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***The Reformation
did much to return us
to the faith of the apostles***

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Elders – A Treasure to Cherish

*Shepherding by the teaching and ruling elders
is a great gift from God*

On Reformation Day we may celebrate God's goodness in unwrapping once more the glories of the gospel through his servants such as Luther and Calvin. The Word was proclaimed again in its fullness and the good news of being justified by faith alone resounded from the pulpits. Another, perhaps less known fruit of going back to the authoritative Word of God, was the rediscovery of the office of elder. It is easy for us to take this office for granted, but we would do so at our peril. This office is a gracious gift of God, established for the well being of the church.

Some background

Right from the very beginning, the early Christian church had elders. This is not surprising given the fact that the first Christians were Jews and the elder had always played a vital role in giving leadership and direction to Israel and the Jewish people. As the new Israel (cf. Galatians 6:16), the Christian church simply continued using this office. It was a matter of course. Indeed, the first churches were called synagogues (thus literally James 2:2). And what is a synagogue without an elder? Because of this continuity with the Old Testament, Luke can mention Christian elders for the first time in Acts 11:30 without needing to give any explanation. All Jewish Christians were familiar with this office and it became standard throughout the entire church, including the congregations originating from Gentile believers. (See, for example, Acts 14:23.) When the Apostle Paul writes Timothy, he speaks of elders "who direct the affairs of the church well," but he also mentions those elders "whose work is preaching and teaching" (1 Tim 5:17). This passage

has been correctly understood to mean that there are two elder offices: the ruling elder and the teaching elder, or, as we are more accustomed to say: elders and ministers. These two elder offices were charged to shepherd the flock entrusted to their care. This shepherding meant especially that the Word was administered to the sheep in the public worship services as well as in the privacy of their homes (cf. Acts 20:20).

In the grand scheme of history, this beautiful setup of shepherding elders visiting the families and administering the Word to them did not last long.

The corruption of the elder offices and their recovery

The early Christian church initially followed the apostolic example in seeing members in their homes. But over time that changed. Elders became known as priests. This is a great tragedy in the history of the church. With this change of identity the focus of their work shifted from the congregation to the sacraments. Indeed, this change came in part because the Lord's Supper celebration came to be regarded as a sacrificial meal which needed priests to administer. And instead of family visitation where Christ's under-shepherds visited the homes, the priest expected the people to come to him for the sacrament of penance. The church kept watch over the souls entrusted to them by making the church members visit the priest to do confession.

It was not until the Reformation during the sixteenth century that the important place of the elder was recognized again and teaching elders and ruling



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elders functioned once more in the church according to the biblical pattern. It is noteworthy that Luther was willing to settle for what he considered a purified form of penance and so he never really gave the office of elder its full due. Calvin, however, broke radically with the sacrament of penance and restored the prerogative of the eldership to its proper place in shepherding the flock. Shepherding by the teaching and ruling elders is a great gift from God that he gave back to the church during the time of the Reformation.

It is not easy to be an elder

We may be grateful heirs of this legacy. It is therefore fitting to remember this treasure on Reformation Day, for history teaches that this office cannot be taken for granted. It tends to disappear or become an empty formality. One very good way to make sure this does not happen is to have a renewed appreciation for this office and to cherish it.

A treasure to cherish

Blessed is the congregation whose elders diligently do their work! They watch over the well being of the church and apply the gospel to the lives of those in their charge. They are not distant from the people or wait for the people to come to them, but they are shepherds who minister to those in their care. They do it humbly, seeking to serve rather than to domineer as is fitting for those in Christ's service, for Christ Himself came to serve and not to be served (Matt 20:28). In this way elders also stimulate the congregation to their duty to build each other up in the faith. Furthermore, ruling elders are to safeguard the pulpit and ensure that the preaching is sound. And they do all this and more as servants of Christ who have been called for this special task.

All of this means that it is not easy to be an elder. While the office is a great privilege for those who

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have been called to it, it is also an enormous responsibility. The Chief Shepherd will hold the under-shepherds accountable for the safety of Zion and for the souls of those whom they have not warned or shepherded (Ezek 3:17-18; Acts 20:28-31). Also, the elders will constantly need to cultivate their gifts and use every opportunity to increase their knowledge of the Word of God. After all, that is the Word of their Sender and the Holy Spirit uses the Word to also equip the office bearers for their weighty task. Furthermore, through the Word also office bearers grow in the Lord. The Good Shepherd uses his Word and Spirit to give office bearers the confidence they need to do their task.

The upshot of all of this is that congregations must cherish their office bearers as Christ's gift to them. Practically speaking this means that church members regularly remember the office bearers and their labours in prayer during family devotions. Furthermore, they will honour and obey their leaders. That's not a popular thing to do in our secular egalitarian culture which has little respect for authority. But that's what God's Word says. "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Heb 13:17).

Congregations must cherish their office bearers as Christ's gift to them

Elsewhere Christians are exhorted: "Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work" (1 Thess 5:12-13). And who would not gladly do that? These under-shepherds are Christ's gift to his church!

Celebrating Reformation Day also means celebrating the treasures Christ has entrusted to his people. Elders are an integral part of that treasure. After all, they are his instruments to guide the congregation to the greatest treasure of all – the gospel of being right with God by faith alone in Christ alone.



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The Reformation of Reformation Day



MATTHEW 13:52

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.”

Hebrews 13:8, 9a

“Get with the times.” It’s a favourite saying in our culture today. People have this urge to transform almost everything. We have to modernize our society and the way we do government and church. Long-standing customs, beliefs, and practices are suspect and targeted for “refreshing change.”

Today the older something is (except for antiques!) the more tiresome it has become and the more pressure there is to shake it up. Marriage? Let’s change it to allow homosexuals in. The Senate? Let’s revamp it to an elected body or scrap it. Church? Let’s do it where people are at, in a style they can relate to. Out with the pulpit, in with the PowerPoint, and on with the music!

Sometimes Reformation Day becomes a day to rally for change. Ironically, the old adage is often trotted out: *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* – that is, “the church reformed must always be reforming” and pressure is applied to adopt new practices, new ways of “doing church.” Reforming is understood to mean constantly changing, progressing, and growing in newer and better ways of worshiping and serving God.

More than ever then, we need the caution and comfort of these words, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” It’s a familiar text but rarely seen in its context. The verse before urges us to remember our leaders who spoke the Word of God to us. We are to consider the outcome of their way of life and to imitate their faith. The

verse after it warns us not to be carried away by strange teachings.

The anchor, the immovable centre, of both of these commands is Jesus Christ, who never changes. We can only imitate the faith of past leaders because faith in Christ is the same for every generation of believers. We must not fall for new teachings because the teaching about Christ has been delivered once for all to the saints (Jude 3). The salvation Christ brings and the worship He commands are as unchangeable as He is.

That’s the real sense of Reformation Day. What God did through the likes of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and the rest was not “taking the church to the next level.” Nor did He transform it in order to get with the times. In fact, the Lord in His might went against the times, went counter-culture in order to reform, re-shape, and re-make His church as it was in the beginning and was always meant to be! Was there change? Absolutely! But it was not transformation into something unheard of; rather, it was a remodelling into the ancient standard!

It’s the arrogance of the modern mind to think that we are steadily growing in knowledge and ways to worship God. In pride we dream that we have more insight than previous generations. Do we really think we know it better than even the apostles of Jesus Christ? What many imagine to be progress is actually regress into man-made worship. The old errors simply come out in a new guise.

Our task today is to check ourselves against the one standard of God’s Word. Are we “doing church” today as the Bible commands it? Are we leading our Christian lives today as God describes it and demands it in Scripture? Our calling is to stand firm in the belief that our Saviour is the same as He ever was and so His people are called to the same service, same worship, and same love for Him as they ever have been.

