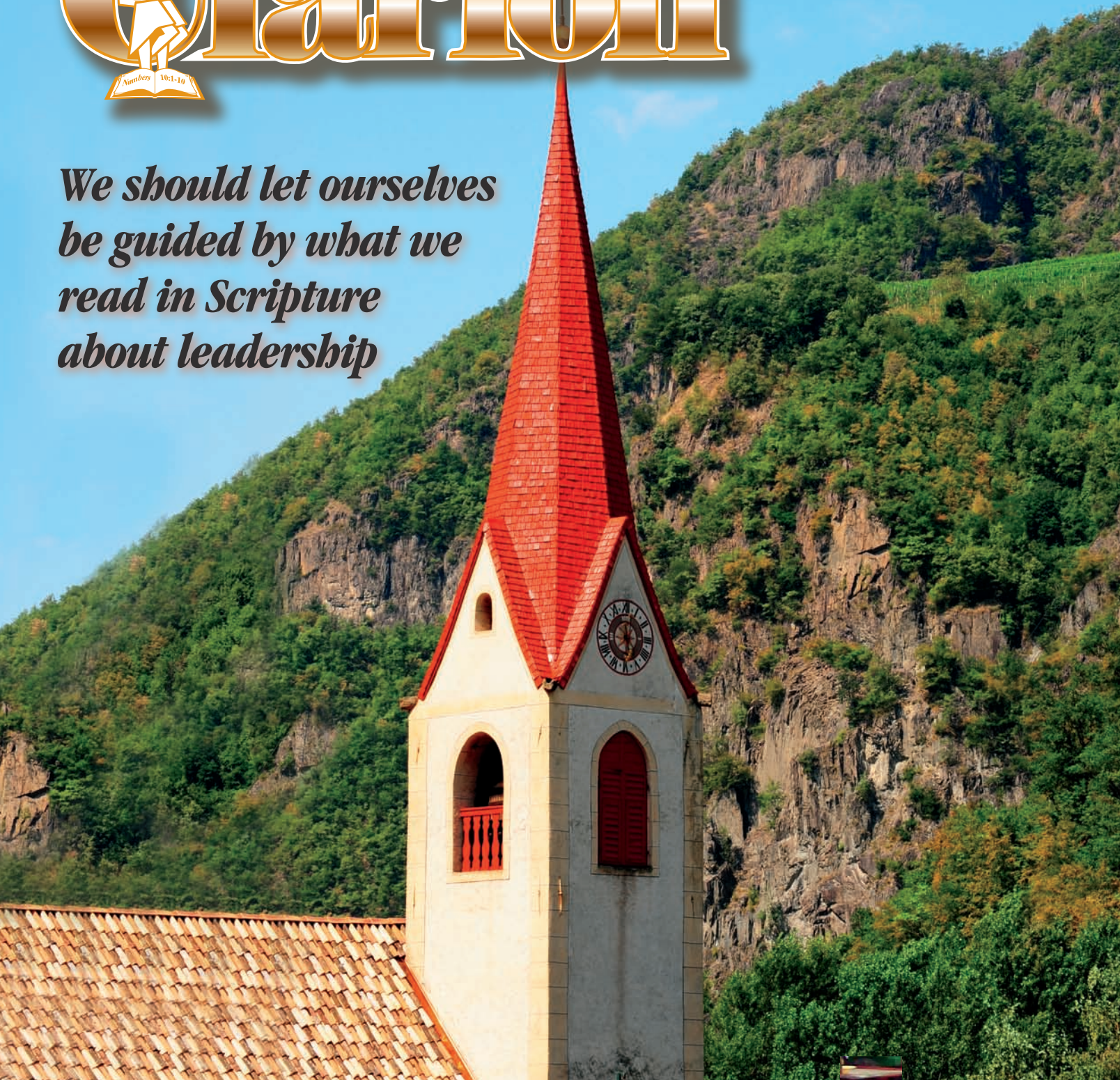


# Clarion



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*We should let ourselves  
be guided by what we  
read in Scripture  
about leadership*



## *Inside this Issue*

- Following the Leader
- Tension in the Ascension?







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# Following the Leader

*A proper process of calling results in proper confidence both for the one called to lead and those called to follow*

Anyone who has been around children will have heard the little song that has as refrain, "Following the leader, the leader, the leader; We're following the leader wherever he may go." It may sound crass, but this refrain well describes what we see in the broader North American Christian world. Many groups are very much tied to a particular leader. Generally, these are not people who have risen to a prominent place within a particular church denomination but they have started their own church and secured a significant group of loyal followers. People will follow such leaders wherever they may go. Some of these leaders even establish new denominations. At other times, churches remain part of their original denomination but become associated with the new leader by adopting his methods and programs. In most cases, the leaders will spread their influence through print and electronic media.

## Local and national examples

It is not hard to find some examples. In the town where I live, with a population of around 28,000 people, there is one group with no denominational affiliation that was established in the year 2000 and worships at the former local movie theatre. The statement of faith is minimal. The words about the Lord Jesus, the Bible, and the Trinity could easily be printed on a three by five index card with room to spare. Another group, incorporated in 1992, has set up a ministry in a large barn just outside of town on a very scenic property. The latter has a woman as the founding pastor, as well as a daughter and son as pastors.

