

Clarion



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What's Inside

As our churches enter the "home visit season," Issue 21 is led with an article by Rev. Peter Holtvliuwer. He discusses the typical home visit and how home visits could perhaps be revised and improved.

Most of our issue focusses on the forty-sixth convocation of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS). There is a report from the Chairman of the Board of Governors, Rev. John Louwerse and an update from the Principal, Dr. Jason Van Vliet. Congratulations to Kelvin Dekker, Aidan Plug, and Daniel Shin for receiving the degree of Master of Divinity, to Tony Zheng for his Bachelor of Theology, and to Vincent Deng for the Diploma of Theological Studies!

Friday, September 11, 2020 was also a special evening for another reason. CRTS was blessed with the installation of their newest faculty member, Dr. William den Hollander. We have included an introduction for our readers to the Professor of New Testament at CRTS. Now, this means also that a retirement was celebrated: we wish Dr. Gerhard Visscher congratulations on his retirement. We hope to publish his final chapel message in an upcoming issue; for this issue, *Clarion* includes Dr. Visscher's keynote speech from Convocation, "Grace and Peace."

Laura Veenendaal

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Improving Home Visits

It is October, and, as “home visit season” ramps up, my thoughts turn to how home visits are being conducted and whether our methods serve well to accomplish the purpose of the visit. I believe that elders visiting members in their homes is biblically based and has for long stretches of church history been implemented to the good of the church. However, are they today as effective as they could be? In Reformed churches of Dutch descent, we have our customs in the way such visits are conducted; but are these truly “best practices”?

A typical home visit

What exactly are our customs? Most homes see the elders once per year in the annual home visit. Elders duly prepare themselves for this visit by studying a passage of Scripture and praying for the family. Many godly and sincere elders have thus entered numerous homes with every intent to build up and bless. And no doubt the Lord has used their efforts to bless his people (including me and my family); yet I can’t help feeling that, despite the best of intentions, something is off kilter with our practice.

A typical home visit goes something like this: two elders enter the home and are invited to sit with the family. Small talk follows for a few minutes. Then one elder clears his throat to “open” the home visit with prayer and Bible reading. An air of formality fills the room and the family falls quiet. The passage chosen could be out of the blue or, as is often the case, the Bible reading is connected to the “home visit theme” adopted by the consistory and perhaps preached on by the minister. That theme could be centred on one of the ten commandments, a petition of the Lord’s prayer, worship, Christian lifestyle, living membership in the church, or the like. The lead elder then begins to expound on this theme out of the Bible passage and starts directing questions to the children and parents about either the passage’s meaning or how it might apply to that person’s life. The bulk of the visit is spent conversing about this Bible passage (and/or chosen theme) and how the family works out this biblical teaching in practice. Toward the end of the visit, the elders may or may not ask more general questions of the kids and parents, but time-wise the thrust of the visit is spent explaining and applying the teaching of a particular Bible passage to that household.

While discussing a Bible passage can certainly be beneficial, I ask myself: is this the purpose of a home visit? For elders to enter and teach? To the family it can feel like they’re being tested on their knowledge on the Bible passage in question. When a theme is chosen, members and families are often asked to read the passage in advance and “prepare for the home visit.” Again I ask: is this the intention of a home visit? To have a mini Bible-study on a passage and ascertain how well parents and children understand and apply that particular passage (or theme) in their lives? And if a passage is “sprung” on the family and questions are asked of them, it can be a very intimidating experience for children and parents alike. It seems to me that we are missing something significant in this approach to home visits.

The purpose of home visits

As churches and as elders, we have made a promise to make home visits. That promise, captured in Article 22 of the Church Order, summarizes the purpose of such visits as well: “The

specific duties of the office of elder are ... to faithfully visit the members of the congregation in their homes to comfort, instruct, and admonish them with the Word of God.” There are three verbs here: comfort, instruct, and admonish. From

the above description, it would seem that elders have the second verb in the forefront of their mind and so they come prepared to instruct. In itself, this is commendable. Scripture tells us that elders should be “able to teach” and should indeed “be able to give instruction in sound doctrine” (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9). And no doubt many families have learned and benefitted from what elders have taught. But should that teaching be “out of the blue” or with little understanding of the particular circumstances and needs of the family (or individual)?

That’s where I think the way we conduct our home visits has gotten out of focus and become imbalanced. Elders enter the home focussed on conveying a scriptural message, intent on teaching and applying the doctrine of the passage they’ve been intensely studying on their own, *without having first listened carefully to what’s going on in the home*. While gentle admonitions and words of correction might come out of the teaching passage, almost forgotten by the elders on a home visit is the duty to “comfort.” That shows that something is out of whack. There’s been a largely one-way period of instruction on a pre-chosen topic instead of a careful application of God’s Word to the specific circumstances of the family.

All of this, I’ve observed, often creates an unintended disconnect. After an hour dialogue with the family about the passage, where the kids and adults could gamely answer questions and make comments, the elders come away with a favourable impression. In the car they comment to each other: “That went well, don’t you think?” But meanwhile, in the home, the kids feel as if they’ve been in school for an hour and the parents feel frustrated that the elders didn’t inquire more personally into each family member’s walk with the Lord. The elders may have a good feeling that the family is on a solid footing in the faith, but the family feels like the elders hardly know them and don’t “get” them. Maybe the worst of it is that those visited fail to see how God’s Word speaks into the concrete reality of their day-to-day lives. We need to fix this.

While discussing a Bible passage can certainly be beneficial, I ask myself: is this the purpose of a home visit?

Listening

Here is where the art of listening and seeking to understand needs to find a fresh place in our thinking as elders. Though the Church Order does not mention the need to “listen,” it is clearly implied in the duty to “comfort, instruct, and admonish.” How can elders comfort a member or a family if they don’t first know what difficulty or misery they may be experiencing? Of course, every person as a sinner experiences the general misery of sin and its consequences, but almost always individuals or families are feeling the effects of sin in very particular ways. They have their own troubles and for the elders to bring comfort to that household they must first take the time to ask about and understand those troubles.

It is the same with admonitions. To admonish is to gently give reproof or words of correction to someone who’s acting, thinking, or speaking in an unbiblical way. How can elders correct a member unless they know if, how, and where he is going astray? In a conversation on a single Bible passage or theme, a certain limited area needing correction may come out, but there is so much to life and so many possible areas needing correction that a wide-ranging conversation (more than one even!) is needed before meaningful admonition can be brought. If the Bible passage is too much in the spotlight of the annual home visit, much of the family’s personal views and practices may remain in the shadows, unseen by the elders. Elders need to bring those out of the shadows by asking good questions in order to get a clear picture of a person and/or a family. Of course, it’s not to be an interrogation, like with police officers, but it ought to be a caring inquiry like that of a concerned father, who truly wants to help his son to stay on or find his way back to the pathway of life.