When Luther nailed up his ninety-five theses, the church had clearly strayed from the standard in both doctrine and practice. The Reformation did much to return us to the faith of the apostles. But how is our practice? How is our worship and service? That has been the special challenge since the Reformation: to maintain the purity of doctrine in our conduct and lifestyle.

A church that outwardly exhibits the marks of the church but is filled with people missing the marks of Christians (see Belgic Confession, Art 29) is deforming away from God’s Word. We must ask ourselves: Is the right teaching borne out by our right living? Have we died to ourselves and are we alive to Christ? Do we have the unchanging Christ living inside of us, empowering and driving us to love God and our neighbour? (Gal 2:20) Then we’ll find ourselves in line with the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, being personally reformed into the image of the Son and corporately reformed into the pure bride of Him who is the same yesterday and today and forever!





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The Frequency of the Lord's Supper Celebration

(Part 2)

In the previous article we considered the Scripture's teaching regarding the frequency of celebrating the Lord's Supper. Jesus instituted the Supper during the Passover (Matt 26:17-19; Luke 22:1-15). The Lord's Supper, however, is not merely a *continuation* of the Passover rite, but a *transformation* of it. From Acts 2 and 20 and 1 Corinthians 11 it is clear that the apostolic church routinely and frequently celebrated this sacrament when they gathered together.

We now turn to the historical witness of the church.

Church historical considerations

As we will observe, the worship of the early church followed the form of "Word and Table" as it emerged out of the New Testament period.¹

A. The early church fathers and witnesses (first and second centuries AD)

Ignatius

Ignatius, believed to be a student of the Apostle John at Antioch and later bishop there in the early second century, is our first witness. He wrote seven letters of comfort to various congregations during a time of persecution in the church. Concerning the Lord's Supper, this is what he wrote to the congregation in Ephesus: "Try to gather more frequently to celebrate

God's Eucharist and to praise him. For when you meet with frequency, Satan's powers are overthrown and his destructiveness is undone by the unanimity of your faith."²

We find here what seems to be the same assumption that Paul made concerning the congregation gathered at Corinth, namely that when they met for worship they would also celebrate the Lord's Supper. To meet with frequency, for Ignatius, also meant to celebrate the Lord's Supper with frequency.

Didache (second century AD)

A portion of the *Didache* (Greek) or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* was a manual for church order in use during the second century AD and possibly as early as the first. This important document indicates that the Lord's Supper was normally celebrated on every Lord's Day. It is significant that both the Supper and the Day are designated "the Lord's."³

The *Didache* stipulates this for the churches: "On every Lord's Day – his special day – come together and break bread and give thanks. . . for it was of this sacrifice that the Lord said, 'Always and everywhere offer me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, says the Lord, and my name is marveled at by the nations.' (Mal 1:11, 14)"⁴

This document, too, gives evidence of the natural, unspoken connection that there appears to have been in the early church between the celebration of the

Lord's Day and the observance of the *Lord's Supper*.

Justin Martyr

In the early church were men who became known as "the apologists," Christian writers who arose to defend the Christian faith against the enemies of the gospel. One such apologist, Justin Martyr, is another witness whom we should consider. In his account of what commonly happened during the Sunday worship services, he includes a description of the celebration of the Lord's Supper. "[B]read is brought, and wine and water, and the president similarly sends up prayers and thanksgivings. . . the distribution, and reception of the consecrated [elements] by each one, takes place and they are sent to the absent by the deacons."⁵ That the frequency of Lord's Supper is not even specified indicates that it was a normal part of Lord's Day worship.

Irenaeus of Lyons

This early church leader, too, speaks of the Lord's Supper as something that should be undertaken "frequently and without intermission."⁶

Ebionites

A rare exception to this pattern of frequent communion in the early church was the practice of the early Jewish-Christian sect of the Ebionites, who believed that it should be celebrated only once a year, like the Passover.⁷

B. The later Christian fathers (third and fourth centuries AD)

John Chrysostom

As we pass into the later centuries of the early church, we discover that for Chrysostom – who clearly made a deep impression upon John Calvin considering how extensively this reformer cites him – the decline in the use of the Lord’s Supper in the church was a matter of great concern to him. This decline was a result of the “pious fear” of the participants⁸ and it became such an issue that Chrysostom needed to settle a controversy on the matter.⁹ Calvin writes of how displeased Chrysostom was with this decline.¹⁰

Basil of Caesarea

Basil also addressed the matter of frequency in his letters. While we might have questions about some of his teachings and practices, his view of how often we should partake of the Lord’s Supper falls in line with the Scriptural custom of the apostolic church, which we have mentioned. He considered frequent communion “a good and helpful practice.”¹¹ Citing the Saviour’s words, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life” (John 6:54), he comments: “Who doubts that to partake of life continually is really to have life in abundance?”¹²

C. Augustine (fifth century AD)

In a letter of Augustine to Janarius we have a snapshot of what the custom was in Augustine’s day. “Some partake daily of the Lord’s body and blood; others receive them on certain days; in some places no day passes when it is not offered; elsewhere, only on Saturday and Sunday; still elsewhere, only on Sunday.”¹³

The minimum seems to have been weekly communion. Those who were becoming lax, writes Calvin, “Holy men sharply rebuked . . . to avoid seeming to wink at such indifference.”¹⁴

D. Middle Ages

During the Middle Ages, then, as is widely recognized, the holy sacrament of the Lord’s Supper fell victim to deformation, innovation, and abuse. We should not gloss over this reality.

The opposite danger of *abuse*, however, is *total neglect*. From what we noted earlier concerning Chrysostom and Augustine, it appears that the two went hand in hand during the Middle Ages. If the church of the Reformation was largely successful in tackling the *abuses* of the Lord’s Supper, it was not quite as successful in addressing its *neglect*.

This is not to say that no attempt was made. John Calvin, to whom we will give our attention shortly, stands out as a reformer who exerted himself for this worthy cause in Christ’s church.

E. Reformation

Martin Bucer and the Tetrapolitan Confession

The Tetrapolitan Confession (1530), considered the oldest of the Reformed Church in Germany, prepared primarily by Martin Bucer “in the name of the four imperial cities (hence the name) of Strasbourg, Contance, Memmingen, and Lindau,”¹⁵ states this:

[T]o all those who sincerely have given their names among his disciples and receive this Supper according to his institution, [Christ] deigns to give his true body and true blood to be truly eaten and drunk for the food and drink of souls, for their nourishment unto life eternal. . . . Hence indeed it occurs that the divine sacraments, the Most Holy Supper of Christ, are administered and received among us very religiously and with singular reverence. . . as it is generally done now among

us more frequently and devoutly than heretofore.¹⁶

Philip Schaff believes that this confession’s formulation concerning the Lord’s Supper “contains the germ of the view afterwards more clearly and fully developed by Calvin.”¹⁷

John Calvin

Anyone who is familiar with Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* hardly needs to be reminded of his oft quoted words on the matter. Interestingly, Calvin associated the deformation of the Lord’s Supper and the “piling up” of abuses and innovations of which we have just spoken with the infrequency of its celebration: “Now to get rid of the great pile of ceremonies, the Supper could have been administered most becomingly if it were set before the church very often, and at least once a week.”¹⁸ He also mentions how measures were taken to ensure that people regularly partook of the Lord’s Supper.¹⁹

Later, Calvin comments on how seriously the ancient church took retaining and protecting “the frequent practice of communion, received as it was, from the apostles themselves,”²⁰ especially since it was falling into disuse.

