Lord. Due to the nature of the case, every single soul of Israel, young and old, had participated in the Exodus out of Egyptian bondage and thus in the Passover celebration. However, not everyone in the congregation necessarily participates in the new Exodus from the bondage of sin through the Passover lamb, Jesus Christ. Only those who have experienced the new exodus by faith in Christ and can show that they have passed from bondage to freedom may participate in the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of the new covenant and it is for those in whose hearts the Lord has written his law (Jer 31:33). Participants of the Lord's Supper need to be actively involved by remembering and believing that Christ died as the atoning sacrifice for all their sins. This reality sets the Lord's Supper apart from the sacrament of infant baptism. A child is passive in receiving baptism, but a participant in the Lord's Supper is actively involved and needs to make a conscious response to God's saving grace in Christ by seeking admission to the Table of the Lord. God's Word gives guidance for who can be admitted to this sacrament. Certain expectations must be fulfilled that in effect limit access to the Lord's Supper. More about that next time. 

Participants
of the Lord's
Supper need
to be actively
involved



The ten Haafs at the welcome evening.



One of our "hawkers," Brad Bos

Edmonton Welcomes Reverend Mark ten Haaf

With thankfulness to the LORD, Providence Canadian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta could witness the ordination of our new pastor and teacher, Rev. Mark ten Haaf, on November 3, 2019. This was the first time an ordination had taken place in Providence, and therefore the first time that many in our congregation had witnessed this. The service was led by our retired pastor, Rev. Richard Aasman. This was special, since Rev. ten Haaf did his final internship in Edmonton with Rev. Aasman in the summer of 2018. It was because we all appreciated then-candidate ten Haaf's preaching and interaction with the congregation so much that we extended a call to him. We were so excited when he accepted our call, bringing our year of vacancy to an end. We were vacant for exactly fifty-two weeks!


Ordination

The ordination took place in the morning service. Rev. Aasman's text was Philippians 1:27-30. We were urged to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, fearlessly standing up for Jesus and being proud of our citizenship in Heaven. We were encouraged to share our joy with others and to suffer opposition with confidence that we are doing the right thing. Just as Paul was a minister to the Philippians, our new minister will set us an example and bring us the Word of God to give us energy for the week ahead. He will comfort us and reprove us when necessary. After the reading of the form, the laying of hands was beautiful to witness, and we pray that Rev. ten Haaf will be enlightened by the Spirit all the days of his ministry. At the end of the service, the chairman of council, Henry Baker, said a few words about God's plan and the amazing way in which the Lord brought us and the ten Haafs together, then letters of congratulations were read, and we heard from representatives of neighbouring congregations. Coffee and cake were enjoyed by all following the service. Family members and friends from far and near joined us for this day, and the service was live streamed on Facebook for those who couldn't be present.

In the afternoon, Rev. ten Haaf preached his inaugural sermon using Philippians 2:1-2 as his text (the verses following this morning's text ... some secret planning was involved in this!). He exhorted us to live in unity with one another, looking forward to what the future holds for all of us in a new season together. The path of our life has been blazed for us by God, and his love gives us comfort in suffering. Because we have unity with Christ, we must have the same compassion for each other that God has for us; not that we have to agree on everything, but that we remember that we together are the body of Christ and God is working in us all. Love for each other means that other people's needs are more important to us than our own. Christ Jesus was a perfect model for us of this love.

Welcome evening

The following Friday, November 8, we had a welcome evening for the ten Haaf family: Mark, Stephanie, and their children Jaiva, Bauer, Creed, Oslo, and Viggo. The celebration took place in the school gym, and everyone turned out in their favourite Edmonton sports team's colours. The kids were given passports and could visit miniatures of many Edmonton attractions. Lots of fun and games, socializing, cotton candy and popcorn, and delicious chili dogs and salads were enjoyed by all. The official part of the evening was led by our MC, Sheldon Kok. He shared trivia about the congregation and the ten Haafs (we learned that Mark has had thirteen broken bones!), a flash mob (made up of everybody) sang "Shine, Jesus, Shine," the children sang "Ten Thousand Reasons," and some presentations were made. We wrapped up the evening with "Now Thank We All Our God" (Hymn 85). Our church life committee did a wonderful job putting this together!

