



# Clarion

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*Free Will*

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*Pentecost*

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*Running the  
Race...*



*There is nothing new under the sun*



Cl. Stam

# Free Will

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*We are deeply concerned these days with personal involvement and human response*

And then there was this pundit who challenged me to explain in five words what Arminianism meant. Being known as a man of few words, I considered this challenge to be an honour.

The man went on to explain that he had often heard of Arminianism, but had never actually seen or met a real red-blooded, flesh and bones Arminian. In reality, he thought, such persons simply do not exist. An Arminian is a figment of a hyper-Calvinistic imagination.

I muttered something about "free will," but he thought I meant the movie "Free Willy." So there was another obstacle to overcome. Anyway, this gave me some time to arrive at my minute five-word definition of Arminianism. I am still amazed that I pulled it off.

## Both guns blazing

I first thought that perhaps I should simply refer him to the Canons of Dort, where he could read for himself what Arminianism is all about. But the attention span of my pundit was already stretched to the max. I had to do some quick thinking.

My response was as follows: Arminianism is *the propagation of free will*. There, those are only five words. But I sensed that this on-the-spot, abbreviated definition did not really satisfy my antagonist. He replied with astonishment. "But, of course, we have a free will!" He went on to explain with more than five words that we play a vital role in our salvation. Dare I deny that role? I quickly did a step backwards, not an easy feat with a cane.

Emboldened, he went on to say that the Lord may come to us with his entire divine arsenal, with both spiritual guns blazing, but if we do not respond positively, God is pretty well finished. Basically, salvation is something in which we play a major role and have the final say. God may have his weapons and these are not totally ineffective, but in the end the Lord Jesus is shooting blanks. Ouch.

## Modern piety

We are surrounded by much piety. But much of this piety is human-centred. We are deeply concerned these days with personal involvement and human response. And I will not deny the importance of this aspect of faith. But surely it is not the only aspect and certainly not the prime concern.

Sometimes you hear that overall the sermons preached on Sunday are far below par. The worship services are by and large quite boring. The church service is too much a one-man show. There needs to be more audience participation. The children must be addressed in a more meaningful manner. Traditional catechism teaching and home visitation are passé. These are sweeping statements, but they are heard.

Modern piety requires sensitive innovation and penetrating personality. My pundit informed me that there is a lot of unrest in the congregations and that especially the young people feel *disenfranchised*. I apologize for using a grandiose term, but it is a modern one.

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*There is really nothing new under the sun*

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How does all this relate to Arminianism and the free will? Well, free-will-thinking is very conscious of the fact that man must be addressed in his specific environment and with respect to his special gifts. After all, we must make others *willing* to give their hearts to the Lord Jesus and show forth the fruit of the Spirit. Only by *involving* people more can we render them more *willing* to serve God.





## A changing society

You may add to the above that in the past few decades society has drastically changed. We often hear that we now live in a post-modern world. I am not always sure about the implications of this discovery, but I, too, admit that society has changed. One needs to mention only the amazing advance of video and computer technology.

Things are different than fifty years ago. People are different, too, and it is important to reflect on the impact these changes may have on our faith and worship. Society and people are much more "open" to religious impulses, so I am told. We have to make use of new opportunities. Okay. The point of this editorial is not to quell any sincere striving for wholesome and meaningful change.

The point of this editorial is that we must also realize that Arminianism thrives on the flux there is in society. Modern piety stresses the effort of man himself. God plays a supporting role, but He never wins any Academy Awards. Jesus is in the bus, but not as the driver, for He is a back-seat passenger. The pendulum sways from dead orthodoxy to energizing mysticism. There's a lot of navel-gazing in today's mutual admiration cultus.

## Worship of God or celebration of man?

Undone from all its precious coating and resounding piety, Arminianism is nothing more than a proclamation and celebration of the free will of man. So it was 400 years ago and so it is today. There is really nothing new under the sun.

Read the refutation of errors in the Canons (*Book of Praise*, p. 564). Arminianism holds that God does not effectually help the will of man to come to conversion, "until the will of man moves itself and determines to do this." In other words, it all depends on our (free and sovereign) will. If we do not get involved and want to be saved, God's grace is powerless. Worship is then not meant to glorify God, but to move human hearts to accept Jesus Christ.

The word "worship" (a contraction of worth-ship, giving someone what he is worth, what he is due) is first of all an indication of what the service must be for the Lord (Psalm 29). We must be led in glorifying Him for his abundant and sovereign grace. *Soli Deo Gloria* is still the first hymn of the church. It is embedded in the spiritual DNA of every true Christian.

Now and then it is good to fire up the Canons. May their roar be heard from the Atlantic to the Pacific, *a mari usque ad mare* (Psalm 72).



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## In This Issue

Editorial – Free Will — Cl. Stam .....	258
Treasures, New and Old – Pentecost — J.E. Ludwig.....	260
Walking Together through the Valley (2) — R. Ludwig .....	261
Roadside Assistance – Running the Race. . . — J. VanDoornik .....	264
Ray of Sunshine — C. GELMS and E. Nordeman .....	266
Education Matters – Professional Development Needed in Our Schools — A. Kingma.....	267
Letters to the Editor .....	271
Press Releases – Classis Manitoba, Classis Northern Ontario .....	273

J.E. Ludwig

# Pentecost



**MATTHEW 13:52**

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*“And they began to speak in other tongues.”*

*Acts 2:4*

Pentecost is the feast of fulfilment, the beginning of the end. With Pentecost we see how far God has come with his church. She no longer needs the announcements and proclamations of angels. His Spirit will lead them into all the truth, bringing his written revelation to a close and illuminating their darkened minds so that they can discern the things of the Spirit, things into which angels long to look. Through his Spirit God Himself has come to dwell in his people. That's the greatness of Pentecost made known by various signs in Acts 2.