On a larger scale, one can think of the mega churches. Many were started apart from any denominational affiliation. One such example is the enormously successful Willow Creek Community Church, founded by Bill Hybels. Over the years, there also has developed what is called the "multi campus church." In this arrangement a church may have

locations across the same city or even across the nation. In many cases, by the use of technology, the same person preaches to people in different places simultaneously. An example of this is Mars Hill, centered in Seattle. The key figure associated with this is Mark Driscoll. An example of this in Ontario is something called the Meeting House, which presents itself as "a church for people who aren't into church." This is officially affiliated with the Brethren in Christ church in the US. During the week the leader will prepare his message at a central location which is then shown in the local Meeting House gatherings on Sunday.

Related to this is what is called "para-church ministries." Literally, that means beside the church or alongside the church. At the heart of these is a founder who had a "vision." I put that in quotation marks for sometimes they may claim to have a direct vision from God. More often, it refers to a vision that formed in their mind through various life experiences. The promotional literature will tend to speak heavily of being called by God to a particular ministry. Just pay attention to the various brochures and mailings you receive soliciting funds and you will come across examples. You may read the material and be left with a sense of guilt for not supporting people who felt called by God. Many para-church ministries turn into impressive organizations with annual conferences around the country, featuring as keynote speaker, of course, the founder. Usually he has authored many books as well.

## Scripture and leadership

Now the thought might arise, "So what that these people have started their own church? So what that one person is so prominent? Aren't they leading people to Christ?" One could even quote the words of our Lord Jesus, "Do not stop him. No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us"

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(Mark 9:39, 40). One could bring in Paul's words in the letter to the Philippians where he wrote about those who preach Christ out of selfish ambition. He wrote, "But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motive or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice" (Phil 1:18).

While those texts would seem to silence further criticism, one should be fair and also think of other parts of Scripture. For example, in Matthew 7:15-23 we read how the Lord Jesus warned about false prophets, and how they would be known by their fruit. He said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven." In the same vein, Paul warned the Ephesians about wolves that would attack the flock, often disguised in sheep's clothing (Acts 20:29-31). We can also think of Paul's warning found in his second letter to Timothy, "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear" (2 Tim 4:3).

**What's Inside**

Issue 11 begins with an editorial from Rev. Eric Kampen. In it he discusses the growing trend in our culture towards following particular church leaders who start their own churches rather than being called by a church. What is scriptural church leadership? This also has implications for the process of election of office bearers, which will happen soon in many congregations.

Dr. Wes Bredenhof concludes a three-part series on mission. In this concluding article he tackles the "How?" and "Why?" of mission work. He cautions us to carefully consider the opportunities God places in our lives, to grab hold of these opportunities, and to do it with excellence and passion.

The difference between Secession and Schism is explored in an article by Rev. Klaas Stam. It is a relevant discussion at a time when relationships with sister churches are being questioned and evaluated.

Issue 11 contains regular columns Treasures New and Old, Ecumena, and Education Matters. We also have a letter to the editor.

Laura Veenendaal

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When we take note of these various passages, we will realize that while we must be careful in judging, this does not take away the need to use discernment with respect to those who present themselves as leaders. Just because someone presents himself as a leader does not mean we should follow him wherever he will go. Rather, we should let ourselves be guided by what we read in the Scriptures about leadership. What stands out in Scripture when it comes to being leaders of God's people is that one must be properly chosen for that task. In the Old Testament, we do come across examples of special appointments, especially the prophets. When it came to kings, in both the lives of Saul and David we read of God's anointed being appointed after the involvement of the people. In the New Testament, apart from the direct appointment of the apostles by the Lord himself, we see how the Lord used the congregation to choose leaders for the new churches that had been established. The key point is that you did not take an office upon yourself.

*What stands out in Scripture when it comes to being leaders of God's people is that one must be properly chosen for that task*

In Hebrews 5 this is even applied to our Lord Jesus. We read, "No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, 'You are my Son, today I have become your Father. . .'" (Heb 5:4, 5). It is striking that our Lord Jesus did not begin his public ministry until his baptism by John. There were witnesses to the voice coming from heaven and the Spirit descending in the form of a dove. Our Lord's calling was also confirmed in his transfiguration, witnessed by three disciples.

**Belgic Confession Article 31**

This principle of being properly called to a position of leadership is also captured in the Belgic Confession. In Article 31 it is stated that leaders "ought to be chosen to their office by lawful election of the church. . . Therefore everyone shall take care not to intrude by improper means. He shall wait for the time he is called by God so that he may have sure testimony and thus be certain that his call comes from the Lord." In this phrase the Confession was interacting with the Anabaptists and

their multitude of self-appointed leaders. There was a tendency for anyone who thought he or she felt the moving of the Spirit to take up a position of leadership. All that was needed was a sense of an inner call, which others were not allowed to dispute. This, of course, set the stage for many divisions.

It is worthwhile to also highlight the reason Article 31 gives for what could be called an external rather than an internal calling process. It is stated that the one called "may have sure testimony and thus be certain that his call comes from God." In this the concern is not even so much that other people may know that one was properly called to the office but especially that the one called may have that assurance. If one was to depend only upon an internal call, that sense of being called might disappear. Especially when facing difficulties and challenges, a leader might wonder whether he was mistaken in his call. When there has been an external process, however, he may find assurance that the Lord has placed him in office and therefore will also equip him for that task. A proper process of calling results in proper confidence both for the one called to lead and those called to follow.

**Appreciating our God-given leaders**

All this is helpful to think about at the time of the year when congregations go through the process of electing new office bearers. Local councils do not solicit names of volunteers. In the church one does not run for office. One does not put himself forward. This is true even for those who study for the ministry. They may study and gather skills for ministry, but when their studies are done they do not impose themselves on the churches nor submit applications. They present themselves as available for call but they are dependent upon being called by a congregation.

