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

74 | 05
APR 11, 2025

Clarion

189 TAKE UP YOUR CROSS | *194* WHEN I THOUGHT MY MOM WAS KILLING ME

200 WITNESS AT WORK | *204* CRTS 2025 GRADUATE PROFILES (PART 1)

Cover Photo Credit: Adobe Stock

what's inside

The death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ are certainly key events in God's plan of salvation. As we prepare to mark them in our churches and families, we are pleased to present four meditative pieces to help us understand afresh the wonder of the cross. John van Popta reflects on the significance of Simon of Cyrene being made to carry Jesus's cross to Golgotha while Arjen Vreugdenhil highlights the plan of God in leading his Son through suffering and death to resurrected life and ascension glory. How does Easter affect the way we walk through a cemetery? Rick Ludwig takes us on little stroll to find out. And if the tender subject of a loved-one who has taken his or her own life is one that touches your heart, you may find Wes Bredenhof's honest and gospel-laced story a particular balm for your soul.

Christ has overcome death, which means that life is rich with meaning and purpose for his people—and perhaps doubly so a mother of seven: twins, a singleton, and quadruplets! In *Witness at Work*, Ilse Vandermeulen brings us the remarkable story of Tracey Schoon who, together with her husband, received these seven children within a five-year period. Speaking of children, kids are asking questions and Laura Veenendaal is filling in for Amanda DeBoer and answering them in *Clarion Kids Ask*—thanks Laura! We also must say a fond farewell to our dear sister for whom this issue is her last as managing editor after some twenty years—wow! Thank you for the countless hours organizing this magazine for us and being a valuable member of the *Clarion* team! May God bless you in the next chapter of your life.

It's also high time I introduce a new face to our editorial team, Calvin Vanderlinde, who serves as pastor in the Nooksack Valley American Reformed Church—great to have you with us brother! Calvin presents his first editorial in this issue dealing with how we interact with one another online—a timely topic. There's more to discover in this issue such as introductions to our forthcoming graduates from CRTS, highlights of a young women's retreat, a MERF newsletter, and a book review. Enjoy!

Peter Holtvlüwer

Publisher's Correction: In issue 4, page 148, Clarence Bouwman was identified as author of the article The Fragrance of Sweet Perfume. The author, as noted at the end of the article, is Han Gill Lee. We regret the error.

CONTENTS

186 WHAT'S INSIDE

187 EDITORIAL
Calvin Vanderlinde

188 TREASURES, NEW & OLD
Arjen Vreugdenhil

189 TAKE UP YOUR CROSS
John van Popta

192 EASTER MOURNING
Rick Ludwig

194 WHEN I THOUGHT MY MOM WAS KILLING ME
Wes Bredenhof

197 GOVERNING THE CHURCH
Jan DeGelder

200 WITNESS AT WORK
Ilse VanderMeulen

204 CRTS 2025 GRADUATE PROFILES (PART 1)

213 DELIGHT RETREAT 2025!
Brigette VanHuisstede

216 MERF NEWSLETTER

218 RAY OF SUNSHINE
Rachel Vis

219 CLARION KIDS ASK

220 BOOK REVIEW
Wes Bredenhof

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 Holtvlüwer
E: *pholtvluwer@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.

Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd. All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without written permission from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada. Canada

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO: One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5
Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40063293

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:

C onfessionally Reformed
L oving in manner
A ttuned to current issues
R eadable and Reliable
I n Submission to Scripture
O pen to constructive criticism
N urturing Christian living

A DISCOURSE-CORRECT WARRANTED

We live in a unique age in history. Over the past few decades, the rise of technology has given access to information at our fingertips and significantly increased the speed and ease of communication. There are distinct advantages that come with these advancements. We can stay connected with friends across the world, share thoughts online at a whim, and need not wait until tomorrow to catch up on the latest news.

There are also, of course, a host of inevitable drawbacks and challenges that these advancements have introduced. It is, therefore, imperative that Christians be tech-wise. It could be argued that this is one of the most important responsibilities of our time. Thankfully, there are a myriad of resources, books, articles, and speeches dedicated to help navigate different aspects and dynamics of the online world and avoid its various pitfalls.

ONLINE DISCUSSIONS

But one easily overlooked area of tech-wisdom is that of engagement in online discourse. Social media has provided various platforms for anyone to communicate in our culture. Facebook probably remains the most popular vehicle for fellow believers to group together to share ideas, opinions, and perspectives and have stimulating and edifying interactions between brothers and sisters who may never meet on this side of eternity. In such online spaces it is even possible to engage in vigorous debate over theological and ecclesiastical matters. This presents many exciting opportunities to learn, bless, encourage, and sharpen—and many use this media for such positive purposes. Online debates and disagreements are not always to be avoided for they can serve to stress-test one's positions and perspectives to determine whether a viewpoint can be sustained or needs development. Even if one fails to persuade their discussion partner, they may nevertheless, through their respectful engagement and reasonable arguments, persuade a third-party observer.

That said, it is readily apparent that one of the greatest strengths of technology—its speed—is simultaneously one of its greatest weaknesses. Digital media is predisposed to a frenzied environment dominated by impulsive hair-trigger responses, and this has led to many disasters. Thoughtful reflection and substantive discussions are often the first casualties in such an environment. The "hot take" of an instant-reaction frequently drowns out voices of seasoned reflection and patient deliberation.

Here is where a course-correct is necessary.

RESTRAINT & PRAYER

Being outspoken or playing the antagonist or devil's advocate is not inherently insightful or virtuous. The Bible commends something very different: that we must exercise caution and control in our communication. According to the Bible a controlled tongue is a particular characteristic of the wise while an unrestrained tongue is a particular mark of the fool. Christian maturity demands that we speak, also through typing and tapping, in a way that honours God and is upbuilding to our neighbor. This includes also knowing when *not* to speak. Exercising restraint in our communication has never been easy, but it is a timeless principle of wisdom. "When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent" (Prov 10:19).

Dare to dream: what would it be like if we paused before creating a post or chiming in on a thread? How much healthier would online discourse become if our ideas were first road-tested on a trusted friend, and we sought out their wisdom? And in the context of disagreements, what would happen to an antagonistic spirit if we first thanked God for the person we disagree with and prayed for their good? God's call to love our neighbor forces us to remember what an online environment obscures: their personhood and dignity which ought to be a greater concern than whatever differences may exist.

In this regard, it is more than a simple plea for James to say, "Be slow to speak and quick to listen" (1:19); it is a command of God. As such, a discourse-correct is something to be regularly heeded and repeated now as much as ever.

Calvin Vanderlinde
Minister
Nooksack Valley American Reformed Church
calvinvanderlinde@gmail.com

HIS HOUR HAD COME

When Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end – John 13:1

"My hour has not yet come," Jesus said to his mother at the wedding in Cana. We hear this expression more than once in the gospel of John. Jesus's preaching ministry was powerful but also full of suspense. He proclaimed that the kingdom of God was very close, but it was not quite there yet. Some decisive events had to happen soon. They would happen in God's good time and not any sooner. Until that "hour" Jesus taught what that kingdom would entail and prepared his disciples to become ambassadors of that kingdom.

Finally, in John 13:1, we read that "Jesus knew that his hour had come." It was time for action! In the chapters that follow, Jesus gave his disciples final instructions and prayed for them; then his crucifixion, death, and resurrection took place, all at God's prearranged time. At Jesus's hour. The wicked leaders of Jerusalem could arrest Jesus only because the time had come. The Roman governor and his soldiers were able to hang him on a cross only because it had been planned so. None of it was accidental; everything had been prepared for when that hour finally came.

When Jesus's hour came, he suffered God's wrath over the sins of the world, and he died to be raised up on the third day. These are key events that changed the world for good, and we do well to celebrate them both on Good Friday and on Easter.

However, when the gospel of John speaks about Jesus's hour, it does not so much refer to the crucifixion or resurrection, but it seems to focus on the Lord's ascension. According to John 13:1, it was time for Jesus to depart out of this world to the Father. Earlier he announced that "the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (12:23). In his high-priestly prayer, Jesus prayed: "Father, the hour has come . . . glorify your Son . . . I am coming to you" (17:1). A key theme in the gospel of John is that Jesus came down from heaven and would return again. He arrived on earth to glorify God, and would return to be glorified.

This teaches us to think of Jesus's death and resurrection not as stand-alone events but as part of a larger, vertical movement. His cross and death were stages of his return journey, of the way back to the presence of the father. Through suffering he would return to glory; through the valley of the shadow of death he would go up to the feast in the house of the Lord.

And he takes us along on that journey. John 13:1 also mentions that Jesus loved his disciples to the very end. Even in the darkest moments of suffering, he cared for them. He assured them that he was not abandoning them, but rather going ahead of them. "In my Father's house there are many rooms" (14:1). He prayed: "I desire that they also . . . may be with me where I am" (17:24). When the hour had come for the Lord Jesus to return to the Father, he paved a way for his followers, all the way from the depths of the hell that we deserve to the glorious perfection of heaven.

