

Clarion

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



The Mode of Baptism

Rick Vanderhorst

CRTS Student Profiles

Grant Me Justice

Jan DeGelder

What's Inside

To have and to hold on to the sound doctrine handed down to us by the apostles and prophets is vital for the faithfulness and vitality of church life (see Jude 3). To that end, we are pleased to provide clarifications on the doctrine of baptism specifically concerning its mode (by Rick Vanderhorst) and on how the church should be understood in its relationship to ethnic Israel (by Rob Schouten). These may seem to be “finer” points of theology but after you’ve read the pieces, I hope you will agree they are relevant and important to our lives as Christians. The practical outworking of the doctrine of pursuing justice is something captured in Article 31 of our Church Order and Jan DeGelder walks us through how to both pursue justice (as an appellant) and how to render justice (as a member of a broader assembly). Good stuff brothers!

We thank our heavenly Father for providing a crop of six graduates from CRTS who are now ready to seek candidacy among the churches! Read their profiles and if you belong to a vacant church consider: could one of these men be a fit for your congregation’s needs? Could your congregation help a new minister find his way with guidance and care in the ministry of the gospel? What a double blessing such a relationship might be!

In other articles, Mariah Tamminga reviews a podcast intended for our small ones while Wes Bredenhof reviews a fine book about small things. Further you can find a *Service Snapshot* featuring Manoah Manor, two letters to the editor, a song, clippings of recent classes, and last but not least Eric Kampen’s editorial on whether a church’s history is a help or a hindrance. Enjoy!

Peter Holtvliwer

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A Church's History: Hindrance or Help?

It is one of the facts of life that everyone has a history. This is also true when it comes to a church. A church may try to mask its history by referring to itself as a community church or a Christian church, but with some digging it may come out that they are Baptist, Mennonite Brethren, Pentecostal, or even Reformed in roots. If there is no history beyond the story of some charismatic founder, that would be a red flag, for it suggests a personality cult, a sect.

HINDRANCE?

The question is, why would someone mask their history? On a personal level, this may be because some sad or bad things happened in one's past, making others cautious about developing friendships. On a church level, this may be because some bad things happened in the past, or because it may appear that one's history might be a hindrance to the gospel message as it inevitably will have ethnic aspects.

It is easy to see how this might be the case of the Canadian Reformed Churches. The name "Canadian" cannot hide the fact that our history goes back to the Netherlands. After seventy-five years in Canada, Dutch surnames predominate and there are still many Dutch customs, ranging from the use of peppermints during worship services, subtle jokes referring to being Dutch still heard in some sermons, the Sunday soup lunch stereotype, the annual visitation in some homes by Sinterklaas, or the singing of *Ere Zij God* at gatherings where members of the community may have been invited. Further, the name "Reformed" might be seen as a hindrance as it has negative connotations of various social or political movements.

HELP?

While it may appear that the ethnic dimension of a church's history could be a hindrance to the gospel, one cannot ignore this dimension. It is part of God's providential guiding of our lives. We are not born as generic citizens of the world, but into a specific historic and cultural context that will flavour how we conduct church life.

We should not erase our history but ask how the Holy Spirit has let the Word bear fruit in our historical context. This can be seen in such things as the confessional documents and practices that have developed. One can then better ask whether that part of our history is a hindrance or help. I would argue that they are very helpful because they are not narrowly ethnic, but catholic and ecumenical, very adaptable to different situations.

CONFESSIONS, LITURGY, & CHURCH ORDER

Think first of the Reformed Confessions. The Belgic Confession was written in French, in an area now known as Belgium. The Heidelberg Catechism was written in German, in the city of Heidelberg. The Canons of Dort were written in the Netherlands, but this was done in consultation with people from England, Scotland, Switzerland, and Germany. This is not narrow ethnicity at work but shows catholicity. These confessions have served to teach, defend and promote the Christian faith throughout the world. They succinctly and faithfully communicate the timeless message of the gospel.

Liturgically, a key aspect of the CanRC is an emphasis on singing Psalms. This can be traced back to Geneva, which gave its name to the tunes we use. This way of singing has spread throughout the world. I have heard people from African background singing to these tunes in French. There is also a comprehensive set of liturgical forms that contain mature, comprehensive biblical teaching on the sacraments and church discipline.

In addition, there is a church order. It was designed first for the Dutch setting in the late 1500s, but has proven very adaptable to different contexts. It is beneficial in the way it avoids the extremes of hierarchy and independentism in organizing church life at a local and cooperative level.

HELP, NOT HINDRANCE

The history of the Canadian Reformed Churches has a Dutch element to it. Its history, however, also brings out the ecumenical and catholic aspects that serve the preservation and increase of the church. For the sake of transparency and full disclosure, we should be forthright about our history. It gives context to who we are, what we do, and why we do it, even if people notice peppermint on our breath. If you think about it, as peppermint freshens breath, being open about our history will be a breath of fresh air in a stale world. 



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The Mode of Baptism

RICK VANDERHORST



If you've ever witnessed a baptism in a Reformed church, whether for an infant or an adult, that baptism was likely done by sprinkling with water. Perhaps you've wondered, why do we administer baptism by sprinkling? Is this the only way to do it?

We might not only have questions but also struggle with serious doubts about this mode of baptism. After all, there are many Baptist and evangelical Christians in North America. Many Baptists, if not all of them, object to baptism by sprinkling, arguing instead that baptism by immersion is the only valid mode of baptism. John MacArthur, for example, writes the following about baptism by immersion:

"Only immersion fits the reality of which baptism is the picture. ... The reality is that the believer at salvation is united with Christ in his death and resurrection. Only immersion symbolizes death, burial into the water, and resurrection of new life coming out. Only immersion maintains the picture, the image of the reality baptism signifies."¹

MacArthur also argues that the meaning of the Greek term "to baptize" literally means "to immerse in water," which further shows immersion as the only legitimate mode for the church. What do we do with this? What is the legitimate mode of baptism and why? Is it sprinkling, is it immersion, or possibly both?

INITIAL REMARKS

Before getting into the heart of the matter, I should make some opening remarks. First of all, it's important to understand that even if immersion were the only legitimate mode of baptism, this would in no way illegitimize the practice of infant baptism. Why? Because we could easily baptize infants by immersion. In fact, the Eastern Orthodox Church practices infant baptism in this way (you can look it up on YouTube if you'd like). Thus, the mode of baptism has little impact on the question of who receives the sacrament.

We also need to understand that the meaning of the Greek term meaning "to baptize" does not always mean to immerse something in water or some other liquid. Yes, the words "baptism" and "to baptize" often carry this meaning. However, consider what John the Baptist said about the Lord Jesus. John proclaimed that while he baptized with water, the one coming after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. This prophecy was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:1–4). In this moment, the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire. However, they were not *immersed* in either the Holy Spirit or in fire. Rather, the Holy Spirit filled them as he was poured out from on high, and tongues of fire merely rested on their heads.

¹ John MacArthur, "Understanding Baptism," www.gty.org/sermons/80-57understanding-baptism



BAPTISM'S DOUBLE BENEFIT

Those remarks aside, let's return to the main point. To understand the proper mode of baptism, we should first understand the message of baptism. Baptism as a sacrament is a sign and seal of the promise of the gospel (see Heidelberg Catechism, LD 25). This is why the sacraments have been called a "visible gospel." What the good news of Christ proclaims in words, the sacraments portray visually. Thus, baptism gives us a visible picture of what Christ has done to save us in his death and resurrection.

The saving work of Christ in his death and resurrection includes two main features. First, it includes a new *status* before God, whereby we are accepted freely and fully by God. Second, it provides us with a new spiritual *condition* by which we can serve God. This is the double benefit of Christ's death and resurrection. Let's unpack these benefits a little.

By his death and resurrection, Christ gives us a new status before God. Without this work of Christ, we stand condemned before God, guilty of both original and actual sins. However, Christ came to take our punishment and condemnation upon himself, and by his perfect obedience as the last Adam to fulfill all righteousness for us. By receiving Christ's benefits in faith, we can appear before God with the new status of "forgiven," "righteous," "redeemed," and "heir of life eternal" (see, for example, Rom 5:12–21; LD 15 Q&A 37).

In addition to this status, Christ also gives us a new spiritual condition by which we can serve God. Without the work of Christ, we are spiritually dead in sin, totally deprived of the holy nature God endowed us with at creation, and unable to do what is truly good. However, Christ died and rose again also to unite us in his death and resurrection. Our old nature was put to death in him, and we are raised to new life through his resurrection. By this we can now serve God instead of sin (see Rom 6:1–14; LD 16 Q&A 43).