Concerning the habit that arose of communicating only once a year, John Calvin had this to say:

Plainly this custom which enjoins us to take communion once a year is a veritable invention of the devil, whoever was instrumental in introducing it. . . . [T]he Lord’s table should have been spread at least once a week for the assembly of Christians, and the promises declared in it should feed us spiritually. None is indeed to be forcibly compelled, but all are to be urged and aroused; also the inertia of indolent people is to be rebuked. All, like hungry men, should flock to such a bounteous repast. Not unjustly,

then, did I complain at the outset that this custom was thrust in by the devil's artifice, which, in prescribing one day a year, renders men slothful all the rest of the year.²¹

We noted earlier that the church during the Reformation was not as successful in tackling the neglect of the Lord's Supper, as it was in tackling its abuse. This is obviously not for lack of effort on John Calvin's part. William D. Maxwell, for example, contends that "[f]or [Calvin] the complete act of Christian worship is that at which the Lord's Supper is celebrated, and the complete Sunday morning office is that which includes the celebration of the Lord's Supper."²²

As Mark L. Dalbey observes: "He designed his order of worship to be Word and Table as a unity. Though his position was never adopted in Geneva, he ordered worship to end with prayer and praise that was setting the stage for the Lord's Supper even when it was not celebrated."²³ This is to say that if John Calvin was not allowed to administer the Lord's Supper weekly by those under whose authority he ministered, he never let the Lord's Table slip out of the church's sight in the weekly liturgy.²⁴

Calvin firmly believed, actually, that "it is certain that a Church cannot be said to be well ordered and regulated unless in it the Holy Supper of our Lord is always being celebrated and frequented. . . ."²⁵

Ulrich Zwingli

The main opponent of frequent communion among the reformers was Ulrich Zwingli, who held to a quarterly celebration, namely at Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and the September 11th Festival of St. Felix and St. Regula, the patron saints of Zurich.²⁶ It is likely, in fact, that his opposition was the most significant obstacle to John Calvin's striving for weekly communion.²⁷ Zwingli's weak understanding of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, merely as a memorial meal of thanksgiving, undoubtedly undergirds his opposition to

frequent communion.²⁸ There is no question, regrettably, that "his teaching has left a lasting mark on the worship and practice of all the Reformed churches."²⁹

While we cannot ignore him, therefore, we must recognize that Zwingli's views contradict the scriptural doctrine formulated in the historic confessions in common use among Reformed and Presbyterian churches. His views, then, should not sustain the influence that they have had in the past in the churches that hold to these confessions.³⁰ This leads us to a closer examination of the implications the confessions have for our present subject, which we will consider in the next article.³¹

¹ Robert E. Webber, ed., *Twenty Centuries of Christian Worship* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), page 145.

² Ignatius, *Letter to the Ephesians*, paragraph 13.

³ Cf. Collins, page 11, note 7.

⁴ *Didache*, paragraph 14.

⁵ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, paragraph 67.

⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.18.6.

⁷ Aasman, page 79.

⁸ G. VanRongen, *Our Reformed Church Service Book* (Neerlandia, AB: Inheritance Publications, 1995) page 205.

⁹ Collins, page 11.

¹⁰ Calvin, *Institutes* 4.17.45,46.

¹¹ Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, paragraph 93.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Cited in Calvin's *Institutes*, 4.17.45.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.17.45.

¹⁵ Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. I: The History of the Creeds (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990 [1931]) page 526.

¹⁶ Cited by Michael S. Horton, "At Least Weekly: The Reformed Doctrine of the Lord's Supper and of Its Frequent Celebration", *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, Vol. 11 (2000), page 153.

¹⁷ Schaff, I, page 528.

¹⁸ Calvin, *Institutes* 4.17.43.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.17.45.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 4.17.46. Cf. Calvin's *Short Treatise on the Holy Supper*, paragraph 44, where he calls it this custom a "calamity which befell the Popish Church."

²² Cited by Mark L. Dalbey, *A Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Look at*

the Regulative Principle of Worship, (St. Louis, MO: Covenant Theological Seminary, 1999), page 26.

²³ *Ibid.*, page 27.

²⁴ William Lee Mashburn, *A Vital Communion* (St. Louis, MO: Covenant Theological Seminary, 1994), page 59: "Calvin desired frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper, yet in his own day he was forced to eventually settle on holy communion once a month due to pressure from the civil authorities, and ultimately had to adopt the custom from Berne (Switzerland) of celebrating the supper only four times a year."

²⁵ See *Articles for Organization of the Church and Worship at Geneva* (1537), as quoted by Horton, page 147.

²⁶ John M. Barkley, *The Worship of the Reformed Church* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1966) page 21. He writes here: "To Zwingli there is only one means of grace, namely, the preaching of the Word. To him, the Eucharist is really another form of preaching, the dramatic re-enactment of what on other occasions has been proclaimed in the sermon. The Lord's Supper is a meal of remembrance, in which the communicant confesses that Jesus has died for his sins and renews his obligation to Christian fellowship."

²⁷ Mashburn, pages 54-55: "It is certainly a curious development that in so many churches which would consider themselves Reformed or Calvinistic, the modern practice and theology of holy communion is based upon the teaching of the one who lost the debate over the Lord's Supper, and who lost it to Calvin himself."

²⁸ Horton deals with this extensively on pages 151ff. Cf. Robert C. Rayburn, *O Come Let us Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), page 257. Another useful article touching on this matter is R.N. Gleason, "Calvin and Bavinck on the Lord's Supper," *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983): 273-303.

²⁹ Barkley, page 21.

³⁰ To wit, the Belgic Confession (Articles 33,35), the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Days 25,28-30), the Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter 29), and the Westminster Larger Catechism (q/a 120).

³¹ Since we hold to the Three Forms of Unity, I will confine myself to a discussion of the relevant portions of the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism.





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A Reformation Martyr Comforts His Wife

Introduction

Some time ago, *Time* magazine featured a cover story entitled, "Does God Want You to Be Rich?" In this story, the authors describe how people like Joel Osteen and Joyce Meyer are pushing a new gospel. They teach that the good news is that Jesus Christ came to make us wealthy, healthy, and materially blessed. Their books are very popular in broader Christian circles and sometimes they're even found in our homes. They're popular, but they're dead wrong. The gospel is not in wealth, health, and prosperity. In Acts 14:22, Paul and Barnabas encouraged the believers at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch by telling them, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." They had learned this from the Lord Jesus Himself when He told them that anyone who follows Him must take up the cross.

These biblical truths were recovered by the Reformation. On October 31, we remember that in 1517, Martin Luther pinned his ninety-five theses to the door of a church in Wittenberg, Germany. Two years later, in 1519, Luther travelled to the birthplace of our Heidelberg Catechism. At Heidelberg, Luther and one of his colleagues, Leonard Beier, defended another set of theses.

With the Heidelberg Disputation, Luther laid out the difference between a theology of glory and a theology of the cross. The Roman Catholic Church taught a theology of glory. Through good works and a little help, man could climb his way up to God and receive God's blessing. The Bible, on the other hand, teaches a theology of the cross. Through grace, God comes down to man in Jesus Christ crucified. The wisdom of God is in the cross and in suffering, not in glory on this earth.

Today, we need to recover a sense of this theology of the cross. We live in a comfortable world. We don't suffer in any meaningful way. The temptation is great to turn to a theology of glory like that preached by Joel Osteen and Joyce Meyer. The way to resist this temptation is to turn again to what we confess from the Scriptures. We need especially to turn to the Belgic Confession. The Belgic Confession is entirely unique – it is the only Reformation confession written by a martyr. As you read through the Confession, you know that it comes from a world where believers were regularly dying for their faith. This is our confession and because we confess a catholic church, one that stretches not only through the world, but also through the ages, we are brought into fellowship with the suffering

body of Christ then and now. To help us in developing that sense, let me share a letter written many years ago. It was written by the author of our Belgic Confession, Guido de Brès. It was written in April, 1567. He was in prison and he knew that he was going to die for what he had confessed.