To be sure, the Lord uses men to lead his people. We are called to obey our leaders and submit to them. At the same time, the Lord also has made clear that it is not a matter of feeling called in one's heart but of being called through an external process. We need to be on the alert for those who simply put themselves forward as leaders, who know how to scratch itching ears and so have people follow them wherever they will go. Our God-given leaders, the elders, deacons, and ministers properly called, may not have the charisma and flair of the self appointed leaders, but they are God's instruments. The Lord uses them, however, so that it may be clear faith does not rest on men's wisdom but on God's power (1 Cor 2:5).







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## MATTHEW 13:52

*"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth."*

Philippians 2:9-10

# Tension in the Ascension?

It was Martin Luther, I believe, who said something like, "Where I see tension, that is where I preach." In coming again to Philippians 2, and looking especially at verses 9-11 this time, a striking tension stares us in the face. Is Christ to be our example, or is he not?

The tension is present already at the beginning of this piece of exalted writing. Paul says that the Philippians should have the same attitude as Christ Jesus, but then immediately adds, "Who, being in very nature God. . . ."

What now? Does anyone else feel like the bar is set a little high here? The tension continues in the verses 9-11: God "exalted [Jesus] to the highest place," or more literally, "super-exalted" him. And God "gave him the name that is above every name." Finally, every knee will bow to Jesus and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

It is possible that when you read this, the tension that you first discerned in the text begins to take shape as a knot in your stomach. Is Paul suggesting that we should aspire to cosmic dominion, deity, and universal obeisance? The short answer is: of course not.

Paul is not calling us to imitate the exalted status of Jesus Christ, but rather to be awed and amazed by his pre-eminence. In the verse 6 Paul displays Christ to us as God, who from eternity dwelt with the Father and the Spirit in the fullness

of majesty and glory. In verse 9, the apostle shows how the extreme humiliation and suffering of Jesus Christ, although necessary and effective for our salvation, is not his present state. Now Jesus Christ has been super-exalted, lifted up by the Father from the grave through the heavens to the place of highest honour, power, and glory – the right hand of the heavenly Father. This is where he now sits and rules, not only as the eternal deity that he always was, but now also as the vindicated Messiah. Jesus, once mockingly hailed as King of the Jews, is now invested by God the Father.

What is more, God has lavished upon his beloved Son the name that is above every name, the name LORD or Yahweh. He was of course always LORD, but now the hidden is revealed. From the two men on their way to Emmaus, to the disciples who witnessed his resurrection, to everyone who hears the testimony of Jesus Christ and believes, the true identity and status of Jesus of Nazareth is revealed. And one day, in the final and ultimate vindication, when Jesus Christ returns in judgment, every knee and every tongue will be forced to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is LORD.

What is striking is that even though we are awed by the glory of Jesus Christ, there remains even here a twofold example for us. The key to discerning this example is to go back to verse 5 and notice that

Paul is speaking about *attitude*: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."

The first example is echoed by both James and Peter later in the New Testament: "Humble yourself before the Lord and he will lift you up" (James 4:10, 1 Pet 5:6). This is one of the paradoxes of the Christian life. We are called to humble and obedient service. We are called to acknowledge our sinfulness and utter dependence on God. We are called to echo the words of the unworthy servants of Luke 17:10 and say, "We have only done our duty." And yet God promises us that when we pursue our calling in life with this attitude and expect nothing in return, God will reward us with eternal joy and pleasures at his right hand (Luke 6:35). The fullness of this will commence when we stand with Jesus Christ at the judgment, made righteous through his blood, vindicated through our union with him.

The second example in Christ's attitude is his goal in all things. Before his incarnation, during his life on earth, in his death on the cross, and while he exerts his Lordship upon the world, Jesus Christ fully and completely does everything for the glory of God the Father. This is to be our goal as well, that in all things God would receive the glory. It reminds us of another emphasis of Martin Luther: *Soli Deo Gloria*.





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

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

In the previous installments, we looked at the definition of mission. We saw that mission is intimately tied to the church and its offices. Furthermore, the old distinction between mission and evangelism was shown to be lacking biblical support – it should be abandoned. Finally, we saw that local congregations have a definite calling: to be either senders or goers.

## How?

That brings us to the more concrete question of how. How should all this function on the ground, in practice? Let me try and give some suggestions.

As we consider this, it's helpful to introduce a three-fold distinction. Ralph Winter, David Hesselgrave and other missiologists have spoken of three different kinds of mission. Among other things, these three represent different levels of difficulty in communicating the gospel. This three-fold distinction works with the idea of the distance between cultures, what we call cultural distance.

The distinction is between M-1, M-2, and M-3 missions. M stands for Missions, naturally. In M-3 missions, we're faced with the greatest possible cultural distance between the ones doing mission and the target group. We would place the work of our missionaries in Brazil in this category. The Canadian Reformed missionaries living and working in Brazil have various backgrounds. But none of them grew up speaking Portuguese. The Brazilian culture was initially foreign to them. However, they did not necessarily need to travel to Brazil to find this cultural distance. There are many cities in North America with

cultural enclaves where mission would also have to be placed in this category. In these M-3 situations, mission is the most challenging, especially in the initial stages. In this sort of work, it is imperative that those doing the work are trained in working cross-culturally. That means not only learning another language, but also being diligent about learning another culture. This is not something that can be done casually or on a part-time basis.

