

Clarion



Clarion

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Canada

What's Inside

Due to pandemic restrictions it has been almost half a year since congregations could worship normally together. Rev. Eric Kampen speaks of it as a spiritual drought. There has been some relief, in some areas more than others, as restrictions lift. But Rev. Kampen asks us to reflect: have we felt this drought, or are we letting our keeping of the Lord's Day slip?

In his article "Why Would a Christian Sing?" Rev. Clarence Bouwman asks why we sing? Does the Lord want us to sing and, if so, why? There is also a second article from Dr. Cornelis Van Dam on the Ten Commandments and our Sunday liturgy.

Our issue brings news on the institution of Devon Canadian Reformed Church. There is also a Treasures, New & Old meditation, the Ray of Sunshine column, You Asked, and a book review.

Laura Veenendaal

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Drought

In my lifetime, I have never lacked the necessities of physical life such as food, clothing, and shelter, either due to natural calamities or to war. I suspect that, except for those who lived through the last World War and those who experienced the hardships of immigration, this comfortable existence is shared by most of the readers of *Clarion*.

The various economic recessions that occur from time to time may bring inconvenience and financial hardships, but it is hard to compare that to the hunger and hardships suffered during times of war and by the many who live in areas devastated by drought and are close to dying because of famine. Whatever setbacks we may have experienced, they are nothing compared to such situations. We have enjoyed a prolonged period of peace, prosperity, stability, and freedom.

Yet, perhaps for the first time in our lives, we have experienced a period of drought. I'm not speaking of physical drought. Rather, I am speaking of spiritual drought. As you read this near the end of August, it will have been about five and a half months since we were able to gather for worship as whole congregations. While there is some relief from this drought as the authorities consider it safe to start meeting in larger groups, we are continuing to experience a worship drought.

Drought relief measures

Yes, we are experiencing worship drought with the restriction on the size of public gatherings. Thankfully, it is not because of persecution, singling out Christians. The same rules were applied to mosques, synagogues, stadiums, and arenas. We can still speak openly about the gospel.

When the drought hit full force, churches were quick at developing Church Emergency Response Banquets (CERB), with virtual services or virtual speeches by the ministers. Study groups used various meeting programs, like Zoom or Google Meet. Office bearers stayed in touch with members via texts and phone calls. All this, however, does not take away that there continues to be a worship drought, as congregations are prevented from gathering in worship as they were used to. At best, a small part of the congregation can be together.

The question to be asked, though, is whether we have felt this as a drought. Do we sense that virtual reality is exactly what it means, namely, almost, or nearly as described, but not the real thing?

Or, are we just taking it in stride, even enjoying the convenience of not having to go through all the effort and potential fuss and conflict in getting ready in time to go to worship, and the comfort of our favourite chair while we watch the livestream? Has the thought crossed our mind that we might be experiencing the heavy hand of our heavenly Father, who, paralyzing the world with fear because of a tiny virus, is perhaps also testing us as community with respect to our obedience to the fourth commandment?

Slipping in keeping the Lord's Day

I recognize that one must be careful about trying to read the mind of God in events. There is the reality, though, that the fourth commandment seems to be taken less seriously over time. One can point to the lower attendance at the afternoon worship service compared to the morning worship service. While ministers prepare their sermons thinking of the people entrusted to their care, do we as members keep in mind the minister will have been thinking of his flock when we decide Sunday is a good time to socialize with family and friends in another congregation, so missing the spiritual food prepared for us? Sermons are not generic but specific. Social distancing and size limitations will keep everyone from physically worshipping in another congregation, although virtual visits will continue to be easy.

We can add to this the holiday practices that have developed with increased prosperity. It is possible to travel far and wide and, on Sunday, tune in to a livestreamed service. That may have been very convenient at those times, but now the exception has become the rule, not voluntarily but by the circumstances. Does it feel different when it is taken away from us?

Thirsting for worship?

Earlier, it was asked if the worship drought was felt. Now the question is to be asked whether this drought bothers us? After all, it is possible that we feel the drought, but it doesn't bother us too much. Just like people on government CERB may not feel like going back to work, perhaps on spiritual CERB we don't feel like going back to our places of worship. This possibility is real, for our government may be working on phasing out the various support programs, but churches will continue to livestream. So, it is good to repeat the question as to whether the worship drought bothers us, whether there is a thirst for being able to worship God as before.