We celebrate Good Friday and Easter. John 13:1 encourages us to understand these Christian holidays as part of that vertical movement: the Lord Jesus returning to the Father, paving the way for us to follow. The cross and the open tomb are the great landmarks along the way, proclaiming to us the deep, deep love of Jesus and promising that soon he will receive us too in his Father's home.

SUGGESTED READING:

John 12:20–50

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. Explore the various passages in John where Jesus speaks about his "hour" (2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1).
2. How did Jesus show in John 13 that even the activities of his enemies were subject to God's timing?
3. We often characterize the New Testament era as "already, but not yet." How does this apply to the ideas in John 13:1? (See also John 14.)
4. In what remarkable way did Jesus show his love to his disciples at the beginning of John 13? What practical lesson did he teach us as we follow him on his journey?
5. How does John 13:1 enrich your understanding of Good Friday and Easter?

Arjen Vreugdenhil
Minister
Eben-Ezer Canadian Reformed Church, Chatham
pastorarjen@gmail.com

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS

JOHN VAN POPTA

"And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross" (Mark 15:21)

Mark gives us a brief vignette from the Via Dolorosa, the Road of Suffering, that Jesus walked on the way to his crucifixion. He had been condemned to death, though found innocent. Crowned with a crown of thorns, our Lord was whipped, mocked, and beaten by the Roman soldiers. He then had to carry his cross out of the city to Golgotha, where he would be crucified. Exhausted from the brutality he had suffered and having gone a night without sleep, Jesus was unable to bear the burden of his cross.

SIMON WHO?

In the Passion story, we meet Simon of Cyrene, a man from a city in North Africa. He is likely in Jerusalem for Passover, having come on a pilgrimage. He is just any man, picked out of the crowd and forced by the soldiers to carry Jesus's cross. Mark tells us that he had two sons. But why are we told of this man? What can we learn from him?

In Acts 13:1, we read of Simeon (or Simon) Niger and Lucius of Cyrene. Lucius, like Simon, was from Cyrene. These two are mentioned as leading figures in the church at Antioch. Two chapters earlier we can read how men from Cyrene brought the gospel

to the Greeks in that city. Though "Simon/Simeon" is a Jewish name, "Lucius" is Latin and "Alexander" is Greek. These two Diaspora Jews (with men like Barnabas) were instrumental in planting the first interracial church, where Jews and Gentiles worshiped the Lord as one.

Cyrene is also mentioned in Acts 2. Jews from Cyrene were there at Pentecost. Maybe even Simon, his wife, and his sons Rufus and Alexander were in the crowds that heard Simon Peter preach about Jesus the Messiah. I want to think so!

But back to the Via Dolorosa. Coming into the city from the country, Simon of Cyrene was met by the Roman execution cohort, who led Jesus and two others out of the city to Calvary. Outside the city gate, Jesus stumbled under the burden of his cross. The Roman soldiers took the cross and conscripted Simon. According to Roman law, they compelled him to carry Jesus's baggage for a mile. These events in his life have much to teach us.

SIMON A CHRISTIAN?

Mark, in his gospel story, mentions Simon's sons, Rufus and Alexander. Rufus was known in the church of Rome. It was for that church that Mark wrote his gospel. From church history, we can learn that Mark lived for a time in Rome, where Peter also was at that time. Mark put Peter's story to parchment. He would have known Rufus and his mother, for they, too, lived in Rome. But he would have come to know them years before when he was in Antioch with his cousin Barnabas before being sent out as a missionary's helper with Paul and Barnabas. We can discover that Rufus and his mother years later live in Rome from Paul. Paul mentions them in his letter to the Romans, though he had never been to Rome. He writes: "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well" (Rom 16:13). It seems Paul was welcomed into Simon of Cyrene's home when Barnabas found him and brought him to Antioch. Paul was a single man, and Simon's wife mothered him.

If this analysis is correct, Simon, a Diaspora Jew of Cyrene, became a Christian. His conscription to carry Jesus's cross forever marked his life. Together with Lucius, also from Cyrene, he helped establish the church at Antioch, from where Barnabas set out to find Paul. This was the first international church where Jews and Gentiles were made one. The church at Antioch then sent Paul, Barnabas, John Mark (the Gospel writer), and Silas on their early missionary journeys to the gentiles. And perhaps Simon of Cyrene died before his wife and one son ended up in Rome. But Paul knew them from Antioch, where Rufus's mother had shown true Christian hospitality to him. Her care for the apostle was so gracious that it was worthy of mention in the Spirit-inspired Word!

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Earlier in Mark's gospel (chap 8) we can read of Simon Peter's confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah of God, and how this prompts Jesus to explain to his disciples what kind of Messiah he was; he was a suffering Messiah, a suffering King. And then Jesus taught them what kind of followers this king would have.

The Messianic hope of the people of God of Jesus's day was that their covenant God would raise a king in David's line and of David's stature, who would drive off the hated occupying Romans and free God's people from oppression and re-establish the storied kingdom of Israel. However, that was not the kingdom the Lord Jesus had been teaching about. That's not the kind of king he is. He tells his disciples plainly that as the Christ, the promised Messiah, he would go up to Jerusalem but not in victory over the Roman occupiers of David's kingdom. No, he was going up to Jerusalem to suffer and to be killed. The apostle Peter tries to dissuade Jesus from his pessimistic views. He maintains that that would never happen!

But Jesus rebuked Simon Peter. Citizens of this kingdom—those loyal to their king—will need to deny themselves, take up a cross, and, carrying that cross, follow their suffering Messiah to the place of execution. This other Simon, Simon of Cyrene, had to turn around and go the other way, just as Jesus had taught Simon Peter and the eleven. The Roman cohort drafted Simon of Cyrene although we can say that the heavenly Father appointed him for this task! On that fateful day, Simon of Cyrene became a living parable. He had to deny his concerns and all he had planned to do in Jerusalem that day. He had to deny his own agenda; instead, he had to take up the cross of the Lord Jesus and follow him.

WHAT IS SELF-DENIAL?

But what does it mean to "deny yourself"? What does it mean to carry a cross? It doesn't mean that you have a personal burden to carry through life, a chronic disease, an unfaithful husband, or wayward children. No, this living parable teaches you to turn your life around. Take up a Jesus cross. Go to the place where you will be crucified with Jesus! There, your old nature is put to death. Take your old nature to your personal Calvary and have it crucified with Jesus! Only then will you have a new life.

And so Jesus says: if you try to preserve your sinful life, you will lose it instead. But if you lose it, that is, throw it away by taking up your cross and following Jesus, you'll find real life in this world

and eternal life in the one to come. And the Lord speaks with urgency! "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?" (Mar 8:36–37)

Remember, there will be a day of reckoning. This is urgent. Know this to be true! A day of judgment is coming. Today is the day to turn your life around. Now is the moment! Meet Jesus on the road of life. Set aside your selfish human plans. Deny your sinful self and take up your cross. Turn your life around and follow the Lord Jesus to your place of execution. There be crucified with him so that your sinful nature is put to death! And you can be assured that you will be raised to a new life with him.

You then can say with the apostle Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

John van Popta
Minister Emeritus
Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church, Burlington
j.vanpopta@gmail.com

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Dear reader:

In our 2024 year-end note, we noted that our magazine's team was experiencing a time of transitions. Rev. Calvin Vanderlinde joined our editorial committee. In this issue you'll see his first editorial. Alexis Gortemaker has ably taken over the design of the magazine as of the first issue of 2025. We thank them both for their work!

This issue marks the last issue managed by our long-time managing editor, Laura Veenendaal. In the year-end issue of 2004, her father announced that these reins were being handed over to her. Laura's work has spanned more than 20 years and about 500 issues, mostly on a firm 2-week cycle. She handled several critical functions not only with much competence and efficiency, but also with grace, discretion, and a desire to serve our readers and the churches. Laura, once more, thank you! God bless you and your family in this next stage!

The reins have been handed over once more. We're thankful to introduce Anna Nienhuis as our next managing editor. Please join us in welcoming her and wishing her strength and blessing in this role!

William Gortemaker

EASTER
Mourning

A trip to the cemetery is understandably something that many people want to avoid. When we attend the burial service of a loved one, we may experience a sweeping range of thoughts and emotions, from sadness to joy, despair to hope, feelings of solitude to a sense of communal wellbeing. Sometimes even the natural elements join in this dissimilitude, with either sunshine or gloominess, windy gales or calm stillness, overbearing heat or chill-to-the-bone frigidity. The cemetery can be an unsettling place. For some people this experience curiously draws them back for a visit from time to time; to tend to the grave, to reflect, to mourn, and to recalibrate their lives. For others it becomes a forsaken place, a place to put behind them; there is nothing there to see or experience or feel.

The return of Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James to the cemetery where Christ was buried has always intrigued me. They were going back to mourn the death of their Lord, to tend to his body with spices in keeping with their customs. They wished to extend their contact with his bodily presence a little longer, to come to emotional grips with the reality of his death. And yet there was a new unsettling reality in the graveyard that met them on that Easter morning! An empty grave with angel sentries bearing witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The aromatic spices were soon forgotten along with their mission of mourning rites. "He is risen" became the tomb-shattering reality of the new dispensation of the kingdom of heaven. Old Testament promises fulfilled as a New Testament reality.

