

Clarion



THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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*“By 1850 there were only
thirteen Christian schools
in the Netherlands”*

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- Free to Serve
- Entertaining Angels





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Free to Serve

The death of soldiers to preserve freedom has the effect of giving us physical freedom to live in this spiritual freedom

On November 7 of the year that has just passed, the church I serve as minister experienced something for the first time in its sixty years as a congregation. It hosted a "Remembrance Day Worship Service." This was not just a service where special attention was paid to the many that died in the wars of the past century. Rather, we were asked by the local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion to host the annual Remembrance Day worship service. In such a service, the Legion sends a small "Flag Party." They march in before the service starts with their flags. These flags are then placed at the front. This is followed by the singing of "O Canada," the playing of the "Last Post," followed by a minute of silence in memory of those who died, which in turn is followed by the playing of the "Reveille." After the reading of the Act of Remembrance, the regular worship service takes place. After the worship service, the Legion Flag Party retrieves the flags. There is the singing of "God Save the Queen," and the Flag Party marches out. Altogether some twenty-five Legion members joined in our worship on that day. It is a striking feature that the local branch of the Legion still sought to remember those who died in past wars in a worship service.

While such a service undoubtedly is outside the regular experiences of a Reformed worship service, there was little hesitation when the request was received to host this service. After all, though there is evidence of an increasing ethnic mix in the Canadian Reformed churches, and we can come across sixth generation Canadians of Dutch descent (at least in Orangeville), that does not take away the fact that the Canadian Reformed Churches are rooted in the Lord's church gathering work in The Netherlands. Further, the existence as a church in Canada is due in part to efforts of the Canadian soldiers who fought in the Second World War. By the providence of God, Canadian

soldiers played a role in liberating The Netherlands. This contributed to making Canada a country of choice for many post war immigrants from The Netherlands.

To do justice to remembering those who died, while at the same time doing justice to the character of a worship service where everything should point to God, the sermon had as theme the words of our Lord found in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." These words can be found on various cenotaphs and war memorials. It is a testimony to those who gave their lives so that others might live. Or, to use words found on the local Orangeville cenotaph, "who gave their lives that freedom might prevail."

When it comes to the many who died in wars, it is very well possible that many did not consciously go with the mindset of giving their lives out of love for others. There may even have been a sense of adventure. In the end, however, their death in war contributed toward the freedom we may enjoy today.

While the words as spoken by our Lord seem a fitting way to refer to those who died in wars, they were of course meant to draw attention to himself. When he spoke those words, his arrest and death by crucifixion was just over the horizon. The disciples did not know that yet, but our Lord was fully aware of what was waiting for him. He had told his disciples at least three times of his arrest and death. When he spoke those words, the Lord was engaged in the battle against the great enemy, the devil, in order to secure freedom for us from sin and the power of the devil.

While it is easy to see why these words of our Lord were chosen for various cenotaphs and war memorials, we see the unique application in the life of our Lord. He died not that freedom might prevail or that we might live in a free country but he died to obtain freedom and eternal life. The death of soldiers secured physical





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freedom. The death of our Lord has given us spiritual freedom. The death of soldiers to preserve freedom has the effect of giving us physical freedom to live in this spiritual freedom.

This is worth highlighting as we stand on the threshold of another year. By the providence of God we live in a free country. We so often take that for granted. Perhaps we would cherish that freedom a little more if we would take note of the struggles of Christians in Muslim countries or in China. The freedom we enjoy today came at a price. Even more, our spiritual freedom came at a price, the blood of God's own Son. This freedom is a precious resource. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Galatians, wrote, "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command:

What's Inside

This is the first issue of *Clarion* for the year of our Lord, 2011. Rev. Eric Kampen writes in his editorial that this year lies open before us, who have been freed by the blood of Christ. We are called to use this freedom thankfully to serve God and our neighbour in love.

As we approach the publishing of our Authorized Provisional Version of the *Book of Praise*, it seems an appropriate time to read Ken Hanko's article on the music of the *Genevan Psalter*. He writes that this music "is a monumental achievement, rich in superb music but still truly congregational, and a wonderful heritage for Reformed churches throughout the world to draw on."

Issue 1 reports on Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer taking up his task with Spring Creek CanRC at Tintern as well as the 2010 graduation at Emmanuel Christian High School. It also includes one book review from Dr. Wes Bredenhof.

The growing "Young, Restless, Reformed" movement is discussed by Rev. John van Popta in the Ecumena column. We also have the regular Treasures New and Old and Education Matters columns as well as the first Mission News insert of the new year.

Laura Veenendaal

'love your neighbour as yourself.' If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed" (Gal 5:13-15). In a similar tone, Peter wrote, "Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king" (1 Pet 2:16, 17).

The words of Paul and Peter touch on two aspects of our freedom in Christ. The first is that we should not indulge in the ways of the sinful nature. It is a sad reality that the freedom we have as a result of wars against oppressors has not led to a godlier but a very ungodly society. Freedom is used to indulge the sinful nature. Our free but ungodly society presents us with many temptations to indulge the sinful nature.

The second aspect of our freedom is expressed in Paul's call to "serve one another in love" and Peter's call to "love the brotherhood of believers." There is the danger that we use the freedom to fight each other rather than serve each other. It can show up, for example, in the way various issues in church life are discussed with a snarl rather than a smile. The danger is there that we are too busy biting each other rather than listening to each other in love.

The year of our Lord 2011 lies open before us, who have been freed by the blood of Christ. We may continue to live in free country. Let us use this double freedom thankfully to serve our gracious God and our neighbour, for the proper use of our freedom is to serve one another in love.



Church News

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

Rev. H. Alkema

of Houston, British Columbia

Called and declined the call to the Smithville
Canadian Reformed Church:

Rev. D. Poppe

of Coaldale, Alberta

Change of Worship Time and Location

Effective October 31, 2010, the Providence
Canadian Reformed Church of Hamilton will be
worshipping at 9:30 AM and 3:30 PM in their new
building located at 582 Southcote Road.

