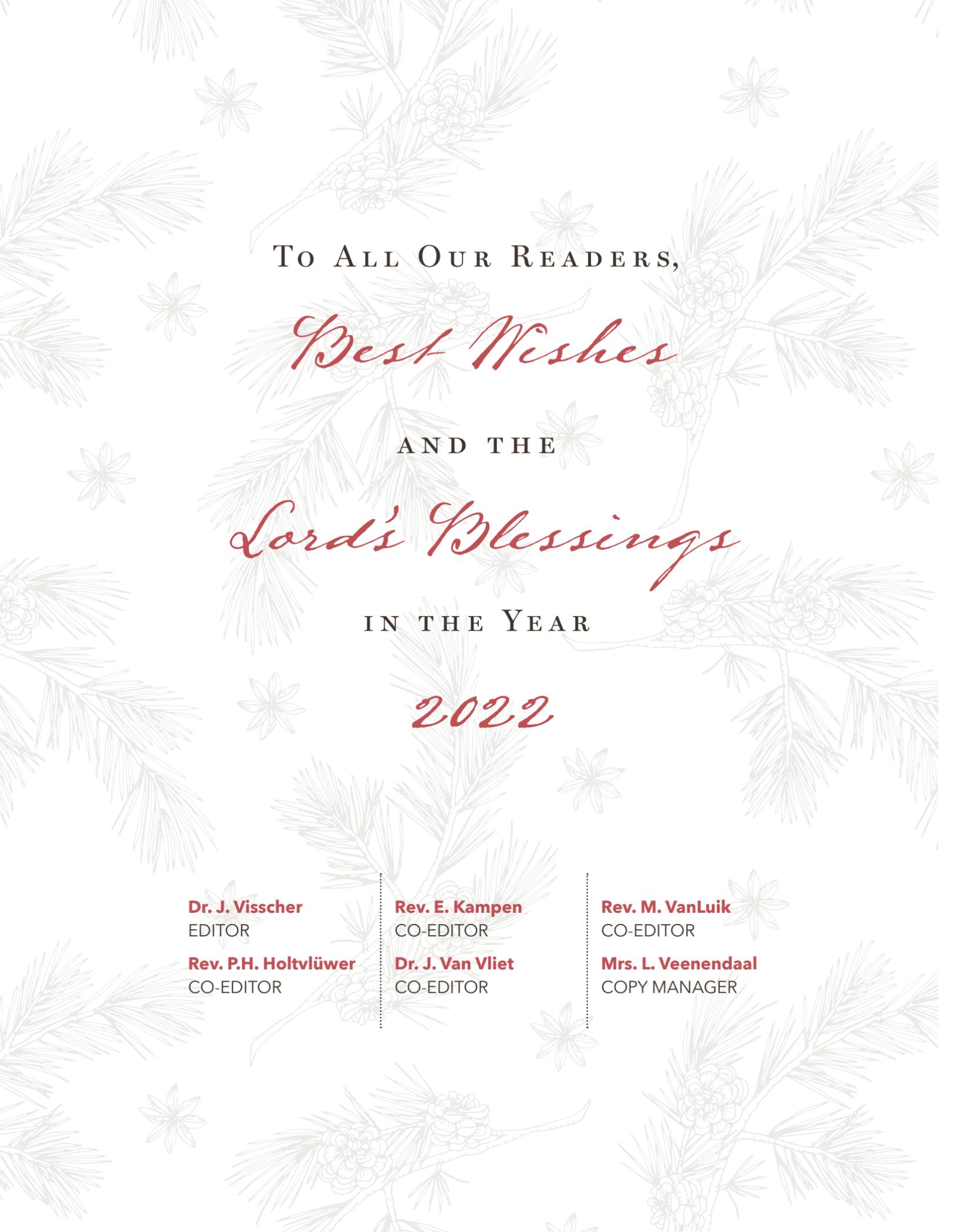


Clarion





TO ALL OUR READERS,
Best Wishes
AND THE
Lord's Blessings
IN THE YEAR
2022

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Exempt from Fear

Every Christmas we hear the angel's command to the shepherds, "Fear not for behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (Luke 2:7). Elsewhere in the story of the Messiah's birth, we hear similar angelic commands issued; for example, to Zechariah, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah" (Luke 1:12) and to Joseph, "Do not fear to take Mary as your wife" (Matt 1:20) and to Mary herself, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God" (Luke 1:30). And if we think of the ministry of the Lord Jesus, many times he exhorted his disciples not to be afraid (e.g., Luke 12:7, 32; Matt 8:26; 14:27; 28:10). That this basic command is for us as well we know from John 14:27, where Jesus, speaking of

his coming departure from the earth says to all who love him, "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (NIV)."

A challenging command

But it's not so simple to obey this command, is it? When I am afraid, I'd very much like to instantly let go of that awful feeling, but how easy is that? Other commands seem more doable. When we are commanded to care for those in need, we can immediately take action and provide physical or financial assistance. Obey our parents? Do no harm to our neighbour? Protect life? In each case we understand what is required and can quickly obey in the strength of the Holy Spirit. But how do you turn

off your fear? How do you make yourself quit being anxious? How do you let go of excessive worry and fright? In the moment when your fear is high and you hear the command not to be afraid, that command seems like an impossible mountain to climb. It may even *add* to your fearfulness for now you realize you are displeasing God by not obeying him!

But what if we thought about God's command differently? Instead of thinking of it as a mental act that falls on us to put into effect, what if we thought of it as a *gift* our Saviour gives us, a Christmas gift as it were? What if the Lord is telling us not that we have to calm ourselves down and set our own hearts at ease by an act of will but rather that he grants us the conditions so *that there is no longer any need to be afraid*? What if the birth of Jesus Christ is God's way of removing the underlying cause of all our fears and for that reason we are *exempt* from being afraid?

Exempt

To be exempt is to be free from an obligation, usually some unpleasant or onerous duty. I remember learning in high school that a student could be exempt from exams if his/her average was high enough at the end of the semester. The thought of that was sweet! And when it actually happened to a student, there was a lot of happiness – *I'm free*! Or, to take another example, think of paying taxes. Most people have no love for taxes and consider paying them a burden, so imagine your joy if the government should one day inform you that because of this or that reason you are now "tax-exempt!" What a relief, right? That heavy task has been lifted from your shoulders and you never have to worry about a tax bill again!

Well, that's the Lord's intention with these commands not to be afraid – he's telling us that there is no longer any reason for our fear! We are exempt from the need to be fearful! This comes out elsewhere in the gospel story of the Messiah's arrival when Zechariah, filled with the Holy Spirit, rejoices in what God is doing: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David ... to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him *without fear*, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days" (Luke 1:68-75). Zechariah announces God's purpose in sending the Christ: that we might serve God *without being afraid*! In other words: Christmas (and Easter and Ascension!) exempts us from all fear – hallelujah!

Christmas proclaims: no one cares more for the salvation of sinners than the good Shepherd Jesus

What fear?

But what kind of fear is meant here? After all, Scripture speaks of a good kind of fear, the fear of God which believers are to embrace. This is not dread but respect, not terror but reverence. Mary herself acknowledges this good fear in her Magnificat, "And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation" (Luke 1:50). This fear is rooted in love for God who loved us first. This fear motivates us to serve the Lord with thankful and joyful obedience. In fact, it is this kind of loving fear that drives out the other kind of fear, a terror-filled fear, and leaves us with a calm heart filled with peace (1 John 4:18).

What then is the terror-filled fear from which we are exempt? Zechariah tells us: "Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, [we] might serve him without fear." Falling into the hands of our enemies brings terror – you can think of how Israel fell into miserable slavery in Egypt. They were alive and breathing but life was a living nightmare under the tyranny of Pharaoh: they had to slave all day under whips and threat of death; they were later forced to find their own materials to make bricks and still produce the same amount; and they had to drown their own baby boys. What a life of horror! They had every reason to live in fear. But when Israel was set free from the oppression of Egypt and settled in Canaan, they were set free from all that made them afraid. God's people were exempt from fear and could serve the LORD in peace.

Free from terror

And this is what God has done for us in the Lord Jesus Christ! Pharaoh and Egyptian slavery is a picture which God uses to teach us about Satan and slavery to sin. Each of us is born a sinner, people in rebellion against God. Apart from God, we grow up enslaved to sin, tormented by the devil, and facing a sentence of eternal death. We grow up in spiritual Egypt, as it

were. Our enemies rule over us. Satan and his followers make life bitter by temptations to sin and our own sinful nature helps by giving in to sin. Like Pharaoh, Satan loves to oppress those he rules – whether that’s physical suffering and persecution or mental anguish, depression, guilt, anxiety, and the like. Satan does his best to keep sinners in darkness and gloom and loves nothing more than to hand them over to a hopeless death after they have lived a hopeless life.

But Jesus was born to put a stop to all of that for God’s people! Like Pharaoh, Satan only has power over us rebels because God allows it. And God allows it because God is angry with us. We have so offended God with our rebellion that his holy wrath is called forth and by rights we fall under the Lord’s judgment of eternal death. It’s this offense that has caused God to separate from us and hand us over to Satan, sin, and death – to a lifetime and even an eternity of terrifying fear. But the




gospel of Christmas announces that God has sent a Saviour to release us from this terror!

You see, at bottom, because of our sin, God *should be* our greatest enemy. It's his eternal wrath against sin that is the cause of our worst fear and the reason Satan, the world, and our sinful flesh have any power to torment us. But God, in magnificent grace, determined not to be our enemy but our *friend*. He gave his Son Jesus to be born of the virgin Mary so that in time Jesus could give his life as a sacrifice in our place, to pay the penalty for our rebellion. Jesus's death and resurrection takes away God's righteous judgment against our sin and in doing so he takes away the source and the reason for all fear, worry, anxiety, and dread. Jesus' death restores us to life in the presence of God in full peace and harmony!

Peace-filled living

This is what the Holy Spirit revealed through Zechariah. The Messiah was sent "to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:79). If you trust that Jesus Christ died for your sins, then you are exempt from fear and granted peace – a true and lasting peace no one can ever take away. God is not mad at you anymore. You are not in Egypt any longer. Satan does not control your life nor does your sinful nature – the Lord Jesus does! And physical death is no longer an entry into the fires of hell but rather a doorway into everlasting life with your God.

Fear can strike us in many instances and for many reasons. Anxiety can dominate our hearts and paralyze us sometimes. But now take the Christmas gospel and set it beside the thing you are afraid of. Is it sickness or injury or a painful loss that brings dread? The Christmas gospel says: know that God is not punishing you because he sent Jesus to take your punishment. God is shaping you into a more godly you, and he is even with you in your trial to sustain you, so set your heart at ease. Are you anxious for the salvation of a loved one gone astray? Christmas proclaims: no one cares more for the salvation of sinners than the good Shepherd Jesus who died for his sheep and who promised that not one of his sheep will be snatched from his hand (John 10:28), so be at peace. Is it worry for the future of your family, the church, or planet earth? Jesus's death and resurrection has secured a glorious future for all God's children in a renewed heaven and earth, so let go of that alarm. You are exempt from all such fear for you have received in Christ Jesus the gift of everlasting peace!

Fear is a powerful feeling, and sometimes even having all the reasons clear in our mind why we don't need to be afraid still doesn't lessen the fear. Anxious worry or irrational fear can stubbornly cling to us. Don't beat yourself up over that. Christ knows all about us bruised reeds and smoldering wicks (Matt 12:20). Simply keep going over the gospel facts, keep praying to the Lord, and ask others to pray over you, until the peace of the Holy Spirit, the peace that passes all understanding settles on your heart. It *will* come, for our God is greater than our hearts (1 John 3:20)! 

“But now thus says the Lord, he who created you,
O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.”

ISAIAH 43:1

dear readers

You are reading the final issue of *Clarion* Volume 70. Throughout this year we have been blessed with a steady supply of material coming in from our contributors. As the Christmas season is upon us and we approach the new year, it is our pleasure to prepare a special issue.

It seems this past year is one where we have experienced fatigue, stress, and perhaps conflict. Yet, what comes through most clearly on the following pages is joy: a year in review that speaks to our Lord's care for our federation; news of church institution, ordination, graduations; celebration of the birth of our Saviour; and looking forward in hope to 2022. Praise God.

I often take the opportunity at Christmas in this small column to look back over the past year. Allow me to look back (just a little) further this time. Seventeen years ago, I joined the editorial team of *Clarion* with Dr. James Visscher at the head of our team. I am grateful for his leadership and dedicated work on all 425 of the issues that we prepared together. Dr. Visscher, may God bless you in your retirement from our magazine!

To the *Clarion* readers: wishing you all a Christmas season that is full of joy. May our Heavenly Father bless you and keep you in 2022.