*God has given gifts and we can and should share those gifts*

In M-2 missions, there is less cultural distance. This would be the category where our mission among the native people in Fort Babine fit. With this category, there is a smaller amount of cultural distance to overcome. Oftentimes a common language can be used to communicate. Certain aspects of culture are shared. We have this with the native people in most areas of Canada. In Fort Babine, they have accepted certain parts of the broader Canadian culture and incorporated them into their own culture. Over the years, aspects of their traditional Babine culture have been lost or changed because of contact with the newcomers in the land. So when we communicated the gospel in Fort Babine, it was definitely easier than doing so in Brazil, at least on a superficial level. Even if the culture in Fort Babine is significantly different, we were close enough to our home culture (physically and culturally) that we never fully experienced what is known as culture shock or culture stress.

The last category is M-1. With this one, no cultural barrier needs to be surpassed. Both the missionary and the target group share mostly the same culture.

When the gospel is communicated, unbelievers will understand it or at least have the potential to understand, if the Spirit grants that understanding. They may not accept it and believe it, but at least they can superficially understand what is being said by the missionary. In such a situation, we can say that meaningful communication of the gospel has taken place. We have two missionaries in our churches who fall into this category. One of them is Rev. Dong – I'm sure you're familiar with him and the work he is doing. Another Canadian Reformed missionary (Rev. Edwer Dethan) is a native Indonesian. He was sent out by the church in Smithville to work in his home country of Indonesia on the island of Timor. Being a native of Timor, he speaks the language fluently (both Indonesian and local dialect(s)) and knows the culture intimately. For these two missionaries, communicating the gospel will still have its challenges, but most of these will be overtly spiritual. Rather than having to learn another culture (including language), they have been able to get busy right away with gospel proclamation.

While we cannot say that it is biblically mandated, M-1 missions are the wisest and most effective use of our limited resources. Where opportunities arise to do M-3 missions, it's best to call a man who can give himself to this full time. Often the same is true for M-2 missions – at times, these opportunities can look deceptively easy. We can be misled into thinking that we truly know a people group and that we as a community or as individuals are competent to bring the gospel to them – meanwhile, there are significant cultural barriers and misunderstandings which prevent an effective communication of the gospel. After some initial enthusiasm, this often creates frustration and disillusionment. If a congregation is looking to expand its outreach in the local area, it's best to focus on M-1 opportunities. Where there are situations that are M-2 and M-3 for us, perhaps God will bring people our way for whom those situations are M-1. We can certainly pray for that!

I want to also tie in a brief comment here on the concept of partnerships. C. J. Haak in The Netherlands has written a bit on this subject under the rubric of what we call ecumenics. This is a popular subject today in Christian mission. Sometimes churches in foreign countries will request our assistance for theological training or in other ways. This presents rich opportunities for partnership. We can share the blessings of our Reformed heritage. However, let me also encourage you

to flip it around. There may be a grand opportunity here for them to share with us their knowledge and expertise as well. Perhaps we might send a man to them. Perhaps they might be able to send a man for some time to us to work among their ethnic group in our region. With some creativity, there are different ways that can be worked out. Regardless, with a partnership, it's important that the flow works both ways. On both sides, God has given gifts and we can and should share those gifts with one another wherever possible.

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### *Grab hold of one opportunity and do it with excellence and passion*

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You need to carefully consider your options and the opportunities that God has placed before you. Let me add a word of caution as you do that. It is possible to get so bogged down in discussions about how and where to work that nothing gets done – *paralysis by analysis*. We're exceptionally good at that in the Canadian Reformed Churches. It is also possible to spread yourself too thin. You want to do everything and the result is that many things are being done, but none of them are being done well. I would suggest you grab hold of one opportunity and do it with excellence and passion.

### **Why?**

Though I am going to be brief on the question of why we should do mission, it's not because it is unimportant. In fact, nothing could be more so. John Piper summed it up best when he wrote these words at the beginning of his book *Let the Nations Be Glad*:  
Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions.

We long to see God worshipped. We earnestly desire to see his name glorified above all. We care about missions because we care about God, we love him, and we want to see him made much of. That is the first and highest reason we want to do mission.



Closely connected with that is the love we have for those around us. Our hearts break for the lost. When we see our unbelieving neighbours, we become sorrowful when we consider their eternal destination. Love compels us to do something, to be God's instruments for bringing the gospel to those who are dead in darkness.

When we consider our motivation for mission, it all boils down to those two things: love for God and love for our neighbour. We want to see God exalted and we long to see our neighbours saved. Whatever your congregation decides to do in the area of outreach, I want to encourage you to keep that two-fold motivation clear in your mind.


## Conclusion

We believe the Scriptures teach that true churches have three marks: faithful preaching, administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of discipline. In years gone by, there have been those who argued for the addition of a fourth mark. Some of those say the fourth mark should be mission. Such calls are well-intentioned, but misguided. We confess that there are not only marks of the true church, but also several characteristics – these are things that belong to the essence of the church. So in the Nicene Creed, we confess one holy, catholic, and apostolic church. Apostolic refers to the teaching of the apostles, but there is more to it. An apostle is literally one who is sent out. The apostolic church is a missionary church. When we consider mission, it is not a matter of true or false church. It is a matter of whether this particular church is a church at all. Mission belongs to the essence of the church.

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### *We long to see God worshipped*

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There is a real sense in which we can say that mission is just part of who we are as a church. Sending and supporting and going are natural outcomes of being the body of Christ. It is something the Holy Spirit leads us to do because we are united to Christ. The evidence is there that the Spirit is indeed leading us in that direction. Let me conclude with that short verse from 1 Thessalonians 5:19, "Do not quench the Spirit." 