Teaching or instructing by elders in the home, too, is meant to come on the heels of listening. Certainly, members are instructed (and admonished and comforted) in a general way from the pulpit by the preaching of the Word. Although the Holy Spirit definitely applies the preaching to individual lives in personal (and often surprising!) ways, the minister can’t single out a particular family or individual and their needs from the pulpit. But elders can when they enter someone’s home. That’s one of the privileges elders have, to bring God’s Word into the

specific, individual lives of the members they visit. That means they must come to know these sheep very well, up close and personal, so they can skillfully apply God’s Word to the particular needs of the household.

His Word is living
and powerful.
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to those who
belong to him.

It seems to me that too often elders are replicating what the minister does from the pulpit: they enter the home and the first thing they do is give a mini “sermon” on a passage with some pointed questions to the family. That’s like prescribing a certain medicine for a person without knowing the extent of his ailment or his overall condition. Wouldn’t it be far better if elders first took time to listen to all that’s going on in the lives of the parents and children and *then* came with the instruction, encouragement, comfort, and admonition of God’s Word? Wouldn’t

that be establishing a genuine pastoral connection between elders and members that would be profitable for members and under-shepherds alike, upbuilding for the church, and glorifying to the Lord?

A revised approach

To bring this about, I would suggest two things. First, that elders make it a point to get to know the individuals and families in their ward as soon as possible after they are appointed to office. One home visit per year is hardly sufficient to get acquainted beyond the surface of things. Elders normally come into office in the spring. Home visits start in the fall. Why not use the summer months to drop in for a more casual acquaintance visit? Consider hosting a social for those under your direct care. You might think: that’s a lot of extra work! Yes, it is. But it’s the Lord’s work, and it’s good and beneficial. Besides, it doesn’t have to be a huge burden. Elders generally oversee a ward in pairs, so the two partners could divide the ward in halves with each taking responsibility to getting to know one half over the summer months. A casual visit to become acquainted plus regular chats in the church parking lot will do a lot to establish both a bond and a base level of understanding of the person/family. That will set up the home visit to be a time of deeper connection and thus more genuinely helpful for the household.

The second thing I would suggest is that elders re-order the flow of a home visit and change the focus of the visit. Instead

of the customary: *prayer* → *Bible reading* → *instruction* → *conversation/listening* → *prayer which focusses on teaching a pre-conceived lesson*, why not try: *prayer* → *listening/conversation* → *Bible reading* → *instruction/application* → *prayer which focusses on understanding the family's needs in order to aptly apply God's Word to their situation*. Remember that neither Scripture nor the confessions nor the Church Order prescribe the order or manner of home visits. It is left to us to apply the principle of God's Word (i.e. shepherds caring for the sheep) to the situation.


As far as I can see, it would be a great improvement to the effectiveness of home visits if elders began with a brief prayer for the Lord to bless the visit with openness, honesty, a willingness to share what's in the heart along with a good understanding for the elders and the ability to bring God's Word beneficially for the family. Indeed, this is something those visited should pray for in advance as well - the ability to be vulnerable with the elders and for the elders to give wise counsel from the Word of God. The next and larger part of the visit would be spent inquiring about the family's daily life and their walk with the Lord, listening carefully to their struggles and joys, to what really lives in their hearts and home. Equipped with an understanding of where the person/family is really at, the elders could then open God's Word to apply its teaching directly to their realities. The concluding prayer can then bring to the Lord the details of thanksgiving/praise and needs that were raised in the visit (drawing in also what came out of the Scripture passage). In this way the individual/family will experience that Christ's appointed shepherds have understood them well, genuinely care for them, and are using God's Word to help them grow closer to the Lord. In this way Scripture (and prayer) can more truly and fully be used to comfort, instruct, and admonish members for their good and the glory of God's Name.

Too difficult?

At this point an elder might say: but I can't think that fast on my feet! Every household is different. How am I supposed to have a Bible passage that I can quickly pull out that will speak to the particulars of a given family? I realize this may sound daunting,

but it's not as bad as it seems. Even if an elder only prepared one text thoroughly in advance, he would be better able to apply it meaningfully to the people *after* hearing what lives in their home than if he read it before all of that was discussed.

However, many elders already have the habit of selecting two or three passages to use at home visits throughout the season. They study them so they know them well enough to use as needed. This allows both variety and flexibility to use a certain passage in a home where they have an inkling it will better fit than another passage. Elders can simply build on this approach. Even if a home visit theme is selected by consistory (and I'm not sold on the idea that this is the best way to go), experienced elders know that they need to be flexible and that the theme just doesn't work in some situations. I don't think it's too much of a stretch if an elder would work in advance to be very familiar with five distinct passages, each with its own accent. One passage could highlight the comfort we have in Christ as forgiven sinners; another the ability that Christ works in us to lead holy lives and his calling to do so; another could be the glorious future the Lord is preparing for us; still another could be a reflection on the love, power, and grace of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit); a fifth could deal with our task as living members of the church. After listening and grasping the nature of a person's (or family's) situation, the elder could mentally select one of his five passages, read it, and go to work applying its message to them specifically.

Elders should not feel intimidated by this, as if selecting a text to match the needs of the visit is beyond their capability. Not so. I have always found it amazing how so many Bible passages can be applied in a variety of circumstances and do good to God's people. His Word is living and powerful. It always has something to say to those who belong to him. When elders, prayerfully relying on the Spirit of Christ, seek to bring his Word to meet the needs of his people, they will be blessed in doing so. The voice of the Good Shepherd will be heard by the sheep and they will be fed and led by him to continue walking in his way. In this way, the home visit may be revitalized and experienced by all as a blessing from the Lord. 

Mature in Christ

"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me." (Colossians 1:28-29)

What is maturity? I suppose it depends on what type of maturity a person is referring to. We are familiar with physical maturity, sexual maturity, mental maturity, and even emotional maturity. Often it is assumed that maturing is the norm. Give it time and a person will mature. The absence of maturing is seen as contrary to nature. Such a person might hear a, "Oh, grow up!" as if all the necessary ingredients of maturity are found within a person.


In Colossians 1:28-29 I want to highlight two truths. First, the Christian must mature in Christ, and, secondly, this maturing does not happen naturally.

By using the word "mature," the ESV makes clear that Paul's focus is on the present experience of the Colossians. They are confused about the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ for their doctrine and maturing life. The word "mature" appropriately captures a person's present-day spiritual growth. Spiritual maturing is very simply Christlikeness – the maturing of Christ in you (Col 1:27). Paul captures a maturing life in his opening prayer. He prays that they might know God's will for every circumstance, walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, pleasing him, bearing fruit, increasing in knowledge, standing strong and stable, with endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks (Col 1:9-14). In whatever changing circumstance, from poverty, prosperity, pandemic, or persecution, a believer lives (thinking, speaking, and acting) a God-glorifying life.

Unlike physical and sexual maturation, this spiritual maturity does not happen naturally. In ourselves, we do not have the necessary ingredients to bake the cake of Christlike maturity. Just telling someone to "grow up!" will not work. As breath must fill a balloon, God must act to make us mature. And he does!

