

A CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
TO ENCOURAGE, EDUCATE, ENGAGE, AND UNITE

74 | 01
JAN 17, 2025



Clarion

05 PREACHING IN THE AGE OF TED TALKS AND TALL TALES | 10 THE DUTCH CHURCH SCAPE

14 SYNOD SNAPSHOTS | 20 ECHS GRADUATION

what's inside

Welcome to the Year of our Lord 2025! Regardless of where you may find yourself in life, one thing is certain: we have moved one year closer to our Lord's return—and that's a mighty comfort! We need always to keep our eyes focused on Christ, a point made in Carl Van Dam's meditation, "The Key of Knowledge." Steve van Leeuwen in his "Ted Talks" article adds to this by discussing how in addition to a Christ-centred message, the method of preaching must also be in line with what Christ teaches in Scripture. And to encourage our readers that the gospel is growing among us at home and abroad, we present an account of the recent graduation ceremony at the CanRC high school in Guelph as well as a newsletter from Mission Brazil.

Issue 1 comes packed with articles on matters in church life beginning in the Netherlands. Karlo Janssen updates us on the admittedly confusing state of affairs among the Reformed churches there. In the last few years there have been multiple separations and unions of different church groups, and his article (with its accompanying chart of acronyms) helps us get our bearings. This is important, for we may once again (and soon) find in our mother country churches with whom we may enter into fellowship. Jan DeGelder continues his Governing the Church series and informs us about the great value of a classis and how it works. With our own General Synod 2025 only months away, Eric Kampen summarizes the reports bound for this assembly and I summarize the overtures heading there, both of which together will form much of the agenda.

We round out our offerings with birthday greetings in the Ray of Sunshine, two book reviews, and a letter to the editor. We always appreciate constructive engagement. God bless your reading!

Peter Holtvliuwer

CONTENTS

- 3 EDITORIAL
Matthew Van Luik
- 4 TREASURES, NEW & OLD
S. Carl Van Dam
- 5 PREACHING IN THE AGE OF TED TALKS AND TALL TALES
Steve van Leeuwen
- 8 WHO IS WHO IN THE DUTCH CHURCH SCAPE?
Karlo Janssen
- 10 THE DUTCH CHURCH SCAPE (PART 1)
Karlo Janssen
- 12 GOVERNING THE CHURCH
Jan DeGelder
- 14 SYNOD SNAPSHOT—REPORTS
Eric Kampen
- 18 SYNOD SNAPSHOT—OVERTURES
Peter Holtvliuwer
- 20 GRADUATION AT ECHS
Arthur Kingma
- 23 MISSION BRAZIL NEWSLETTER
- 26 RAY OF SUNSHINE
Rachel Vis
- 28 BOOK REVIEW
Rick Ludwig
- 29 BOOK REVIEW
Wes Bredenhof
- 30 LETTER TO THE EDITOR

CLARION (ISSN 0383-0438) is published 16 times per year (tri-weekly) by Premier Printing Ltd., 1 Beghin Ave, Winnipeg MB R2J 3X5.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor in Chief: Peter Holtvliuwer
E: pholtvliuwer@clarionmagazine.ca
Managing Editor: Laura Veenendaal
Contributing Editors: Eric Kampen, Jason Van Vliet, Matthew VanLuik, Jim Witteveen

CONTENT INQUIRIES

E: editor@clarionmagazine.ca

ADMINISTRATIVE INQUIRIES

W: clarionmagazine.ca
E: publisher@clarionmagazine.ca
T: 204-663-9000

ARCHIVE

Search and read past volumes online at clarionmagazine.ca/archive

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

E: letters@clarionmagazine.ca
Letters to the Editor must not exceed 300 words and are to be written in a Christian manner.
See clarionmagazine.ca for guidelines.

SUBMIT AN ARTICLE

E: submissions@clarionmagazine.ca
Only articles which agree with Clarion's guidelines will be considered for publication.
See clarionmagazine.ca for guidelines.

SUBMIT A BOOK REVIEW

E: bookreview@clarionmagazine.ca
Reviews should be 600-700 words and concern books which fit with Clarion's purpose.
See clarionmagazine.ca for more.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

clarionmagazine.ca/subscriptions

	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada	\$ 59	\$ 104
USA (USD)	\$ 74	\$ 134
International	\$ 104	\$ 178
Digital	\$ 40	

Digital can be added to print subscription at no cost.

Taxes extra for Canadian subscribers.

Subscription renewals will be invoiced unless written subscription cancellation is received.

ADVERTISEMENTS

W: clarionmagazine.ca/advertisements
E: ads@clarionmagazine.ca
Full page \$434 | ½ \$234 | ¼ \$119 | ⅛ \$64
We reserve the right to refuse ads.

Clarion

A trustworthy and engaging magazine, widely spread and read in Canadian Reformed households and beyond.

To equip God's people for his glory, in faithfulness to Scripture, as summarized in the Reformed confessions, Clarion adheres to the following core values:

Confessionally Reformed
Loving in manner
Attuned to current issues
Readable and Reliable
In Submission to Scripture
Open to constructive criticism
Nurturing Christian living

"DO EVERYTHING WITHOUT GRUMBLING OR ARGUING"

These are words of the apostle Paul written to the Philippian believers while he was in prison. Paul shed many tears during his ministry because of the opposition of fellow believers. Today the church still faces grumbling and arguing among God's people. Grumbling in the church undermines the joy God gives us in Jesus Christ and arguing destroys the unity among brothers and sisters.

CORROSIVE ARGUING

To be clear, Paul is not suggesting that we do not stand up for the truth. He himself often spoke strongly against those who undermined the truth of the gospel, and he used strong language against anyone who undermined the honour of Jesus Christ as the only and complete Saviour. What Paul is dealing with is a corrosive attitude within the church that tears brothers and sisters apart. Grumbling and arguing displays a selfish attitude in which we place our own desires before that of others. It is possible and even healthy to have brotherly discussions about things we do not agree on, but when we insist on our way, not only do we become argumentative, but we also begin to grumble against our church leaders and against one another.

When members of the church constantly grumble against one another rather than support each other, the message we give to our children and others is that the church is not a very nice place to be. We speak about Christ and his saving work and yet we constantly undermine the very body of Christ where we are to experience the joy of fellowship we have in Christ. What makes the church attractive is that being united in Christ we support each other. Grumbling never lifts anyone up but undermines the joy in Christ. Being argumentative turns people away. Paul reveals in Philippians 2:14ff that our grumbling and arguing arises from a selfish attitude. It reveals the corruption of our own heart.

ANTIDOTE

What is the antidote to grumbling in the church? How do we change from a body of grumblers to a vibrant church in which everyone feels the support and care of everyone else? Paul answers,

"In your relationship with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." The answer is simple but working it out as sinners is difficult. It is difficult, for it involves laying aside our own desires in order to put the needs of others first. If the church makes a decision that is not to our liking, it is our natural inclination to grumble and use every occasion to complain to others. We use every opportunity to undermine the unity of the church, often with the mindset that we are doing the work of Christ. And yet Paul makes clear that such an attitude is not in agreement with the mind of Christ.

The amazing gospel message is that Christ laid aside his own desires to serve us, sinful human beings. Christ was less concerned about his own glory and more concerned for our eternal wellbeing. Paul revealed this attitude in prison, for he was less concerned about his own condition and thought only about the needs of the believers to whom he was writing. He gives the example of Timothy and Epaphroditus, two men who displayed a greater concern for the wellbeing of the saints than focusing on their own desires.

If you experience an attitude of grumbling and arguing within the church, you have two choices: either you can join the grumbling chorus or take on the mind of Christ, in which you serve one another. Kindness and caring for each other as Christ cared for us will restore joy, first to your own heart and then to the life of others. In the end a grumbler's influence will fade away as he continues toward his own destruction, but those who genuinely care for others as Christ did for us will positively impact the lives of others.

Imagine if Christ had only thought about himself. He would not have made a positive impact on our lives. It is because he sacrificed his life for us that we now live with a glorious hope. Paul now teaches us that when we learn to serve others in love, that will lead to an increase in joy in our lives and the lives of others. 



Matthew Van Luik

Minister Emeritus

Grace Canadian Reformed Church, Brampton

mhvanluik@gmail.com

THE KEY OF KNOWLEDGE

*Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge.
You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering*

– Luke 11:52

The English philosopher and scientist Francis Bacon (1561–1626) coined the phrase, “knowledge is power,” by which he meant that knowledge is more than only theoretical facts but also has practical, real world results and a positive impact on your life. Knowledge is critical for being able to function in the world. You need to know certain skills in order to be, for example, a mechanic or a machinist or a carpenter. You need to know how computer programming works to be a software developer. Spy agencies spend millions of dollars trying to gain or guard secrets of knowledge.

In Luke 11:52, the Lord Jesus uses the unusual expression “key of knowledge,” only used here in the Bible. At a dinner hosted by a Pharisee, Jesus is speaking woes against the Pharisees and lawyers. He accuses the Pharisees of showing only outward obedience while missing the point of the justice and love of God. He berates the lawyers for loading the people with burdens hard to bear and without helping them at all.

In his last woe, Jesus tells them that they have taken away the key of knowledge. They have deprived those who listen to them of the key of knowledge, which would have gained their listeners access to the kingdom of heaven. That is what a key is for, to gain access to something that would normally be locked away and hidden.

Jesus says that the lawyers had consented to the deeds of their fathers, who had killed the prophets and built tombs for them. They honoured those who killed the prophets of the Lord. These prophets had told them the Lord’s ways and his promises of the Messiah who was to come. The blood of these prophets was shed by their fathers, and they would soon express agreement with their fathers by shedding the blood of the great prophet Jesus Christ. The blood of the prophets “will be required of this generation” (v. 51) because they will participate in the cries of “Crucify him, crucify him!”

By rejecting Jesus, the lawyers took away the key of knowledge from those who listened to them. They led the people astray and these lawyers will not enter the kingdom of heaven themselves.

The last prophet of the old covenant was John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ. His father Zechariah prophesied concerning

him after his birth, “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God” (Luke 1:76-78). John the Baptist gave knowledge of salvation to God’s people by declaring about Jesus, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

The key of knowledge leading into the kingdom of God is Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life. When we know the truth about Jesus Christ and his perfect salvation, then we are called upon to use this knowledge, to confess Jesus Christ, and pass on this knowledge of salvation to the next generation. May the woe of our text serve as a warning that we would not be found guilty of hindering those who are entering God’s kingdom.

The mystery of Christ has been proclaimed far and wide. What was hidden for ages has now been revealed. Knowledge of Christ leads to God’s powerful salvation. Let us pray to God that we would be enabled by the Spirit “to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:2–3). 

FURTHER READING

Ephesians 3; Colossians 1:15–2:5

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. What are the keys (plural) of the kingdom? How do they relate to this key of knowledge?
2. How do we ensure that we are entering the kingdom and also not hindering others from entering?
3. Discuss the description of Christ in Colossians 2:3.