Letter of comfort from Guido de Brès to his wife

The grace and mercy of our good God and heavenly Father, and the love of His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, be with you, my dearly beloved.

Catherine Ramon, my dear and beloved wife and sister in our Lord Jesus Christ: your anguish and sadness disturbs somewhat my joy and the happiness of my heart, so I am writing this for the consolation of both of us, and especially for your consolation, since you have always loved me with an ardent affection, and because it pleases the Lord to separate us from each other. I feel your sorrow over this separation more keenly than mine. I pray you not to be troubled too much over this, for fear of offending God. You knew when you married me that you were taking a mortal husband, who was uncertain of life, and yet it has pleased God to permit us to live together for seven years, giving us five children. If the

Lord had wished us to live together longer, he would have provided the way. But it did not please him to do this and may his will be done.

Now remember that I did not fall into the hands of my enemies by mere chance, but through the providence of my God who controls and governs all things, the least as well as the greatest. This is shown by the words of Christ, "Be not afraid. Your very hairs are numbered. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And not one of them shall fall to the ground without the will of your Father. Then fear nothing. You are more excellent than many sparrows." These words of divine wisdom say that God knows the number of my hairs. How then can harm come to me without the command and providence of God? It could not happen, unless one should say that God is no longer God. This is why the Prophet says that there is no affliction in the city that the Lord has not willed.

Many saintly persons who were before us consoled themselves in their afflictions and tribulations with this doctrine. Joseph, having been sold by his brothers and taken into Egypt, says, "You did a wicked deed, but God has turned it to your good. God sent me into Egypt before you for your profit" (Genesis 50). David also experienced this when Shimei cursed him. So too in the case of Job and many others.

And that is why the Evangelists write so carefully of the sufferings and of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, adding, "And this was done that that which was written of Him might be accomplished." The same should be said of all the members of Christ.

It is very true that human reason rebels against this doctrine and resists it as much as possible and I have very strongly experienced this myself. When I was arrested, I would say to myself, "So many of us should not have traveled together. We were

betrayed by this one or that one. We ought not to have been arrested." With such thoughts I became overwhelmed, until my spirits were raised by mediation on the providence of God. Then my heart began to feel a great repose. I began then to say, "My God, you have caused me to be born in the time you have ordained. During all the time of my life you have kept me and preserved me from great dangers and you have delivered me from them all – and if at present my hour has come in which I will pass from this life to you, may your will be done. I cannot escape from your hands. And if I could, I would not, since it is happiness for me to conform to your will." These thoughts made my heart cheerful again.

And I pray you, my dear and faithful companion, to join me in thanking God for what he has done. For he does nothing that is not just and very equitable, and you should believe that it is for my good and for my peace. You have seen and felt my labours, cross, persecutions, and afflictions which I have endured, and have even had a part in them when you accompanied me in my travels during the time of my exile. Now my God has extended his hand to receive me into his blessed kingdom. I shall see it before you and when it shall please the Lord, you will follow me. This separation is not for all time. The Lord will receive you also to join us together again in our head, Jesus Christ.

This is not the place of our habitation – that is in heaven. This is only the place of our journey. That is why we long for our true country, which is heaven. We desire to be received in the home of our Heavenly Father, to see our Brother, Head, and Saviour Jesus Christ, to see the noble company of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and many thousands of martyrs, into whose company I hope to be received when I have finished the

Church News

Declined the call to the church of Elora, Ontario:

Rev. J. VanWoudenberg
of Guelph, Ontario.

Called by the Free Reformed Church of West Albany, Australia:

Rev. R.E. Pot
of London, Ontario.

course of my work which I received from my Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray you, my dearly beloved, to console yourself with meditation on these things. Consider the honour that God has done you, in giving you a husband who was not only a minister of the Son of God, but so esteemed of God that he allowed him to have the crown of martyrs. It is an honour the like of which God has never even given to the angels.

I am happy; my heart is light and it lacks nothing in my afflictions. I am so filled with the abundance of the richness of my God that I have enough for me and all those to whom I can speak. So I pray my God that he will continue his kindness to me, his prisoner. The One in whom I have trusted will do it, for I have found by experience that he will never leave those who have trusted in him. I would never have thought that God would have been so kind to such a poor creature as I. I feel the faithfulness of my Lord Jesus Christ.

I am practicing now what I have preached to others. And I must confess that when I preached I would speak about the things I am actually experiencing as a blind man speaks of colour. Since I was taken prisoner I have profited more and learned more than during all the rest of my life. I am in a very

good school: the Holy Spirit inspires me continually and teaches me how to use the weapons in this combat. On the other side is Satan, the adversary of all children of God. He is like a boisterous, roaring lion. He constantly surrounds me and seeks to wound me. But he who has said, "Fear not, for I have overcome the world," makes me victorious. And already I see that the Lord puts Satan under my feet and I feel the power of God perfected in my weakness.

Our Lord permits me on the one hand to feel my weakness and my smallness, that I am but a small vessel on the earth, very fragile, to the end that he would humble me, so that all the glory of the victory may be given to him. On the other hand, he fortifies me and consoles me in an unbelievable way. I have more comfort than the enemies of the gospel. I eat, drink and rest better than they do. I am held in a very strong prison, very bleak, obscure and dark. The prison is known by the obscure name "Brunain." The air is poor and it stinks. On my feet and hands I have irons, big and heavy. They are a continual hell, hollowing my limbs up to my poor bones. The chief constable comes to look at my irons two or three times a day, fearing that I will escape. There are three guards of forty men before the door of the prison.

I have also the visits of Monsieur de Hamaide. He comes to see me, to console me, and to exhort me to patience, as he says. However, he comes after dinner, after he has wine in the head and a full stomach. You can imagine what these consolations are. He threatens me and says to me that if I would show any intention of escaping he would have me chained by the neck, the body and legs, so that I could not move a finger; and he says many other things in this order. But for all that, my God does not take away his

promises, consoling my heart, giving me very much contentment.

Since such things have happened, my dear sister and faithful wife, I implore you to find comfort from the Lord in your afflictions and to place your troubles with him. He is the husband of believing widows and the father of poor orphans. He will never leave you – of that I can assure you. Conduct yourself as a Christian woman, faithful in the fear of God, as you always have been, honouring by your good life and conversation the doctrine of the Son of God, which your husband has preached.

As you have always loved me with great affection, I pray that you will continue this love toward our little children, instructing them in the knowledge of the true God and of his Son Jesus Christ. Be their father and their mother, and take care that they use honestly the little that God has given you. If God does you the favour to permit you to live in widowhood with our children after my death, that will be well. If you cannot, and the means are lacking, then go to some good man, faithful and fearing God. And when I can, I shall write to our friends to watch over you. I think that they will not let you want for anything. Take up your regular routine after the Lord has taken me. You have our daughter Sarah who will soon be grown. She will be your companion and help you in your troubles. She will console you in your tribulations and the Lord will always be with you. Greet our good friends in my name, and let them pray to God for me, that he may give me strength, speech, and the wisdom and ability to uphold the truth of the Son of God to the end and to the last breath of my life.

Farewell, Catherine, my dearly beloved. I pray my God that he will comfort you and give you contentment in his good will. I hope that God has given me the grace to write for your benefit, in such a way that you may be

consoled in this poor world. Keep my letter for a remembrance of me. It is badly written, but it is what I am able to do, and not what I wish to do. Commend me to my good mother. I hope to write some consolation to her, if it pleases God. Greet also my good sister. May she take her affliction to God. Grace be with you.