A fitting image

It is indeed proper to speak of thirst. It is proper not only because thirst goes together with drought, but also because this image is used in Scripture in connection with worship. We find it in Psalm 42, "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." The psalmist is not just referring to some sort of personal devotional time. He had that. His personal fellowship with God was not an issue. What he missed was communal fellowship and worship. For, he continues, "When shall I come and appear before God?" A little further, he recounts how he would go with the throng and lead them in the procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival. This psalm expresses the deep longing to be together with the people of God in the place of the ministry of reconciliation. That was the temple in OT times. In NT times, that happens in our worship services. The psalmist recognizes that personal communion has its place, but it pales in comparison with communion as community.

We have other psalms that express the longing to be in the presence of God amidst his people (Ps 27, 63, 84, 122). Psalm 63 also speaks of thirsting in a dry and weary place. God's people long for worship as much as a thirsty animal longs for refreshing water. Virtual worship doesn't quite cut it. It puts the glass of water before your eyes but, in the end, you can't really get it. All you can do is look at it, which should increase your thirst for the real experience.

Wake-up call

As was mentioned earlier, we can be thankful that God's Word can continue to be communicated at a time when we can't gather for worship as assembled congregations. At the same time, we should realize that he has taken away a privilege, allowing us at best a little taste of what real worship is all about. By taking it away, we are led to ask ourselves whether the drought really bothers us, whether we are thirsting to meet our God again together as his children, as he ordained it to be. Just like physical drought is a wake-up call to see the blessings of food and drink so easily taken for granted, so a spiritual drought is a wake-up call to see the blessing of worship, where we encounter our gracious God in a special way.

May our gracious God end this drought and show his favour to us again, so that as his people we can gather again to gladly adore him. 

Conversation Topics

"Therefore encourage one another with these words.... Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." (1 THESS 4:18, 5:11)

Imagine yourself in your living room or around your dinner table or fire pit. Maybe that is where you are already! Now add in your favourite company and conversation partners – friends, family or fellow believers. What are you talking about? What are you discussing? Work life? Family life? Church life? Politics? Sports? The weather?

There is an endless amount of topics available to you, ranging from what is empty, to mundane and ordinary, to what is eternally significant. The challenge for us as Christians is to find the right proportion. Assess yourself: how much do you converse with your spouse, or your closest friends, or your children concerning Jesus Christ and your relationship with him, and your joint determination to live for his glory? These should be topics that Christians talk about with one another without reservation. As Christ said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."


In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 Paul reminds the believers about Christ's second coming. He spoke of what will happen to believers who die before that event, as well as the need to be prepared. In light of this, he issues the commands he does in 4:18 and 5:11, namely, to "encourage one another" and "build one another up." To encourage means to comfort. To build up means to build a house, and the idea is that we should build up fellow believers.

What this means in general terms is that after another Christian spends time with you, the result should be a stronger Christian, an encouraged Christian, a built-up Christian. That's a worthy aim to pursue.

The question is: how do we do this? Certainly deeds of love and mercy play a part. Hello meal trains! But Paul mentions one specific way: encourage one another "with these words." So the task is to encourage and build one another up by using our words as they relate to the content Paul had just taught about the coming of Jesus Christ.

This is why Bible reading is so important for yourself and for your family. Where do you get things to talk about? It should not

come primarily from your pool of common interests, hobbies, concerns, or grievances, but from the Word! That is also what makes a Bible study or small-group meeting so peculiar when the Word is hardly opened or only minimally unpacked and discussed. Call it a therapy group then for a more accurate description. We need to be mining the Word in order for us to have material to talk about. We need to be in the Scriptures and filled with them so that we can encourage others profitably.

Christ's return provides much material for deep and impactful conversation. Just think: if you were about to embark on an exotic vacation with some friends and you meet together the week before, you would probably talk about it. That would be logical. If you are scheduled for an appointment to meet with the Prime Minister or the President, you would likely talk about that in advance. How about this: "We will always be with the Lord" (4:17) and we will "live with him" (5:10)? There is no greater destination or appointment than that! It makes sense therefore that these things would be on the forefront of our minds and woven into the fabric of our conversations. Else they be conspicuously absent. 

For further study

1. **Have you measured up to your calling in these verses? Is there anything you must repent of and reorder in your conversations with other people or online?**
2. **Consider some motivations to change: 1) Your words reveal what is in your heart. 2) God hears everything you say. 3) When you delight in something, no one has to tell you to talk about it.**



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Why Would a Christian Sing?

Recently Ontario's provincial government (the jurisdiction where I live) allowed the opening of centres of worship, including our church (be it to thirty percent of the seating capacity). After some twelve weeks of lockdown in an effort to contain the spread of the novel corona virus, we were certainly more than eager to return to church. That eagerness was clearly demonstrated in how we sang. It was good to lift up our voices together in praise of our Lord and Saviour!

A week later word came out that perhaps worshipers should not sing; singing, it was suggested, spreads the virus. I'm not qualified to weigh the arguments for and against singing in the context of COVID; thankfully the documentation from the Ministry of Health left the matter of singing in the freedom of local leaders. It meant that we in our congregation could keep singing – and we did, eagerly.