Laura Veenendaal

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Clarion

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TREASURES NEW & OLD :: MATTHEW 13:52

A Humble Christmas Hymn

"Born in the likeness of men" (PHILIPPIANS 2:7)

There's a Christmas hymn in Philippians 2:6-11 (cf. Hymn 23) that leaves the familiar nativity scene and characters behind. There's no mention of Joseph or Mary, no manger or star, no Herod or Magi. The focus is exclusively on the Christ child. He's centre stage. The hymn begins with a strong affirmation of his divine nature: "He was in the form of God" (v. 6). This is a reference to Christ's divine glory, which he had before the world began (John 17:5).

Surprisingly, Jesus didn't grasp and cling to this glory like the child who tightfistedly clings to a new Christmas present, unwilling to let it go or share with anyone. He "emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (v. 7). How astonishing! The little child in Mary's womb was (and still is) true God of true God. He's the Word who spoke creation into existence. He's the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He's the one who formed his mother Mary in her own mother's womb. Yet there he was a tiny infant in a womb he himself formed and fashioned, spending months in the fetal position, totally dependent on his mother. After his birth, he had to be kept warm with swaddling clothes, cry for his food, have his diaper changed. What humiliation for the one who shared in God's glory and goodness since eternity past! This puts Christmas in a different perspective, doesn't it? We love the miracle of the conception. We marvel at the manger and the swaddling clothes. To think of God in human form warms our hearts, calms our fears, and leads to comfort and joy. But never forget that what warms our hearts at Christmas time was a great humiliation for the Christ child.

Shockingly, his greatest humiliation wasn't his conception and birth, but his death. That's where this humble Christmas hymn is heading. It moves quickly from the cradle to the cross: "And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (v. 8). There he was – a grown man – naked and alone, suspended between heaven and earth, cursed by God his Father, mocked

by the very ones he formed and created. This is humiliation beyond words!

Staggeringly, his humiliation was a voluntary act. His hands weren't pinned to the cross against his will. He wasn't robbed of his glory. *He* made himself nothing. *He* took on the form of slave. *He* humbled himself unto death. This is nothing other than a glorious display of his love for sinners. His humiliation is our salvation! That's why "he did not to his rightful glory cling" (Hymn 23:1). It was for you, for me, for all those whose names are written in the book of life. So wide, high, deep, and long is Christ's love for his church that he willingly, voluntarily humbled himself, took on the fetal position, was laid in a manger, and even bore our sins on that old rugged cross! That's why God exalted him to the heavenly heights and gave him the name above all names (v. 9). This too is why we must bend the knee to him, and confess the name of Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father (vv. 10-12). So sing this humble Christmas hymn today and always. Shout your hallelujahs to him, confess his name, and humbly bow before his majesty! 🙏

For further study

1. How might the humiliation of Christ's conception, birth, and death shape the way you celebrate Christmas this year?
2. In what areas of your life do you lack humility? How does the humble attitude of Christ encourage you to grow in these areas?



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While Shepherds Watched

If you could have witnessed one moment in the Bible, which would it be? I wouldn't be surprised if many of us pick Luke 2:13, when a great company of angels appear and give their song of praise to God.

Luke doesn't actually say, but I think we all imagine that it was a most glorious sound as the angels' beautiful voices filled the air. Perhaps it's because of our Hymn 21:6, but I always assume there was singing involved in the angelic praise. And we long to hear that same music ourselves one day in heaven. And even join the heavenly choir ourselves in praise to God, when we'll presumably have angelic voices!

Initially, however, the shepherds weren't filled with wonder but with the opposite – fear.

The shepherds' fear

Verse 9 says that when the angel first appeared to them, they were terrified. Because of the angel's sudden appearance, but also because the glory of the Lord shone around them. I assume the angel is probably Gabriel, who announced the conceptions

**“All glory to our God on high
and on the earth his peace
for men to whom he favour shows
which nevermore shall cease.”**

(Hymn 21:6, *Book of Praise*)

All their fears will disappear, and only joy be left

of John the Baptist and Jesus to Zechariah and Mary in chapter 1. Even if not, like Gabriel this angel also “stands in the presence of God” (Luke 1:19) and so also reflects the glory of God in his appearance.

The glory of God appears to human beings like a blinding light. It is bright shining white because of God’s holiness, his complete aversion to sin and anything sinful. And that shining glory is frightening to human beings, even in its reflection (see Exodus 34:30). It’s frightening because we are sinners, who by nature have a complete aversion to God and his holiness.

The shepherds, despite faithfully doing their task and keeping watch over their flock even by night, are sinners. And so, they react with great fright to the sight of God’s holy angel. Basically, every time a human being meets an angel of God in the Bible, terror is their reaction.

There is a huge difference between us, even on our best days, and the perfect holiness that God requires of us in his law. If we were transported onto the hilltop with the shepherds, to see the angel and hear their majestic song, our initial reaction would almost certainly also be great fear, not the open-mouthed joy and wonder that we probably imagine! (For proof, see Revelation 1:16-17.)

But it doesn’t have to be that way!

The angel’s gospel

The angel begins with words of comfort: “Do not be afraid.” It’s the same way basically every angelic message begins. But, for the very first time, in a sense, there’s good reason not to be afraid – of the angel and even of God’s glory. “I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord.”

Our fear at God’s glory comes because of our sin. Because sin makes us unable to approach God’s holy presence. But the

angel’s message promises a Saviour! A Saviour to “save us from our sins” as an angel (Gabriel again?) tells Joseph in Matthew 1:21.

And not just any Saviour. He’s the Messiah, the “Anointed One” who was promised so many times over by Old Testament prophets, whom God would send to bring final deliverance to his people.

That’s why the angel can tell the shepherds “I bring you good news.” Another way to put that is, “I proclaim the gospel to you.” It’s a gospel that is going to bring them *great* joy. All their fears will disappear, and only joy be left. The Messiah has come to take away their sins, so they will no longer have to feel ashamed or terrified at the sight of God’s glory and holiness.

But what kind of a Saviour is here?

The wonderful Saviour

Both in verse 11 and verse 12 the angel describes what the Messiah will look like. But both verses contain a strange contrast.

Verse 11 says that the Saviour is *born*. But then later that the Messiah is “the Lord.” Jesus our Saviour is truly human. Born of the Virgin Mary as real baby in the painful way that infants are always born. And, at the same time, he is also true and eternal God.

We are of course used to the idea. But what a strange and wonderful thing it must have sounded like to the shepherds. How would the Lord be on earth in the first place, and as a baby? Had the angel mis-spoke?

But then verse 12 contains another contrast that confirms something strange is going on. The angel invites them to go and see the baby for themselves. And he tells them that they will find the baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

Now, I’ve seen a few newborn babies in my time, and they have generally been wrapped in some sort of blanket to swaddle them. So, with these words the angel confirms that the baby is a real baby. He’s not a spiritual God *appearing* on earth as a baby, or he could not be wrapped. Like every other baby in history he is born, wiped clean, and wrapped up snugly in blankets, especially important if it is a cool evening.

But this wrapped baby is lying: in a manger. Now, infants snuggled up in their warm blankets can sleep pretty much anywhere. We’ve sometimes put our babies on couches, in empty suitcases, and even (empty) baths to sleep, when there was no room in the inn hotel room for a baby bed. But an animal feeding trough is another story.

The shepherds believed and understood the main message

And so, it's another surprise to the shepherds: go see this baby. He's a real baby, as cute and adorably snuggly as any other baby you see. But there's also something wonderful about him. He will not have an ordinary life, because he is at the same time true God. That is the reason for the angel's truly good news. That's the only way that he can be great joy that is for all the people. Because he is God's Messiah, the God-man who can save his people from their sins. The only name under heaven by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

The angels' song

So, it is because of this that the angels sing their song. Their song begins with glory for God. Glory might radiate from the presence of the angels, but they know that it is not their glory. They are simply reflecting their God. And so, they direct their praise to the only one truly worthy of our worship and praise. And God is in the highest. He is in heaven, high and lifted up.

But he is not *just* high and far away. He's also always come down to his people. He especially has come near in the baby who has just been born. And so the angels also proclaim God's peace. Not his peace towards everyone. "On earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

On which people then does God's favour rest? Isaiah 57 says that God "lives in a high and lofty place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit." You need to be humble, acknowledge your sin and unworthiness before God, and then find salvation in his Messiah the Lord born today to you.

The shepherds' delight

The shepherds wouldn't have understood all of this immediately, of course. They were just shepherds, regular people. Even those who spent years *with Jesus* didn't understand who he was and how he was Saviour, Messiah, and Lord until after he had died and rose again.

But we know the shepherds believed and understood the main message: this child was the promised Messiah, Saviour for them and all God's people. The first thing they did after they saw him was to tell everyone they met what the angel told them (v. 17).

In great excitement they rushed off and found the child in the manger exactly as the angel had told them. And, having seen him and returned back to their flocks, they "glorified and praised God for all the things they had heard and seen."

It *will* be wonderful, one day in heaven and on the new earth, to join with the angels in singing magnificent songs of praise to God. Especially for those of us who aren't exactly blessed with "angelic" singing voices here below.

But, actually, we don't have to wait! Notice the angels were praising and glorifying God (v. 13, 14), and that's exactly what the shepherds did too (v. 20). The last note of angelic song had long since faded in the Judean hills. The only echo left was in the shepherds' hearts. But they sang along anyway.

We can be sure that the angels' song of praise continued when they returned to heaven, just as it still continues today (Rev 5). And so, we too today join with angels, shepherds, saints above, and saints here below as we sing our Christmas songs of praise and glory to God. Songs in awe at his grace at coming near to us in Christ. Born as a human baby, and yet also Christ the Lord, so that he alone can indeed save his people from our sins. We, on whom God's favour rests, can have not terror at the sight of God's glory, but only everlasting peace with God. 🕊



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No Luke, No Service



We were dropping off a child or two at the nursery. It was before the Christmas Day worship service. As usual, there was an excitement and festivity in the air.

What was unusual was a father and mother bundling up a couple of children with some older children standing around. Then, without so much as a good-bye, they left. Left the nursery, left the church building, and left the parking lot.

It was unusual, but one could surmise a reason. Perhaps one of the children was feeling sick and it was wisest to take the child home. With only one vehicle the whole family had to go home.

It wasn't until a few days later that I found out what was really the matter. Mom had gone to the nursery with their little one(s), while Dad and the older children found a place in one of the pews. It was only then that Dad discovered the text for the

Christmas Day sermon. The text was Ruth 4:13-17. Or was it Micah 5:2-4? I can't remember anymore. The text choice was a problem. The problem was that it was not from Luke. More specifically, it was not from Luke 2. You see, Dad had promised his children at some point, maybe the day before, or maybe that morning at breakfast, that the sermon would be about the Christmas story. Apparently, the Christmas story can only be told, or preached, from Luke 2. Since that was not the case that year, it was not the place to take the family on Christmas Day! So, they left and went to a neighbouring church where, thankfully, the sermon was based on a text from Luke 2.

The following Christmas I chose my text from Luke 2:8-11. I did this for a couple of reasons. First, it is a very nice text for a Christmas sermon! No arguments from this sentimental

Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of all God's promises!

preacher! Who doesn't love hearing a sermon about an angel of the Lord who came down and glory shone around? The angel said to the shepherds, "Be not afraid, for I have come to tell good news of great and wondrous joy for all of Israel. To you in David's town today was born of David's line a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord!" How great is that? Second, I was concerned for my brother and sister and their family and did not want them to leave for another church again.

That next Christmas Day morning I kept a lookout for the family's vehicle. I wanted to see if they would come. And yes, they did! I was glad and they were going to be happy. Imagine my surprise when the vehicle was parked in the usual spot and only one of the older children hopped out and went into the church. I was waiting, when the child returned to the vehicle, and said something through the window. And then, they all came out! I guess this year, to save the need to bundle up kids and leave, it was better to send out their child on a reconnaissance mission first! Oh, so what. I was happier for it! And the worship service and Christmas celebration was all the more festive! Maybe the angels in heaven were singing too!

I learned something that year. Telling and preaching about the Christmas story is important to God's people. And why shouldn't it be? The whole Bible is written to proclaim the

gospel of Jesus Christ, who is God incarnate. He is eternal God, who came down from heaven to take upon himself our flesh, in a perfect form no less through the virgin birth. The Christmas story is a miracle of God's grace that leads to the salvation of God's chosen people. We like to focus on the cross regarding our salvation, and rightly so, but the cross has no meaning if there isn't first the grand redemptive solution for our sin through the virgin birth of the Son of God!

While I still don't think the Christmas Day worship service must have a text from Luke 2, I do realize now the importance of at least *reading* that story every Christmas service and *bringing in* the events surrounding the miracle of Christ's birth into the sermon. Since that time, I have not let one Christmas service go by without preaching or reading from Luke 2. Then it is possible to have as text Genesis 3:15, or Ruth 4:13-17, or Isaiah 9:6 or 11:1, or Micah 5:2-4, or Matthew 1:18-25, or John 1:14, or Philippians 2:5-11, or Revelation 12, etc. Sometimes these sermon texts fit well because they are part of a series of sermons leading up to Christmas Day and beyond. What such text choices also do is demonstrate the unity of Scripture, how all of Scripture points to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. He is the fulfilment of all God's promises!

