

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
Volume 61, No. 8 • April 13, 2012

*Carman East
welcomes
Rev. S. Vandavelde
and family*

Inside this Issue

- *Pulpit Power*
- *Sending Flowers to Sinners*





Rev. Eric Kampen is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Orangeville, Ontario
eric.kampen@canrc.org

Pulpit Power

We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us

Appreciation for the pulpit

Anyone observing our life as Canadian Reformed churches will quickly become aware of the importance placed on the pulpit. This is because of the activity that takes place from the pulpit, that is, the preaching of the gospel. The pulpit is the focal point of our church auditoriums. It is also the focal point of the annual church budget, for the largest part of the budget will be taken up by financial provisions for a minister. Another indicator of its importance is how vacant churches give diligent attention to finding a new minister to fill the pulpit. It is further reinforced by the willingness to contribute a significant sum each year to the operation of the Seminary in Hamilton, where men may receive training for the ministry of the gospel. All this is an indication of the recognition of the importance of the pulpit in the life of the congregation.

Lurking danger around the pulpit

As good as all this attention on the pulpit is, there is a great danger lurking in the wings. That danger is a subtle shift from the *message* that is heard from the pulpit to the *messenger* who stands on the pulpit.

The seeds for this may already have been laid in the calling process where there was more attention given to various characteristics, traits, and abilities of the messenger rather than simply to the faithfulness with which he brings the message. It is not unheard of that vacant congregations send around surveys asking the members as to what type of minister they would like. The goal is to find the right person to deal with the various situations in the congregation. One of the consequences of this will often be the search for a man with experience in the ministry. Churches may think that their situation is just too complex to entrust to someone just out of seminary. When a call is issued,

there will be high expectations of the minister, that he will be able to address all the problems facing the congregation.

Note how the focus falls on the messenger. There are great expectations which can also set the stage for great disappointments.

The danger is not only on the side of the congregation. There is also a great danger for the minister, especially when he is the first to be called in a vacancy or when he seems to be desired by so many congregations. The confidence shown in him as messenger may rub off on him so that he forgets for a moment that, ultimately, it is not the messenger that is the power of the pulpit but the message.

Scriptural sobriety

The sobering lesson from the Scriptures is that the *message* is the power of the pulpit. The Lord Jesus indicated that in the parable of the sower. The seed is the Word and that will bear fruit. He sent his disciples into the world with the command to make disciples by baptizing and teaching.

We also receive much sobering instruction from the Apostle Paul. In his first letter to the Corinthians he addressed a situation of people placing their trust in various leaders. We read in the opening chapter how some claimed to belong to Paul, others to Peter or Apollos, while some said they belonged to Christ. It was not the case that any of these leaders put himself on a pedestal, rather, the members of the church did.

In response, Paul stressed that these men were merely servants. It is the message of the cross, he wrote, that is the power of God unto salvation (1 Cor 1:18). In chapter 2 he wrote about his own ministry, saying, "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal
Coeditors: P. Holtvlüwer, E. Kampen, K. Stam, C. Van Dam

ADDRESS FOR COPY MANAGER:

Clarion, 57 Oakridge Drive South, St. Albert, AB T8N 7H2
E-Mail: veenendaal@telus.net

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

Subscriptions: clarionadmin@premierpublishing.ca

Advertisements: clarionads@premierpublishing.ca

Website: www.premierpublishing.ca

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

Subscription Rates for 2012


	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada	\$49.00*	\$ 84.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds  	\$69.00	\$ 92.00
International	\$98.00	\$149.00

*Applicable GST, HST, PRT taxes are extra. GST/HST – No. 890967359RT

Advertisements: \$18.00 per column inch

Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$21.00 per column inch

We reserve the right to refuse ads.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada,  through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.

Cancellation Agreement

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.
Agreement No. 40063293; ISSN 0383-0438

Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

Useful Link: www.canrc.org

In This Issue

Editorial – Pulpit Power — <i>E. Kampen</i>	198
Treasures, New and Old – Sending Flowers to Sinners — <i>P. Feenstra</i>	201
Liturgical Change in the Christian Reformed Church (1964-1985) (5) — <i>W. Bredenhof</i>	202
Finding New Office-Bearers — <i>C. Bouwman</i>	204
Welcome Rev. S. Vandevelde! — <i>G. van Dijk</i>	207
Education Matters – Shifting Goal Posts? — <i>P. Torenluiet</i>	208
Ray of Sunshine — <i>C. Gelms and P. Gelms</i>	211
Letters to the Editor	213
Press Releases – Classis Central Ontario, Classis Alberta	216

men’s wisdom, but on God’s power” (1 Cor 2:4, 5). In I Corinthians 3 Paul describes himself and others as God’s fellow workers in God’s field. Paul planted the seed, a person like Apollos watered, but “God made it grow.”