At the prison, April 12, 1567.

Your faithful husband, Guy de Brès, minister of the Word of God at Valenciennes, and presently prisoner for the Son of God at the aforesaid place.

He was hung on May 31, 1567.

Closing reflection

Reflecting on that letter, consider how your brother, Guido de Brès, was sharing in the sufferings of Christ. Through many tribulations, he was entering the kingdom of God. He left a Confession for us, a faithful summary of what Scripture teaches. Would you die for that Confession? Would you suffer for it? Would you give up family and friends for the doctrine of the Old and New Testament summarized in that Confession? Let me leave you with the words of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 10:37-39,

He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.

This letter is found translated in *Procedures Held With Regard to Those of the Religion of the Netherlands* (no publication information). I compared and corrected the translation in some places with reference to the French original found in *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, Volume 8, pp.624-628.





Ray of Sunshine

*"I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.
My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice."*

Psalm 34:1, 2

We have now come to the end of another mini series on the fruits of the Spirit and the rich gifts we receive through the Spirit. We must be very thankful for these gifts. Let us boast in the Lord and walk humbly in the way that He has shown to us in Psalm 34.

When David was writing this psalm, it was a confession of humble trust in the Lord. He knew that in himself he had nothing to boast about. We also know today that we have to be humble and not to boast about ourselves. We are all given different talents and it is so easy to think that we are so good. Let us never forget that it is the Lord who has blessed us with these talents. At times it does not take much for us to think, "I have worked hard for all the things that I have, so it's all for me."

It is our pride that puts us against God. We are sometimes so full of ourselves that God does not have any room in our thoughts, and then, at times He is there but only when we feel it's necessary in our lives. Where would we be if God did not send his Son to save us from our sins? We would not be saved but stand forever under the wrath of God. This means that He would be angry with us forever. God could not forgive us our sins if his Son did not die for us.

As Christians we know it all so well, that we have to be humble and not proud; but every day we sin against the Lord. When the minister reads the Ten Commandments to us on Sunday morning, it makes it very clear to us that we are sinners. It is a constant reminder of how we are to live before Him.

The world today tells us to "believe in yourself." You are a good person if you want to be and you can do it by yourself. God is nowhere in the picture. In Isaiah 13:11 the Lord tells us that "He will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless." The Lord shows us clearly what He wants from us. In Micah 6:8 we read, "He has showed you O man what is good, and what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

We do not own ourselves but belong to the Lord. If we always remember this in our daily lives, we will soon realize that the only boasting we may do is in the Lord. Christ had to humble Himself by dying for our sins on the cross. This will make us very humble, for everything that He has done for us and is still busy doing in our lives. Therefore if we sometimes need care or help from others in our daily lives, be careful that pride does not take over. Although it can be very difficult to let it go at times, always remember your Saviour. Let us be trusting and remain humble in the Lord. He gives us what we need also in difficult moments of our life. For Christ to hang on the cross for our sins gives us the true meaning of humility. He knows how hard it is to humble oneself. Let us be taught by what Christ teaches us in his Word in 1 Peter 5:5b-7, "All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore under God's mighty hand that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

*He on the church of Christ our Lord
His many sacred gifts outpoured,
That, without pride or malice, we
Might one another's members be.*

Hymn 38:2

Birthdays in November:

3 WILMA VAN DRONGELEN will be 51
306-33375 Mayfair Avenue, Abbotsford, BC V2S 1P4

Congratulations to you, Wilma, on your birthday. May our heavenly Father bless you in this new year with all you need. Hope you have a wonderful day together with family and friends.

Till next month,
Corinne Gelms and Patricia Gelms
548 Kemp Road East, RR2 Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
Phone: 905-563-0380
Email: jcorgelms@porchlight.ca



Welcome to Rev. Huijgen

Installation

With thankfulness to the Lord the congregation of Attercliffe Canadian Reformed Church announces the arrival of its new pastor and teacher, Rev. J. Huijgen, and his family. The installation of Rev. Huijgen took place on Sunday July 13, 2008. Rev. G. Nederveen chose as text 2 Corinthians 2:14-17. His theme: The twofold effect of the ministry of the Word. Rev. Nederveen focused on the fragrance and the preacher of the Word. Paul was addressing the issue of watering down the Word and glories in the preaching of the Word. Paul called himself the aroma of Christ, reminding us of the Old Testament sacrifices. Now Christ's sacrifice is that aroma that brings either life or death. The preaching of Christ is also that aroma. The preacher has to proclaim fully the whole counsel of God. The preacher cannot preach only what people want to hear. The true preacher declares the whole gospel, the simple truth of the crucified Christ. That will be an aroma, for life or death.

In the afternoon service Rev. Huijgen chose as text Revelation 1:4-8. His theme: The Triune God reveals Himself to the churches for their comfort, blessing, and warning. He focused on knowing your God, being blessed by your God, and expecting your God. The greeting of grace and peace is



brought through Christ's coming. This was God's decision to not leave men in their sin and misery. Paradise is promised again. God will see to it that his people are reminded of the gospel by the preaching of it. In this knowledge of God we receive a threefold blessing: his love, freedom from our sins, and being made a kingdom. He is coming with the clouds, indicating his majesty. Every eye will see Him. The text ends with a double Amen. It will certainly be! He is coming again and we will always hear about Him.

Welcome evening

Since our newly installed minister promptly left on holidays, it was several weeks later, on the evening of Friday, August 22, 2008,

that we gathered for the official welcome evening. With the opening words, the reading of Psalm 100 and in the prayer, we were reminded that in the midst of a world that shuns authority, leadership, and shepherding, God's work goes on and we could receive a pastor and teacher to lead and guide us.

Then the entertainment for the evening began with the Adult Bible Society singing "The best town you can name is thankful that you came." This was followed by a matching game to help Rev. and Mrs. Huijgen get to know our congregation. They matched husbands to wives and men to occupations. The "Consistory Men's Choir" amused the congregation with a song, while the Young



People's had members of the congregation stand up in answer to many interesting questions they asked. The Men's Society followed with an entertaining power point quiz where Rev. Huijgen had to identify which one of his peers (ministers) fit the description given in a riddle. Another game was presented by the morning Women's Society with teams answering questions about the congregation or its surrounding area.

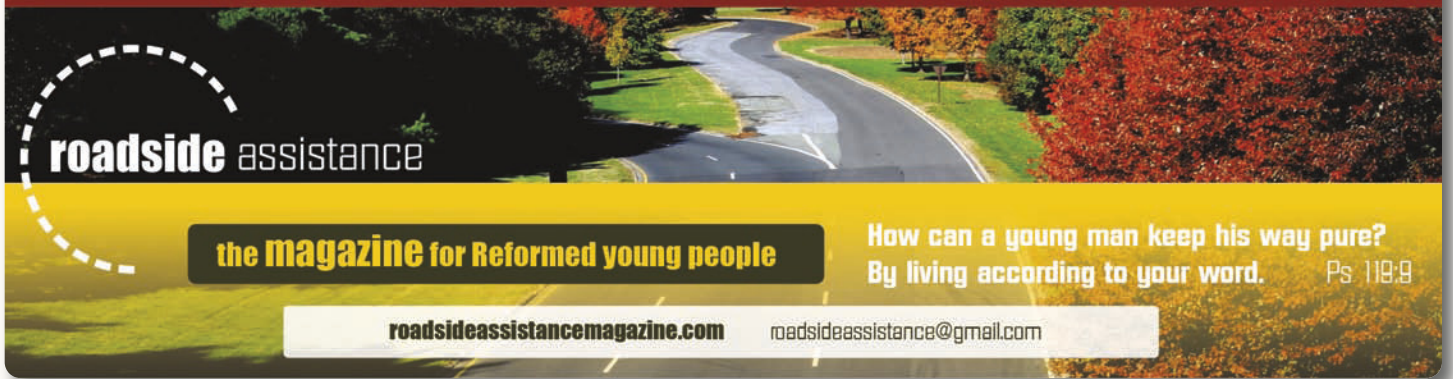
After all the presentations, the church council's vice-chairman, Br. K. Linde, thanked Rev. DeBoer of our neighbouring congregation for all he did as counsellor for the time we were vacant. Rev. DeBoer passed on his and his wife's welcome and best wishes to the Huijgens. This was followed by the presentation of a gift from the congregation – a park bench – as the vice-chairman proceeded to explain to the Huijgens why this bench had been bought. It is a

place for the weary to rest, it's the opposite of what you give a minister who leaves your congregation (a canoe!), and the sales clerk had said it was good for twenty years! (Get the

message? Our previous minister had stayed for twenty years!) The Huijgens were also presented a book about the history and beautiful heritage of the Canadian Reformed Churches in the Niagara area.