It has been a rich blessing every Christmas Day service to read the Christmas story from Luke 2. It is such a wonderful story to tell. Who doesn't love to read and hear it told again and again? It never gets old. 📖



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“For unto you is born this day in the city of David
a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.” LUKE 2:11

Do You Have a Plan for 2022?

EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD HAVE A PLAN FOR DISCIPLINED, REGULAR READING OF THE SCRIPTURES


The first congregation of Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was in a Welsh town called Sandfields. In his biography of Lloyd-Jones, Iain Murray relates how the pastor made efforts to get his congregation into the Word of God on a daily basis. It was his conviction that every pastor should go through the complete Bible in one year – “That should be the very minimum of the preacher’s Bible reading.” But he also believed that such a discipline of Bible reading would be beneficial for all church members. Initially, the Doctor developed his own Bible-reading plan which would take the congregation through the entire Bible in one year. However, eventually he discovered the reading plan developed by Robert Murray M’Cheyne and, for the rest of his life, this was the plan he used personally and that he recommended to parishioners.

Thanks to a godly elder in my previous congregation, I’ve become convinced that every Christian should have a plan for disciplined, regular reading of the Scriptures. I’ve been practicing it now for several years and the blessings have been enormous. In past years, I’ve sometimes followed the reading plan recommended by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones and used with great profit by many. You can easily find M’Cheyne’s plan with a quick Google. If you come across his original plan, it includes some helpful notes about the practice of daily Bible reading, including the dangers and advantages. M’Cheyne’s plan knits together family Bible reading and individual Bible reading, and you could do it that way. I’ve personally taken a different approach with it – I’ve used the family Bible reading in the morning and the individual Bible reading in the evening. With M’Cheyne’s plan, in the span of a year you go through the entire Old Testament once and the New Testament and Psalms twice.

Every late December this topic gets raised on blogs and social media. Every year naysayers trot out objections. My challenge: why not just try it? It doesn’t have to be M’Cheyne’s plan,

it could be any one of a variety of plans. Just search for “Bible reading plans.” There are one-year plans, two-year, and even three-year plans. You could work your way through the Old Testament in 2022, and then do the New Testament in 2023. There are plans that you take you through the Bible chronologically, either in the order events happened or in the order the books were written. Aside from those, you could decide to spend the entire year focusing on one book of the Bible – perhaps the Psalms or Isaiah. You could read a chapter a day and journal your way along, taking notes about how God is revealing himself and how he is pointing you to Christ. When you get to the end, start over and read it again.

Whatever route you take, if the Word of God is precious to you, and if you believe that reading it will enrich your faith, then shouldn’t you have *some type of plan* in place to help you stay on track? And what if you do fall behind? Sometimes events conspire against the best-made plans for Bible reading. If you haven’t fallen too far behind, do some catch up on the Lord’s Day – that’s a great time for some extra Bible reading. If you’ve fallen really far behind, just carry on with your plan and don’t stress about it. You’re not doing it to tick boxes or earn God’s approval. It’s not meant to be a mechanical duty, but a delightful spiritual exercise which leads to prayer and worship.

If you don’t already, let me encourage you to take up this practice as of January 1, 2022 – it won’t always be easy, but ultimately you won’t regret it! If you do take up the challenge, let me know how it goes. 



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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Dear reader:

Once more we have to dispense with the customary year-end meditation in order to focus on some changes at *Clarion*.

Two years ago, we noted the retirement from our Editorial Committee of Dr. Van Dam, who had spent considerable time on our committee and contributed around 600 articles over fifty years. This year's "retirement" likewise signals a changing of the guard at *Clarion*.

Dr. James Visscher has decided the time is right to hand over the *Clarion* reins to someone else. Dr. Visscher's involvement with *Clarion* goes back at least to the very first issue after *Canadian Reformed Magazine* became *Clarion*, in 1973. The then Rev. Visscher, only recently in his first congregation, was announced in that first issue as a contributor as well as coordinator of the "Press Review" column. In 2000, he joined the Editorial Committee as Editor-in-Chief, a post he has held for twenty-one and a half years.

To put that into perspective, consider that it has been the Editor-in-Chief's responsibility, together with the Managing Editor, to vet, compile, and review the content for each issue, aside from contributing articles himself. Consider that our magazine is a biweekly with twenty-five issues per year. That's 537 issues of the magazine, on a without-fail two-week recurring schedule! Except for a brief period of absence due to health concerns, Dr. Visscher has been our steady hand at the helm, faithfully ensuring the content was reviewed and ready for publication.

Dr. Visscher, our hearty thanks for your distinguished service to our magazine and thereby the churches! We know that another retirement will not mean an end to your work, and we pray for a blessing on the endeavours to which you will now be able to devote yourself more fully, and, hopefully, a more relaxed pace.

Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer, already on the Editorial Committee, has been found willing to take up this task, beginning with the first issue of the new year. Thank you! Inevitably, a new leader will mean some different ideas and initiatives, and we look forward to your leadership of our magazine into the coming years. Yet, our mission remains the same – to encourage, educate, engage, and unite.

Space does not permit me to mention all the names, but allow me to thank our Editorial Committee, our column coordinators, and our regular contributors for your hard work this year.

Thank you to our advertisers for your support of our magazine.

Dear reader, thank you for your continued support and involvement in our magazine. We pray that it may continue to be a blessing to you. On behalf of the Premier Printing team, we extend our warm greetings to you and our prayer for the blessings of our Father in the New Year. ☐

William Gortemaker

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR



James Visscher *Minister emeritus*
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The Preacher reminds us that there is a season for everything under the sun, and that surely includes retiring as well. Since July of 2000 I have been the Editor of *Clarion*, and this means that it is high time for me to step aside and hand the reins over to someone else. It has been a privilege to serve our Canadian Reformed community in this capacity for so many years.

It has also been a privilege to work with so many good people. My thanks go out to:

The publisher, William Gortemaker (and before him to his father, Bill). He has been super supportive over the years and a great help when needed. His staff too has always been of the highest caliber.

The Managing Editor, Laura Veenendaal, who has done her work with great professionalism and skill.

The Co-editors: Revs. Peter Holtvlüwer, Eric Kampen, Matthew Van Luik, and Prof. Jason Van Vliet (and before them Rev. Richard Aasman, the late Prof. Jack de Jong, Prof. Niek Gootjes, Rev. Bill Slomp, the late Rev. Klaas Stam, and Prof. Cornelis Van Dam), who could always be counted on for their advice when needed.

Many thanks as well to the advertisers who continued to support our humble efforts and made them viable.

Most of all, thanks to our readers, who have remained faithful over the years even in a time when the printed page is taking a backseat to all things digital. May your support continue to be there in the years to come.

Finally, a warm welcome to the new Editor, the Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer. He is both young and capable and has the potential to lead *Clarion* forward in the coming years.

God's blessing to all. 🍷

James Visscher



Ordination of Rev. Shin

L. OOSTERHOFF



On the morning of June 6, Spring Creek Canadian Reformed Church confessed in song that “Great is, O God, your steadfast love, / far higher than the heavens above” (Psalm 108:2). And indeed God, in his steadfast love, has provided us with a new pastor and teacher: Rev. Daniel Shin.

Ordination

The morning of the ordination was a typical warm and sunny late spring day, but our manner of meeting was quite out of the ordinary – Rev. Shin was installed in a drive-in parking lot service. Despite the unusual circumstances, it was wonderful to be together in one place for this special day. The parking lot was packed with both Spring Creekers and many of Rev. Shin’s friends.

Dr. Van Vliet preached on Isaiah 40: 9-11 with the theme, “Hear the good news: ‘Behold your LORD comes with power to save.’” We were reminded that the church

< Rev. Shin and Russell





is called to herald the good news of salvation to the world and that God in his faithfulness has provided men for this task.

After the preaching, the ordination took place. This included the laying on of hands by eight ministers and elders, including three of Rev. Shin's former professors.

After the service, there were several letters shared – the usual letters from neighbouring churches, but also an encouraging letter from Rev. Shin's parents in South Korea. Several local ministers spoke words of congratulations and encouragement as well – including our former pastor Rev. Holtvlüwer, who spoke on behalf of Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church, but also as Rev. Shin's former pastor.

That afternoon we all returned to the parking lot and tuned into 92.7 FM to hear Rev. Shin preach his inaugural sermon and perform his first baptism. He chose Luke 5:1-11 as his text and presented it under the theme: "Jesus calls Peter to catch men by approaching, convicting, and encouraging him."

(Page opposite, top left) The laying on of hands: Dr. Van Vliet, Dr. de Visser, Dr. Van Raalte, Rev. Kampen, Rev. Sikkema, Rev. Swaving, Br. Bosch, Rev. Holtvlüwer

(Page opposite, top row, right) Brian Bosch, Rev. Shin, Eileen VanEs, Simone Vis, Joyce Olij

(Page opposite, bottom) Micah Oosterhoff plays guitar while some of the younger members of the church sing "Jesus Loves Me"


(Above, left) An unusual installation service

(Above, right) Rev. Shin enjoys a round of volleyball

Celebration

After the busy summer months were over (so many weddings!), we were able to celebrate Rev. Shin's coming with an afternoon come-and-go event and a short program. The tent we had rented for our outdoor COVID-style worship services was the perfect venue for this beautiful late summer afternoon. In addition to the tasty food, pleasant fellowship, and volleyball, we enjoyed some singing – first the children of the congregation sang "Jesus Loves Me" in English and then we all attempted to sing "Jesus Loves Me" in Korean. Brian Bosch hosted a quiz show with Rev. Shin squaring off against a panel of experts: Joyce Olij, Simone Vis, and Eileen VanEs. With the help of the audience Rev. Shin managed to squeak ahead of the panel of experts and was declared the winner.

The highlight of the afternoon was when Rev. Shin was presented with his gift from the congregation. In a funny twist on the usual manner of gift giving, the Welcome Committee had conspired with Rev. Shin and kept the surprise from the congregation – Rev. Shin was given a puppy! Russell the Jack Russell now adds a little noise and activity to the manse.

The formal installation and welcome have now happened, but Rev. Shin continues to faithfully make his way through the congregation with a visit to every household. It is our prayer that as he gets to know us and as we get to know him, we may all be mutually blessed and built up and that, above all, the glorious gospel of Christ will be proclaimed. 



Steps, Milestones, and Moments

Graduation at Emmanuel Christian High School, September 11, 2021

ARTHUR KINGMA

In a freshly mown grass field, framed in the distance with mixed forest on the west and a church on the east, stands a white tent. Four spires rise to the cloudless sky. The tent stands majestically, gaining prominence and colour as the morning sun rises upon it. It's a tent without sides, sheltering 270 black chairs, arranged in groups of two or five, appropriately distanced. Another tent flanks its south side, dwarfed, but as white and as proud. A gentle southwest breeze brings promises of fresh air throughout the tent.

By ten o'clock, vehicles arrive. Some people roll out wires to add livestream capabilities and enhanced sound to the large tent; others carry food and drink to the small tent. Within a half hour, guests stroll in to claim their seats; graduands gather on a gentle berm, bedazzling each other with their hairstyles, dresses, and suits. By eleven, all are seated, even the 48 grads, sitting with the four that they specifically invited to their Grade 12 graduation.

The chairman, Butch Medemblik, opens the festive occasion. He shares words of gratitude to God for allowing this event to happen and reads words of direction from Scripture. A jubilant "Great is Thy Faithfulness" fills the air. The keynote speaker, Dianne Westrik, gently addresses the whole audience: moms,

dads, grandmas, grandpas, brothers, sisters, friends, staff, and grads. Amazingly, four or five rows of other guests flank the rear of the tent.

She establishes the purpose of the address: "The steps on your journey have brought you to this day – a milestone on your path – not a destination in itself, but a moment to stop, reflect, and rejoice in God's grace in all our lives." She reminds the grads of baby steps, or holding adult's hands for security and stability. While that no longer literally happens, thankfully, she highlighted the One above who is there for stability and security "along the path: He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber." To strengthen the reflection in the first half of her speech, Dianne shares direction in her second half: Go on in your life and continue to see three key blessings. Blessing #1 is to see that God uses our homes, church, and schools, to be connected and enriched by his goodness. Blessing #2 is to see that each graduand has been equipped with gifts – gifts from you to give to others, whoever those others will be. She quoted from Hebrews 13:16: "*Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*" As the body of Christ, united together with those special characteristics and unique gifts, we help to build



his kingdom, she states. In blessing #3, she reminds the grads that “God matures you unto salvation; you are prepared and matured for the next leg of your journey. You never graduate from the gospel; it remains central on your journey. You never move from it! It is your compass, it keeps you in range, it guides your steps.” To close her address, Dianne shared a memorable verse: *“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work”* (2 Cor 9:8).

After a reflective and sincere singing of verses from Psalm 119, Stephen DeBoer, the principal, shares his address, and calls on both the board chair and Theo Hopman to assist in handing out diplomas. KHK photography snaps pictures of each grad as they pose with covered diplomas in their hand.