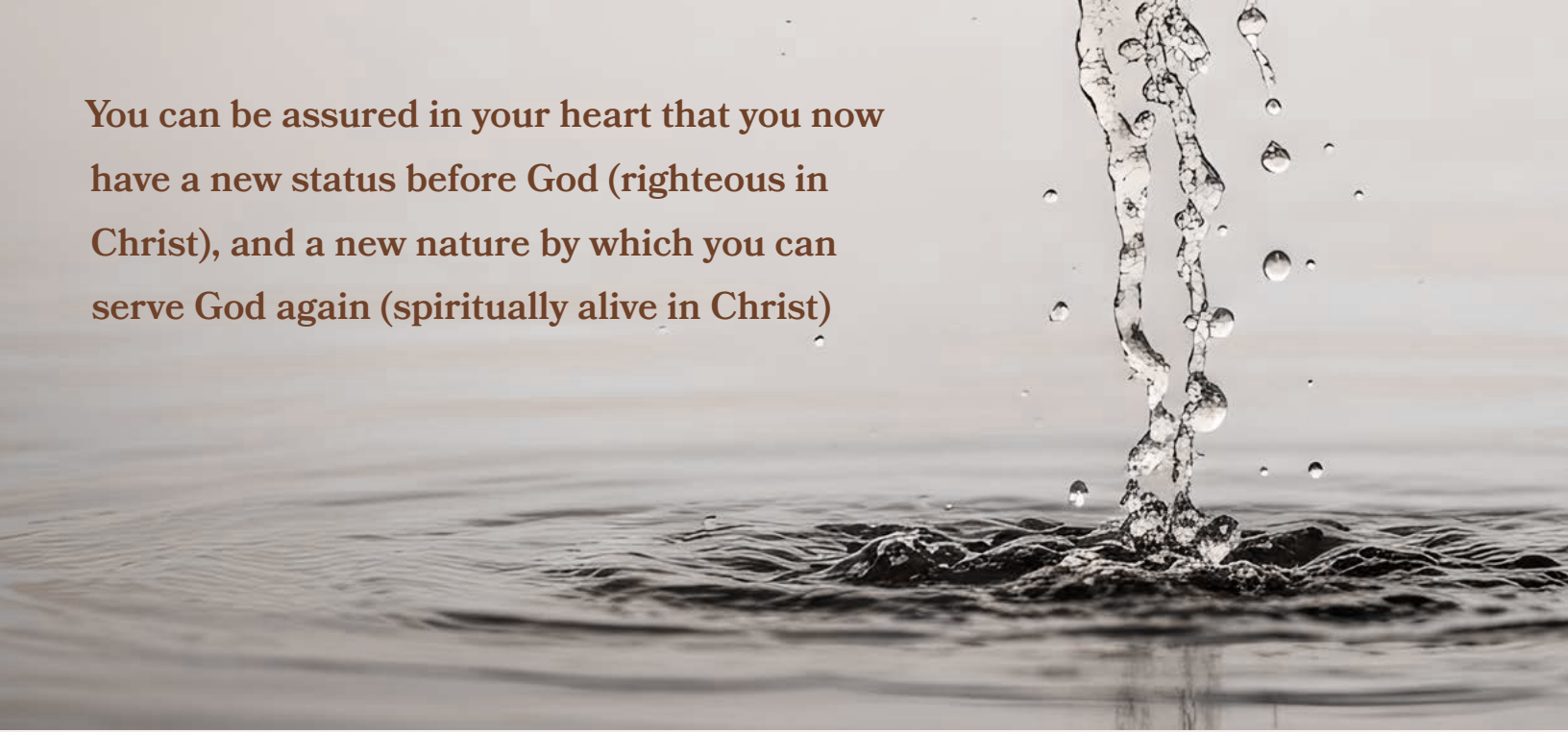
This double benefit of Christ's death and resurrection is pictured in the double washing of baptism. Lord's Day 26 describes baptism as being washed with both Christ's blood and his Spirit. To be washed with Christ's blood means to receive forgiveness of sins from God because of Christ's blood (a new status before God). To be washed with Christ's Spirit means to be renewed by the Holy Spirit to the effect that we become dead to sin and lead a holy and blameless life (a new spiritual condition).

THE MODE OF BAPTISM

Putting this all together, the mode of baptism must match this central message of the gospel. Because of this, Christians have recognized immersion, sprinkling, and pouring as legitimate modes of baptism.² This is because these three modes picture those two main saving benefits Christ gives in his death and resurrection.

² See Daniel R. Hyde, *Jesus loves the little children: why we baptize children* (Reformed Fellowship Inc., 2006), 55.

You can be assured in your heart that you now have a new status before God (righteous in Christ), and a new nature by which you can serve God again (spiritually alive in Christ)



Immersion is a legitimate mode of baptism because it pictures our dying and rising with Christ. Through our union with Christ, we are given a new status, and we are given a new nature. The Apostle Paul highlights the initial advantage of our new status, stating, “God made us alive together with Christ, having forgiven us all our trespasses” (Col 2:13; note the connection to baptism in v. 12 as well). Romans 6:6 describes the benefit of a new nature when it says, “We know that our old self was crucified with [Christ], so that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin” (note the reference to baptism in vv. 1–4).

Baptism by sprinkling likewise pictures both these saving benefits of Christ. Hebrews 9:11–14 speaks of the sprinkling of Christ’s blood, which secures an eternal redemption (a new status). Baptism by sprinkling pictures this redemption secured by our great high priest. Moreover, in Ezekiel 36:25–27, the LORD declares how he will renew his people, give them a new heart by the Holy Spirit, and cause them to walk in his ways. He pictures this renewal by a sprinkling with water (v. 25). This does not mean that Ezekiel 36 is speaking specifically about baptism. But it does mean that baptism by sprinkling can picture this renewing work.

We see the same things pictured in baptism by pouring. The pouring of water symbolizes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit given to a believer both confirms a believer’s justified status (see Rom 5:1–5; 1 Cor 6:11) *and* the possession of a new nature by which we can serve God (Titus 3:4–7).

Although this article is about the mode of baptism, it’s worth pointing out that circumcision likewise pictures this double benefit of Christ’s death and resurrection. Romans 4:11 calls circumcision “a seal of the righteousness of faith” that Abraham had. Not only that, but circumcision pictured God’s promise to circumcise the hearts of his people so that they might live according to his commandments

(Deut 30:6). This helps us to see the intimate connection between circumcision and baptism; they are both gospel signs.

CONCLUSION

There are a few ways understanding the proper mode of baptism can help us. First, baptism by sprinkling isn’t just empty formalism or tradition. Instead, sprinkling has a strong biblical basis to show the double washing that we have in Christ. We can be assured that sprinkling is certainly one legitimate mode of baptism as it communicates the riches of Christ’s work *for* us and *in* us.

Second, understanding these truths can keep us from becoming unsettled in our faith when certain Christians insist that immersion is the *only* legitimate mode of baptism. This is simply not the case. We need not worry that we are baptizing in the wrong manner when we baptize by sprinkling.

Third, understanding how the mode of baptism pictures these saving benefits of Christ can strengthen the belief in our hearts that these saving benefits of Christ truly belong to us. You can be assured in your heart that you now have a new status before God (righteous in Christ), and a new nature by which you can serve God again (spiritually alive in Christ). As we confess in Article 34 of the Belgic Confession, “Baptism benefits us not only when the water is on us... but throughout our whole life.” 



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The Israel of God:

Why Uncritical Christian Zionism is a Theological Error

ROB SCHOUTEN



A teaching has shaped the thinking of millions of American evangelicals: the belief that the modern state of Israel is the direct fulfillment of biblical prophecy, and that Christians must give it unwavering political and military support. This teaching comes from Dispensationalism, a theological system developed in the 1800s. At its core, Dispensationalism says that God has two separate peoples with two separate plans: an earthly plan for Israel and a heavenly plan for the Church.

Dispensationalists insist that every prophecy given to Israel in the Old Testament must be fulfilled literally in ethnic Israel. Promises about land (Gen 12:7), temple worship and sacrifices (Zech 14:16–21), and about political kingship (2 Sam 7:12–16) are not seen as fulfilled in Christ and his church. They must, instead, await a future fulfillment in the Jewish nation. So, when Isaiah describes Zion's glory, Dispensationalists say it refers to a future earthly Jerusalem. When Ezekiel describes a temple, they expect literal stone and mortar in Palestine, not Christ and his body. This approach fuels prophecy charts and drives strong political attachment to the modern state of Israel, which is viewed as the central stage of God's plan.

Reformed disagreement with Dispensationalism is not a small debate about the details of the end times. It goes much deeper than that. At stake is the way we read the whole Bible. If we divide God's plan into two tracks—one for Israel and one for the Church—we end up distorting not only prophecy, but also our ethics, our politics, and even our understanding of the gospel itself. That is why this view needs to be challenged with the clear teaching of the New Testament.

ALL PROMISES ARE FULFILLED IN CHRIST

We need to remember that Jesus Christ and his apostles are our final authority for how to read the Old Testament. They show us how the promises given to Israel are to be understood. We don't get to invent our own way of reading prophecy, as though the New Testament left the matter undecided.

Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me" (John 5:39). After his resurrection, he walked with the disciples and, "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in

all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). Then, “he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45).

The apostles followed their Master’s lead. Peter, preaching in the temple shortly after Pentecost, declared: “And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days” (Acts 3:24). Notice: not a future millennium, but *these days*—the days of Christ’s death, resurrection, and the gift of the Spirit—*these days* are the fulfillment of prophecies given to Israel.

Paul puts the same truth in sweeping words: “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory” (2 Cor 1:20).

This is why we cannot look for the fulfillment of God’s promises in a secular nation-state, often indifferent to or hostile to Christ. To do so is to look past the “Yes” and “Amen” already given in Jesus. It is to cling to the shadow while ignoring the substance: “These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ” (Col 2:17).

THE FULFILLMENT CREATES ONE PEOPLE

Once we see that all God’s promises are fulfilled in Christ, the New Testament’s teaching about the people of God becomes clear. The great mistake of Zionist theology is that it divides God’s plan into two tracks—one for Jews, one for Gentiles. But the cross has already torn down that division. Paul writes: “For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility . . . that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility” (Eph 2:14–16).

The gospel shows that God is not building two houses but one temple (Eph 2:19–22). He is not tending two olive trees but one (Rom 11:17–24). Jews who do not believe were broken off because of unbelief. Gentiles, wild branches by nature, have been grafted in through faith. The only way for anyone—Jew or Gentile—to be part of God’s people is by trusting in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. There is no back door, no special covenant, and no national privilege that sidesteps the cross.

The New Testament takes the highest Old Testament titles of Israel and applies them directly to the Church, the worldwide body of believers in Christ:

- “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession” (1 Pet 2:9, echoing Exod 19:5–6).