S. Carl Van Dam

Minister

Canadian Reformed Church at Carman East

s.carl.vandam@gmail.com



PREACHING IN THE AGE OF TED TALKS & TALL TALES

STEVE VANLEEUEWEN

A CHALLENGE FOR PREACHING TODAY

Do you prefer to listen to a sermon, a Ted Talk, or a good story? If you said a Ted Talk or a tall tale, you would not be alone. We live in an age where individual experience is highly valued. Marketing agents, politicians, and influencers know they only have a few seconds to capture your attention. That means advertisers spend considerable effort on the presentation. As consumers, we are being conditioned more than ever to expect a high level of engagement.

Unfortunately, that expectation is also often being applied on Sunday. One of the most frequent complaints from the pew is that the preaching is just not connecting. It is not grabbing hold of the listeners' attention and consequently it is failing to spiritually

transform the lives of God's people. And so it not surprising that those who are left feeling spiritually empty are looking for answers.

SEARCHING FOR AN ANSWER

In fact, some are asking if the problem is our method of preaching. They question whether the old tried and true method of expository preaching that our forefathers used needs to give way to a more dynamic, engaging approach. It is suggested that perhaps we should be looking at the great communicators of our own day and age who are finding new ways to connect with their audience.

So, what is it about a Ted Talk or a good story that engages us more than a sermon? The answer to that question is easy to find. There has been a lot written on the subject; any of the books

on giving a good Ted Talk will tell you how to establish a better connection with your audience. Some of the most frequent suggestions are to tell a story, use personal relatable anecdotes about yourself, make an emotional connection by showing your vulnerability, bring in some humour, or enlist a visual aid. And there is no denying that such methods are effective in establishing a

Does traditional preaching need to give way to a more dynamic engaging approach?

connection with the listener.

But is it the right sort of connection? Is the goal of preaching for the preacher to connect with the congregation on this sort of human level? The answer is no!

Paul addresses this very concern in his first letter to the Corinthians. Paul speaks about the power of God's wisdom and his own style of preaching: "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor 2:1-5). Here, if we are attentive to the text, we can gain some insight into the distinction between preaching and motivational speaking.

A COMPARISON

The first difference between preaching and motivational speaking is the source of authority. Preaching is grounded in the authority of God's Word, while motivational speaking relies on the speaker's personal experiences and opinions and as such is man-centred rather than God-centred. Paul did not come to the Corinthians with "lofty speech or wisdom." In other words, Paul spoke not with an emphasis on human reasoning but with the testimony of God. His preaching was not based on his own wisdom or understanding, but on Scripture. In contrast, Ted Talks often share personal stories and opinions, which may or may not align with the truth of God's Word.

The second difference is the focus of the message. Preaching focuses on the gospel of Jesus Christ and the salvation of souls, while motivational speaking often focuses on self-improvement and achieving success in life. For the preacher who incorporates

the Ted Talk methodology, there is a danger that the message will become horizontal. For instance, when a preacher tries to show his own vulnerability, and he talks about his own struggles and successes, the sermon can easily become a self-help session rather than the proclamation of God's truth as revealed in the Word. And although this may connect and appeal to many in the pew, it is not the gospel. The focus of Paul's preaching was on the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. He did not come to impress the Corinthians with his knowledge or to motivate them to achieve worldly success, but to share the life-changing message of the cross.

The third difference is the source of motivation. Preaching invokes the power of the Holy Spirit, while motivational speaking relies on human effort and determination. Paul writes that "my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor 2:4). The effectiveness of Paul's preaching was not based on his own abilities or eloquence, but on the demonstration of the Spirit's power. The Holy Spirit is the source of true transformation and motivation, not human effort or willpower. The goal of preaching therefore is not for the minister to connect personally to the listener in the pew but rather to have the listener in the pew be moved by the message through the power of the Holy Spirit.

EVALUATION

Unlike the demonstration of the Holy Spirit that works faith in the heart of the listener, motivational speaking often relies on techniques and strategies to motivate and inspire the audience through emotional connection. While these may be effective in the short term, they do not have the lasting power to bring about true change and transformation in a person's life. As Christians, we believe that true transformation comes from the power of the Holy Spirit and cannot be directed by human methods.

History shows this to be the case. For instance, Iain Murray in his book *Revival and Revivalism* shows how the first Great Awakening in the USA and England was characterized by solid expository preaching that resulted in true converts. The second Great Awakening, although it looked similar, was method driven and the outcome was dramatically different. Many who initially converted fell away again. Murray explains why. During the second Great Awakening, the preaching was heavily influenced by Charles Finney, who had initially been trained as a lawyer. Rather than simply preaching the Word, Finney encouraged the use of psychological aids intended to affect peoples' emotions. To do so, he had to make an emotional connection with the people. The problem with his approach, however, was that eventually the emotional effects wore off. And so Murray concludes that the simple preaching of the

gospel message was far more effective in the long run than a method-driven approach based on the wisdom of men. Unfortunately, the modern evangelical church has drunk deeply from the well of Finney, resulting in all kinds of novel methods for winning souls. And the fallout is that most modern churchgoers never commit to a local congregation, jumping from congregation to congregation based on the newest engaging personality.

This reliance on method is not a new problem as it turns out. Paul was dealing with the same issues when he refused to employ the wisdom of the Greeks. As a missionary to the Gentiles, he was preaching to a worldly audience much like today. The Greeks were accustomed to listening to the very finest orators in the world. It was common for eloquent and well-spoken teachers to gain a following. They liked their teachers to be engaging, but Paul chose not to preach like these worldly teachers. Why? “So that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

GET OUT OF THE WAY

In preaching, the speaker is seen as a vessel or messenger of God, delivering his Word to the people. Paul says, “We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.” An ambassador has a job to do. He has to deliver the message of his King clearly, so the people know what is being asked of them. The message can certainly be obscured when the preacher does not study the text or formulate his thoughts well. But the message can also be obscured when the preacher relies too heavily on his chosen method, as if he has the power to help the Holy Spirit along. “I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling” (1 Cor 2:3). It was not by Paul’s power—he did not rely on his own strength or abilities, but on the power of God. Paul understood that it was not about him, but about delivering the message of God faithfully; the Holy Spirit would do the rest.

In contrast, motivational speakers are seen as the main source of inspiration and motivation. They rely on their own charisma and personality to engage the audience and deliver their message. While they may have good intentions, the focus is often on the speaker rather than the message itself. As Christians, we believe that it is not about us, but about God and his message. We should avoid imposing our own ideas onto the text and let the plain message of the gospel accomplish what the Holy Spirit intends.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LISTENER

Likewise, the implications for the listener are profound. When one sits in the congregation, listening intently to the preacher’s

words, there is a silent exchange happening—a transfer of divine wisdom and truth from the vessel of the preacher to the soul of the listener through the Holy Spirit. This transfer is not meant to be tainted by human ego or clever rhetoric, but rather be pure and unadulterated, carrying within it the transformative power of God himself. The goal of preaching is to point people towards a faith that is rooted in the unshakeable power of God rather than in human methods or strategies, as Paul emphasizes, “So that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Cor 2:5).

This also means that as listeners in the pew, we need to come with the right expectation of the preacher. We need to come ready to receive the message as divine revelation, working through the power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds. Just as Paul relied on the power of God in his preaching, we must also rely on the power of God to open our hearts to receive his truth. The message of the gospel is not primarily about being engaged on a human level but transformed at a spiritual level.

CONCLUSION

Preaching is a sacred act of delivering God’s message faithfully, with humility and dependence on the Holy Spirit, rather than a platform for personal anecdotes or self-help strategies. By focusing on the gospel and allowing the power of God to work through the message, true transformation can occur in the hearts of listeners. As Paul exemplified, the preacher should be a vessel for God’s Word, not a centrepiece for attention or admiration. This distinction is crucial for ensuring that faith is rooted in God’s power rather than in human wisdom or methods. The listener, in turn, must approach preaching with a readiness to receive divine truth and allow the Holy Spirit to work within them for genuine change. Ultimately, the goal of preaching is not merely to engage but to transform, leading individuals to a faith firmly grounded in the unwavering power of God. 



Steve van Leeuwen

Minister

Grace Canadian Reformed Church, Kerwood

pastorvanleeuwen@gmail.com

WHO'S WHO IN THE *Dutch Church Scape?*

KARLO JANSSEN

“All those acronyms, I can’t keep track of who is who,” I’m hearing. As I began to write an article to update the readership on the Dutch church scape, following my recent visit there, I realized writing on the acronyms in the flow of the article would likely not be helpful. So here is a brief overview of what is relevant for the purposes of my article. This way you can flip back and forth as you read, or even snap a picture / take a screenshot and have it handy.

To avoid confusion the practice is becoming more common to refer to federations of churches by their name in English, but to put their acronym or abbreviation in the language of origin. For example, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated), our former sister churches, are known as the GKv. The article that follows will make reference to the Church federations listed in this chart.

A FEW NOTES

An observant reader will notice some peculiarities. Yes, “GKN” does not have the word “in” in its name. And yes, DGK includes the word “The” in its official name. I understand that the reason for these peculiarities has a legal background.

As to “Netherlandishly” and “Netherlandish,” there is a little grammar going on here. In the name “NGK” the “N” (“Nederlands”) is an adverb and thus modifies the participle “Reformed.” The NGK were Reformed churches that had been Reformed in a Dutch manner. In the name NeGK, the “Ne” (Nederlandse) is an adjective and thus modifies the noun “Churches.” Further, very quickly the acronym NeGK became NGK in Dutch circles as the former NGK no longer exist. For our purposes I will stick with NGK and NeGK so as not to confuse the two.

DUTCH CHURCH FEDERATION ACRONYMS

CGK — CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

The Secession churches that did not join the Union in 1892. The CGK are sister churches of the Free Reformed Churches here in North America, though doctrinally the CGK are far more diverse than the FRC.

DGK — (ALSO DGKH)—THE REFORMED CHURCHES (RESTORED)

Came out of the GKv in 2003/2004, in our circles also known as the “Van Gurp group.” This is the federation that had a sister church relationship with the Liberated Reformed Church in Abbotsford, Canada.

GKN — REFORMED CHURCHES THE NETHERLANDS

Came out of the GKv in 2009, in our circles also known as the “Hoogendoorn group”

GKv — REFORMED CHURCHES (LIBERATED)

Formed in 1944, for the most part ended in 2023; these are our former sister churches

NeGK — NETHERLANDISH REFORMED CHURCHES

Merger of most GKv and all NGK in May 2023

NGK — NETHERLANDISHLY REFORMED CHURCHES

Historically a confederation of churches that, having once belonged to the GKv, found themselves outside the GKv during the late 1960s and early 1970s; ended in 2023

GK — REFORMED CHURCHES

Merger of the DGK and GKN in October 2024

HHK — RESTORED (DUTCH) REFORMED CHURCH

Churches that refused to participate in the union of three churches in 2004 that saw the formation of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN). Doctrinally the HHK are similar to the Heritage Reformed Churches in North America.

SERK — INDEPENDENT EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH (IN GERMANY)

Two congregations in Germany that are sister churches of the GKN; there are also communications between the seminary (RTS—Reformed Theological Seminary) and our own CRTS.