Rev. Huijgen closed the evening with a word of thanks on behalf of his wife and family, for the fun and fellowship and the great way of saying "welcome" to them. He prayed that now as we continue together as congregation, and pastor and family, to that final destination, that we will grow in fellowship and in faith and rejoice in God's work in our midst.





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

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Thoughts on “Sunday Best”

Jim Fluit

Why do we dress up for church services?

I have thought about this question before, looked up Bible passages that could shed some light on the issue, and discussed it in Bible study groups. There was always some debate, but I was pretty confident about the answer. The reason we dress up is to show honour and respect for God.

But here is a confession. To be totally honest, I can not remember ever having woken up on a Sunday morning, opening the closet, and asking myself, “How can I show honour and respect to God through what I wear to church today?”

Since I was a kid, I was taught to wear certain types of clothes for Sunday services. And even now, what I wear to church is basically shaped by my peer group and what they wear. Either way, I have always been content telling myself that I dress up to honour God, but the genuine attitude was never really there on Sunday

mornings. If every adult male in my congregation wore a suit to church, I would probably do the same. But if the guys never wore anything more formal than polo shirts and khakis, you can be sure that I would not show up in a suit. So why do I dress up? “Respect and honour for God” is a great answer, but realistically, it is hardly a factor.

I am not saying that this kind of attitude is a good one. I am saying that this attitude is the *real* one. Of course, I can only speak for myself. But maybe you feel the same way.

If you are dressing up for church, I do think that a sincere desire to show respect to God would be an excellent reason. That kind of desire to honour God may be the motivation of the leaders in your congregation, and it may be the motivation of the guy sitting in the pew in front of you. But if it is not *your* motivation, then you will only be fooling yourself if you simply “follow suit.”

It does not do us any good to just give the correct answer to the question. Knowing the right

answer and conforming to the status quo does not solve the question. Actually, this approach can allow us to *ignore* the real challenge that the question presents.

Why do you dress for church the way that you do? Do not answer that question too quickly. Wrestle with it and let it get under your skin. Write it in on a piece of paper, tape it to the door of your closet, and let it confront you again.

Your answer might not be the “correct” answer. The real reason you wear that cute new dress or style your hair in that certain way might be a selfish one. I am sure that if any of us probe deep enough, we will find something dirty in our motives, maybe conceit, maybe apathy. But if we can make an honest, gritty self-assessment, and if we genuinely want to be cleaned up from our selfishness, then we have taken a big step in the right direction. This progress will not come in the form of an ironclad dress code. It will come when we learn to see our “Sunday Best” as an attitude.



Letter to the Editor

Letter to the Editor

In a recent *Clarion* article Dr. de Visser critiques the book *And They Sing a New Song*. It appears to be a defence of hymns rather than a defence of the inspired.

Dr. de Visser indicates reformers Bucer and Luther were proponents of uninspired hymns; his article suggests that men such as Calvin and Schilder did not prefer the uninspired hymns. His suggestion does not include why their preference was not imposed upon others. Is it that in this matter they did not compel their views so vehemently as to divide potential benefits of brotherly unity? This is to say their principles grounded in *Sola Scriptura* were imposed upon for the benefit of others. Calvin endorsed the use of the inspired! For the sake of unity Calvin tolerated the lesser perspective. Schilder also was imposed upon, his willingness to submit for the benefits of the pacification was turned against him, and today in Dr. de Visser's article his brotherly submission is turned against him as a defence for the use of uninspired hymns. It is interesting how justification of the uninspired is made on the basis of misconstrued submission and brotherly empathy. If Dr. de Visser is correct in his analysis of Calvin and Schilder, are not the grounds for their condoning only inspired hymns not silenced by those that want "more"? Calvin and Schilder bore their burden for others.

Dr. de Visser points to Ambrose and uninspired hymns and this exemplifies that there is nothing new under the sun. Another church father of that time is Augustine, his exposition of Psalm 96:4 reveals "For the Lord is Great and cannot not worthily be praised." He explains that which is mortal cannot comprehend in its own words and mind how to praise the immortal; therefore the inspired was given for us to utilize. As Augustine endorsed the inspired and the augment utilizes him in its introduction, is this a misrepresentation? Is this also happening to Calvin and Schilder? Was it not Augustine who expressed men do not need to learn more; they need to remember!

Augustine describes a hymn as containing three things: song, praise, and that which is of God. I understand being of God as that which is

eternal. Attached is a portion of a letter of Augustine expressing the value and effect of inspired versus uninspired hymns in worship:

The Donstists reproach us with our grave chanting of the divine songs of the prophets in our churches, while they inflame their passions in their revels by the singing of psalms of human composition, which rouse them like the stirring notes of the trumpet on the battlefield. But when brothers are assembled in the church, why should not the time be devoted to the singing of sacred songs. . . I do not see what could be more excellent, useful and holy exercise for a Christian congregation.

The conclusion of the book review of *They Sing a New Song* expresses a hope; I too have a hope that the churches will do the right thing, and during communal worship *Sola Deo Gloria* will prove itself grounded in *Sola Scriptura*.

Tom Bosma
Lincoln Congregation

Response

A few comments in response to the letter by Br. Bosma:

1. Br. Bosma's letter reflects the concern that whatever we do in worship should be biblical in content and character. I appreciate this. Worship should be done according to the holy will of God. Therefore, it should be based on what is revealed in the Scriptures and guided by the Holy Spirit.

2. Br. Bosma claims that Calvin and Schilder were "imposed upon" by others and that they accommodated the singing of hymns only for the sake of unity. I do not believe that this was the case. Take Schilder for example. After the Liberation of 1944 he was the uncontested leader of the Reformed Churches (liberated). Nothing was imposed on him anymore. If Schilder was opposed to the singing of hymns in worship, he could easily have written a few articles in *De Reformatie* and



the churches would have listened. Schilder did not do that. Why not? Because in principle he had no problem with the singing of hymns.

3. Br. Bosma ends his letter with a quote from Augustine. Clearly, the church father disliked the hymn singing of the Donatists. For the sake of a balanced picture of Augustine's views it would have been good to mention that he was deeply impressed by the hymn singing in the church of Ambrose in Milan (see his *Confessions*, Book 9).