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# What is the Difference between Secession and Schism?

In the past I have written a number of times in *Clarion* about the current situation in our Dutch sister churches. Not everyone is interested in these things, I know, but we should have some knowledge about what is happening there. After all, it could also happen to us who have the same origin and heritage.

Now I am not going to list everything that may or may not be right or wrong in our Dutch sister churches. Our last General Synod appointed a special subcommittee to evaluate the situation in The Netherlands. In time there will be a report that hopefully is of help to us all.

Recently I read a book by Dr. H.J.C.C.J. Wilschut, who was editor of an esteemed Dutch magazine titled *Nader Bekeken* ("A Closer Look"). The book is titled *Secession?* (Berkum Graphics, 2010, 55 pp.). In this book Wilschut frankly discusses the situation in the Dutch churches and asks the question: what should be done? While he admits that there are serious problems in his church federation, he does not yet want to go the way of "secession." Others have already seceded but Wilschut is definitely not ready for this move.

His reason is simple and powerful. A legitimate secession takes place only when it is absolutely clear that the church has become *false*. There is great difference between a legitimate secession and a sinful schism. While secession can sometimes be mandated, all schism must always be avoided. When the gospel is still faithfully preached and God is praised for his work in Christ, the time of secession has not arrived. Wilschut also points out that no one is hindered from preaching the true gospel in the GKv, our sister churches. Much good work is still being done. The GKv may be in error but are not (yet) false. I did not know that such a distinction existed: apostate but not false.

## Back to Calvin?

Dr. Wilschut distinguishes (with Calvin) between fundamental and non-fundamental issues. Most issues are *not* fundamental. The foundation of the GKv is still solid. It may differ from place to place, but overall there is sincerity and truth. We must act only when the foundations have been destroyed.

I appreciate what Wilschut is saying. Let's get the bee out of our bonnet. Still, I am a little leery about the *distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental points of doctrine*. This is especially the case in a post-modern, individualistic time where accusations of *fundamentalism* are not uncommon. True, every point of doctrine has its own place and weight, but improper use of this distinction can lead to much debate and dissension. Everyone can develop his own list of major and minor points of faith. It is better to hold fast to the confessions *in their entirety* as the fundamental matters of faith; otherwise new contentions arise constantly.

This is why we have a Form for Subscription which all office bearers must sign. In this Form we acknowledge our mutual binding to the doctrine of God's Word as summarized in the confessions. We promise not to teach or promote anything that conflicts with this standard, and if we later have misgivings about any point of doctrine, we promise first to lay the matter before our consistory and sister churches. I have not heard that any colleague in The Netherlands has approached the churches in such a case. Therefore it is alarming when some ministers make easy and loose statements which appear to conflict with the Form of Subscription.

It does no good, then, to hide behind John Calvin. Calvin did not seek to justify the decision to secede

from the Romanist church. He knew that secession in this case was obedience to Christ. Calvin did want to keep us from *extremism*: there are perhaps traces of the catholic church left in the false church. There may still be believers who are being saved there. Perhaps our forebears did now and then make statements that were strong and controversial. But these statements had their own specific context which we today perhaps do not fully understand.

### Mid-life crisis?

It appears to me that the Dutch churches have fallen into a "mid-life" crisis in which one looks critically at the past and charts new ways for the future. It is only an example, but I do believe that there is such a crisis. The way out of such a crisis is to go back to your roots and cherish anew what has been received by God's grace. *Personally I would like to see a more positive appraisal of what the Lord gave us in the Liberation of 1944. Was this Liberation an act of legitimate secession or was it a schism?*

### *A path must be chosen*

This is a very serious matter, also for us. Were our parents faithful to the Lord Jesus when they felt compelled to institute the Canadian Reformed Churches? Or was the whole thing a stupid misunderstanding? Was the establishing of Reformed churches and schools necessary, or was it misplaced zeal? Tell me now, what was it? Are we the result of secession or schism?

In time every generation critically examines the legacy of the previous generations. Sometimes, because not enough time has passed, we can be too

negative on the generation before us. Children easily criticize parents. The world is rapidly changing and old values and decisions are not valid in the new setting. Is that how we are to evaluate the work of our fathers? Shall we stand with them in the issues of our time? Is it now Klaas contra Klaas? When we buried our parents, did we also bury their deepest convictions and their faithful struggle in Holland and in Canada?

### A rather sad ending

Wilschut asks the churches in Holland to show patience and restraint, and discuss the differences in a brotherly manner. Okay. In the end Wilschut asks "GKv, what now?" Good question. Unfortunately he writes, "I cannot answer the question. The churches themselves must do this. We ask the Lord to be gracious to the GKv." (p. 55)

### *There is great difference between a legitimate secession and a sinful schism*

It is a rather sad ending. No solution is offered. The time for secession may not have arrived, I cannot judge that, but I hoped that Wilschut would give some solid direction. After all, he is on the spot, on the ground, and in the thick of things.

Of course, prayer is needed for our sister-churches. Let us be diligent in prayer. But also some concrete decisions must be made. A path must be chosen. Will these churches continue to be churches-in-transition or will they remain recognizably Reformed? More than ever before, we need to keep in mind the difference between secession and schism. The former is obedience, the latter is sin.

C







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# Ecumena

## Trends in Canadian Anglicanism

For 2,000 years, the church has taught that baptism precedes communion. We take this seriously. Before a person is allowed to make a public profession of faith, and so be admitted to communion, we ensure that he has been baptized. If he comes from another church background, we even require a copy of his baptismal certificate or other letter of proof.