In his second letter to the Corinthians, where he had to make a further defense of his apostolic ministry, Paul wrote, “For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.” A little further he wrote, “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Cor 4:5, 7). Paul had to impress upon his readers that it was not about the messengers but the message. The Word of God is the seed of regeneration.

It is also possible for too low a view of the messenger to get in the way of the gospel. We see this in Paul’s words to Timothy, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young” (1 Tim 4:12). This is the “experience” angle. In our days we might look down on one who has little or no experience in the ministry. This is always a challenge with respect to candidates.

What’s Inside

The issue in your hands begins with an editorial by Rev. Eric Kampen. “Pulpit Power” emphasizes the importance of the message preached from the pulpit every Sunday and discusses the danger of shifting our attention to the messenger.

Dr. Wes Bredenhof concludes his five-part series on liturgical changes in the Christian Reformed Church by discussing what we in the Canadian Reformed churches can learn from those changes.

As we approach the season of office-bearer nominations and elections, Rev. Clarence Bouwman brings us an article on why we follow the process that we do, as well as the implications of this process.

In federational news, we have an article from Carman East, welcoming Rev. Steve Vandevelde as their new minister.

Issue 8 contains regular columns Treasures New and Old and Education Matters. There are also two letters to the editor and two press releases. Finally, there is a Mission News insert.

Laura Veenendaal

The thought might arise, "But he is too young. He needs some life experience." This view also places the trust in the messenger, as if he has to do it by himself. By preserving Paul's encouragement to Timothy, the Spirit instructs us to be focused on the message and not the messenger. That's where the power lies. Paul's advice to Timothy was, "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching" (1 Tim 4:13). He also urged Timothy to adorn his ministry in Ephesus with a godly life. This advice is reinforced in his second letter to Timothy when he directs Timothy to the inspired Scriptures which are "God breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16, 17). He followed this through with the exhortation to "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season, correct, rebuke and encourage. . ." (2 Tim 4:2).

The messenger must not get in the way of the message

We can also think of other passages that show the power of the pulpit is the Word. In the letter to the Hebrews, the author wrote, "For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb 4:12). James wrote that God "chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of all he created" (James 1:18). Peter wrote that his readers had been "born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. . . and this is the word that was preached to you" (1 Pet 1:23-25).

Implications

Since the power of the pulpit is the message of the gospel there is, therefore, the need to focus on the message, not the messenger. The man in the pulpit is simply the instrument. To be sure, the messenger must always do his best. He must utilize all the talent the Spirit has given him to fulfill his task but, ultimately, he is not the power of the pulpit. Therefore, the messenger must not get in the way of the message.

It is the reality of life that the messenger will draw attention to himself even without trying. Every person has his own personality traits that will either enamour or irritate others. A minister, for example, may be thought of as speaking too slowly, too fast, moving his arms too much or not enough, saying certain words in a peculiar way, having his hair too short, too long, and who knows what else. It may all be very superficial, but these can detract people from the message. When one

Church News

Sustained Candidacy Examination

Examined by Classis Ontario West of March 21, 2012 and declared eligible for call:

Br. Abel Pol

Call by the Adoration URC of Vineland, Ontario:

Rev. K. Wieske

missionary in Brazil of the Maranatha CanRC of Surrey, British Columbia

considers the incidental ways a minister can get in the way of the message without even trying or being aware of it, it is all the more important not to go out and make an effort to get in the way, for example by cleverness and innovation. The challenge for the messenger is that, despite being very visible due to his task, he must, in a manner of speaking, be invisible. The message is the power of the pulpit.

At the same time, it is also important that all those listening do not let the messenger get in the way but focus on the message. That means looking past the person and his personality. It means talking about what he said, not how he said it. For example, how easily does it not happen that a discussion about the message quickly turns to a discussion about the messenger? It can happen on Sunday, over coffee. It can happen at family visits, when the elders ask about the impact the preaching has in someone's life. It takes great effort by an elder to keep the discussion from being about the preacher. He wants to hear what effect the preaching has on the heart, which way the sword of the Word is cutting.