That little episode, however, does raise the interesting question: why do we sing to begin with? Just because we enjoy it? Or might it be that the Lord wants us to sing? If so, why?

Psalms

Perhaps you say: of course he does – and then appeal to various times the psalms tell us to “sing to the Lord a new song” (Ps 98:1; cf Ps 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 149:1). Isn't that clear enough?

Well, no, I don't think it is. Yes, the psalms are inspired – but the psalms are people speaking to people (as opposed to a direct command from the Lord as it came, for example, through Moses). So, we're back to the question: *why* does the psalmist tell his fellow Israelites to “sing to the Lord a new song”? By what authority can he give that instruction?

The question is so intriguing, simply because, in all the commands God gave to Moses concerning the building of the tabernacle, and the worship details the people were to follow in the tabernacle, *there is not a single reference to singing!* Yes, Miriam led the people of Israel in song after Pharaoh's army was drowned in the Red Sea (Exod 15), and Moses taught the people of Israel their “national anthem” just before he died (Deut 32), and the Book of Psalms even has a psalm written by Moses (Ps 90), but the worship God commanded surrounding the tabernacle in the desert was a completely *silent affair* in relation to music and singing. The people saw the sacrifices, they *heard* the words of priests and Levites (including their teaching and the blessing), but the Lord gave them no space to respond in song. That makes the instruction of one Israelite to another in Psalm 98 – to “sing to the Lord a new song” – so striking.

David

Singing first appears in Israel's worship in the days of King David. After he was securely enthroned in Jerusalem, he set up a tent in Jerusalem for the ark of God and organized a day when the ark would be carried into the city to its new resting place. The Levites “carried the ark of God on their shoulders,” according to the divine prescription. Meanwhile, other Levites were appointed “as the singers who should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy” (1 Chron 15:16). That raises the question: why did David appoint singers at this point in history? Or to put the question more sharply: why did the Lord God prompt David (1 Chron 28:19) to appoint singers now?

The ark

Through Moses the Lord had instructed Israel to build an ark, complete with a mercy seat. This ark functioned as the throne of God in the midst of his people. It was positioned in the back of the tabernacle, in the room known as the Holy of Holies. As the people were *en route* to the Promised Land, the Lord appointed the Levites to carry the ark as the people journeyed. In fact, during their travels, the Lord went before them – a reality made very visible by the Levites carrying the ark in front of the people (Num 10:33). So when Israel went to cross the Jordan, the Levitical priests entered the riverbed first – and immediately the waters of the river stood in a heap upstream so that the people could enter the Promised Land (Josh 3). The battle, after all, was the Lord's.

Once the people conquered the Promised Land and settled in it, the ark (with the tabernacle) was set up in Shiloh. But that did not last; in due time, Hophni and Phinehas, the two apostate sons of the high priest Eli, carried the ark to the battle to ensure victory against the Philistines. That effort, of course, did not work; the Philistines captured the ark. Eventually they sent it back to the land of Israel, where the people placed it in the house of Abinadab in Kiriath-Jearim. The tabernacle, meanwhile, was rescued from Shiloh and set up in Gibeon. Clearly, the ark had thus far not come to the end of its journey.

With David now securely on his throne – and so the people well and truly settled in their land – the time had come for the ark of the Lord – and hence the Lord himself – to be settled in the Promised Land. The place where the Lord had chosen to make his home (Deut 12) was Zion, that mountain peak in Jerusalem (Ps 132:13f). From now on, Levites would no longer need to carry the Lord's ark on their shoulders as it journeyed from place to place.

That's the setting in which David instructs the Levites to sing.

Why, then, should worship now include singing? With the ark coming to Jerusalem, there is *progress in redemptive history*; now, finally, Israel's true King is settled in his resting place, enthroned in Zion. The Levites should no longer carry the ark of God (and hence symbolically God himself) on their shoulders; they now may carry God in their songs of praise. And not just the Levites should bear the Lord on their praises, but all Israel should join in magnifying the Lord in their songs. As Psalm 22:3 has it: the Lord is "enthroned on the praises of Israel." That's why in the psalms the one Israelite enjoins the other to "sing to the Lord a new song!" God is enthroned in Jerusalem, King among


his people, never to be dislodged – and so it's right and proper for his people in worship to carry him aloft in songs of praise and so to magnify his greatness in their jubilation.