The Anglican Church in Canada (ACC) is considering doing away with the requirement of baptism. Why?

The ACC is a church in crisis. It is losing 13,000 members a year and has declined in membership from the 1.3 million of only a few decades ago to the present 500,000. Recently, I spoke with an Anglican gentleman who said that when most people think of the average Anglican, they think of someone like him, a sixty-five year old white male. According to him, that face of the Anglican Church in the UK and in North America, including the ACC, will disappear along with him. Said he, in fact, the average Anglican in the worldwide communion is a young black woman living in Africa.

One solution that is being proposed to rebuild the ACC is to remove the requirement of baptism to partake in communion. The challenge is to be a church in a post-Christian society where many have not been baptized, come from different religious traditions, or from no religion at all. The question is being asked in ACC circles how the church can be an open, welcoming, and inclusive place in a pluralistic and multi-cultural society, supporting people in their spiritual journey, and not invite all who are in attendance to participate in communion.

The *Ottawa Citizen* reported that the Rev. Gary Nicolosi, pastor at St. James Westminster Anglican



Church in London, Ontario, and an official church consultant on how to build church membership, said that not allowing guests to communion is like inviting someone for Sunday dinner and not feeding them a meal. According to Rev. Nicolosi, the idea that baptism precedes communion is not directly spelled out in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup>

Is this correct? Does the New Testament not require those partaking in communion first to have been baptized? In fact, it does. John Murray had some good things to say about this in his articles about fencing the table.<sup>2</sup>

When Jesus preached the gospel, he made no distinction between men but called all to himself. "On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink'" (John 7:37, ESV). The Lord said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28). "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (John 6:37).



Whoever hears the preaching of the gospel is called to faith in Christ. As we confess in the Canons of Dort, "But as many as are called by the gospel are earnestly called, for God earnestly and most sincerely reveals in his Word what is pleasing to him, namely, that those who are called should come to him. He also earnestly promises rest for their souls and eternal life to all who come to him and believe" (Chap III, 8).

However, when the Lord instituted the holy supper, he sat down with his disciples. While the preaching of the gospel is for all who hear it, the Lord's Supper is for the disciples of Christ. Who are the disciples? More than the Twelve. Disciples are all those who have acknowledged Christ as Lord and who follow him in obedience. They have confessed that they have redemption by the blood of Christ.

Prof. Murray points out that it is instructive to note the order of events on the first Christian Pentecost. After the Holy Spirit came forth, the people who witnessed the amazing things happening asked Peter and the others what they were to do. Peter replied "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name

of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. . . . Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Act 2:38, 40). As the narrative continues, we read, "So those who received his word were baptized. . . . And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:41, 42).

"The breaking of bread" refers to the Lord's Supper. Those who repented and believed the gospel message were baptized, continued to submit to the apostolic teaching, Christian fellowship, and communal prayer, and were the ones who partook of the bread and wine. It is not for all indiscriminately but is for the support and edification of those who are disciples of Christ. By baptism one is incorporated into Christ; the Lord's Supper is meant to strengthen those who already belong to the body of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

What is the answer for the ACC? The answer for the ACC is the same as the answer for every church: preach the gospel! In the Canons of Dort we confess, "The promise of the gospel is that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life. This promise ought to be announced and proclaimed universally and without discrimination to all peoples and to all men, to whom God in his good pleasure sends the gospel, together with the command to repent and believe" (Chap II, 5).

When I mentioned the Synod of Dort and its Canons to my Anglican conversation partner, he said, "We were at that synod." Indeed, the Anglicans were. If the ACC were to hold to the things the fathers believed, confessed, and practised, the present crisis in the ACC could, under the grace of God, be averted.

<sup>1</sup> "Anglicans consider communion for all," by Charles Lewis, March 13, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> John Murray, "Fencing the Table" (1, 2 & 3), *Collected Writings*, Vol. 3, Edinburgh: The Banner of Trust, © 1982, pp. 275-79.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, "Fencing the Table (2)," *op. cit.*, p. 277.







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# Teaching Mores

A few years ago, the faculty of Moral Development at the Reformed University-College in Zwolle, The Netherlands, published a study (*Mores Léren*) about the alignment of parents and teachers in moral upbringing.<sup>1</sup> Teaching *mores*, plural of the Latin *mos*, is about instilling the fixed customs and manners of a society. The study was conducted at one of the Reformed elementary schools in Bunschoten-Spakenburg. A parallel study was done at another local Christian school. Bunschoten is part of a relatively closed community, known, among others, for its traditional dress and mores, and amateur soccer teams. Over thirty percent of its population of 20,000 is Reformed of some sort, over twenty percent belongs to our sister churches, and of its thirteen elementary schools, twelve are Christian. Bunschoten's strong collective moral sense is an integral part of town culture. There are benefits of moral conventions and social control, but this culture also accepts undesirable rough behaviour, coarse language, exclusion, and ambivalence on alcohol-use by minors. Teachers are said to handle behavioural issues by control and direction, rather than through bonding and relationships. This article presents a summary of the study and some reflections.

## There are benefits of moral conventions and social control

The school clearly presents itself as Christian. Its mission "aims to provide a safe and protected environment, in which each child feels accepted and receives space to develop socially, emotionally, cognitively, creatively, and culturally. Its starting point is the uniqueness of each child and it attempts to meet individual differences in approach and style." It propagates a Reformed identity, in which teachers see and treat each child as valuable, base their actions on Christian values and norms, and seek good cooperation

between home, church, and school. The basis of education is the Word of God, with stated implications for loving God above all, and one's neighbour like oneself. This leads to expectations like respect for differences, patience to guide students, no bullying; a climate of order, peace, and regularity, and recognition of everyone's responsibility and independence. The study was initiated because of discrepancies between the stated identity and reality.