TASKFORCE REFLECTION (KERNGROEP BEZINNING)

This is a private and personal initiative that seeks to help the concerned within the NeGK (formerly GKv). Since the fusion, several individuals involved in this Taskforce have left the NeGK and joined a zGKv. While the Taskforce has a purpose similar to the Alliance of Reformed Churches in the 1990s, a major difference is that the Alliance was for churches while the Taskforce is for individuals and groups of individuals.

zGKv — INDEPENDENT GKv CONGREGATIONS

At the time of writing there are four congregations which refuse to be part of the NeGK; these currently function as independent congregations, much like the independent Christian Reformed Churches did in the early to mid 1990s, many of which became United Reformed Churches.

THE DUTCH CHURCH SCAPE

(PART 1)

Editor's note: For an overview of acronyms used in this article, please see the preceding page.

On October 5, 2024, synods of the GKN and DGK, meeting separately together, decided to merge the two federations into one, to be known as the Reformed Churches (*Gereformeerde Kerken*–GK). This decision came after a GKN synod had decided in December 2023 and a DGK synod had decided in January 2024 that the two federations were “in a state of union.”

This two-part article intends to update *Clarion* readership on “where things are at” in the Netherlands. In this article we will look “wide;” next time we will zoom in on the merger of the GKN and DGK.

THE MERGER OF 2023

After the Liberation in 1944, when the GKv were formed, there were issues in the GKv regarding doctrinal tolerance and compliance with the church order. A sizeable minority of GKv congregations found themselves “outside the federation” and joined in a group of churches that became known as the NGK. In doctrine and practice, the GKv then were very similar to the CanRC today. The NGK were doctrinally more tolerant and practised a church polity that, though not congregational, was very independentistic.¹

In the past two decades the GKv began to think and act more like the NGK, first in the practice of their polity and then in their doctrine. During the early 2000s the GKv still considered “women in office” to be an obstacle in GKv–NGK discussions. When in the late 2010s the GKv made allowance for women in office, this could no longer be an obstacle. Discussions on bringing the two federations together began in all earnestness and the merger became a fact in May 2023. All the NGKs and almost all the GKv congregations merged to form the NeGK.

THOSE WHO DID NOT JOIN

Prior to the merger, in early 2020, an independent GKv (zGKv) formed in Bunschoten-Spakenburg when a minister was released from his call. Initially this church wrote to both the GKN and the

DGK that it would join them once the two church federations had merged. However, it joined the DGK in the course of 2024. The minister in question was elected chairman of the DGK synod in October 2024.

As concerns about the direction of the GKv grew, a “Taskforce Reflection” was formed by seven individuals, among whom were ministers and capable legal professionals. This taskforce is concerned with both the doctrine and polity of the NeGK. Regarding doctrine, I was informed that teachings tolerated now include denial of the historicity of the fall into sin. Regarding polity, the Taskforce believes the NeGK grant the local church too much autonomy. The Taskforce is convinced those seeking to be faithful to Christ cannot remain in the NeGK. Most (if not all by the time you read this) are members of a zGKv.

When the merger became a reality, three GKvs decided not to participate: those in Capelle a/d IJssel Noord, Urk, and Vroomshoop. The Vroomshoop zGKv has since joined the CGK. The other two zGKvs have not yet decided what they will do. They continue as a two-church federation at this time. Very recently they sent a letter to our CER requesting a sister-church relationship with the CanRC.

OTHERS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Clarion readers will know that in North America there are quite a number of Reformed churches that are close to us in confession. With some we practice ecclesiastical fellowship (e.g. URC, OPC, RCUS, ERQ), with some we are in direct contact (e.g. FRC, HRC, ARPC, RPCNA/RPCC), with yet others we maintain contact through NAPARC (check naparc.org for the acronyms).

A similar situation exists in the Netherlands. Local churches holding to the Reformed confessions are found in various federations. Among them are two that deserve closer attention.

The first is the CGK. This federation has its roots in the Secession and in the three churches that refused to participate in the Union of 1892. The CGK grew after 1892 through churches

¹ For more on this history see the first article in my series, “When a Church Does Not Comply” (*Clarion* Vol. 72, No. 14, Nov. 3, 2023).

leaving the Union and (re)joining the CGK. The CGK in the Netherlands is rather broad; for a North American equivalent imagine the United Reformed and Free Reformed together in one federation. However, a minority in the CGK are more aligned with the NeGK (think Christian Reformed in North America). When issues arose in the GKv, many individuals withdrew from the GKv and joined a CGK. The CGK is a deeply troubled federation and seems to be following a trajectory similar to that of the GKv. GS-CGK 2022 decided that women cannot serve in office. However, there is a very diverse practice in the CGK with respect to various matters, many of them similar to those that saw the GKv change identity. In April 2024 the CGK met in a “convent” to discuss how the churches should continue. In the summer of 2024, a synod began meeting that will last into 2025 to determine the path forward.

A second church federation deserving attention is the HHK. This federation has its roots in the Dutch Reformed Church, often considered the Dutch “State” Church. The HHK was formed in 2004 by those who refused to participate in a merger of the Dutch Reformed, the synodical Reformed, and the Evangelical Lutherans to form the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN). In many ways the HHK is similar to the Free Reformed and Heritage Reformed in North America.

There was already talk of “redrawing the church map” in the Netherlands when I served as minister in the GKv (1999–2009). Among others, it is now suggested that the CGK could dissolve,

with the more liberal/tolerant portion joining the NeGK, and the more experiential/conservative portion joining the HHK.

The Taskforce Reflection figures CGKs and HHKs should be part of the conversation. It is noteworthy that the newly formed GK also has formal contact with both CGK and HHK. During a synod session of the GKN I attended, the brothers spoke very positively of their contact with both CGK and HHK (among others acknowledging that perceptions of each other tended to be caricatures). Could a third portion of the CGK join the newly formed GK?

NEXT TIME

The Dutch church-scape is no longer what it was a few decades ago. The Lord is sifting his people. For those who trust truly in God, the confession of the duty to join with Christ’s church is dear (BC, Art. 28). May the Lord grant wisdom to all who find themselves at crossroads.

Some of God’s people have found each other and merged to form a single federation of churches. That is the recently formed GK. Next time we’ll look at this merger. 



Karlo Janssen

Minister

Willoughby Heights Canadian Reformed Church
rcjanssen@shaw.ca

READ AND SEARCH OLD VOLUMES

of **Clarion**

clarionmagazine.ca/archive

— WHEN — NEIGHBOURING CHURCHES GATHER

Last time we talked about the general synod—the major assembly where all the churches of the federation come together, represented by their delegates. It’s the place where matters are discussed and decided that will impact all the churches. Another one of our major assemblies is the classis. It is “minor” compared to a general synod, for the simple reason that it is a gathering of a limited number of neighbouring churches from a much smaller area. It may look and sound less impressive than a general synod, but don’t be mistaken. The classis is the “backbone” in the structure of our federation. Like all major assemblies, it is a temporary meeting of churches with limited jurisdiction. But in this case, it is the gathering close to the heartbeat of our church life, which is in the local churches. Through delegation, churches meet that are familiar with each other, with office bearers who often know each other. All of this gives a classis unique opportunity for local sister churches to support and encourage each other, to share challenges and joyful experiences.

Very early after the Reformation the first churches that were established felt the need to come together locally, based on their unity of faith, and with the purpose of helping each other build up Reformed church life. The structure developed during the second half of the sixteenth century. This led to what we had in the old Canadian Reformed Church Order in Articles 41 and 42, which was basically the same as in the Church Order of Dort 1618/19. In 1983, the birth year of our current Church Order, these were put together in one article (44), with a few changes.

EQUALITY

From the very beginning it was emphasized that there should be two delegates from each church: a minister and an elder, regardless of the size of the congregation. This is a matter of principle. Every local church, no matter how large or how small, is a full

manifestation of the body of Christ. From that principle flows the fundamental rule we have in Article 74, that *no church shall in any way lord it over other churches*. Therefore, a church with 600 members has the same number of votes at a classis as a church with seventy-five members. This illustrates also why proper credentials, as a valid proof of delegation, are important. Only these brothers have the right to vote, regardless of how many others may be present.

In the early years there were often more ministers than elders available, and in the beginning of the Reformation the advice and input of “extra” ministers at classis was needed. This led to the rule we still have in the last paragraph of Article 44 today. Non-delegated ministers from churches that have more than one minister obviously do not have a vote, but *they shall have the right to attend classis in an advisory capacity*. In recent years we have seen an increasing number of those in our churches, which raises the question: does an “advisory capacity” give me the right to offer unsolicited advice at any time in any discussion on any topic? The consensus seems to be “yes, of course.” But I wonder about that. Article 44 is silent about it, but the danger is not imaginary that the discussion is going to be dominated by those who are not voting. I see much wisdom in the decision of Synod Middelburg 1581 that those who have not been delegated can only give advice when asked. It is good to avoid even the impression of “clerical hierarchy.”

LOGISTICS

How large should a classis be? There is no specific rule, and during the first decades after Synod Emden 1571 there was great variety in size, depending on the density of churches in an area. F. L. Rutgers suggests that there should be no less than five or six churches in a classis and not more than twenty-five. In the CanRC the average is about nine.

In some areas the boundaries of a classical region make geographical sense, but in other cases “relative proximity” is just that: relative. Nevertheless, it is good to read the word “neighbouring” in Article 44 as “geographical neighbours” and not as “likeminded neighbours.” The latter criterion would be most unhealthy for the unity we have in Christ.

For various reasons churches may want to change classical boundaries. How should that be handled? There are, of course, always two or more classes involved, and it’s important that all of them fully agree with the reasons for the suggested change. If those classes cannot agree, the matter should be brought to the next regional synod for arbitration.

The classis is the “backbone” in the structure of our federation

How often should a classis be held? Again—as we have seen with other things—in the first decades of the Reformation there was a variety of practices. In a time of persecution, perhaps only two times per year was possible. But when more freedom came sometimes classes would be held every month. Since the Synod of Dort, the consistent rule in Reformed church orders has been *at least once every three months*. In the Church Order revision of 1983, the CanRC added in Article 44 the provision that a classis can be cancelled if no matters have been sent in by the churches. This cannot be done twice in a row, though, for it is important to stay in touch as churches in a classical region.

It is explicitly stated in Article 44 that the chairman of classis shall always be one of the ministers. From the very beginning elders have been excluded. This was not because a minister has a higher office, but in the early years ministers would usually be better equipped for this job. This has changed, and I don’t think that today there is any reason to restrict the presidency of major assemblies to ministers only. After all, it is also in the freedom of every classis to determine who can serve as vice-chairman or clerk.

AGENDA

The matters that are typically on the agenda of a classis demonstrate what I mentioned earlier about the classis being the “backbone” of our federational structure. Apart from being the first court-of-appeal (Art. 31) and receiving overtures or proposals (in the framework of Art. 30), in the Church Order we have agreed on some significant responsibilities for the classis. Classis has the task to examine men before they will be able to enter the ministry (Arts. 4, 5, and 8) and has to approve their exit from the ministry as well (Arts. 11, 12, 13, and 71). Classis also plays a

decisive role at a crucial moment in the discipline process in the local churches (Art. 68).