The first part of Acts 2:4, “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit,” determines the character and the meaning of the sign that follows. The Spirit Himself is invisible and inaudible. . . as is his work. The sign, therefore, declares that He has come. About that coming Luke tells us that it was sudden and abrupt. There was no preparatory warning. None of those who were gathered together could determine or even second-guess the moment of his arrival. They knew He was coming, but not when. Jesus had spoken of this day more than once during his life on earth and after his resurrection He even charged his disciples to wait for the gift which his Father had promised and which they had heard Him speak about.

That the Holy would come was well known. . . only when He would come was unknown. But now that

moment has arrived. The audible and visible signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit were evident, the final one being “and they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” or “as the Spirit gave them utterance.” The word gave is used to depict the gift nature of speaking in tongues. This was not a learned experience. It was imparted immediately by the Holy Spirit to the believers. This needs to be emphasized in contrast to the practice in Pentecostal assemblies with their “tarrying” meetings. In these meetings groups of people will “tarry” and be taught how to expand their consciousness in order to bypass the intellect so that they can speak in tongues, uttering unintelligible sounds. But that is not what is meant here in Acts. As soon as the Holy Spirit filled those present in the house, an external effect was manifested. There was no period of apprenticeship; there were no language courses taught. There was not even time for learning. They began to speak right away. All of them.

The Holy Spirit caused the believers to speak out boldly. He gave them the ability to declare with emphasis. This bold speech does not designate ecstatic speech (about which Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14), but a speaking that is distinct, loud, and clear. This was done “in other tongues” or, as the NRSV renders, “in other languages.” The Jews who had come to

Jerusalem from all the surrounding countries to keep the feast of harvest were amazed, saying, “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?” (2:8) The crowd detected that the speakers were not foreigners, but Galileans who could not have learned those foreign languages in any natural way. This demonstrates that the listeners do not think they are hearing a spirit-language, a supernatural Esperanto, but their own mother tongues. The Holy Spirit dispensed here one of his extraordinary gifts upon the entire congregation. They all receive the gift of prophecy – proclaiming the gracious work of God through Jesus Christ in languages they had not studied.

With this particular gift, which is not repeated today because it is no longer necessary, God made known that the middle wall of partition between Israel and the nations was finally removed. The one gospel goes forth in many languages to many nations. God's promise to Abraham is now being fulfilled, “In you *all the families of the earth* shall be blessed.”

Pentecost reminds us of the joyful obligation that we have to support the spread of the gospel all over the world. Pray for faithful missionaries who are proclaiming Jesus Christ in the languages of the people among whom they labour. None of them were enabled by the Spirit to speak in other

“tongues” in the way the early church was in Acts 2, but only after formal training and taking special courses. Nevertheless, this too is a gift from the Spirit. He gives people the talents to learn Portuguese and French and any other language.

Pentecost also points us to the duties of our office and calling to

make known the mighty deeds of God – men, women, and children alike, for we are all united by the Spirit. That duty applies not just to the Sunday but Monday through Saturday on every terrain of life, in the home, at school, and on the job. There is no longer one Holy of Holies – all of life must be

sanctified for we are temples of the Holy Spirit. It is not an easy task to witness of Christ, but we have the comfort of Pentecost. We do not have to undertake this in our own strength. The Spirit has been poured out. Pray in faith that He may equip you. . . and God will answer you even before you call.



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## Rick Ludwig

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*This seminar was recently presented by Mr. Ludwig in Carman, Manitoba*

### The grief journey

I mentioned in the beginning that the bereaved are on a grief journey. Grief has often been described this way because it follows a definite course. It has a defined beginning and moves into new territory for the bereaved. Some have described this route as circuitous, starting and eventually ending at the same spot. I think this is a poor model because a significant loss in life requires the eventual acceptance that we do not end up in the same place, that we cannot recreate the past, that we must allow ourselves to enter a new reality. However, we must recognize cyclical patterns in grief as the bereaved person reviews and reworks the many feelings and thoughts encountered at this time. Let me illustrate by trying to give

# Walking Together through the Valley (Part 2 of 4)

an overview of the grief journey (sometimes called grief work). This is not meant to be prescriptive, but rather based on others' research in compiling the descriptions of many people's experiences.

### Acceptance

We have to understand that bereaved people are reluctant travelers on the grief journey. They did not ask for the affliction that causes their grief. They are generally unwilling or unable to initially accept it, let alone willing to embrace it. As a result the initial steps on this road are steps of resistance, embodied by shock, numbness, denial, anger, frustration, and inability to focus. They may repeat phrases like, "I can't believe it! It doesn't seem real. It can't be – we were just together this morning! It's all a bad dream." There is an intensive period involving a continual revisiting and questioning the

reality of the events surrounding the death, including feelings of guilt and a sense of responsibility about actions at the time of death or prior to it. We might hear, "If only I had been there. If only I had insisted we go to the doctor earlier. If only we had just stayed home. If only I made him take better care of himself." If only statements are our natural way of trying to regain control in a situation we cannot change. . . by moving back with "if only I had done this or that" reasoning we mentally move back in time to a place where we might have been able to effect a change on the sequence of events that led to a death.

Eventually the bereaved will let this go as they realize it cannot change the reality of the death. These things do not happen in a set or ordered pattern, nor is this an exhaustive list. But it is clear that the beginning of the journey has much to do with accepting the



fact of the loss. Until someone reaches the point where they have accepted the factual evidence that their loved one is gone, it is impossible to move on to a response to this loss.

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### *Bereaved people are reluctant travelers on the grief journey*

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I use the term "gone" in the strict physical and temporal sense. Scripture also speaks of the dead as those who are "sleeping." This is a helpful term in that it illustrates to us that death is not final and that there is the full expectation of the awakening of the dead in Jesus Christ. Yet the term is not helpful if it prevents the bereaved from facing the reality that, in this life, their loved one is now dead to them, and even more to the point, the relationship they shared has come to an end in this life. This is crucial to a healthy Christian grief response. The secular response over the ages is that the soul is immortal and remains embodied in nature, or in our memories, or in our hearts and somehow remains available to us. This is not the Christian teaching. Those who die in the Lord are with the Lord. They are no longer with us. This is not an easy reality to grasp. It works itself out over the journey. We cannot rush someone into acceptance of this any more than we can steer them around it. It is the first difficult step. We cannot put a rigid timeline on the grief journey.