Called by the Eben-Ezer Canadian Reformed
Church in Chatham, Ontario:

Rev. D. de Boer

of Dunnville, Ontario

Sustained Ordination Exam

Sustained his ordination exam at the Classis
Manitoba of December 10, 2010:

Candidate Ryan Kampen





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Entertaining Angels

MATTHEW 13:52

“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”

Hebrews 13:2

We all know about the Good Samaritan. It's a memorable story, also for the lesson it so clearly teaches in answer to that question: "Who is my neighbour?" We know the parable and its lesson, yet we also know how hard it is to show this kind of love. How difficult, especially when we're in the uncomfortable position of actually having to *do something!*

Yet this is the call of the Scriptures: that God's people be busy with loving not just those who love them in return, but loving *all* – neighbours and visitors and strangers alike. That's what we're exhorted in Hebrews 13, where the writer begins his closing words to the congregation: "Keep on loving each other as brothers" (v. 1). If you've been sprinkled with Christ's blood, then you'll love your fellow members in the family of Christ.

The author then goes on to speak of other ways of showing love, the first of which is that command to "entertain strangers." The Greek term that's used here is a compound word and it means literally "the love-of-strangers." Don't neglect it, we're told! So what is this activity? It's being welcoming to all, like by reaching out to those fellow saints you're not so familiar with or by offering kindness to the unbelievers whom God places on your path.

And this is what the saints have always done, for in "so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it" (v. 2). It's just a passing allusion, but one that the "Hebrews" would've picked up on. Probably the first example that

popped into their minds would've been Genesis 18, where Abraham is active in "the love-of-strangers." For he welcomes to his tents those three men who suddenly drop in; he prepares a meal for them, even waits on them like a lowly servant would.

We know the identity of these three visitors, of course: two are angels, and the third is said to be none other than "the LORD." But Abraham doesn't know and that's the whole point. These three travellers could've been anyone, from anywhere, but that doesn't hinder Abraham's work of hospitality.

More examples of unsuspecting hospitality to angels could be brought forward, from Genesis 19 or Judges 6 or Judges 13. The impression is that the saints were used to doing this, welcoming perfect "strangers." Surely it wasn't always convenient for those who hosted. Being hospitable meant incurring costs. Yet they honoured the obligation to love their neighbour.

The question some people want to ask when they read this text is: "So will angels in disguise appear to us *today*?" And there are stories to that effect, told by people who are almost certain they once encountered an angel: that person in the snowstorm, that beggar on the sidewalk, that blind man on the bus.

Is it impossible that God would place an "undercover angel" on our path today? We could debate the question. But notice the text isn't teaching us to expect such appearances from heaven. Instead, the whole lesson is about how we treat the people around us here on

earth. The Holy Spirit wants us to ask a different question: "So what about the people constantly coming in and out of my life? Do I love them? Do I welcome them? And how can I better build them up?"

The illustration from the past is brought forward by the Spirit to show us the abiding importance of neighbour love. That great "cloud of witnesses" shows us how it's done. Many things have changed from the days of Abraham, but not this!

God is telling us that true love reaches across a great distance. Sometimes that distance is in the church, where there might be brothers and sisters in Christ who wrestle with loneliness, who are in need of some kind of help, or who've strayed to the fringes. Perhaps we don't really know them, but that shouldn't stop us. We must love these "strangers" in our midst, open our door to them, and respond to their needs in concrete ways.

And this love has to reach across an even greater distance, out into the world. For the world is full of "strangers." When we meet them, we have no idea who they are. They could be anyone, from anywhere. They could look odd, they could be down and out, or even be followers of different religions. What should we do?

We ought to treat them with love. We ought to treat them as if the holy angels were in our midst, as if these people were sent by God himself to walk among us – indeed, God *has* sent these strangers! So let's not neglect to welcome them.



The Music of the Genevan Psalter

This article started its life as a speech made to the congregation in Bluebell for our Reformation Day celebration.

One of the most important contributions that the Reformers made to the reformation of the church's worship was the restoration of congregational singing. To accomplish this they had to provide both new music and new lyrics: new music because the existing music was too difficult for congregations to sing and new lyrics because the existing lyrics were all in Latin.

Among the Lutherans, beginning with Martin Luther himself and continuing through the time of Johann Sebastian Bach about 200 years later, there developed a rich and extensive hymnody. But among the Calvinists things took a different turn: they began a new way of singing the psalms. First in Strasburg, and then in Geneva, Calvin introduced into the Reformed churches the practice of metrical psalmody. Clement Marot and Theodore Beza rendered all the psalms in rhymed verse and various musicians then set these verses to music. The *Genevan Psalter*, begun around 1538 and completed about twenty-five years later in 1562, was the result.

Various considerations governed the composition of the Genevan psalm tunes, among them: the music had to be suitable for worship, it had to be simple enough for untrained singers to sing, and it had to fit the lyrics for which it was written.

Suitable for worship

With regard to suitability for worship, Calvin spoke of the need for the music to have weight and majesty. While it may be somewhat difficult to define these terms precisely in this connection, it is certainly clear that the reformers believed that not all the music available to them was fitting as an offering to God. The first and most important consideration was that the music had to take into account that the people were drawing near to a God whose majesty demands fear and reverence. The light and frivolous could have no place.

This does not mean, however, that the music of the *Genevan Psalter* lacks joy. It is not only joyful when joy is appropriate, but even at times exuberant. Psalms 47 and 81 are examples.

Simple enough for untrained singers

The music also had to be simple enough for untrained singers. But, since simplicity pulls towards sameness and a lack of differentiation, ways also had to be found to maintain variety and interest as well as excellence.