We are so thankful that God brought Rev. ten Haaf to Edmonton Providence. We pray that we may be a blessing to one another for many years (our pulpit seems to fit him perfectly!). 

Edmonton skyline by *miroslav_1*, Getty Images



www.merf.org

MERF News

December 2019



Middle East Reformed Fellowship—"Declaring the Whole Counsel of God"

Rejoicing in God's Works

BY PASTOR NORMAN MCAULEY



2019 International Council

Saturday, November 2 was a full and busy day for MERF's International Council of field and support representatives. Time slipped by unnoticed in the wonderful atmosphere of rejoicing together in God's goodness.

In the opening, tribute was paid to the late brother John Wilkens of New Zealand, MERF's longest serving volunteer in Cyprus.



Biblical Training

The primary aim of MERF has always been to give a good and thorough grounding in the Scriptures

to church leaders and others in several key Muslim countries. It was encouraging to hear of progress being made.

In **Indonesia**, in four centers in Sulawesi and East Java, believers are equipped for evangelism and pastors and evangelists trained for church planting. Wonderful opportunities are opening up for ministry to children. The training of Sunday School teachers and youth leaders is a vital aspect of that work.

At **Lokichoggio (Loki), Kenya** the intensive three-month training for pastors and other spiritual leaders has been efficiently structured within the Augustine

Program. It is coordinated by Pastor Timothy Burden who has the responsibility for arranging the teaching. He has drawn up an holistic curriculum of teaching materials for visiting lecturers. In 2019, sixty-seven, mostly South Sudanese, trainees completed the course.

In **Ethiopia** training is provided in a newly-built center. This enhances evangelistic and teaching endeavours via broadcasts. Plans are being implemented to also introduce the effective Augustine Program.

There are now five Calvin Academies in **Pakistan**, providing education in a Christian ethos to over

1500 children.

In **Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan** and other parts of the Arab World teaching ministries to children and young adults are growing. Use of the new Arabic Sunday School curriculum, based on the Westminster Shorter Catechism, is expanding in towns and villages in the region. It has become even easier to use by replacing traditional flannelgraph by velcro strips.

Pastor Samuel Kharrat, Chairman of Lebanon Reformed Fellowship (LRF) brought a very exciting report on the numbers of converts joining churches in Syria and Lebanon.

“Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.”

— Psalm 29:1

This, of course increases the need for many more trained spiritual leaders to nourish them in God’s word. In **Palestine** and **Jordan** there are many more requests for local biblical training events.

Media Broadcasting

In **Indonesia** the media ministry continues to bear good fruit. Increasing numbers of people are being reached over a slot on national television as well as by producing short videos that are easily shared via mobile phones. Radio programs produced at **Loki** are in the major South Sudanese

Nuer language. They are reaching hundreds of thousands of displaced people inside South Sudan and also those outside in UN refugee camps. These bring the gospel message of hope in a desperate situation of war and poverty. In **Ethiopia** broadcasting continues in three main languages, Amharic, Oromo and Somali, reaching the entire region.

Internet-based Farsi language ministries most effectively reach people in **Iran**. Appealing short audio programs, targeting the younger generations are produced every week. These generate many responses. Some ask questions, while others seek more help to understand the Scriptures. These and various media files are available for free download from the ministry websites.

The **Arabic Media** ministry is the largest part of MERF’s work. In 2019 tens of thousands more are visiting the Dardasha7 and Issa-almasih websites and related social media.



Pastor Woody Lauer teaching in Indonesia

Diaconal Aid

In late 2018 a tsunami struck Sulawesi, **Indonesia**, destroying homes and schools. MERF responded by partnering with local churches to establish biblically-based trauma support ministries, opening a center in Palu to enable young people to continue their studies. This way Christ’s love is visibly demonstrated.