#### **Reaction**

Once the difficult reality is experienced and accepted, now the reaction follows. Again the

response is varied, but it can generally be described using some of the following terms.

Disorganization encapsulates this period in many ways. The bereaved have had their lives turned upside down. To be concrete, I will speak about the sudden loss of a husband or wife. What was a normal and safe living routine for many years suddenly becomes threatening and uninviting. Every action and event seems to accentuate the absence of the spouse instead of providing relief or respite for an aching heart. Quite often the bereaved cannot find refuge in their home. There is a general scrambling around to find something that brings the safety and security that was once afforded in the relationship with the spouse. It is elusive because it is gone.

There are many factors that will influence this response: the gender of the person, the type and depth of the relationship, the time of preparation for the death, the nature of the death, as well as many other factors. The bereaved not only deal with the primary loss of the relationship with the loved one but also all the secondary losses that accompany it in a domino effect, such as loss of financial security, loss of social identity, sometimes loss of mobility, loss of hopes and dreams and future plans, loss of spiritual support, loss of intimacy, and the list can go on. In summary, the bereaved suddenly realize that there is a big unwelcome change in their life and they begin to scramble to cope with it. Often this leads to over-activity when they are already physically weakened by the experience. This may stimulate feelings of anxiety, panic, and fear.

This all happens within the framework of being a child of God. I am not suggesting that this grief journey assaults one's belief in God, although it may test it. It is clear that the child of God may feel all these emotions even while feeling secure in God's care.

#### **Sadness**

The next steps on the road are very difficult for the grieving and also taxing for the supporting community (family, friends, pastor, etc.). Quite often there is an extended feeling of spinning ones wheels. Lack of motivation, depression, sadness, emptiness, and a general unwillingness and inability to move forward, all form a response to the very real understanding that life has changed irreversibly for the bereaved. This is a time that tries the patience for those who are supportive, for quite often their own lives do go on, without as large an impact on their daily routine. They want to be supportive, but tire of the journey.

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### *We cannot put a rigid timeline on the grief journey*

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This is where many well meaning people try to divert the bereaved person's attention from grief work and try to offer short cuts to bypass the grief response. They just want to help the bereaved move on. Frustration sets in when their efforts seem to have little effect and don't seem to bear positive results. It is common that the bereaved march to a slower beat than those around them. This needs to be accepted. This is a time of introspection and rediscovery for



the bereaved. I would suggest that this is a time of significant personal growth, also in a spiritual way, for a grieving Christian. In 2 Corinthians 5 we read about groaning and being burdened in our earthly tent. Often the bereaved are very in tune with this reality in their grief. It is not uncommon for them to experience feelings of wishing to join their loved ones and having a sense of purposelessness in normal daily activities. This is not the same as being suicidal. It is simply a feeling of no longer knowing their role and calling in life. This also needs to be rediscovered. A new social arena needs to develop, also amongst the communion of saints and within the family structure.

### **Reconciliation**

There does come a time, for those who allow themselves to walk the grief journey, where they begin to turn from disorganization to reorganization. This is sometimes called a period of reconciliation. In short, the bereaved are very aware of the impact of the loss of their loved one in their life, they are able to acknowledge and express this, and are also able to begin to make

plans for a new reality. This is not a time where pain and grief are left behind, but where it is openly acknowledged and accepted as a part of living. It is also described as a movement from a "head" acceptance and understanding of the death and its impact to a "heart" understanding. This is usually a time of acute mourning,

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### *Grief is an important and natural part of the life of a Christian*

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as the numbness has worn off and the stark reality has set in. Often you will hear the grieving say the second year is harder than the first. This is a testimony to where they are on the journey. Over time the intensity of the pain is dulled and less frequent. There is hope for the future and a re-emerging sense of purpose for one's life and the possibility for commitment to future plans and goals returns. The bereaved arrive at a new place that is shaped by their grief experience.

As I mentioned earlier, this journey to healthy resolution of

grief does not go in a circle. The bereaved do not return to a former reality, but emerge to a new place, often with a new sense of identity. It is unreasonable to expect that one who has been in a marriage relationship (where two have become one) would not have to do some unravelling after the death of their spouse in order to continue on. In marriage you focus on each other's well being. When one spouse dies, the focus needs to shift. This takes time and energy. This takes grief work. This also applies in varied ways with the death of a child, a parent, or a sibling. The relationship of the bereaved to the deceased influences the reorganization of one's life that needs to take place and the emotional attachments that have to be let go of. Again, this is an area where the supporting community is not always helpful. Often others resist changes in the bereaved person's life or personality. Others also wish to recoup the past. They want life to go back to normal as it was before the death. This can lead to internal conflicts in families and amongst friends when the need for change is not clearly understood.

This has been a thumbnail sketch of the grief process. There are undoubtedly more questions that could be asked and answered. I hope you share in my conviction that grief is an important and natural part of the life of a Christian. It is part of a healthy spiritual life, as well, and can serve to strengthen one's faith in the Lord. In fact the opposite is also true; a refusal to grieve the loss of a loved one may leave one desperate and confused and in spiritual jeopardy. This is where the role of the pastoral caregiver or friend is a crucial one.



roadside assistance

the magazine for Reformed young people

How can a young man keep his way pure?  
By living according to your word. Ps 119:9

Roadside Assistance is a bimonthly magazine for and by Reformed youth. It aims to provide a forum for stimulating discussion about faith issues, encouraging each other in the fight of faith, passing on Bible knowledge, building and expressing identity as Christians, sharpening hearts and minds through Biblical reflection, stimulating reading on Biblical issues, and educating one another. As a way of spreading the excitement around the world, we will occasionally be publishing one of our articles as a column in Clarion. We hope you'll enjoy the magazine, and perhaps you'll even consider contributing.