## The study

This study is of interest to all who have good intentions for raising their children – but are prone to sustain wrong behaviours. It seeks to help teachers be better role models and improve cooperation between home and school in moral upbringing. In a written component, participants first had to rate values for their relative importance, and then select possible applications to moral situations. The background to these responses was then explored further in separate focus-group interviews with parents, with teachers, and with students. In brief, the study found that the adults stressed *outward behaviours* rather than intrinsic values, referring, in descending order of importance, to values like: showing respect and being polite, being obedient and following rules, being dependable, and being fair. Students, on the other hand, gave preference to learning *character* values, and ranked them differently: being fair, having one's own opinion, showing respect, being dependable and trustworthy. Other values ranked lower and are not included here.

Some examples will illustrate how these values are applied in practice. When a child is excluded from a game for not wearing brand-name clothes, should the teacher lead a *whole class* discussion about this, or only with the *students involved*? Forty percent of the parents and students and thirty percent of the teachers think the former; forty-five percent of the teachers and thirty percent of parents and students choose the latter. (The authors regret that less than half seize

the teachable moment with a class discussion.) What should a teacher say when grade 5/6 students want to organize a class party with alcohol? Half of the adults want the teacher to just give his opinion; the others recommend a class discussion first. Students are not interested in the opinion; they know it is illegal. Yet, several of them publicly consumed alcohol before, even with parental consent. In a third example, all participants rank the value of respect highly, but nearly half the students indicate that they don't treat each other that way, and only about twenty-five percent of adults are convinced that they do. Most adults also know that swearing and bullying happens at school. Participants agree that the teachers' most important value-related tasks are to correct students for inappropriate behaviour, to teach them to behave respectfully, and to be a role model.

## Interviews

The focus-group interviews zoomed in on five key areas, as presented below. First, the interviews confirmed that internal bonds and strong social control of Bunschoten's culture make it difficult for youth to make independent choices. Few youths opt for post-secondary education; most aim to get a job at age thirteen or fourteen and spend their money on goods and alcohol (and sometimes drugs); few people express scruples with under-age drinking.

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who have good intentions for raising  
their children*

As for values, apart from transferring knowledge, teachers say they value developing a sense of community, and working out of a faith-conviction of love for God and the neighbour. They try to create an atmosphere of pleasant interaction and joy, in which saying sorry and starting anew are possible. They also value building trustworthiness and justice, as well as independence and assertiveness. Parents value the school's work on social awareness, with values like mutual acceptance, honesty, and dependability; they stress good behaviour more and attitude development less than teachers. All oppose bullying. Adults place little value on teaching children how to constructively handle criticism.



*Windmill between  
Bunschoten and  
Spakenburg*

Teachers feel that parents are first responsible for *upbringing*, and that the school plays an (important) secondary role. This necessitates good home-school cooperation and approachable teachers, even as the school maintains its own responsibilities and policies. Parents like this school for upholding their norms and values, and for the identity the children share with peers. They expect the school to let the normative light of Scripture shine on reality: Teachers should tell students not to drink before age sixteen, prepare them to stand up for themselves with scriptural norms and values, and have an eye for individual differences. Children think teachers should reward good behaviour and punish bad; but at home, they find, it helps better to talk.

Parents value good *interaction* between staff and home, which, they think, may need to be more intensive. Sometimes they only talk about issues with like-minded others, and then children don't see how they can get resolved. Parents find that more consultation about upbringing would be good: home-school communication suffers when both parents work, and children spend after-school time with some outside supervision service. Children trust that outcomes



will be good when they discuss issues with teachers. They value being helpful to others, but keep unwanted interference at bay. All find that swearing and bullying happens a lot, and that there are differences between home and school when it comes to sticking up for oneself. This is one area in which home and school can help each other better.

Adults believe that a common *faith conviction* strongly influences upbringing at home and at school: it generates togetherness and belonging. This comes out in Bible lessons, prayer, and singing Psalms, but also in one's attitude: You've been baptized and act accordingly by loving God and the neighbour. Teachers are expected to be models of good behaviour; parents choose this school because it connects to what they believe and teach. Parents are satisfied with the school, but realize that it is hard to transfer values. Children observe in practical things that it shows that they are children of God: don't swear, and trust that prayer gives courage to address difficult but good things. They tell their wrongs to God more easily than to adults.

### Study conclusions

There is embarrassment about the use of alcohol (and drugs), as parents and teachers alike wish to base their actions on norms from God's Word, which inspire virtues like neighbourly love, faithfulness, compassion, and forgiveness. Parents expect support from the teachers in instilling such virtues and attitudes in their children, and wish for more intensive communication on this. They express a strong need for building school-community – and not just around soccer. Bunschoters work hard and put much effort into joint causes, and, together with a conformity supporting culture, this can be a good aspect of bringing up a child.

Despite the positives, there are also negatives. Conformity inhibits independent choices, and leads to double standards. The culture of hard work, making money, and keeping up with trends, contributes to waste and alcohol use. Parents know it is wrong, but do little to teach self-control, responsibility, and long-term thinking. Children must yet learn how to handle criticism, take personal responsibility, and formulate faith-based opinions apart from peer influence.