Paul and his fellow workers proclaim Christ. They warn and teach everyone with all wisdom from the Word of Christ. This toil translates into toil among believers for greater maturity (Col 3:12-17). In and through it all, the Spirit of Christ knits believers together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and knowledge of Christ (Col 2:2). So where does maturation happen? In the Body of Christ, the Church of Jesus Christ.

Most young teenagers want to grow up. They want to be mature and be treated as mature. Often they think they are more mature than they really are. As Christians, we often have the same experience. We want to be seen as perfect Christians, mature in every way. We get annoyed when someone suggests we are acting or thinking immaturely. We forget our destiny: to be like Christ. We forget we are not yet like him. We forget we need to still grow up in Christ. We forget that maturing is a present-day, life-long process. We forget that God is powerfully at work in the Body of Christ under the leadership of the servants of Christ. We forget our predetermined destiny. We forget and ignorantly rest in our immaturity before our predetermined destiny is realized. Let us not forget.

On October 31 we are again reminded of the Reformation of the 1500s. The Reformation restored the centrality of God's sovereign grace that not only calls us according to his purpose, but also predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom 8:28). God's grace in Christ saves and God's grace sanctifies. The Reformation called pastors and elders to a new embrace of toiling with divine energy for the maturation of believers. The Reformation called believers to an eager embrace of the promises of God's grace that one day will result in their destiny fulfilled – to be presented perfect in Christ. 

For further study

1. **Part of maturation is a growth in wisdom. Do you have and seek after true wisdom (James 3:13-18)? Do you know where to find true wisdom? Read Proverbs 3:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 and reflect on the relationship between maturing in Christ and a growth in wise living.**
2. **Read through Ephesians 4:11-16. What do you see happening when the Body of Christ is built up (v. 14-16)?**



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Report of the 51st Anniversary Meeting and 46th Convocation of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, September 11, 2020

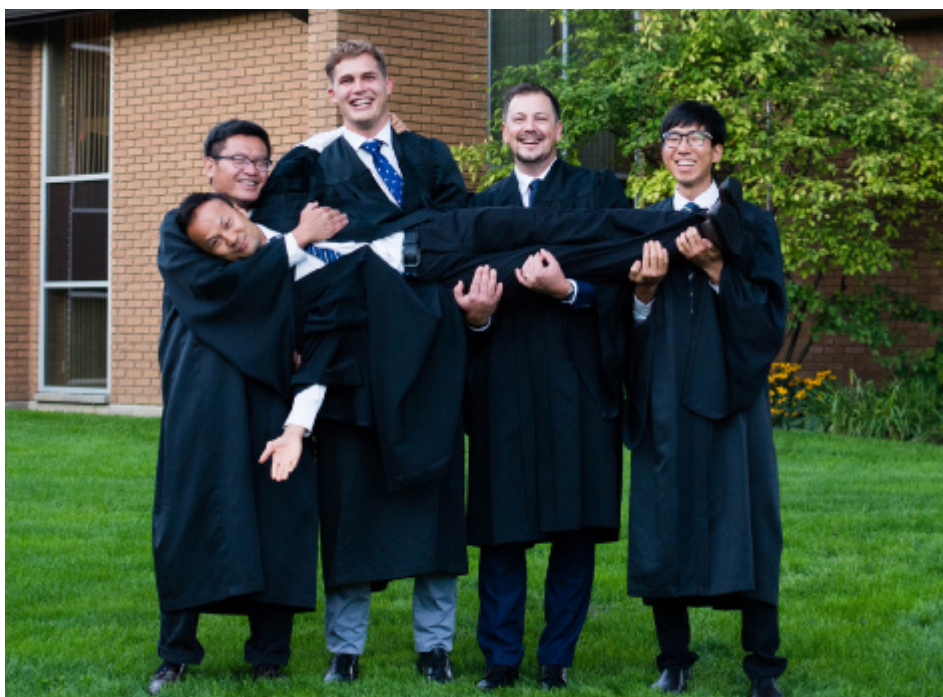
The 2020 anniversary meeting and convocation of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) will be remembered as a unique yet joyous occasion. The restrictions brought on by COVID-19 prevented this gathering from happening at its usual venue, Redeemer College in Ancaster, and from having its usual large number of brothers and sisters in attendance. This year the venue was Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church in Hamilton and in-person attendance was restricted to fifty people. Yet, thanks to God's good gift of modern technology, many brothers and sisters from around the country and the world could join the gathering by means of livestream.

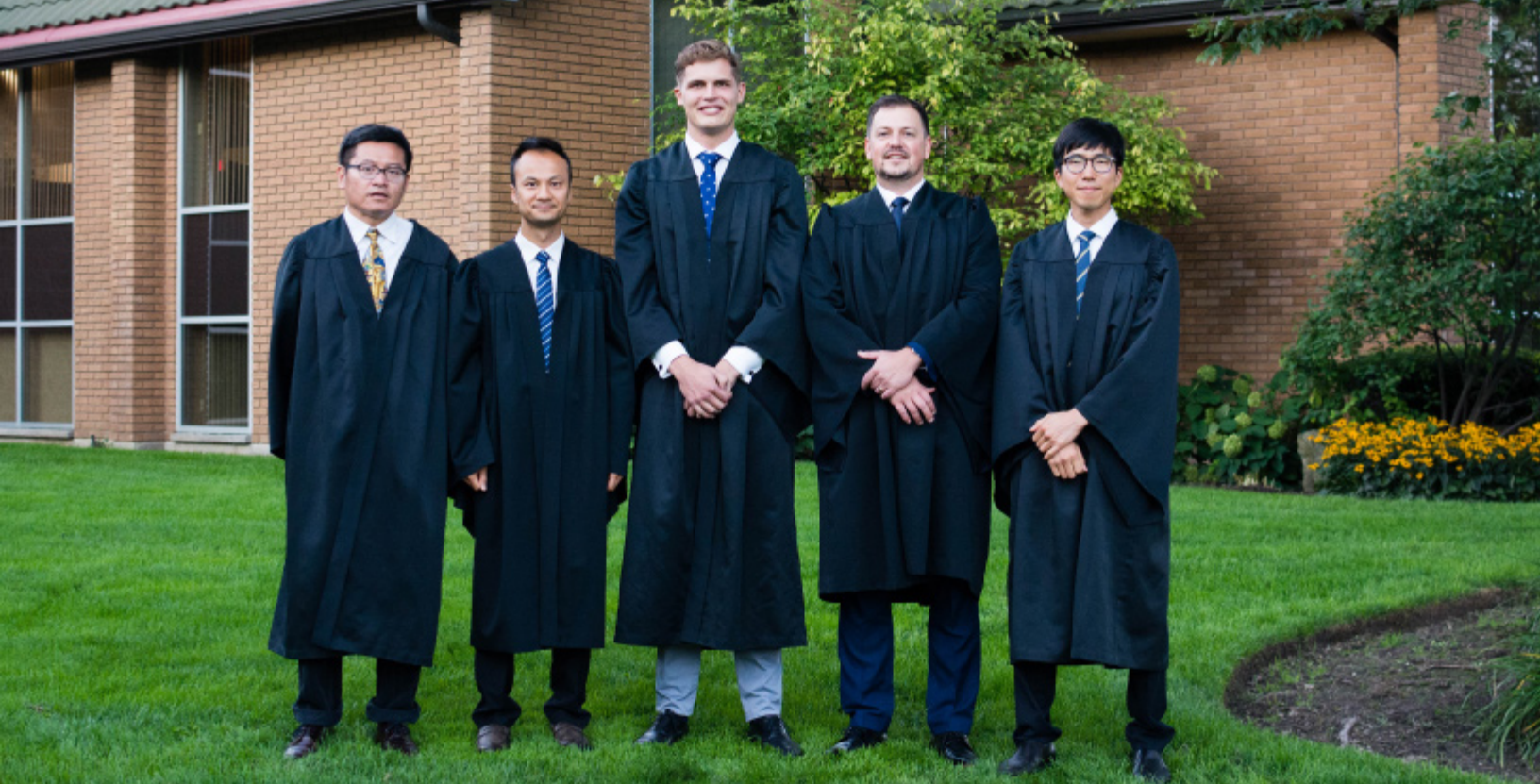
The evening began with the Chairman of the Board, Rev John Louwerse, welcoming everyone. In prayer he gave thanks to the Lord God for the blessing of having such an evening in spite of the COVID restrictions. He also gave thanks for the care of sister G. Deddens, widow of the late Dr. K. Deddens, sister Margaret DeJong, widow of the late Dr. J. DeJong, and Dr. N. H. Gootjes and his wife Dinie. Further, he mentioned the