Jesus Christ

With the coming of Jesus Christ, God's presence among his people has been made even more secure. It's recorded that, as Jesus carried out his earthly ministry, he joined his disciples in singing (Mark 14:26) – and thereby lifting up God's holiness in song. Then he went to the cross, hardly the place for joyful song. But he arose from the grave, he ascended into heaven, and entered his final resting place as he took his seat at God's right hand. With Jesus thus enthroned, never to be dislodged, there is every reason for every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth to burst forth in worshipful song (Rev 5). Paul and Silas in prison understood that, and so, though their feet were securely fastened in the stocks, they sang heartily in the dead of night. The apostle also directed the saints of Ephesus to make it their business to address one another "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord" (Eph 5:19). Christ is exalted, he is infinitely worthy to be carried aloft on the praises of all creatures; let there be song in all the world – and especially in the midst of his redeemed!

Today

So, it's clear too: singing is so vital to being church! Christ Jesus has arrived, and he's enthroned, never to be displaced to another location. So, the church joins the creatures of heaven and of earth and heartily joins in songs of worship to carry aloft the glorious name of the King of kings.

And of course, Christians do not limit their singing to church. In the home, in the car, at work – always Christ is enthroned, he's arrived at his sovereign destination in the heavenly Zion; so we'll give voice to our jubilation in songs that bear up the name of Jesus Christ before all the world. 



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Should We Keep the Ten Commandments in Our Sunday Liturgy? (2 of 3)

In the first article we saw that the Decalogue was of great importance as a covenant document. With it, the Lord showed his people Israel both his great love and grace as well as his expectations as covenant nation. We now consider its usage in the early Christian church and in subsequent centuries.

Up to the Reformation

In view of the central importance of the Ten Commandments as a covenantal document, one would expect that since the Decalogue functioned liturgically in the Temple and synagogue, it would also do so in the Christian church. After all, one needs to realize, as Roger Beckwith put it, that “the centres of worship for Jewish Christians before AD 70 were the same as those for other Jews, namely, the Temple, the synagogue and the home.” Initially, “Jewish Christians attempted to maintain the ordinances of Judaism alongside their Christian counterparts.”¹ We can therefore expect Jewish liturgical practices such as the reading of the Decalogue to be part of their worship. Unfortunately, there is virtually no information available about Christian liturgy in the first century after Pentecost. One tantalizing piece of evidence however can be interpreted to suggest that the Decalogue was read in the worship service.

In a famous letter sent to Emperor Trajan early in the second century, Pliny the Younger noted that the Christians of Bythinia were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as

to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food – but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.²

To all appearances, this letter seems to describe an early Sunday morning church service that included singing and a binding themselves to God’s law, suggesting that the Decalogue was read, after which they celebrated the Lord’s Supper. Some scholars have therefore concluded that the Ten Commandments were included in early Christian liturgy. In any case, it is widely recognized that, apart from the Sunday liturgy, the Decalogue occupied a central place in the catechesis and teaching of the early church as can be expected seeing its place in the teachings of the Lord Jesus and the apostles as noted in the previous article.

A further justification for seeing an early Christian liturgical use of the Decalogue can be found in the fact that the Jews were very disturbed by the early church’s emphasis on the central importance of the Ten Commandments. Their being upset would especially be the case if the Christian liturgical use of the Ten Words was similar to that of the synagogue. Anyway, during the second century AD, Jews reacted to the Christian emphasis on the Decalogue by no longer reading the Ten Words in their daily synagogue worship. They held that every

¹Roger Beckwith, *Daily and Weekly Worship: Jewish to Christian* (Bramcote, Nottingham, UK: Grove Books, 1987), 21.

²Letter XCVI as found in Pliny, *Letters*, ed. T.E. Page, et al., trans. William Melmoth, The Loeb Classical Library (London; New York: William Heinemann; Macmillan, 1931), 2:404-5.

commandment of the Pentateuch had the same divine authority and to overestimate the significance of the Decalogue had to be avoided! Eventually the Decalogue again became part of the synagogue worship, but it is now only officially recited publicly three times a year. Yet the respect for the Decalogue is obvious. To this day Jews reverently rise to their feet when the Ten Words of the covenant are read, and the two tablets of the covenant inscribed with the Decalogue are prominently displayed in many a synagogue.

While the Ten Commandments continued to feature in the early church's catechetical instruction, their liturgical use appears to have ended for some unknown reason by the mid-second century, since Justin Martyr's 150 AD description of a Sunday worship service, the first one available, does not mention it. There is some evidence that they did function liturgically in the thirteenth century and beyond. With the development of private confession beginning in the seventh century, the place of the Decalogue became important and increasingly so as yearly auricular confession became obligatory. Many medieval confession manuals contained explanations of the Ten Commandments and by the fifteenth century such instruction was integrated into the teaching and preaching ministry of the church.