The composers achieved simplicity by refusing to make use of several musical devices that are common even in later church music. 1) The music falls within a narrow vocal range, an octave plus one note. Most tunes encompass a range of middle C to high D, a few D to high E. The congregations therefore never had to sing more than nine different notes in the course of a single tune. Later church music frequently expands that range to ten or even eleven notes. 2) All of the tunes use only half notes and quarter notes: no eighth notes, no sixteenth notes and no dotted notes, all of which are quite common in more recent church music. 3) Psalms 2 and 6, and a few others, are exceptions, but the tunes are generally syllabic. There is only one note for each syllable in the lyrics. 4) There are few large leaps up or down from one note to the next. Small intervals are easier to sing than large ones. The most difficult larger intervals never appear. 5) Most lines begin and end with long notes, to give the members of the congregation time to gather their voices together at the beginning of the lines and to catch their breath between lines. 6) The congregation sang in unison and without even instrumental accompaniment to supply any harmony.

Now these are pretty stringent requirements. It's as if you were to go into one of the big box shoe stores where they have an enormous selection of shoes, but decide before you begin to shop that you are not going to spend more than thirty dollars, that the shoes must have no ornamentation like buckles or tassels, and that



the leather must have a glossy finish. Those restrictions would severely limit your choices. But, as far as we know, the composers of the Genevan tunes imposed these musical restrictions on themselves, to make possible a truly congregational body of music.

Though the tunes are simple they also show an amazing variety, but a variety that is achieved in ways quite different from that of more recent hymn and psalm tunes.

Modern church music is written almost exclusively in major and minor keys. In fact, since the minor keys are very seldom used, almost all tunes sung today are in major. But there are twelve church modes and the *Genevan Psalter* uses nine of them. These modes, each of which has its own distinctive sound, permit a much wider range of expressiveness than major and minor tonalities.

One of the most important contributions that the Reformers made to the church's worship was the restoration of congregational singing

The Genevan tunes also use an enormous variety of meters. By meter we mean the number of lines in the tune as well as the number of notes per line. Thus Psalm 1, for example, has six lines of music, the first two lines of ten notes, the third and fourth of eleven notes, and the last two again of ten notes each. The meter, therefore, is 10.10.11.11.10.10.

There are 125 tunes in the *Genevan Psalter* and 110 different meters, almost a one to one ratio of meters to tunes. For the sake of comparison, *The Psalter*, published by the United Presbyterian Church in 1912 and still in use in the Protestant Reformed and Netherlands Reformed Churches, has approximately four hundred fifty tunes and about fifty different meters, a ratio of one meter for every nine tunes. The *Book of Psalms for Singing*, the Psalter of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, also has about 450 tunes and about sixty different meters, a ratio of one to seven or eight. And *The Scottish Psalter* (or *The Psalms of David in Metre*) has all the psalms rendered in Common Meter (86.86) so that you could, if you wanted, sing all the psalms to only one tune. In fact, there was a time in the history of the Scottish Presbyterian churches that the congregations in general used only about ten tunes to sing the whole Psalter.

The meters of the *Genevan Psalter* are frequently asymmetrical. This also is unusual. The vast majority of tunes in more recent hymn and psalm books have very symmetrical meters: 86.86, or 88.88 or 886.886, etc. But the *Genevan Psalter* has meters like 89.889 (Psalm 15), 10.8.8.10.776.666 (Psalm 40), 11.11.11.11.667.667 (Psalm 79), or 66.77.66.666 (Psalm 97).

Also, it is possible, in many cases, to sing just half of the tune. The *Book of Praise* takes advantage of this only in Psalms 17 and 79, but it can be done with many other tunes as well.

Finally, the Genevan tunes have a great variety of rhythms. By rhythm I mean the patterns of half and quarter notes within the lines of music. Again this is unlike most later church music. The best way to illustrate this is to turn to Psalm 134. Psalm 134 has a symmetrical meter (88.88, what we call Long Meter today), but notice that, though the first three lines all have the same rhythm (1 long, 4 short, 3 long), the fourth line is different (3 long, 2 short, 3 long). This tune, under the name Old Hundredth, is found in nearly every hymn and psalm book that has been compiled since the Reformation, but rarely with the same asymmetrical rhythms. Usually you will find that the fourth line is made to match the first three, or that all the lines are reduced to quarter notes. Another example is Psalm 93. The meter is symmetrical (10.10.10.10), but the rhythm changes in every line, so that no two lines match.

Secondly with regard to rhythm, some lines begin or end with quarter notes: Psalm 1, lines 2 and 5; and Psalm 8, line 4 are examples.

Thirdly, we must not ignore the syncopations. Syncopations are shifts in accent, so that the accent falls in an unexpected place. These usually occur near the end of the line: Psalms 16, 78 and 105 are examples. But occasionally they occur earlier, as in Psalm 124. The meter is 10.10.10.10.10. All the lines, except the third, have a regular pattern of unaccented note followed by accented note: J J J J J . But line 3 has J J L // J . Syncopation occurs in about one third of the tunes.

It should be noted that the presence of eighth or sixteenth notes in modern hymn tunes does not indicate syncopation: these do not force a shift in the accents.

Matching music and lyrics

The third consideration for the composers of the *Genevan Psalter* was matching the expressive character of the music to the words of the Psalm. Music is a very powerful thing. It can "enflame our hearts with a more vehement and ardent zeal," as Calvin says. But in worship that power must be made subservient

to the words we sing. The important thing is the offering of our lips. The music does not stand alone, as in one of Beethoven's symphonies, but supports the text. To serve us well, then, it must not distract from or contradict what we are saying, but call our attention to the meaning of the words and stir us up to experience imaginatively the same things that the psalmists were experiencing thousands of years ago.

Music is a very powerful thing

When we sing a sad psalm, the music should be sad, as in Psalms 6 and 51. If we sing a psalm of exultation the music should exult, as in Psalms 97 and 150. Psalm 84, a psalm of longing for God's house, expresses that longing in the music. The serenity of the music of Psalm 121 is a perfect match for the text, a psalm of quiet confidence in the watchful care of God. The modes allow a wider range of flexibility in this than the major and minor tonalities of more modern music.