Furthermore, although the Reformation did away with bishops who singlehandedly supervised local clergy and parishes, the churches did acknowledge the need for some form of mutual “supervision.” Classis became the platform for exercising this mutual accountability among the sister churches in a region. This shows in different ways.

In the beginning one of the first items on the agenda was the preaching of a sermon by one of the ministers. This was not meant as opening devotions; the sermon would be discussed and criticized by others. The purpose was to improve the preaching. In those days a good number of ministers were former priests and monks who had joined the Reformed churches but were poorly educated. Eventually, with better theological training, this custom disappeared.

From early on a prominent place on the agenda of classis was also given to mutual accountability and encouragement. The chairman would ask each church separately about its circumstances and spiritual well-being, and whether help or advice was needed. Initially the chairman had some freedom to formulate questions as he saw fit. And even when synods listed particular questions, the Church Order always maintained some flexibility by adding expressions like “and other like matters” (1578), or: “among other things” (1618/19). When in 1568 church visitors were introduced, this way of inquiring at classis became less relevant.

The wording we find today in Article 44 lists only three questions. In practice it is usually a minor item on the agenda. The delegates respond on behalf of their church, and most of the time the standard answer is “yes—yes—no.” Then the whole exercise will last two minutes. Sometimes the answer will be “yes—yes—yes.” The third “yes” means that a church needs help for some issue. That can be anything. Rev. Van Oene argues correctly that the first two questions are a leftover from the past and should be asked at church visitations, and that only the third one makes sense (*With Common Consent*, 1990, p. 209-10).

And if you want to see for yourself how it all works, feel free to visit the next classis in your area. Usually those meetings are open for all church members. Only if classis is asked to judge an appeal on a personal matter will there be a closed session, because no one except the delegates needs to know about such confidential and frequently difficult matters. 📺



Jan DeGelder

Minister Emeritus

Redemption Canadian Reformed Church, Flamborough

jdegelder8@gmail.com

Synod Snapshots

REPORTS

ERIC KAMPEN

With the next general synod scheduled to start on May 6, 2025, in Aldergrove, BC, local church councils will be busy reviewing the many reports prepared by various committees appointed by the previous general synod. These reports are available to all the members, as they are posted on the canrc.org website (see Assemblies › General Synod › Aldergrove 2025). This shows the desire to be transparent about the issues presented to a general synod. The reality is, however, that these reports are extensive, and the detail may deter the interested reader. While the office bearers will need to work through the details, the interested church member will be well-served by getting a brief overview, what might be called a synod snapshot, which is what is presented below.

A snapshot touches only on the main points mentioned in a report. If there is a desire for more information, the full report is available online. The hope is that via this snapshot church members are informed and can meaningfully discuss some of the issues on the agenda of the upcoming synod. While a snapshot by nature is selective, beyond selecting what to include there will be no editorial commentary.

1. SCBP REPORT

There are three items in the mandate of the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* that will be of particular interest: Forms for the Lord's Supper; the proposed psalms and hymns and existing hymns; and a proposal for a principled view of the *Book of Praise*.

Forms for the Lord's Supper

The Committee was asked to study and propose appropriate changes to the current Forms for the Lord's Supper and also to provide shorter forms (i.e. shorter than the current "Abbreviated Form"). The Committee recommends a modifying of the current "Self-examination" section of the full Lord's Supper Form to the first-person plural cohortative. This means using words like "we/

us." An example would be modifying the introductory sentence under "Self-examination" to, "In order that we may now celebrate this holy supper of the Lord to our comfort, we must each first rightly examine ourselves." The SCBP also prepared two shorter Lord's Supper Forms for adoption and use in the churches while recommending that these not replace the existing forms but be used in conjunction with them.

Psalms & Hymns

The main part of the Committee's task was to facilitate and evaluate input on the *proposed* psalms and hymns as well as on the *existing* hymns. Their detailed evaluation is found in a supplementary report. The Committee proposes the following eight alternative psalms for adoption.

1. Psalm 4 – Give Ear, God of My Righteousness
2. Psalm 13 – How Long Will You Forget Me?
3. Psalm 19 – The Heavens Above Declare
4. Psalm 22 – Amid the Thronging Worshipers
5. Psalm 23 – The Lord's My Shepherd
6. Psalm 41 – Blessed Is the One Who Helps the Weak and Poor
7. Psalm 112 – O Praise the LORD! The Man Is Blest
8. Psalm 149 – Give Praise to the LORD

It is worthy of note that the Supplementary Report containing the evaluation of each song recommends Ps. 103C for inclusion, but it is not included in the list in the main Report.

There are also twenty-three hymns being proposed for adoption:

1. Abide with Me
2. All Creatures of Our God and King
3. Amazing Grace!
4. Christians, Awake
5. Come, Thou Almighty King
6. Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus
7. Crown Him with Many Crowns

8. Guide Me, O My Great Redeemer
9. Hark! the Herald Angels Sing
10. How Deep the Father's Love for Us
11. How Great Thou Art
12. In Christ Alone
13. Let All Things Now Living
14. May the Mind of Christ, My Saviour
15. My Lord, I Did Not Choose You
16. O Christ, Our Hope, Our Heart's Desire
17. O Come, All Ye Faithful
18. O Sacred Head, Now Wounded
19. Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above
20. Speak, O Lord
21. Take My Life, and Let It Be
22. When I Survey the Wondrous Cross
23. Your Law, O God, Is Our Delight

The Committee adds that since there is currently a cap of one hundred hymns (per GS 2004), and if that remains the case they would limit their recommended selection to the following fifteen for adoption:

1. Abide with Me
2. All Creatures of Our God and King
3. Come, Thou Almighty King
4. Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus
5. Crown Him with Many Crowns
6. Guide Me, O My Great Redeemer
7. Hark! the Herald Angels Sing
8. How Deep the Father's Love for Us (text & melody copyright)
9. In Christ Alone (text & melody copyright)
10. Let All Things Now Living (melody copyright)
11. O Christ, Our Hope, Our Heart's Desire
12. O Come, All Ye Faithful
13. O Sacred Head, Now Wounded
14. Speak, O Lord (text & melody copyright)
15. Take My Life, and Let It Be

Principled View of the Book of Praise

As to the request to put forward a proposal for a principled view of the *Book of Praise*, the Committee gave the following summary, which captures the essence of their proposal.

1. In the "Principles and Guidelines" for selecting songs, the Committee suggests the addition of the guideline that hymns that are added will be those that deal with the riches of the new covenant.
2. The Committee suggests that any proposal for a further addition to our songbook, with or without a hymn cap, needs to prove that such an addition would fill a gap in the current collection of our worship songs.

3. The identifying of such gaps would be facilitated by a spreadsheet that demonstrates to what extent the current collection covers the fullness of God's trinitarian revelation. The Committee would be willing to prepare such spreadsheet.

Augment

The Committee also proposes that an authorized augment be published to contain the melody and text of new hymns and alternative psalms approved by GS 2025, the previously approved changes to Hymns 1, 55, and 58, and the shorter Lord's Supper Forms, if they are adopted. The Committee suggests that publishing an augment at this time is more stewardly than publishing a new *Book of Praise* with all the changes.

2. CER REPORT

General Synod 2022 decided to combine the various committees responsible for ecumenical relationships into one committee, giving it the name of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER). The CER report contains updates on contacts with twenty-one church federations as well as the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) and the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

The part of the report that will be of particular interest is the recommendation regarding the mandate to study the categories of Ecumenical Relationships, the Rules for Ecumenical relationships, and the Revision of Church Order Article 50, which deals with ecumenical relationships. This was a continuation of the mandate given by General Synod 2019.

Church Order Article 50

With respect to Article 50 CO, the CER recommends that Synod decide to adopt the following text:

Article 50: Ecumenical Relationships

Ecumenical relationships with other churches of Reformed confession shall be entered into where feasible and be maintained according to the rules adopted for this purpose by general synod. On minor points of ecclesiastical governance and practice churches shall not be rejected.

Rules for Establishing and Maintaining Ecclesiastical Relationships

With respect to the Rules for Establishing and Maintaining Ecclesiastical Relationships, the CER recommends that GS 2025 decide that the rules for establishing and maintaining ecclesiastical relationships be updated from what was established by GS 1992 as follows:

RULE 1

Level 1 – Ecclesiastical Fellowship

At a federative level, the following shall apply by decision of general synod:

Ecclesiastical Fellowship – Category A is with other churches of Reformed confession according to C.O. Art. 50. This relationship is maintained with churches with which we have **intense contact**.

This relationship is to be exercised where possible and desirable by:

1. Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies.
2. The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting Christian unity.
3. Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another.
4. Pulpit fellowship.
5. Reception of members at the Lord's Supper according to local regulations.
6. Reception of members into the local congregation, according to local regulations.
7. Consultation on issues of joint concern, particularly prior to instituting changes in doctrine, worship and governance which might affect the basis of the fellowship.
8. Joint action in areas of common responsibility.
9. Exchange of relevant ecclesiastical materials, including:
 - a. The minutes/acts of major assemblies;
 - b. Yearbooks/directories of the churches;
 - c. The most recently published edition of the Confessional Standards;
 - d. The most recent published edition of the Church Order;
 - e. The most recently published edition of an approved psalter, or psalter-hymnal.

Ecclesiastical Fellowship - Category B is with other churches of Reformed confession according to C.O. Art. 50. This relationship is maintained with churches with whom we have **less intense contact** for geographical, linguistic, or historical reasons. This relationship is to be exercised where possible and desirable by:

1. Welcome of fraternal observers at appropriate major assemblies.
2. Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another.
3. Pulpit fellowship.
4. Reception of members at the Lord's Supper according to local regulations.
5. Reception of members into the local congregation, according to local regulations.

6. Communication on issues of joint concern.
7. Review relevant ecclesiastical materials and monitor faithfulness to the Reformed confessions.

Level 2 – Ecclesiastical Contact

Ecclesiastical Contact is with other churches of Reformed confession with which we do not have Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Such churches may include churches with membership in NAPARC, or the ICRC, as well as other churches as determined by general synod. This relationship is to be exercised where possible and desirable by:

1. Meetings, both formal and informal, of delegates to the meetings of NAPARC and the ICRC and on other occasions that may arise.
2. Mutual labours as members of NAPARC and the ICRC in the discharge of the purposes of the council/conference.
3. Welcome of fraternal observers at major assemblies.
4. Other duties as directed by general synod.

The CER shall periodically review our ecumenical relationships to ensure we are honouring our commitments to each other. Furthermore, the CER may make recommendations, without prejudice, to general synod regarding the optimal placement of federations within these categories.

