

Clarion



THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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*Are the approaching footsteps of
our Lord Jesus Christ not sounding
louder and louder?*



Inside this Issue

- Hope For The Hopeless
- Jesus Christ has Risen from the Dead!





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Hope For The Hopeless

*Easter forces us to focus on
 the person and work of Jesus Christ*

There is a sense of hopelessness in the air. Have you noticed it? Has it perhaps touched your life as well?

Japan in crisis

I am not sure where all of it comes from, but no doubt a good deal of it has to do with what recently took place in Japan. First, the northern part of that nation was rocked by an earthquake that numbered among the largest ever recorded. Thereafter, a massive tsunami rolled in and destroyed everything in its path. Finally, there were all of those damaged nuclear reactors spewing radiation and stubbornly refusing to be contained. Taken together, all of this represents a disaster of epic proportions – tens of thousands are dead, many more may become sick, countless lives will never be the same, reconstruction will take years and it will all come at a staggering cost.

Now, it has to be said that we have grown somewhat used to great disasters by now. After all, the last number of years has produced a whole series of them. You can count them: the great tsunami in Indonesia, the floods in Pakistan and Australia, earthquakes in China, Haiti, Chile, and New Zealand.

World trauma

But still in some ways, Japan was different. Perhaps it was all of that film footage that allowed us to witness the huge walls of water rolling in, the thousands of cars, trucks, and boats bobbing around aimlessly, the houses, buildings, and farms being shredded and engulfed. In the past we only read about this stuff, or we saw brief, blurry video clips. Now, however, the footage is longer, clearer, and almost instant. There is a sense that along with Japan, the whole world is being traumatized as it watches the destruction unfold and as the same footage keeps being replayed. Even when the televisions and computers are turned off, the images are still playing on in our minds.

Political turmoil

Meanwhile, natural disasters are not the only things these days that have our attention. There is all of that political unrest in the Middle East as well. It began in Tunisia, rolled into Bahrain, Yemen, and Egypt, and erupted into civil war in Libya. No one knows where it will strike next.

It would appear that the ordinary people are finding it harder to make ends meet, are seething at the corruption all around them, and are looking to improve their sorry lot. And who can blame them? Who would say that after years and decades of dictatorship, oppression, and poverty, they do not have a case?

Money troubles

Moving from the natural and the political, we come to the economic. Also there the news is not good. The financial meltdown of 2008 is still being felt. Bailouts have been needed to prop up Iceland, Ireland, and Greece. Portugal and Spain appear to be next. Are England and Italy waiting in the wings? The United States economy, while still number 1 in the world, continues to limp along wounded by a severe housing crisis, by state governments on the verge of bankruptcy and by a national debt that defies description and imagination.

It would appear that after years and decades of spending with abandon, the bills are coming in at an ever escalating rate. Countries, states, and cities are sinking under a tsunami of a different sort – a financial tsunami.

More woe

What a tale of woe thus far! How many more chapters cannot be added to it? Chapters filled with stories about violence and moral decline. Chapters chronicling increased religious persecution in such places as Indonesia, Pakistan, and Egypt. Indeed, there is ample evidence to indicate that we live in perilous times.



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Even more accurately, and from a Christian perspective, we live in footstep times. Are the approaching footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ not sounding louder and louder? What other miseries will come our way before He finally appears again? The present seems so bleak and so depressing.

But there is hope

Yet even the present is not without hope. For look at your calendar and you can see that it is time again to celebrate Easter. It is time to focus on the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is time to let the light of that glorious event penetrate the darkness that shrouds us and the despondency that grips us.

How does it do so? What difference does Easter make? In what way does it drive back the clouds of despair?

The first thing that Easter does is remind us that we possess, worship, and serve a risen, conquering Saviour. Easter forces us to focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Before Easter

Only before we can consider Easter, we need to go back to Good Friday and the days that came before it. They were dark, difficult, and depressing days for our

What's Inside

Issue 9 begins with Dr. James Visscher discussing current events in connection with Easter. In a time of natural disasters, political upheaval, and financial trouble we as Christians have Christ's resurrection and victory to focus on. A message of hope in turbulent times!

Our Easter issue also contains an Easter-themed Treasures New and Old meditation as well as an Easter hymn.

We begin a three-part series by Dr. Wes Bredenhof on the Church and Mission. Part I discusses *what* mission is.

Seminary Corner introduces the four upcoming graduates of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary and their families.

This issue includes regular columns Ray of Sunshine and Education Matters. We also have two book reviews and a press release.

Laura Veenendaal

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Lord. The circle of those who followed him grew smaller and smaller. The accusations of his enemies increased. The loyalty of his disciples grew even more suspect.

Meanwhile, the pressure mounted. There was that last supper together where suspicion and treachery filled the air. There was that tortuous time in the Garden of Gethsemane. There was that mob of soldiers and priests who arrested him. There were those demeaning trials before religious and civil rulers. There was that final outrageous episode before Pontius Pilate and all those vicious cries of "crucify him, crucify him" resonating through the square. There was that long, hard road to Golgotha. There was that gruesome crucifixion and all those agonizing cries from the cross. There was that last loud cry and then there was death. So many, many sad events took place.

Suffering

So much suffering too. In these days we hear a lot about the agonies of Japan and they are not to be discounted. Nevertheless, when we consider the sufferings of our Lord we are reminded that his went deeper. Experiencing the death of loved ones, seeing your house and possessions vanish, having your job wiped out, living in a wasteland – all that is excruciating. Nevertheless, it can hardly be compared to bearing in body and soul the wrath of God against the sins of the whole human race (HC, LD 15). How our Saviour suffered! How he suffered for the sins of his people!

Death and burial

Only all of this great suffering did not do him in. And neither did death. Let us remember that he died in order to satisfy the justice and truth of God. All of those animals that died as sacrifices in the OT pointed ahead to the death of Christ as the great and final atoning sacrifice.

After dying he was taken down from the cross, ministered to by some women, laid in Joseph's new tomb. He was buried not just to prove that he was really dead. He was also buried and put in that place where dust returns to dust. This too was part of his life of ever deepening humiliation. He went as low as his people go.

Resurrection!