[www.roadsideassistancemagazine.com](http://www.roadsideassistancemagazine.com)

# Running the Race. . . even through busy times

Jocelin VanDoornik

## Busy

I'm so busy. It seems that as soon as I have finished racing through one task there is already another one crowding my agenda. There always seems to be endless amounts of work to be done, tests, exams, school work, meetings, appointments, volunteer hours, and daily chores to do.

Have you started using phrases like: "I'm too busy, I'm worn out, I don't have time, and the days are too short"? It's at times like these that you need to stop racing around and think. Did you forget some very important things? I'm not talking about getting your homework done, or bringing your books back to the library when they are due, or even making an important phone call to check up on your friend. Sure these are important things, but what I'm actually thinking of is something of far greater value. Did you forget God? Did you set some time aside to pray and read the Bible? Not just a hurried rote prayer or reading a short Psalm before you run out the

door in the morning, but something more personal than that. Did you truly pray to God? Did you remember to thank Him for all He has given you and ask Him for your daily needs? Did you truly read the Bible? Did you actually think about the words on the page? Can you honestly say you have completed your devotions in those two seconds before you run out the door to catch the bus?

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## *We need to train for the race*

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Not only during your devotions must you focus on God, but also throughout the entire day. You must show by your lifestyle – actions, speech, attitude – that you want to serve the one, only, true God. God isn't just with us for a few brief minutes either. He is always present. Is it then too much that God demands complete devotion from us all day, every day, even when we are busy? No!

## The race

The Bible uses the analogy of our lives being a race that we must run. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, we can see that the purpose of our race on earth is to get the crown that will last forever, the crown of eternal life:

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

In order that we may be eligible to gain the crown of eternal life, we need to train for the race. Each person has their own set of hurdles that are placed on their track,



uniquely placed there by God to strengthen and help the runner grow in faith. We have to run the race by the rules written in the rulebook, the Bible, otherwise we will be disqualified.

But the Bible is so big, how can we possibly learn all the rules? By studying it! Who goes out onto a racecourse without first knowing where to go and how to reach the finish line? The athlete cannot look back halfway through the race and retrace his steps to fix his mistakes. So also, as we focus our lives towards the finish line, we must continue to strive to live according to the rules, getting rid of those things which provoke us to sin and prevent us from serving God. Paul writes about this in Hebrews 12:1-3 and encourages through the example of Jesus:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with

perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Sometimes in our busy lives we lose our focus and begin to veer off track, trying to stretch the boundaries and the rules of the race. We become so involved in our daily lives that we forget God, or we succumb to peer pressure, becoming lax in our ways.

## Look up Galatians 5

1. What is Paul warning you against? (see v. 7-10, 15-21)
2. What is God's command for your life? (see v. 22-26)

How can we maintain our focus even when we are caught up in the whirlwind of our busy lives? What must we remember as we run the race? We must draw on the strength of the Lord and trust in Him, because He will never leave us and will direct us in the correct path. Through everything we encounter in this life, God is there to protect and guide us. He will help us overcome those hurdles, no matter how high they may seem. Isaiah writes about this in a couple of passages.

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*It's not a matter of who gets to the end first, but how we get to the end of the race*

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## Look up Isaiah 40:4-5, 28-31 and Isaiah 43:1-3a

1. What comfort do you find in these texts?
2. Think of a specific example when God has carried you through a difficult time. Take some time to reflect and pray to God for his abounding love and mercy.

What else must we remember during the race? We must thank God for everything He has given us and worship Him with reverence and awe (Heb 12:28).

Even through those hard, grueling weeks and the whirlwinds that surround us, God always cares

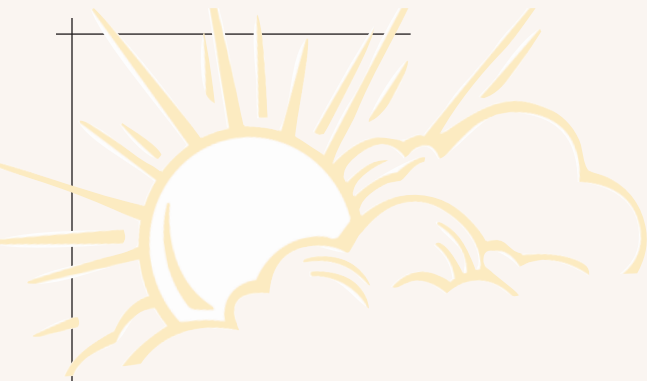
for us and makes sure that we have what we need. We can show our thankfulness through our worship, actions, thoughts, and prayers. We should seek ways in which we can serve God, showing our love and care to others as God has done to us. Not only does God want us to be kind to others, but also to ourselves. As we go through the race of life, we must not forget to take care of ourselves and our bodies. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit!

Are you overworking yourself? Do your job, school, committees, volunteer work, and the activities that you are caught up in rule your life? Do you make time to spend in prayer, Bible reading, and worship of our awesome God?

Life is a race we all run, but it has its own set of rules. It has a beginning and an end point, but the purpose is very unlike a normal race. It's not a matter of who gets to the end first, but how we get to the end of the race. Christ has already completed and won the race for us. He has saved us from our sins, so that when we finish the race we may all enjoy the prize of eternal life. Live your life so that you may echo the words in 2 Timothy 4:7-8:

I have fought the good fight,  
I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Are you too busy to complete the race according to the rules, and in so doing, have you willingly given up the prize of eternal life?



# Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

*"Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen."*

Psalm 77:19

In reflecting upon the mighty power and strength of the Lord as it was revealed in history, the poet of Psalm 77 makes a remarkable observation. An observation which also forms the solution to his distress.

At the beginning of this psalm, he cried out to God for help, but his soul refused to be comforted. His spirit was weak and he couldn't see his way through life. He was frustrated that God was not answering his urgent prayers. When he was in such grief and torment, God sent the Holy Spirit into his heart, that he could reflect on the mighty deeds of the Lord. In this psalm he lists all the miracles and saving acts of God towards his people Israel. He overcomes his fear and anxiety by reflecting on God's power and goodness. He notes that the way of the Lord has something invisible about it; something mysterious and awesome, "...though your footprints were not seen" (19b).