RULE 2

In circumstances where no federative fellowship (Rule 1) exists, churches may engage in ecumenical relationships with other local churches as per CO Article 50, in accordance with the following protocols:

1. Pulpit fellowship may occur with the concurring advice of classis and the deputies of regional synod. This fellowship will be implemented in a manner determined by classis.
2. Reception of members at the Lord's Supper according to local regulations.
3. Reception of members into the local congregation, according to local regulations.
4. Churches shall give an account of their ecumenical activities to their respective classes.

3. CRTS REPORT

The report from the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary comes in at 146 pages. The gist of the report is found in the first thirteen pages with the rest being appendices. The appendices are a reminder of the tremendous amount of work that takes place to keep the Seminary running smoothly. Among the appendices is a Policy for Admission

of Mature Students. It states that “As a rule, applicants to the M.Div. program are required to hold a Bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution. In extraordinary cases, a student who does not hold a Bachelor’s degree may be admitted to the M.Div. program.” The Policy lays out the criteria that must be met. As for the recommendations in the report, they fall in the category of housekeeping matters.

4. OTHER REPORTS

Synod also has to deal with reports from the Committee for Bible Translation, the Committee for the Federation Website, Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding, Committee for Needy Study Fund, as well as reports about Days of Prayer and Inspection of the Archives and from the Archive Church and the Address Church. These reports show how many brothers and sisters faithfully work behind the scenes. Reading them will give a sense of all they do. While each report puts recommendations

before general synod, these are the typical recommendations to enable the committees to continue their work. In short, there is little new here that is being proposed.

May our heavenly Father bless all who are busy studying these reports, preparing letters concerning them, and also the delegates who will be required to deliberate together and make decisions concerning them. 📖



Eric Kampen
Minister Emeritus
Canadian Reformed Church of Orangeville
rev.e.kampen@gmail.com

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Dear readers and advertisers,

Shortly before our second-last issue of 2024 was mailed, a strike by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers became imminent. Unlike the 2018 strike, which began with rotating stoppages and ended before Christmas mail deliveries, the 2024 strike caused a full postal shutdown at a critical time.

The disruption impacted many, including those awaiting essential supplies, payments, or one of 215,000 delayed passports. Non-profits relying on printed year-end donation appeals and cheque donations were particularly affected.

Clarion also faced challenges due to the strike, as mail remains our most efficient distribution method. Despite higher costs, we bundled #15 and the year-end issue into bulk parcels for distribution where we could. (Thanks to our correspondents for helping on the receiving end!) The remaining issues were sent as soon as the strike ended.

We’ve worked hard to streamline our turnaround for reliable delivery, making the disruption of our final two issues in 2024 especially disappointing. We apologize for the inconvenience.

William Gortemaker

Synod Snapshots

OVERTURES

As we approach the convening of General Synod 2025, the churches will be considering a number of overtures on a variety of topics. Overtures are basically proposals. In church life currently, if a local church wishes to propose a change to something the churches have together agreed upon, then the local church “overtures” (or: makes a proposal to) the local classis, giving reasons. If the classis finds the reasons convincing, it will pass it along to regional synod. And again, if the regional synod supports the overture, it will be sent along to general synod.

All the overtures referenced below are available to be read at canrc.org under (Assemblies > General Synod > Aldergrove 2025). What follows is a snapshot overview of the various overtures in as objective a manner as possible.

SYNOD DELEGATION & LENGTH

Two nearly identical overtures coming out of Regional Synod East 2024 (RSE) have to do with changing which ecclesiastical body chooses delegates to serve at general synod as well as increasing the number of delegates. Currently as churches we’ve agreed that each regional synod is to select twelve men—six ministers and six elders—for a total of twenty-four delegates (see Arts. 47 & 49, CO). One of the overtures proposes that instead of a regional synod, each *classis* would delegate two ministers and two elders. Since there are currently eight classes in the federation, this would make for a total of thirty-two delegates. The overtures argue that such a change would ensure “that each classical region is represented at general synod.” They also argue that increasing the number of delegates to thirty-two “would help achieve better regional and proportional representation without destroying the deliberative character of general synod.”

A third overture asserts that there is a problem with the length of the average general synod which it cites as taking an average of twelve days (over the past eight synods). It further states that on account of this “elders still engaged in the workforce hesitate to allow their names to stand as delegate to general synod.” The solution proposed is to shorten the duration of general synod by

two means. First, it proposes to adopt a hybrid model of having general synod meet both virtually and in-person as was done by the Christian Reformed Church in their GS 2024. Second, it proposes to hire a clerical team to assist the recording clerk of general synod with such things as checking the accuracy of the acts and other administrative tasks.

“HE DESCENDED INTO HELL”

RSE 2024 also adopted an overture that proposes to append “an explanatory footnote to ‘He descended into hell’” as it occurs in the Apostles’ Creed (including in Hymn 1). The overture states that this clause has “a long history of disputed interpretation” and provides appendices to show how a debate on this clause occurred already at GS 1980. It reasons that this line, in the “context of what is otherwise a series of statements about Jesus Christ laid out in chronological sequence, creates for many . . . the erroneous impression that immediately after Jesus Christ died, he went into the physical place of eternal torment known in the Bible as hell.” The solution it proposes is to place an explanatory statement of clarification in a footnote beneath the Creed (and Hymn 1) which reads: “These words are not to be understood as if Christ, upon entering death, went to the place of eternal torment called hell. See Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 16, Q/A 44.”

PSALMS & HYMNS—CONSISTORY DECIDE?

Two overtures from the West and one from the East propose (with some variations) that the decision as to what songs may be sung in the worship services be left up to each individual consistory. Throughout the history of our federation, the churches have agreed to decide on our songs collectively at general synod (see Article 55 CO), but each overture argues that the time is ripe to change this. Some of the arguments include that such a change would “demonstrate that the local consistory has the primary authority... for safeguarding the doctrinal integrity of the teaching, preaching and singing in the local church;” it would give the flexibility needed in “this time of increasing multiculturalism and ecclesiastical

connectivity;" it would serve "the interests of ecclesiastical unity;" it would "recognize the particular challenges faced by churches and church plants who may be ministering in a context that would benefit from the freedom to select certain songs outside of the *Book of Praise*;" it would allow for the singing of many "excellent, biblically grounded and well-known hymns" currently not available to the churches; it would remove "an unnecessary burden on some local churches . . . who feel compelled to adopt creative measures related to parsing the church order term 'worship service'" in order to sing additional songs; and that other North American sister churches leave this decision "within the province of the consistory/session" (note: quotations are selected from observations made by a regional synod in dealing with an overture; see the Acts of each regional synod).

In handling each overture, each regional synod added some considerations or recommendations of its own for general synod to consider. Regional Synod East 2024 recommends that the "proposed revision of CO Art. 55 include a provision that articulates the historic emphasis of the principal place of the Psalms in corporate worship." It further recommends that the proposed revision "include a clause directing local churches to seek concurring advice at classis before incorporating songs in the worship services that are not approved by general synod." Regional Synod West 2024 for its part notes in a consideration that "neither this proposal nor the current Article 55 address the matter of the Psalms having a predominant place in worship services."

FORM FOR THE BAPTISM OF INFANTS

Regional Synod West 2024 is presenting an overture to revise the wording of our current Form for the Baptism of Infants (*Book of Praise*, p. 597). The given reasons for such a revision include that many of the sentences are long and contain multiple clauses; that the whole form is too long and should ideally be half the length; that the language is overly formal; there is some lack of clarity and logical flow; the prayer before baptism is awkward; and other sister churches have revised this form. In response to a number of letters from the churches, RSW added its own recommendation that a committee be appointed by GS 2025 "for the purpose of proposing to the churches a revised form for infant baptism" ahead of the next general synod.

CHANGING THE ECCLESIASTICAL ROUTE

This issue may be a bit more challenging to get one's mind around since it concerns a part of the Church Order that only the assemblies of our federation ever deal with, and not individuals. The basic issue is how overtures actually come to be placed on the table of a general synod, a process known as the "ecclesiastical

route." A general synod deals with matters that are in common to all the churches in the federation as established by the Church Order (e.g. the songs we sing in worship, Art. 55; our liturgical forms concerning the sacraments, Art. 56; or marriage, Art. 63). As is obvious from the above discussion, currently overtures need to arise out of a local church and first be proposed to a classis along with reasons why such a proposal would be beneficial. If it wins support there, classis sends it on to regional synod (possibly with some alterations or suggestions and usually with a rationale as to why the overture finds support). Again, if it wins support at regional synod, it then gets sent on to general synod (again, possibly with some alterations, suggestions, and rationale). Overtures which do not convince a broader assembly are dropped and not passed on (which happened at each regional synod in 2024, for example). The idea in this process is that each broader assembly acts like a filter, ultimately assisting decision making at general synod (see *Acts of GS 2013*, Art. 99 for some background to this issue).

RSW's overture seeks to alter this process so that a local church can submit an overture directly to a general synod while at the same time distributing that overture to each local congregation no later than six months ahead of general synod. This effectively eliminates the involvement of the broader assemblies. Such a proposal leaves individual church councils free to interact directly with general synod while still involving all other churches in considering the matter being proposed. To accomplish this, the overture proposes to change Article 30 of the Church Order to read, "A new matter which has not previously been presented to that major assembly and is common its churches may be put on the agenda by one of its churches." It also proposes changing a regulation of general synod to obligate a distribution of such proposals to all churches at least six months in advance of a general synod.

The above five topics (involving nine overtures) will all come to the churches for consideration and then to GS 2025 for adjudication, the Lord willing. Let us pray that the Lord may grant wisdom to all the church councils in deliberating these matters and writing letters as they are so moved. And may the Holy Spirit also be with all delegates to general synod in their preparations and with synod itself in making decisions which fully please our heavenly Father and serve to build up Christ's church. 



Peter Holtvliuwer
Minister

Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church
pholtvliuwer@gmail.com



ECCHS GRADUATION

2024



Thirty-nine Grade 12 students graduated from Emmanuel Christian High School on September 27, 2024. The day was a warm one, but by the time the graduands and guests entered the glass atrium doors the temperature had dropped to 19°C. Though clouds blocked the sunset, no one noticed. Decorative centerpieces, place settings, and sparkling glasses adorned the tables; festive music filled the air, and a photo booth invited grads to snap once-in-a-lifetime memories. Parents, staff, and board members surrounded the central grad table and then the dinner MC, Mrs. Kim Vis, officially opened the festivities.

Following a tried-and-true tradition, Grade 12 moms brought heaps of delicious food from the kitchen for all. Grade 12 students, dressed in white, black, and smiles, attended each table. Amicable chatter, punctuated with odd bursts of laughter, filled the air. To create a break between dinner and desserts, the staff hosted their first-ever Kahoot game. The grads loved it! Good fun, good memories.

CEREMONY

After the dinner, everyone headed to Lakeside Church in Guelph where friends, relatives, and church community members joined the graduands for the official ceremony. While the principal, Mr. Stephen DeBoer, gave the grads specific instructions about donning gowns and stoles properly, walking in synchronistically, sitting alphabetically backwards, posing regally for a picture, and a few other rules, a good 650 people found their seats, studied the screens that displayed the grads, and listened to the songs that Jasmine Doekes played on the keyboard.