Yet thankfully, the grave did not represent the end of the story. God did not leave his body there to decay and to wait for a better day. No, on the third day he rose from the grave! The chains of death and the grave could not hold him.

Matthew even recounts that on Easter morning there was a violent earthquake (28:2). What damage it did

we do not know, except to say that it coincided with the coming of an angel and with the shaking of the tomb.

Yet unlike the recent earthquakes in Haiti, Chile, New Zealand, and Japan, this one did not bring death, rather it heralded the dawning of new life. Indeed, it signalled the rising of the Lord of life. Here at last is someone whom death cannot hold.

He rises but unlike Lazarus and others, he did not rise to die again one day. No, Jesus Christ arose to life and he rose to live forever more. He is the risen, resurrected Saviour for always and ever.

Raised, but not alone!

At the same time it is essential that we remind ourselves that his rising was not a solitary rising. True, he arose alone, but the Scriptures are full of the wonderful news that all of his people rose with him. Their status is now that of a risen people in name and one day their reality will be that of a risen people in deed.

How the Apostle Paul drives that most blessed truth home. In his letter to the believers in Corinth he tangles with some who insist that there is no resurrection of the dead. In very short order he brings all of his guns to bear on them. First, he marshals his historical guns and gives the names and numbers of all those who saw the risen Lord. Second, he marshals his theological and logical guns and draws out the consequences if believers do not rise. If that be true, he writes, then Christ has not been raised (13), then preaching and faith are both useless (15), then all of those witnesses are false (15), then believers are still in their sins (17), then the saints who have died are lost (18) and then Christians are the most pitiable people of all (19).

Everything hangs on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And that's alright because Paul insists that Christ has indeed been raised. As a matter of fact he represents "the first fruits" of a great and glorious harvest. All who believe in him shall live. As all who are in Adam die, so all who are in Christ shall live.

Now is that not exhilarating stuff? It's the kind of news that gives boundless joy and deep encouragement. It's the tonic that we need for days like these. To know that we belong to God's resurrection people, to know that one day we shall receive resurrection bodies, to know that one day we shall possess and enjoy those bodies on a new heaven and a new earth, what can be better than that?

"The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:17). There is indeed hope for the hopeless!





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MATTHEW 13:52

Jesus Christ has Risen from the Dead!

“Don't be alarmed,” he said, “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen!” Mark 16:6

It is very early in the morning, just after sunrise on the first day of the week, when three women go to the tomb of their teacher and Lord. They are still overwhelmed by grief at the death of Jesus, which seemed far too early for them. They loved him and wanted to serve him with his disciples. But he had died and they are going to the tomb to pay their respects to him by bringing spices to anoint his body.

It is a quiet morning. Nothing seems to be out of the ordinary until they arrive at the tomb and find that the stone at the entrance has been rolled away. How was that possible? What had happened? They don't have to ponder too long for when they enter the tomb itself, they encounter a young man dressed in a white robe. And when they see him, they are alarmed. That is always the reaction of sinful human beings when faced with God's heavenly messengers. But they do not need to be afraid or alarmed at all because this angel has been sent by God himself to tell the women the good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

The angel begins by reassuring the women and telling them, “Don't be alarmed.” The angel is patient with their weakness and fear. He speaks comforting words to them in their time of distress. The women are emotionally overwrought by all that has happened and now they also meet an angel, which is the cause of even more anxiety for them.

Yet this meeting of an angel actually gives reason for great joy because he has wonderful news to tell them. They may hear from God's messenger that their teacher and Lord has risen from the dead. He says to them, “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. He has risen!”

In the angel's description of Jesus, he emphasizes his humiliation. He calls him “the Nazarene,” the one who comes from Nazareth, that back-water town in Galilee, from which nothing good could possibly come (cf. John 1:46). Throughout his life on earth Jesus suffered much humiliation for our sake. He was mocked and ridiculed. He was hated and attacked and crucified. All this happened according to God's plan for him so that he would fulfill all righteousness.

In his crucifixion, he entered hell itself by being forsaken by God during those three hours of complete darkness. He cried out to God but did not receive an answer from him. In his crucifixion, he took upon himself the curse which lay on us (cf. LD 15). He was crucified in our place so that we would not need to receive God's curse over us, but may instead receive his blessing.

Now this Jesus who was from Nazareth and was crucified has risen from the dead! That is why Jesus' body is no longer in the tomb. The women don't need their

spices because their Lord lives! The crucified one is now the resurrected one! When he hung on the cross he was rejected by God, but now he has been accepted by God again because he fulfilled the task which his Father had given to him. He has made atonement for the sins of the world, of all those who believe in him. The price for sin has been paid and the new life which God promised has now come about in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Death could not hold Jesus in its grip, but he shattered the bonds of death and arose victorious over sin and death. He rose from the dead as the first fruits of the new mankind. He is the first of many who will be completely restored and glorified. He is our Head and we are members of his body. Because we belong to Christ, we may also look forward to the complete renewal of our souls and our bodies. One day we too will rise from the dead, or we will be changed in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet.

May we encourage each other with the gospel of Christ's resurrection and the certainty of his coming again. May we live as those who have been raised up to a new life, a life which finds its fulfilment and direction in loving God, desiring to do his will and exalting him, who has given us such amazing gifts in his Son Jesus Christ.





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Your Church and Mission: What, How, Why (Part 1 of 3)

Revised text of a presentation originally prepared for the Abbotsford Canadian Reformed Church in February 2007.

We live in an exciting time when our churches are becoming increasingly aware of their missionary calling. Across the country, churches are exploring options for outreach, both within their own communities and further afield. We can praise God for what's happening and pray that all these discussions will result in action.

What I want to do is to go over a number of important issues with respect to mission and outreach. The idea is not necessarily for me to give you all the answers, but to at least get you thinking. First, we'll look at what mission is. Then, closely related to that, we'll consider the role of the local congregation in mission. Third, we'll briefly consider the question of how. Finally, we want to look at the why, the motivation for mission.