But the matching of music to words is sometimes even more precise than that. Sometimes the music expresses exactly what the words are saying. Thus in Psalm 81, "Sing a Psalm of joy. Shout with holy fervour," you cannot help but shout on the word shout. The long high note at the beginning of line 2 demands it.

Psalm 2 is even more interesting. This is a psalm about the rebellion of the nations and their kings against the Lord and his Anointed. The composer, therefore, could have given the music a defiant cast (a perfectly appropriate way to illustrate that rebellion), but he took a different approach. The first thing to note is that all the notes in the first three lines, except those at the beginnings and ends of the lines, are quarter

notes. I think that you will not find this anywhere else in the whole Psalter. There are single lines constructed on the same pattern (Psalm 104, line 7), but not, I think, three lines together. All those quarter notes give one a sense of hurry, especially if the tune is played rather briskly as it ought to be. This sense of hurry reflects the restlessness and frenzy of the nations in their rebellion. The second thing to note is that the range is narrow and at the low end of the octave. You do not get above an A until the middle of the fourth line. So along with the hurry you have a kind of muttering or grumbling sound, which not only reflects on the character of the rebellion, but also reminds us of the derision that the Lord himself expresses in the second stanza. It is brilliantly done.

Also Psalm 130: in the psalm we cry to God "from the depths." From the first to the second note of the tune we fall into the depths, going from an A down to a D. After that fall, however, we begin to rise out of the depths again, but gradually: the rising is not nearly as swift as the falling. In the first line we get up to an F, in the second line back to an A, in the third line to a C, and, finally, in the fourth line to a D. This is the movement of the Psalm itself, for at the end we sing:

*He will redeem His people,
His chosen Israel,
From all their sin and evil,
That they His praise may tell.*

The *Genevan Psalter* was so successful that within a few years of its completion it had been translated into most of the languages of Europe, except (alas!) English, and has been in continuous use in at least some Reformed churches from the Reformation down to the present. It is a monumental achievement, rich in superb music but still truly congregational, and a wonderful heritage for Reformed churches throughout the world to draw on.

C





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Ecumena

Commentary on News and Trends in the International Church

Young, Restless, Reformed

For several years now, across the USA, a movement has been growing. Loosely identified, it has been called, "Young, Restless, Reformed." Not organized in any formal way, the movement is based on the desire for more than what contemporary evangelicalism offers. There is a powerful resurgence of interest in Reformed theology. A new generation of Christians in America wants more. All kinds of people are turning to Reformed theology! Though this movement is strongly found in the USA, there is growing interest in Canada too.

This generation is interested in learning of the sovereign God of the Bible. John Piper's preaching (easily accessed through pod-casting on the Internet) and his books (*Desiring God* has sold nearly 300,000 copies) have had much influence. Many people will acknowledge that it was John Piper's preaching or his books that brought them to the Reformed faith. R.C. Sproul and Ligonier Ministries, in both Canada and the USA, have raised the Reformed banner for decades.

One of the remarkable stories is that of Al Mohler, who was appointed as President of Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville Kentucky in 1993, when he was only forty-four years old. Southern Baptist is the main seminary (over 2000 students) for the largest Protestant body in the USA, which has sixteen million members and more than 42,000 churches. For decades, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) had drifted into contemporary liberalism. Al Mohler led the way back to the churches' Calvinist roots. At his arrival, ninety percent of the faculty was offered early retirement! Then the SBC reversed decisions previously made and, for

example, again rejected women's ordination. For nearly twenty years Al Mohler has been a voice for Calvinism in the USA. Though we disagree with SBC's position on baptism, we can be thankful that there is a strong voice for Reformed doctrine in the largest Protestant church in the USA.

Mark Driscoll, preacher at Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington, and Rick McKinley at Imago Dei Church in Portland, Oregon, reach the "unreachable" in the most un-churched major cities in America. Tim Keller preaches to thousands in Manhattan. These men all profess to be Calvinists. There is a hunger for solid biblical Calvinist teaching and preaching across America. These churches are reaching into their communities and changing the face of American Christianity. Though the "emergent church movement" with its lack of doctrinal rigour continues to influence many, the "Young, Restless, Reformed" is gaining strength and influence. This can be seen in the Acts 29 Network, a network of 300 and more men who are training others how to go into rural and urban America, and the world, to plant Reformed churches.

Recently, at the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, three well-known Calvinist scholars and authors, N.T. Wright (Anglican), Tom Schreiner (Southern Baptist), and Frank Thielman (Presbyterian) were plenary speakers on the central Reformed doctrine of "Justification by Faith." Each day one of the speakers presented a paper. On the final day, the three were on a stage in front of 2600 participants and had a drag-down no-holds-barred debate. At the end they were given a standing ovation; not something



*From left to right: Clinton Arnold, N.T. Wright, Tom Schreiner, Frank Thielman
(Photo credit G.H. Visscher)*

often seen at an academic conference! There was a passion in the room for the clear sound of biblical teaching in the Reformed traditions.

The “Young, Restless, Reformed,” however, are not just wanting to learn some intellectual Calvinism; they are seeking the truth that radically transforms lives and seek to live obedient lives. Authors like James K.

Smith are leading the way to passionate, thorough going Reformed life styles.