The evening began with a warm welcome from the chairman, Mr. Greg Wildeboer, who led the opening devotions before introducing the speaker, Mr. Trevor Devries. Mr. Devries highlighted the comforting doctrine of God's providence. He said, "Even the trials were part of his greater plan, leading you to this very moment." He also connected to this theme to AI: "It is God who is in control; he directs every computation that is generated by this or that type of so-called AI." As God guided Joseph, so God guides "you as you step

Graduation Awards 2023-2024

Honours Achievement Award

Kate Bouwers	Asa Leistra	Henrietta Thalen
Tiffany Bouwers	Lillian Lenting	Jordan Vanleeuwen
Travis de Haan	Tyson Lodder	Keisha Vanleeuwen
Kiersten de Witt	Wesley Niezen	Siera Vanleeuwen
Micah DeGroot	Cameron Oostdyk	Jamelle vanRaalte
Evan Jagt	Darren Penninga	Evan VanWoudenberg
Ethan Knol	Brayden Reinink	Riki Westrik
Joseph Kottelenberg	Hannah Thalen	John Wildeboer

Citizenship Award

Avery Vink

Stewardship Award

Kate Bouwers
Lillian Lenting

Governor General's Academic Medal

John Wildeboer

Jordan Hutchinson Academic Proficiency Award

John Wildeboer

Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award

Asa Leistra

Golden Eagle Award

Kate Bouwers
Kenya Kottelenberg
Asa Leistra
Curtis Reinink
Evan VanWoudenberg
Riki Westrik

Alec Calder Award

Darren Penninga

Royal LePage RCR Realty Business Excellence Award

Ian Dallinga

Post Farm Structures Award

Wesley Niezen

L. Martin Toet Memorial Athletics Scholarship Award

Evan VanWoudenberg
Kate Bouwers

Ashley's Music Studio Music Appreciation Award

Cameron Oostdyk

Wightman Family Bursary

Jonathan Van Eerde

Greg Wildeboer, board chairman



into your future.” He concluded by sharing the comfort that “he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6).

The principal then spoke, reflecting on the symbolism of the eagle (ECHS’s mascot) in Scripture. He noted that the eagle is portrayed in contrasting ways: with eagles’ wings, we can flee from God; but on eagles’ wings, God carries us and brings us to him. He encouraged the graduands to “seek to be carried on wings of faith, renewed by God’s strength. . . He will give you strength to endure and guide you to soar above the storms.”

Following the speeches, the graduands could ceremoniously rise from their comfortable seats and respectfully receive their diplomas. The audience clapped and cheered, cameras flashed while the grads beamed and enjoyed the moments of honour on stage. After this, various awards and bursaries were presented to qualifying graduates (see side bar).

Valedictorians Evan Vanwoudenberg and Jeremy VanRaalte then took to the stage to deliver a memorable address. They used an extended metaphor: “High school has truly been a huge buffet, starting with an empty plate. . . and ending with satisfied stomachs, unique experiences, and lessons learned.” Concerning two students who left in Grade 10: “I guess their appetites were for something different.” In Grade 12: purchasing Shawarma at lunch “eventually led Mr. Hopman to invite us over for home-made shawarma,” and for some students who entered the school through a third-floor window one night, “Unfortunately for them, the only meal they got was one of nutritionless suspensions.”

They concluded with these words: “So as we leave here tonight, let us remember that high school was more than a buffet of experiences. It was a place where we grew, learned, laughed, and yes, even inhaled a little sulphur dioxide. But more importantly, it was a place where we found friends, developed talents that God gave us, and grew in our faith. May God be with and bless each and every one of us as we continue to do whatever he has in store for us. To him be all the glory.”

It was truly a beautiful evening.

Arthur Kingma

Valedictorian duo: Jeremy VanRaalte and Evan Vanwoudenberg



Trevor Devries, keynote speaker



missionBRAZIL

BI-Monthly Newsletter

www.missionbrazil.ca



The 43rd Concílio Growth, Concerns and Thankfulness

By Pr. Jon Chase, Pr. Jim Witteveen and Br. Chris Boersema

The IRB 43rd Concílio (Synod) took place the first week of November in the building of São José da Coroa Grande. A complete copy of the acts can be found on the IRB's official website. A few of the notable results:

One student sustained his licensure exam and is now able to preach his own sermons in the churches. Of the two students who were examined for eligibility for call, one sustained his exam and the other will hopefully successfully redo the one part of his exam that he didn't sustain at the next Concílio.

A sad (but not unexpected) outcome of the Concílio is that the Reformed Church of Greater Recife is no longer an instituted church in the federation. The church in IPSEP has accepted responsibility for supervising the work of the office-bearers in this church (and her two missionary congregations in Caruaru and Fortaleza). Hopefully the work can continue and one day we can see these congregations instituted

again as established churches.

Two other churches were also short of the minimum number of office-bearers, but expressed their expectation that the situation would be resolved very soon. So Concílio decided to give them each more time to ordain the needed men for a full council.

On the other hand, some joyful news: two independent reformed churches were received as sister churches with a view towards ultimately joining the federation: the Berean Reformed Church in São Luis, MA; and the Defense of the Faith Reformed Church in Olho d'Água das Flores, AL. During this stage, their ministers will be preparing to undergo a peremptory exam, after which the churches can officially become part of the federation, if they (and Concílio) still desire. May God be praised for this development! How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in communion!

Bi-Monthly Newsletter | December 2024



Sign Up

**SUBSCRIBE
TO STAY
INFORMED**

missionBRAZIL

CONTENT GALLERY

The 43rd Concílio	1
Inside the IRB Federation	2
Prayer Requests	3

**SO CHRIST HIMSELF
GAVE THE APOSTLES,
THE PROPHETS, THE
EVANGELISTS, THE
PASTORS AND TEACHERS,
TO EQUIP HIS PEOPLE FOR
WORKS OF SERVICE, SO
THAT THE BODY OF CHRIST
MAY BE BUILT UP UNTIL
WE ALL REACH UNITY IN
THE FAITH AND IN THE
KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON
OF GOD AND BECOME
MATURE, ATTAINING TO
THE WHOLE MEASURE OF
THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST.**

(EPHESIANS 4:11-14)



Inside the IRB Federation

By Pr. Jon Chase and Pr. Elienai Bispo Batista

Continued Growth in Campinas - and Growing Leaders

By God's grace, the congregation in Campinas has continued to experience steady growth, under the leadership of Pr. Elienai Batista. This month, they began renting a new worship building—a building that was once a church, transformed into a gym. The congregation is very thankful to have its own place, that finally has enough room for all of the members. The brothers and sisters are very active in the congregation. A number of families have moved in order to live closer to the church.

Pr. Elienai has set up an interesting leadership structure: biblically qualified men are asked to serve terms of four months functioning as a "leadership committee". Together with Pr. Elienai, they handle the day-to-day matters and take visible leadership within the congregation. This arrangement gives the men a chance to use and grow in their gifts, and it gives Pr. Elienai an opportunity to train and prepare them for the office-bearers.

Children "Yearn" to Participate in Memorization!

In the church in Campinas, parents receive a document with the answers for three different levels and apply this to their children according to the child's ability and the parents' availability to work on memorization that week. This has in fact become a culture in the congregation, with children from a young age wanting to come forward to respond. One of the advantages is that parents are involved in this work.

Pastor Elienai from Campinas reports: "Often in catechesis or pastoral visits, dealing with certain subjects, it is interesting to observe how they manage to remember and even recite a memorized question after three or four months. And sometimes they can relate an answer to a topic I'm discussing with the family. It is interesting to note that there are children, whose family visited us, and who yearn to be part of the congregation, as they would like to participate in memorization."



Children from levels 1 and 2, reciting LD28, Q75



Level 3 children reciting question LD28, Q75



Our teenagers reciting the Lord's Day 22

Hospitality in Campinas

The congregation in Campinas continues to strive to practice hospitality. It's great to see photos of families together in the men's group in the congregation, especially on Saturdays and Sundays. An important point is that hospitality is not just for women in the congregation. Men are completely involved in this too. It is interesting how shy men have integrated themselves into congregational life, through being welcomed and now through welcoming families into their homes. A blessing of hospitality is that instead of communion taking place across age groups or being male or female, it takes place through families, enabling greater interaction between everyone. And singles are included in this too.



**Pastor J. Witteveen
and family have safely
arrived in Brazil!**

Please Pray For This Work



The newest
addition to the
Boersema
family:
"Anna
Elisabeth
Boersema"

- The faithful Reformed / Presbyterian / CREC churches in Brazil, with which our field team and the IRB pastors have contact.
- The congregation in Campinas, for the families who are being discipled, for the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of the members, and for Pr. Elienai and his family—that God would continue to give him joy and peace in spite of the intense workload.
- The sending church of Cabo Frio, as they do their best with their limited number of office-bearers to exercise good leadership over the church in Campinas.
- The two independent churches that have been received as sister churches of the IRB. Pray for their ministers as they prepare for their peremptory exams.
- The Aldergrove Canadian Reformed church council and the Aldergrove Brazil Mission Society board members, for wisdom and insight as they support the work in Brazil.
- The missionary congregation in Içara, SC, under the supervision of the missionary congregation in Colombo. Give thanks for the ongoing commitment of these brothers to the work of establishing a Reformed church in this city and state that lacks any serious Reformed witness.
- The Reformed Church of Greater Recife, which is no longer an instituted church in the federation. Pray that the work may continue under the supervision of the church in IPSEP.
- The churches currently facing challenges in meeting the minimum number of office-bearers. Pray that God would raise up men of wisdom, courage, and conviction to serve as elders and deacons, strengthening these congregations to move forward in faithfulness and unity. May the Lord equip His church with godly leadership to advance His kingdom and glorify His name.
- The missionary congregation in Fortaleza and for their missionary, Pr. Elissandro. Praise God for the recent growth, with four individuals joining through profession of faith and others undergoing discipleship and catechism. Pray for continued faithfulness, wisdom, and strength as they trust God for His provision and guidance in the days ahead.
- The missionaries, Pr. Jim and Pr. Jon, the mission worker Chris, and their families, as well as the pastors and office bearers of the IRB churches. Please pray for health and strength to do their task faithfully and with boldness, discernment and wisdom, with the help of the Spirit.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Happy Birthday to Ron, Trevor, and Connie, each one celebrating a birthday in February! May God bless you all in the coming year. We pray you continue to put your hope and trust in God alone, who provides you with all things.