Truly, a milestone has been reached by each, and definitely a time of celebration for all.

Theo Hopman and Arthur Kingma then present the awards and bursaries to the grads. Since no recipients’ names are printed or have leaked out via social media, this awards ceremony holds surprises and perhaps disappointments for some. Beaming faces come to the grass stage to receive their hard-earned awards, and proudly return to their seats, welcomed by happy families. To keep proper perspective, however, Arthur quotes, for the benefit of all graduates, part of the keynote address, “You have each received provisions, equipment, and the gear needed for the journey through your life. And he grants maturity, that your faith can grow, and that you see what God is doing in and through your life with the gifts he has given. May your spirit grow bold for God’s calling on your life.”

The valedictorian, Laurissa VanLuik, takes the opportunity to help her class, her teachers, and the audience to reflect from a student's perspective. With wit, enthusiasm, and dynamo, she shares class experiences, reveals class secrets, and encourages classmates. Her conclusion wonderfully compliments the keynote address, and gives glory to God. The audience responds in an enthusiastic applause.

After singing Hymn 8, Mr. DeBoer leads in closing prayer. Once the echoes of verses 1 and 4 of our national anthem dissipate, a hubbub of congratulatory wishes are shared, drinks are served, fruit and goodies are eaten, and then, to add an extra note of informality, the staff shares with all present their annual Jeopardy game. Mr. Alkema runs the show. Students selected categories and levels, and questions like "Who is Colton?" or "Who is Sarah?" are shouted out in response to the revealed word or phrase.

And, definitely, a "hit-the-spot" luncheon. Mrs. Joyce Feenstra and the Grade 12 ladies serve amazing salads and buns laden with pulled pork. Wow! Guests ask for recipes. What a wonderful ending to a festive day.

By three in the afternoon, all is quiet. Food tables have been cleared, cleaned, and stowed; the wires that snaked through the grass have disappeared; the screen and sound equipment, carefully brought to the church, are no more; chairs and lectern carted away in trailers reveal the now dimpled, flattened grass. The breeze that had jovially muscled up to blow speakers' papers away three times during the ceremony now whistles freely through the open tent. The overhead sun smiles on the cleanliness, and the birds, field mice, chipmunks, and all other creatures gather together again to chat about what they just witnessed. The audience and the grads, now dispersed, share memories, and ponder in their hearts the joys and messages of the day. The tent, still flanked on the south side, stands firm, perhaps even straighter and taller, and if able, is thankful for being able to house this beautiful Saturday graduation ceremony. Praise to the Creator, the Director and Sustainer of our lives. 

(Page opposite, clockwise, from top left)
Laurissa VanLuik shares her valedictorian address

Mr. Butch Medemblik, board chairman

Mrs. Dianne Westrik, keynote speaker

Mr. Stephen DeBoer, ready to hand out diplomas

The big white tent

Mr. Theo Hopman presents a bursary to Ben Jagt

48 graduates are standing for an enthusiastic applause

Description of the Awards

Honours Achievement Award

Madelyn Broersma	Alexander Thalen
Dianne DeBoer	Kaycee VanSydenborgh
Serena deWitt	Cassidy Vanleeuwen
Logan Doekes	Hailey Vanleeuwen
Taylor Feenstra	Laurissa VanLuik
Rebekah Harlaar	Cameron VanWoudenberg
Ian Hoeksema	Curtis VanWoudenberg
Benjamin Jagt	Deanna Vis
Sarah Knot	Nicole Vis
Christina Kottelenberg	Alexander Westrik
Jenna Lodder	Sophia Westrik
Naomi Meerstra	Tiana Westrik
Kaitlyn Niezen	Shawna Wierenga
Evan Nijenhuis	

Royal LePage RCR Realty Business Excellence Award

Cassidy VanLeeuwen

Governor General's Award

Hailey VanLeeuwen

Post Farm Structures Award

Curtis VanWoudenberg

The Lieutenant Governor's Community

Volunteer Award

Ben Jagt

Wightman Family Bursary

Ben Jagt

Golden Eagle Award

Austin Knol

Naomi Meerstra

Curtis VanWoudenberg

Sophia Westrik

Ashley's Music

Studio Music

Appreciation Award

Tiana Westrik

Citizenship Award

Alexander Thalen

L. Martin Toet Memorial

Athletics Scholarship

Naomi Meerstra

Curtis VanWoudenberg

Stewardship Award

Sophia Westrik

Jordan Hutchinson

Memorial Academic

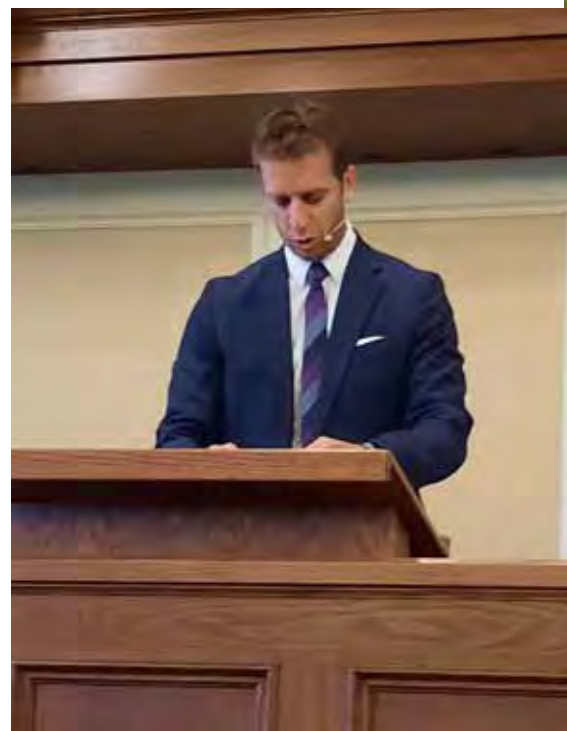
Proficiency Award

Jenna Lodder

The Light Of Jesus Christ

to Shine in Downtown Grimsby, Ontario

THERESA POST





It was a highly anticipated day on September 12, 2021. Members of the new Canadian Reformed Church in Grimsby (the official name is still being decided upon) excitedly and thankfully gathered for the inaugural service at 4:00 p.m. in Covenant Canadian Reformed Church of Grassie, the mother church of this newly established congregation of 170 members. Though the plan is for this new congregation to meet in the St. John's Presbyterian Church on Mountain Street

in Grimsby, due to the size of the church and the restrictions from COVID, we were grateful to be able to use the facilities of the mother church so that all members of the new Grimsby church could attend the inaugural service together, in person. There was clearly an atmosphere of great joy and bittersweet thoughts at this service.

As many of you who have experienced the “leaving” of one mother church to become part of a newly established daughter church, there is always the feelings of sadness for separating from the many beloved brothers and sisters of the mother church as well as the feelings of excitement and wonder of the possibilities and the future of this smaller family of believers. And rightly so!

(Above), St. John's Presbyterian Church in Grimsby

(Page opposite, far left), Installation of brothers Derek Bartels, Al Schutten, and John Kottelenberg

(Page opposite, near left), Rev. R. W. den Hollander




After more than two years of hard work and planning, which started with a small group of members of the Covenant congregation who saw a need for a church to be instituted in the heart of Grimsby, as well as this being a helpful solution to the increasing workload of the pastor and office bearers of the ever-growing mother church, the day had finally arrived. The small group of congregant members became a focus group that then led to the Grimsby Institution Committee. Each of these groups of men and women laid out the groundwork and plans to present to Classis Niagara and, after some hiccups due to COVID-19, some challenges and struggles, the institution of a new church in Grimsby was approved. Looking back, it is clear that the Lord of all, our Great King and Saviour, has always been the One in control. God is good!

Reverend R. J. den Hollander led the inaugural service using the text of Matthew 5:14-16 under the theme of, "Jesus Bids us Shine." His message was very appropriate and beautiful as he encouraged all to remember who we are, what we do, and why we do it under the command of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus

Christ. He reminded us that we are lights in this town and our presence should display to all that we are a reflection of Jesus Christ. During this service, the congregation could witness the installation of seven elders and three deacons. Once the service was completed, the congregation had an opportunity to receive greetings and congratulations from a number of sister churches, including four in-person greetings (Pastor Shin of the Spring Creek congregation of Tintern, brother Ted Witten of the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church, brother Marty Schulenberg of the Covenant congregation in Grassie, and brother Bruce DeBoer of the Dunnville Canadian Reformed Church). As well, we received and read three letters of congratulations from the Attercliffe, Niagara South, and the Vineyard Canadian Reformed Churches respectively.

It was a beautiful and blessed service in which all were fed with the Word, encouraged by the Spirit, and blessed by the Creator and Protector of all. The Grimsby church members finished this wonderful afternoon with the sharing of a picnic dinner outside on the patio of the Covenant Canadian Reformed Church. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

When you are visiting in the Niagara region, please know you are welcome to join us in worship every Sunday at the St. John's Presbyterian Church on Mountain Street in Grimsby at 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m! 

(Above left), Installation of brothers Henry Alkema, Dan Witten, Ryan Kingma, John Oostdyk, and Dave Baartman

(Above right), Picnic on the patio after the inaugural service

Guido de Brès Christian High School: Graduation 2021

JOHN SCOTT

It is tremendously difficult to walk through Guido de Brès Christian High School in Hamilton and not be made aware of its motto, “Everything in Christ.” It is highly evident in various artistic displays throughout the building, inside and out. One of the images in the school’s logo creatively presents this truth with two spikes of wheat; golden and ready for harvest. A plant that grows is nourished from the roots and multiplies to produce good abundant fruit. The Commencement of the Class of 2021 on Saturday, September 25 lived out the theme of the Christian’s call to be rooted in Christ.

In his welcome, Principal Jason Heemskerk (right), drew the attention of the graduates and guests to the school’s motto as a framework for finding a way through life. He compared the cultivation of a life devoted to Christ to the process of garden cultivation. He pointed to the importance of roots to a garden’s plants and the nourishment that is best provided through organic fertilizer. Mr. Heemskerk found several similarities between organic fertilizer and high school; it nourishes, and (ahem) it smells. Drawing wittily from 2 Corinthians 2:15-16, listeners were challenged to have an “aroma” of Christ that was identifiable in the world. This “aroma” would be appealing to some and repulsive to others.



List of Awards

Guido de Brès Award

Jaime Blokker
Megan Hulzebosch
Alexa Kampen
Raine Knegt
Emma Lof
Julia Spanninga
Nadia VanderVeen
Paige VanSydenborgh

Academic Athletic Award

Emma Lof

The Guido de Brès Participation Award

Blake Bartels
Landen Beijes
Lucas Bork
Shelby Bos
Ryenn Jans

Alexa Kampen
Jakob Koning
Raelene Slaa
Tianna VanderHoeven
Tamryn Vanderwoude

The Governor General's Bronze Medal

Raine Knegt

The Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award for Students

Jaden Hoogsteen

The Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff Student-of-the-Year Award

Alexa Kampen

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL DIPLOMAS

Connor Wichert Aalbers
Faith Elisabeth Aaltje Aalbers
Cristian Willem Aantjes
Nicklas Edward Alkema
Blake Elliott Bartels
Isaiah Jesse Bartels
Luke Jonathan Bartels
Samantha Antonia Bartels
Landen John Beijes
Rachel Elisabeth Beijes
Jaime Lynne Blokker
Emily Grace Boersema
Lucas Michael Bork
Shelby Grace Roseanne Bos
Jackson Derek Bouwman
Ava Dorothea Chong
Naomi Paulina Chong
Emma Grace D'Addazio
Damon Manuel Da Silva
Katelyn Marlaine DeGelder
Juanita Lynne DeRuiter
Noah DeVries
Nathan Samuel Draaistra
Kaylee Janice Gelms
Joshua Thomas Groen
Ethan William Harsevoort

Makenna Christina Harsevoort
Reuben Pieter Harsevoort
Owen Jesse Heeg
Brody Mitchell Heeringa
Mitchell David Heyink
Kathleen Cornelia Homan
Jaden Daniel Hoogsteen
Emma Faith Hordyk
Megan Charity Hulzebosch
Elijah Zion Jans
Jakob Matthew Jans
Ryenn Johanna Jans
Bradley John Jansema
Matthew Jansema
Joel Nathaniel Jongbloed
Dylan Luke Jonker
Samuel Harold Jonker
Alexa Deanna Kampen
Dayna Lynn Kampen
Levi Fredrick Kampen
Rhone Merrick Kampen
Zachary Lieuwe Kampen
Hannah Alissa Kelly
Elisabeth Naomi Kingma
Sadie Dawn Kingma
Raine Kasiya Knegt

Jakob Nathanael Koning
Terissa Kathryn Lanting
Emma Annelies Lof
Shayna Marlene Lof
Ashley Victoria Ludwig
Leah Justine Ludwig
Levi Roel Ludwig
Calvin Harold Meerveld
Ember Nell Muis
Liana Clare Noot
David John Connell Pierotti
Kyle Patrick Ravensbergen
Nienke Fiona Ravensbergen
Jeremy Michael Salomons
Elyse Marija Scholtens
Frank Schuller
Caleb Michael Sieders
Madison Olivia Sipkema
Raelene Tami Slaa
Julia Brooke Spanninga
Logan Gerald Stam
Carter Elliott Stegenga
Talina Grace Tamminga
Elijah Derk Tel
Aiden Keith Temple
Owen Samuel Tenhage
Katie Martha Van Dam


James Gerald Van Iperen
Emily Ann VanDasselaar
Gus John VanDasselaar
Hannah Lauren Vandenberg
Tianna Marie VanderHoeven
Calvin Scott VanderLaan
Jonathan Edward VanderLaan
Nadia Christina VanderVeen
Naomi Jantina VanderVeen
Joelle Christine VanderVelde
Kara Jamisyn VanderVelde
Marcel Jacob Vanderwoude
Tamryn Grace Vanderwoude
Blake Harris Van Egmond
Rachel Nicole Van Egmond
Leah Elizabeth Van Raalte
Paige Lynn Van Sydenborgh
Tia Aveline Van Veen
Loretta Maralynn VanWoudenberg
Cole Spencer Vis
Henry John Vis
Connor John Westlake
Lukas Keith Henry Wielink
Micah Lynn Wieske
Elisha Yaqub



Looking at Jesus's parable of the sower, Dr. Jeff Temple addressed the graduates. Dr. Temple looked at two reasons for roots. He observed that roots make growth possible and that roots help plants to stand firm. Application can be drawn into our lives as well. We, like plants, need to keep growing. High School has provided a good beginning to establish a root system of nourishment, but continued growth needs to be found in God's Word throughout our lives. We, like plants, must remain firm in God's love when we face challenges. As covenant children of God, we recognize his love for us. This indeed provides for us stability and aids us in standing firm in our world.