passing on of Prof. J. Geertsema to God's glory earlier this year. He expressed gratitude to the Lord for the continued work of professor emeritus, Dr. C. Van Dam, and the faithful service and retirement of Dr. G. H. Visscher.

After the opening prayer, an excerpt from a letter from Rev. D. Poppe, a deputy for training for the ministry of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, was read, as well as an excerpt of a letter from the Free Reformed Church of West Albany in Australia. These letters of congratulations and encouragement were received with much thankfulness. Then the chairman read from Ephesians 2:11-22, a focal passage in the address of the featured speaker that evening.

The Principal of the Seminary, Dr. Jason Van Vliet, presented his annual report. You can read the contents of his address elsewhere in this issue of *Clarion*. One of the things Dr. Van Vliet focussed on was the completion of the last academic year in an unusual way because of COVID restrictions. Looking ahead, he noted the efforts undertaken to prepare for another year of instruction in a hybrid mode: of face-to-face education as





much as possible and online learning as necessary. He also introduced the new students for the upcoming year. Following this report, all praise and glory was given to God with the singing of Hymn 82:1, 3.


The Chairman of the Board of Governors read the form for the installation of faculty of CRTS. Dr. William den Hollander, who had been appointed by Synod Edmonton 2019, responded in the affirmative to the three questions posed in this form and was installed as Professor of New Testament at CRTS. Upon the reading of the form of subscription by the Chairman, Dr. den Hollander indicated his agreement by signing this form. Praise to God for this joyous milestone was expressed with the singing of Hymn 6:1.

Following the installation of the new Professor of New Testament, the retiring Professor of New Testament, Dr. G. H. Visscher, gave his address which was entitled "Grace and Peace." You will find the full text of this speech elsewhere in this issue of Clarion. Dr. Visscher focussed on these well-known words of Scripture, which are so often found together and found in a particular order. Dr. Visscher's farewell address was upbuilding to all and encouraging to the graduates who hope to be preachers of God's grace and messengers of the Prince of Peace.

After the singing of Hymn 52:1, 4, which was led by Martin Jongsma, the organist for the evening, the degree of Master of Divinity was conferred on Kelvin Dekker, Aidan Plug, and Daniel Shin, and the Bachelor of Theology on Tony Zheng and the Diploma of Theological Studies on Vincent Deng. Kelvin Dekker

spoke on behalf of the graduating class. He drew attention to our resurrected Lord Jesus's question to the apostle Peter: do you love me? As he made clear, it is the love for Christ which shaped their instruction at the Seminary but also their future work in God's Kingdom. He expressed much thankfulness for the work of the professors and staff at CRTS.

The Women's Savings Action (WSA) presentation began with a brief video, which showcased the recent update of the seminary library's décor. This was followed with sister Janet Van Vliet presenting the amount of \$35,000 to the seminary library. Dr. Van Vliet expressed CRTS's thanks for the faithful work and the ongoing contributions by the sisters of the WSA.

The collection was for the Foreign Student Bursary - a fund that provides the necessary financial assistance to qualified foreign students from developing countries who seek a Reformed theological education. Rev. Clarence VanderVelde led in closing prayer, focussing particularly on the work of the seminary in the upcoming year. As is customary, the assembly concluded with the singing of "O Canada." After the program, everyone had the opportunity to congratulate the graduates in a COVID-friendly way. You are welcome to view a video version of the College evening at www.canadianreformedseminary.ca 



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Principal's report 2020

It is time for another annual update about our seminary, the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS). This year our Convocation evening was different. We had fifty people in the building and many more joined via livestream. We were truly thankful to be able to broadcast the video stream, but it was still strange, almost surreal. We missed being at the Redeemer auditorium, with hundreds of voices blending together to sing enthusiastically to our God. It is always such an annual highlight. With the Lord's blessing, we sincerely hope that next year we will be back to full numbers.

Without further ado, then, here is an account of the past, a report on the present, and a glance into the future of CRTS.

The past

About one year ago, on September 6, 2019, we began celebrating fifty years of the Lord's faithfulness and grace to our seminary. Convocation resounded with a festive tone. The next day, the open house was well attended; at times, the hallways were packed like a high school at break time. Our anniversary book, *Your Word is Our Light*, edited by C. Van Dam and J. Van Vliet, was well-received (copies are still available on Amazon). It was a truly joyful way to begin a new academic year.

With the busyness of preparing for our golden anniversary behind us, we thought that we could settle back into normal seminary life. Yes, there was one big event on the horizon. Representatives from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) were scheduled for an on-site, re-accreditation visit from March 23-26, 2020. But for the rest, life at CRTS would follow regular routines – so we thought – but God planned differently.

Right in the middle of the second semester, and only one week before the ATS team was scheduled to arrive, the Premier of Ontario, Mr. Doug Ford, declared a state of emergency due to COVID-19. Like so many other places in the world, everyone had to stay home. The lockdown had begun. Still, our faithful Father in heaven provided a way. Classes continued, entirely online. All students completed their courses, including the exams, entirely online. The ATS visit went ahead as scheduled, entirely online. The accreditation agency gave CRTS a ten-year re-accreditation, the longest term possible. In all of this, the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, helped us, otherwise it would not have been possible.

At this point I would also like to acknowledge the skillful and self-sacrificing contributions of my fellow faculty members, the staff, consisting of Catharine Mechelse, Margaret Alkema, and Leanne Kuizenga, all of the students, as well as the Board of

Governors. In time of crisis everyone pulled together and got the job done. Thank-you very much!