Teachers can teach independence and assertiveness, and develop intrinsic values by discussing reasons for rules – rather than just laying down the law. The community values good behaviour, but promotes compliance and conformity only:

Correction is aimed at behaviours, rather than intrinsic commitment. They don't connect having respect to keeping rules and being polite: They find respect important, but still bully and swear. Adults think that it will take much effort to embrace the need for change, and then to implement it. The behaviour is "in their genes." Yet, more young people do now choose for post-secondary education.

### Study recommendations

The study has several recommendations. First, building on strong cohesion, the common Christian identity, and cooperation between parents and teachers, moral upbringing can be strengthened at school and at home. Intrinsic motivation can be developed by giving children responsibilities and letting them develop their own opinions. Mutual support and communication can be strengthened between parents and teachers.



*Dr. Bavinck School.*  
"After school only for children up to 12.  
No Soccer. Keep out. No dogs."



*Parking and Recess at Dr. Bavinck School*

Teachers can capitalize on teachable moments in spontaneous moral situations, and they can make the school safer by teaching “safe school” values and behaviours. Together, adults can commit to holding a line of not allowing minor alcohol use.

The study observes different influences on value transfer. It notes that moral sensitivity develops in phases, which explains why children may bully while knowing it is wrong. It suggests to first teach the outward forms of the norm, such as decency and self control, and to emphasize internalization later, through discussions, explanations, and modeling. Each developmental level calls for its own approach to teaching norms and values, and parents and teachers both need to make responsible choices regarding value-transfer, value-clarification, and critical discussion of values. Different parenting styles affect instilling norms and values in different ways. Further, brain research has found that the moral-thinking area of the brain only begins to develop during elementary years, is in full swing during adolescence, and is not complete until about age twenty-four. This would caution to expect too much even in high school—making structured and organized explanation and discussion even more important.

## Reflections

The study displays a strong desire to get things right, and, simply by talking about it probably helped improve local home-school cooperation and teacher role-model aspects. While the study acknowledges parents as primarily responsible for raising their children, and the school as an extension, it seems

to expect much of the school. Schools can help and support a change for the better, which the study intends, but real change should rather be rooted in the home.

The study, the parents, and the school’s identity papers happily share a Christian identity based on God’s Word, and seek cooperation between home, church, and school. It is therefore remarkable that the recommendations don’t mention the church. Shouldn’t its proclamation of God’s Word also call for repentance, and help equip the covenant community to support the parents in their tasks? Such reference would also balance the recommendation to consider secular psychology, brain research, and sociology. These may offer an understanding of observable patterns and processes, but are not particularly good at acknowledging sin and our sinful nature, or the Holy Spirit’s work of conversion.

*The teacher’s most important value-related tasks are to correct students for inappropriate behaviour, to teach them to behave respectfully, and to be a role model*

As for us, we can look at ourselves, and determine where our beliefs and our actions do not jive—and help each other to do something about it. We can consider how we teach morals and ethics to our children, and how home, school, and church can support each other as a three-fold cord which cannot easily be broken. We can remain humble and accept correction in gratitude, whether it is personal or communal. As the study portrays a desire to remain vigilant for Reformed education and God’s honour, may we as well.

The authors included Wilma van der Jagt, Marleen Kranenburg-Kaptijn, Jeanet Oosterhuis-Stoit, and Pieter Vos. Permission was granted for publication of this review as a very good representation of the study.

*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.*



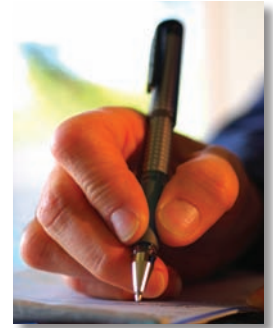
**Dear Editor:**

I was happy to see Rev. Klaas Stam address the somewhat controversial issue of how we address our ministers ("Pastor Klaas Meet Reverend Stam," Vol.60, No. 8, April 8, 2011). I agree with him that our attempts at reducing the perceived "class difference" between the minister and members of the congregation, and doing so by using forms of address that are more acceptable, has the real tendency of demeaning the office that a minister of the Word holds. We do not address him as "Reverend" because of his personal character or quality, but because of the special office he holds. This is the background to the title Reverend. Correctly, it should be Reverend Mister Stam, which has by custom been shortened to Rev. Stam.

Our increasing use of the term Pastor grates with me. Maybe it is my memory of hearing the term *pastoor* in Dutch, which my Cassell's Dutch-English Dictionary translates as "(parish) priest." As Rev. Stam correctly points out, our transition from the Dutch use of *Dominee* to Reverend is not always comfortable and possibly, not even correct. Our use of phrases like "the Rev. can look after this. . ." or "Hello Rev.," are totally inappropriate. On the other hand, addressing our ministers as Pastor is equally incorrect. Not only

does it only describe one aspect of the office that our ministers have, it is using a word, which describes the vocation or task, as a form of address. We would never think of addressing those we hire to fix things, as Plumber Jones or Electrician Doe; rather, we would normally use the form of Mr. Jones or Mr. Doe (although in our NA culture, the familiarity of addressing almost all people by their first name might not warrant even this). But then, we would not normally address our ministers by only their first name either.

The vocation/occupation that our ministers have is that of preacher, teacher, and shepherd (or pastor). Let's then use the terminology correctly and address them with the title that respects their office. We might describe them as our pastors, (although in my mind that still is incomplete), but address them in the manner that acknowledges and respects the position that they hold.



*Thank you,  
John Vanderstoep,  
Surrey, 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.*



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