A NEW EXPERIENCE

The Easter good news of Christ's victory over death continues to colour the experience of going to the grave, for the dead and the living. It is not a place of desolation for the people of God but a place of anticipation. The burial of the dead is not an act of despair and finality, but a hope-filled sowing of seed to new life. The Father, who did not allow his holy one to see decay, does not abandon his children to Sheol. The cemetery is a resting place for all who put their trust in Jesus. It is not an *empty* place because Christ's grave was *emptied*. The cemetery is teeming with purpose and promise.

A short walk among the tombstones bears witness to this. On my right I see a monument for an elderly couple, with the epitaph, "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." A little further down the row, there is a grave of a young wife and mother that professes, "The Lord Is My Shepherd." Two rows over a simple marker testifies "Be Still and Know That I am God." And then there is one for a child, born still, with the assurance, "He Gathers the Lambs," which is only two places over from a toddler's grave which encourages, "Let the Little Children Come." As I round the turn there is one more etching in granite that elaborates, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine!" Testimonies of faith in the risen Lord abound in the place of the dead.

THE TRUMPET BLAST

Sometimes I wish I had some musical skills and could play the trumpet, or at least a little bugle. I would stand at the graveside each time I am there and play a few bars as a bit of a foretaste and a reminder of things to come. Afterall, it wasn't that long after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven that the early believers began to wonder about the vanity of the burial of the dead and the seeming moroseness of the cemetery. They questioned whether their loved ones had missed out on the new life promises and they were concerned that the cemetery only bore witness to a lost opportunity. It was then that the apostle Paul corrected them. These saints, buried here, are first in line! They will meet Christ in the sky as he returns. A bursting forth from the grave and a rushing forward to their Master. Those living at the time will watch and follow in behind. All of this at the trumpet blast! The residents of the cemetery will be first to act on that great day.

There is still sadness at the graveside. No matter how long you stand there, and even if you pour out your heart, there is a solemn silence. There is no response from the grave. There is a real sense of missing that can overcome you. And a profound sense of waiting. There is ongoing grief and humbling in our weakness. But there is also hope and promise. This is not found in the things of the cemetery itself, but it is stirred up in the heart of the one who passes through in faith. It is the same hope that fluttered in the hearts of the Marys who gaped in astonishment and trembled at the empty grave of their Lord and at the announcement of the angels. And think of how their hearts soared when they saw their risen Rabboni face to face! Their joy prompted them to run and tell the others. On this Easter morn, let's be filled with the same holy fear and amazement and compulsion to run and tell someone, anyone, everyone, "He is risen!" And may this good news also continue to calm our troubled hearts as we carry on missing our departed loved ones while we wait for our Lord's promised return.

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

WHEN I THOUGHT MY MOM WAS KILLING ME

WES BREDENHOF

It was 1975 and our family was living in Regina, Saskatchewan. In this prairie city my dad had his first posting as a pilot for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. He'd been serving as an RCMP officer for a few years already, but he finally landed his dream job flying planes for the Mounties. So it was that he returned to where his RCMP career began, this time with a small family in tow. While Dad was out flying the Beaver, and sometimes the Twin Otter, Mom was at home with me and my baby sister.

Though I was not yet three years old, I have some vivid memories of this time. On one occasion, Mom was distracted with my sister Gloria in another room. I was left in the kitchen by myself. What could possibly go wrong?

On the counter I spied a glass bottle containing some red liquid. I was old enough to know that red liquid is generally sweet and tasty. So naturally I reached up and grabbed the good stuff. It had a lid that I easily screwed off. I put the bottle to my lips and drank up. And I drank the whole thing—polished it right off!

As I was standing there and feeling quite satisfied, my mom came into the kitchen to see me standing there with an empty bottle of cough syrup. To my surprise, she became rather alarmed and the next thing I knew we were at our neighbour's house and Mom was pleading with him to drive us somewhere. Dad was slipping the surly bonds of earth somewhere over the prairies and our one family car was at the hangar waiting for his return.

The neighbour seemed to understand Mom's urgency. We rushed over to some building on the other side of Regina. Not long after arriving, I was flat on my back under some bright lights. Some ladies were pinning me down by my arms and legs. I was rather confused and distressed by all this. Then some man came in and he had a machine. He stuck a tube up my nose and down my throat and, by this time, I was in a wee bit of discomfort and alarm. Then he turned on this machine to suck out my innards and I thought this was the end. My not yet 3-year-old life flashed before my eyes. I looked over at my mom thinking, "Why is she trying to kill me?"

UNDERSTANDING IT

It was only later that I came to understand it was quite the opposite. When she rushed me to the hospital to get my stomach pumped out, she was saving my life. But I was too young to understand it. All my thoughts were of a premature demise. The second time it happened, I thought the same. That was after a pleasant snack of grass my dad had recently sprayed with weed killer. I'd been pretending to be a cow, you see. Thankfully, I only had one stomach to pump out and not four.

It was my mom's instinctive love for her son that made her bring me to the hospital on both those occasions. Though I couldn't understand it at the time, she didn't hate me, and she wasn't trying to end me. Years later, realizing this helped me gain perspective on something my heavenly Father did.

He called my mom home when she was just fifty-six years old. She had been struggling with her physical and mental health for several years and, in the end, it became too much for her. She took an overdose of drugs and sadly ended her own life on May 27, 2002.

Mom's suicide really made me wrestle with God and his ways. On the one hand, I knew from the Bible that God's providence encompasses both the things we experience as blessing and the things we experience as adversity—among many other passages, you could refer to Isaiah 45:7, Psalm 71:20, and Lamentations 3:38. On the other hand, I struggled to reconcile that with God's goodness and love for us. How could a loving Father bring so much pain to our lives?

Eventually I realized that a third biblical truth was needed to bring this all together in a way I could accept. It was simply that God is our heavenly Father, and we are like little children compared to him (e.g. Matt 11:25). Little children don't necessarily understand what their parents are doing. I didn't understand what my mom was doing with me back in Regina in 1975. In 2002, I didn't understand what my heavenly Father was doing. But I came to realize that my mom still loved me and what she did in 1975 wasn't for my harm, but for my good. My heavenly Father has promised that he loves me, and I have to trust that his love is even greater than my mom's was and his plans even wiser, even when it came to what happened with my mom's death.

God hasn't promised to give us all the answers to our questions. I may never fully know why he did what he did on May 27, 2002. I'm okay with that, because I do fully know why he did what he did on Good Friday at the cross. The most horrific suffering ever experienced by a human being had a loving, redemptive purpose. The cross proves God's love for every Christian. It shows how we can trust him through our tears. God is good in the light *and* he's good in the darkness. I can trust him, and so can you.

Wes Bredenhof
Minister
Free Reformed Church of Launceston
wes.bredenhof@gmail.com

GIVE THE GIFT OF *CLARION*

Subscribers get 25% Off the first year of a gift subscription!

Go to clarionmagazine.ca/giftpromo to sign up or contact your local *Clarion* correspondent. You can choose to have the subscription roll over to the reader (at regular price) after one year.

- MY FRIEND
- MY BROTHER
- MY CHILD
- MY GRANDCHILD
- MY NEIGHBOUR

SHEPHERDS & SHEPHERDS

In this column we will have a look at Articles 16 and 22 of the Church Order: the specific duties of the office of minister and the specific duties of the office of elder. But it might be good to make clear first of all what this piece is *not* about. I will not get into the perennial debate on whether there are only two offices (deacons and elders, with ministers being a certain kind of elder) or three (ministers holding an office separate from that of elders). My starting point is simply what we have agreed upon in Article 2: "The offices are those of the minister of the Word, of the elder, and of the deacon." I will also not discuss in detail all the duties of elders and ministers as listed in Article 16 and 22. That could move us quickly away from church polity, and get us into areas like homiletics, liturgics, pastoral theology, etc. Everyone can read about it in more detail in the Forms of Ordination.[1] And finally, I will not entertain the dialogue about women serving in the office of minister or elder. That's not a church political dispute but an exegetical one. Again, my starting point is the adopted rule in Article 3, that "only male members . . . shall be eligible for office."

I want to reflect on the differences and similarities, the overlap, as well as the distinctions among the offices when we put Articles 16 and 22 beside each other. According to the Forms for Ordination we confess that "God himself, through his congregation, calls men to the offices of minister and elder."[2] This makes them equal but that's not the same as identical.

IN IT TOGETHER

Among the duties of the minister in Article 16 it says that "with the elders" he must govern the church, keeping her in good order, and exercise discipline according to God's will. Visiting the members and comforting the sick is not listed here under the heading "with the elders," but in practice this is also a responsibility shared with the elders. Such visiting is in line with Article 22 where visiting the members of the congregation in their homes is in the centre of what elders do "together with the ministers of the Word." In Article 22 all the duties of the office of elder are things they do "together with the ministers of the Word," except what is mentioned in the last line.

The picture is clear: ministers and elders are together in the business of tending the flock of the great shepherd Jesus Christ. Ministers and elders are both shepherds. Or to use another word

[1] Additionally, there is a large selection of books available about the work of ministers and elders.