The definition of mission

When we talk about mission it's important that we're all on the same page as to what exactly mission is. I believe this is a good scriptural definition: *Mission is the official sending of the church to go and make disciples by preaching and witnessing to the good news of Jesus Christ in all nations through the power of the Holy Spirit.* We can see that it's scriptural by going back to some of the key passages, particularly to those passages where the Lord Jesus was sending out his disciples into the world after his resurrection. Let's briefly survey some of those passages.

Matthew 28:18-20

Matthew 28:18-20 provides the most well-known version of what is often called the Great Commission:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

In this passage, the Lord Jesus says very clearly that he wants to see the apostles going out and making obedient followers (disciples) in all the nations. Now it should be noted that "nations" does not refer in the first place to social-political states. The word in Greek refers to ethnicity rather than to political realities. We should be able to see this clearly in Canada where our country is made up of various ethnicities and even ethnic groups that refer to themselves as "nations." There is much more that can be said about Matthew 28, but we should move along to the next passage.

Luke 24:46-49

In Luke 24:46-49, Luke records the Great Commission in this way:

He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

This passage is unusual in that the only direct command appears in verse 49, "stay in the city." The Lord Jesus commands the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the promise of the Father comes upon them – a reference to Pentecost. In this passage, the Holy Spirit is connected with the Great Commission. The disciples are sent out through the power of the Holy Spirit. Verse

49 is basically telling the apostles, "Wait now and go later in the power of the Spirit."

And when they do go, what are they to do? Verses 46 and 47 give the answer. In verse 46, the Lord Jesus speaks of what was written in the Old Testament about the necessity of the Christ suffering and then rising from the dead on the third day. In verse 47, he goes further and says that Scripture (again the Old Testament) had prophesied that repentance and the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all nations in his Name, starting with the city of Jerusalem, but eventually this would reach out to all the nations – which, like in Matthew, are to be understood as ethnicities. The Saviour's words here lay out a picture of a divine-human effort in a limited sense. The divine Word prophesied that it would be accomplished and ultimately, under God's sovereign power, so it will be. At the same time, the prophecy concerning the nations also lays a burden upon the hearts of the apostles, not merely to be witnesses in some passive, uninvolved sense, but to be active participants. Verse 48 indicates that not only have the disciples been witnesses in the past, they are going to be witnesses in the future as well.

This will involve preaching. What we have here is the preaching of the Word connected with a special office, the word of a herald bringing a message from a higher up. That official character is underlined in this passage with the addition of those three words, "in his Name." So, from Luke's gospel we can conclude that Christ, in fulfillment of the Old Testament, sent out his apostles in the power of the Spirit to witness to his suffering and resurrection and to preach officially repentance and the forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations.

Acts 1:8

That brings us to another form of the Great Commission. This one also comes down to us from the hand of Luke, but this time in the book of Acts. Acts 1:8 reads:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

The key idea here is that the apostles will receive power from the Holy Spirit – notice again the accent on the work of the Spirit. As a result of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, the apostles are to be witnesses for the Lord Jesus, starting in their immediate vicinity and working outward. As in Luke 24, the disciples are not

so much sent out here as commissioned with a task. To be sure, there is a geographic locale attached which implies both a sending out and a going. However, the emphasis here is not on the sending and going. Rather, it is on the fact that Christ commissions his apostles to be witnesses. In the New Testament, a witness gives sound testimony to the truth of something and this sound testimony could stand up under legal scrutiny in a court of law. Witnesses speak about what they have seen and heard. So, the apostles were commissioned in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring a sober word of truth about Jesus Christ, a sober word that could convince a doubtful world that he is truly the Saviour.

If we go through the book of Acts, this is exactly the picture we see of the early Christian church. The church goes out from Jerusalem into the whole world and witnesses for Christ, giving sound testimony about him. When we look at the church in Acts, there are certainly acts of mercy and kindness, but the emphasis always fall on the verbal heralding of the good news of Christ. Going through the book, you can't help but notice the numerous sermons and speeches. In fact, sermons and speeches make up twenty to thirty percent of the book. The verbal proclamation of the church is front and centre. It seems that the apostles and other early Christians understood very well what it was that Jesus Christ had commissioned them to do.

Now there are many other passages (both from the Old and New Testament) we could look at, but I have to move along. Given what we've surveyed, however, we can reach some conclusions. One thing we cannot escape is the command to preach in an official way, a way that can only be connected with a special office. There is another aspect as well and it is not directly connected to a special office and that is the notion of witnessing. Both preaching and witnessing are inextricably tied to words – they are verbal forms of communication. The Lord was sending out the apostles to speak. The content of their speaking is captured with the word "evangel" – good news. All of the Great Commission passages either speak of or imply a going out. We also noted an emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the ones who are targeted by this command are identified as all the nations or something similar. Thus we come to the definition mentioned a few moments ago:

Mission is the official sending of the church to go and make disciples by preaching and witnessing to the good news of Jesus Christ in all nations through the power of the Holy Spirit.





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Seminary Corner

Presenting...

Over the next number of months four students hope to complete their studies, present themselves to a classis for preparatory examinations, and thus become eligible for call. It's been our privilege to get to know them and instruct them over the last four years. It's also easy for us to presume that everyone else knows them as well, but that is, of course, not the case. Thus, we've again asked our graduates to introduce themselves by means of the following pictures and words. We are thankful to God for continuing to provide us with students and you with ministerial candidates.

Abel Pol

My name is Abel Pol. I was born in Zwolle, The Netherlands, to Rev. and Mrs. Pol, the first of eight children. After living in Den Haag, where my father served as a minister of one of our sister churches, we moved to



Indonesia, where he taught at a Reformed Theological School on the island of Sumba. We repatriated to Canada right before my thirteenth birthday when my father took the call to serve Emmanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Guelph, Ontario. Six years later we moved to Carman, Manitoba, and I took an honours undergraduate in English literature at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. For two of my university years I served as president of the (now defunct) University of Manitoba Students for Life. After graduation and working until the fall, I moved to Frankfurt, Germany for half a year, and taught English as a second

language at two different language schools. During that time I felt drawn to study theology. After returning to Canada I enrolled at McMaster for a year to get the necessary language prerequisites before coming to our seminary. This past summer I was able to serve in an internship under the capable supervision of Rev. Rob Schouten in Aldergrove, British Columbia. This was a wonderful opportunity to apply some of the theory I learned in the classroom. The Lord has blessed my time at the Theological Seminary. Not only have I been able to learn and grow in ways I never thought were possible, but I also became engaged to Rosemarie Vermeulen, the administrative assistant. We hope to get married this summer, and serve wherever the Lord leads us.