The time of the Reformation

An example of the use of the Decalogue within a church service prior to the Reformation is found in the work of Johann Ulrich Surgant (c. 1450-1503), a professor at the University of Basel, and parish pastor in that city under whose preaching the future reformer Huldrych Zwingli sat. In 1503, Surgant published *Manuale Curatorum*, a manual for parish priests to assist them in their preaching on the Lord's Day. His practice was to rehearse from the pulpit the text of Our Father, the Ave Maria, the Apostles' Creed, and the Decalogue. In addition, there was a general confession of sin. Surgant's work was influential. It went through several editions in Basel, Augsburg, Mainz, and Strasbourg. The labours of Johannes Geiler of Kaysersberg were also of great import in this regard.

Not surprisingly then, the Ten Commandments were introduced in the liturgy for Sunday's public worship in various places in Europe. It also found its place in the 1524 order of worship, as well as in subsequent liturgies, of Martin Bucer, who worked as a reformer in Strasbourg. Also in Geneva, where the reformer Farel laboured, the Decalogue had a place in his 1533 liturgy. It was in use when John Calvin arrived there in 1536.


Two years later, the Council of Geneva expelled Calvin who left for Strasbourg where he adapted Bucer's German liturgy for its use in his French congregation. Whereas Bucer had the law read followed by confession of sin and words of absolution, Calvin had the law sung after the confession of sin and the words of absolution had already been spoken. Thus, while Bucer read the law to convict the congregation of their sin, Calvin used it as a rule of gratitude for those whose sins have been forgiven. In Calvin's view, to show one's thankfulness to God appropriately in worship, the congregation should sing to the Lord. By singing the law, they were praising God for giving it and thanking him for showing the way of obedience to his will. It is a joyful duty for the redeemed in Christ to obey. The fact that the singing of each commandment was followed by

Although God's forgiven children want to obey, they only make a small beginning of the new obedience and constantly need God's forgiving mercy

the refrain "*Kyrie eleison*" ("Lord have mercy") was probably due to two factors. It was part of the old liturgical tradition that Calvin was replacing. Secondly, and more importantly, it was a reminder that although God's forgiven children want to obey, they only make a small beginning of the new obedience and constantly need God's forgiving mercy. Thus, Calvin acknowledged both functions of the law in his liturgy.

When Calvin was invited back to Geneva, his 1542 liturgy did not include the law and the assurance of pardon. The reason for this lack was the fact that the Genevans resisted church discipline as Calvin wanted it and any liturgical expression that alluded to such discipline was considered intolerable. And so, omitting the law in the liturgy was a compromise. However, Calvin's rhymed version of the Decalogue was included in the liturgical book of 1542, but without the *Kyrie eleison* refrain, and so it was probably used in the worship service.

Although Calvin was frustrated in his desire to include the Ten Commandments in the official liturgy of Geneva, his wish in this regard was honoured in churches elsewhere. For our purposes, the focus is on The Netherlands. Dutch theologian Peter Datheen introduced Calvin's liturgy, including the Decalogue (to be read or sung), to his Dutch refugee congregation in Frankenthal and so indirectly to his homeland in a 1566 publication of liturgical material. He placed the Ten Commandments in the morning service before the confession of sins. In the ensuing centuries, this liturgy was the dominant one and has basically endured up to the present time with churches who want to honor this heritage. The exception is the Presbyterian churches. Knox took the liturgy of Geneva which was without the reading of the law to Scotland and that fact has influenced subsequent Presbyterian generations not to include the Decalogue in the regular Sunday liturgy. There are, however, exceptions. The Ten Words also had a place in the Anglican liturgy.

Currently there is a tendency in Reformed churches to downplay the reading of the law or to drop it altogether. Why is it important to maintain this part of the Reformed heritage and keep the liturgical reading of the Ten Commandments? To answer that question, we need to consider why it has been part of worship for many centuries. There are two obvious uses of the Decalogue and then there is an underestimated use that needs to be recovered. 

More about this next time - to be continued.



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By Jason Klaver

Institution of the Devon Canadian Reformed Church

With thankfulness to the Lord, we rejoice that on July 5, 2020 the Devon Canadian Reformed Church was instituted with the installation of two deacons and four elders. Devon, Alberta is a town with a population just over 6,500 and is located south west of Edmonton. Spurred by the growth of the Immanuel Canadian Reformed church in Edmonton, members of the congregation started discussing the idea of starting a new church. From the original efforts of a small group that proposed targeting the area south west of the existing church, to the steering committee that put the focus


on Devon, and all the meetings held along the way, it was the efforts of many people that brought the final proposal together.