In **Loki**, the church continues to exercise its biblical mandate. Help is provided to the local Turkana people, such as fresh water. Recent disturbances actually opened up witness in a Turkana village previously unreached with the gospel. So, the church in **Loki** outgrew its accommodation and had to extend facilities.

Prayer and Praise

The situation in **Iraq** remains difficult. Only one of the six Reformed churches is still meeting, with less than one-tenth of pre-war attendance. Still, we can give thanks and pray for the increasing numbers of disenchanted

Muslims from both the Shite and Sunni branches of Islam.

What a joy to learn of God’s grace wonderfully touching and transforming many lives. The earnest prayers of Christ’s people are being answered. His Church is being built in Arab and Muslim lands. Nothing can prevent the fulfilling of his eternal purpose. Indeed, he is gathering a people from every tongue, tribe and race.



Norman and Joy McAuley



Ministering to Syrian refugees in Lebanon

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

MERF Canada | 1225 Dundas St., RR #1 | Burlington, ON L7P 0S9 | Tel. (1) 289 895-8153 | merf@merf.org

The Prayer of Manasseh

Part 2 of 3: Confession of Sin

This prayer, though apocryphal, is a classic prayer of repentance attributed by tradition to Manasseh, a wicked king of Judah (2 Chr 33:1-11), who pleaded God's forgiveness for his many sins, and was shown mercy (2 Chr 33:12-20).

George van Popta, 2019

(Tune: Genevan 6)

Geneva, 1542

1. The sins I have com - mit - ted, with which my life is blight - ed
 2. I may not look to heav - en for down-wards I am beat - en
 3. My crimes in-flamed your an - ger and put my soul in dan - ger.

out - num - ber all the sand of seas and o - cean beach - es.
 by all my man - y sins. They, like an i - ron fet - ter
 I have of - fend - ed you with my a - bom - i - na - tions

My guilt on - ly in - creas - es. I can no long - er stand.
 weigh down this wretch - ed debt - or. My sin, it al - ways wins.
 and count-less prov - o - ca - tions. I'm wick - ed, through and through.

George van Popta Minister emeritus Jubilee Canadian Reformed Church, Ottawa, Ontario gvanpopta@gmail.com

February Birthdays

Happy Birthday to the three of you celebrating a birthday in February!
We wish you the Lord's blessing in the coming year.

3 Ron de Witt will be **47**
3217 Twin Oaks
Burlington, ON L7M 3A8

6 Trevor Buys will be **40**
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road
Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2

12 Connie VanAmerongen will be **55**
c/o Anchor Home
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Beamsville ON LOR 1B2
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Trevor Buys

My name is Trevor Buys and I was the last addition to my family, arriving in February 1980. I have two sisters and seven brothers.

I had a hard time hearing, and from the time I was four or five years old I've worn hearing aids. Because of this predicament, I've never been very good at speaking, which is why at one time I learned sign language and was also given speech therapy.

When I was younger, I spent many hours listening to Christian music, learning many hymns, as well as popular fun songs. I aced the Air Drums, which was acceptable to my parents!

Similarly to my siblings, I had to participate in many household duties such as wash and dry dishes, keep my room tidy and dust it from time to time, set the table, fold laundry, help mow the lawn, rake grass and leaves, and shovel snow in the wintertime. Sometimes my Dad would even let me handle the snow blower, which made me feel quite proud.

Even before I was finished with my schooling, I started to work in a greenhouse where I would put plastic pots into plastic trays. Sometimes the boss would let me do other simple jobs as well.



Now after twenty years I'm still working there. I suppose that if this was a government job, I could look forward to a neat pension, but this will likely not be the case. I also volunteer at a local nursing home in the recycling department, and more recently at the Gleaners in Smithville, which I enjoy very much.

While I am quite content living at Anchor Home where I have had my own room since January 22, 2010, I am also tickled pink when my brother Mark's family comes to pick me up every

Wednesday afternoon for a visit and we play games, finish a puzzle, or watch a movie.

Every other Monday, my sister Kathy has me over to her house for a visit, but usually not without (shhhhhh) a pitstop at Tim Hortons. I have mastered Train Dominoes and do enjoy the occasional game of sjoelen while at her house.