Justin Roukema

I was born to John and Margret Roukema in Orangeville, Ontario. After living there for one year, the family moved to Chatham, where we stayed for seven years. After a brief two year stay in Burlington, we moved to Aldergrove, British Columbia.

After high school I went to the University College of the Fraser Valley in Abbotsford, BC for two years, working toward a degree in Political Science. After two years there, I married Amanda Luinge and we moved together to Victoria, BC, where I received a degree in Political Science and Economics.

When I finished at UVIC, we moved back to the mainland, finding a place in Abbotsford. It was here that I began to think hard about ministry, and after a lot of prayer and deliberation, it seemed good to us that this is what I should do. So, having decided to pursue the ministry, my wife and I moved to Langley, BC, where I went to Trinity Western University in order to fulfill the language requirements of the Canadian Reformed Theological College. While in Langley I spent my time between landscaping and learning languages. Little did I know that I would need both to survive in Hamilton.



After completing the language requirements we moved to Hamilton, Ontario. While in Hamilton, our family doubled in size. After the first year, the Lord blessed us with the birth of our son Ian, who is now two years old. Then, last year the Lord blessed us again and Hannah was born. She is nine months old.

While in school I spent two summers landscaping, but last summer I was given opportunity to do my internship with Rev. VanLuik in Brampton, Ontario. It was a great experience and I learned a lot from Rev. VanLuik and the members of Brampton Canadian Reformed Church. It was great to put into practice what I had learned at school and to begin to experience the challenges of the ministry.

After four years of seminary, I'm eager to begin the next step. I continue to pray that God will bless the work I have done and we eagerly wait for what he will do next in our lives.

Steve VandeVelde

I was born and raised in Smithers, BC; I moved to Houston, BC soon after I graduated from high school. While living in Houston I worked as an Electronics Technician for eight years. My beautiful wife, Cecilia, was also born and raised in Smithers; we were married on a sunny day in May, 2003. A year later we packed up and moved two-thirds of the way across the country to Hamilton where I took up studies at McMaster University. A short time after arriving in Hamilton, God blessed us by giving us a son whom we named Evan.

I completed my Classics degree at McMaster University in 2007 and continued on to the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary to begin four years of studies there. During the time at the Seminary God again blessed us with a baby, this time a sweet baby girl whom we named Emily.

During the summer of 2010 I completed an internship with Rev. D. Poppe in Coaldale, AB. The experience was enlightening and rewarding; I'm very thankful for the time Rev. Poppe took to mentor me and for the feedback I received from the Coaldale congregation.

As a family we love spending time outdoors. We love spending time walking, hiking, or biking or just spending time by a lake on a hot summer day. We enjoy playing games together on a cozy winter evening when time allows.

God continues to guide our family and this spring, if it is his will, I hope to complete my years at the Seminary and present myself to Classis in June to be made available for call. We have been blessed to be supported in every way by the congregations we have known throughout our lives so far and have experienced the hand of the Lord guiding and leading us up to this point. We thank the Lord for all his blessings to us and we pray he will continue to guide us in the coming months and years.



Ted VanSpronsen

We have been asked to introduce ourselves to the world (that is reached by *Clarion*, that is), so here goes. . . we are Ted, Cathy, Jessica, and Zoe VanSpronsen and here is a little about us:

I, Zoe, am five years old and was born in Calgary, Alberta. I like riding my bike, princesses, Dora, dancing, and chicken nuggets. I am very beautiful, of course, and much loved by my older sister.

I, Jessica, am ten years old (double digits!) and was born in Albany, West Australia. I'm in grade five at

Timothy Christian School and I like drawing, arts and crafts, travelling, shopping (!), soccer, and iPods (though I don't have one). Of course, I love bugging, I mean playing, with my sister Zoe.

I, Cathy, grew up in Australia in the Dykstra family. I was swept off my feet by a Canadian who visited our church one day and have been married to him for almost fifteen years. Previously, I have worked in a bank, at an accountant's office, and for the past nine years have been living in Canada. I now enjoy being a stay at home wife and mother and all the activities that come with that. I also try to fit in as much sewing and knitting and other crafts as time allows.

And then, there's me, Ted. During the past four years I have been busy studying at the Theological Seminary, and before that received a degree in Religious Studies at the University of Calgary. Prior to taking on the studies, I was in the workforce in jobs ranging from computers to construction. When I was born (1970), my family took up a position in a mission field in Brazil. Eight years later we came back to Canada and since then I have lived in Smithers, Vernon, and Surrey, all in British Columbia. It was on the other side of the world that I found someone willing to marry me. After exchanging "I dos" we settled in



West Australia, first in Armadale and then in Albany. In 2003, we moved back to Canada, first living in Calgary, Alberta and finally now in Hamilton, Ontario. I enjoy woodworking, Lego, Volkswagens (mostly the old ones!), and outdoor activities like camping and fishing.

There. . . that's us, the VanSpronsens. We are thankful to God for every way in which he has provided for us, and look forward to serving him, in whatever way that may be!



Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Re: the cover of the March 25, 2011 issue of *Clarion*
The Japanese Flowering Cherry Issue (Sakura)

Thank you for the wonderful picture on the cover. Spring has always been the favorite time of year for me and as a lover of flowers and nature I agree with Dr. David Lam who wrote: "We should all live like the cherry it gives us everything – its colour – its fragrance, its beauty and asks for nothing in return, It does all this to make us happy – and we should all live like that."

However, there is a big problem with the comment that was added to the picture: *A good tree brings forth*

much fruit. This appears to be a variation of Matthew 7:17 and the word good before fruit was replaced by *much*. Of course I have no problem with Matthew 7:17 at all, but the person who added the comment knew very little about Japanese flowering cherry trees. These beautiful trees come in many different varieties and colours but none of them bear any fruit!