During the midst of that unforgettable second semester, another chapter in our seminary's history also drew to a close. On March 31, 2020, the LORD called his servant, Professor Jakob Geertsema, home to eternal glory. With fondness and gratitude, we remember his love for our seminary. CRTS was on his heart and mind, even in the last weeks of his earthly sojourn. He now enjoys the majestic presence of his Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Next, on April 17, Dr. G. H. Visscher delivered his last chapel message before his retirement. That, too, was all on Zoom. Neither he nor we would have chosen this way to end over nineteen years of service at our seminary. Still, we made the occasion as special as we could. Both faculty and students spoke warm words of appreciation.

Let me, then, also take this moment to publicly thank Dr. Visscher for all his devotion to the Seminary and his strong desire to see CRTS grow and improve. May the Lord bless him and his wife, Teny, in their retirement years, so that they may contribute fruitfully in Christ's kingdom and also enjoy some special things that they did not have time for previously.

The present

This evening we rejoice with five graduands from various programs: Kelvin Dekker, Aidan Plug, and Daniel Shin from the MDiv program, Tony Zheng with a Bachelor of Theology, and Vincent Deng with a Diploma of Theological Studies. May our risen Saviour, Jesus Christ, equip and guide each one of these students with his Spirit so that they may serve the King of the Church in whichever way and in whatever place he may have planned for them.

Also, we extend a heartfelt welcome to seven new freshmen students in the MDiv program: Jacob Baijal (Australia), Taylor Bredenhof (BC), Jakob Mars (South Africa), Josh Peters (Alberta), Zach Vanderploeg (BC), Kevin Wattel (Ontario), and Tony Zheng (Asia). We also welcome one new student into our Diploma program: Ivy Solmeron (Philippines). Added to that we are also blessed to receive three new visiting students into the Master of Divinity program: Dave Lee and Taejin Yang (Korea) and Ramphabana Rofhiwa (South Africa). A visiting student takes some courses at CRTS – often about two semesters – and then transfers back to his home institution. Welcome to all these new students! We hope you soon feel at home at CRTS.

With this incoming class, the size of our student body goes up from twenty-four to twenty-eight, the highest it has ever been! We recognize that the Lord is answering our prayers for more students of theology so that vacancies may be filled, and new preachers go out into the Lord's harvest fields.

Speaking of new, we also have a new professor: Dr. William den Hollander. He and his wife, Diane, and their two sons, Gabriel and Silas, have come to us from the Canadian Reformed Church in Langley. We are excited to have him serve as our professor of New Testament. So, we also extend a warm welcome to the den Hollander family. May you soon feel at home in our midst!

This semester six of our twenty-eight students (or approximately twenty percent of the student body) will begin their studies online because the required visa documents have been delayed due to the coronavirus. Already back in June the Senate and the Board of Governors anticipated that this might happen, so we agreed to be ready to teach the Fall 2020 semester, and possibly the entire academic year, in a hybrid mode. This means that we will be teaching the students sitting in front of us in the classrooms at 110 West 27th Street just like we have always done, but through a live and interactive video link we will also have online students joining us from South Africa, Korea, and the Philippines.

To make this all possible the Board invested in various hardware and software upgrades. We are now privileged to use some cutting-edge technology. Imagine this: an online student in South Africa will be able to share his Hebrew homework with the rest of his class by sending his work to a digital whiteboard on the wall in one of our classrooms in Hamilton. Dr. Smith can then grab his digital pen, write on that digital whiteboard, and correct any mistakes in the student's homework. Instantly the entire class in Hamilton and South Africa will see the corrections, and they can all talk about it just as clearly as if they were in the same room with each other. In fact, Dr. Smith can even do his professorial markup using any colour he would like. Why stick with the traditional red, when you can correct Hebrew with more vibrant colours like magenta or turquoise ... or even apricot?

Of course, the technology is helpful, but it does not take anything away from the fact that this semester is going to be a big challenge. Teaching students that are spread out over four different countries, in four different time zones, and still keeping everyone together in a cohesive and vibrant group of students that learn together, deliberate together, and pray together – that is no small task. Please remember us in your prayers.

The future

Right now, we are teaching in hybrid mode because of delays and restrictions brought on by COVID. But what about the future? What are the longer-term plans for the use of this kind of technology at CRTS?

Well, that is a valid question. In fact, a committee of the Board of Governors has been exploring all the pros and cons, and ins and outs of that question for a couple of years now, well before the present pandemic began. At its meeting on September 10, the Board thoroughly discussed a comprehensive report from this committee. More information will be forthcoming in due time.


At this point, though, I would like to convey three things:

The primary purpose of CRTS is to train students to serve as faithful and effective ministers of the gospel.

CRTS is committed to serving our supporting churches.

CRTS is also committed to promoting the Reformed heritage far and wide.

I did not make up those three points. They are all part of our official statement of purpose. Under the Lord's blessing we will keep our focus on those three things. We will ask the Lord to give us wisdom and strength to bring them together in the best possible way, including the use of remarkable technology for the advance of his eternal kingdom.

We do not know exactly what the future holds, but we do know exactly Who holds the future: our Redeemer. He died and arose to give us a truly good news that a faith-less and fear-filled world needs to hear. Brothers and sisters, thank you for all your support as we work together to spread that glorious and gracious message of salvation both near and far. 



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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.

Please send questions to **William den Hollander**, *Minister emeritus*
Bethel Canadian Reformed Church, Toronto, Ontario

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Grace and Peace

Keynote Address at Convocation 2020

If there is one wish that the apostle Paul expressed for his churches upon leaving them, it was that they might continue to thrive in a context of peace as a wonderful foundation for the further spread of the gospel. He is acutely aware that anything other than peace can effectively chew up all his efforts in a very short time. And so, almost every one of his final chapters contains some reference to this wish for peace.¹

Well, if it's suitable for the apostle Paul to end so many of his letters on this note, it may be appropriate for me to close off this chapter of ministry and seminary work similarly. "Peace" is certainly something we want to see in our day – personally, collectively, and even globally.

Personal peace

Those who have paid attention to my preaching and writing over the last number of years will have heard me beating on one drum again and again. The predominant note has been that of *grace*. You cannot write a dissertation on justification by faith through grace and not be impressed with the *grace* of God in Christ. You cannot preach on Ephesians and Romans without

noticing that *grace* is its dominant message. You cannot in fact be Reformed without standing on the doctrine of the sovereign *grace* of God in Christ.

This evening, though, I want to draw your attention to the fact that in so many of the benedictions of Scripture, the concepts of "grace" and "peace" are coupled together. It begins famously, in the great Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6: "The Lord ... be gracious to you ... and give you peace." The two words are coupled together regularly in every one of the votums with which Paul begins his letters.² "Grace and peace to you...."

The question might be asked though: why is peace so often coupled together with grace? On the one hand, it may be matter of *hendiadys*, two words coupled together saying more than just one of those words alone. But, more importantly, I believe that in Paul's language and thought you can't have one without the other. Would you wish for peace? You cannot receive it except through the grace of God.