- “For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” (Phil 3:3).
- “Peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16).
- “Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. . . . And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:7, 29).
- “But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter” (Rom 2:29).

To claim that God’s final promises belong to a geopolitical nation defined by ethnicity rather than to the body of Christ gathered from every tribe and nation is to ignore the radical redefinition—and fulfillment—that Jesus has accomplished.

FUTURE TEMPLE FOLLY

While Dispensationalism has shifted in recent decades—with “progressive” forms emphasizing more overlap between Israel and the Church—nearly all versions still expect a distinct future for national Israel, often including a rebuilt temple. That expectation is one of the most dangerous features of the system, because it collides head-on with the finished work of Christ.

The book of Hebrews is one long argument that the Old Covenant system of priests, sacrifices, and temple worship has been made permanently obsolete by something far greater—the perfect and final priesthood of Christ (see Heb 8:6, 13). To expect a return to animal sacrifices is to say, in effect, that Christ’s one sacrifice was not enough. That is not only an error—it is a regression of the highest order. The only temple God now recognizes is the living temple, built of living stones—the Church, indwelt by the Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; 1 Pet 2:5).

“ALL ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED”

Supporters of Christian Zionism often point to Romans 11:26, which says “And in this way all Israel will be saved” as proof of a separate plan for ethnic Israel. But Paul is not teaching that God has one track for Jews and another for the Church, or that there will be a mass conversion of Jews apart from Christ. The wider context of Romans 9–11 makes this clear. From the start, Paul insists: “For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel” (Rom 9:6). He speaks of a “remnant, chosen by grace” within Israel (Rom 11:5). In other words, belonging to God’s people has always depended on faith, not merely ethnicity or biological descent.

So, when Paul says, “all Israel will be saved,” he is speaking about the full number of God’s people—the complete family of faith, gathered from Jews and Gentiles alike, across all of history. These

are not two peoples with two destinies, but one redeemed people in Christ, the true Israel of God.

This does not mean Jewish people are excluded. On the contrary, Jewish men and women are being saved now, and they will continue to be saved until Christ returns. But, like all others, they are saved only by being grafted into the one olive tree by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 11:17–24). There is only one tree, one people, and one Saviour.

CLARIFYING OUR CALLING

The stakes here are not only theological but practical. The Dispensational way of thinking often leads Christians to give blanket approval to the military or political actions of a modern nation-state—sometimes even when those actions run against justice, mercy, and the witness of the gospel to both Israelis and Palestinians.

Scripture calls us to a different allegiance. “Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20). Our mission is not to wave the flag of any earthly nation, but to proclaim the gospel to all nations, making disciples of Jesus Christ. The only “special nation” in God’s eyes is the holy nation he is building—the Church, gathered from every tribe, tongue, and people. The hope of the world is not the Israeli flag flying over Jerusalem. The hope of the world is the banner of the cross, under which all people—Jew and Gentile alike—find peace with God and with one another. That is why we must firmly reject the mistaken hermeneutic of Dispensationalism and hold to a Christ-centered reading of Scripture. Every promise is already answered in Jesus, and the true people of God are those who bow the knee to him as Lord. 🇺🇸



Rob Schouten

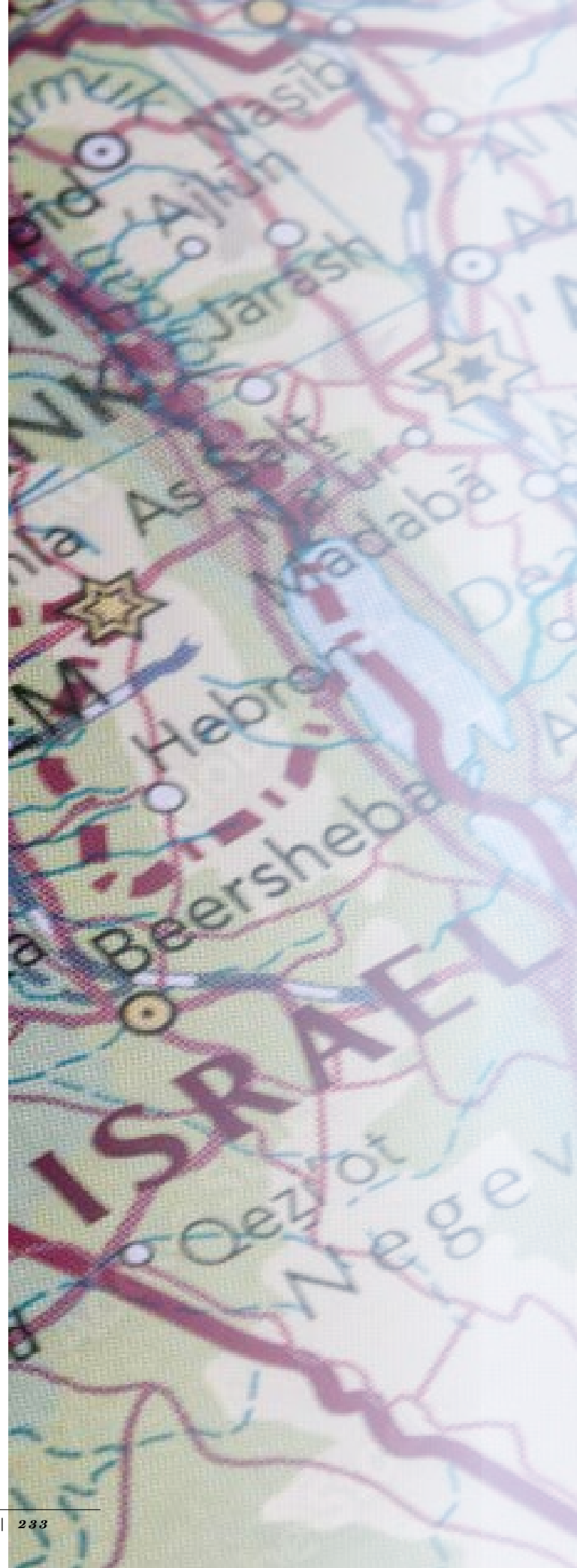
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FOR FURTHER READING:

- Chapman, Colin. *Whose Promised Land? The Continuing Crisis Over Israel and Palestine* (2003)
- LaRondelle, Hans K. *The Israel of God: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (1983)
- Mathison, Keith. *Dispensationalism: Rightly Dividing the People of God?* (1995)
- Poythress, Vern S. *Understanding Dispensationalists* (1993)
- Robertson, O. Palmer. *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (2000)
- Sizer, Stephen. *Zion’s Christian Soldiers?* (2007)



CRTS Student Profiles

You are about to read the profiles of the six 2026 graduates of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS). May we all give thanks to Jesus Christ who wants his church to know how greatly he loves her, and who therefore moves men to study for gospel ministry! Four years ago, he brought these six young men to CRTS. Between them, they represent Australia (1), Korea (1), South Africa (3), and Canada (1). They arrived young, full of energy, and ready to work hard. We are thankful that we could teach them in peace and good order, see them grow spiritually and academically, pray with them, and help them become known to the churches. They

followed internships, filled pulpits, and taught catechism. By God's grace, they desire to become eligible for call and to serve wherever our Lord might call them. Training them has been a joyful thing, and we are happy that they can be presented to the churches.



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Jonatan Boon

Hi brothers and sisters! My name is Jonatan Boon, and at my side you find my beautiful bride-to-be, Danielle Kok. We are standing at the end of the seminary chapter, and on the threshold of another. We are excited (and a bit nervous) to see where our Lord will lead us next.

To start at the beginning, we need to go back in time and space to the winter of 2000 and the Dutch city of Hoozevee. I, Jonatan, was born here as the oldest of a small-town pastor and his wife. As it often goes with a pastor's kid, I soon found myself (age five) living somewhere else—in my case, South Africa. I spent my formative years in the Jacaranda-lined suburbs of Pretoria. I attended the local Reformed elementary school and high school. During these years, I was a member of the Free Reformed Church Pretoria-Maranata, where my dad was (and still is) the pastor.

At the end of my high school years, with some encouragement from teachers, friends, and parents, I began considering gospel ministry. I enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts program at the University of Pretoria, which put me on my way to seminary. Three years later, I graduated with a major in Biblical Languages and Latin.

Between finishing university and starting seminary, I returned to my country of birth. In the Netherlands, I worked for five months in a cheese factory in Rouveen (could there be a more Dutch job?). After a short stop back in South Africa, I crossed the Atlantic to settle in Hamilton.

The change came with many adjustments. It is winter for a large portion of the year, I must speak English all the time (except with my South African roommates), and shovel snow. Yet, I found a warm community, both at CRTS and in the Hamilton churches. I also became (more) accustomed to the Canadian culture and climate, though Canada could not rid me of my South African accent.

One summer, I volunteered as a counsellor at Campfire! Bible Camp. There I met another wonderful counsellor, Danielle. Fast forward a few months, and we were dating. A little under a year and a trip to South Africa later, we became engaged. Though it may seem unlikely for a Canadian and a South African to meet at a kids' camp, we believe this is a testimony of God's guiding hand. At the moment, Danielle is a high school teacher at the Oxford Reformed Christian School. We are counting down the days till July, when, Lord willing, we will enter the marriage chapter of our relationship.

The Lord graciously used my seminary years to shape me. I am deeply grateful for all my professors and classmates who stimulated me to grow in understanding, communicating, and radiating the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am further thankful for all the faithful support of my family and the wider church community.