The city of Vancouver is easily Canada's flowering cherry capital with its 36,000 of them. This year the city plans to add another 3,000 to the total, in honour of its 125th anniversary celebration. Come and join them for this event. The Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival runs from March 26 to April 22, 2011.

Hanna Lengkeek, Chilliwack, BC

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.

EASTER HYMN (1964)

Text: C. Spyer (Dutch)
Translation: Tina Koning
Music: Peter M. Koning

Andante

A - gain we see an o -- pen tomb --- the won --- der of --- the
Christ Vic --- to --- ri --- ous --- He --- tri --- umphed o --- ver
death and doom, --- And gives e --- ter --- nal life --- all glo --- ri ---
ous! You o -- pened up --- the way --- O Lord, --- Be --
You o --- pened up the way, O Lord, ---
cause --- un --- til the end --- You --- loved --- us ---

The musical score is written for piano and voice. It consists of five systems of music. Each system has a treble and bass clef staff. The tempo is marked 'Andante'. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature starts in 3/4 and changes to 4/4 and back to 3/4. The lyrics are written below the notes. The score includes dynamic markings like 'V' (fortissimo) and 'V' (piano). The piece ends with a double bar line.



Mr. Keith Sikkema is principal of Dufferin Area Christian School in Orangeville, Ontario
ksikkema@istop.com

Outstanding

There are many faith-based schools around the world, and it turns out that they have something "outstanding" about them. A report of Christina Odone in *The Telegraph* (Dec 17, 2010) observed that faith schools in Great Britain "make up only a third of all primary schools, yet they constitute two-thirds of the best performers. In an education system where a quarter of children leave school without knowing how to read, and more than half of all pupils fail to gain five C grades [at high school graduation], faith schools form an oasis of excellence." These schools have some common traits, including that every child is considered special, and that every aspect of their uniqueness deserves respect; further, that the schools' relative independence allows parents to have more say in decisions about their child's progress, school ethos and performance, the choice of teachers, budget allocations, and activities in the community. Odone summarized that "independence can inspire heads, teachers, parents and pupils."

We may pursue excellence, but we worship God, and it is his blessing on our labours that makes the difference

A chairman's summary of (part of) a speech by Dr. Nelson Kloosterman on *Kingdom and Culture* does not dwell on grades of A, B, or C, but on *character*:

He stressed that our main focus in a Christian school is to be shaping the *character* of the students so that they will be equipped with the necessary tools to step out into the world as strong Christians in a culture that is veering farther and farther away from its Christian roots. At times, Dr. Kloosterman stated, we tend to put our focus on taming, controlling and dealing with the conduct of the students, rather than looking at the bigger picture of developing their *character*. He asserted that if a child develops his/her character more and more into

the "image of God," this will naturally be reflected in their *conduct*. Therefore if we, as parents and educators, focus on encouraging godly character in our children, we will not have to spend so much time dealing with ungodly conduct.

This chairman reflected further on what this takes in terms of preparing the youth, helping them build characters of selflessness and love to others, modeling, prayer. . . "We pray that God may give our teachers, (and us as parents and membership) the patience and wisdom to train the children in the ways of the Lord, so that their hearts may be fountains of service for God, as they, too, reflect his light in a broken world." Respecting each child's uniqueness, parental input, and our schools' independence from state interference are great features to have, but they do not in and of themselves constitute that blessing. In *Christian Educators Journal*, October 2009, Mike Goheen reflected on excellence as well, and commented that, "If status and success in the educational world are more important than our faithfulness, we will not shine as lights but will inevitably adopt the prevailing (secular) norms." We may pursue excellence, but we worship God, and it is his blessing on our labours that makes the difference.

Excellence

Excellence can be pursued in practical ways. Many schools choose an annual theme text, for instance. At John Calvin Christian School in Burlington, the theme text for this year came from Prov 20:11: "Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right." The principal describes how it is put into practice:

We have begun keeping responsibility journals in every grade. These journals are there so that staff and students have a record of what they as a class, and as individuals, choose to be responsible for. As such, these journals could hold agreements on how to walk in the hallway as we move from class to class. They may house a list of ways in which a class can make responsible decisions so they will

be able to get started quickly. Once guidelines have been set out, the journals can then be used to debrief, in a neutral way, about the choices which have been made and the consequences of the choices. Either they can rate themselves, or they can react to situations in pictures and words to stimulate their role in any given activity. The idea that "even a child is known by his actions" points us toward a life of self responsibility towards the Lord and each other. The use of these journals will hopefully provide for more opportunities to discuss how we live for the Lord and how we show our thankfulness in our personal actions.

We expect our children to be accountable, consistories hold parents accountable, and most importantly, the LORD holds all of us accountable

Accountability supports responsibility. At another school, the principal noted a reduction in the students' "use of manners in general. Addressing one another and teachers in familiar, and often rude ways, are on the rise. We are doing our best to not accept this behaviour (although we as teachers become desensitized to this as well). We covet your support in this." This request for support is a call for accountability.

Accountability

There are different ways of holding people accountable. After a government evaluation with a coveted and gratefully received outcome, a BC principal reflected that, "As Christians we believe that accountability is a good thing. We expect our children to be accountable, consistories hold parents accountable, and most importantly, the LORD holds all of us accountable." Board members, the principal, and the government each have a role in holding the school accountable. "The government has an important role to establish credible educational and safety standards, and, because they also provide our schools with a substantial amount of funding, they must hold us accountable for the proper use of the funds. . . . Needless to say, the loss of government funding is

a terrific motivator! But it is more than money. An evaluation process facilitates very serious professional reflection and review. . . . Consequently, our schools (i.e., our students) are clearly the first to benefit from this school evaluation process. And that is the bottom line: student safety and effective student learning. . . . The EEC (government evaluation committee) was pleased with everything they saw and heard."

The principal of Guido de Brès Christian High in Hamilton points out what is true for his school, and (apart from the colours and the name) may very well also hold true for many others: "We are a very unique school. Our uniqueness is not based on the bright blue siding, or our name, or the excellence of our teachers and our students. Our real uniqueness is that we are a community-based school." He elaborates on this by indicating that, "The needs of all the parents and other supporters are integrated into the policy generated by the board. This policy dictates what happens at Guido. Most other independent schools set their own agenda and focus. . . . We can count our blessings and be thankful about how our school reflects the many and diverse needs of our community. However, we cannot rest on our laurels and feel that nothing more needs to be done." He identifies several program improvements that are being considered to better meet the needs of the community.