Every other Sunday I'm always very happy to see my Dad, with whom I spend the day including going to church and spending some time at yet another brother and his family.

All in all, I am very blessed and thankful for the TLC I experience at Anchor Home.



Still Just Thinking: More Delightful Doodles and Deep Thoughts


by Jason Bouwman
(Grimsby, ON: Jason Bouwman Illustration, 2017).
188 pages. \$19.95 CDN.

Available at justthinkingbook.com

He's back! Two years after debuting *Just Thinking*, Jason Bouwman has recently published *Still Just Thinking* – a thoughtful follow-up indeed! The format is much the same: arresting word doodles that force us to stop and ponder their significance, together with rolling commentary. Whereas in the first book Bouwman was aiming to make us evaluate our common sayings to see whether they truly line up with Scripture, in this volume he is reaching more broadly, simply to get us thinking carefully on a variety of real-life subject matters. Some themes that resurface frequently are: our true identity, fighting our own ego, how to truly change our behaviour, church life and evangelism, and how we treat others.

All of these are worthwhile subjects to slow down over, to think about, and to discuss with family or friends. This time out Jason has not only included his own running analysis on the topics at hand, but he's also invited friends to "guest-write" a few pages – a neat touch! Whether the reader will agree with all the musings and reflections remains to be seen, but Bouwman will definitely

accomplish his goal of forcing the reader to take time out to contemplate a given issue. In this regard I think my favourite doodle was that of the cell phone with vertical bars drawn over-top the screen. The simple caption "Cell? Phone?" (p. 160/61) stopped me in my tracks and made me take a new look at the device so often in my hand.

As with the first book, this one too may be used as a devotional (suggested Bible texts appear on the bottom of key pages), a casual look, a coffee table book, or for a straight-through read. Teens and adults should appreciate it. I also think giving it to a non-Christian neighbour might be a way to open deeper conversations with them about the true meaning and purpose of life that the gospel makes clear for all people. Recommended as an aid for profitable pondering! 



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Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary held on September 5, 2019

Opening and roll call

The secretary of the Board, Rev. M. H. Van Luik, led in opening devotions. All governors were present with the exception of Rev. R. Schouten, who was absent with notice. Rev. C. VanderVelde and br. A. Datema were welcomed as new governors. Dr. Van Vliet was present as Principal and sr. L. Kuizenga was present as requested to take the minutes of the meeting. Three guests were also welcomed to the meeting; br. Bruce Huizinga was present representing the Australian Deputies for Training for the Ministry and Gerard and Cora Hagg were present representing the Deputies from South Africa.

Election or confirmation of officers

The new governors, Rev. C. VanderVelde and br. A. Datema, were welcomed, and the compliance documentation was signed. They had an orientation session prior to the board meeting. Rev. J. Louwerse was appointed Chairman of the Board of Governors, after election by secret ballot. Rev. J. Poppe was appointed as Vice-Chairman and Corresponding Secretary; Rev. M. H. Van Luik was reappointed as Recording Secretary, and brother C. Medemblik as Treasurer.

Memorabilia

Information was shared about the personal circumstances of emeriti professors, as well as widows and families of professors. Concerns and reasons for thankfulness were brought before the Lord in prayer.

Minutes and agenda

The minutes of the meeting held on January 17, 2019 were approved. The agenda for the meeting was established.