<http://athousandelsewhere.ca>

3

Ron de Witt will be 52
3217 Twin Oaks
Burlington, Ontario
L7M 3A8

6

Trevor Buys will be 45
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road
Grimsby, Ontario
L3M 0L1

12

Connie VanAmerongen will be 60
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road
Grimsby, Ontario
L3M 0L1
e-mail: conniev1965@gmail.com

CLARION KIDS **ASK!**

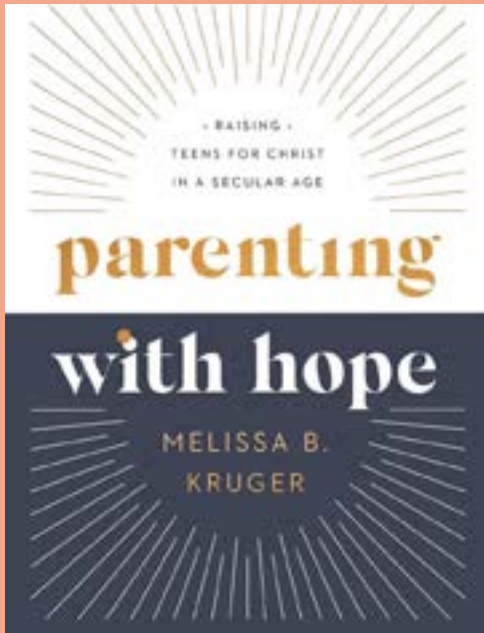
Calling all kids:

Do you have a question
about **God** or **church**?

Any questions about
something in Clarion?

**Ask away, and we'll
get you answers!**

Email your question to
editor@clarionmagazine.ca
and watch for the answer
here in the Clarion!



PARENTING WITH HOPE

Raising Teens for Christ in a Secular Age

By Melissa B. Kruger. (Harvest House Publishers, 2024). Hardcover. 237 pages. \$29.95 CDN. Study Guide (Paperback) \$13.99 CDN.

When Melissa Kruger discussed with a friend her goal of writing a book about raising teens for Christ, she admitted she was having difficulty finding a launching point. Without hesitation, her friend replied, “Lord, help us!” And so it begins, with a prayer. If you are familiar with The Gospel Coalition you will recognize Kruger’s name and credentials as vice president of discipleship programming, and author of a number of books on the topic of intentional Christian relationships. She is a biblical scholar and regular speaker at TGC’s annual women’s conference. With scriptural clarity and maternal love and humility she works her way through the many potential landmines of raising teenage children in an increasingly ungodly North American context.

A book about parenting skills and tactics often starts close to home with some self evaluation. What was my own experience as a child and teenager? How did my parents raise me? How has that shaped my instincts as a Christian parent? Integrating psychological studies with Christian insight, Kruger offers a basic spectrum of parenting styles from authoritative (shepherding) to authoritarian (domineering) contrasted with permissive (indulgent) to negligent (absentee). Understanding our own history, as well as identifying our impulses as parents within these categories, helps us analyze the interactions we are having with our teens in respect to what we are bringing to the table each day. This is a better starting point than beginning with a critique on how the children are receiving our parental guidance. Remove the log before the splinter!

The book is divided into three sections: The Basics, The Battle, and The Blessings. The first section introduces the foundations of searching God’s Word, seeking God in prayer, and fostering a vibrant church life for your family. The second part engages some

of the potential pitfalls for parents and teens including pursuing success, managing busyness, and striving for popularity. Here we can observe a clash between the expectations of parents and children while often missing really seeing each other as unique individuals made in God’s image. The third section zeros in on the home and how it can be cultivated to be a place of thriving for our children, and how it can easily fall short of this goal if it is not well considered and highly prioritized. Throughout the book Kruger provides biblical admonitions and insights, gently applied with understanding and grace for the weaknesses and shortcomings of both parents and children, along with hope for real change rooted in Christ.

I did not purchase the study guide, but it seems clear that, paired with this book, it would not only be great for personal growth, but could also easily form the basis for a parents group study in your neighbourhood or church fellowship. It is easy to read, well resourced, encouraging for all, and will certainly lead to good conversations, and possibly an increased support network for dads and moms during challenging child raising years. Highly commended. The only downer for me is that the attractive gilded lettering on the book cover was partially worn off by the time I finished the book, proving the old adage that *all that glitters is not gold!* 📖



Rick Ludwig
Streetlight Christian Church, Hamilton
rludwig@kitchingsteepeandludwig.com



WHAT IS LOVE?

By Kyle Borg. (Pittsburgh: Grassmarket Press, 2022). Paperback. 135 pages. \$10.00 USD.

This little book is yet another volume in Grassmarket Press's "Bedrock Series." This series "aims to provide clear, concise books on Christian doctrine and life from a Reformed and Presbyterian perspective." Having read several of them now, I have yet to read one that falls short of that aim. More than that, I've *enjoyed* them, including this one by Kyle Borg from a couple of years ago.

This book tackles the topic of love. Many years ago, D. A. Carson wrote a little book, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*. That book focused on one aspect of the Bible's teaching on love and Borg goes into that here as well, though in a way that makes it really quite simple. But he also goes beyond that to include teaching on what the Bible says about how we're to love one another. Expositing the well-known passage of 1 Corinthians 13, Borg outlines what love is and what it isn't.

"What is love?" Our culture has its answers, but what does the Bible say?

The book begins with one question: "What is love?" Our culture has its answers, but what does the Bible say? Borg then proceeds to answer many other questions we might ask. These include: does God love everyone? What about the love we read about between David and Jonathan? What was going on there between them? What about love in marriage? "When you don't feel in love with your significant other, how do you still love?" (p. 119). Read the book to find out.

Two of the most insightful chapters occur early in the book. Chapter 2 is entitled "Love isn't God." Here Borg explains how making love divine ends up elevating our idea of love over God as he reveals himself in the Bible. The next chapter is the counterpoint: "God is Love." The author has a great explanation of love as one of God's attributes. If love must always have an object, and if God's attributes are always true of him, whom did God love before he created humanity and other creatures? If you don't know the answer, this book is for you.

I appreciated that Borg underlined the greatest expression of God's love in the incarnation. He writes, "The sending of his only Son into the world is the greatest demonstration of love imaginable—it's self-giving in the greatest sense" (p. 31). Then he gives this great quote from Octavius Winslow: "Who delivered Jesus up to die? Not Judas for money; not Pilate for fear; not the Jews for envy—but the Father, for love." So beautiful!

Borg has a breezy, conversational writing style. There are many illustrations and personal anecdotes to keep your interest. If you want a nice little book that will get you thinking widely and deeply about love—both God's love and ours—this one is hard to beat. 



Wes Bredenhof

Minister

Free Reformed Church of Launceston

bookreview@clarionmagazine.ca

letter to the **EDITOR**

Dear Editor,

Thank you for publishing Rev. E. Kampen's overview of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC) in the November 22 issue. Since these churches are now found all over the world, including here in Tasmania, this is both relevant and helpful.

I believe it important to mention one more concern. While it is not officially held by the CREC, paedocommunion is a common practice among them. The most well-known example is Christ Church in Moscow, Idaho. It claims to adhere to the Heidelberg Catechism and yet admits everyone who has been baptized to the Lord's Supper, contrary to Lord's Day 30.

Wes Bredenhof
Launceston, Tasmania, Australia

Clarion

INDEX 2024

VOLUME 73

No.	Page	No.	Page	No.	Page	No.	Page
01	1-40	05	181-224	09	369-408	13	557-603
02	41-88	06	225-276	10	409-456	14	604-648
03	89-132	07	277-324	11	457-504	15	649-696
04	133-180	08	325-368	12	505-556	16	697-784

CONTRIBUTORS

AASMAN, Richard
TREASURES NEW & OLD
Choose Life, 608

ALKEMA, Hendrik
Delightful Friendship, 609

BOSCH, Winston
TREASURES NEW & OLD
Tired of Being Alone, 460
Christmas Lyrics Worth Listening To, 702

BOUWMAN, Clarence
Church in Canadian Reformed History: The Beginnings, 233
Church in Canadian Reformed History: The 1950s, 286
Teaching English: A Tool for Mission, 727

BREDENHOF, Reuben
The Ministry of Small Things, 464
The Preacher's Progress, 573
What's a Vicariate?, 653

BREDENHOF, Wes
Can you Read?, 10
The Myth of the Sovereign Citizen, 377
The Greatest Guide Overcame, 615
Stop Trying to Illustrate the Trinity, 657

BRUINTJES, Gerrit
TREASURES NEW & OLD
The Christ's Glorious Resting Place, 136
Not Again?!, 652

DEBOER, Amanda
CLARION KIDS 22, 70, 113, 163, 201, 256, 310, 354, 394, 439,
485, 537, 579, 631

DEGELDER, Jan
GOVERNING THE CHURCH
Come Let Us Sing, 54
Preach the Word! Anywhere?, 145
Church and School, 238
Bloom Where You're Planted, 338
Honor the King, 419
Welcome Him in the Lord, 473
More About Attestations, 566
A General Synod is Coming to Town, 661

DEN HOLLANDER, William
EDITORIAL
The Blessing of Confessing, 411

DE VISSER, Arjan
Mission Organization of the URCNA, 8
Mission Organization of the CanRC, 45
Mission Organization of the CanRC: An Evaluation, 93

- DOUMA, Andrew
 PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS
 Capitalism Persecutes the Church, 152
 Strong & Courageous, 340
 Eritrea: The World's Largest Prison, 476
 IDOP: International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, 618
- DYKSTRA, Kent
 Seven Takeaways from the RCDC/CARE/CCRTC SOGI and Curriculum Conference, 391
- EZINGA, Michael
 Intergenerational Discipleship, 717
- FEENSTRA, Peter
 We All Need a Little Encouragement!, 329
- GORTEMAKER, William
 CHURCHES OUTSIDE THE PARC
 NAPARC 2023, November 14–16, 57
 FROM THE PUBLISHER
 Clarion Year End update, 703
- HOLTVLÜWER, Peter
 EDITORIAL
 State Your Pronouns?, 43
 Transparency & Trust in the Acts of General Synod, 279
 Useful Press Releases, 651
 NEW VOICES
 Visual Meditations, 147
 The Priority of Psalm Singing: Historical Overview, 229
 The Priority of Psalm Singing: Reasons, 281
 A time to Rest: EMC 2024, 719
- JANSSEN, Karlo
 The Ecclesiastical Route, 51
 The Ecclesiastical Route, Part 2, 95
 The Organization of the CanRC's Mission in Mexico, 188
- KAMPEN, Eric
 CHURCHES OUTSIDE THE PARC
 Churches Outside the PARC (Introduction), 11
 The Christian Reformed Church, 191
 The Reformed Church in America, 378
 The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 522
 The Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches, 664
 EDITORIAL
 Hope, 135
 Co-opting God's Word, 371
 Joining a Conversation, 607
 Aspiration, 509
- KAMPEN, Ryan
 DISCIPLING THE NATIONS
 The Reformational Study Centre, 671
- KINGMA, Sara
 SERVICE SNAPSHOTS
 CRWRF – Survive to Thrive, 534
- LEE, Han Gil
 My Path to Liberation, 658
- LUDWIG, Rick
 Trauma at the Table, 241
 Growing Vulnerable, 336
 Home Renovations, 416
 Unhindered Glory, 515
 Christmas Lamentations, 708
- MEDEMBLIK, Louie
 DISCIPLING THE NATIONS
 Progress of Ressources chrétiennes, 102
- MORRIS, Jeff
 The Majesty of God's Simplicity, 612
- NYENHUIS, Isabel
 NEW VOICES
 A Forever Broken Heart, 150
- ONDERWATER, Eric
 The Need for Life Renewal, 461
- POORT, Jeff
 TREASURES NEW & OLD
 Establishing Unity, 92
- ROUKEMA, Tony
 Celebrating Love of the Good Shepherd at Christmas, 704
- SCHOOF, Ben
 TREASURES NEW & OLD
 Another Helper, 280
- SCHOUTEN, Tim
 DISCIPLING THE NATIONS
 What does a Missionary do?, 479
- SEGSTRO, Jeremy
 Wanna Trade? Covenant ... or Discipleship?, 561
- SIKKEMA, Keith
 Alcuin the Scholar and Charles the King
 Part 1: Scholar Alcuin, 15
 Part 2: Charles the King, 63
 Part 3: Parma, 110
 Part 4: Renewal, 158
- SLOMP, Willem B.
 TREASURES NEW & OLD
 Kicking Against the Goads, 560
- SMITH, John
 God's Battle Lines: The Antithesis in the Preaching of the Gospel, 97
 God's Battle Lines: The Antithesis in the Preaching of the Gospel, Part 2, 140
 God's Battle Lines: The Antithesis in the Preaching of the Gospel, Part 3, 185
- TORENVLIET, Jake
 The State of the Union Federation, 712
- VAN BOSTELEN, Wade
 MONEY MATTERS
 The Gas Principle, 48
- VAN DAM, S. Carl
 TREASURES NEW & OLD
 The Lord is Always the Same, 184
 Show Me Your Glory, 328
- VANDERHORST, Rick
 How to Live in Covenant with God, Part Three, 5
 God's Providence is not Our Bible, 564
- VANDERLINDE, Calvin
 Sports Betting and Christian Ethics, 373