4. Whatever we do in worship should be drawn from the Scriptures. This is what Martin Luther did when he took Psalm 46 and wrote the hymn "A mighty fortress is our God." It is what Isaac Watts did when he took Psalm 90 and paraphrased it into the hymn "O God, our help in ages past." Are these hymns "inspired" in the same way as the Psalms were inspired? No. Should we then call these hymns "uninspired" and suggest that these men were not led by the Holy Spirit when they made these beautiful hymns? On the contrary. One of the wonderful blessings of the new covenant is that the Holy Spirit causes the Word to resonate in the hearts of gifted men in such a way that new songs of praise are created time and again. The call of the Psalmist still stands: "Sing to the Lord a new song!" (Ps 96:1, 98:1).

A. J. De Visser

Dear Editor,

I have heard that some say that we may not sing the revised Psalms in the worship services because the Church Order says that only approved ones may be sung in church.

In a similar vein, Yarrow Church approached the last Synod with the same complaint about the Hymnary Augment. You can find this in Article 149 of the Acts of Synod Smithers.

2.8 Yarrow considers that the churches should test the proposed new hymn section before it is provisionally adopted as per Art. 55 CO. Hence Yarrow recommends to not adopt the recommendation of the [Book of Praise] committee to "provisionally adopt the Hymns presented. . . for testing by the churches," and [Yarrow] further states that singing the proposed hymns should be done before the

worship services, on music evenings or at various other occasions, but not during the worship services.

Synod responded with this consideration to that complaint: "3.8 re 2.8 – the last time hymns in our federation of churches were tested, they were sung in the worship services. Yarrow gives no reason for not following this practice again."

Ever since the CanRC began developing the Anglo Genevan Psalter / Hymnary we have been singing from booklets produced by the *Book of Praise* Committee. I can remember the black book, the red book, the red supplement, the green supplement, the blue collection, the blue liturgical forms, the Three Forms of Unity. All of these were used provisionally for testing in the churches. We sang the songs, used the forms, and read the confessions, all in the services. Things finally got "nailed down" in 1983 in Cloverdale.

The recent Synod said: "Testing the hymns" means "using them in the worship services." Thus also (*mutatis mutandis*) the revised Psalms. Testing means using them in worship.

We sing the revised Psalms and use the Augment in Fellowship Church throughout our worship services and the congregation (for the most part) is really enjoying the experience. We use PowerPoint and a projector and screen to great effect.

I would urge all members of the churches to approach their consistories and request that the revised Psalms be used whenever possible in our worship services. This has been our practice since the 50s and 60s.

Moreover, Yarrow's suggestion that they be sung "before the service" rings hollow to me. How can you have an auditorium full of God's covenant people, gathered together on the first day of the week, and ask them to sing a hymn or Psalm, and not acknowledge that it is worship? Let's purge the words "pre-service (or pre-worship) song" from our vocabulary. There is no such thing on Sunday morning in church. When we raise our voices together we are worshiping the great and highly exalted God of heaven and earth!

John van Popta
Pastor, Fellowship Church, Burlington

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.

**Press Release Classis
Central Ontario, held on
September 12, 2008 in
Burlington**

1. On behalf of the convening church of Burlington-Ebenezer, Rev. G. Nederveen called the meeting to order. He read Psalm 65 and after a brief meditation on this passage he led in prayer. He then asked the brothers to sing Psalm 65:1, 3 and welcomed the delegates
2. The credentials were examined by the delegates of the church of Toronto and found to be in good order. There were no instructions.
3. Classis was then constituted. Officers were: Rev. Nederveen, chairman; Rev. J. DeGelder, vice-chairman; and Rev. W. den Hollander, clerk.
4. The Rev. G.Ph. van Popta, who is present for the first time since his installation as minister of the Word for the church at Ottawa, signs the Form of Subscription of the Canadian Reformed Churches and was welcomed in Classis Central Ontario.
5. The chairman expressed thankfulness that Rev. H. Versteeg has accepted the call from the sending church of Toronto for the Mission in PNG. He wished the vacant church of Burlington-Waterdown the Lord's blessing in its search for a pastor. He also mentioned the health concerns of Dr. DeJong and Dr. Gootjes, as well as of Rev. J. Mulder, minister emeritus of the church in Burlington-Waterdown.
6. The proposed agenda was adopted with some minor adjustments.
7. The Church of Burlington Fellowship reported that the classical archives were in good order.
8. The classical treasurer reported that the August 31, 2008 balance was \$9470.19 plus a receivable of \$1996.00 minus an estimated expense of \$1000.00 for the remainder of 2008. He proposes to maintain the classical assessment at \$2.00 per communicant member for 2009. The 2009 assessment for Regional Synod East remains at \$2.00 per communicant member as well. Classis adopted the proposal of the treasurer.
9. The church of Burlington-Waterdown reported that the books of the classical treasurer were found to be in good order. The treasurer was released of his responsibilities for the fiscal year September 1, 2007 to August 31, 2008. Classis expressed appreciation for his work.
10. The Church of Flamborough reported that the Fund for Financial Aid to Students for the ministry has a balance of \$7,535.17 with one outstanding amount for 2007. In 2008 no funds were collected as per the decision of classis Central Ontario of September 2007. There is no proposal for an assessment. This will be presented to the classis of December 2008, depending on the advice of classis concerning the eligibility for support of a brother who studies at a seminary of one of our sister churches. Classis received this report with gratitude.
11. The church of Burlington Waterdown reported that the books of the Fund for Financial Aid to students for the Ministry were found to be in good order.
12. The Committee for Needy Churches reported that a request for support was received from the church at Ottawa for 2009. The committee recommends that the request from Ottawa be accepted and that the assessment for Classis be set at \$18.00 per communicant member. Classis accepted the committee's recommendations. The delegates from Ottawa express their thankfulness for the classical support. They report growth and much enthusiasm for the work of the Lord in Ottawa.
13. The Church of Burlington-Waterdown reported that the books of the Fund for Needy Churches were found to be in good order.
14. In the question period according to Art. 44 CO all the churches answer the first two questions in the affirmative and the third one in the negative. The church of Burlington Fellowship informs Classis of its decision to appeal a decision of the previous classis.
15. The Church of Flamborough, as Committee for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry requested the advice of Classis as to the correct interpretation of Art. 1 of the mandate of the committee. Could a brother who is pursuing theological studies at a seminary of churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches have ecclesiastical fellowship, instead of at our own Theological College, be eligible for receiving financial aid from the Fund? Classis advised not to grant the request for support.

16. Appointments

- Convening church for the next Classis: Burlington Fellowship, December 12, 2008
- Suggested officers: Rev. J.L. van Popta, chairman; Rev. Nederveen, vice chairman; Rev. DeGelder, clerk
- Examiners
Coordinators:
Rev. den Hollander and
Rev. G. Ph. Van Popta
Exegesis OT: Rev. Nederveen
Exegesis NT:
Rev. J.L. van Popta
Knowledge of Scripture:
Rev. J.L. van Popta
Doctrine & Creeds:
Rev. DeGelder
Church History:
Rev. den Hollander
Ethics: Rev. DeGelder
Church Polity: Rev. Nederveen
Diaconiology:
Rev. G.Ph. van Popta
- Church Visitors: Rev. DeGelder, Rev. den Hollander, Rev. Nederveen.
- Church for taking care of the Archives: Burlington Ebenezer
- Church to inspect the archives: Burlington Fellowship
- Treasurer: H.J. Sloots, 568 Dynes Road, Burlington, ON, L7N 2V2, alternate: G. Nordeman.
- Church for Financial Aid for students for the Ministry: Flamborough
- Committee for Needy Churches: H.J. Sloots (2010), A. VanTol (2009), E. Schouten (2011).
- Church for auditing the books of the Classical Treasurer, the Fund for Needy Churches and the Fund for Financial aid for Students for the Ministry: Burlington-Waterdown.