Though we could have strong disagreements with many of these preachers and leaders on the doctrine of baptism, we can be thankful that Reformed thought and practice is a growing influence in our culture.



www.desiringgod.org
www.albertmohler.com
www.acts29network.org

www.imagodeicommunity.com
www.marshillchurch.org



Emmanuel Christian High School Graduation 2010

It was a pleasant fall day on Friday, October 1 as students, parents, staff, and board members gathered in the Guelph Canadian Reformed church building to celebrate the graduation of the Emmanuel Christian High School class of 2010. As one entered the church building, fall-themed decorations were everywhere. All present enjoyed a delicious meal prepared by the mothers of the Grade 12 students and served by a number of the Grade 12 students. The servers were exceptionally helpful, eager to serve as many cups of coffee to the diners as necessary. After the dinner and dessert, all enjoyed a game of Jeopardy, where various student quirks, escapades, and comments were remembered and celebrated. The game was so enjoyed by those present that even the parents wanted to get into the game, which was only meant for the grads.

After the meal and a short break, all those who dined, joined by other family members and friends, moved into the sanctuary to witness the graduation of thirty well-dressed and groomed graduands. The graduands entered to the song *Pomp and Circumstance* as played by the Emmanuel Chamber Orchestra, ably conducted by Mr. Steve DeBoer. The chairman of the board, Mr. Butch Medemblik, welcomed all those present with Bible reading and prayer, as well as with some opening remarks. He then introduced Rev. P. Feenstra, who presented the graduation address entitled "The Pilgrim's Progress." Rev. Feenstra briefly reviewed the content of the book *Pilgrim's Progress*, and described the pilgrim's journey to the Celestial City, where he will be relieved of the burden he is carrying. Along the way he is tempted by those who suggest a better way to get to the intended destination. ECHS has provided supplies to the students which will equip them on their journey to the Celestial City. A pilgrim needs to have his eyes fixed on his destination and likewise the graduands were encouraged, whether they travel to places of study or work, to have focus on what they want to do and where they want to go. They

were encouraged to grow and mature in Christ and continue to live for Christ. As a pilgrim in our society we can be distracted by so many things around us, but we are reminded that our focus should be on Jesus. At times our focus may be blurred because

of insecurity about the future, or we could be encouraged by the world to enjoy tonight and have a good time, rather than focus on what is above. Our focus should always be on reaching the city, on what puts us on our knees. The graduands were encouraged to discipline their minds and emotions so that they focus on Christ and the others in attendance were encouraged to pray for them and lead by example, as they continue on their way to the celestial city.

Then followed the principal's address, which was not presented by the principal, Mr. Henk Nobel, but by the vice-principal, Mr. Arthur Kingma, as Mr. Nobel had come down with a case of laryngitis and was unable to speak above a whisper. In this address, Mr. Nobel highlighted that our society encourages everyone to seek what would give them the opportunity to reach their full potential, as that would lead them to true happiness. However, those heeding this message are led to destruction. Adam and Eve heeded the words of the serpent, who was evidently the most polished speaker. As the graduands move into the world, they will be confronted by sweet words which appeal to their reason and to their ego, and this is Satan's method of working. Adam and Eve lost Paradise when they stopped listening to God and listened to Satan; we are encouraged to stop listening to Satan and listen to God instead. The grads were encouraged to keep alive the



Rev. Feenstra – Grad Address

joy and wonder in their Heavenly Father and seek to praise him in all that they do.

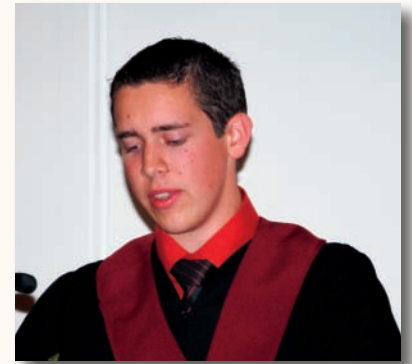
The diplomas were then presented to the grads in (mostly!) alphabetical order, and then a number of awards, which highlighted the dedication and zeal of the students, as well as the faithful use of their talents, were presented.

Immediately following these presentations, one of the graduates, Sylvia Degelder, played her own composition on the piano. This composition was very warmly received by all present.

On behalf of the graduates, Ben Agema presented the Valedictorian Address. He brought the grads on a trip down memory lane, reminding them of many of the different components to school life: the musical, art class, sporting events, volunteering, and so on. The

most relevant thing from school, however, was the covenantal training that was woven into their tasks at school, and on behalf of the grads relayed their gratitude to God on high for all that he had given them, as well as that he was their key to the future.

Throughout the evening we were reminded of God's hand in the lives of these students and we pray with them that he will lead them on they travel on their paths as pilgrims.



Ben Agema – Valedictorian Speech



Honours Achievement Award

Ben Agema
Marsha Bultena
Darren Feenstra
Sarah Groen
Emily Kampen
Joanne Kruizenga
Nick Nijenhuis
Lisa Plantinga
Kailey Swaving
Jenise Tamminga
Kassia VanVeen

Jordan Hutchinson Memorial Academic Proficiency Award

Jenise Tamminga

Post Farm Structures Award

Neil Nobel

Queen Elizabeth II Aiming for the Top Scholarship

Ben Agema

Governor General's Award

Ben Agema

Citizenship Award

Nick Nijenhuis

Stewardship Award

Marsha Bultena
Rachel Helder
Cailey Swaving



Spring Creek CanRC at Tintern Welcomes Rev. Holtvlüwer

Installation

On October 17, 2010, the Spring Creek Canadian Reformed Church at Tintern and many guests joyfully came together to worship the Lord and to install their new pastor and teacher, Rev. P. H. Holtvlüwer. In the morning service, Rev. D. Wynia of the Vineyard Canadian Reformed Church at Lincoln, our counsellor during our vacancy, preached on the text of 2 Corinthians 5:11-15. Paul reveals the motives for the ministry of the gospel. He preached the gospel because he knew the fear of the Lord; he was compelled by the love of the Lord; and so that his listeners would live for the Lord. Rev. Wynia pointed out that, in this installation service, the Lord gives us a special moment in the life of the congregation to focus on what he says in his Word about the calling, office, and service of the minister in the congregation.