Through God's working in creation He shows that He is the omnipotent God; his ways can not be traced. He did not leave his mark as He led his people into the Promised Land. The waters returned to their former place and no one could see that the Lord had led his people in such a dramatic way.

The psalmist speaks of God's work among his people. He appeared in a magnificent way in Christ's ministry, death, and resurrection. His ascension also showed a mighty act of God done in all power and glory.

God also works in many awesome ways today. The proclamation of the gospel and the call to repentance is with us daily. His presence comes to us and upholds us precisely when we are in despair and do not expect it anymore. Through his Spirit and Word the Lord works his salvation on history. He confirms his promises with the sign of baptism and helps us remember our redemption by the celebration of Lord's Supper. He continually reforms and reshapes his church, also through church discipline.

He does all this and still we cannot visibly see his ways. We as sinful earthly people always like to see to believe. However, we simply need to believe and see God's faithfulness and love in our lives. His ways are awe-inspiring, majestic, unfathomable, mysterious,

and glorious. God works in holiness. The wind blows where it wills, you hear the sound of it but you do not know whether it comes or whether it goes; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

So Christ's church has comfort today. Our hearts may be comforted knowing his presence is near. He is near to all who call on Him in faith and will also be an ever-present help in difficult days. His love is all surpassing. We can never imagine how deep God's love is for us. It became evident through the death of his only Son for our sins. By turning to God's Word we will see how near He is to us. We may never see his footprints because He is all-powerful; but his miracles and creation are for all to see.

Let us be still and know that God still works! His ways are unsearchable. His footprints are unseen, but He continues in truth and righteousness to bring his people home! All praise and thanks to Him alone!

*O may this bounteous God  
Through all our life be near us,  
With ever joyful hearts  
And blessed peace to cheer us;  
And keep us in His grace,  
And guide us when perplexed,  
And free us from all ills  
Of this world in the next.*

Hymn 65:2

## BIRTHDAYS IN JUNE:

- 17 **JOAN KOERSELMAN** will be 50  
Box 1312, Coaldale, AB T0K 0L0
- 30 **BEVERLY BREUKEMAN** will be 45  
2225-19th Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4

Congratulations to all who are celebrating their birthday in June. May God bless you all richly with good health and may He grant you an enjoyable day together with your family and friends.

Till next month,

Mrs. C. Gelms and Mrs. E. Nordeman  
548 Kemp Road East  
RR 2, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2  
905-563-0380





A. Kingma

Mr. Arthur Kingma is vice-principal of Emmanuel Christian High School in Fergus, Ontario  
abkingma@execulink.com

# Professional Development Needed in Our Schools



When your son or daughter has a day off school, teachers most likely are having a PA or a PD day. But what does Professional Activity or Professional Development mean? Are teachers planning for the next school year? Are they working on curriculum together? Or are they studying some video or book on the art of teaching? It could be that teachers are trying to handle "integration," or new ways of assessment and evaluation, or other such like tasks that belong to the profession of teaching. Through professional development, teachers equip themselves to provide covenant children better education. In our Christian schools, teachers must constantly be developing professionally. To make this a reality, all school community's stakeholders need to ensure that this professional development continues.

## Definitions

The term professional development can be a very general term. It makes a teacher extend beyond the self to improve in the knowledge-base for or in the art of teaching. Broadly defined then, professional development means developing as a professional in the *what* and the *how* of teaching.

When they hear the word professional development, some

teachers, education committee members, or board members have the idea of "taking courses." In the educational literature, you will also find this more narrowly defined focus. Professional development can simply refer to a teacher's plan to develop himself or herself by means of taking courses towards a diploma or degree. In this definition, professional development becomes very personal; it can exclude staff development, curriculum work, and any other activity that goes beyond the focus of this teacher.

Another type of professional development is known specifically as *staff development*. In a staff development situation, the principal together with his staff determines an area of need in which all staff members can develop. It may be that a curricular area needs to be revised; it could be that students' misbehaviours have escalated into bullying situations which need to be understood and addressed; it could be that issues regarding special needs children need to be studied by both classroom and special ed teachers. Whatever the issue, the principal directs all staff to sink their teeth into the issue together, to understand it better, and to come up with solutions or improvements.

## Like other professions

Professional development is not unique to teachers. Almost all professions demand that their members partake in professional development. Lawyers need to review new cases constantly; they need to educate themselves in revised laws and regulations. Medical doctors need to keep up with new drugs, procedures, and medical studies, and not just those in their own countries. Mechanics need to regularly train for understanding and repairing new technologies found in vehicles or for developing skills to learn how to best use new equipment. Computer programmers and computer techies need to upgrade regularly to be able to repair, upgrade, or network computers. Trades people need to learn about new products on the market, when to use them or how to install them. All seek to develop in their profession.

Professional development is executed in various ways. In most cases, the company sends employees to seminars or courses on company time; however, to keep the edge, the professional employee needs to educate himself or herself on-line, or in reading journals/books in their area of expertise, even in his or her own



time. Usually, companies will pay for general expenses incurred, for example, mileage, housing, and course fees. Likewise, teachers may receive from their boards some professional development days, or they may be paid by their schools to take workshops or courses; however, many teachers realize that whenever they can, they should be reading educational journals, magazines, or books to continue their professional development. Teachers, more than in any other profession, should realize that children and adults alike must be learners. No adult is too old to learn. Professional development should be an intuitive part of a teacher's teaching.

### **Following a personal professional plan**

A teacher, based on experience, previous education and colleagues' advice will decide to forge ahead in a specific area of teaching. Perhaps the teacher did not yet attain his or her Education degree. Perhaps, and now I'm thinking specifically for a high

school situation, the teacher does not have enough knowledge in the subject area, and wishes to pick up a Science or an Arts degree. In any case, he or she will seek a personal professional development plan to obtain a higher level or broader scope in the chosen field.