Decisions, reports, agenda items

1. The Board reviewed General Synod Edmonton decisions concerning CRTS. The Board noted with thankfulness the appointment of Dr. W. den Hollander as professor of New Testament. Arrangements have been made for his transition to CRTS. The Governance Committee was asked to look at the Acts of Synod, Art. 84, 2.15 about the appointment of the principal. The Board appointed an ad hoc committee to look into the appointment of new professors and the time needed for such a person to prepare for teaching, taking into consideration procedures and finances.
2. The Board received a "Metrics Report," which provides feedback allowing the Board to evaluate how well the Seminary is functioning, as well as a 2019 Church Survey Report. These reports were received with thankfulness, and they will be used especially in the upcoming strategic planning session.
3. Dr. Van Raalte reported on how prayer has been included in the student mentoring groups led by each professor, and how this was deemed very beneficial by the students and will be continued. He was thanked for his work and this initiative was considered to be completed.
4. A committee established to investigate the possibility of Distance Education reported on its work. The Board mandated the committee to work in consultation with the Senate to investigate what would be needed in terms of personnel and technology for various potential uses of distance education at CRTS.
5. A committee established to investigate a further emphasis on mission and church planting at CRTS reported to the Board. The Board sent the report to the Senate for feedback.
6. A letter was sent from the Board of CRTS to all the United Reformed Churches in Canada. Since some of these churches are sending men to study at CRTS, and are calling CRTS graduates, some of these churches were asking if they were required to make a lump-sum payment in support of CRTS if they called one of our graduates. The Board's letter explains how CRTS is supported by our churches, and that a lump-sum payment was not required. It requested the prayerful support of the URC churches, and welcomed any contributions these churches might want to give.
7. The Board decided to have another Strategic Planning Session on September 9, 2020. These sessions are normally held once every three years, and give the CRTS Board, faculty, staff, and students the opportunity to review the strengths and weaknesses of CRTS, and to make longer term plans for the Seminary.

8. The executive gave an oral report. It included a very positive review of the work of the principal, as well as noting other pertinent matters relating to the faculty.
9. Revs. J. Ludwig and M. H. Van Luik reported on lecture visits to CRTS on February 20 and March 26, as well as on visits with the four of the professors and lunch with the students.
10. The Finance and Property Committee provided some information on a "building audit" that was done to determine what kind of building maintenance and renovations will be required in the next ten years. They will report on this in further detail at the next Board meeting. A capital drive to cover these costs outside of the regular assessments to the churches is being planned. The audited financial statements of 2018 and the budget for 2020 were approved. Minutes of the Finance and Property Committee's meetings held in April and June were received for information. The Health and Safety Policy was approved by the Board.
11. Margaret Alkema was present for the next portion of the meeting as ATS Coordinator. CRTS belongs to the Association of Theological Schools, and in 2020 it will be visited by representative of ATS to determine whether or not it can maintain accreditation. Over the past year the Board of Governors, faculty, and staff have been engaged in an extensive self-study, examining CRTS according to the standards set by ATS. A draft of the Self Study Report was presented, along with a list of proposed recommendations of things that CRTS could improve on. The steering committee took input from the meeting to adjust the recommendations that will be submitted to ATS for their consideration. An ATS Institutional Peer Profile Report 2018-19 and an ATS Strategic Information Report 2018-19 were received for information.
12. Margaret Alkema was also present for the discussion of the Annual Report of the Assessment Coordinator, the Minutes from Assessment Day (May 14, 2019), and the Alumni Survey 2019. These reports were received with thankfulness.
13. The principal presented his principal's report, and it was received with thankfulness. It included an update on the commemorative volume celebrating the 50th anniversary of CRTS, which is printed and available for sale in time for the 2019 Convocation.
14. Our former Board chairman, Rev. R. Aasman, and our principal, Dr. J. Van Vliet, travelled to Australia in June 2019 for meetings with the Australian Deputies for Training for the Ministry. They presented a final copy of the report taken to Australia answering various questions the Australian deputies had about the possibility and feasibility of setting up their own seminary. They reported back on a round table discussion with the Australian deputies, which concluded that there is a need for close interaction in seminary training between our churches.
15. Dr. T. Van Raalte submitted a sabbatical report and the principal gave an evaluation of it. The Senate proposed and the Board approved moving forward with the tenure of Dr. Van Raalte.
16. The following annual reports were received with thankfulness: course work report, registrar's report, library report, website report, convocation committee report, Faber-Holwerda bursary report, publication foundation report, conference report, foreign student bursary report, and the lecture schedule for 2019-20.
17. Dr. J. Van Vliet reported on an Australian church tour, librarian M. Alkema and Drs. A. J. de Visser and T. Van Raalte on conference reports.