As graduating students participated throughout the ceremony, it was a tremendous testimony of God's working in the lives of the young adults. As students sang (thank-you Kara Vandervelde, Hannah Kelly, and Julia Spanninga), performed

musically (thank-you Jenna Dekker, Arie DeVries, Brooke VanderVelde), spoke (well done Valedictorian Landen Beijes), and were awarded their Ontario Secondary School Diplomas (congratulations graduates) and various awards for academic, athletic, and community involvement (well done Jaime Blokker, Megan Huizebosch, Alexa Kampen, Raine Knecht, Emma Lof, Julia Spanninga, Nadia Vanderveen, Paige VanSydenborgh, Blake Bartels, Landen Beijes, Lucas Bork, Shelby Bos, Ryenn Jans, Jakob Koning, Raelene Slaa, Tianna VanderHoeven, Tamryn Vanderwoude, and Jaden Hoogsteen), there was significant evidence of the growth and fruit that God has worked in their lives as they have been nurtured in their years at Guido de Brès Christian High School.

Following COVID-19 protocols, the proceedings were held under a tent for some and in the beautiful outdoors in the school's field of grass for others. How fitting that during the ceremony, with the theme of "The Reason for Roots," that nourishing rains should begin to fall and require a slight change of plans as many took cover in the school gym to watch and listen to the live feed. Undeterred, families and friends were encouraged with the accomplishments of the graduates and the valuable, rich heritage that has been passed to students for soon approaching fifty years. 

(Clockwise from top left), Pre-ceremony luncheon;

Rev. Temple delivering the address to the graduating class.

Current Student Leadership Team President, Katie Tomlin, granting a Participation Award to Lucas Bork

Valedictorian Landen Beijes

Student of the Year Award Recipient, Alexa Kampen



“Be Still, and Know That I Am God”

MARTIN VANDERWEL

It's only fitting to start in this manner. When words fail, we turn to our Father in deep humiliation and confess that he alone is Lord and Majesty over everything. That includes the devastation many of us here in the Fraser Valley and our friends south of the low-lying 49th encountered in a forty-eight-hour

period several weeks ago, as an “atmospheric river” emptied itself and the swollen rivers overflowed into our peaceful lives.

On Sunday, November 14, many gathered for worship, not unlike any other Sunday really, save for the fact it was under sodden skies and a steady downpour. But hey, this is part of



(At left, and top) aerial view of the flooded prairie, courtesy, district of Abbotsford.

(Above) Andrew and Anita deLeeuw, "MarDel Farm, one of the lowest spots in the Sumas Prairie.

Cascadia and we're accustomed to the occasional sprinkle, aren't we? Ah yes, we are a hearty bunch! At that time none of us felt that we were in any imminent danger.

But the rain never stopped. The Lord brought more, and for forty-eight long hours the lands were drenched, and the flood threats became very real.

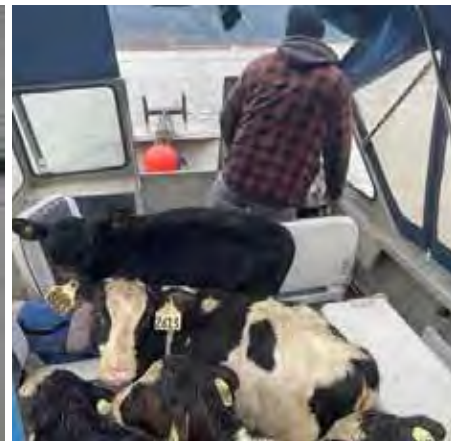
Each one of us has a story to tell.

There's a story of a hasty evacuation, leaving livestock and precious belongings behind. A text from a local farmer in our circles to his daughter in law, "We turned the hydro off. We lost." They could only stand by and watch as their livelihood and belongings were engulfed by raging waters within thirty

minutes of a breach in one of the many dikes that are supposed to keep the old ghosts of Sumas Lake from reappearing.

There's a story of narrow escape and bravery while helping others. Some stayed a little longer than they were supposed to. And who can blame them. While determinedly struggling to save their own homes and farms, many resolutely abandoned their efforts in defeat, only to navigate across the rising waters to help a neighbour to possibly save their properties and possessions. Some succeeded, others did not, as they could only stand by and watch in horror.

There's a story of opening homes to those displaced. Within hours, the communion of saints sprang to life. Facebook groups



(At left) another aerial view of the flooding.

(Above) moving calves to safety.


lit up with offers of refuge for as many nights needed. Driveways became plugged with borrowed trailers and motorhomes, and several families put out extra plates for the evening meal. Some of the evacuees, who were never really “churched,” respectfully sat through family devotions with hands folded, but were moved to tears to see those around the table worship God and sing praises. They could also witness true family communion in the “breaking of bread,” something they obviously were not accustomed to, or perhaps lost along the way. The Lord works through his Spirit in these trying times!

There’s a story about Credo Christian High School, who held a food and supply drive. It started with some flyers distributed in the neighbourhood with a notice for the drive. The response was overwhelming, and as result newspaper and TV exposure led to a long school hallway packed with needful things for those that lost it all. (OK, that one caught me in the feels, I’m fine thanks.)

And then there’s a story of midnight heroics sandbagging to save a pump station. The call came out at the midnight hour. This pump station is vital to our flood relief. It was already being overtaxed in its efforts to propel waters into the Fraser River. If it failed or became submerged, the disaster area could potentially have been much larger. Hundreds of volunteers, most of them whom had, just a day or two prior, sat in warm pews, mobilized themselves to become part of a sandbagging crew. We affectionately call them “Sandbaggers.” Sounds like a Hockey team. Go Sandbaggers Go! And they did. Tirelessly, for multiple hours, singing songs and offering encouragement during times when the bag brigade showed signs of fatigue.

God is the author of all of this. He brought the water, but he also brought the relief, and we confess he will also restore his people through it all. A text in one of the following Sundays, “Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Blessed be the name of the Lord? Really? All this damage, all this loss, all this sadness and sorrow; blessed be the Lord? A resounding yes!

The book of Job is a story about God and who he is (even though Job appears to be the focus throughout the narrative), it is the Lord and his grace that shine. And so it is in our lives, although visited by recent tragedy; he continues to be our rock and salvation. Our prayers continue to go up for all those afflicted in so many ways and who, Lord willing, may go back home to pick up the pieces and continue on. We give thanks for those who stand beside our needy brothers and sisters showing the fruits of the Spirit. Thank you, Sandbaggers, thank you bakers and home makers, and for all the prayers offered up at this time.

When we acknowledged that God’s hand was in the events of these past weeks, we confess that it was God working in us with his Holy Spirit to acknowledge him in adversity. After the forty-eight-hour deluge, the sun peaked out for a brief moment and several could witness a rainbow in the sky, a sign of his faithfulness and promises to his people. Our prayer each day is that all of us, whether in prosperity or adversity, will be able to say that God be praised for his goodness and wisdom. All glory to him on high! 

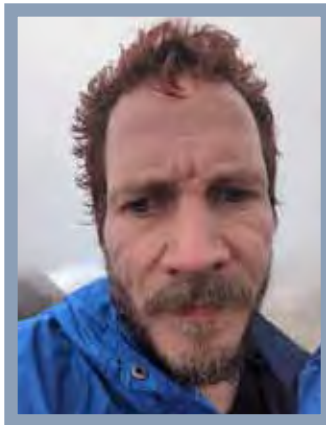
RAY OF SUNSHINE

Rachel Vis

**Stephen Dykstra**

Hello. My name is Stephen Dykstra. I live in Smithers, BC. I am a member of the Canadian Reformed Church at Smithers. I figure a lot of people who know me look at me as a walking encyclopedia, due to my intelligence. I may be a little smarter than average. I love history, mathematics, and even some things people may find weird such as Nuclear Physics.

Here's a little about my history. I've had a bad history of depression. I can't really get too much into how bad it got, but the past several years, it seemed to have gotten better, albeit, it still hits me from time to time. I was quite aggressive while growing up, but if you got to know me today, you'd never figure I was. I grew up in Smithers and was a member of the Smithers Canadian Reformed Church. I was baptized by Rev. C. VanSpronsen and, ironically, Rev. J. VanSpronsen did my Profession back when our church was on Fifteenth Avenue.



Living in Smithers is somewhat decent, but because I don't drive, it's hard for me to go places. I do love hiking, and last year, I found my new favourite hiking trail. If you're familiar with the Bulkley Valley, specifically around Smithers, there are some trails out on the Babine Range. For the longest time, it was Silver King Basin (or Joe L'Orsa Cabin). My new favorite hike is Lyon Creek Trail. It was absolutely awesome up there.

On top of my love for the outdoors, I'm also tech savvy and am quite a good photographer. I haven't done much photography the past few years, but I'm hoping to get back into it. I'm also planning on writing a series of articles regarding issues such as depression, bullying, social media, and more. If I could get enough articles together, I was hoping to publish them into a book. I've always wanted to do a book on hiking, which is on my list.

Speaking of articles, when I was in school, I've always been bullied. This has to be something that needs to be addressed.

The sad truth is that bullying, not only in person, but also cyber-bullying, it is one of the leading causes of suicides in young teenagers.

Here's some interesting facts about me you may be interested in. I can say "Thank You" in about six different languages, I know some Dutch and a little bit of French (although, nowhere to get me through if I needed to speak these languages), and I'm very musical. I can play piano, harmonica, and clarinet. I can also play guitar one string at a time. The chords are going to be the hard part. I also have a flute I was hoping to learn. Piano was the first instrument I was ever able to play and can play quite a few songs from the *Book of Praise* and a large variety of other songs. I play by ear and there have been a few people who said I should play for the church. In theory I can, but if I try

to play for an audience, let alone while people are singing, I just get nervous so I go a little too fast. I've always done it in the key of C Major, but now I can do a few songs using the actual key signature.

If you wish to know me better or ask questions about myself, please, feel free to drop me a line at: sdyk2011@gmail.com. I always enjoy sending/receiving emails, or even snail mail.

I've also wanted to thank those of you who have sent me birthday cards the last number of years. I do appreciate it.

I would like to finish up with the text from my Profession of Faith: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16 ESV).

Thank you. 🙏

January birthdays

Happy Birthday to all of you celebrating a birthday in January. We wish you all a wonderful day celebrating with family and friends. I also would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and happy new year. We have so much for which to be thankful.

6 Jason Herrewynen will be 48

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

7 Christine Breukelman will be 50

2225-19th Street
Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4

13 Ben DeJong will be 31

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

14 Stephen Dykstra will be 39

Box 3573
Smithers, BC V0J 2N0

17 Henry Driegen will be 66

PO Box 2532 Station A
Abbotsford, BC V2T 6R3

17 Grace Homan will be 66

c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road S.
RR 2 Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2

19 Edwin Schutte will be 38

844 Bowman Road
Abbotsford, BC V3G 1S9
northchilliwackhome@bethesdabc.com

9 Janine Smid will be 52

c/o Beacon Home
653 Broad Street West
Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

26 Katherine Nijenhuis will be 56

c/o Lighthouse
6528 1st Line
RR 3 Fergus, ON N1M 2W4

30 Tyler Hoeksema will be 33

6755 Lorne Dr
Sardis, BC V2R 2G3

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

PRESS RELEASE



Regional Synod East

convened by and held in Spring Creek Canadian Reformed Church

NOVEMBER 10, 2021,

The meeting of the delegates was called to order by Rev. Daniel Shin, minister of the Spring Creek Canadian Reformed Church. After opening devotions, the examination of credentials, and the election of officers, Regional Synod was declared constituted.