[2] This is, of course, also true for the office of deacon, but that has to wait for another time.

for this job description: they are both *pastors*. We are used to reserving the word "pastor" for the minister. And when a church has a vacancy for minister, people might say: "we need a shepherd or pastor." But with six, eight, or ten elders tending the flock, you already have a number of pastors. You just need one more. That's not playing with words. Being a pastor is the very essence of being an elder.

This also means that elders and ministers come to you with the same authority. They are called by the Lord not to lord it over but to *serve* his people. Here Jesus himself is the role-model. Sometimes elders feel the need to stress their authority as office bearers. But you are accountable to God. Work faithfully with his Word to keep the sheep close to the great shepherd and then you won't have to worry about your authority.

Both Articles 16 and 22 emphasize the duty to "visit the members of the congregation in their homes." That's important. Scripture calls us to care for each other as members of the body of Christ. But such mutual care cannot replace the pastoral work of ministers and elders. When churches discontinue the practice of shepherds regularly visiting members in their homes, it's a loss for the congregation. After all, Jesus did not only teach crowds—he also pastored to individuals.

EACH IS UNIQUE

While ministers and elders share certain duties (as above), each office also has its unique aspects. This is especially spelled out for the minister: proclaiming the gospel, administering the sacraments, and leading in public prayer. Instructing the youth in the doctrine of salvation is also mentioned. This was inserted in the 1983 revision of our Church Order although it was already common practice long before that. And there are good reasons for this. Sometimes others may help out with catechism teaching. But for the minister, it's an invaluable opportunity to get to know and walk with the youth of the congregation in their faith journey. And they get to know him in a way few others in the congregation will.

It is interesting that the pre-1983 version of Article 16 mentions prayer *before* the ministry of the Word. This listing doesn't demand a change in the liturgical order of a worship service, but it does indicate the significance of public congregational prayer. Think of it in this way. At that moment the minister is leading the whole congregation before the throne of God. And as he addresses the awesome and most glorious king of the universe, he is the mouth of all those people! That's pretty intimidating, isn't it? And it makes sense that ministers take time to prayerfully prepare for that.

The work of the minister is not restricted to what is listed in Article 16. He will receive some federational responsibilities (e.g. to serve as delegate to classis; he could also be assigned as an examiner at classis or a church visitor), and he might stimulate new beneficial activities in the congregation. However, what is mentioned in Article 16 must be his priority. Ministers are not project managers or activity coordinators. More than anything else he is preacher and teacher. When other things get in the way of that, perhaps it's time to refocus on what he was called and ordained to do.

As for the elders, they have the unique duty to assist, advise, and supervise the ministers. That may sound a bit unnerving perhaps, especially the supervising part. But no office bearer is above the need for critical reflection. To make this go well, a good

level of mutual trust is crucial, so that there is no fear of "lording it over others" (Art. 74). This requires tact, humble wisdom, and above all love.

HELP NEEDED

The shepherds' care for the flock of Jesus Christ is crucial for running the church. At the same time, there are also other things to take care of: property, finances, bulletin . . . you name it. For these things the shepherds need help, not only because they should be able to focus on the duties outlined earlier, but also because they can only do so much in the hours available. On top of that, being a shepherd does not necessarily qualify you to be a property manager or financial administrator. That's why we are all familiar with committees of administration, treasurers, bookkeepers, bulletin editors, and archivists, as well as the occasional building committee. Usually those positions are filled by volunteers, and it is great to see male and female church members step forward and offer the gifts God has given them for the benefit and wellbeing of the body of Christ (HC Q/A 55). That being said, volunteers are available when it works for them. That's the nature of voluntary commitments. In order to count on administrative stuff getting done regularly and timely, without loose ends being forgotten, more and more churches are choosing to hire a secretary or administrator as a part-time paid position.

However, there is more help the ordained shepherds can benefit from, especially when it comes to their pastoral responsibilities. What about a role for women with that purpose? According to some of his letters, the apostle Paul benefitted greatly in his ministry from the service of women. Several of them are mentioned in Romans 16, and some in Philippians 4, while Priscilla (with her husband Aquilla) is mentioned six times. What we have agreed upon in Article 3 does not imply that women cannot or should not play a role in the pastoral care in the church. And then to do so in a way that goes beyond what could be called "general mutual care."

Ministers and elders, either past or present, know that you will run into pastoral situations where you think: "Here the comfort or advice of a wise women would be invaluable." Sometimes you realize that for a male it just doesn't work. Perhaps it is dealing with an abusive relationship, domestic violence, or just having a heart-to-heart conversation with a single woman.

In those situations a minister or elder can bring his own wife, assuming these ladies feel comfortable with that. But perhaps appointing a team of qualified women in the church that can be called upon to assist the elders when female pastoral support is needed would be more effective. They would be under the supervision of, and also accountable to the consistory. After all—the specific duties listed in Articles 16 and 22 are entrusted to the ordained office bearers.

Jan DeGelder
Minister Emeritus
Redemption Canadian Reformed Church, Flamborough
jdegelder8@gmail.com

MEET TRACEY!

ILSE VANDERMEULEN

Clarion is interviewing various professionals in our Reformed community to highlight how they are serving the Lord in their particular industry or calling. In this issue we meet Tracey Schoon (34), mother of a set of identical twins (9), a singleton (7), and fraternal quadruplets who just turned 4.

BACKGROUND

One of the most special callings in life is raising covenant children. Tracey Schoon always looked forward to being a mom of a large family. She grew up in St. Mary's and Lynden, Ontario, and married Peter in 2013. She attended Guido de Brès High School and obtained her diploma in accounting from Mohawk College. Pete and Tracey now attend Trinity Canadian Reformed Church in Glanbrook.

Besides her accounting work, Tracey became the mother of twin boys and later a daughter. Then, in 2020 Tracey was told that she was expecting quadruplets, meaning that in just a few months time she and her husband would have to take care of seven children under the age of five. In the first month after the quads came home from the hospital, the family went through 1,020 diapers, 960 bottles, forty-five loads of baby laundry, and twenty cans of formula. Now that the quads have turned four and the family is approximately 22,000 diapers further, Tracey looks back on the past years as a mom.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE BECOMING A MOM OF TWINS?

I have a hormone disease and therefore I needed hormone treatments in order to ovulate. I know there are some strong opinions on fertility treatment amongst Reformed believers. Pete and I did our research, and we looked at all the options and we knew what lines we did not want to cross. We believe life begins at conception and every single fertilized egg is a covenant child that must be protected.

Our first pregnancy with treatment resulted in identical twins when one fertilized egg split. We were so excited. I grew up with siblings who were much younger, and I always hoped my child would not grow up alone. The twins were born at thirty-two weeks by emergency C-section because one of them was starving *in utero*. They were in the hospital for over a month. The hardest part was that the babies could not stay with me, while other mothers had their newborns with them. It was hard to leave them in the hospital and go home. I was crying the entire way home, but I got used to it.

When the twins came home, I had to learn to ask for help. Pete was working full time and needed his sleep. I received meals, and people from church came to take care of the boys so I could nap. I had different stations in my bedroom for feeding and changing them, along with some books and my laptop. I practically lived in my bedroom for four months. It was just easier that way.

When I was expecting our daughter, I was excited to experience having just one baby and looking forward to giving her all my attention. And she ended up being my hardest baby!

WALK US THROUGH EXPECTING QUADRUPLETS.

During COVID I had treatments again and at one point, there was 5% chance of having triplets. We were fine with that; however, it turned out that the ultrasound technician had missed a fourth egg and a later ultrasound showed that I was expecting quadruplets. The fertility doctor was *so* mad. Due to the restrictions, I faced that doctor all by myself. I mentioned that this obviously was God's plan for our lives. But he said: "You don't understand, this is bad for you and for the babies. This is bad medicine." He raised his voice at me: "This is not God's plan, but human error!"

The fertility doctor knew our stance on abortion, but he still tried to convince me to abort two, so that the likelihood of the other two surviving would be much better. Medical staff constantly talked about risks and percentages, and we understood this was not a normal pregnancy, but ultimately, God is in control. Abortion was unthinkable to us. God's plan will always succeed over man's plan.

The practical implications of having four babies at the same time didn't really sink in until later.

In the NICU (above)

The quadrupalets (below)

Pete, as the provider, wrestled with the practical questions. Where are we going to live? What kind of car do we need as a family? How are we going to feed not five but nine mouths? We had a vacation planned and we really took that time to work through everything. We didn't know what would happen, but we trusted that God would provide.

The pregnancy with the quads was the best pregnancy I had. I made it to thirty-two weeks. All four were born healthy. [Laughs.] We said we would never name our children after anybody, but with two boys and two girls it was the perfect opportunity to name them after all four grandparents in one shot!

HOW DID YOU TAKE CARE OF ALL SEVEN?

Because of COVID we could not line up volunteers, so we decided to hire a night-nanny. Our congregation also helped us pay for a daytime nanny for a year. We were so thankful for that. It is such a blessing to be part of the communion of saints. Beside that, we have been amazed by how much help we received from across Canada, from people we do not even know personally: meals, gifts, money. . . . Most of our formula was paid for through health insurance because some of the babies had serious reflux issues.