This concern for peace was really very much in tune with Paul's time. The Roman empire was all about peace. Rome did not care much about what exactly happened in the empire,

¹ Rom 15:33, 16:20; 1 Cor 16:11; 2 Cor 13:11; Gal 6:16; Eph 6:23; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess 3:16

² Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; Phm 1:3; cf. 1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:2; 2 John 1:3

as long as there was peace. Think of the famous *Pax Romana*; the survival and transmission of the whole classical heritage of Greek and Roman civilization depended on the peace and stability brought about by Emperor Augustus. It was this peace that was extolled by Virgil and so many of the writers of the ancient world.³ And how did this *Pax Romana* come into being? Through power, legislation, and brute force.

But notice that, for the apostle Paul, peace comes about in a very different way. It happens through the power and grace of God. The clear proof of that comes in the early verses of Romans 5. What is Romans 4 about but the doctrine of justification by faith through grace? Jews and Gentiles ever since Abraham and Genesis 15 have had their faith reckoned as righteousness. And then, despite the chapter division, the conclusion comes in Romans 5:1: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have *peace* through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into which this grace in which we now stand."

This, says Paul, is the result of the divine reckoning of faith for righteousness. Peace. And peace is not just some subjective, personal tranquility similar to sitting beside a quiet stream. No, it means the end of hostilities between warring parties.

We need to think about the meaning of peace, "*shalom*," in the Jewish ancient world. The word designates first of all the very opposite of war. It was the state of law and order that would follow in the life of Israel when they were walking with the Lord and he blessed them in the defeat of their enemies. It sometimes came to refer to general well-being and took on much more of a social and personal dimension. But its primary meaning is "the end of war." For Paul, too, "we have peace" first of all means: the end of enmity between us and God and with that the end of war and conflict with others. We come to a state of personal and social *shalom*. Our enmity has been pacified.

Think about that. Meditate on it. In Christ Jesus, we have been lifted to a state where all the conflicts between us and God are over, and therefore all the conflicts between each other in the body of Christ should and can be over as well.

Through the Aaronic blessing "the Lord give you peace" (Num 6:26). Israel was constantly reminded that the true source and giver of peace and well-being is Yahweh alone. Says one scholar, "Shalom there has a very comprehensive meaning, for it describes the experience of the person who fully enjoys the presence of Yahweh, being blessed, guarded, and treated graciously by him."⁴

Now, similarly, Paul is saying: peace (*eirēnē*), a cessation of enmity, and the blessing of general well-being comes only through Jesus Christ. He is our Peace, the source of our peace just as he is the source of our righteousness.

At one point (Eph 6:15), Paul refers to the "gospel of peace" – that is what it is. At another, Peter refers to "the good news of peace through Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:36). The most insistent passage of all is Ephesians 2:14, "For he (Christ) himself is our peace." Obviously, peace is both the content and the goal of all Christian preaching.

And so, this is the message that you must bring, brothers, with great consistency and enthusiasm, to the people of God. There is no program, no accomplishment, no list to conquer. Peace and access to the grace in which we may stand for the duration of our lives is found in Christ and Christ alone through faith alone, of grace alone. It is a gift of the Triune God. The grace of God, and the peace that follows, is critical for the well-being of each member of the church under your charge, and every person God gives you to add to that fold. Their psychological and spiritual wellbeing, their sense of security and joy, depends so much on the degree to which they understand and appropriate for themselves this great doctrine.

All of this means, by the way, – and this is a point aside, though related – that we ought also to be careful as to how we present the law in our morning worship services. I have no doubt that the law serves us well in the New Testament era. To say that it has no place today one would need to rewrite much of the New Testament, for its ethical injunctions undergird so much of what is written. But there is the real danger that especially our youth receive the impression that salvation comes by doing the law.

The predominant
note has been
that of grace

³J. E. Bowley, "Pax Romana," *Dictionary of New Testament Background*. (IVP, 2000) 771-775.

⁴J. I. Durham, "Shalom and the Presence of God" *Proclamation and Presence: Old Testament Essays in Honour of Gwynne Henton Davies*, (Mercer, 1970), 292-293.

But Paul clearly says that no human being will be justified by works of the law (Rom 3:20). That is impossible. He tells us why, too (Rom 8:3). The law has been weakened by our human flesh and therefore is powerless in that regard. "God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk ... according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:3, 4; cf. CofD III/IV, 5, 6⁵). Congregations need to be made aware regularly that the law serves not as a means to boost oneself heavenwards, but as a barometer of sin, as a way to test whether we are still walking in the ways of grace, as a means to come appropriately before the God of all grace, and continue to seek our peace only in the blood of our Lord.

Communal peace

What we need to note, though, is that this message of peace not only has personal consequences. It also has collective, congregational consequences. This is what Paul is also getting at in Ephesians 2 when he claims so boldly that "Christ is our peace" (v. 14).

We need to realize that the greatest social tension of Paul's day was created when the apostles began to bring a great number of Gentile believers into the church, which had always been so very Jewish up to this point. That produced all kinds of tensions and troubles as those who already belonged thought the very existence of the church was being jeopardized. This is the "dividing wall of hostility" to which Paul refers in 2:14. And what is it that brings the wall down? It is only the peace-making work of Jesus Christ. He declares that all ethnic barriers for the people of God are banished forever. As he says to his Gentile audience: "In Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself

is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.... His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility." The result of that is that now we, Gentiles, belong to God's people (2:19), are members of God's household (2:19), God's family, and are even built into the temple of God (2:22). Those are astounding

realities; but they only come about because Christ is the peace of the people of God.

And precisely because, through grace, Christ is our peace, the church becomes a peaceful place. The presence of God's peace in Christ among his people means that the church becomes a place of peace. Our Lord Jesus says we need to be "at peace with each other" (Mark 9:50); "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matt 5:9). Paul commands us: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Rom 12:18), and he reminds us that "the kingdom of

Where the
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God consists of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (14:17). It does not mean that we all become compromisers with respect to important principles, but it means as Paul puts it in Romans 14:19: "Let us make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." Or, how about Col. 3:15: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace." At one point, Paul also points out that the result of rejoicing in all things, and being prayerful about all things, will have the blessed result that we will know of a "peace that surpasses understanding" and that peace will guard our hearts and our minds (Phil 4:4-7). As one author puts it: "As a power that pervades the believer, this peace is neither the Stoic's withdrawal from the world nor a pious flight into spirituality and mystical contemplation. It is the joyful assurance of sharing already the peace of God as one goes

⁵ "ARTICLE 5: The Inadequacy of the Law. What holds for the light of nature also applies to the Ten Commandments, given by God through Moses particularly to the Jews. For though it reveals the greatness of sin, and more and more convicts man of his guilt, yet it neither points out a remedy nor gives him power to rise out of this misery. Rather, weakened by the flesh, it leaves the transgressor under the curse. Man cannot, therefore, through the law obtain saving grace.