But the works done for the Lord will remain forever and are stored up to our credit in Heaven, where moth nor rust can corrupt it

What makes our schools stand out from others? In our pursuit of excellence, as well as in cherishing the unique character of our schools, it needs to be something that gives honour to God, that serves the neighbour, and that acknowledges his blessings.

Standing out

Some items stood out in my perusal of the last batch of monthly or bi-monthly school bulletins from East and West. Maranatha Christian School and Emmanuel Christian High School (about 175 students each) occupy the same property and facilities in Fergus. While they operated under the same board for many

years, their organizational separation took effect some six years ago, and the time has come to look at physical separation. Even though ninety-some pupils recently left Maranatha for Cornerstone Christian School in Guelph, the Fergus schools continue to need a long term vision that deals with the cramped corners. "Maranatha" now serves students from the Fergus, Elora, and (part of) Grand Valley congregations, while "Emmanuel" serves students from several feeder schools as far away as Orangeville, Cambridge, Listowel, and Owen Sound. Recently, both the elementary and high school societies voted strongly in favour of a vision which will have the schools separate physically. Depending on what properties may become available in the next five years, either MCS or ECHS will leave the current location and move to the new (or new-to-them) premises.

Guido de Brès Christian High in Hamilton has a new gym floor. Budgetary constraints dictated the installation of vinyl composite tile on the concrete base in 1996-1997, but this turned out to be hard on people's joints. Thanks to anonymous donations, a better base and hardwood floor was installed over the vinyl tile. In 2012, the school will also need another principal, as Mr. Hans VanDooren will retire after many years of faithful and capable service. From nearby Smithville there is no message about upgrading the similarly constructed gym floor, but Principal Frank Ludwig hopes to retire at the same time, also after many years of faithful and capable service. Much goes on in schools between the floors and the heads, and may the prayers for capably and faithfully serving ongoing leadership be answered.

Much goes on in schools between the floors and the heads, and may the prayers for capably and faithfully serving ongoing leadership be answered

Credo Branches (Langley) reports that, to the credit of the Reformed Curriculum Development Committee, Mr. Nap and Mr. Torenvliet have successfully completed Volume Three of the *Flame of the Word* Church History series. By September 2011 (DV), the teacher's edition will also go to press: It will signal the closure of a project that has spanned fifteen years. In addition, we may add, the project was completed while regular work carried on as well. Congratulations!

Church News

New Email address

New email address for Rev. C.J. VanderVelde, Elora, Ontario is:

cjvandervelde@wightman.ca

Examined by Classis Ontario West of March 23, 2011 and granted permission to speak an edifying word in the churches:

Student David Winkel

In Smithers, the fall general meeting with the membership was held on a Saturday night, and the chairman was happy to report that it was a good meeting with only one question from the floor. The question raised concerns our perspective on sports: "What defines success in sports for people dedicated to living as prophets, priests, and kings in Christ?" That question raised over twenty supplementary questions, which will be addressed in *Education Matters* in due time.

Browsing through some old issues of *Canadian Reformed Magazine*, I found a quote from one of the school magazines about financing the schools:

The load for all these gifts and contributions comes often on the shoulders of our mothers. Their endeavours to stretch the family budget with hard work, rummage sales and bargains etc, will be remembered undoubtedly by future generations. One of the remarks that strikes me always is that we could all be driving new cars every year if we did not have to pay our dues to the school, church, and their organizations. We may comfort each other, though, with the thought that we cannot look at cars as treasures that endure. But the works done for the Lord will remain forever and are stored up to our credit in Heaven, where moth nor rust can corrupt it. (CRM Vol. 17, #25)

Such is the spirit in Owen Sound Canadian Reformed School, where the board chairman expressed gratitude to our heavenly Father for the fine work of its principal, teachers, teachers' aides, and volunteers, as shown in their hard work and patience, and for the support and dedication of the parents. May our heavenly Father continue to bless our faith-based schools across the country.

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

Ray of Sunshine

by Corinne Gelms and
Patricia Gelms

Here is an excerpt from Eddie VanRootselaar who has so wonderfully shared some of his highlights and daily activities. Job well done Eddie!!

Eddie VanRootselaar

Hi my name is Eddie and I am going to be 18 this year! I can't wait to go to Anchor Camp this year and I hope to take the big bus to camp this year! I had fun cutting concrete at Camp last year and going out for lunch for burgers when I went to camp last year! I hope to see my counsellors this year again. I hope to play with the water toys at camp and swim in the pond! I hope they get a pool one day.



We live in Dunnville now and I go to Guido de Bres High School. I have one more year to do and then will graduate. We are getting a brand new bus for Guido!! I enjoy going to catechism and young people's. We have also just joined a bowling league with my sister some other kids from Attercliffe - it is lots of fun to meet new people and hang out. We also go to Friendship Club for the first time at the URC church.

I made resumes at school and hope to get a summer job in Dunnville this year. The Anchor walkathon is coming in May right after my birthday and I can't wait to go and I hope to collect lots of money for it.

I come from a big family and I am a proud uncle to two nephews!!

I really love getting birthday cards from everyone and wait till my birthday to open them!!!

*Thank you
Eddie*

Also in the month of May there are others who have a birthday as well. We would like to take this opportunity to share their special days, and hope you too can share in sending a birthday card. Mail is always so greatly appreciated by those who receive it.

Birthdays in May:

- 1 **CLARENCE ZWIEP will be 57**
653 Broad Street West
Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 4 **DEBBIE VEENSTRA will be 37**
4238 2nd Concession Road
Sherkston, ON L0S 1R0
- 10 **ROB DE HAAN will be 46**
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road, RR 2
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
- 21 **EDDIE VAN ROOTSELAAR will be 18**
409 Cedar Street
Dunnville, ON N1A 2J2
- 30 **BERNIE DE VOS will be 36**
361 Thirty Road
RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2

May all of you celebrating this month, have a wonderful day! May you continue to be filled with the many good blessings from our heavenly Father. Till next month,

A note to all parents and caregivers

If there are any address or other changes that we need to be aware of please let us know as soon as possible.