A highlight of seminary is the internships. My orientation internship took me back to my hometown, where I learned from Dr. Erik van Alten at the FRC Pretoria. For my preaching internship, I ventured to northern British Columbia. Rev. Hendrik Alkema mentored me at the Smithers CanRC. I headed to Santa Barbara, Querétaro, Mexico, for my mission internship with Scott Bredenhof. Last summer, I served at Arthur CanRC in weekly pulpit supply for two months. I also had the opportunity to teach catechism classes in my church, Providence CanRC. I have fond memories of all these places and the fellow saints I was privileged to meet.

Looking back over the past four years (and the years before seminary), we can see our Lord's guiding hand. Relying on his faithfulness, we are looking into the future. This coming summer will bring many changes. We are eagerly looking forward to our wedding day. At the same time, we are waiting to see where God will bring us to serve in his kingdom, whether in Canada, South Africa, or beyond. I hope to present myself to classis, Lord willing, in June. Seminary often taught me to walk by faith, looking to God's promises rather than to ourselves. With his promise that he works all for the good of those who love him, we are eager to start the next chapter.



Klaas Cho

Hi brothers and sisters, my name is Klaas Cho. When people hear my name, they often wonder about the connection between my appearance and my name. The story behind it begins about twenty-seven years ago on the other side of the world, in Korea.

On a blossoming spring day, my grandfather visited a temple in the mountains to see his teacher, a monk. After waiting for some time, he was finally able to speak with him and said, "My grandson has just been born. What would be a good name for him?"

After hearing about the baby, the monk gave the name Moongi, meaning "foundation of study." He said that with this name the boy would live a life devoted to study. My grandfather gladly received the name he had waited for and passed it on to my father, and so it became my name.

In God's providence, that name would later take on a deeper meaning. Moongi can also be understood as "study of Christ." Without realizing it, my grandfather gave me a name that would point toward the direction God would give my life—to study Christ all my life and, beyond that, to guide others to grow in their study of him.

I was born into a non-Christian family, the youngest of two children, dearly loved by my parents and my sister. Though I could not ask for a more wonderful family, I did not grow up knowing the love of God in Christ. Yet the Lord was gracious. In middle school, he opened my eyes to see that God is real, and in high school, through the preaching of his Word, he opened my heart to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. At the same time, he placed in me a deep desire to know his Word. From that point on, I longed to devote my life to the study of Christ and the proclamation of his love, to which my name has pointed me all along.

For some time, however, I struggled with the assurance of my salvation. In his kindness, the Lord led me to the writings of Klaas Schilder and others shaped by his theological work. Through their faithful explanation of Scripture, God helped me understand the riches of his covenant promises and brought me to the joyful assurance that Jesus Christ is truly my Lord and my Saviour. Through that same path, I also came to appreciate the Canadian Reformed Churches, especially their commitment to the authority of Scripture and to the Reformed confessions as its faithful summary.

Because of that, it became clear to me that I should come to Canada to study at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. After completing a bachelor's degree in theology in Korea, I moved to Canada in 2021. As a reminder of God's grace along this path, I adopted the name "Klaas," much like a newcomer to a new country might take on a new name. I remain thankful for the way the Lord used Schilder and others in my life. At the same time, the name also reminds me of the initial calling I felt years ago—to serve Christ's church by holding firmly to the authority of Scripture and the Reformed confessions, and in that way contribute to the building up of his church.

The past four years in Canada have been some of the most adventurous and formative years of my life. My first year was spent in British Columbia working at various jobs, which helped me better understand the lives of ordinary church members. After that, I began my studies at the seminary.

My time at CRTS has been a great blessing. I am deeply thankful for the professors who taught us with such dedication—not only through their theological insight, but also through their humility, love for the church, and personal encouragement. Learning from them, together with the close fellowship of fellow students, has been both

inspiring and enriching. The seminary has significantly shaped me both intellectually and spiritually as I prepare for ministry.

The Lord also blessed me with valuable opportunities to learn from ministers and congregations through internships. In Smithville, I had the privilege of teaching catechism for one year, which was my first opportunity to serve the church in instruction. In my first year, an orientation internship with Rev. Roukema introduced me to the rhythms of a minister's life. In my second year, a preaching and mission internship with Rev. Bruintjes and Rev. Park helped me better understand the work of pastoral ministry and local mission. In my third year, a preaching internship with Rev. Wieske provided further pastoral guidance and wisdom. I am very thankful for the rich mentorship of these ministers.

I am also truly grateful to the congregations that welcomed me and allowed me to serve among them. My serving experiences at Ebenezer CanRC, Bethel CanRC, St. Albert CanRC, Spruce Grove church plant, Calgary CanRC, and Coaldale CanRC were special blessings that I greatly treasure. Above all, the encouragement and kindness of God's people throughout these years have been both humbling and strengthening. Building on the initial calling I felt, these experiences have shown me the profound delight of serving God's precious people—walking alongside them, supporting their growth in Christ, and sharing in the life of the congregation—a joy that continues to guide and inspire my calling to pastoral ministry.

As I reflect on this journey—from the story of my name Moongi in Korea to the path the Lord has led me on as Klaas in Canada—I see his faithful hand guiding my story. And my prayer is that he will continue to write my story for his story, using my life for the study of Christ and the proclamation of his gospel.

As I come to the end of my time at CRTS, I hope, the Lord willing, to present myself before classis at the beginning of June to become eligible for call. Amazed by the Lord's faithful guidance and the remarkable growth he has granted me so far, I look forward with confidence that he will continue to accomplish his good purpose. May he use *Moongi* to promote the study of Christ among his people, and *Klaas* to serve in building up Christ's church in faithful commitment to the Bible and the Reformed confessions, guided by a profound love for God's people, all for the glory of his name.

"The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever" (Ps 138:8).

Noah Holtvlüwer

Hello, everyone! My name is Noah Holtvlüwer. With me is my lovely wife, Katherine, and our two children, Miriam (3) and Boaz (1). Only the keenest of eyes could spot the third child, whom we are eager to welcome this spring, the Lord willing. Now, you may be wondering, “Is Noah the son of the pastor?” or “Is his brother the one who does that podcast thingy?” Simply put, yes and yes. Rest assured, however, that aspiring to the ministry is not my attempt to escape their long shadows. In fact, I’m very thankful for such influences, for God has used many conversations with my family to develop my love for him and for his Word.

Speaking of family, I am one of six kids born to a set of God-fearing parents. Together, we’ve been blessed to live in several provinces of this vast country we call Canada—one of the many perks of being a minister’s kid! From Aldergrove, BC to Carman, MB to the Golden Horseshoe of Ontario, the Lord has led me and my family and blessed us with many and varied relationships among the communion of saints.

While my dad was serving at Spring Creek CanRC, I formed my most special relationship with Katherine, the girl in the neighbouring pew. We married in 2021, and for the past four years have been residing in Ancaster, ON, which is just a hop, skip, and a jump away from CRTS.

My educational path toward the seminary was similarly short. Following high school, I spent a year working at Kitching Steepe & Ludwig Funeral Home in Waterdown, ON. That year was very formative for me, teaching me how to serve those who are grieving and in need, and learning the value of good service also in the small details. I became pretty efficient at washing cars too! Ultimately, I chose to set aside my funerary attire and give university a try. I graduated from McMaster University with a BA in History, having endured many an online class due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Needless to say, I was thrilled to begin my seminary education in person.

In addition to the regular courses, I undertook several internships as part of my seminary studies. After completing year one, I spent two weeks with Rev. Joel Dykstra at Wellandport URC in Ontario. After my second year, I went back to my roots to do a ten-week preaching internship in Aldergrove, BC, under the tutelage of Rev. Rob Schouten. The following summer, I commuted to Ajax, ON for two weeks, joining Rev. Brian Zegers of Word of Life Ministry in sharing the gospel with Muslims. Later that same summer, I filled



the pulpit for six weeks at Grace URC in Oro-Medonte, ON. The Lord has used each of these experiences to mould and shape me, preparing me for life in the ministry, should that be his will. I will forever be grateful for the wise counsel and encouragement that I have received from classmates, professors, mentors, and a host of parishioners along the way.

It is my intention to present myself at Classis Niagara this spring in the hopes of being declared eligible for call. In the meantime, I am content to leave all uncertainties with my heavenly Father, whose ever-steady hand will continue to guide all things for my good unto his glory.



Jarrell Lemos

Greetings! My name is Jarrell Lemos, and with me are my dear wife Leanna and our two children, Jaslyn (2) and Jethro (9 months). As we reflect upon our journey to this point, we cannot help but recount the unfailing faithfulness of our God.

Both Leanna and I spent most of our lives in the most obscure (yet beautiful) part of Australia, the little island of Tasmania. I grew up in one of the more rural areas of Tassie, where I was raised with my siblings by my hardworking Mum. We moved around a bit, getting a taste of both country and urban life. My Dad, stepmother, and brother lived on the other side of the country (WA), and we visited them frequently.

It was when I moved to the city for secondary schooling that the Lord, in his grace, changed my life. As a young teen, I didn't really know what I wanted to do, yet as I searched for meaning I felt increasingly confronted with the emptiness of a worldly life. Yet a light shone in the darkness and I met some godly young people at school. And they didn't seem too fazed by the existentially deep and sometimes hostile questions I threw at them. They encouraged me to read the Bible and, after learning the gospel, I eventually came to a crossroads.

I was 17 when the Lord rescued me from my sin and I became a Christian. Shortly after, I joined the Free Reformed Church in Launceston. I am forever grateful for the people in the church community and my friends, whom God used to shape me.

It is there that I came to be impressed by one particular shy yet godly young lady. I had to move, and we tried a long-distance relationship at first but I couldn't keep away. We were married in June

of 2021. We both attended university, and my appetite for ministry heightened through my involvement in evangelism on campus. The problem was that I was studying engineering. Was the ministry for me? I didn't know much about writing essays and studying languages. Yet some very persistent people kept telling me that I might have different gifts, and I'm glad I finally listened. I prepared for seminary by doing my undergraduate as a philosophy major (BA).