Arrangements were originally made for the institution to take place on March 15, but due to COVID-19 related restrictions this event was postponed until larger gatherings were permitted. With the members who were leaving to become the Devon congregation in attendance, and the rest of the Immanuel congregation attending via livestream, the service was held in the building of the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church and led by Rev. Julius VanSpronsen. The message

of the sermon was based on Acts 14:21-23 with the theme, "Committed to the Lord, Christ's church will continue in faith." The congregation was urged to go forward with the message of salvation, sharing our faith with the community where we live. As we continue to receive the faithful preaching and share in the communion of saints, we will be encouraged and strengthened through the work of the Holy Spirit. This is to be done with the supervision and care of the office bearers who watch over the congregation.

After the service letters of congratulations from the neighbouring churches of Providence, Neerlandia, Barrhead, and St. Albert were read. Some words of parting from the Immanuel congregation and on behalf of Classis were expressed by Rev. VanSpronsen. Martin Bredenhof, elder of the Devon consistory, spoke on behalf of the Devon congregation. A casual gathering of those in attendance was held outside after the service, again due to COVID-19 related restrictions.

The afternoon service of the Devon congregation was led by student Bryan Vanderhorst with a message from the text of 1 Samuel 10:17-27. Under the theme "The Lord strengthens his servant Saul for Kingdom work," we were reminded of how the Lord had used his strength to sustain Israel when it had no King and how the Lord is sustaining us today. We saw how Saul needed the Lord's strength for his daunting task and how we also are strengthened by the Lord for our tasks. We heard how Saul proceeded to take on his task in the strength of the Lord and we like Saul can trust the outcome of our challenges to his sovereign will.

It is our hope to eventually have our own building in or near the town of Devon, but in the interim the Immanuel congregation has agreed to share their building with alternating service times. The Devon Canadian Reformed Church will be worshipping in the Immanuel Canadian Reformed church building with services at 9:00am and 1:00pm. 



September Birthdays

6 Katie Deboer will be **20**

34756 7 Ave

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8 Marsha Moesker will be **43**

c/o Lighthouse

6528 1st Line RR 3

Fergus, ON N1M 2W4

14 Jerry Bontekoe will be **56**

c/o Anchor Home

361 Thirty Road RR 2

Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2

15 Cindy Blokker will be **31**

984 Farnham Rd

London, ON N6K 1S1

22 Nick Prinzen will be **48**

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653 Broad Street West

Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

25 Dave Vanveen will be **50**

c/o Lighthouse

6528 1st Line RR 3

Fergus, ON N1M 2W4

29 Paul Dieleman will be **51**

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653 Broad Street West

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Paul Dieleman



Good morning everyone, I am Paul Dieleman and I will be turning fifty-one this year! I am the fifth of eight children and I grew up in Toronto. I have been living at the Beacon Home for fifteen years already and I love it.

I keep busy with diamond painting and writing short stories. I also like doing games, especially Monopoly Deal, Wizard, UNO, and Skip Bo. I also play the piano and violin in my free time. I work at Rosa Flora, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic I have been off since the middle of March.

I like visiting my family members. One of my favourite vacations is to go to Disney World - I have gone twice, with last year being the last time to celebrate my fiftieth birthday.

I enjoy getting all your birthday cards through the Ray of Sunshine over the years! So, keep it up, it is very much appreciated by the recipients.

We have been very blessed by our new addition last fall here at the Beacon Home, which was well used during this time of isolation. We just celebrated Anchor Camp COVID-style at home, and while it was different, we still had a great time! We pray that next year we can celebrate the fortieth year of Anchor Camp at Campfire.

Thank you to the Board for all their effort of running the Anchor Association!

Happy Birthday to all of you celebrating a birthday in September! We wish all the Lord's blessing in the year ahead, a blessed birthday celebrating with your loved ones. "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

The Position of Women in the Congregation


We don't have women in leadership positions in the church (elder, deacon, minister), but what would be the biblical view for having women lead Bible study discussions?

This question most likely has its place within the wider context of the position of the sisters in the midst of the congregation or in their involvement in God's church and kingdom. The questioner clearly excludes the matter of women in leadership positions, which does not mean that it is clear what else our sisters can do in the midst of the New Testament congregation. Speaking of the NT congregation, the day of Pentecost would be a good place to start: "When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were *all* together in one place," Acts 2:1, "and they were *all* filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (v. 4). Then we may assume that the women were among them, as Peter also implies when he explains the event with a reference to Joel 2:28-32, "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your *daughters* shall prophesy ... even on my male servants

and *female servants* in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy."