In the text, Paul speaks about his work and office as apostle to the Corinthians. There were critics and opponents to his work as an apostle. Paul responds, not to defend himself personally, but for the sake of the gospel, the message of salvation. His office and message are bound together: the effectiveness and power of his ministry are based on the confession and conviction that God had sent him. Paul also speaks of his motives as he defends his ministry and office. He knows the fear of the Lord. One day we will all stand before God's throne and we will have to give an answer for everything we have done. Throughout his letters, Paul also sets the work of office bearers in the context of their accountability to the Lord, the good shepherd. Paul's care for the Corinthians is evident in his jealousy for them and so he diligently worked to present them to Christ on the last day. The love of Christ compelled Paul to preach the gospel. That Christ died for all has tremendous effect and power. Paul works and prays that the work of Christ will come to fulfillment and expression in the congregation, so that they no longer



live for themselves, but for Christ! This is the whole point and purpose of the ministry of the gospel. It is for this purpose that God has sent us Rev. Holtvlüwer and it is for this purpose that we receive his ministry.

After the worship service, congratulations were received from neighbouring CanRC, URCNA, and OPC churches and the local MP via letters read by chairman Br. Jan VanZanten, and through several guest speakers representing their churches. Rev. Wynia spoke on behalf of Classis Niagara. Our congregation and Rev. Holtvlüwer were congratulated on his installation and also encouraged as we work together in the Lord to the glory of his holy Name.

Inaugural sermon

In the afternoon service, Rev. Holtvlüwer preached his inaugural sermon on God's Word in Psalm 126. Sowing seed in tears we will reap with joy: fulsome joy remembered; further joy sought; fresh joy assured.

Rev. Holtvlüwer began by saying that today is a day of rejoicing. He is glad to be here and eager to get



started! Yet we all know that happiness has a way of wearing off after a while. What is new becomes normal. When trouble does strike, the joy that we had can quickly evaporate and become a distant memory. It happens to everyone. Yet it is exactly the joy of salvation which Rev. Holtvlüwer may preach to us. We may experience it – not just once, but over and over again, until it becomes a permanent reality.

The text says that “When the Lord brought back captives to Zion we were like men who dreamed.” God had done the impossible. Hallelujah! Do we too marvel at the power of the Lord? For those who believe in him there is joy. The Lord has done great things for us! Anyone who has experienced freedom from sin after repentance knows this feeling. This joy – this is the Christian life! He sent a Deliverer to rescue us from sin, the darkest slavery we know. His Son became one of us and took upon himself all our sins and punishment so that we might be forever free. God has turned our sorrow into gladness! This is the greatest of all God’s wonderful works.

And we must seek still further joy! If you struggle with a particular sin, and the Lord releases you from it, you taste that joy of freedom! But does it stay that way forever? In Psalm 126, adversity is pictured as a time of sowing seeds. There was a greater purpose in the Israelites going into exile. They went out weeping, but sowing seeds in hope. They trusted that God would have a harvest of faithfulness at the end. And he did! He brought back the remnant. We also may experience the bitterness of a fall into sin, but in hope we may turn to the Lord Jesus who knows all about tears and struggle; after all, he is the man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. We appeal to Him and He is working toward the day when all our tears will be gone

forever. It is Rev. Holtvlüwer’s privilege to proclaim that message Sunday after Sunday, in catechism and in counselling from house to house: that the Lord has done great things for us and he will do great things for us! Sins that grip you today can be broken out of your life if you cry out to him. Don’t despair if sins have recaptured you. Pray for release again and again. Do you need rescuing? Take heart! If you sow in tears, the Lord promises you that you will reap with songs of joy.

Welcome evening

On Friday, October 22, 2010, the congregation came together with the Holtvlüwer family for an evening of fellowship and good food to welcome the minister and his family. The evening began with a wonderful dessert coffee social. A letter of congratulations from our emeritus pastor Rev. Wieske was read. Various study societies and the catechism students had entertaining presentations and the children and the teenagers sang some beautiful songs. Br. Brian Bosch was our MC and kept us laughing with his jokes and comments, such as his efforts as Council’s clerk to type the “u with the two dots” in the Holtvlüwer name. The Holtvlüwer family was presented with gifts including a photo directory of the congregation and a binder of suggestions of local activities for the family to enjoy. Rev. and Mrs. Holtvlüwer thanked everyone and mentioned that they thoroughly enjoyed the welcome evening hosted by the congregation – they have indeed all felt very welcome!

The Lord has given us a new pastor and teacher in Rev. Holtvlüwer! May the Lord bless him and his family as he begins his ministry here and may we receive him joyfully and work together to the glory of our heavenly Father, giving thanks to him for all that he has done for us!





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ksikkema@istop.com

Kootwijk: Doleantie and Education

On January 8, 1886, now 125 years ago, Candidate J.H. Houtzagers (1857-1940) accepted a call to Kootwijk, an impoverished hamlet in the Veluwe region of The Netherlands. In 1884, he had been the first theology student to graduate from the Reformed – but as yet unapproved – Free University in Amsterdam. His ordination took place on February 7, 1886, a few days after the consistory of Kootwijk was provisionally suspended from office by Classis Harderwijk. This series of events made Kootwijk the “mother-church” of the Doleantie of 1886. What was ultimately at stake was a desire to bow under the yoke of Christ, rather than that of the state. This desire also translated into a renewed effort for Christian education.