Change can be intimidating. But with the support of our church, family, and friends, we made the move from tiny Tassie to Ontario. Who knew that by the end of our four years here we would be blessed in countless ways, including with two precious children! We were warmly embraced and soon felt at home at our new church family in Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church. They showed us the ropes of Canadian life and all its treats, such as bass fishing and Costco.

My time at seminary has been remarkable. I'll admit that, more times than I can count, learning felt like I was trying to drink out of a fire hose. But I can't thank God enough for the way he has been renewing my mind and heart with the help of my friends, colleagues, and professors. I praise God regularly for my education here.

My internships have been especially formative. I had an opportunity to shadow Pastor Jeff Poort at Guelph (Living Word) and undergo a preaching internship with Pastor Steve Vandervelde at Owen Sound CanRC. These men fostered within me a love for God's Word and service in his Kingdom. I was also blessed by an urban mission internship in Grand Rapids with Pastor Adrian Crum (OPC).

It's an exciting time for us as we consider the future in dependence on the Lord. I hope to undertake my preparatory exam this coming June and become eligible for call. Though there are a lot of unknowns, we are excited to see what our God has in store for us. Whatever that may be, may he receive the glory forever.

Arjan van der Meer

Hi, my name is Arjan van der Meer and with me is my lovely wife, Arina. We were both born and raised in South Africa, in the city of Pretoria. Our time in Canada has been a time of great joy, but not without its challenges. But when we look back, we see how God guided us on our way and through it all.

I am the second of five children. I was blessed to grow up in a Christian home, where, from a young age, we were taught and instructed in the knowledge of God. This laid a solid foundation for me to build on in the years to come. Growing up, I always wanted to become a veterinarian or work in nature, like a game warden. I love creation and would have loved to work in nature. But God had other plans for me.

Late in high school, I was convinced that I should pursue the ministry. So, after school, I moved away from my home in Pretoria to start my undergraduate studies. I completed my bachelor's degree at the Theological School of Potchefstroom, which is the training school of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (aka GKSA). It was there, in my final year, that I met my wife.

After graduating in December 2021, I worked in a steel factory for several months before moving to Canada in September 2022 to start my studies at CRTS. I stayed in Canada for a couple of months before returning to South Africa and completing my first and second years online. It was during that time that I got married to Arina. In September 2024, we moved to Canada, where I started my third year of studies. Meanwhile, Arina started working for EY (formerly Ernst & Young) as a Forensic Accountant.

Moving to Canada was not always easy, but we have been richly blessed during our time here. The seminary community, as well as the church community, is wonderful, and we were much encouraged by them. We will always look back fondly on our time in Canada.

During my studies, I had the privilege of doing a couple of internships. I spent two weeks with Rev. Johan Buintjes in Cape Town. After my second year, I completed seven weeks of internship with Rev. Erik van Alten in Pretoria as part of my long summer internship. I did another internship as part of the summer internship with Rev. Jeff Temple of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church



in Hamilton. I completed my mission internship with Rev. Greg Davidson of the Blessings Christian Church. I am truly grateful for these ministers who helped me to grow in my love for the Lord and for the ministry.

Looking forward, we are going back to South Africa, where I will be doing a year-long internship/vicariate in Cape Town under Rev. Buintjes. We look forward to moving back to our home country and see where the Lord leads us after that to serve him and build his Kingdom.

Marco van Renssen

Dear brothers and sisters, my name is Marco van Renssen. Studying at CRTS has been an immense blessing, and I thank the Father for the capable training we have received here in preparation for the work we desire. As I approach the end of my studies, my prayer and desire is to serve as a humble servant of God's kingdom wherever he sends. Allow me to tell a little more about what brought me here.

I grew up in the beautiful suburbs of Cape Town, South Africa. Since I was young, my parents and grandparents gave me the greatest gift they could give: a faithful example of love and service for the Lord. From a young age, I was interested in becoming a minister.

I learned English for the first time at the Reformed school of our church, the *Gereformeerde Laerskool Bellville* (try pronouncing that out loud!). When I went to high school, I entered an English-language public school, where I encountered secularism, evolutionism, feminism, and the LGBTQ movement. Those days challenged and formed me as I learned how to walk in wisdom toward outsiders, witness in love, and defend the faith.

In those days, I also had more and more conversations with my uncle, who is in the ministry. These had a formative effect on me, as I came to understand more and more the depth and the beauty of the grace of God. It contradicts our transactional nature, which wants to earn and achieve things for ourselves, by giving us complete forgiveness at no merit of our own, only through trust and faith in Jesus Christ. This was humbling, convicting, and life-changing.

While Cape Town is beautiful, it is also a place of poverty and brokenness. If you ever land at Cape Town Airport, you might be struck by the large areas of informal settlements. Unemployment rates are very high. In the neighbourhood where I grew up, people would take the train from the informal settlements and wait at the station for the chance of work. Many homeless people live around there as well. For a time, our church would hand out meals there and spread the gospel.

It was in those people that I saw the true hunger that is in every person. No amount of money or charity can fill the emptiness in the soul of someone who is lost, whether rich or poor. The only true and lasting comfort is the good news of Jesus Christ.

After graduating from high school in 2018, I went to Stellenbosch University to study biblical languages. I majored in Hebrew, Greek, and Philosophy. During the breaks, I spent time working at a butchery and then at the Reformational Study Centre. There was a span of



eight months between the end of the academic year in South Africa (December) and the beginning of the academic year in Canada (September), during which I worked full-time for the Reformational Study Centre, translating Dutch.

Seminary was a wealth of experiences for me, and a time of rapid growth and learning. I had several internship mentors, to whom I am thankful: Rev. Hilmer Jagersma (Fellowship), Rev. Jake Torenvliet (Flamborough); Rev. Julius VanSpronsen (Edmonton Immanuel); and Rev. Tony Zekveld (Brampton). It was a joy delving into God's Word under the supervision of these mentors, and I still benefit from their example and counsel. I also had the privilege of teaching catechism in Ancaster and Grassie, which I greatly enjoyed.

Meeting so many brothers and sisters in the Canadian Reformed (and sometimes United Reformed) Churches has been an immense blessing that accompanied my permission to speak an edifying Word in the churches. After growing up in a small federation in South Africa with only a handful of churches, meeting so many saints on the other side of the world—worshipping the same Lord and confessing the same Gospel—has been a great joy to me.

I hope to present myself to Classis Ontario West in June to be declared eligible for call. Wherever the Lord leads next, I will let him walk in front. 

MANOAH MANOR

Manoah Manor Senior Citizens Home: FROM VISION TO REALITY

Manoah Manor Senior Citizens Home in Langley, BC is the fruit of years of prayerful planning, steadfast perseverance, and devoted labour by the Canadian Reformed Churches in the Fraser Valley. What began as the concern of a small group of church members in the region grew into a collective effort to provide a home where senior members could live in safety, dignity, and Christian fellowship. The story of Manoah Manor is not merely a story of construction or administration, but a testament to the enduring commitment of a community guided by faith.

THE EARLY COMMITTEE: 1965–1984

The beginnings of Manoah Manor date back to the fall of 1965 when a committee first began meeting to consider the establishment of a senior citizens' home. These meetings were undertaken with a deep sense of responsibility as the churches recognized their calling to care for the elderly. The goal was to create a residence where seniors could continue to live within a community shaped by Reformed faith and practice, while receiving both practical and spiritual support.



Manoah Manor was envisioned not only as a place of physical care, but as a living, faith-centered community.

The consideration to establish a senior citizens' home became a reality in 1967 when the Canadian Reformed Senior Citizen's Home Society was registered with the governing authorities. For the next nineteen years (1965 and onward), committees met regularly, examining every aspect of the proposed home. Topics included location, architectural design, funding strategies, governance structures, and standards of care. Each decision required patience and wisdom, as resources were limited and progress was often slow. Yet the committee remained steadfast, carefully weighing each step to ensure that the eventual home would be practical, sustainable, and in keeping with the values of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT & BREAKING GROUND

Support from congregations across the Fraser Valley was vital. Church members gave generously through offerings, fundraising campaigns, and volunteer efforts. Many contributed professional skills, labour, and time, while others provided encouragement and guidance. This widespread involvement reflected the shared conviction that caring for the elderly is a fundamental aspect of Christian life and a tangible expression of love and service. Over these years, the vision of Manoah Manor became not only a project of planning, but a unifying mission that brought congregations together in a spirit of service. In 1984, after nearly two decades of preparation and discussion, the society moved from planning to action. Ground was

finally broken in Langley, with the mandate to construct a three-story building containing fifteen residential units. Though modest in size, the project marked the fulfillment of long-held hopes and prayers.

The facility was designed to be home-like rather than institutional—prioritizing safety, comfort, and community living. Special attention was given to spaces for fellowship, social interaction, and spiritual nourishment, including areas for worship services and pastoral visitation. Manoah Manor was envisioned not only as a place of physical care, but as a living, faith-centered community.

MANOAH MANOR EXPANDS

As the residents made Manoah Manor their home, with all things coming together, the need for additional rooms and intermediate care (now called Long Term Care) soon became apparent. Planning began, plans were developed, financing was arranged, an administrator and nursing staff were hired, and by late 1989—early 1990, an additional twelve residential units and nine intermediate care rooms were made available and were occupied soon after. Four additional intermediate care rooms were added in subsequent years, allowing for a licensed capacity of fifteen residents in intermediate care.