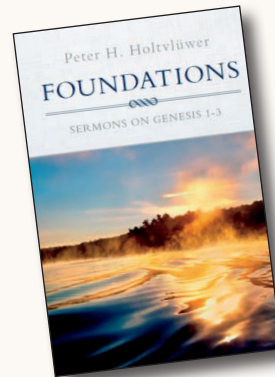
You can contact us by the following means:

Mail: Corinne Gelms
8301 Range 1 Road, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0
Phone: 905-957-0380
Email: jcorgelms@porchlight.ca





Dr. Wes Bredenhof is pastor of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church, Hamilton, Ontario
wbredenhof@bell.net



**Foundations: Sermons on Genesis 1-3,
Peter H. Holtvlüwer, Winnipeg: Little Angels
Press, 2010**

**Additional Information: Paperback, 163 pages,
\$15.00**

Attacks on the truths of God’s Word never stop. This is also obviously true for the first three chapters of the Bible. Outside the church there are voices that outrightly deny what the Bible says about our creation and fall. Sadly, even inside the church there are voices that weaken what Scripture says about these things by denying their historicity. We can be thankful to God for faithful preachers of the Word like Peter Holtvlüwer, minister of the Spring Creek Canadian Reformed Church in Tintern, Ontario.

This book contains a series of sermons he preached to his previous congregation in Carman, Manitoba. There are thirteen sermons and they cover almost every verse of Genesis 1-3. The sermons retain the style of sermons and they include the sort of references that one might expect from a pastor addressing a rural congregation.

There are three reasons why I’m going to recommend this book to you. First, the author takes the biblical text seriously as a record of historical events. There is no capitulation here to Darwinism, theistic evolution, or anything of the sort. Second, Holtvlüwer constantly brings everything to a focus on Jesus Christ. These sermons are Christ-centred and therefore edifying and God-glorifying. Third, *Foundations* features clearly written prose. The author explains Scripture in a direct and easy-to-understand fashion.

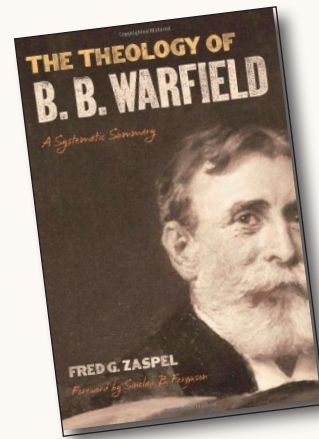
Preachers who review other preachers’ sermons are in an awkward position. We all have our own ideas of what should be left in a sermon and what should be left out. In this instance, too, there are some things that I would have liked to see included. As an example, especially in the light of some current discussions with our URC brothers, it would be good to see a reason why Holtvlüwer regards the covenant in Genesis 3 as a *renewal* of the covenant from Genesis 2. He appears to assume that this is an obvious fact. Or in chapter 12, he writes that “we often must learn to forgive ourselves too.” Where does Scripture teach that? Again, this seems to be assumed rather than established.

Overall, this is a valuable contribution to our Reformed community. Holtvlüwer’s book could be used in public worship for reading sermons – song selections, etc. are included in an appendix. It could also be used with profit for personal devotional reading. Moreover, the author has generously decided to use all the proceeds for this book to support a worthy cause in Brazil. The Reformed Reading Room in Recife is part of Canadian Reformed mission efforts in north-eastern Brazil. God has used it in a fantastic way for the spread of the biblical gospel. Your purchase of this book will contribute to the ongoing dissemination of the good news of Jesus Christ. Ordering information can be found online at: <http://www.sermonsongenesisl23.com>. C



***The Theology of B.B. Warfield: A Systematic Summary*, Fred G. Zaspel, Wheaton: Crossway, 2010**

Additional Information: Hardcover, 624 pages, \$44.00



Ninety years after his death, Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield continues to be a respected voice in Reformed theology. Along with Jonathan Edwards, the Hodges, and a few others, Warfield is one of the pre-eminent Reformed theologians in North American church history. Yet for all his renown, few have given him a careful reading. Popular ideas persist about what Warfield believed about this or that. Part of the problem is Warfield himself never systematically laid out his theology in one place.

Fred Zaspel has therefore done us a favour by carefully collating Warfield's theology into one helpful volume. After an introduction surveying Warfield's life and work, Zaspel follows the standard topics of systematic theology and distils Warfield's thought on each one. Here and there he also interacts with interpreters, particularly the ones whom Zaspel feels have not done justice to Warfield.

Zaspel himself is a sympathetic interpreter. A Reformed Baptist pastor in Pennsylvania, he is broadly in agreement with Warfield's theological bent. Where he personally might depart from Warfield (regarding infant baptism, for instance), Zaspel remains respectfully silent, just simply laying out the Princeton theologian's views without comment. At the end of the volume he does offer some critique, but for the most part he allows Warfield to speak for himself. That's not to say the book consists mostly of quotations – most of the time Zaspel summarizes and paraphrases.

The Theology of B.B. Warfield will appeal most to pastors, scholars, seminary students, and informed "lay people." Like Warfield himself, it is not light and fluffy. Technical language is used and readers are expected to have an intermediate level of theological knowledge.

There are four areas in the book especially worthy of further comment. Early on, Zaspel deals with Warfield's views on apologetics. He argues that Warfield has been unfairly portrayed by later Reformed apologists such as Cornelius Van Til.

Van Til argued that Warfield did not give adequate expression to the effects of sin upon the unregenerate mind. Zaspel attempts to defend Warfield against this accusation. He notes that Warfield did not attribute "right reason" to the unbeliever and spoke repeatedly of the pervasiveness of sin (77-78). However, Zaspel also states that Warfield maintained that unregenerate man "is able to see the compelling force of 'right reason.'" Unfortunately, Zaspel is unable to see that this justifies Van Til's complaint. While he adds some useful nuance to Warfield's views, Zaspel does not succeed in exculpating Warfield on his inconsistencies in apologetics.