ARTICLE 6: The Need for the Gospel. What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law can do, God performs by the power of the Holy Spirit through the word or ministry of reconciliation, which is the gospel of the Messiah, by which it has pleased God to save men who believe, both under the old and under the new dispensation."

through life and looks to eternity. In this way, Christ's peace rules in their heart and so reigns in the Christian community (Col 3:15), manifesting itself as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22)."⁶

Looking beyond Paul, one can think of Hebrews 12 and James 3. In Hebrews 12:14, the people of God are commanded to "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy...." Thereafter, Esau serves as a warning. Why did he "sell his birthright"? Hebrews says: because he failed to live in peace and holiness, he missed the grace of God and allowed a "bitter root" to grow and cause trouble.

Office bearers are told to be on the guard against such persons.

Similarly, James lists "peacefulness" as one of virtues associated with heavenly wisdom. "The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then *peace-loving*, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. *Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness*" (James 3:17-18).

Once again, in biblical thought, where the grace of God abounds, peace will be a blessed fruit.

This, too, has significance for you, brothers, who hope to enter the ministry. Not one of you wants to have a congregation that is rife with dissension, tension, and trouble, I'm sure. What must you do then? Ensure that a very dominant note in what you are preaching is the blessed note of the grace of God. Justification by grace through faith must be preached because it is so very true, and being true, is so very beneficial for the people of God. Wherever and whenever a congregation is being torn to pieces by strife and tension, office bearers would do well to ask the question whether this note is sounded loudly and clearly and often enough. It's not a panacea for all that ails the people of God. But a healthy, vibrant church life grows out of a Reformed understanding of the grace of God.

The reason that justification by faith through grace needs to be proclaimed clearly is that otherwise, people will end up automatically in a moralistic, legalistic, works-righteousness approach to the Christian life. And they will do that precisely because that kind of approach is not limited to any particular race or religious group; it is the default approach of all human flesh. And it only leads to divisiveness and quarrelling

in a competitive environment that starves out all grace. The letter to the Galatians alone is evidence of that.

I have said it before: "Corporately and individually, a healthy emphasis on the grace of God makes the congregation *less judgemental ... more humble ... more loving ... more peaceful....* The result of the abundance of the grace of God among the people of God will be an overflow of *peace*. In the face of all the enmity and hatred that was heaped upon God and his Son on the tree of the cross, we learn deep and powerful truths that reveal that all our quarrels and pettiness is nothing – nothing at all. This is the ministry of reconciliation."⁷

In the highly recommended book, *The Peace Making Pastor*, Alfred Poirier cites many of the passages of Scripture which I have quoted and then says this to all pastors:

Did you hear the imperative that calls us to a vigorous life as peacemakers – to make every effort to do what leads to peace, to keep the peace, to live in peace? Peacemaking does not appear to be an option, much less a tool, but a way of being. Furthermore, as a result of human nature, peacemaking is a necessary way. Implied in these verses and throughout Scripture is that people break peace – peace splinters, friendships fracture, relationships rupture. Most important, these verses demonstrate that God is zealous about peacemaking, that he has a passion for peace. Should not we, then, who are called to be ambassadors of reconciliation, share his passion?

Pastoring is peacemaking. Pastoring is mediating. Everything we do is peacemaking because that is who we now are in Christ the Mediator.

Mediation, reconciliation, is getting enemies to eat of the slaughtered Lamb and drink of his blood. Here opposing bloods that flow thick with the venom of hatred are reconciled by the stronger, deeper blood of the Lamb. In short, pastors are waiters serving the Lamb to sworn enemies. Pastors are busboys washing the dirty dishes of our hatreds, anger, lusts, deceits, malice, and filthy words in the purifying stream of Christ's blood. It is tiring work. It is battle work. It is Messiah work. But we are compelled to persevere, because serving this way is at the heart of our calling as pastors, as mediators.⁸

⁶ Silva, Moises, *eirene*, New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis, (Zondeervan, 2014) II, 115.

⁷ Gerhard H. Visscher, "Living in the Light of Grace: Paul, Grace, and Conflict," *Clarion* Vol. 69, No. 8 and 9. See page 259.

There I also give biblical support for the idea that we become less judgemental, etc., as a result of the clear proclamation of the grace of God.

⁸ Poirier, Alfred. *The Peacemaking Pastor: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict* (Baker, 2006) 184, 187, 188

Cosmic peace

There is a third way in which grace and peace are related, with the grace of God being a wonderful causal agent. Think of it. 9/11. COVID-19. Wars. Persecution. Rioting. Disease. What are we waiting for? What do we need? Peace. Cosmic peace. We are waiting for the day when the world will be reconciled to God, set free of its bondage to decay, and the heavens and the earth have become one again, with the redeemed people of God upon it.

But how will that universal peace come about? Not for a moment through politicians, or the United Nations, or the efforts of all of humanity. But only ... only because of the blood of Christ. This was his objective from the beginning – to reconcile not just some souls but the world to its Creator (Luke 1:79; Col 1:20; Eph 1:10, Rom 8:22). Every benediction for the people of God, every proclamation of the peace of the gospel, is ultimately loaded with significance as it awaits and expects that great and glorious day when he, who is our peace (Eph 2:14), returns upon the clouds.

There was a day when the Lord Jesus said to his disciples: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you....” The disciples must have wondered about that, as they wondered about so much.

Today, redeemed, renewed hearts give testimony to the fact that we have received it. And congregations that enjoy it, through grace, are but harbingers of the fact that one day, in the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and all his saints, they will enjoy it perfectly and forever.

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”


Conclusion

As this is my final speech as a member of the faculty, allow me to speak personally for a few moments. I wish to thank the Lord for the opportunity to serve him and for the many blessings he has given so that I could do so. No man works alone; we are surrounded also by people who have been ever so supportive. The last nineteen years at CRTS have not always been easy. In the early years we had to deal with the tragic illnesses of Dr. Jack DeJong and Dr. Niek Gootjes. May the Lord continue to be with Niek and the families of these dear brothers. In my nine and a half years as Principal, we also went through the accreditation process for the first time. How arduous that was! In the meantime, lectures happened, and young men were prepared to the best of our ability. And through it all, I have always experienced the harmony and co-operation of fellow

faculty members, members of the Board of Governors, and members of the staff. Without naming you all, I thank you so much for being supportive, patient, and understanding. We were blessed, no doubt, by the peace that comes in Christ. I thank the many, many students who came through the halls of CRTS over those years. All of you have seen my weaknesses, quirks, and failings; but I thank you for looking with the grace that also comes in our Lord.

From this place I also want to congratulate our new professor with his position. I have no doubt that Prof. den Hollander will do exceptionally well, given his gifts and his preparation for the task. May the Lord who has brought you to this point also richly bless you, brother!

There is one who is particularly aware of my weaknesses, and that is my dear wife, Teny. I thank you for your support and your love nevertheless. May the Lord go with us in the next stage of our lives, and with our six children, their spouses, and twenty-three grandchildren, who have all been so very supportive. May the grace and peace of God continue to be with each one of them, and each one of you, in the expectation of that better day that’s coming.

May the God of peace be with you all (Phil 4:9). 