ONLY BY THE LORD'S FAITHFULNESS

Today, Manoah Manor stands as a testimony to patience, cooperation, and faithful service. Its history, from the first committee



meetings in 1965 to the groundbreaking in 1984 and beyond, reflects the dedication of many church members over several decades. Most importantly, it demonstrates the Lord's faithfulness and provision. At every stage, resources were made available, guidance was given, and challenges were met with perseverance.

This snapshot of Manoah Manor would not be complete without acknowledging the administration and staff that have been part of the long-term care over the years. The care provided to our parents and grandparents has always been a testimony of God's good provision. He has continually provided qualified and passionate staff with willing hearts and minds, filled with compassion and love for the elderly in their care.

THE NEXT PHASE

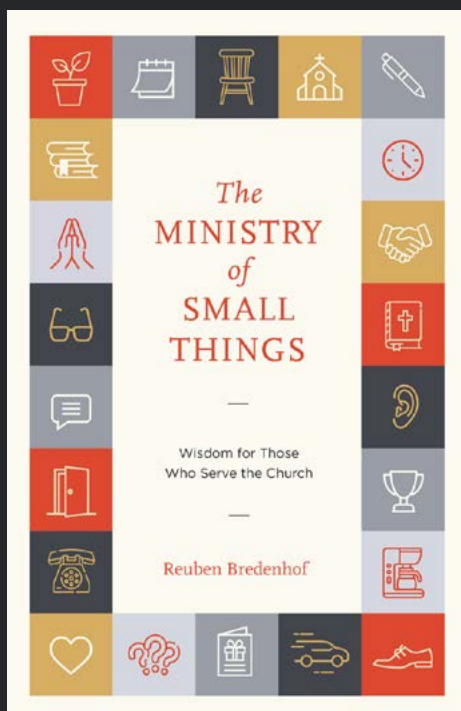
The time has come to consider the replacement of Manoah Manor. The building has aged well over the years, but age and needs are at odds with each other, and combined with government and health authority regulations, the time has come to review and act on "what next" and "where-to next" for Manoah.

To further the "what and where to" for the future of Manoah Manor, the Board has appointed the New Horizons Committee to consider the feasibility and possibility of relocating Manoah Manor. This committee is working to provide the Board with a report detailing needs, type of structure, possibilities of where to

build, and costing for a new build. It's a bold step forward, not an easy step. Should we endeavor to do this in our own strength our plans will have already failed, but we know that as we plan and take those steps forward in God's strength that wisdom will be given to carry out our planning well. The Board, at the Lord's time, will present the plans for next steps to the membership.

Manoah Manor serves senior citizens with care and dignity, upholding the principles that inspired its founding. It remains a living reminder that when a community works together in obedience, faith, and commitment, the Lord's guidance and provision sustain and bless their efforts, just as the Apostle Paul reminds us: "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:6 NIV). 

From the Board of Manoah Manor
Langley, BC
manoahmanor@gmail.com



Pastors: Don't Despise Small Things

The Ministry of Small Things Wisdom for Those Who Serve the Church, Reuben Bredenhof. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2026. Softcover, 144 pages, \$18.00.

Pastoral care isn't something intuitive or natural to anyone. Everyone called to do it needs instruction and wise guidance. This little book provides that for those who are starting off in ministry, as well as for those who are more seasoned.

The Ministry of Small Things consists of 30 short chapters. It's divided into three sections: Beginning the Work, Doing the Work, and Pressing on with the Work. Some of the chapter titles include:

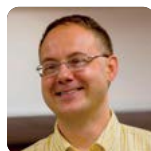
- Let Your People Know That You Love Them
- Ask the Questions You Don't Want to Ask
- Be the Predictable Pastor
- Pray with Your People
- Know What to Do with Criticism

While the basis is always Scripture, the author has sprinkled throughout many helpful anecdotes from his years of pastoral experience in Canada and Australia. Each chapter concludes with a question for reflection.

This is a unique, practical guide to the work of ministry. I'd commend it to my colleagues everywhere. While it is addressed to

pastors, much of it is also applicable to the pastoral ministry of elders. For example, Bredenhof writes, "Maybe review the membership list periodically, just to be reminded of all the individual souls in your care" (p. 75). Similarly, elders should periodically look over their ward list for the same reminder. As another example, "Before the pastor comes to the home or the hospital, his people will know what he is going to say: He will point them to Christ" (p. 79). We need elders who will be predictable in exactly the same way.

Clearly written, *The Ministry of Small Things* will undoubtedly enrich those who read it. I might also add that its contents bode well for the training of future pastors, since the author is (since 2023) Professor of Ministry and Mission at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. If this reflects how he is teaching the next generation, we can look forward to God blessing his church through their faithful "ministry of small things." 



Wes Bredenhof

Minister

Free Reformed Church of Launceston, AU

bookreview@clarionmagazine.ca



Tiny Theologians

There are a lot of solid theology podcasts out there. But the overwhelming majority are produced for adults. This is also the case with other resources such as books and Bible studies.

Amy Gannett, founder of the Tiny Theologians Shop and the Tiny Theologians Podcast, recognized a gap in deep theological resources for children. As she was looking for a curriculum for a kids' ministry class she was teaching in 2017, she noticed that most of it centred on moralistic teachings about Bible characters, such as the "brave" Daniel. She saw that kids' material often fails to point children to who Daniel's God *is*. And isn't that the whole point of the Scriptures—revealing *who God is*? When we meditate on who God is and what he has done for us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, it transforms the way we think, speak and act.

BIG TRUTHS FOR TINY HEARTS

R.C. Sproul recognized that everyone is a theologian. Everyone has a belief about who God is, and this includes our children. Sproul argues that we all have a duty to study and understand the Word correctly, and this duty extends then to teaching our children. Children are like sponges, able to soak up and retain information. We should see this as an opportunity—not to water down the truth, but to fill their hearts and minds with deep truths about who God is. These are the truths that they can carry with them as they develop their understanding and grow in their relationship with God.

This is exactly what *Tiny Theologians* aims to do. It is rich and deep theology made accessible for kids, in a way they will not only understand but love. And what do kids love? Adventure stories! Each week, *Tiny Theologians* invites kids (and their parents) to "join TJ and Tory as they adventure through the attributes of God." In each episode, kids are transported to the world of brother and sister TJ and Tory and their community. Through relatable life moments, TJ and Tory learn about who God is through the teaching of their parents, expounding the Word of God and applying it to daily life.

Even better than an audiobook, *Tiny Theologians* creates an immersive experience that makes listeners feel as though they are

right there with them. To deepen the listener's retention, each episode ends with a catchy song that reinforces the theme of the episode. Each episode in the regular seasons also corresponds to the *Tiny Theologians* ABC's of Theology flashcard set, providing opportunity for further discipleship.

NOTE OF CAUTION

One thing to be aware of is that while Amy Gannett is Reformed in her soteriology and is generally sound in her understanding of the Scriptures, readers of *Clarion* would differ with her when it comes to her stance on baptism, as she holds to believer's baptism. I don't think this should deter parents from listening to the podcast as a whole, but as with anything we listen to or read it is important to be discerning. Her stance can come out in certain episodes, such as *B is for Baptism* and *S is for Sacraments*. With younger ears, you might want to skip these episodes. However, if you think your child can discern where the podcast may differ, this could be leveraged as a teaching moment to really explain why we believe what we believe.

Overall, the *Tiny Theologians* podcast is a valuable tool for parents as they seek to disciple their children and raise them in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Theology isn't boring, nor is it just for adults! Let's invite our kids into the joy of learning about the God who created them and loves them.

You can find *Tiny Theologians* wherever you get your podcasts. If you want to hear more about the background of *Tiny Theologians* and why tiny hearts need big theology, listen to Ep. 137 of *Real Talk* podcast (scan the QR code below to go straight to it) where Tyler interviews Amy and explores why kids and parents alike love *Tiny Theologians*. 🎧

mariahtamminga24@hotmail.com

Mariah Tamminga serves as the producer of the Real Talk Podcast and is a graduate of Reformation Bible College.

HELLO TO ALL OUR READERS,

The *Ray of Sunshine* column continues to share the birthdays of many of our brothers and sisters with disabilities in our Christian community. This is a wonderful way for us to get to know these special individuals. We encourage everyone to keep them in your prayers, send them a card, or, if they live nearby, consider giving them a visit—they would truly appreciate it.

I am excited to share that I have found five new young people to join our birthday list! Over the next few months, as their birthdays come around, you will have the opportunity to get to know them. I would love to see this list continue to grow. If you have a family member or fellow church member you think could be added to the list, please reach out to their caregiver or contact me.

I would like to encourage you to continue praying for those in our communities who have disabilities. Each of them plays a special role in the lives of those around them. God has given every one of them unique talents and gifts, along with a heart to serve the Lord. Please also pray for their caregivers, that they may be given wisdom, strength, patience, and joy in their task. May we all support one another, encouraging each other and serving Christ in all we do.

We have a few dedicated ladies who faithfully write cards each month to those celebrating a birthday on our Ray of Sunshine list. *Thank you to all of you!* I receive many messages of thanks from those who receive the cards, as well as from their parents and caregivers. I know they truly love receiving them and feeling the care and support of our Christian community. If you are a person who likes writing cards, consider adding these birthdays to your list!

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 2:1–4).