There are also implications for churches seeking to fill a vacancy. No messenger can solve problems. It is the message that does it. The message either heals or flushes out hardening of heart. Each church needs its own minister who can be busy with the Word in the particular setting of that congregation. As the minister studies the Word in the congregation and preaches it, the Spirit will accomplish his work of regeneration and sanctification.

A faith view of the pulpit

When we look at the place of the pulpit in faith, we will know not to look down on the messenger because he is young, nor to look up to him because he is experienced. Every messenger is no more than a jar of clay beneath whatever fancy glaze may be on him. The power of the pulpit is the message brought in these jars of clay "to show that this all-surpassing power is from God."





MATTHEW 13:52

Sending Flowers to Sinners



Rev. Peter Feenstra is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Grand Valley, Ontario
feenstrapg@canrc.org

“As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, will never cease.”
(Genesis 8:22)

What a wonderful time of the year spring can be! Deciduous trees come into full leaf. The fragrance of blossoms and flowers fills the air. Ponds, rivers, fields, and forests teem with life. Did you know that the changing seasons are the work of the Holy Spirit? Step outside and look at a bud breaking forth, a seedling poking out of the soil, young kids and lambs skipping joyfully in a field. All of nature is the work of the Spirit. Psalm 104:30 sings the praises of God’s creation, attributing creation and renewal to the work of the Spirit, “When you send your Spirit they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.” In all the beauty of creation – the colours of flowers, the whistling of a bird, the crashing of waves on a seashore, a water droplet that crystallizes into a piece of ice, the formation of new life – we see the Holy Spirit at work.

Not everything that happens in the parks and meadows of the earth is holy and pure. What the earth yields is often used for sinful purposes. Humanity is guilty of exploiting nature through greed and selfishness. Instead of ruling over creation to God’s glory, mankind has used the creation to further his own interests. The whole creation groans under the pressure of sin (Rom 8:20-23).

So why does God send flowers to sinners? The answer to that question is given throughout

Scripture. Right after the devastation of the flood God promises the continuation of the seasons. God sends flowers to Noah and his family! In the beginning God made the world as a beautiful place where people could enjoy the glory of creation. The flood destroys the beauty of the earth, and the work of creation appears to be undone. As a result of sin, beautiful landscapes, trees and forests, plants and flowers are submerged under water. But on the waters floats a boat! In wrath the Lord remembers mercy. In his sovereignty he decides to make a new start. God remembers Noah and he allows him to leave the ark.

Before any work gets underway, God promises never again to curse the ground because of mankind. He will not destroy every living creature as he did in the flood: “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease” (Gen 8:22). God continues to send flowers to sinners because of his desire to save sinners through Jesus Christ. The continuation of every season, the blooming of every flower, is a constant reminder that the Lord will gather his holy catholic church. The flowers you look at proclaim the work of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is creating a new mankind who will enjoy the wonderful gardens that he has planted in the New Jerusalem.

God sends flowers to sinners as evidence of his patience. Jesus says in Matthew 5:45 that his heavenly Father “causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” Paul proclaims to the people of Lystra, “In the past God let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy” (Acts 14:16-17).

The Lord delays his judgment, but not indefinitely. We shouldn’t think the Lord will keep sending flowers to sinners. God’s patience will only last “while the earth remains.” Christ will come again as judge at the end of days, and if we do not believe his gospel of salvation, the flowers in our gardens and vases will testify against us.

All of creation displays how God is indeed true to his Word of promise and judgment. Listen to the birds sing the loyalty of your God. Think about God’s faithfulness when you watch a sunset, as you gaze into the night sky, and as you take a walk through a park. Take the time to stop and smell the roses! The flowers of the fields and gardens are telling you something. Bring some inside and listen to what they are saying. Thank the Lord for sending flowers to sinners!





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

Liturgical Change in the Christian Reformed Church (1964-1985) Part 5 of 5

Conclusion

By Synod 1986 the Liturgical Committee seems to have been disbanded — although in the 1990s a Committee to Study Worship emerges. However, by 1986, the CRC had been set in a certain direction. On paper, there were not supposed to be significant liturgical changes in this period. In practice the story was different. In some CRC churches the traditional elements of Reformed liturgy were increasingly questioned and/or replaced. Drama was used in worship services, catechism preaching was marginalized, and choirs became commonplace. We may characterize these changes as an addition to or subtraction from what had been in place previously.