After discussion and work by advisory committees, Synod made the following decisions:

Synod made the following regular appointments:

Church to care for the treasury	Grassie-Covenant
Church to review the treasury books	Lincoln-Vineyard
Church to maintain the archives	Toronto-Bethel
Church to inspect the archives	Brampton-Grace
Convening Church and date for the next RSE	Burlington-Fellowship, Nov 9, 2022

Synod appointed the following ministers as synodical deputies (CO 48) for the upcoming year:

From Classis Central Ontario as deputy to Classis Northern Ontario and Classis Niagara	Clarence Vandervelde; First alternate: Bill DeJong; Second alternate: Anthony Roukema
From Classis Northern Ontario as deputy to Classis Central Ontario and Classis Ontario West	Eric Kampen; First alternate: Marc Jagt; Second alternate: Matthew VanLuik
From Classis Niagara as deputy to Classis Central Ontario and Classis Ontario West	Dick Wynia First alternate: Rodney Vermeulen Second alternate: John VanWoudenberg
From Classis Ontario West as deputy for Classis Northern Ontario and Classis Niagara	John Louwerse First alternate: Ken Kok Second alternate: Arend Witten

Synod appointed the following as delegates to GS 2022:**ELDER DELEGATES**

George Bartels
 Peter Engbers
 Cornell Feenstra
 James Jonker
 Carl Oosterhoff
 Art Witten
 First alternate: Rick Ludwig
 Second alternate: Ben Harsevoort
 Third alternate: Brian Niezen
 Fourth alternate: Gary Wiese
 Fifth alternate: Bruce DeBoer
 Sixth alternate: Allard Gunnink

MINISTER DELEGATES

Eric Kampen
 Jeff Temple
 Clarence Vandervelde
 John VanWoudenberg
 Rodney Vermeulen
 Dick Wynia
 First alternate: Theo Wierenga
 Second alternate: Winston Bosch
 Third alternate: John Louwerse
 Fourth alternate: Peter Holtvlüwer
 Fifth alternate: Douwe Agema
 Sixth alternate: Marc Jagt



To adopt an overture to General Synod Guelph-Emmanuel 2022 (GS 2022) which will ensure that preparatory examinations of students of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) happen in the classis of the church to which the student belonged when applying for admission to CRTS.

To adopt an overture to GS 2022 to test and adopt additional, shorter Lord's Supper liturgical forms to accommodate the desire in the churches for more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper.

To not adopt overtures from 3 classes to add the following sentence to CO 55: "The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in the singing of the churches."

The treasurer's books were found to be in good order and the recommended assessment of \$1.00 per communicant member was adopted. Special thanks was expressed for the many decades of faithful service by br. Dave VanAmerongen, sr.

The archives were also found to be in good order.

The various Regional Synod Deputies reported on the work that they did in classical colloquiums and examinations in this past year.

Synod drafted a list of suggested names for possible appointment by GS 2022 to the board of the CRTS.

After devotions Synod was closed. 

Rev. John VanWoudenberg (vice-chairman)



Year In Review

The year of our Lord 2021 proved to be another very busy year. Many of the things that transpired were not new: working at your daily job, raising families, entering into courtships, going to school, doing business, and worshipping the Lord; although it does have to be said that some of these things took on different forms. In some places schools were closed for a time and parents and children alike had to adjust to video learning. Going to work is something that we consider normal, but many businesses told employees to work from home. Going to church, too, had always been a normal thing, but suddenly gathering together in a building was forbidden. In short, 2021 saw its share of changes and challenges.

What will the year 2022 bring? We cannot say with absolute certainty, but there are things that lead us to suspect that a number of things will happen. What things? Well, consider the subject of climate change. It received more and more attention as 2021 wore on: devastating forest fires and extreme temperatures, as well as an atmospheric river of water and flooding in BC, deep drought in parts of Alberta, violent weather in Ontario. Internationally, too, the weather was often unpredictable and deadly. So, it is an almost sure thing that 2022 will once again be filled with news about weird and extreme weather.

Another subject that will no doubt receive some more press in 2022 is COVID. This nasty virus just does not seem to want to go away. As 2021 came to a close, infection rates were declining in some parts of the world and there was hope that perhaps, just perhaps, we might turn the corner once and for all in 2022. Will those hopes be realized? We do not know, but what we do know is that COVID as a news item will continue to garner headlines.

But enough of trends and developments. Let us conclude by saying that this new year will no doubt see its share of events, both good and bad. We can safely predict that. Yet over against it, we, as believers, continue to trust in the faithfulness and care of the Lord our God. He will keep his people, no matter what.

Still, the focus for this article is not supposed to be on 2022, but on the things that transpired in our church life in 2021. So, what did happen?

Churches and pastors

First, a few general comments. For one, the number of churches in our federation continues to grow. In a time and age when many churches are declining in membership, if not shutting their doors, our churches keeping on increasing. Of course, it is not that much of an increase, and we would really like to see much

more, but it is still an increase. Second, our churches continue to face a ministerial shortage. Retirements, new openings, and sickness are all contributing to this trend. Thankfully, an increasing number of young men are preparing themselves for pastoral service. Third, there are churches that have had their fellowship strained by controversy over COVID, government health regulations, church closings, vaccinations, and vaccine passports. Differing opinions over these matters and other related ones have created disagreement, division, and polarization in families, but also in churches. Extra effort and prayer will be needed to heal these breaches. Where to begin? Putting into practice the fruit of the Spirit will go a long way to restore and rebuild what has been damaged.

But enough said about that. It is now on to churches and pastors.

Ontario

When it comes to developments in Ontario, it is hard to know where to begin, from north to south, or east to west. Let's take the former this time if I have my geography right. In the capital region, where we find the church of Ottawa, the Rev. Winston Bosch teamed up for a time with an intern by the name of Hugo Star. In the area northwest of Toronto, the church at Orangeville took possession of its new church building. True, it was built on the site of the old, but it is in almost every other way a new structure. And it is beautifully done, with fine stonework on the outside, a very high and open worship space, with an expanded pipe organ, ample meeting room, a spacious catechism room, and a council room dominated by a huge and wonderfully crafted table. How do I know all this? Because I was there in September and was given a tour by the Rev. Eric Kampen.

Somewhat northwest of Orangeville is the town of Grand Valley. The church there is currently vacant and searching for a new pastor. It is also in discussion with the neighbouring churches of Fergus-North and Elora, as there has been some talk of setting up a new church in the area. Hopefully, an arrangement can be made that alleviates the over-crowding in some and does not threaten the viability of others.

The Maranatha church of Fergus South became vacant with the departure of Rev. Theo Wierenga and is actively searching for a replacement. Further to the northwest, the church at Owen Sound is doing the same, as its pastor David Pol accepted a call from the Free Reformed Church of Southern River to do

mission work in Papua New Guinea. There he is labouring beside another Canadian expat, the Rev. Ryan DeJonge.

And then there is the Emmanuel church at Guelph. Its pastor, the Rev. Peter Feenstra, had health issues and was granted early retirement. Thus far a successor has not been found. Across town, the other Guelph church called Living Word moved into new premises. For years it had been worshipping in a gym, but when a viable church building in the area became available, they, along with others, submitted a bid and they won. By the way, it is a rather distinctive building and looks like praying hands. Drive by and have a look.

All of the churches mentioned thus far, except Ottawa, are part of Classis Northern Ontario. Not that long ago there were no vacancies at all in the entire classis, but now there are four and a number of the present ministers are inching towards retirement. How quickly things change! It reminds us to be thankful for what we have, to avoid complacency, and not to be surprised when changes come our way.

Heading towards Lake Ontario, the church at Brampton (which belongs to Classis Northern Ontario too), along with its regional home mission, Eric Onderwater, is hard at work dealing with all sorts of contacts. Meanwhile, the Rev. Matthew VanLuik continues to lead the congregation and is heading up the Word and Spirit Institute. The church of Toronto (actually Richmond Hill) continues to experience a slow decline in membership due mostly to ever increasing house prices. Hopefully ways will be found to increase the numbers and expand the light in their part of the GTA.

Along the lakeshore, the church at Waterdown was so kind as to give its minister, the Rev. Clarence Vandeveld, a study leave. They managed in the interim to obtain the services of a recently retired Seminary professor and their former minister, Dr. Gerhard Visscher. Meanwhile, Waterdown church also received a new pastor in the person of the Rev. Victor Atallah. He is known among us as the man who leads the Middle East



Reformed Fellowship (MERF). For many years, his ministerial credentials were with a local church in the Netherlands that belonged to the Reformed Churches (Article 31), but recent doctrinal developments in that church have caused him to look elsewhere for a new home church. Thankfully, Waterdown could step into the breach and that too is fitting as they have been at the forefront of support for MERF in Canada for many years. We welcome him and his wife, Lisa!

Across town, the new Flamborough church building is taking shape and there is the hope that the congregation will be able to enjoy its new premises by the end of 2021. Now that is great news! After being “homeless” for years and having to make use of the Waterdown building, the congregation finally has a place to call its own. Of course, I know that the church is about people not a steeple, but it’s a huge step forward to have an established place in the community. No doubt the Fellowship church is still hoping to emulate this but for the interim it continues to make good use of the fine premises of the Grace Christian School.

In the greater Hamilton area there were also some new developments in 2021. Mercy church, a satellite church plant of Blessings, is moving steadily forward. Pastor Ian Wildeboer and congregation benefited from the services of a Seminary graduate, br. Tim Veenstra. He is headed to classis for an exam in December. Meanwhile, Blessings church, which lost the services of Rev. Hilmer Jagersma to Fellowship, has received a “yes” to the call they extended to the Rev. Dr. Greg Davidson. Seeing that he comes to us from a federation with which the Canadian Reformed Churches have no official ties, a special classical examination will be held in the not too distant future.

Moving down to the wine growing region of Ontario, we welcome the institution of a new church in Grimsby. It is mostly an offshoot of the Grassie church, which has been expanding rapidly and could apparently afford to lose a few members. Rev. Rolf den Hollander, who is serving in Grassie and has been on leave for a time, is thankfully taking up his duties again. Rev. Clarence Bouwman, who was serving the church of Smithville, received a change in status as he is now the minister emeritus of that congregation. This change, however, has had little impact on his workload, as he is still busy preaching every Sunday. Not so far away, the not so old church of Niagara South called Candidate Ruurd Offringa. He accepted and is at present preparing for another classis examination with a view to ordination. We wish him well. Finally, the Dunnville church continues to experience steady growth and is holding four worship services a Sunday. What this usually means is that a split or an institution

is in the works. So perhaps another new church will emerge in the Niagara region in the new year.

I am not hearing anything from the churches and pastors in western Ontario, so I can only assume that all is going well in the churches of London, Kerwood, Chatham, and Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Manitoba

As for the churches in Manitoba, I have heard very little in terms of new church developments. Presently all the churches have their own pastors and there are no vacancies. Various attempts were being made to plant churches in the Brandon area and elsewhere, and we can only hope that these attempts will continue and be blessed. Much further away, and still a member of Classis Manitoba, the American Reformed Church at Denver, Colorado, continues to be served by the Rev. Steve Vandeveld. We wish our colleague there every strength as it is not easy to pastor a church so far away from the rest of the federation. Hopefully, he has some good local contacts that bring some measure of fellowship and encouragement.

Alberta

In the province of Alberta, there are several vacancies. The Church of Barrhead became vacant when the Rev. Calvin Vanderlinde moved across the line to Nooksack Valley, Washington. The newly instituted church of Devon also remains vacant. Both churches have extended calls, but without success thus far. For the rest no news has come to us from the churches in Calgary, Coaldale, Edmonton, Neerlandia, St. Albert, and Taber, which must mean that the ministry of the gospel continues unabated.

British Columbia

In the western most province of Canada, there is no shortage of news. Far in the north the church of Smithers finally received a “yes” when the Rev. Hendrik Alkema, currently serving down under in Albany, Western Australia, accepted its call. He is hoping to arrive with his family in January of 2022, thereby exchanging the Australian summer for the Canadian winter. Is that a good trade? If all goes as planned, the score in Smithers will soon be “one down and one to go,” as it is now a two-pastor congregation. Nearby the church of Houston has not been as successful and remains vacant.

Down in the Fraser Valley, things are hopping. The Rev. Randall Visscher is settling into his new charge at the Refuge

Church of Langley. The same is true of the Rev. Phil Grotenhuis, who, together with his wife, Joy, are getting used to the Abbotsford area, where he is the new pastor of the Pathway Church. Formerly, he served the Phoenix United Reformed Church in Arizona for many years. Before that he served the URC in Lynden and thus is familiar with life in the Pacific Northwest. Welcome, Phil and Joy!