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

1 Clarence Zwiep will be 72
c/o Beacon Home
653 Broad Street West
Dunnville, ON
N1A 1T8

21 Eddie Van Rootselaar will be 33
c/o Beacon Home
653 Broad Street West
Dunnville, ON
N1A 1T8

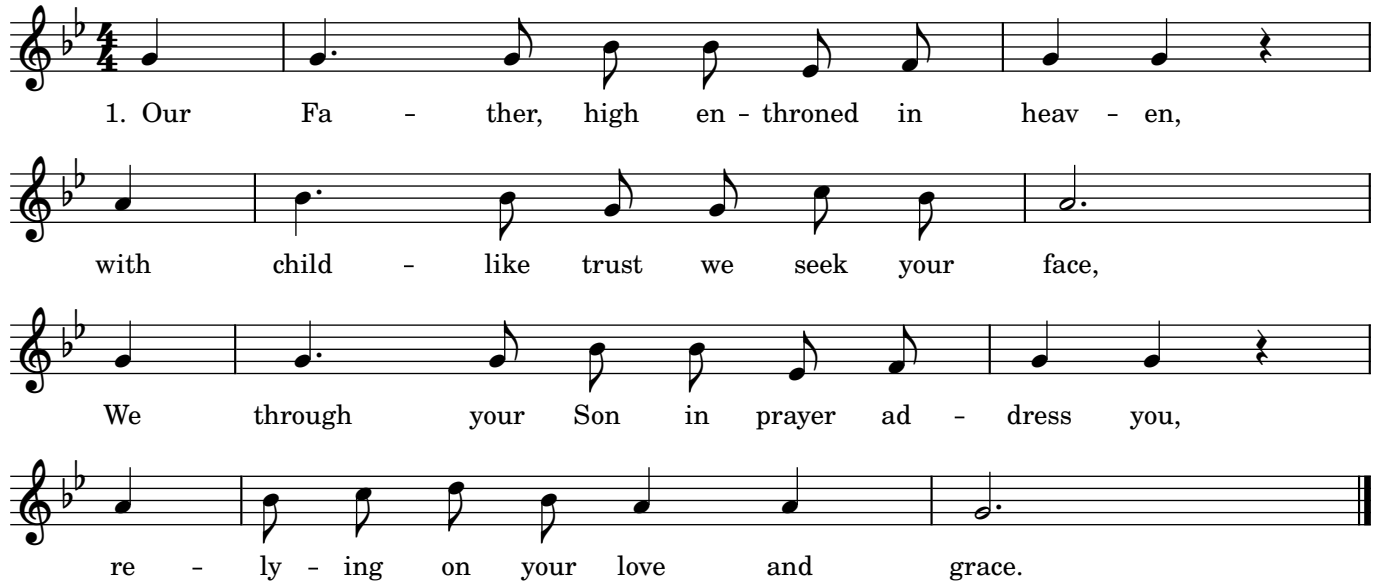
30 Bernie De Vos will be 51
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road
Grimsby, ON
L3M 0L1

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

*Happy birthday to Clarence,
Eddie, Bernie, and Shaelyn!
We wish you all the Lord's
blessings in the year to come.
May you be surrounded by
those you love and continue to
feel God's ray of sunshine in
your lives.*

Our Father, High Enthroned in Heaven

Based on the Lord's Prayer



1. Our Fa - ther, high en - throned in heav - en,
with child - like trust we seek your face,
We through your Son in prayer ad - dress you,
re - ly - ing on your love and grace.

2. May your exalted name be hallowed.
Let all creation bring you praise.
May we, too, join in adoration
to glorify your works and ways.

3. Lord, may your kingdom be established.
Cause it, we pray, to come with haste.
Wield everywhere your kingly power.
Lay Satan's dark domain to waste.

4. Your holy will be done, O Father,
on earth just as in heaven on high
where angels faithfully obey you.
May we our impure will deny.

5. We pray, O Fount of every blessing,
give us this day our daily bread.
May we, not on our strength depending,
entrust our needs to you instead.

6. Forgive the sins we have committed;
the debts we owe you please erase
as we also forgive our neighbours,
encouraged by your gift of grace.

7. Lord, lead us not into temptation
but save us from the evil one.
Help us resist him by your Spirit
until our victory is won.

8. Yours is the kingdom, yours the power,
and glorious is your majesty.
Yours be all praise now and forever.
Amen, Amen; so shall it be.

Text: William Helder, 2026

Tune: Gerard Kremer (1919–1970)

Grant Me JUSTICE!



In the previous article in this series, we looked at the distinction between “authority” and “jurisdiction” for major assemblies in our church federation. One of the questions that might come up is: how does this work in the case of an appeal?

In Article 31 of the Church Order, we have this rule: “If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding.” Here a major assembly can and must judge a decision of a minor assembly, and the result is binding. Is that hierarchy? No. As sister churches we have agreed to help each other to protect justice in the church by judging appeals. Article 31 formulates this by stating two principles: (1) the right of appeal, and (2) the willingness to accept the decisions as settled and binding.

LET JUSTICE ROLL ON LIKE A RIVER

If there is one community in the world where “doing justice” must have a very high priority, it is the church of Jesus Christ. This should be something that can be seen, experienced, and trusted by everyone inside and outside the church. When there is a conflict in the church, and someone complains that he or she has been treated unjustly, the Lord calls us to grant and protect justice. That’s because he himself is a God of justice, an impartial judge. And he wants his people to reflect this. Scripture is full of examples showing this principle.¹

In requiring justice, the Lord’s goal is the restoration of peace and harmony among his people. It is important to remember this when you are delegated to an assembly that is confronted with an appeal. After all, an appeal to a classis or other major assembly is always the result of a conflict that apparently cannot be solved locally. Article 31 CO gives every church member the right to appeal because office bearers can make mistakes; consistories and major assemblies can err. The church is not infallible.

At the same time, it is good to realize that a right is not an obligation. When there is a conflict in the church and my consistory makes a decision I don’t agree with, I do not *have to* appeal. I should first of all consider prayerfully, with the humility of Philippians 2:3–4, if I can bear what might feel like an injustice. Appealing a consistory decision to a classis is only justified when one is seriously convinced that one is “wronged,” as Art. 31 CO puts it. This means that an injustice has been committed which must be rectified.

The opening words of Art. 31 CO (“If anyone complains that he has been wronged . . .”) have led some to think that a church member can only appeal when he or she is personally affected by the decision of a minor assembly. But historically this has never been the way this article was read and used. Consistories and major assemblies can make decisions in conflict with God’s Word, the confessions, or the church order that may not directly wrong an individual personally, but any individual—convinced that a true injustice has taken place and that harm is being done by it—is within his rights to bring an appeal and so expose a threat to the well-being and faithfulness of the church.

HUMILITY AS PREREQUISITE

As mentioned earlier, an appeal is always the result of a local conflict that cannot be solved locally. Article 31 CO opens the way for those involved in such a situation to turn to the sister churches in that region and ask for help. God’s children may expect to receive help to resolve their conflict, to find justice, and see peace restored.

As a first step, this will mean an appeal to classis. It is crucial for this process that those who write an appeal and those who are called to judge have the right attitude. When *writing* an appeal, do so driven by love, in humility considering others better than yourself (Phil 2). Pray before you start writing. And when you—as a member of a broader assembly—*judge* an appeal, do so driven by love, as

¹ See Gen 18:25; Lev 19:15; Deut 1:16,17; 16:18–20; 32:4; Job 34:18,19; Ps 33:5; Isa 1:17; Amos 5:24; Zech 8:16; Luke 18:7–8.

part of God's humble instrument to administer justice. Pray before you start judging.

It may sound simple and straightforward: an appeal is a request to judge an action or decision of a minor assembly. Was that action or decision right or wrong? If, after thorough investigation, it becomes clear who is right and who is wrong, such must be stated.

But is that all a major assembly can say? Sometimes that may be sufficient. But quite often it is not. Remember: doing justice is God's way to restore peace in the covenant community. Jesus's call in Matthew 5:9 to be peacemakers, agents of reconciliation, also applies to members of major assemblies. When God's children turn to the sister churches for help, may they not expect to hear more than a formal "appeal sustained" or "appeal denied"? Some have argued that this is the only proper response. Everything a major assembly would say beyond this becomes pastoral advice, which is not a task for major assemblies.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL

Indeed, follow-up pastoral care in a local conflict is ultimately the responsibility of the local elders. However, that may not be as simple as it sounds. The appeal challenged a consistory decision, and thus the elders have already been part of this conflict. That won't help. Therefore, when a major assembly is called to grant justice, it cannot be separated from the call to help facilitating restoration where needed. It makes sense to expect such an approach in particular from a classis. True, it is not within the jurisdiction of a classis to step into a local situation on its own authority, but a classis is the major assembly closest to the local situation and therefore, when dealing with an appeal, it is uniquely positioned to suggest a way forward, perhaps offer arbitration, or whatever can be advised to get to the ultimate goal of the appeal process: restoring peace where the conflict originated.

This emphasis on the role of the classis is, of course, not meant to prohibit access to a regional or even general synod with an appeal for justice. The rule in Article 31 CO that "whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote, shall be considered settled and binding" is not unconditional. There is also the "unless" clause at the end of said article. Above the authority of any assembly is the authority God's Word. And there is also the expectation that as churches we keep our promises.

In other words, if I have prayerfully come to the conviction that the decision on my appeal is in conflict with God's Word and that accepting it will bring me in conflict with God's Word, I cannot and may not consider it settled and binding. The same must be said when it is clear that such a decision violates what we have agreed upon in the church order. In those situations, the way is open to appeal a classis decision to a regional synod, and if that fails, to appeal a regional synod decision to a general synod.

WHERE DOES IT END?

Considering a classis decision "settled and binding" does indicate that the matter is finished. I may not like it or agree with it, but the conclusion of the classis settles the case. Rev. Van Oene, without denying the right to appeal to synods, emphasizes that this should be the rule.² It implies that, when the classis denies my appeal, I should not automatically jump to the next "level" just because I can do so. Always remember that a regional synod, and even more so a general synod, are farther removed from the original conflict. Perhaps sometimes that could be beneficial. But my experience in dealing with appeals, also at major assemblies, made me decide years ago already that if I ever have to appeal a decision of my consistory, I will accept the verdict of classis and not pursue my case at a regional or general synod. I have seen how complicated it can get when issues drag on for a while. Synods can easily get lost in historical and procedural details, which makes it increasingly difficult to focus on the ultimate goal of restoring peace among believers and with the Lord.