TREASURES NEW & OLD
Thanklessness Rectified, 508

VANDERMEULEN, Ilse
WITNESS AT WORK
Being a Christian Funeral Director, 107
Being a Christian Detective Constable, 243
Church Social Creator, 381
Meet Marieke: Registered Nurse, 525
Meet Conrad: Professor of English, 668
Report on the Work in Papua New Guinea, 343
Mission Outreach in Brampton, 423
New CanRC in Caledonia, 483
One Small School Becomes Two, 626

VANDERVELDE, Clarence
TREASURES NEW & OLD
Set Free From Spiritual Oppression, 372
Equipping the Saints for the Work of Service, 412

VAISANEN, Harriet
SERVICE SNAPSHOTS
Anchor Home in Grimsby, 724

VAN LUIK, Matthew
EDITORIAL
Reconciliation Withing the Community of Believers, 91
No Longer Victims, 327
To Marry or Not to Marry: Are Marriage Vows Necessary?, 559
Victims and Abusers: Navigating Broken Relationships, 541

VAN POPTA, George
TREASURES NEW & OLD
The Benefits of the Ascension of Christ, 228

VANSPRONSEN, Julius
Deliberately Welcoming: A Strategy for Churches, 413

VAN VLIET, Jason
EDITORIAL
Last Days, 3
235 Jesus Songs, 227
Onceing/Halving, 459
AI: At What Cost?, 701
Update from CRTS, 193
Do Children Belong at the Lord's Supper?, 290
When Should Young Believers be Admitted to the
Lord's Table?, 332
CRTS Principal's Update, 571

VERSTEEG, Henry and Rita
DISCIPLING THE NATIONS
Update from Papua New Guinea, 530

VIS, Rachel
RAY OF SUNSHINE 21, 69, 162, 200, 307, 352, 437, 536, 677, 734

VREUGDENHIL, Arjen
TREASURES NEW & OLD
Sharing in the Divine Nature, 4
Supplementing Your Faith, 44

WITTEN, Arend
Your Brain is a Muscle, 513

WITTEVEEN, Jim
The Place of Modern Israel in God's Plan, 137
EDITORIAL
"Speaking the Truth in Love," or Hate Speech?, 183
Fulfilling the Dominion Mandate, 507

WYNIA, Dick
CRCNA Synod 2024 Stands Firm on Human Sexuality, 469
Reflections on CRCNA Synod 2024

BOOK REVIEWS

BREDENHOF, Reuben
John D. Meade and Peter J. Gurry, Scribes and Scripture: The
Amazing Story of how We Got the Bible, 395
William Boekestein, Jonathan Landry Cruse, Andrew J. Miller,
Glorifying and Enjoying God, 586

BREDENHOF, Wes
A.S. Ibrahim, Reaching Your Muslim Neighbor with the Gospel, 24
Cornelis Van Dam, In Holy Service: Essays on Office – Personal
and Ecclesial, 71
Heath Lambert, A Theology of Biblical Counseling, 116
Patricia Weerakoon, The Gender Revolution: A Biblical, Biological,
and Compassionate Response, 164
Nina Siegal, The Diary Keepers: World War II in the
Netherlands, 209
Charles L. Quarles and L. Scott Kellum, 40 Questions About the
Text and Canon of the New Testament, 259
Mary K. Mohler, Susannah Spurgeon: Lessons for a Life of
Joyful Eagerness in Christ, 313
Helen Thorne and Dr. Steve Midgley, Mental Health and
Your Church, 357
Ed Drew, Raising Confident Kids in a Confusing World, 396
Nathan Eshelman, Worthy: The Worship of God, 444
William Boekestein, Finding My Vocation: A guide for Young
People Seeking a Calling, 486
George Marsden, An Infinite Fountain of Light: Jonathan
Edwards for the Twenty-First Century, 538
John Frederik Ezinga, The Impact of Psalm Singing in Corporate
Worship in the Canadian Reformed Churches, 539
Lucy S.R. Austen, Elisabeth Elliot: A Life, 587
Scott Klusendorf, The Case for Life: Equipping Christians
to Engage the Culture, 636
Mike McKinley, Friendship with God: A Path to Deeper
Fellowship with the Father, Son and Spirit, 679
Daniel Howe, Worship, Feasting, Rest, Mercy: The Christian Sabbath, 683
Herman Bavinck, Biblical and Religious Psychology, 736
Carl Trueman, Crisis of Confidence: Reclaiming the Historic Faith
in a Culture Consumed with Individualism and Identity, 738

FABER, Gloria
Jackie Gibson, You are Still a Mother: Hope for Women
Grieving a Stillbirth or Miscarriage, 488

HOLTVLÜWER, Peter
Joel R. Beeke and Anthony T. Selvaggio, Sing a New Song:
Recovering Psalm Singing for the Twenty-First Century, 311
Ted J. Postuma, Psalmody Through the Ages, 312

HUIZENGA, Jack
Mark Milke, The 1867 Project: Why Canada should be
cherished – not cancelled, 257

LUDWIG, Rick
Meaningful Work Wanted, 26
Rosaria Butterfield, Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age, 114
Christopher Ash, The Book Your Pastor Wishes You Would
Read (but is too embarrassed to ask), 206
Wes Bredenhof, Get To Know the Holy Spirit, 358
Mark Jones, The Pilgrim's Regress, Guarding against
backsliding and apostasy in the Christian life, 440
Samuel E. Waldron, A Man as Priest in His Home, 585
David Gibson, The Lord of Psalm 23: Jesus Our Shepherd,
Companion and Host, 632

Megan Basham, Shepherds for Sale, 634
Alan D. Strange, Empowered Witness, Politics, Culture and the
Spiritual Mission of the Church, 681
T. David Gordon, Choose Better, 740

T HART, Stephan

Harry Kleyn, Declare His Glory: A history of mission among
the Indigenous Australians, 355

TORENVLIIET, Jake

Reuben Bredenhof, Thank God: Becoming more grateful to
the Greatest of Givers, 442

VAN POPTA, George

Theodore Haak, An English Translation of the Annotations to
the Dutch States Bible, 166

MUSIC

HELDER, William

The Suffering Servant, 144
O God of Light, 196
Praise Our Exalted Lord, 237
The Earth, O Lord, Is Your Dominion, 422
Burning Bush, 617
The Supremacy of Christ, 716

VAN POPTA, George

O Lord Almighty, God Supreme, 13
O Lord Almighty, God Supreme, 342
The Song of Deborah (1), 380

PODCAST REVIEWS

HOLTVLÜWER, Lucas

Once for All Delivered, 23
The Acquired Podcast, 204

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RE: Capitalism Persecutes the Church, 261
RE: Mission Organization of the CanRC, 314
RE: Book Review of The Diary Keepers, 314
RE: With Voices United, 490
RE: Church in Canadian Reformed History, 491
RE: Delightful Friendship, 744

READERS FORUM

Response to: When a Church does not comply (2), 73
With Voices United, 398
Response to: The Priority of Psalm Singing, 445
Response to: Reconciliation Withing the Community
of Believers, 492
Response to: Do Children Belong at the Lord's Supper, 589

PRESS RELEASES

CLASSIS CLIPPINGS, 262, 315, 493, 638
BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE CRTS
January 11, 2024
September 5, 2024

CRMA

September 7, 2024

CLASSIS MANITOBA

December 8, 2023, 75

CLASSIS NIAGARA

December 13, 2023, 76

CLASSIS NORTHERN ONTARIO

February 2, 2024

CLASSIS ONTARIO WEST

December 13, 2023, 118

CLASSIS PACIFIC WEST

(Contracta) January 11, 2024

CANADIAN REFORMED MISSIONS ASSOCIATION

September 7, 2024

REGIONAL SYNOD EAST

November 8, 2023, 27

REGIONAL SYNOD WEST

November 21, 2023, 28

SPECIAL EVENTS

DACS: Celebrating 55 Blessed Years, 19
Timothy Christian School Celebrates 50 Years, 67
Mission in Our Communities: God Prepares the Harvest in Dark Times, 100
Niagara South Dedicates New Building, 156
Pastor Dathan Pleiter's Ordination and Welcome, 197
Devon's First Minister, 247
Launching the Delight Retreat, 251
Stakri Building Nearing Completion, 253
New Building for Hope CanRC, 345
Louwerse Family Welcomed to Grassie, 347
Orangeville Welcomes Mark and Sheri VanderLinde, 385
Neerlandia Welcomes Faustin and Magdalena Emadjeu, 387
Summit Reformed Young Adults Conference, 427
What is a Brazilian Concílio?, 431
New CanRC in Caledonia, 483
Retirement of Rev. Jan Huijgen, 528
50th Convocation of CRTS, 569
RCUS Synod 2024, 581
Farewell to Pastor Steve van Leeuwen, 583
Rev. Wynia Retires, 620
Guido Graduation 2024, 623
One Small School Becomes Two, 626
Behold Our God! Recap of the Summit Reformed Youth Conference, 673
A Time to Rest: EMC 2024, 719

OTHER/MISCELLANEOUS

IRTC, 105, 389, 629
MERF News 61, 350, 435, 722
Christ For All Ministry, 154, 433, 730
Women's Savings Action Annual Newsletter, 202
CRTS Graduate Profiles, 294
Mission Work in Edmonton, 304
CRTS is going to need new Professors, 467
CRTS Principal's Update, 571
Women's Savings Action: Funding the Seminary Library, 578