At times it was overwhelming, and I have cried many tears. They were fed and changed, but still crying, and you don't know what to do anymore. We also became creative. We used the vacuum cleaner as a white noise machine and my dad bought me a baby Brezza: basically a Keurig to make baby formula. It makes bottles at the right temperature with the right amount of formula . . . it was amazing!

We had a notebook where we would write when we fed each of the quads or changed one's diaper because it became hard to remember all the details. We became really good at rocking two babies with our hands and two with our feet.

The daytime nanny left at five and the night help would not come until eleven, so every day we also had time as a family by ourselves to bond. I am glad we did that. I have an amazing husband, and this journey has strengthened our marriage. He is very helpful. We have to pay close attention to each child individually, especially our daughter who is between the twins and the quads. She notices she is a singleton. She has asked me: "Mom, why was I not born with a friend?"

HOW HAS YOUR FAITH BEEN SHAPED?

When one of the twins was not healthy and I had the emergency C-section, I had to learn to trust God with the outcome. When the quads were born, we were so thankful they were all well. It also helped to know that the infant stage does not last forever. God gives you strength for what you need at that time. I would say to other parents who are struggling: you will be overwhelmed and feel like a broken record asking God to help you through it, but he brings you closer to him. And our brothers and sisters are there to ask for help; they are our church family!

Now that the kids are getting older, I realize more fully what a big deal it is to raise covenant children. They are not my own. They are God's. I am not the most patient person, and life is busy. I find it hard to sit down and focus on what one child is saying to me. Yet, it is really important to teach them and tell them about the Lord. Deuteronomy 6:7 speaks about how we teach our children when we walk, when we get up, constantly talking about God to our children.

The last couple of years, I have hardly been away from home. Everyone came to us. And taking them to church was way too much work. That was challenging. [Laughs.] I am starting to rediscover the world! I enjoy being involved in church work and going to Bible study again. I have started a small business: making natural products and selling them. I enjoy being in my garden and having the kids play outside and showing them how God blesses seeds to grow into plants so we can eat.

HOW DO YOU WITNESS AS A MOTHER?

We sometimes do receive negative comments when people see us out and about. No, we are not a daycare or part of a cult! And when we went for a short holiday with all the kids and our nanny, someone asked if we were sister-wives. . . .

I think we witness to the world and to the medical staff that we encounter that life is God-given and precious. Our fertility doctor had to accept our decision and still give us all the care he was supposed to give. Once the quads were born, I tried to visit him. All his staff were super excited to see the quads, but this doctor would never come out and meet them.

But mostly as a mom, I have the opportunity to teach my children about the Lord. There are so many personalities with seven children: how will I reach each of them? Teach them to love each other and play together. I hope and pray our family will be close to each other and that we can foster a relationship of love. I love seeing them love each other. It makes me happy when they are playing together or when the older kids read books to each other. My biggest joy would be to see my children serving the Lord in their lives. It makes me happy to hear one of the quads sing "Holy, holy, holy" at the top of her lungs in the van. Despite all the busyness of a large family, that makes me happy.

Ilse VanderMeulen
Elora, Ontario
ilsevandermeulen@hotmail.com

CRTS 2025 Graduate Profiles

It's my privilege as Dean of Students at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary to present to you the students who will be graduating this year, DV. We are grateful to God for each of them and praise him for giving us the largest class ever to graduate from our seminary. There are ten students finishing their Master of Divinity degrees, and one student wrapping up his Diploma of Theological Studies. Each of them has played a key role in the life of the seminary over the past four years, and each of them has grown tremendously, above all in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. In their profiles, published over two issues of *Clarion*, you will read about brothers in Christ who have come from different parts of the world, with different stories and different paths, but with the same ultimate testimony to the abounding grace of our God, who by his Spirit brings sinners from death to life, and transforms them into the image of Christ, from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18). You will meet brothers eager to serve the Lord wherever he should call, and equipped to do so, in dependence upon the Spirit of Christ. As seminary community we are also excited to see what the Lord has in store for them as he continues his work as the chief Shepherd of the flock (1 Pet 5:4). Enjoy reading their profiles and please uphold them in prayer.

William den Hollander
Professor of New Testament
Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
wdenhollander@crts.ca

DAMON BOSVELD

Hi, I'm Damon Bosveld, and in the picture with me is my beautiful wife of nine years, Miriam, and our two children, Lydia (8) and Josiah (4). We hail from Perth, Western Australia, but our home is currently on the other side of the world in Hamilton, Ontario, while I study at CRTS. How did we get here you may wonder? While the pathway to seminary was not clear to us at the beginning, it was a path where we can see the Lord's hand at work in our lives.

I grew up in the coastal suburb of Rockingham (WA), where, after high school, I apprenticed as a cabinet maker in a family business. Through my years as an apprentice, I also worked on and obtained my pilot's licence. During these years I met this wonderful young lady called Miriam, and we quickly became close friends. Through the years of dating the inevitable topic for consideration and conversation was: what does our future hold? Astounded by the great price that was paid for our salvation, we felt compelled to hand our lives over in service to God's kingdom. Since I loved flying, we inquired with Mission Aviation Fellowship to learn what it would take to serve with them. One of the various requirements was a one-year Diploma of Theology. So, a year after getting married, I enrolled in a one-year program. As it turns out, when you begin to study the riches of God's Word it is difficult to stop. Four years quickly passed, and instead of a diploma, I graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Theology. In those years the Lord also added to our family with the arrival of Lydia. Now at the end of the bachelor's program, we had to consider again how to best serve God with the gifts he had given to us. For various reasons, we

realized that MAF would not work for us, and through working on our church's search/calling committee it became evident that there was a great need for pastors. After much prayer, consideration, and conversation, I enrolled in the Master of Divinity program at CRTS with the hope of serving as a Minister of the Word in the future. So, shortly after receiving the blessing of baby Josiah, we said farewell to our families in Western Australia and got on the plane to journey to the far side of the world and begin our years in Hamilton.

Over the last four years, we have enjoyed calling Hamilton our home. We have made friends both in the seminary and outside of it. We have enjoyed the changing seasons and the snow (a novel experience for us West Australians!). I have enjoyed learning under the professors and alongside faithful young men. Professors and students alike all share a desire to glorify God and to hear clear preaching of the gospel. In particular, we enjoyed the various internships that took us across Canada to Langley (with Rev. D. Vandeburgt) and Smithers (with Rev. H. Alkema), and back across the world to Christchurch, New Zealand (with emeritus minister, Rev. Van Garderen). In each internship, we were blessed to experience the love of Christ through his members as they opened their homes to us, walked with us, talked with us, and prayed with us.

With the Lord's blessing, I hope to submit myself to Classis Ontario West for a preparatory examination in June with the desire to be called into the Ministry of the Word. It has been quite the journey, and the doorway that is the final day of seminary looms closer. Even with many years of quality education and faithful Christlike mentoring, what lies on the other side of that door is intimidating. We do not know where he will call us to serve him and we do not know what our lives will look like beyond that door, but we do know that he will provide all things we need to faithfully serve him wherever he calls us. What a blessing to rest in the all-sufficient provision of our God. C

MITCHELL BOSVELD

Hi there! My name is Mitchell Bosveld and this is my dear wife Katie (Emily-Kate) and our sweet little son, Sebastian. Our journey at CRTS has been a time of grace, growth, and the goodness of God. We have had so many wonderful experiences, met so many lovely, godly people, and have been astounded time and time again at the goodness and sovereign love of our heavenly Father. Perhaps the best place to start is at the very beginning.

I grew up on a small hobby farm in Baldivis, Western Australia. Through these formative years, God was gracious in allowing me to grow up in a Christian family—a family that loved and cared for me. With tremendous humility, I can say that, by God's grace, there was not a day in my life when I didn't know Christ as my Saviour. In these years, God gave me a solid foundation for the faith I know and love. My childhood was pretty cool—lots of animals and space to play with bikes, go-karts, and quads. Perhaps it was in these early years that I developed my childhood love of car racing, something I dabbled in as a teenager.

Racing was the dream, but it stayed just that, a dream. For indeed, the Lord had other plans and paths for me. In high school, I was encouraged to pursue ministry, and it wasn't something that I could shake. At this point I wasn't deeply convicted but nevertheless took the first step, pursuing language studies and an Arts degree at the University of Western Australia. I was eager to see what God would do with the doors on my path. By his grace, the doors remained open, and the desire grew. Thankfully my (now) wife was fully on board. Katie was studying psychology at the same university while working as a nanny. With her kind, thoughtful, and caring soul, she has been my friend and constant encouragement. God blessed our relationship and studies; we were married in early 2021 with our hearts set on moving to Canada to attend CRTS later that year.

Since then, we have not looked back. These past almost-four years have been full of God's provision and grace. Our time here hasn't been without both much joy and deep sorrow, yet his steady hand has been our constant through it all. He has provided for us in every way, and grown us in so, so many ways. In his good pleasure, he gave us our earnest little boy—Sebastian, one of our dearest treasures, who brings so much joy to our lives. We have been blessed with caring and godly peers and friends at the seminary, and a wonderful home church at Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church. These people have become like family to us during our sojourn here, and through them we have experienced so richly the love of Christ.