How can we make the appeal process work properly? Article 31 of the church order establishes the right to seek justice through an appeal, but procedural details are left wide open. How do we guard consistency and confidence in due process, transparency, and impartiality across the board and throughout the federation? More and more classes have adopted guidelines for dealing with appeals. That helps. What about developing similar structures for our synods? That needs more thought from our churches.³ 



Jan DeGelder

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² W.W.J. Van Oene, *With Common Consent*, Winnipeg, 1990, 150–151.

³ Something is in the works for general synods. See the Acts of GS Aldergrove 2025, Art.132, 5.2. But a more comprehensive approach might be recommendable. Any local church willing to initiate that?



CLASSIS CLIPPINGS

Editor's note: What follows are clippings from the press releases of recent classes across the federation, for the interest of our readers. Each press release can be found in full at canrc.org.

CLASSIS ALBERTA – MARCH 12, 2026

Peremptory Examination

The provisional agenda is adopted, with the addition of a request from the churches at Calgary and Coaldale for pulpit supply. Classis decides that the peremptory examination of candidate Quentin Vandermeulen will be livestreamed. Classis proceeds to the peremptory examination. The required documents are found to be in order with the exception of a copy of the letter of call and the letter of acceptance. Coaldale undertakes to send these documents digitally.

Candidate Vandermeulen presents his sermon proposal on Luke 19:1–10. Classis enters into closed session to discuss the sermon proposal. The deputies of Regional Synod West, Rev. J. Poppe and Rev. B. Wielenga, who arrived just before the sermon presentation, are welcomed and seated at the table. Classis decides that the sermon proposal is sufficient, and that the examination can proceed. The deputies of regional synod give concurring advice. Candidate Vandermeulen is examined in OT exegesis, NT exegesis, and knowledge of Scripture. During the first part of these exams, some elementary students from Parkland Immanuel School are welcomed and stay to observe for a time.

After a delicious lunch, the examination continues in the areas of doctrine and creeds, church history, ethics, church polity, and diaconiology. Classis is informed that the digital documents necessary for approving the call have been received from Coaldale. Classis enters into closed session and judges the examination to be sufficient. The delegates of regional synod west give concurring advice. Classis approbates the call, declaring that the way is

open for brother Vandermeulen to be ordained to the ministry as pastor of Coaldale Canadian Reformed Church. In open session, the chairman, with appropriate remarks, informs brother Vandermeulen of the joyful news.

Archives & pulpit supply

Classis receives a report from the archivist. Classis decides that going forward, a copy of all the documents of each classis shall be stored digitally on a hard drive in a fireproof safe, one in the Edmonton Providence church building, and another in the home of the archivist. Classis mandates the archivist to digitize the existing files in the archives.

Classical pulpit supply is granted to the church at Calgary. The request of the church at Coaldale for pulpit supply is denied, and Coaldale is given advice on other ways to find pulpit supply during the period during which their new minister is beginning his ministry.

CLASSIS MANITOBA – MARCH 27, 2026

Rev. Adrian Tams, missionary in Niverville, signs the form of subscription and is seated as an advisor at classis.

In closed session, the church visitation reports for the churches of Carman East, Carman West and Elm Creek were received with gratitude. After each report, the church was remembered in prayer. The church visitations to Winnipeg Grace and Winnipeg Redeemer were postponed to April due to inclement weather. The chairman asked the questions re Article 44 of the Church Order. One church asked advice regarding matters of pastoral oversight. In closed session, advice was given.

Rev. Kevin Pulliam of Christ Reformed Church of Minot, ND speaks words of greetings to classis. He shared some of the recent developments in the Northern Plain Classis. Plans are being made to ordain a missionary and associate pastor to serve in the classis. The classis is active in reaching out to churches and pastors of other denominations in the area which are not content to remain in their churches because of the unfaithful direction of their churches.

Rev. Christopher Drew of Grand Forks OPC speaks words of greetings from the OPC Presbytery of the Dakotas to Classis. He requested our prayers for the Presbytery since there was the possibility of losing a congregation due to unfortunate difficulties in the past. There is also a real need for more men to come forward to serve as new pastors and teachers, as well as in mission, since there are quite a few retirements.

CLASSIS ONTARIO WEST – MARCH 4, 2026

Classis examined br. Jeffrey Uriarte and br. David Kroeze, both second-year students at CRTS and seeking permission to speak an edifying word in the churches. After judging their sermons to be sufficient, they were each examined in doctrine and creeds. Both students sustained their respective exams. After promising not to preach or teach anything contrary to God's Word as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity, with thankfulness, they were granted permission to speak an edifying word in the churches upon successful completion of their second year of studies at the seminary. This is valid for three years.

Rev. Jordan Van Amerongen extended fraternal greetings to those assembled expressing appreciation for the recent pulpit exchanges and mutual support. The chairman asked each church the required questions of C.O. 44. Chatham and London asked for the advice of Classis. Chatham requested concurring advice about a proposal to allow local pulpit exchanges with the Living Hope Free Reformed Church of Chatham according to the federation's (new) rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Concurring advice was given.

London Canadian Reformed Church requested advice on calling a missionary to do mission work in the city of London. Informal advice was offered by the delegates. An ad hoc committee report was

received regarding the finances of Grand Rapids (currently a needy church). In order to allow time for further reflection, the committee was asked to resubmit this report to the next meeting of Classis.

CLASSIS NORTHERN ONTARIO – MARCH 26, 2026

After adopting the agenda, Rev. Mark ten Haaf signed the form of subscription.

A proposal was received from the Church Taking Care of the Archives (Owen Sound) to change the regulations of Classis concerning their responsibilities. Classis adopted the following change: "The church responsible for the Classis archives shall set up and administer electronic document storage. All required documents shall be archived utilizing adequate redundancy."

CLASSIS CENTRAL ONTARIO – MARCH 13, 2026

Rev. Davidson introduced Elisha (a visitor and currently apprenticing with Blessings Church) and the work he has been doing internationally. Elisha was given an opportunity to speak about his work in China.

The merging of Rehoboth and Ebenezer was mentioned. It was noted the merged church was sending delegates for the first time.

Jubilee submitted a matter related to pulpit supply. Classis decided it was not a matter to be decided by Classis. Fellowship sought concurring advice regarding preaching access according to CO 50 and CCO 12.1. Classis decided to approve the request. Blessings sought concurring advice regarding preaching access according to CO 50 and CCO 12.1. Classis decided to approve the request with one exception. Blessings sought advice. Advice was given. 



READ AND SEARCH OLD VOLUMES

of **Clarion**

clarionmagazine.ca/archive

Dear Editor,

Last October, *Clarion* published my response to Rev. E. Kampen's article "Baptist Churches" (July 25, 2025). In that letter, I expressed difficulty understanding his implication that Baptist churches form part of God's holy catholic church. This implication arose particularly from his concluding remark that "where the Word is, the Spirit is working," followed by his citation of the prayer *For the Church Universal* from the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Our confession teaches that Christ gathers, defends, and preserves one catholic church (Lord's Day 21; Belgic Confession Article 27), which manifests itself in local, true churches governed according to the pure Word of God (Article 29). If Baptist churches are indeed part of this catholic church, it would follow that believers living near such churches are obligated to join them (Article 28).

Rev. Kampen previously stated that his attention to various churches does not imply their legitimization or endorsement (*Clarion*, January 12, 2024). However, this clarification appears to be weakened by his repeated assertion that the presence of the Word necessarily indicates the Spirit's work, especially when coupled with references to the prayer for the holy catholic church.

Subsequent articles—most recently on the Anglican Church of Canada—again conclude with similar language, which seems to suggest that these religious bodies are members of the catholic church described in our confession. While it is true that where the Word is present the Spirit may be at work, it is equally true that where heresy exists, the devil is at work. We should therefore avoid implying that churches such as Baptist or Anglican bodies are manifestations of the holy catholic church unless we are prepared to affirm that they bear the marks of the true church and that believers should join them.

It is especially important that our youth clearly understand that Articles 27–32 of the Belgic Confession speak of Christ's one true church, whose catholicity is evident where local, visible churches bear the marks of the true church, and which believers are called to join.

Sincerely,

Jelte Numan
Free Reformed Church of Mt Nasura
Western Australia

Dear Editor,

It is now almost a year since General Synod Aldergrove 2025 completed its work. By some accounts it produced some significant changes for the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Some months ago, brother W. Helder submitted an article about some of these changes as they relate to the Genevan melodies (“Setting the Record Straight”, *Clarion*, October 2025, 74.14). In this submission, Helder made some observations regarding “unfounded accusations” making their way into the record books of GS 2025. He states “. . . it formed part of the documentation setting the stage for the decision to alter Article 55 of the Church Order.”

I think there is little reason to doubt br. Helder’s assessment, considering his extensive involvement with the federationally appointed committee dealing with the songs of the church. My question is: was the naiveté of the 24 members of this synod a factor in making these changes?

Of course, GS 2025 is over and can never be revived to answer these questions, but the records survive. But if these appointed song book deputies—including those now passed on to glory—were “publicly maligned” as br. Helder asserts, then it should prompt at least some of the 24 members of Synod 2025 to set the record straight by way of a public statement, or better yet by working with their consistories to submit an overture to the next synod so that the churches can put some closure to these accusations.

Blessings,

Aubrey Vandergaag