How does one account for these changes? There was an unbalanced emphasis on dialogue as the determining factor of Reformed liturgy. There was no consideration given to what the Reformed confessions say about worship, such as what we find in Articles 7 and 32 of the Belgic Confession or Lord's Day 35 of the Heidelberg Catechism. This went together with a general weakening of the authority and place of the confessions in the CRC in general in this period. We can think of the arguments of men like Harry Boer and Lewis Smedes against the doctrine of limited atonement (a.k.a. particular redemption). The CRC was drifting away from its confessional moorings. The emphasis on dialogue reflected that trend.

Now, on the one hand, there is much to be said for the notion of dialogue as the "enduring structure for worship," so long as one informs this notion with the covenant of grace. But, on the other hand, if this dialogical structure stands all by itself as the only determining factor of Reformed liturgy, it is liable to

fall prey to human inventions, additions, and subtractions. There must be more — and that "more" must be determined by the principle of worship found in the Three Forms of Unity: we are not "to worship him in any other manner than he has commanded in his Word" (HC, Q/A 96). Indeed, "the whole manner of worship which God requires of us" (BC, Art. 7) is found in his all-sufficient Word.

There were other factors involved in these changes in the CRC. Chief among these was the general societal unrest of the day. That unrest was felt at Calvin College. Many of those serving on the Liturgical Committee were professors at either Calvin College or Seminary. Some, like Nicholas Wolterstorff, were on the leading edge of radical activities at Calvin. It could be that there was a realization among many professors at Calvin that CRC youth were restless and might go elsewhere if changes were not made. Furthermore, we also have the general tendency in American Christianity at this time to revolutionize liturgy. There was an increased desire to be outward looking and a corresponding wish to make worship services more "user-friendly."

Was there resistance to these liturgical changes? There was the overture from Classis Hamilton in 1985 about liturgical dancing. But apart from that, I have been unable to discern any widespread vocal resistance to the work of the Liturgical Committee in the official ecclesiastical documents. The Association of Christian Reformed Laymen was opposing these developments, but their voice could not be heard at synods. It could also be (and I suspect it to be true) that countless letters were written to local CRC consistories with no effect. Those who were concerned left the matter as is. Also to be considered is the fact that some

concerned members left the CRC in the 1970s and 1980s to form the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church. Were liturgical concerns partly motivating their exodus? It could be, but I have not yet researched it.

If there was a certain degree of resistance, why was it not successful? How did we get to proposals for liturgical dance in 1985? My theory is that it has to be explained in light of the total picture. The CRC was in turmoil during this time. Many battles were being fought by CRC conservatives for biblical and confessional truth. It was not possible to win them all and, in the end, it was not possible to win many (any?) of them. Once again, that appears to have been the result of the undermining of confessional authority in the CRC. Once this was taken away, there was little to no common ground between the concerned and the more progressively minded members. Discussion became fruitless.

The biblical principle of worship found in our confessions safeguards the purity of worship and ensures that our worship will be truly pleasing to God

For us in the Canadian Reformed Churches, there are abiding lessons here. This is a cautionary tale. We must enthusiastically embrace our confessions, also as they speak in a soundly biblical way to matters of liturgy. Once the confessions are undermined or neglected in this area, the door is left open to further aberrations. Traditionalism will not protect us. "We have always done it this way," will only go so far. Eventually a generation will arise for whom that argument is not persuasive. The biblical principle of worship found in our confessions safeguards the purity of worship and ensures that our worship will be truly pleasing to God. That is something that an emphasis on the dialogical (or covenantal) structure of worship on its own cannot accomplish. When we add or take away as we please, even in the name of dialogue (or covenant), we are on the road back to Rome. May God graciously prevent that the Canadian Reformed churches ever find themselves on such a road. "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:12).





Rev. Clarence Bouwman is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Smithville, Ontario clarence.bouwman@gmail.com

Finding New Office-Bearers

The time is here again: we need to find new office-bearers to replace those whose terms have expired. We know the procedure: an announcement comes from the Consistory requesting the congregation to submit names of brothers deemed suitable for the office of elder or deacon. In due time, the Consistory puts together a slate of nominations from which the congregation is requested to elect the required number of brothers.

One wonders: why do we follow *this* method to obtain new office-bearers? Shouldn't consistory just appoint some brothers? Or should we perhaps simply cast lots? What involvement should the congregation actually have in this procedure? My intent today is to investigate why we do it the way we do, and then to list the consequences that follow.