I became aware of the link between the Doleantie and the Kootwijk “School with the Bible” right after attending the ICRE-III conference in Lunteren. I stopped in nearby Voorthuizen and Kootwijk to get some pictures for church history lessons about the Doleantie, but in Kootwijk I got more than expected. The custodian was quite prepared to engage in a conversation about the events of 1886. She even agreed to open the medieval church building and made me aware of “The Little Church on the Hill.” This was the Doleantie church, built when Rev. Houtzagers left Kootwijk in 1919, and the congregation could no longer rent the old building. When I stopped at the Little Church, I discovered the former School with the Bible next door. Its current owners gladly shared more about their home and their village.¹

Kootwijk derives its name from *cote-vick*, a sheep shelter. In the 1880s, sheep farming on the heather was still the industry of choice, as the area’s fine glacial sand was but marginally suitable for agriculture. People supplemented their meager incomes as broom makers, poachers, and bee keepers, with some cash cropping. Because of the poverty, government subsidies covered nearly eighty-five percent of the church budget. The hamlet was spiritually impoverished as well. It had no minister since 1868 – other than a failed theological student who acted as a farmer/lay-preacher. The parsonage served as a barn. A classically

appointed minister would customarily administer the sacraments, but might be the only one at the Lord’s Table. Influenced by a pietist lady, Engeltje vanHussel, the sheep hardly dared attend. It also appears that baptism was administered out of custom, rather than as an ordinance of God regarding the promises and obligations of the covenant, and devoid of key elements of the form.

School struggle

Christian Renewal recently published an excellent series about the Dutch school struggle, and here is but a brief summary of nineteenth century highlights. The country’s 1806 constitution required public schools to teach in all “Christian and social virtues,” but Enlightenment thinking led schools to a moralistic and secular promotion of being considerate, kind, friendly, and patient. The Bible was considered not written for children and offensive to Jews and Muslims. Consequently, by the 1830s, Bibles were not allowed in classrooms – and certainly not open ones. Foreign dignitaries, studying excellent aspects of Dutch education, expressed surprise that these were “Christian” schools *without the Bible*. People who joined the Secession in 1834 were convinced that the Bible ought to be central in school – and soon discovered that this was not an option, even if they paid for it themselves from their often meager resources.

The constitution allowed for independent schools, but permission was only granted if local officials saw a benefit. They rarely did. Several parental or parochial Schools with the Bible were started, but quickly shut down. Those involved were prosecuted and fined. Freedom of education became a key reason for emigration to Michigan and Iowa in the 1840s. The permission requirement was removed in 1848, but by 1850 there were only thirteen Christian schools in The Netherlands; it was just too costly. In 1878, new building codes and qualification regulations made it still harder to establish a School with the Bible and a nationwide action with prayer services and both Reformed and

Roman Catholic petitions, representing more than ten percent of the population, did not sway the king from signing the new law. An ongoing national drive was started around this time to financially support Christian schools. In 1889, the government approved a partial subsidy, and full funding became a reality in 1920.

Houtzagers and vandenBergh

Rev. Houtzagers (Kootwijk's pastor from 1886-1918) helped establish Christian schools, in line with the thinking of Dr. Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper taught that raising children must be done to the honour of God and schools were to play an important and refining role in this effort. The aim was for the child to increasingly reflect the image of God and eventually to embrace and fulfill his calling in church, state, and society. The ultimate school goal was to expand God's kingdom by living and working to God's honour; Christian schools were necessary, since it was unthinkable that such goals could be accomplished in secular schools. A Christian school must therefore be one in which Christ would be the Head and in which parents understood that bringing up children was their task in the first place. Scriptures, the form for baptism, and Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism all were considered to demand Christian schools.²

Rev. Houtzagers also worked closely with his friend, Rev. Willem vandenBergh of nearby Voorthuizen, a recognized leader for Christian education. Rev. VandenBergh opposed state subsidies for Christian education, deeply concerned that it would make people bow under the yoke of the state again, rather than the yoke of Christ. He stressed cooperation and mutual support between home, church, and school, as well as between schools and school boards. His regional Association of Schools produced a report in 1888, which worked this out for members of congregations, school boards, parents, teachers, deacons, consistories, and the government.³ By 1890, after nationwide dissemination of the report, 222 schools were associated in the national Council for Schools with the Bible. Rev. Houtzagers served on this council and played a leading role in establishing the schools of Kootwijkerbroek, Kootwijk, and Harskamp.

In Amsterdam, in January, 1887, a prayer service for Christian education led by Rev. vandenBergh about Micah 2:9b, led directly to material support for schools in the Kootwijk area, through what became known as the "Amsterdam Committee." Simultaneously, Rev. Houtzagers led a similar service in Kootwijkerbroek (some ten kilometres west of Kootwijk), with reference to the same text. Both included a call to *offer up earthly*



wealth of gold and silver, so we may have a place where God's spiritual blessings can be proclaimed to the children, because, in the public schools, the Lord's blessing has been taken away from them. On Ascension Day, 1888, the Amsterdam Committee had collected enough to invite tenders for a school building in Kootwijkerbroek. Architectural drawings were donated. Initially, available funds were some thirty percent short of the need, but with some re-design the school could be built and was opened on November 20, 1888, with forty-two students and one teacher.

Houtzagers' school

Kootwijk took longer to get ready, but local and outside collections (especially from the Amsterdam Committee), allowed for a start in December, 1890, when the public school teacher-principal's retirement provided opportunity. A replacement teacher had been hired from the village of Stroe, six kilometres away, but when he made the daily trek to Kootwijk, he found that there were no students. Where were they?

On December 16, 1890, Rev. Houtzagers, as chairman of the school society,⁴ led the opening ceremony for twenty-eight students and their parents in the Kootwijk church. The public school was not available to them, but a church member, Mrs. Bakkenes, had offered a room in her farmhouse. The school inspector was duly notified of the facts. A teacher-principal was hired, but could not come immediately; temporary staffing included the minister and his wife, their maid, an elder, and the Kootwijkerbroek teacher. Furniture included little beyond six benches, a smoky pot-belly stove, and an easel holding a blackboard. The facilities had barely seven square feet of space per person (we consider twenty square feet per student crowded), the ceiling was just over nine feet high, window seats were either too hot or too cold, there was no washroom, and it included a *bedstee* (a cupboard-enclosed bed). When the inspector came to investigate



on January 29, 1891, together with the mayor and a health official, they condemned the room as unhealthy and unfit, and ordered the school closed. A new room in the home of deacon vanOort was similarly condemned. In March, the mayor permitted the use of the public school's teacher home as an adequate temporary facility, and in January, 1892, they received permission to rent the empty public school. It now became known as the Rev. Houtzagers School with the Bible.