- Observer Free Church of Scotland: Rev. den Hollander.
17. Classis chose the following brothers as delegates to Regional Synod East, to be convened on November 12, 2008 in Chatham:
Ministers:
Rev. DeGelder and
Rev. den Hollander
Alternates:
Rev. G. Ph. Van Popta and
Rev. J.L. van Popta
Elders: B. Hordyk and
K. Veldkamp
Alternates: R. Ludwig and
H. Harsevoort
18. Question period was not made use of.
19. The chairman judged that censure according to Art. 34 C.O. was not required.
20. The Acts were read and adopted, after which the Press Release was read and approved.
21. The chairman requested the singing of Psalm 65:5, 6, after which the vice chairman led in thanksgiving prayer. The chairman then closed Classis Central Ontario of September 12, 2008.

For Classis Central Ontario of
September 12, 2008
Rev. J. DeGelder,
Vice-chairman of that classis

Press Release of Classis Manitoba convened in the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg on September 12, 2008

1. On behalf of the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church, Rev. J. Poppe called the meeting to order. He requested that the brothers sing Psalm 136:1, 2 and read 1 Timothy

1:12-2:7. He welcomed all present, in particular Candidate Rolf den Hollander, and the deputies of Regional Synod, Rev. C. Bouwman and Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar.

2. The credentials of the delegates were examined by the brothers from the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church and reported to be in order. There was an instruction from Carman East, and three of the churches have nominated delegates for Regional Synod.
3. Classis was declared constituted.
4. The following officers were appointed: Chairman – Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer; Vice Chairman – Rev. Poppe; Clerk – Rev. A.J. Pol.
5. Rev. Holtvlüwer thanked the convening church for the preparations involved in convening the classis. He welcomed the grade 11 and 12 students from the Immanuel Christian School. The agenda was adopted after a few adjustments.
6. Candidate den Hollander was welcomed to come to the front. The deputies of Regional Synod and a fraternal delegate, Br. Sandy Siepman from the Providence Reformed Church (URCNA) in Winnipeg were seated. Classis approved the proposal that Rev. George Horner, interim pastor of the Emmanuel American Reformed Church of Denver, be seated as an observer at Classis.
7. At this Classis Candidate den Hollander, who has accepted the call extended to him by the Grace Canadian Reformed Church of Winnipeg, presented himself for a peremptory examination. Classis examined the documentation and found all to be in order.

8. Candidate den Hollander proceeded to read Matthew 28:1-7 delivered his sermon proposal on this text. Classis deemed this sermon proposal sufficient to continue with the rest of the examination and the deputies of Regional Synod gave their concurring advice. Candidate den Hollander was informed and Classis adjourned for coffee.
9. Candidate den Hollander was examined in exegesis Old Testament, exegesis New Testament, and ethics. The senior students from Immanuel Christian School were thanked for their attendance. Classis adjourned for lunch.
10. The chairman welcomed the grade 4 class from Immanuel Christian School. Candidate den Hollander was examined on Knowledge of the contents of Holy Scripture and doctrine and creeds. Classis adjourned and the students from Immanuel Christian School departed.
11. Candidate den Hollander was examined on church history, church polity, and homiletics. Classis went into closed session to evaluate the exam. It deemed the exam sufficient and the deputies of Regional Synod concurred, opening the way for Candidate den Hollander to be ordained as Minister of the Word. The chairman read the Form of Subscription and Candidate den Hollander was asked to sign it, indicating his willingness to preach and teach the Word of God as summarised in the Three Forms of Unity. The chairman read from 2 Timothy 3:10-4:8, invited us to sing from Psalm 147:1, 4, and led in a prayer of thanksgiving. The chairman thanked the deputies of Regional Synod for their presence at Classis and giving concurring advice in the examination of brother den Hollander. Classis adjourned and an opportunity was given to congratulate Candidate den Hollander.
12. Br. Siepman brought greetings from the Providence Reformed Church and expressed thankfulness for the pulpit exchanges and growing contacts and involvement between the Providence Reformed Church and the Canadian Reformed Churches. Br. M. Leyenhorst thanked Br. Siepman for coming, expressing appreciation in turn for the developing contacts, and led in prayer for the United Reformed Churches of North America.
13. In closed session, the church visitors reported on a visit to the Emmanuel American Reformed Church of Denver. The visitors' report was received with thankfulness.
14. The Committee for Aid to Needy Churches presented a report. It details support given to the Emmanuel American Reformed Church of Denver. Support of \$66.00 per communicant member was given in 2007 and \$48.00 per communicant member in 2008. Aid is requested for \$28,350 CDN for 2009, which works out to a commitment of \$31.00 per communicant member for 2009. It is noted with thankfulness that the church of Denver is becoming more self sufficient. Classis agrees to provide the requested support. The Church for Auditing the books for Aid to Needy Churches (Winnipeg Redeemer) reported that the books were found to be in good order. Prayer was offered for this church.
15. The Committee for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry (Art. 20 CO) presented a report. The committee requested advice from Classis about how to deal with a potential need for substantial support beginning in September 2009. Classis decided to instruct the committee to assess the churches for approximately \$20 per communicant member. Brothers from the Church for Auditing the books of the Committee for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry (Winnipeg Grace) reported that the books were found to be in good order.
16. An extensive report from the Deputies for Contact with Neighbouring Classes/Presbyteries. This was received with gratitude.
17. A proposal was received from Carman-West to appoint a committee for students of theology in place of the current committee for financial aid to students for the ministry (see Article 20 of the Church Order). This committee would have a mandate that actively promotes theological study for the ministry. It is charged to mentor students, and support them financially if necessary. After some modifications, this proposal was adopted.
18. A proposal from Redeemer-Winnipeg for an amendment to the standing regulations of Classis Manitoba regarding delegates by the classis to a regional synod. When classis votes for elders to attend regional synod, it shall do so

only from names recommended to classis by the churches. Classis decided to also send a similar proposal to Regional Synod West.

19. Question Period according to Art. 44 C.O. was held. The church of Carman East requested advice that was given in closed session.
20. Correspondence was received from Grace Canadian Reformed Church requesting Classis be moved forward to September 12 and also requesting that Classis appoint a representative to be present at the ordination and inauguration of Candidate den Hollander. The church of Winnipeg Redeemer was appointed to send a representative to the ordination and inauguration of Candidate den Hollander.
21. A letter of greeting was received from Rev. Doug Barnes, Stated Clerk, Classis Central U.S. of the United Reformed Churches in North

America. This was received with thankfulness.

22. Appointments.
 - a. The convening church for the next classis is the Canadian Reformed Church of Carman East. The classis is scheduled to be held, the Lord willing on December 12, 2008. Alternate date: March 27, 2009.
 - b. The suggested officers for the next classis are: Chairman – Rev. Pol; Vice-chairman – Rev. Holtvlüwer; Clerk – Rev. Poppe.
 - c. Various standing committees, classical deputies and church visitors are appointed.
 - d. The following delegates were appointed to Regional Synod West, November 4, 2008: As ministers, Rev. Holtvlüwer and Rev. Poppe with Rev. Pol as alternate; as elders Brs. Len Lodder and W. (Bill) Nobel with Brs. Martin Leyenhorst and W. (Bill) Raap as first and second alternates.

23. Personal question period was held. The church of Denver expressed thankfulness for the financial support given and encouraged the churches to remember them in their prayers.
24. No censure according to Art. 34 of the Church Order was necessary.
25. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release approved for publication.
26. The chairman requested that the brothers sing from Psalm 100:3, 4 and led in closing prayer.

For Classis Manitoba
September 12, 2008
J. Poppe
Vice-chairman at that time

Note to Readers:
Beginning in January 2009, Clarion will no longer be publishing all submitted press releases. Selected items may appear from time to time. Press releases can be read at www.canrc.org.