New business

1. Lecture visits were organized for semesters 1 and 2 of the 2019-20 school year.
2. The date of the next Board Meeting was set for January 16, 2020 at 10:00 am.

Press release and closing

The completion of the Press Release was delegated to the Vice-Chairman in consultation with the Executive and the Principal. Rev. J. Poppe closed the meeting with prayer.

On behalf of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary,

Rev. J. Poppe (Vice-chairman/Corresponding Clerk)

Regional Synod East, November 13, 2019

Rev. Peter Feenstra, minister of the convening church (Emmanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Guelph), opened the meeting of the delegates by requesting the singing of Psalm 87:1, 5, reading Acts 11:19-30, speaking some words on this passage, and offering a prayer.

After the delegates chose Rev. Peter Holtvliwer to function as chairman, Rev. John VanWoudenberg as vice-chairman, and Rev. Marc Jagt as clerk, Regional Synod East was declared constituted.

Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington/Water-down

appealed Article 11 of the Acts of Classis Central Ontario June 14, 2019. This article dealt with the practice of Redemption Canadian Reformed Church regarding the Good Friday service as it relates to Articles 53 and 55 of the Church Order. Regional Synod judged that Classis Central Ontario June 14, 2019 erred when it judged that Redemption church, by "inviting" members and visitors to a "commemorative service" (and not calling them to an official worship service) on Good Friday, fulfilled the obligations of Articles 52, 53 and 55 of the Church Order and the judgment of Classis on September 6-7, 2018, concerning this matter.

The following appointments were made:

Treasurer:

Br. Dave VanAmerongen.

Church to Review the books of the treasurer:

Covenant Canadian Reformed Church of Grassie.

Church to care for the archives:

Bethel Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto.

Church to inspect the archives:

The Canadian Reformed Church of Brampton.

Regarding deputies for Regional Synod, the following appointments were made:

Originating Classis	Deputy	Alternates	Classis in which to function as Deputy
Central Ontario	Rev. Clarence Vandervelde	1. Rev. Bill DeJong 2. Rev. Anthony Roukema	Northern Ontario Niagara
Northern Ontario	Rev. Eric Kampen	1. Rev. Marc Jagt 2. Rev. Douwe Agema	Central Ontario Ontario West
Niagara	Rev. Dick Wynia	1. Rev. Rolf DenHollander 2. Rev. Peter Holtvliwer	Central Ontario Ontario West
Ontario West	Rev. John Louwerse	1. Rev. Ken Kok 2. Rev. Arend Witten	Northern Ontario Niagara

Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington/Water-down also appealed Article 17 of Classis Central Ontario, September 13/October 10, 2019. This classis did not accept Burlington-Rehoboth's proposal to make a judgment against the developing practice in Hamilton-Blessings and Ottawa-Jubilee to allow ministers from non-sister churches to preach on their pulpit. Regional Synod sustained this appeal. The Canadian Reformed Church of Orangeville presented to Regional Synod a submission regarding a letter it wrote to Classis Central Ontario. In this letter Orangeville expressed some concerns it had regarding various practices in that classis that it considered as contrary to the adopted Church Order. Regional Synod judged the matter as not completed in the minor assemblies (Art. 30 CO).

The reports from the various deputies regarding the work done in the past year, particularly in connection with classical examinations, were read and received with thankfulness.

The treasurer of Regional Synod, Br. Dave VanAmerongen, as well as the church appointed to review the books of the treasurer (Covenant Canadian Reformed Church of Grassie), submitted reports. These were received with thankfulness. The proposal to assess the churches \$2.00 per communicant member was adopted.

Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church of Hamilton was appointed as the convening church for the next regional synod, to be held November 11, 2020, beginning at 9:00 AM.

Due to the lateness of the hour, the adoption of the Acts and the approval of the Press Release was delegated to the moderamen.

The chairman requested the singing of Psalm 147:1 and closed Synod with prayer.

John VanWoudenberg, vice-chairman e.t.