Not so far away, the church of Yarrow continues to make use of the services of Candidate Chauncey Knegt. The pastor of the Yarrow church, the Rev. Ted VanSprosen, remains on sick leave. Next door in the church of Sardis there is also a vacancy, as there is in the church of Chilliwack. Both are actively looking for capable men to fill their pastoral needs.

Across the border in the Lynden and Nooksack areas of Washington state, things appear to be going well. Thankfully in these days of no border crossing there are two pastors as well as URC ministers to exchange pulpits with from time to time.

Retired ministers

Each year the number of retired ministers in the federation keep on increasing. In 2021, the Rev. Clarence Bouwman of Smithville became an emeritus minister. As mentioned already this does not mean that he is sleeping in every morning and doing nothing. He, like so many others in that same state, is still busy writing, teaching, and preaching. Before COVID came along, many in his position were travelling near and far to assist vacant churches. While the "near" still happens, the "far" not so much so.

In memoriam – Rev. Dick de Jong (1927 – 2021)

In the middle of the summer, word reached us that the Rev. Dick de Jong had died in the Netherlands at the age of ninety-three. Many of the younger members will not remember him, but the older members in Brampton, Edmonton, Calgary, and Burlington, where he served, will. His years of service in Canada were many, but they were not without struggle. In a way he was always "a stranger in a strange land," as his heart remained in the old country. Hence it was no surprise that when he retired, he and his wife Wilma moved back to the Netherlands. There in his retirement he was able to be of service to vacant churches for many years. Still, in the end he became deeply troubled by developments and events in the Reformed Churches and the result was that he left and joined himself to De Gereformeerde Kerken.

Personally, I knew him well and I owe him a deep debt gratitude. When I started in the ministry in 1972 in Coaldale, Alberta, he was the only experienced Canadian Reformed minister in the province, and I often called on him for advice. In addition, when I went way up north to Barrhead and Neerlandia on classical preaching engagements every few months or so, he and Wilma always had a bed ready for me and the fellowship was sweet. I shall miss him, but I am glad that, after a long and full life, he is now at home with his Lord and Saviour.

Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS)

The year 2021 turned out to be a good year for our Seminary. For a time in-person learning had to be suspended due to the COVID restrictions and a shift had to be made to online learning, but by the fall, both forms of learning were in full swing again. If COVID has brought benefits to CRTS, it has come especially in the form of a substantial investment in the resources needed for online learning. While this kind of learning had been under study for some time already, the pandemic forced the Seminary's hand and compelled it to move full speed into this direction. Needless to say, all those engaged in distance learning whether in the Philippines, South Africa, or elsewhere are thankful for this development.

Another reason for thankfulness was the improved health of Prof. Ted Van Raalte. At the beginning of the year, there was much uncertainty about his future, but over time and under the Lord's blessing, he has staged a remarkable recovery. Now, this is not to say that he is 100% again, but he is moving in the right direction. In the meantime, there appears to be a warning here for theologians and pastors when it comes to mechanical contraptions that can travel at great speeds. I say that because I too jumped on one some time ago and made head-first contact with a lava rock wall. Ouch! Not recommended.





But while one professor is working on rehab, another is thinking of retirement. By now the churches have all received a letter from CRTS asking for names of men who can succeed Dr. Arjan de Visser. In 2022 the General Synod meeting in Guelph, Ontario, will need to designate a replacement for him.

In September, CRTS was once again able to hold a Convocation Evening. Unfortunately, the number of people in attendance had to be severely limited. Still, it could be witnessed, thanks to the live feed connection. Those who did so will have witnessed and heard the inaugural address of Dr. William den Hollander as Professor of New Testament Studies on the topic "Christ and the True Temple." Much appreciation was expressed to the retiring professor, Dr. Gerhard Visscher, for his many years of faithful service. Thereafter twelve new students were welcomed and degrees were conferred on five graduating students: Raoul Kingma, Kim Lapiz, Ruurd Offringa, Kevin Star, and Timothy Veenstra. When all the numbers are tallied up, CRTS now has its highest enrollment ever. Truly, a blessing in these times of many vacancies and looming retirements.

One final thing needs to be mentioned regarding CRTS and it is the fact that growth in the student body is putting considerable strain on the existing Seminary building. Classrooms need to be both expanded and added. Renovations have to be made to accommodate everyone. Yet, all of that costs money. As a result, a drive called "Partnership in the Gospel" has been launched by the Board with the aim of collecting a million dollars in donations. If the Lord has blessed you, here is a worthy cause to support.

Classes and regional synods

Throughout the year and across the land most classes managed to meet as scheduled, although any number had to resort to

meeting by Zoom. While not ideal, it works and, in some cases, even saves on travel time and money.

In addition, regional synods were also held in both East and West. Their business consisted of two main items: dealing with various appeals and electing delegates for the 2022 General Synod scheduled to meet in Guelph starting on May 10.

Ministerial gatherings

It has become a custom for ministers of the CanRC and URC to meet together annually in various parts of the country. Unfortunately, due to COVID restrictions, the meeting in BC had to be cancelled. In Ontario, however, it was a different story. Colleagues and their wives came together from October 26 – 28 at the Rathfon Inn, Port Colborne, and enjoyed some great fellowship as well as some stimulating speeches. The Revs. Dick Wynia and Harry Zekveld spoke. In addition, Dr. Bryan Chapell, well-known writer of books on preaching, former President of Covenant Theological Seminary, and now Stated Clerk of the PCA spoke on "Grace for Grumblers" (Num 20), "Lost and Found" (Luke 15) and, together with his wife Kathy, on "Blessings and Battles." I am sure that a great time was had by one and all. As well, any number of human batteries were recharged for another time of service in the various church communities.

Home mission work

Across Canada there are any number of home mission efforts / church plants / outreach churches. In Eastern Canada, the Blessings church in Hamilton and Mercy church in Stoney Creek continue to concentrate on impacting their neighbourhoods with the gospel. While there is considerable enthusiasm for this work, it is not without its challenges. Canadian culture is becoming more and more secularized. Money and pleasure are the preoccupations of many. Cradle to grave security (not to mention endless government COVID handouts) makes daily living less of a hurdle for many. In short, most Canadian citizens project an image of indifference when it comes to God. There is very little self-examination and often an absence of hunger for the gospel. Meanwhile, social problems relating to marriage and family, as well as addiction and abuse, keep on rising. The challenges are great, but there is also the abiding conviction among many in our churches that only our God offers real hope and a way forward.

In Hamilton too, there is Streetlight Ministries, whose main focus is on reaching the marginalized (the economically down and out, the handicapped, and the drug addicted) with the

gospel. If the work just described above is tough, this is even tougher and more taxing. Thankfully, the staff at Streetlight is both dedicated and persistent. At the same time, they need to do something about their decaying facility and thus a fund raiser is underway for a new and more functional building.

The Owen Sound church continues to support the work being done by the Rev. Pauline Bedard of the ERQ church in St. Georges, Quebec. Over the years, he has shown himself to be a prolific author of study material and a busy translator of English-speaking material into the French language. Many of these resources are also being used by the Christian Library of South Africa, as there are quite a number of French speaking countries, churches, and pastors in Africa.

In Manitoba, the Rev. James Zekveld continues to be hard at work as he serves as the organizing pastor of the Ambassador Canadian Reformed Church in Niverville. Regular worship services are being held. There is a heavy emphasis on community involvement and a sharp eye is being kept out for new opportunities. New contacts receive a lot of attention, and, as needed, regular classes are organized for those who are new to the faith.

In northern British Columbia, the Rev. Tim Schouten is the missionary / church planter of the Smithers church. Several new families have moved into the area and joined themselves to the church. Worship services are held rather close together at 10:00 and 11:30 am due to the travelling distances of some members and visitors. Thankfully, Rev. Schouten is not doing this work alone, but can count on the able assistance of br. John Siebenga, a retired Christian school teacher and principal from Houston, as well as other capable volunteers.

In southern BC, there are two new churches that cannot really be described as church plants, seeing that they are instituted churches. Still, Pathway church in Abbotsford and Refuge church in Langley are both local churches with a very intentional local mission focus. They both want to make a difference in the communities / neighbourhoods in which they are located and are constantly on the lookout for meaningful ways to be involved locally. As such, they are striving to bridge the gap between the church and the unchurched. Seeing that this is a big challenge which is getting bigger all the time, we wish them well.

Foreign mission work

Brazil

The church at Aldergrove is the church that continues to spearhead the mission work in Brazil on behalf of many churches in



Western Canada. At present, Rev. Jim Witteveen is working out of his home in Abbotsford, BC. Due to adoption problems with his children, he cannot move permanently to Brazil. This means that he works from home and spends a considerable amount of time on the Internet and Zoom. He also became ill this year and had to spend several weeks in hospital. At present he is on the mend and no doubt making plans to visit Brazil for a number of weeks as soon as possible.

In the meantime, his partner, the Rev. Jonathan Chase, is in Recife, Brazil, already with his family and is settling in nicely. It is beneficial that nothing is strange to him there, as he has visited often, knows quite a few people, speaks the language, and has a Brazilian wife. Most of his work centres around preparing and delivering lectures at the John Calvin Seminary, doing administrative work, as well as assisting local churches with various needs.

At one time consideration was being given to having three missionaries set aside for the work in Brazil, but the thinking has changed somewhat. Now it is deemed more effective to have two full timers and to use money that would have been spent on a third to support any number of mission congregations and their local pastors. It needs to be acknowledged that sending missionaries from North America to Brazil is expensive and that a better strategy may be to designate that money to the support of indigenous pastors.

In addition to teaching and mentoring, financial aid and support is also rendered in various forms. Br. Chris Boersema continues to function as the Mission Aid Worker and is involved in financial training, conference hosting, congregational development, pastor assistance, and Christian education.

Still, Aldergrove is not the only church heading up mission work in Brazil. The church at Hamilton, on behalf of a number of Ontario churches, is also involved in the same country. Its missionary, the Rev. Bram deGraaf, lives and works in Maceio, about a four-hour drive south of Recife. Unlike the Aldergrove missionary, his first focus is not so much on seminary training as on local mission work and mentoring, as well as on giving advice to surrounding churches. He also does his share of translation work making sure that the churches have the resources

they need for development and growth. From time to time he teaches at the John Calvin Seminary in Recife.

China

The challenges of doing mission work in China are huge, and this has to do mostly with the political situation. At present, the government there lumps our mission work in with that of other "Reformed" groups and it does not understand that among us there are differences. For one, while we very much lament that some believers and religious leaders have been imprisoned, we also recognize that they have chosen a different approach, namely one of being very vocal and highly critical of the government.

Already early on, the Asia Mission Board of Cloverdale and Langley adopted a different policy and approach, namely one of not criticizing the government but of urging churches to act in step with Article 36 of the Belgic Confession. The conviction is that honouring those in authority, obeying laws, paying taxes, and praying for governing authorities is the best approach. After all, we need to keep in mind what the apostles Paul and Peter wrote long ago in Holy Scripture and how they interacted with those in authority over them, both Jewish and Roman. Neither of them challenged the legitimacy of the government but urged believers to treat them with respect. After all, the gospel spreads not by confrontation but by believers being salt and light in their local communities.

Still, in spite of this approach, the challenges remain many, but the work goes on. Relevant material is constantly being translated and sent to China and to people of Chinese extraction living throughout Asia and around the world. The current enrollment at the online Bible College stands at 145 students. The number of churches being taught grows rapidly. Workshops on preaching are held weekly. Mentoring goes on daily. International travel remains severely curtailed, but the Internet offers all sorts of opportunities for teaching, encouraging, and assisting.

Needless to say, all of this keeps the Missionary (who will remain unnamed) extremely busy. He is on the phone and on the computer constantly. Also, seeing that this work is done over numerous time zones, it means working at the strangest hours. Still, the Lord continues to bless him, as well as his wife. In addition, he also continues to bless the work of the full-timer translators, Helen and Jean. In addition to that work, they also monitor the Bible College students, mark assignments, and regularly update the website. In short, the AMB can be proud of its dedicated team.

Indonesia

Staying in Asia, we go next to Indonesia and to Timor, where the church at Smithville is working through its missionary, the Rev. Edwar Dethan. His work, too, is diverse, as he teaches, administers, organizes, writes, and preaches. Thankfully, he does not have to worry about the authorities knocking on his door and telling him to fold up his operations. Still, Indonesia is plagued by people who adhere to various radical Muslim groups and think nothing of attacking Christians and burning churches.

In 2021, the biggest challenge for Rev. Dethan and his work among the churches related to a severe cyclone that did a lot of damage to houses, churches, dormitories, and the radio station. Right now, the rebuilding work is in full swing, but it will be some time before things return to a semblance of normal. Thankfully, church members in Smithville and the surrounding churches are aware of this situation and have responded prayerfully and monetarily. Their generosity is making a difference far away.