We were also blessed by wonderful saints all over Canada, and around the world. We were welcomed with open arms and the love of our Saviour by so many wonderful churches throughout our internships and will be forever grateful to the saints and servants who received us into their hearts and homes. We did an orientation internship at Fellowship Church in Burlington with Hilmer and Meagan Jagersma, and God further formed us through preaching internships at Hope Reformed Church in Brampton with John and Julie Bouwers, and Carman East Canadian Reformed Church with Carl and Lisa Van Dam. We were also privileged to spend two months serving at Lincoln-Vineyard this past summer. Finally, we were able to spend a month in Mexico on a Cross-Cultural Mission Training Program, led by Rich and Angela Bout and other local missionaries, which gave us fresh and sincere appreciation for the work of God in gathering his people from among the nations. All these churches have a special place in our hearts. We will forever be thankful to God for the people we could meet, the gifts we could develop, and the love we could share.

In his grace, God has kept doors open for us, and we feel humbled that he might even use us for such a high calling as gospel ministry. So, it is with much dependence on and praise and glory to him that I hope to present myself to Classis Ontario West at the beginning of June to become eligible for call. We are eager to see where and how God might use us to build up his kingdom, trusting in him who is the overflowing fountain of all good.

MOACIR CAMPOS

Hello, brothers and sisters! My name is Moacir Campos, and it is a joy to share how the Lord's marvelous works have led me to this moment.

I am Brazilian, born into a Christian family that, during my childhood, sadly drifted from the faith. My earliest memories of God's Word come from my mother, who, despite her wavering belief, faithfully read the Bible to me. Psalm 46 was her favourite, and though I did not fully grasp its significance at the time, those words would later shape my life.

Since my teenage years, I have read the Bible daily—perhaps at first with selfish motives, hoping to unlock divine secrets for my own gain. But God, in his mercy, transformed my heart, teaching me that his power is made perfect in weakness. At age twenty-two, while living in Australia for an academic exchange, I had my first experience far from family. Those months were filled with challenges, but it was in the solitude of rainy nights in Perth that God visited me powerfully. Ironically, he was proving to be exactly what Psalm 46 declared: "[my] refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." That realization set my soul on fire, and as I read the Bible, I marveled as if seeing it for the first time. The gospel was too glorious to be the product of mere human invention.

Years later, during an elective course in Pediatric Intensive Care Unit in Edmonton just before the pandemic, I visited a Canadian Reformed church for the first time. I fell in love with the liturgy, the *Book of Praise*, the confessions, and the warm welcome I received. Already eager to deepen my understanding of Reformed theology, I returned to Brazil with one goal in mind: coming back to Canada for seminary.

After two years of working in a pediatric emergency department (and waiting for the pandemic to pass), I enrolled in the Bachelor of Theology program, only to later be led to the Diploma of Theology instead, after an injury that required surgery. Who was I to question the Lord's plans "when the earth gives way or the mountains are moved into the heart of the sea"? (Ps 46:2.) If shifting from medicine to theology wasn't already a bold move—not to say an outright crazy one, as my relatives would put it—diving headfirst into ecclesiology and advanced symbolics after years of anatomy and biochemistry was a humbling experience.

Now, I close yet another chapter of my academic journey—because, for some reason, my life seems to revolve around finishing and starting programs of study. I am also completing a postgraduate program in adolescent medicine, hoping to care for my patients not only in body but also in heart. That was always my intention in pursuing seminary: to minister to people's souls, wherever God places me.

My graduation from CRTS is more than an academic milestone—it is a testament of gratitude to God's unwavering faithfulness and the only true comfort in life and death, not just for others, but also for me in Christ Jesus. He redeemed me from a futile way of life and led me across the world to behold more of his revealed glory. As I look ahead, I trust that he will keep guiding me exactly where I need to be. And wherever that may be, may all the glory be his. For indeed, "the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."

HONGDI CHEN

Hello, my name is Hongdi Chen and this is my wife Karen, along with our two children, Joseph (8) and Joshua (5). I was born and raised in the city of Fushun in Liaoning province in China. Growing up there, I was never exposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. At 23, I traveled to France to study French and immerse myself in European culture. I spent eight years in France, where I earned my bachelor's and master's degrees in international business from the University Paris-Est Créteil. It was during my time in France that a classmate introduced me to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Although I initially rejected the concepts of repentance and belief in Christ, I ultimately came to faith at the age of 32 after moving to Montreal, Quebec. I met Karen at the Montreal Chinese Alliance Grace Church and we were married there, truly by God's grace. I lived in Montreal for nearly fourteen years, during which I pursued further education in accounting and obtained my CPA, and I worked in that field for nine years.

While in Montreal, my pastor, who had been educated at a Reformed theological seminary, introduced me to Reformed doctrine. This experience sparked my interest in reading Reformed material and listening to Reformed sermons online. In 2018, I felt God's call to ministry through various sermons and personal reflections. When I shared my calling with my pastor and fellow church members in Montreal, they all encouraged me to pursue this path. I searched online for "Reformed seminary" and discovered CRTS. Exploring the Three Forms of Unity, especially the Canons of Dort, helped resolve my long-standing questions about election and predestination. This newfound understanding intensified my desire to study at CRTS.

When I first discussed God's call to ministry with Karen, she expressed some concerns. However, two years later, by God's grace, I completed online courses in biblical languages and successfully passed the English language proficiency exams (TOEFL). My application to CRTS was approved, and Karen became convinced that this was God's way of opening the door for us to enter ministry. In June 2021, we said goodbye to our friends and colleagues and moved to Hamilton.

I am grateful for the opportunity to study at CRTS and for the dedicated

teaching of our professors. The fellowship among brothers is a true blessing, reminding me of David's words in Psalm 133:1, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" I would like to express my gratitude to Rev. John Louwerse and Rev. Rodney Vermeulen for their mentorship during my five-week internships at Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church and Attercliffe Canadian Reformed Church, respectively. I deeply appreciated their kindness and the time they invested in me. I also had the privilege of participating in a one-week mission internship under the guidance of Rev. Mario Veilleux, Rev. Christian Cruchet, and Rev. Paulin Bedard in the ERQ of Beauce in Quebec. Additionally, as part of my mission internship, I led devotions at Wellington Retirement Home in Hamilton for five Sunday evenings, which was a rewarding experience.

It has been a true privilege to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ from the pulpit for the past two years and to teach in the catechism room for three years. As we look forward, we are eager to follow God's guidance and serve him faithfully. We pray that he will lead me into ordained ministry in his time and in his way.

REESE GAILLARD

Hello brothers and sisters! My name is Reese Gaillard. To help with the pronunciation of my last name, think "There's a guy in my yard. Guy-yard." Pictured here with me are my loving wife, Courtney, and our precious son Russell, born in January. It's my privilege to have this opportunity to share a little about us with you, and more importantly, the ways in which the Lord has faithfully led us to this point! It is hard to believe I have nearly completed my studies at CRTS. I am eagerly looking forward to seeing where the Lord calls me in the coming months.

You may notice that my last name is not very Dutch sounding, so let me take this opportunity to explain to you how the Lord brought me to CRTS and the Canadian Reformed church. I grew up in the oil town of Lloydminster, which is on the border of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Like many prairie boys, I dreamed of becoming an NHL hockey player. Though I grew up in a non-church-going family, I attended a Bible camp as a teenager and was deeply convicted by a message from the chapel speaker regarding Ecclesiastes 1 and the meaninglessness of life apart from God. The speaker must have known their audience of young Canadian boys well, and they emphasized that even if one were to make it to the NHL as a famous hockey player, it would be meaningless without God! This message resonated with me deeply, and I asked my Bible camp counselor to teach me how to become a Christian.

From that time, the Lord gave me a deep hunger to know him more, and I began reading and studying the Bible. Beginning at the age of 17, however, I had three years of serious doubt and testing. I read atheist writers such as Hume, Dawkins, and Hitchens. At the time, their arguments felt strong, and my faith in God felt shaky. Yet, the Lord came to my aid and helped my unbelief. He sustained me and moved me to study, test, and contemplate his Word. He strengthened me through this time of growth and certainly heard my prayers. Around this time, I became aware of Reformed theology in high school through the teachings of R. C. Sproul (little did I know at the time, that this American theologian would lead to me meeting my future wife).

The Lord continued to give me a deep desire and longing to study Scripture and theology. I delved into YouTube videos teaching apologetics and found myself so deeply passionate about the truth of Scripture and the necessity of believing its truths that I desired to share it with those around me. I began speaking to my fellow classmates, and I would drive other students home from school in an attempt to evangelize to them.

I began attending Briercrest College in the fall of 2017, in hopes of acquiring a degree in theology so that I might one day become a pastor of a Baptist church. I was content with my position until I began studying Reformed theology and their confessions. I soon became acquainted with terms such as catechism, and covenant, and through this deeper study I became convinced of its truthfulness. With no Reformed church around me, I continued attending a Baptist church, preaching on several occasions.