In our Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 12, we also confess that *all* true Christians share in the anointing of the Holy Spirit to be prophets, priests, and kings. Indeed, in the book of Acts we read about the four unmarried *daughters* of Philip who *prophesied* (Acts 21:9). This ability to prophesy, as Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians 14:4, serves to build up the church, while he also instructs the *sisters* who *pray* and *prophesy* in the congregation regarding a specific point (1 Cor 11:5). Indeed, with regard to the position of the sisters in the congregation, the anointing with the Holy Spirit makes them prophetesses as one of the aspects in which they are equal to the men (Gal 3:28). They belong to Christ the King and share in the full inheritance of the grace of life (1 Pet 3:7) and may be involved as fellow-workers in Christ Jesus (Rom 16:1, 3).

Hence, the book of Acts and the epistles of Paul to the congregations give us quite a few names of sisters in the Lord who have been active participants in the spreading of the gospel. Paul acknowledges for instance that Euodia and Syntyche laboured side by side with him in the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of his fellow workers (Phil 4:2, 3). They were not the only ones, as we can see in the long list of greetings at the end of Paul's epistle to the Romans, among which are a variety of names of men *and* women. There Paul mentions Prisca and Aquila, for instance, who risked their life for Paul. In Acts 18 we read about them that they instructed Apollos, who only knew about the baptism of John. It's striking that in both references to them Paul mentions Prisca first. She, especially, must have been very active in the congregation and as fellow worker of Paul. The same may be said about Tryphaena and Tryphosa and Persis (Rom 16:12). Finally, Paul mentions Phoebe, whom he also characterizes as a servant of the church at Cenchreae.

Of course, from this list of examples and references we cannot answer the question *per se* about women leading Bible study discussions. However, these Scriptures do show that beside the leadership position of the men in the congregation, the sisters also have ample opportunity to work side by side, shoulder by shoulder, with the men in the upbuilding of the church and in the service of the kingdom of God! The sisters as well are moved and motivated by the Holy Spirit to share the will of God in the midst of the congregation, using their spiritual gifts and talents (including leadership abilities) to prophesy, profess, and study God's Word (HC, LD 21, Q/A 55). 



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ASK A QUESTION

Is there something you've been wanting to know?
An answer you've been looking for? Send us your
most thought provoking questions to explore
in our **You Asked** column.

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Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms

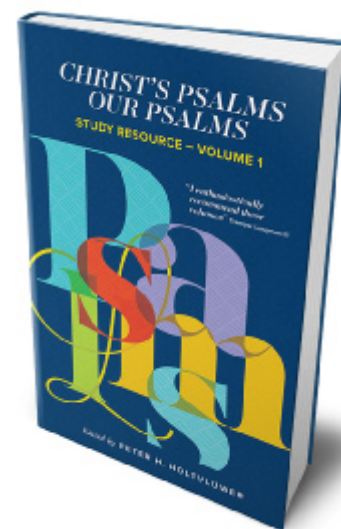
Study Resource

Having whetted our appetite with a book of meditations on the Psalms, the contributors to *Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms – Devotional* now present us with the main course! It is a well-balanced, well-prepared, and highly nutritious meal! I am referring to *Christ's Psalms Our Psalms – Study Resource*, a four-volume commentary on the Psalms by sixteen contributors with Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer as editor, published by Reformed Perspective Press. It is wonderful that these four volumes could be completed two years after the Devotional was published.

The title indicates the aim of this work, to draw lines from the Psalms to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be an easily accessible resource for studying the Psalms. To quote from the Preface: "Especially for those who lead, teach, or preach, we believe the *Study Resource* will prove to be a handy and effective go-to aid in preparing their work." An ambitious goal!

Overview

To enjoy the benefit of the Study Resource, the user has to delve into the Introduction. It contains a wealth of background information that will prove beneficial for savouring the many and various flavours and textures of the Psalms. It gives an in-depth explanation why the approach was taken to draw connections with Christ and his work. The clear explanation of the template used for explaining each psalm is very helpful. Each template is made up of sixteen key items (e.g. *Author and Purpose*, *Poetic Elements*, *Key Words*, *OT and NT Links*, *Application*, and *Questions for Further Study*). This way the



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Edited by **Peter Holtvlüwer**

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Throughout her history, the church has realized that the Psalms are an important aspect of our prayers. Not only do we sing the Psalms, we also have to learn to pray them, for in praying a psalm we make the psalm our own.

user who wants to focus on one aspect or who wants to look across several psalms for a specific item can easily do so. The Introduction also contains information on the book of Psalms in general, e.g. the history and composition of it, technical terms used in it, etc.

The main part of these four volumes is made up of a thorough explanation of each psalm. Sixteen contributors were involved in this and they follow the template explained in the Introduction. At the end of Volume Four you will find several helpful resources. There is a glossary of key words (and by the way, these key words were already identified in the commentary itself by boldface!), a glossary of poetic terms (indicated in the commentary by bolded asterisks), a bibliography, a select Scripture index, a confessional index, and a select subject index.