The school gradually grew. By 1900, it had two teachers. Their salaries were frequently paid from gifts or borrowed from the Amsterdam Committee. In 1903, the society obtained title to the building with a fifteen year mortgage. In 1919, the school burned down, and a mortgage was required for rebuilding. In 1935, when the school was struck by lightning, the teacher closed the lessons with prayer before leaving the burning building. The church was used as a temporary facility. By 1950, there were seventy students, but enrolment steadily declined after that. From the mid-1980s to 1993, there were only about ten students, and, along with many other small-town schools, it was forced to close. As a result, "Kootwijk, which was a model for the good cause of Christian education. . . no longer had a school where young people could be led to the church of the Lord and His Kingdom" (vanEeden, p. 53).

Rev. Houtzagers retired in 1918, but remained as treasurer of the school society until 1938. He died in 1940 and was buried in Kootwijk. His gravestone refers to 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." The school building remains known today as the J. H. Houtzagers School with the Bible.



Conclusion

It has been 125 years since the Doleantie started in Kootwijk and 120 years since their school had a Bible again. It is one of those years when we remember specific great deeds of the Lord. Here we saw him provide an immense willingness to sacrifice for a good cause. The building is no longer a school, but we can still learn from its example: We are not alone in our efforts to support Christian education and we follow in a worthy tradition, based on a good standard. Rev. Houtzagers' gravestone sets a standard we do well to remember. May we hold on to that standard; it is a matter of bowing under the yoke of Christ in our schools.

¹ Among others, they gave me a copy of A.E. vanEeden, 1984, *Twee Kerken, Maar Geen School*, about the history of the Doleantie and the churches and the Christian school in Kootwijk. Details in this article are largely based on this publication.

² The notions of *reflecting the image of God and expanding God's kingdom* remain foundational today in some Christian school contexts. In the least, they imply a different emphasis than our *Four Markers of Reformed Education*. This was explored in further detail in a series of lectures organized by Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College in the fall of 2010.

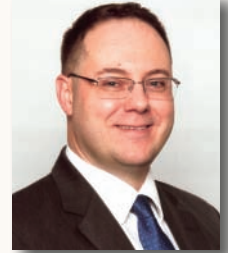
³ This is an interesting document from which I have quoted on previous occasions. This article would become too long if I did so now.

⁴ Synod Leeuwarden, 1920, of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, gave new directions in the arrangements between church, home and school. Before, consistories frequently served as school board as well, making the schools essentially parochial (run by the church). As parents are responsible for raising their children in the first place, schools then shifted from being parochial to being parental (run by the parents).

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.



reviewed by Wes Bredenhof



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Faithfulness Under Fire: The Story of Guido de Brès, William Boekestein, Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010

Additional Information: Hardcover, 32 pages, \$10.00 USD




This is a book that I've been looking forward to for quite some time. It's been worth the wait. William Boekestein, pastor of the Covenant Reformed Church (URCNA) in Carbondale, Pennsylvania, has written a powerful, short biography of the author of the Belgic Confession just for children. Not much has been written about the life of Guido (or Guy) de Brès and certainly nothing in English for little ones. So, this title certainly fills a void.

Boekestein traces the life of de Brès from his birth in Mons (in present-day Belgium) to his death as a martyr in Valenciennes in 1567. Along the way, we see de Brès as a refugee in London, England and as a student in Geneva under John Calvin and others. Later we see him as a devoted pastor in the Low Countries and as a husband and father. The story is told accurately though, as to be expected in a children's book, not comprehensively.

Evan Hughes has provided the illustrations throughout and they're well done. I especially

appreciated his reproduction of the "Wanted" poster at the beginning of the book. This is the artist's impression of an actual poster that was circulated when de Brès was on the run from the Spanish authorities. The only information that we have about de Brès' appearance comes from the wording of this poster.

The story is told at a grade-school level and I would envision that as such it would be useful for elementary school teachers and their church history classes. This is a story that deserves to be told well and told often. The only other remotely comparable English book is Thea Van Halsema's older work *Glorious Heretic* (usually found printed with her other little book, *Three Men Came to Heidelberg*). Boekestein's book is pitched at a younger audience. Meanwhile, the English Reformed world is still waiting for a full-length scholarly biography of de Brès.

Faithfulness Under Fire can be ordered directly from Reformation Heritage Books, www.heritagebooks.org. 

A Note from the Urban Mission Board

The Urban Mission Board, supporting Rev. Dong in his mission work to Chinese people in BC and abroad, would like to thank all of the many sponsors and supporters who have contributed to the exciting work that the Lord has guided. God has been good and gracious. The UMB feels the blessings of the communion of saints and feels tremendous thanksgiving to the Lord.

As the UMB goes into the new 2011 year of our Lord, a request for continued sponsorship and support for its work is asked. Donations are gratefully accepted and can be sent to

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Thank you!



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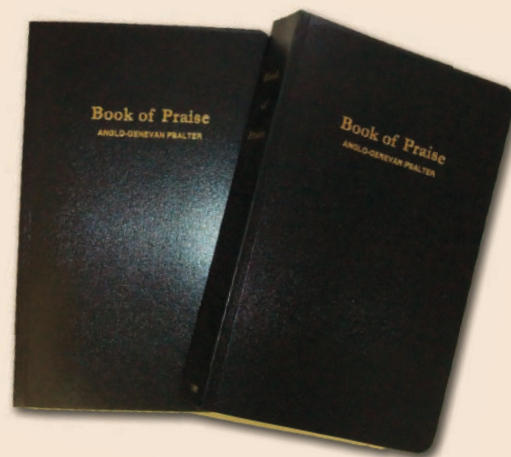
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