I met my wife Courtney towards the latter half of my studies. She began speaking to me when she saw me reading a book by R. C. Sproul and soon after we began dating (you could say that Sproul was my favourite theologian . . . and

wingman). As I neared the end of my studies, I proposed. We moved to Hamilton, and I began studying at CRTS. Over these last four years, we have been warmly welcomed by the Canadian Reformed Churches. Courtney and I have often spoken about the feeling of being "home" as we have attended worship.

Throughout my time at seminary, the Lord has been so utterly faithful to me. I have learned deep and important truths about our faith and doctrine under the guidance and teaching of the professors. I have enjoyed numerous practical opportunities to experience the minister's vocation under the supervision of Rev. James Slaa (Carman West) and Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer (Ancaster), during which I learned valuable insights about preaching, writing, and shepherding. I also benefited from a mission internship with Rev. Richard Bultje (Niagara River of Life). I thank all of these men for their willingness to come alongside me amidst a busy ministry schedule and provide such valuable guidance. My wife and I are also exceedingly grateful to the church members who have opened their homes to us and welcomed us with open arms.

I hope to present myself to Classis Ontario West in June. We are very excited at the prospect of serving in the churches, Lord willing. It's been a real privilege to learn and study under faithful men of God, and I look forward to one day being able to share the gospel behind a pulpit and humbly shepherd God's people. My deep desire is for people not just to know but to truly see the beauty and riches that our God has given us in his Word.

TODD LINDE

Hello. I'm Todd Linde and here with me are my lovely wife, Marietta, and our cheerful boy, Nathaniel (1½). Born the youngest of six and raised in a farming family near Dunnville, Ontario, I grew up on outdoor adventures and with a love for learning. When I was twelve, we made the short move to the family farm in Attercliffe. After graduating high school at Guido de Brès, I headed off to the engineering department of McMaster University on a path well-trodden by my three older brothers. But the Lord had another plan for me and strengthened in me the desire to go to seminary, and if it be his will, to serve in the ministry of the gospel. After a few years in engineering, I changed course and graduated with a degree in classics. Over the years I also had the chance to do all sorts of interesting summer jobs, like working at farmers' markets, in a feed mill, in construction, and doing cedar roofing. I also started a small business for a few summers producing the steel frames of soccer nets.

Before I began seminary, the Lord brought a long-time friend back into my life. Marietta and I were classmates from fourth grade until the end of high school. In 2018, however, she moved with her family to southern Alberta. When our friendship was reignited a few years later, Marietta came back to Ontario. After dating for a while we were united in marriage in August of 2022. The next summer we welcomed our son Nathaniel into our life. What a joyful and contented boy he has been! We are also excited because God has blessed us with another covenant child, who is due this coming May.

Since I started seminary back in 2021, the years have flown by in a flurry of essays, lectures, sermon proposals, moving houses, internships, more essays, chapels, readings, etc. It has been a great time that we will never forget. The internships which I've been privileged to do have been a special highlight: I shadowed "The Rev." William den Hollander (sr.) for a couple of weeks. I had many good conversations with Rev. Marc Jagt during my summer-long preaching internship in Fergus North. I especially loved the time I could spend with Rev. Tim Schouten during a mission internship in Prince George. It was wonderful to see the Lord blessing that church with many new believers. I also had the opportunity to have a bit of an "unofficial" internship in Coaldale during their time of vacancy. I really enjoyed the opportunity to preach the Word, visit the saints, and sit in council and consistory meetings.

Through the past four years and all that God has carried us through, he has worked much growth in my life. I thank him for my professors and fellow classmates who have been such an upbuilding influence on me. I've been thankful for the opportunity to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ over the past two years in many of the churches and to teach catechism classes in Grassie and Attercliffe. The Lord has confirmed in me the desire to serve him and his people in the ministry of his Word. I intend, therefore, to go before Classis Niagara for the preparatory exam this coming June. We thank and praise our loving Father for all his blessings in our lives. He is the one who has carried us this far and we place our trust in him and his plan for us going forward.

DELIGHT RETREAT 2025!

God is good. His steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness continues to all generations. Isn't this a truth we need to hear over and over and over again?

At the second annual Delight Retreat for Young Women, we emphasized the faithfulness of God. What does it mean that God is faithful? Why does this matter? And how does this impact our day-to-day living? Knowing that God is faithful, that God keeps his promises, gives us bright hope for today and strength for tomorrow, we want our young women to hear, know, and believe this truth so that they can live confident, bold, peace-filled, and thankful lives that glorify God.

Despite the weather forecast that was ominously predicting a large snowfall, we were able to gather at the beautiful Circle Square Ranch in Brantford for a full day of worship, learning, praying together, encouragement, laughter, and bonding on Saturday, February 8, 2025.

Registration opened at 8:30 am and one hundred young women from Grades 7 to 10 lined up to collect name tags, loot bags, t-shirts, and their itinerary for the day. Our talented music team led us in praise and worship songs and then we enjoyed a keynote talk by Brigette VanHuisstede highlighting Psalm 100:5: "For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all

generations." An icebreaker allowed the young women to mix, mingle, and meet. There were young ladies from twenty-four different churches, four different grades, and from Burlington, Hamilton, Stoney Creek, Waterdown, Amaranth, Smithville, London, and more!

The rest of the day included a delicious lunch and dinner, choosing two of six workshops, and participating in two of four activities. We are thankful for Josina, Jessica, Lauren, Hadassah, Kaylee, and Elise who led workshops on Bible Study, My Mental Health, Social Media, Identity in Christ, Missions (The World in His Hands), and Who's in Control.

The fun activities included team-building games, horse-riding, initiative obstacle course, and a climbing wall. By the end of the day, we were praying together, laughing loudly, worshiping passionately, and being so thankful for a wonderful day.

In a world that is broken and sinful, God is so good. In a world where it seems like everything changes, God is faithful, and his love endures forever. We really cannot hear it enough and we are so thankful for the opportunity to come alongside an energetic group of young women to share this truth. *Thank you* for the prayerful support and financial sponsorship of many churches and businesses. We are deeply grateful for your support.

SPONSORS:

Trinity Canadian Reformed Church
Rehoboth United Reformed Church
Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church
Danasy Landscaping & Maintenance
Rocket Marketing
Blessings Christian Church
Oakhill Windows & Doors Inc.
Riverside Renovations
Ridgeline Renovations
Purecraft Renovations
Mercy Christian Church
Thor Stone
Select Stone Natural Stone Specialists
Escape Computers
Bartels Group
Planit Green Landscapes
Professional Computer Management Inc.
Powergroup Resources
All-Pro Door & Hardware
Diamond Contracting

www.merf.org
MERF News
March 2025
Middle East Reformed Fellowship—"Declaring the Whole Counsel of God"
"Faithful, Fruitful and Cost-Effective Indigenous Missions!"

Indonesia – Challenges are Blessings

by Tommy & Elisa Christanto

Makatian Island, Maluku

Little church by the mosque in Nglelo village, Kopeng-Central Java

Ngaduman village, Kopeng-Central Java

Indonesia is an island archipelago country of over 284 million spread over 3000 miles (5000 km). The vast majority of the population are simple farmers. Most are Muslims, largely only by name. Indonesian Christians are concentrated in areas in North Sulawesi, Maluku, East Nusa Tenggara, and Papua. Their presence provides opportunities to reach out to Muslim neighbors. Yet, Christians, not well grounded in God's Word, over time increasingly turn to Islam. Mosques are being built next to churches.

Tommy & Elisa Christanto

So, the MERF team in Jakarta, the capital on Java Island, seeks to proclaim the gospel to the Muslim majority as well as build up the faith of Christians. Gospel messages are shared over the radio in Indonesian languages and online and in-person. As many churches lack Bible teaching for children, the Jakarta team gives special emphasis to programs which bring God's Word to children and young people and Bible teacher training. We praise God for the spiritual hunger evident all over the Indonesian islands and beyond. Gospel messages are broadcast by radio to neglected rural areas of far-flung islands. This opens up opportunities for in-person ministry visits.

Ngaduman Village

Like many others, in Ngaduman Village, Kopeng, Central Java, almost all the villagers are illiterate and they live together harmoniously. At Easter and Christmas, Muslims visit and greet their Christian neighbors. They happily enter the church for social activities and even attend Christmas services. *Pray for Christians to be thoroughly grounded in God's Word and to lovingly bring the gospel to their Muslim neighbors.*

Lakoka

The poor Muslim and Christian farmers in beautiful Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara get along well. The Central Sumba village of Lakoka lacks electricity. This has provided opportunities to express Christ's love. MERF-Jakarta organized for Indonesian city churches to provide solar-powered lamps to needy Lakoka Christian families. Their Muslim and tribal neighbors asked, *"How is your house so bright?"* So, the local Christians witnessed to the light of Christ. Neighbors have come to the church asking

Children at Vacation Bible School event

for help to also get solar-powered lamps. In this way, the Christian congregation serves the community practically, expressing love to neighbors, and also sharing Christ's message of salvation.