As the first part of the title *Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms* indicates, the specific focus of this commentary is to explain the Psalms not just in their own setting but also as they point to Christ. This Christological approach deepens our understanding of the Psalms and helps us in applying them to our lives. The second part of the title indicates that this commentary is also meant as a resource for further study. The goal was not to present a finished scholarly commentary, but rather to engage the reader by in-depth explanation in ongoing study of the Psalms. It is an invitation and encouragement to work with the Psalms for our own spiritual benefit.

The goal

The goal of this *Study Resource* is to be a handy and effective go-to aid for those who lead, teach, and preach. I will briefly review the various parts of this work to see if it lives up to this claim. The Introduction is very clear and helpful. The information offered certainly helps leaders, teachers, and preachers. The focus on Christ and his work is important and refreshing, not only for studying the Psalms but also when it comes to others parts of the Old Testament. At the same time, it is also good to see that each psalm is explained within its own context. I appreciate this balance for it cautions us against superficial or artificial connections. The believers in the OT who sang

these psalms expressed their joys and sorrows, and longed for redemption and renewal, within their own context. We are united and sing with them through the ongoing work of God in his Son. The background information about the Psalms is very helpful. The authors' approach to the division of the Psalter in five books is interesting, but in my view not convincing. Compared with other study sources on the Psalms I noticed that there are quite a few different ways in which these five books can be characterized.

The main part of this *Study Resource* is of course the explanation of the 150 Psalms. Even though quite a few contributors have been involved, there is a wonderful balance between keeping an overall consistency in dealing with each psalm and yet allowing each contributor to approach the psalm in his own way. The consistent use of the template certainly contributes to this. It gives cohesion to the work but at the same time allows some freedom to the contributors. The various items that make up the template are helpful as well. It is user-friendly and a helpful way of delving into the Psalms. Of course, the list of items is not meant to be complete. I look at these items as an invitation or encouragement to further study. In light of this I find it regrettable that when it comes to Scriptural Themes the expression "Nothing noteworthy" is used if in the judgment of the contributor the given theme is not touched on significantly in that psalm (Vol. 1, p. 11). It does not invite further study and reflection.

The glossaries, bibliography, and indices at the end of the work are very important and helpful tools to explore the riches of the Psalms. To connect the glossaries with the explanation of each psalm by means of boldface and bolded asterisks is really beneficial. The Scripture Index is helpful but also overwhelming because it includes many direct references.

A helpful aid

These few critical comments do not take away my overall conclusion that *Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms - Study Resource* is a very helpful aid to help those who lead, teach or preach. It is a wonderful tool to explore the riches of the Psalms. The Psalms are so vital to our lives of faith. We sing them in church, at home

and in school. How often in trying circumstances don't we go to the Psalms? When we want to express our joy, we reach to the songs God himself gave to praise him. They address so many situations we face and emotions we need to express. Studying the Psalms is an indispensable part of using them. This resource is very helpful for personal study, but also for group study. Its consistency and accessibility are important factors that contribute to its usefulness. It is easy to have a closer look at a particular psalm, or a selection of psalms. It is also easy to look for a cross section of psalms on a certain topic.

Throughout her history, the church has realized that the Psalms are an important aspect of our prayers. Not only do we sing the Psalms, we also have to learn to pray them, for in praying a psalm we make the psalm our own. This is important for our personal prayers, but also for congregational prayers. The *Study Resource* helps in this regard by leading us to the riches of the Psalms, but more attention to this aspect in the questions at the end of each chapter would be beneficial. This is why it is important to keep the *Devotional* with this *Study Resource*!

Another aim of this *Study Resource* is to equip teachers in school and parents at home to teach the Psalms to a new

generation. This is a wonderful aim and consistent with the history of the Reformed churches. Already in 1568, at their gathering in Wesel, the churches stressed the need to teach the children the Psalms. This *Study Resource* certainly gives a lot of information that will benefit those who teach. It is a wonderful resource to explain, for example, the poetic terms, show the set-up of a psalm, or some of its literary beauty such as contrasts, metaphors. Having said this, I do wish that this teaching aspect had received more attention in giving teachers practical hints as to how to explain a psalm or how to connect it to their teaching. Perhaps it could be a separate item, as part of the template?

The goal was ambitious, and it is wonderful to see the result, an accessible and at the same time in-depth study resource. The contributors and editor are to be complimented for achieving this in a rather short time. Having whetted our appetite, we are now presented the main course. This review is an invitation to a nutritious and well-balanced meal. Highly recommended! Bon appetite! May the Lord indeed use this *Study Resource* to help his people sing the beginning of the eternal song of praise. 