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Dr. William den Hollander

Introduction

My Early Years

I was born in 1983 in Hamilton, Ontario, while my dad (and namesake) was studying at the Seminary, then known as the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches or, affectionately, “the College.” After his studies were done, we moved to Winnipeg, Manitoba, where my dad began his service as minister of the Word and sacraments. That’s also where I began my academic career, with kindergarten. From there we moved to Orangeville, Ontario, where I attended Dufferin Area Christian School from Grades 1 to 7. It was during this time that I developed a lifelong love of reading, anything and everything. In the summer of 1996 we moved to Richmond Hill, just north of the city of Toronto. I attended Credo Christian School in Woodbridge for Grade 8 and then made the trek to Hamilton to attend Guido de Brès Christian High School for four years.

University Studies

After high school, I was admitted to York University for the Bachelor of Arts program in Classical Studies. My intention at that point was to pursue a career in criminal law, and so I took the necessary steps to begin preparing for the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). In a third-year Greek translation course, however, I encountered the writings of the first-century Jewish historian, Josephus, and my plans changed. My professor for that course, Steve Mason, is one of the world’s foremost experts on Josephus, and he whetted my appetite for further study. So, when I finished my BA (2005), I entered immediately upon a Master of Arts degree in history, also at York University, under

his supervision. My major research paper explored the impact of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70 on the Jewish communities of the Diaspora. This still did not satisfy my interests and so I enrolled the following year (2006) in the PhD program, with Steve Mason as my supervisor. Over the next six years I was busy with my dissertation and teaching at the university. In 2010 a special opportunity arose when I was invited to continue my research in Jerusalem, Israel, at the Hebrew University, for a semester. That remains a highlight for both me and my family.

Speaking of family, during my MA year (December 17, 2005) I married my high school sweetheart, Diane Boot. We settled in Richmond Hill together, not far from where we had both grown up. Diane taught Grade 1 and 2 at Credo where we had both attended previously. In 2008, God granted us our firstborn son, Gabriel.

On to Seminary

In the fall of 2011, I was teaching a fourth-year undergraduate course of my own design, “The Jews in the Roman World,” and finishing up my dissertation. As I reflected on my plans to pursue an academic career in ancient history, I was left feeling dissatisfied. I wanted to devote myself to communicating a deeper, richer, and more ultimate message. I wanted to preach the gospel. When I floated the idea of pursuing seminary education to Diane, she was unhesitatingly supportive and willing to continue on as student-wife for another four years. So, in August of 2012, I defended my dissertation, “From Hostage to




Historian: Josephus, the Emperors, and the City of Rome,” and the next month I began my MDiv at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in Hamilton. Highlights during our time at the seminary – apart from the lectures, of course – were the birth of our second son Silas in 2014, lasting friendships with fellow students, internships in Neerlandia, AB, and Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, and a two-month postdoctoral fellowship at the Theological University of Kampen, NL.

In the ministry

When I had finished my seminary degree in 2016 (twenty-eight years after my academic career began!), I received and accepted a call from the Canadian Reformed Church of Langley, BC. I was ordained to the ministry of the gospel on October 30, 2016. I served that large community alongside my co-pastor, brother, and friend, Doug Vandeburgt, until May of 2020. Although brief, our time together as pastor and congregation was wonderful, united as we are by our love for Christ and his

love for us, which is wider and longer and higher and deeper than we could ever know (Eph 3:18-19). Serving them as shepherd and teacher was a tremendous privilege and joy, while also revealing to me abundantly my weaknesses and insufficiencies. I learned experientially what Christ taught the apostle Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9).

A whole new challenge

Now, as I take up my place as professor of New Testament at the same seminary where I studied a short four years ago, it continues to be the all-sufficient power of Christ on which I rest and rely. The task ahead is weighty and overwhelming, but God is faithful and true, and I trust he will equip where he has called. I do feel honoured to be given the opportunity to train young men to understand, communicate, and radiate the Word, as together we serve the incarnate Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. To God alone be the glory! 


Seminary library updates

Last year marked the fiftieth anniversary year of our Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) and of the Women's Savings Action (WSA). Under God's blessings, dedicated representatives representing fifty-six churches went about their collecting for the Seminary library. The anniversary collection allowed the WSA to fulfill its goal by providing the necessary funds needed to:

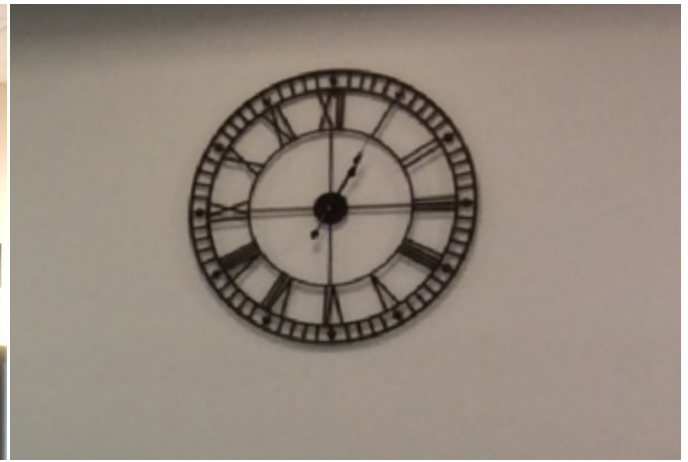
1. Maintain the current academic standard of our library
2. Allow necessary upgrades to make our library look less tired.

This year at Convocation, with music in the background, a video presentation showed pictures of the Seminary library before and after the updates that were made this summer. New carpet, paint, couches, chairs, plants, bright pillows, pictures, new letter boards, a word wall with the words of Proverbs 9:10, and a decorative clock make for a beautifully refreshed library. Slides with best wishes to Dr. and Mrs. Visscher in their retirement were

also part of the show. God's blessings to them as well as to the den Hollander family from our WSA corner!

When some of our WSA representatives began their collecting in their respective congregations for this year's collection, life was steady as she goes, so to speak. However, many of our representatives collect in the spring and suddenly found themselves caught in a quandary wondering how to wisely proceed with collecting. Could we ask our brothers and sisters to give when so many were dealing with times of uncertainty? Stepping forward in faith many of our representatives did collect, requesting their brothers and sisters to give only if they were able, understanding the intense difficulties that many were facing. The Lord blessed even in adversity. When we did not know if we would receive anything, we collected \$26,840.55 this past year. We deeply thank our Heavenly Father for providing in his providence for the library again. We pledged \$35,000 for the ongoing costs of running our Seminary library. May God bless the work of everyone at the Seminary for the coming of his kingdom. 





A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS If there are any address changes that I need to be aware of please let me know as soon as possible. **Rachel Vis** >> 731 Lincoln Street, Wellandport, Ontario L0R 2J0 | tom.rachelvis@gmail.com | **905-329-9476**

November Birthday

3 Wilma Van Drongelen will be **63**
1892 Horizon Street
Abbotsford, BC V2S 3J4

Happy birthday Wilma! We wish you the Lord's blessing in the coming year. We all hope you have a wonderful day celebrating with family and friends.