Usually schools follow a standard practice regarding the implementation of the plan. The teacher's proposed personal professional plan will be shared with the principal or vice-principal in charge, given that the plan is part of the profession in which the teacher is busy. It could be that a teacher may be involved in other areas of learning unrelated to the area of teaching which then would not need to be shared with the principal, nor would it need the support of the school. Usually the principal will work with the teacher on the personal professional development plan and will share the plan with the education committee of the school. In most cases, schools will then support the teacher by assisting financially or by providing time, if necessary.

### **Supporting personal professional development**

Personal professional developments should always be valued by our supporting communities. Knowing that the teacher desires to follow this plan for the benefit of his or her teaching should be a laudable goal; any board, staff, or school community would recognize the value of improvement. The school community can show their support in different ways, but across the provinces a number of Canadian Reformed school communities have recognized the value of supporting teacher's personal professional developments. It is true that in the western provinces communities have had external pressures, like government funding, to support teachers in obtaining education degrees, but it is also true that the western provinces have supported other teachers' personal professional plans. Ontario schools may not have had government funding, but most recognize the need to have all teachers fully qualified for their teaching tasks and will support teachers in becoming qualified. How this support is realized may differ from school to school.

Proper qualifications may mean further courses, obtaining a teaching degree or a master's degree or an administrator's certificate. More than adequate knowledge of our subject matter and of didactics is a must. Proper qualifications can also mean taking further courses or studies in Christian education, in teaching in a Reformed manner. One who has his or her degrees would still be more apt to teach in a Reformed school if they took courses that deal with Reformed teaching.



For this reason, several western boards have taken the initiative to promote the taking of a Reformed education course from Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College. In Ontario, many have the CCRTC diploma already; yet for those who have not done so, taking courses or workshops offered by the CCRTC would help any teacher to be fully qualified to teach in our Reformed schools.

### Supporting staff development

For the development of the school, personal professional development is great, but staff development is even better! It generally will yield better direct results for the school's students, staff, and community. All stakeholders, however, must be on board to make the staff development a success: full-time and part-time teachers, education committee and board members, and perhaps even the parents, depending on the need. I cannot emphasize enough that staff development only works well in a school if all stakeholders are involved. Obviously, staff development needs to have good directive, focus, and time limits too. Not so obvious, however, but equally important, is the fact that some staff members who want to be busy with their personal professional activities may have to drop these activities for a time (or be formally excused from them) to ensure the success of the school's staff development project.

In most Ontario's Canadian Reformed schools, teachers follow the document called "A Model for Professional Development" (2000) prepared by a committee of the League of Canadian Reformed schools in Ontario. This document offers four strands of professional

development. In the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools, the teachers follow another model, more prescriptive and specific than the one used in Canadian Reformed schools. I'm sure that in each province, models developed by a College of Teachers, by government departments, or other educational institutes are being used by teachers and schools. Without discussing the differences in models, one can deduce that in each province or in each school system, professional development, which includes personal or staff development, is important!

### Is PD really needed?

Some teachers and some community members will still ask this question cynically. They may argue that human nature doesn't change, nor do kid's learning styles change; therefore, why should they learn anything new? Some may see advantages in staff development but will not see the advantage of having and supporting personal professional development. They may negate workshops and methods as secular or as "tried it-done it" models.

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*Professional development work must be included in the daily work of each teacher in our Canadian Reformed schools*

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They may be apathetic to change of any kind. Some school supporters may also cap their arguments with an additional negative view about time or money "wasted."

Those teachers and supporters who look at professional development for direct results, who cannot evaluate and discern the value of new teaching methods, or who are cynical of progress in education will never be able to answer the question of the necessity of professional development in the affirmative. Yet those who seek to be life-long learners, who want to discern a new method for its philosophy and effectiveness, as well as those who desire to use whatever God has given to us, will seize the opportunities to grow and develop. True, the secularism in our culture is prevalent and strong in educational areas; but that should not cause us to negate personal professional development. Instead, it should urge us to work harder on seeking Reformed means to further educate the teachers. Our teachers need to be revitalized in purpose, in spirit, in knowledge, and in focus to remain or to become better teachers.

I have a newer text for my Grade 12 history course entitled *The West and the World* (Haberman and Shubert, 2002). Although it covers the Great Reformation more thoroughly than previous texts, including a good section on Calvin, Zwingli, and other reformers, it heavily promotes a post-modern philosophy. How did I discover this philosophy in the text? Another high school teacher warned me about it. I then searched for it especially in introductions and conclusions of the text's chapters. I wished to have been steeped in Dr. Oosterhoff's history course, but living too far away, I could not. So I pulled out and read her book on *Post Modernism* as well as her book entitled *Ideas have History*. Researching these sources in lieu

## Church News

Effective immediately the mailing address for the Grace Canadian Reformed Church at Winnipeg, Manitoba will be:

211 Rougeau Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R2C 3Z9

of a course has cost me time, but has benefited me greatly in teaching the Western Civilization course from a scriptural perspective. And I feel that I have only begun to understand my post-modern text and the place that this text will have in my course.

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### *We cannot afford to not have teachers engaged in professional development*

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Learning is an on-going process. To teach, teachers need to learn. To teach in our Reformed schools, teachers need to be steeped in Scripture and in educational foundations. Teachers need to be able to refute or accept new textbooks, new teaching methods, or new philosophies. Teachers need to hone their didactic skills. Engaging teachers in these matters during professional development days, workshops, or courses should be promoted by all society members and by every Canadian Reformed school board.

School boards and school communities cannot afford to not have teachers engaged in staff or personal professional development. While the question whether it is really needed should always be answered with a resounding "yes," the question whether it is always done must be answered with a very cautionary "sometimes." The excuses of being too busy, of not having courses or decent workshops available, or of

not having the funds to be engaged in it, are either indicative of apathy among teachers or are genuine excuses. Good teachers are often busy in the evenings, workshops are not always available, and costs are often prohibitive. Likewise, the lack of contractual agreements which include professional development, allows teachers to slip out of it. While most teachers see the need for it, most teachers need a better system to guide and push them into doing it. Professional development work must be included in the daily work of each teacher in our Canadian Reformed schools.