Meanwhile, Rev. Dethan carries on as best as he can, especially with his seminary work. In addition, his wife Femmie makes a great contribution too through her orphanage work and other efforts. Together they are a hard-working couple.





Mexico

While the mission work in Indonesia has been going on for some time, the mission work in Mexico is just starting. It began in 2018 and is a joint project organized by the churches at Abbotsford and Vernon. The mission worker, Scott Bredenhof, and his wife, Annemarie, arrived in 2019 at their mission post in the city of Queretaro. Once there, they were assisted by Langley members, Jeremy Van Beelen and Duane Visscher. In the meantime, Jeremy and his family have moved to Canada, but Duane continues to live there and works at the Pan de Vida Orphanage, which is known to any number of our members through mission trips.

Once onsite, Scott and Annemarie's first priority has been language training. They were hoping that after a one year transition they could begin to make some inroads into the community; however, COVID struck and lockdown happened, upsetting their plans. Still, they have not been idle, but have been busy preparing and distributing food parcels to the needy. This also opens up opportunities for connecting and witnessing. In addition, they are very involved with the Pan de Vida Orphanage.

Time has also been spent with a URC missionary, Matt Van Dyken, in Tepic. Later in the year, the Bredenhof family made it back to Canada for some rest and relaxation with family and friends.

Papua New Guinea

On the other side of the world, in Papua New Guinea, the Rev. Cornelis Kleyn and his family, as well as Mark and Elisabeth Mulder, are busy on behalf of the church at Toronto and its supporting churches, especially in connection with the Reformed Churches Bible College in Port Moresby.

Generally, things appear to be going well at the college; however, the school was recently a site of sorrow. One of the students, br. Joe Pinauga, died of COVID, and left behind his

wife, Christine, along with five children. Joe was coming close to finishing his studies and was expected to become a future leader in the churches. Only it was not to be, and this has had and will continue to have a great impact on his family, also seeing that he was the sole breadwinner. Thankfully, donations are coming in from near and far to assist this grief-stricken family. If you would like to help, drop Mark Mulder a line at markmulder64@gmail.com.

This untimely death also had a profound impact on the entire college community. In a small college such as this the students tend to develop a strong bond and now there is a huge hole. May the Lord fill it with his indispensable comfort.

The scourge called COVID not only claimed a life at RCBC, it also spread to one of the instructors. Pastor Hans (I assume that this is Pastor Hans Vaatstra from New Zealand) also contracted the disease, as did his wife Lisa. She, however, suffered a double whammy as she also came down with typhoid. Hopefully, by the time you read this, they are doing better again.

In spite of these health setbacks, the work of teaching and mentoring continues. Thankfully both the Kleyns and Mulders are doing well and their work of teaching at RCBC and assisting the Reformed Churches in PNG is being blessed. It is also great that they can turn to their Australian-ex-pat Canadian colleagues, the Revs. Ryan DeJonge and David Pol, who live and work in Lae, for help and hopefully some fellowship from time to time.

The Philippines

The Providence Church of Hamilton continues to be involved in mission teaching in the Philippines. There is little to report on this work in 2021 and no doubt that has much to do with COVID travel restrictions. It has been close to impossible to send people in person to teach whether in the Philippines or elsewhere. Should a person manage to get there, it is also not without risks relating to getting sick and needing hospitalization.

South Africa

For the last few years, the Dunnville church has shown a special interest in mission work being done in South Africa. It called the Rev. Ryan Kampen for this work and connected him to The Reformational Study Centre near Pretoria. While he continues to live in Canada, his work is mostly being done online. Among his duties are vetting material for the Christian Library, supervising the Living Word project, and lately being heavily involved in a new Bible study program called Vox Viva.

All of these resources will greatly aid the more than 12000 African pastors enrolled as they strive to do their preaching and pastoral work. Since many of them are tentmakers, part-timers, and financially-strapped men, they cannot afford to buy many books or pay to access online material and theological libraries. This free material is thus a God send and helps them greatly as they seek to preach and teach among God's people.

Keeping up

If you are interesting in keeping up with the ever increasing news from the mission fields in which the Canadian Reformed Churches are involved, you are invited to regularly visit the website Reformedmissions.net. This website has been developed for the Canadian Reformed Missions Association and is operated on a daily basis by the Rev. George van Popta. If you want updates, tune in to Facebook or go directly to it, click on Member Links, and read to your heart's content.

Books and more books

For years there was a common complaint in our churches that ministers did not publish any books. In their defence, it was often said that they were hindered by a lack of real familiarity with the English language. It was predicted, too, that this will be something that the next generation will correct.

Well, the next generation is here and there is evidence that the prediction is coming true. In 2021, Dr. Cornelis Van Dam continued to show that retirement has not affected his pen, as he published yet another book entitled *In the Beginning* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books) 395 pages. This detailed study of Genesis 1 and 2 gives a real boost to the traditional reading of Genesis and will be consulted by admirer and critic alike. No doubt his forthcoming book on worship will also prove to be a clear explanation and an able defence of what Reformed worship is all about.

The Rev. Jan DeGelder, another emeritus, has also taken up his pen and transformed some of his sermons into a most readable exposition on the Revelation of John called *The View from Above* (Fergus: The Study), 450 pages.

The Rev. George van Popta, yet another you know who, wrote a most interesting biography on his father called *Man of the First Hour: A Son's Story* (Reformed Perspective Press), 248 pages. It chronicles the life and ministry of the Rev. Jules Taco Van Popta, the first minister in the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Down Under the ex-pat Bredenhof cousins were also active. The Rev. Reuben Bredenhof wrote, *Weak Pastor, Strong Christ*

(Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books), 130 pages. One can say that what it lacks in length, it makes up in punch. The Rev. Wes Bredenhof also added a new book to his growing list, *Aiming to Please: A Guide to Reformed Worship* (Fergus: The Study). Together with Van Dam's forthcoming book on worship, we will soon have two very capable treatments on this subject.

Nothing worthwhile to read? Sorry, but that excuse has just been put to rest for good.

Christian education

In the annals of Christian education, 2021 will be known as the year of the lockdown. Different provinces in Canada have different rules, and this resulted in school shutdowns in some more than others. Needless to say, this caused a great deal of disruption: school agendas needed to be adjusted, online learning needed to be activated quickly, parents had to get used to having any number of kids home and studying. Whether or not more of this mayhem will continue into 2022 remains to be seen.

Not being familiar with the entire school scene across the country limits my reporting. I can say that in the Fraser Valley region of BC there is a massive reorganization under way. The oldest of our schools, the William of Orange Christian School of Surrey, is no more mostly due to changing demographics related to rising housing prices. Both Credo Elementary in Langley and John Calvin in Yarrow now have middle schools. Fundraising for a new gym in Yarrow and for an eventual new high school in Abbotsford has been started. This is a project that will take years to complete and millions of dollars in funding as well.

I understand that there is another school that is having similar challenges to that of William of Orange, namely the Credo School in Woodbridge, which services families in the Brampton and Toronto areas. There too declining enrollment due to escalating property values is having a negative impact on the viability of a school.

As always, staffing continues to be a real challenge. For months at a time the back pages of *Clarion* are filled with advertisements for teachers and principals. Thankfully, the Covenant Canadian Reformed Teacher's College (CCRTC) is continuing to supply teachers and various colleges and universities across the country are doing the same; nevertheless, the demand just does not seem to go away.

Speaking of CCRTC, it is celebrating a fortieth anniversary. Congratulations! I remember well when it was in its planning stages and the hurdles that it had to jump in order to become a

reality. Amazing that the Lord has blessed it with so many years and has made it such a blessing for so many of our Ontario schools, and indirectly for schools across the country. At this time, CCRTC is still busy with hurdles as it seeks to start its degree granting program by submitting its application for accreditation to the Ontario College of Teachers. No doubt once again a mountain of paperwork is required. Alas, ours is a society that is forgetting the KISS Principle (Keep It Simple, Silly) as we proceed to create mountains of regulations about almost everything.

Relief agencies

Also in 2021 the main relief organizations supported by our community were busy. The Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund (CRWRF) continued to support any number of needy causes around the world relating to child and community development, disaster relief and rehabilitation, global awareness, and HIV/Aids response. It also contributed a substantial amount of funds to assist those in West Timor affected by Cyclone Seroja that happened back on April 4, 2021. This money went to rebuild homes, schools, churches, and dormitories. The latest reports indicate that construction is well under way and progress is being made. For a good overview of its work and needs, go to www.crwrf.ca.

Another organization hard at work doing similar work but in other parts of the world is Word and Deed. It seeks to act as a bridge connecting churches, businesses, and individuals in North America with missions and churches in other parts of the world. Often there is serious trouble in those parts, as for example trying to keep contact with several children's homes in Myanmar where a military crackdown continues and is intensifying. And then there is Haiti, where another earthquake has left a trail of destruction and devastation. Getting aid to a country rife with corruption, kidnappings, gangs, as well as limited infrastructure is no small feat. Or what about Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, that is disintegrating into chaos with its inept political leadership, tainted military, Islamic terrorists, and Pentecostal mayhem? How do you make a difference there and get aid to those who need it? Challenges abound and the gospel and its mercy is desperately needed. For more information, go to wordanddeed.org.

Youth camps

Various youth camps operated over the summer, although all of them had to deal with COVID restrictions of one kind or



another. In some cases, this meant cutting back on enrollment and activities. It also made fundraising a greater challenge, as golf tournaments and fundraising banquets had to be cancelled. Still, the show could go on complete with new protocols and procedures. It is hoped that the new year will bring about a return to a more normal camp life.

Among the highlights, it can be mentioned that Stepping Stones Bible Camp in Deroche officially opened its brand new conference facility, called "The Lookout." The name tells the story, as there are incredible valley views to take in from its large windows and balcony. In addition, there is seating for 150 guests and a large kitchen. The aim is for this facility to accommodate lots of events when camp is on, as well as be a place to host group meetings, weddings, and anniversaries. For more information and pictures, you can go to www.stepingstonesbiblecamp.ca.

Special homes

Throughout the country one will also find special homes dedicated either to the care of the physically and mentally challenged or the elderly. In Ontario, an organization called Anchor Home operates a number of homes in various communities. Each of them has about half a dozen residents as well as support staff. In these homes, the handicapped receive excellent care. Part time jobs are found in the community for those who can work. Also, almost all of the residents belong to local CanRC and URC churches, from which they receive a lot of love and support. In Alberta, Rehoboth provides similar help, as does Cornerstone in Manitoba and Bethesda in BC.



In addition to these homes, there are also homes for the elderly. Some of them were really impacted by COVID. Indeed, senior care homes were the sites of most of the fatalities early in the pandemic. In addition, all of them were also subject to a host of health regulations. The overall aim of these regulations was laudable, namely, to keep our seniors safe. At times, however, staff and relatives were frustrated and wondered aloud as to whether all of these rules were reasonable, effective, and truly beneficial.

It should also be mentioned that most of the senior homes in our community are geared for daily living. Nursing care is often another story, as this is a very expensive and labour-intensive option, and thus not possible in all places. At present, Canadian Reformed seniors can be found in homes in Abbotsford, Brampton, Burlington, Carman, Edmonton, Hamilton, Grimsby, Langley, Smithers, and many other places. More are being added as the general population ages. In most cases, these homes receive government support to operate. Overall, the care is good and the fellowship sweet.

Political and social action


On the political and legal front, the Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) had a busy year in 2021. Provincial COVID health regulations, especially as they were applied to churches, kept them busy. In addition, the fact that health and medical

care falls under provincial jurisdiction meant that each province took a slightly different approach. Thankfully, in almost cases ARPA was up to the task. Still, this did not always make it easy, as local Canadian Reformed communities were not always in agreement. For example, some took issue with ARPA intervening on behalf of churches that refused to obey health orders as these pertained to assembling for worship. Others were in whole-hearted support of this role. In almost all cases, ARPA seems to have exercised great care and tried to educate the authorities on the importance of corporate worship.

In addition to going to bat for local churches, ARPA also intervened in a number of legal cases relating to rights and freedoms. One Supreme Court of Canada case in particular comes to mind. It had to do with the ability of the government to intervene in church disciplinary procedures. In the end, the Court decided that when it comes to church discipline and doctrine, the church has independent jurisdiction. In other words, it was a resounding victory for churches and their freedom from state ARPA also organized youth conferences, conventions, workshops, and meetings across the country. In this way it kept contact with its base and trained, educated, and activated its members.

All in all, ARPA plays a pivotal role as threats from secularism grow and as the Canadian population moves further and further away from its Christian past. May the LORD continue to bless its efforts.

In conclusion

No doubt there is much more to report and I have missed any number of newsworthy items, but I have tried to incorporate what I read, learned, or heard. Still, I am not omniscient, and you will need to reckon with that. So, forgive my omissions and mistakes. If any of those are glaring in nature, please drop me a line at jvisscher@telus.net. May the Lord bless you all as we journey together with him into a new year. 



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Seasons Greetings



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