Seputih Surabaya

Seputih Surabaya transmigration resettlement area of East Sumatra, Lampung is one of many sparsely-populated places where landless poor from densely-populated Java and Bali were resettled to farm. These are Muslims, Christians and Hindus, living together in the same community. Members of the growing Christian congregation are eager to bear witness to Christ. MERF Jakarta provides them with evangelistic and teaching materials, suitable for children and teenagers. Having to travel for many hours, on extremely rough roads to reach such remote areas is challenging, especially in rainy seasons. By God's grace this does not hinder the growth of Christian communities. Some who first came to church just for an event, eventually expressed genuine desire to know Christ. Also, the congregation brings radios to farms for people to hear the Word of God.

Aboru & Surrounding Islands

In the Maluku Islands, we met a different ministry challenge. In the past, Aboru, on Haruku Island, headquartered anti-government separatist fighters. Due to this fact, it is very difficult to get permission to enter Aboru. No one is allowed without a local invitation. After acceptance for entry to this island, we received an extraordinary welcome, especially from the Christian community. The surrounding small Maluku islands are also a challenge to reach. These are accessible only when seas are calm. It is not uncommon for large waves to delay passenger ships from docking. Being seasick from big waves, we had to wait for many hours. This is part of the ministry journey.

Papua regions

Ministering in Papua, in the easternmost part of Indonesia, is also challenging. It is mountainous and rich in mining resources; but the population is very primitive. The Asmat tribe is a large tribe in Papua. They are very open and eager to hear God's Word. MERF-Jakarta partners with the Indonesian Bible Society to provide Bibles to the Papua outlying regions of Nabire, Biak, and Mamberamo. Ministry journeys require travel for days over mountains and valleys and across waters.

"O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God. Sing praises to the Lord."

— Psalm 68:32

Blessings

Travel over land and sea to share the gospel in remote island villages is demanding. It requires long hikes or driving over rough roads. Expecting flat tires and car break downs is part of the journey, so is waiting all day for a boat to dock, while dizzy and nauseous from large waves. Sleeping in a tent, on a mat or two chairs pushed together in a church spare room are part of the ministry challenges. Jesus travelled on foot and by boat to minister and brought his disciples through storms. We are thankful that wherever God sends us to serve, he works according to his wise plan. As Christ is glorified, his church grows. *Thank you for your prayers and support.*

MERF–Canada

Thank you for your faithful support! Please make cheques payable to MERF-Canada and send them to the address at the bottom of the page.

Online donations can be made to Middle East Reformed Fellowship (Canada) Inc. through

www.merf.org/support

e-transfers:

merfcanada@gmail.com

Asmat tribe-Papua receiving Bibles

RAY OF SUNSHINE

Rachel Vis

MARCH BIRTHDAYS:

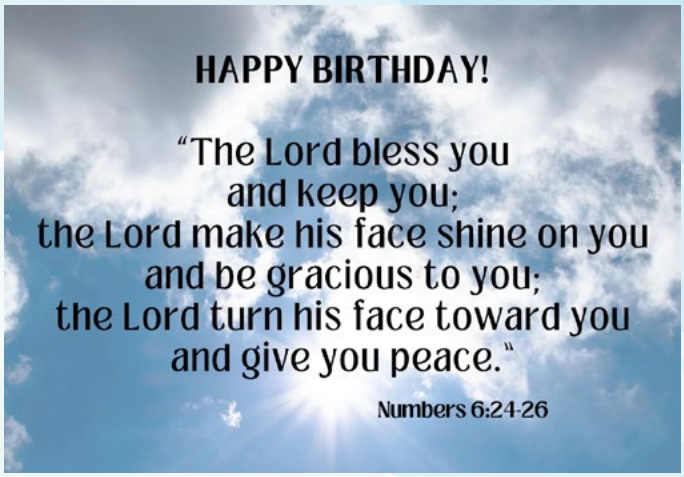
1 Clarence Zwiep will be 71
c/o Beacon Home
653 Broad Street West
Dunnville, ON
NIA IT8

4 Debbie Veenstra will be 51
4238 2nd Concession Road
Sherkston, ON
L0S 1R0

21 Eddie Van Rootselaar will be 32
c/o Beacon Home
653 Broad Street West
Dunnville, ON
NIA IT8

30 Bernie De Vos will be 50
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road
Grimsby, ON
L3M 0L1

30 Shaelyn Kottlelenberg will be 29
c/o Lighthouse
6528 1st Line, RR #3
Fergus, ON
N1M 2W4



Happy Birthday to Clarence, Debbie, Eddie, Bernie, and Shaelyn!

We wish you all the Lord's blessings in the year to come. Have a great day celebrating with your family and friends! May you all be continually lifted up and supported by your loved ones and the communion of saints around you. Most of all, may you feel the love of Jesus Christ in your life and each and every day.

- Rachel Vis

CLARION KIDS ASK!

How was God here before everything?

- Gabriel, age 7

Hello Gabriel,

The Bible tells us that God was here before everything. You can read that in Psalm 90:2. Before God made anything in the world, the Bible says: "From everlasting to everlasting you are God." So God was not just here *before* everything. He was *always* here.

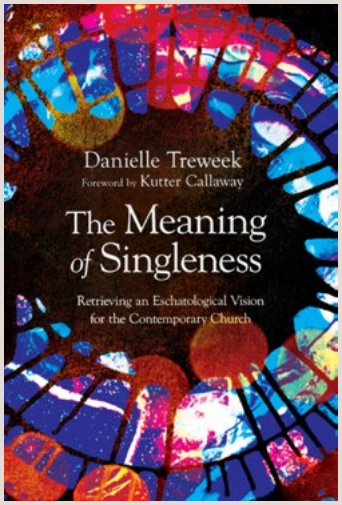
God is eternal. That means he has no beginning, and he has no end. Unlike you or me, God was never born! This is very hard for us to understand, because every person is born. But not God. He is eternal and cannot be destroyed. Ever.

Do you know what else is amazing? Every person who believes Jesus died for their sins gets the most amazing gift. God gives believers like you and me eternal life! Then *we* will live with God forever.

Till next time,

Mrs. Veenendaal

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



BOOK REVIEW

AN OLD–NEW WAY OF THINKING ABOUT SINGLENESS

The Meaning of Singleness: Retrieving an Eschatological Vision for the Contemporary Church, by Danielle Treweek. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2023). Paperback. 313 pages. $51.95 CDN.

According to Dani Treweek, "Christian singleness is routinely portrayed as not simply abnormal, but aberrant" (p. 46). She quotes popular evangelical preacher and writer John MacArthur who once said that singleness is "the most devastating attack on marriage today . . . singleness is an assault on marriage" (p. 84). Douglas Wilson is quoted saying that Christians should only be thankful for singleness the way they would "thank God for bad financial news, or a cancer diagnosis, or any other true affliction" (p. 74). It's often the case that we expect a single person to want to be married and anyone who doesn't must be either gay or weird. Treweek aims to challenge that way of thinking.

The *Meaning of Singleness* is a reworking of her doctoral dissertation. It's published by an academic press. To be honest, there were times where I had to stop and look up certain words. It's not easy reading. But it has an important message and in this review I want to summarize it for you. If you like being challenged with deeper reading, then by all means have at it, but I wouldn't expect most readers to persevere through it.

Treweek's case begins by arguing that our contemporary Christian understanding of singleness has been more influenced by the world than we'd care to admit. Secular thought and principles have heavily influenced the way we regard singleness as deficient and marriage as normative. She writes, "It would be a mistake to think that the schemes of thought that have shaped any contemporary or historical Christian view have been exclusively Christian in their character and grounding" (p. 87).

But she doesn't propose to develop something entirely new in response. Treweek sees theology as partly an exercise in retrieval. It's good to think about how singleness was regarded in church history, in biblical exegesis, and in Christian theology. Of course, those who have preceded us need to be critically considered—and she does that. The outcome of this is that Treweek observes that, whereas most Protestant thinking on singleness has been exclusively based on protology (the doctrine of the first things, i.e. Genesis 1–3), much earlier Christian thinking also took into account eschatology (the doctrine of the last things). In the new creation, all Christians will be single. Shouldn't that have some impact on how we think about singleness now? The meaning of singleness is partly found in the fact that single Christians in this age are giving us a picture of the future awaiting all of us.

Treweek isn't arguing that singleness is superior to marriage. Her aim isn't to downplay the significance of marriage either. She writes that marriage has its own way of pointing ahead to the beautiful new creation in that it points us to the "eternal union between Christ and his church" (p. 231). Rather, she's contending that singleness and marriage have equal value and meaning for Christians.

There are two other ways she speaks about the meaningfulness of being single. The first has to do with procreation. Whereas married Christians are usually more focused on biological procreation (parenting), singles ought to focus on the spiritual procreation involved in discipleship. The other has to do with the embrace of celibacy. By embracing sexual celibacy, spiritually mature Christian singles proclaim with their lives that physical gratification is not "equivalent to true happiness [n]or necessary for human flourishing" (p. 268).

I found it to be a fascinating read which stretched my thinking. In fact, it was the best Christian book I read in 2024. The only negative I'll mention is that she quotes an author taking God's name in vain on page 24. Otherwise, this is a great challenge to the contemporary portrayals of singleness "as either an exceptional miracle to be embraced, a problem to be solved, an interim period to be endured, or a tragedy to be lamented" (p. 218).

Wes Bredenhof
Minister
Free Reformed Church of Launceston
bookreview@clarionmagazine.ca