Christian teachers need to teach understandingly, faithfully and professionally. To do so, teachers constantly need to be engaged in professional

development. Schools and their supporting communities must support them to make on-going professional development a successful reality. So when you see the teachers busily working on your son's or daughter's day off, tip-toe quietly by so not to disturb them, or stop in to share your support.

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*The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Otto Bouwman  
obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us*







### Re: **Congregationalism by Rev. E. Kampen**

I appreciate Rev. Kampen's desire for a balanced approach to the relationships we have as churches within a federation. Indeed, we should not be staunch supporters of congregationalism or "independentism" on the one hand, or synodical hierarchy on the other. It is a joy to be able to visit sister churches within the federation and to generally know what to expect. We share a common song book, a fairly similar form of liturgy, and even a common approach to the writing and delivery of sermons. We should be very grateful for these things. However, the examples that are used to emphasize our unity as federation are somewhat curious.

The example used is: "Is there a willingness to accept the conclusion of a synod that another federation is faithful or do they see the need to accept the ministers or members from such a federation on a case by case basis, perhaps, in the case of ministers, seeing the need to subject them to a special screening interview?"

First of all, it is very possible that a federation can be recognized as faithful, but that does not mean that every single congregation or minister in that federation remains faithful. I understand that, for practical reasons, we recognize a federation as faithful based on its synodical decisions, but it certainly strikes me as odd that we seldom hear how decisions are being practiced. Do we not really care what lives in the federation, as long as their synodical decisions remain orthodox?

Second, why would it not be commendable for a consistory to get acquainted with a minister before he begins preaching on a pulpit over which a consistory has oversight? Just because a minister comes from a federation of churches that we recognize as faithful, does not mean that he has a right, by that very fact, to preach in our churches. He certainly may be invited, as per the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, but who preaches on the pulpit must remain the responsibility of the consistory.

We also read that "accounts can be heard of people who submitted an attestation but who were required to attend membership classes and perhaps even make a public statement of faith before they were considered members." For various reasons, I applaud this idea. Again, I recognize the bond that we have in a federation and so this practice may be unnecessary, but members from other federations who would like to join us, might do well to participate in membership classes.

If I were to become a member of a Presbyterian church, who admittedly have some form of confessional membership, then I ought to study and take classes in their confessions. I think the opposite is also true. If we suggest that we maintain the need for confessional membership, then it would make perfect sense that those who come from a Presbyterian background should receive classes in what the church confesses in the Three Forms of Unity. It seems odd that we could receive them as members when they may never have read the Three Forms of Unity. Have we just given up on confessional membership? I understand that by requesting membership in a church within our federation, they submit themselves to the Word of God, summarized in the confessions, but shouldn't they know what that means before they are members?

*With brotherly greetings,  
Chris deBoer  
Smithville, ON*

### **To the Editor of Clarion:**

I was dismayed when I read the letter to the Editor from my brother Martin. I assume it is the proposed union of the URCNA and the Canadian and American Reformed Churches he refers to. As for the liberation of 1944 from the GNK church in The Netherlands: yes, it was ugly. But do you think that the separation from the CRC in 1995 was less painful?

Here we have two church federations that are faithful to Scripture and confessions and both bear the marks of a true church. How can you say that the Canadian and American Reformed Churches might be destroyed by a false union? A false union no less! Is this not a slap in the face to the faithful brothers and sisters of both federations? Should we not be overjoyed and thankful to the Lord that these unity talks are really happening? That thereby we also heed the command of the Head of the church "that they may be one"?

What happened in 1892 has nothing to do with the proposed union (which, among other things, was promoting the doctrine of presumptive regeneration). Neither federation is promoting this doctrine.

Then he goes on about the combined song book, changes to the Church Order, and the seminaries. There are committees working on all these issues. Let's give them a chance to do their work before we start condemning it.

You mention the saying "*goed gereformeerd*," that is, "good reformed." I'm sorry to say, Martin, your letter wasn't. Also, I don't think either federation is running headlong into a union. As I recall talks have been going on for some ten years now.

*Yours in Christ,  
George Van Bostelen  
Member of Trinity URC, Lethbridge, AB*

### **Dear Editor,**

I read with interest the March 30, 2007 *Clarion* column "News from the College." I was particularly interested to read that the Board of Governors is asking the upcoming synod to "approve the creation of a fifth professorship. . . and to come with a concrete proposal for an appointment to Synod 2010."

I have some questions and comments about this. First, why wait until 2010? Knowing a bit about the

current workload of the professors now at the College, I can see no reason why there has to be a delay until 2010. I am sure there are candidates who could very ably fill a professorship sooner than that and thus relieve the workload much sooner. Or are there specific candidates we are waiting for? Second, I wonder why the newly created professorship is recommended in the Biblical and Theological Studies area. From my understanding, this then is mainly in the languages area. However, I think our College, students, and churches would be better served if there was an additional professor appointed for more practical studies. Our College has a good academic standing and reputation, but, in my opinion some more work needs to be done on its "practical" program. This practical area would emphasize preaching, mission, evangelism, church planting, youth ministry, music ministry, etc. Hence a professorship as soon as possible in that area of studies would, in my opinion, serve the federation much better.

*Tom Zietsma  
Hamilton, ON*

*Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication. Submissions need to be less than one page in length.*



**The Theological College, Hamilton, Ontario**

## **Press Release of Classis Manitoba of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches held March 23 2007 in Carman, MB**

### **Opening**

On behalf of the convening church of Carman West, Rev. A.J. Pol opened the meeting. He requested the singing of Hymn 47:1, 2, read Psalm 33, spoke a few meditative words, and led in prayer. He then welcomed the delegates. Besides the primary delegates of the churches the following fraternal delegates were present: Br. Ken Cavers of Providence URC, Winnipeg; Rev. Ralph Pontier of Redeemer URC, Orange City, IA, and Rev. Edward Huntington of the OPC, Bismarck, ND.