Warfield is known as the great defender of biblical inspiration and inerrancy. Therefore, one would expect a book of this nature to deal with those subjects at length. Zaspel does not disappoint. He outlines how contemporaries of Warfield and latter-day interpreters have accused the Princetonian of "rationalistic scholasticism" in his doctrine of the Bible. He helpfully illustrates how these charges fall well short of the mark.

A third area of interest is Warfield's thought on evolution. The claim is often made that Warfield had an appreciation for evolution. The argument is advanced that if Warfield can be regarded as a great Reformed theologian and he held to evolution, then how can contemporary advocates of evolution be excluded from Reformed churches? Those making such claims ought to read Zaspel's careful summary of Warfield's views and how they developed. He concludes Warfield could at best be said to have been noncommittal or to be critically agnostic (386-387). However, Warfield also developed a "strengthening conviction against evolution" (385).

Finally, one of Warfield's greatest concerns was the influence of perfectionism or Keswick "higher life" spirituality. In his day there were popular preachers and writers claiming it was possible for Christians to no longer sin in this age. There were also those who

claimed that Christians should not regard themselves as sinners, since they are a "new creation in Christ." They denied the biblical teaching that, in this age, we are both justified and sinners (*simul iustus et peccator*). These false teachings are still around today. Today we still need Warfield's biblical defense against these errors. Zaspel provides a helpful door. Warfield approvingly quoted Thomas Adam, "The

moment we think we have no sin, we shall desert Christ" (465).

The Theology of B.B. Warfield is a comprehensive guide to the thought of "the Lion of Princeton." There's no question it will be a standard reference for decades to come. Anyone interested in the development of Reformed theology on our continent needs to have it and read it.



Press Release

Press Release of Classis Manitoba convened in the Carman West Canadian Reformed Church on March 25, 2011

Opening

On behalf of Carman West Canadian Reformed Church, the convening church of the March 25, 2011 classis, Br. L. Vanderveen called the meeting to order. He requested that the brothers sing Psalm 33:6, read Psalm 133, and led in prayer. He welcomed all present, especially fraternal delegate Rev. J. Grossman from the RCUS Classis North Dakota, and observer Br. Ryan Kampen, future pastor of the Church at Denver, CO. Also welcomed as observers were the two deputies of the Committee for Contact with Neighbouring Classis/Presbyteries.

Examination of credentials

The credentials of the delegates were examined by the brothers from the Carman West Canadian Reformed Church and reported to be in order. All delegates in attendance were primary delegates. Only one of the delegates from Denver was able to attend. Classis was declared constituted.

Appointment of executive officers

The following officers were appointed:

Chairman: Rev. J. Poppe
Vice Chairman: Br. W. van Beek
Clerk: Rev. R.J. den Hollander

Adoption of the agenda

Rev. Poppe thanked the Carman West Canadian Reformed Church for the preparations involved in convening the classis. The agenda was adopted. The fraternal delegate and observers were seated.

Reports

A financial report was received from Br. H. Veldman, the treasurer of Classis. It was decided that the classical assessment for 2011 will be \$10.00 per communicant member. The church of Carman West reported that the books of the treasurer of Classis, Br. H. Veldman, were audited and found to be in order. The Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church reported that the archives of Classis have been inspected and found to be in order, with the exception of a copy of a letter of appointment, which was missing. A recommendation was made that all email correspondence be signed and dated when submitted. A report was received from Br. W. van Beek in regard to the activities of the Deputies for Contact with the Provincial Government.

In closed session the church visitors reported on visits to the Canadian Reformed Churches of Carman East and West and the Grace and Redeemer Canadian Reformed Churches in Winnipeg. Prayers were offered for these churches after each report.

Proposals

A letter from the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church proposing three amendments to the regulations of Classis was discussed. One amendment was defeated and two were carried.

A letter from Carman West proposed to use of the term "cancellation" instead of "postponement" if a Regional Synod is not held in a given year. In this connection Carman West also noted that elders delegated to a regional synod that does not take place may no longer be elders anymore a year later. Classis decided that new delegates will be appointed to regional synod at the fall classis. A letter will be sent to the convening church of Regional Synod West to inform them of this decision.

Appeals

An appeal was submitted by the Redeemer Consistory with the Deacons concerning a decision regarding pulpit exchanges from the Acts of Classis, December 10, 2010. Classis concluded that Classis December 2010 erred in this matter. Further discussion was held on a related matter to this appeal.

Question period

Question Period according to Art. 44 C.O. was held. All churches answered in the affirmative that the ministry of the office-bearers is being maintained and that the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. The Winnipeg Grace church requested advice which was given in closed session.

Fraternal delegates

A letter was received with thankfulness from Rev. Doug Barnes of the Classis Central URCNA. Br. W. van Beek led in intercessory prayer for the URCNA.

Rev. J. Grossman representing the RCUS Northern Plains Classis was given the floor to address Classis. He expressed appreciation for the fellowship experienced with the Canadian Reformed Churches and brought greetings from the RCUS churches. They are presently working at a setting up a mission in Dickinson, ND, and request our prayers for that mission work and for the search for a man to call for this work. He gave us an update on some of their activities and their search to fill a vacancy in their churches. Rev. R.J. den Hollander read a portion of Scripture from

Philippians 1 and led in intercessory prayer for the both the RCUS and the OPC churches.

Correspondence

A letter was received from Rev. K. Jonker. Classis decided that it was admissible. The letter was brought into discussion in closed session and a response will be sent.

Appointments

The convening church for the next classis is the Emmanuel American Reformed Church in Denver and will be hosted in the Winnipeg Grace church building.

The classis is scheduled to be held on June 24, 2011. Alternate date: September 23, 2011.

The suggested president for the next classis is Dr. A. Pol

Personal question period and adoption of the Acts and Press Release

Personal question period was held.

No censure according to Art. 34 of the Church Order was necessary.

The Acts were adopted and the Press Release approved for publication.

Closing

The chairman requested that the brothers sing Psalm 107:1 and led in closing prayer.

*For Classis Manitoba, March 25, 2011
W. van Beek, Vice-chairman at that time* 