Rev. Pol noted that Rev. K. Jonker has retired from full-time service as minister of the Grace Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg and that both Winnipeg churches are now in need of a minister. The Winnipeg Redeemer church has called Rev. J. Poppe. He wished both churches God's blessing. Rev. Pol also noted with gratitude that pastor D. M. Boersma of Denver recently became married to Sr. Rinette Werkman.

The credentials were found to be in good order. The church at Denver was represented by one elder due to scheduled time away for the minister of Denver in connection with his recent wedding.

Classis was then constituted with the following officers: Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer, chairman; Br. Henk Moorlag, vice-chairman; Rev. Pol, clerk. After a few items were added, the agenda was adopted

The following fraternal delegates were seated: Br. Cavers as representative of Providence URC Winnipeg; Rev. Pontier as representative of Classis Central US

of the URCNA, and Rev. Huntington as representative of the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the OPC.

### **Reports**

The report of the classis treasurer was received and accepted with gratitude.

The church at Carman West reported that the books of the treasurer had been found in good order. The church was thanked for their work.

The church at Winnipeg Redeemer reported on the inspection of the classis archives. One item will need follow-up. The church was thanked for their work.

There was no report on contact with the provincial government. Rev. Jonker was thanked for his many years of service in this area.

The church at Winnipeg Redeemer reported that the books of the Committee for Aid to Needy Churches had been found in good order. Classis thankfully received the report.

In closed session church visitor reports for the churches of Winnipeg Grace, Winnipeg Redeemer, Carman East, and Carman West were read and received with thankfulness. After each report was read an elder-delegate offered a prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for the particular church.

### **Instructions from the churches**

The church at Carman East requested to formally recognize with thankfulness Rev. Jonker's fifteen years of service among the churches in this classical district. Classis granted this request and decided to send a letter of thanks to Rev. Jonker.

The church at Winnipeg Grace requested that Rev. Pol be appointed church counsellor of

Winnipeg Grace. This request was granted.

The church at Winnipeg Grace requested classical pulpit supply for one Sunday per month during its vacancy. This request was also granted.

Question period as per Art 44 C.O. was held. All churches responded that the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued and that the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. No churches requested advice from Classis.

### **Addresses by fraternal delegates**

Br. Cavers brought greetings from Providence URC in Winnipeg and expressed appreciation for the increasing contacts between the churches. The chairman responded in kind. Also from the Canadian Reformed Churches there is appreciation for the blossoming relations.

Rev. Pontier then brought greetings on behalf of Classis Central US, URCNA. He encouraged the CANRC and URC federations to keep working towards unity and expressed the hope that roadblocks may be removed. Rev. Holtvlüwer responded with the hope that the Lord will bring the federations closer together in peace. He then offered prayer for the URCNA.

Rev. Huntington brought greetings on behalf of the OPC Presbytery of the Dakotas and with gratitude emphasized the visibility of the unity between the OPC and Canadian and American Reformed Churches. Good interactions are in particularly present in Denver. Br. T. Termeer responded with words of appreciation and led in prayer.

A letter of greeting from the RCUS Northern Plains Classis sent by Rev. Lee Johnson was read.



Br. W. van Beek offered prayer for the RCUS.

## Correspondence

Incoming letters from Grace Canadian Reformed Church, Winnipeg and from Rev. Jonker were discussed. A letter will be sent to Rev. Jonker.

## Appointments

The church at Denver was appointed the convening church for the next classis, to be held in the Carman East church building on June 22 or Sept 28 at 3:00 pm. Suggested officers for the next classis are Rev. Pol, chairman; Rev. Holtvlüwer, vice-chairman; Rev. Boersma, clerk.

The appointments for standing committees, classical deputies, and church visitors were reviewed and changes were made where needed.

Personal question period was not made use of and the chairman noted with thankfulness that censure according to Art 34 of the church order was not needed. The Acts of Classis were read and adopted and the press release was read and approved.

After Hymn 40:1,2 was sung the chairman led in prayer and the meeting was closed.

*Henk Moorlag  
(vice chairman at the time)*

## Press Release of Classis Northern Ontario March 23, 2007, held at Grand Valley, Ontario

On behalf of the convening church of Grand Valley Br. M. Brouwer called the meeting to order. He asked the delegates to sing Psalm 119:1 and 13, read from Titus 2, and led in prayer.

The delegates from Fergus Maranatha examined the credentials and found them to be in order. Classis was declared constituted and the officers proposed by the last classis took their places, Rev. Vermeulen as chairman, Rev. Geurts as vice-chairman, and Rev. Van Woudenberg as clerk.

The chairman noted that since the last classis Rev. Feensta has accepted a call from the church of Grand Valley. Owen Sound is remembered since they will soon be vacant. Rev. Vermeulen is

considering a call by the Darling Downs congregation of the FRCA. After these items of memorabilia the agenda was adopted.

Classis received a report on a visit made by Rev. E. Kampen and Brother A. VanRaalte to Classis Southern Ontario March 21, 2007 of the URCNA.

All the churches affirmed that the ministry of the office bearers is being continued and that the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. None of the churches requested the advice of Classis.

A proposal was received from the church of Guelph requesting that Classis overture Regional Synod East 2007 to amend the regulations of Regional Synod regarding the duties of the convening church. After discussion this proposal was adopted.

The church at Guelph was appointed to convene the next classis on June 22, 2007 at 9:00 am. It was proposed that Rev. Agema serve as chairman, Rev. Van Woudenberg as vice-chairman, and Rev. Vermeulen as clerk. The convening church was appointed to invite observers from the URCNA and ERQ and to send observers to the next classis Southern Ontario of the URCNA and the next synod of the ERQ.

Question period was made use of. Censure according to Article 34 C.O. was not necessary. The Acts of Classis were adopted. The press release was approved.

The chairman requested that Classis sing Psalm 147:1 and 6, led in prayer, and then declared Classis closed.

*For Classis,  
Rev. W. Geurts,  
vice-chairman at that time*