God calls to office

Scripture makes clear that none else than God himself calls people to office. In the Old Testament God, for example, determined who could serve in the office of priest. He said to Moses, "Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons. . . so that they may serve me as priests" (Exod 28:1). Equally, God determined who should be the priest's assistants: "The Lord said to Moses, 'Bring the tribe of Levi and present them to Aaron the priest to assist him'" (Num 3:5f). There was no room here for volunteers, or for a popular vote.

The same is true in relation to Old Testament prophets. Concerning Jeremiah one reads: "The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations'" (Jer 1:4, 5). Moses (Exod 3:10), Gideon (Judg 6:14), Samson (Judg 13:5), Samuel (1 Sam 3:10), Saul (1 Sam 10:2), David (1 Sam 16:12f), and Isaiah (Isa 6:8f) all serve as other examples of men who were very obviously called by God to a

particular office amongst God's people. Even Jesus Christ "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 5:5). Similarly, the Lord Jesus called the disciples to their office; none of them volunteered. Concerning the elders of Ephesus we read Paul is emphatic that "the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" over the flock (Acts 20:28).

Congregational involvement is not limited to nomination and voting. . . it includes ongoing prayer!

Office-bearers throughout the ages, then, receive their office from the Head of the church. That is why no man is permitted to elbow his way into the office today, nor is any to push his friend into the office. Rather, "He shall wait for the time that he is called by God so that he may have sure testimony and thus be certain that his call comes from the Lord" (BC, Art. 31).

How does God do it?

Still, the question arises as to how the Lord God calls men to the offices of the church. In the Old Testament the Lord called many to office by a direct word of revelation. Through a precise command to Moses, God specified that Aaron had to be the high priest. God stipulated too that the next high priest was to be the oldest son of the high priest currently in office – and God himself, of course, determined in his providence who the oldest son would be. The same is true of the kings of Judah. Of the prophets too it is evident that God called them. The quote mentioned above in relation to Jeremiah serves as an example. The Lord Jesus also very directly called the disciples to their office.

There is a change on this point as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Due to the Spirit's renewing presence, the congregation is equipped to *think things through* and so (under the leadership of existing office-bearers) is *responsible* for making decisions. Some examples from the book of Acts demonstrate the point.

- The Lord Jesus had appointed twelve disciples. But a vacancy existed in the group of twelve, since Judas had committed suicide. How was a replacement to be found? The procedure followed is outlined in Acts 1:15-26. One does not read that the remaining eleven unilaterally appointed Matthias to replace Judas. Rather, Peter (on behalf of the eleven) approached the congregation and sought their assistance in filling the vacancy. In verse 23 we read, "So they proposed two men: Joseph ... and Matthias." It is unclear who is meant in this passage by "they," but the context suggests that it was the congregation under the leadership of Peter and the other ten disciples. "Then they prayed, 'Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry. . . .' Then they cast lots, and the lot fell on Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles" (v. 24-26). It's clear that the congregation was involved, possibly in proposing the candidates and certainly in praying. Then "they" cast lots, and the term "they" in this instance certainly includes the involvement of the congregation. Nevertheless, it was God who called to office, for "the lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord" (Prov 16:33).
- A second example of God calling a person to office through the involvement of the congregation can be found in Acts 6. One reads in verse 1 that the widows were being neglected even while the number of disciples was increasing. Consequently, the twelve apostles called together the whole congregation and gave this charge: "Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom" (v. 3). "This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. . . . They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them" (v. 5, 6). Though the initiative lay with the

existing office-bearers (the apostles), it is evident that the congregation played a central role in calling these brothers to their office. That God himself with his blessing was ultimately behind their calling is evident from the "wisdom and the Spirit" by which Stephen, for example, spoke (Acts 6:10).

- In Acts 14:23 we read, "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord." The word "appointed" means literally "elect by raising hands." Although our translation does not seem to suggest the congregation's involvement in the appointment of the elders, the reference to designating a person by raising one's hand does suggest the congregation's direct involvement.

Please notice: in the Acts 6 and 14 passages, the lot is no longer mentioned, and that's because the Holy Spirit was poured out in Acts 2. We're left with the conclusion that the Lord calls brothers to office, and does so through the *active and prayerful thinking processes* of the congregation. In Article 31 of the Belgic Confession, the church echoes this scriptural pattern with these words: "We believe that ministers of God's Word, elders and deacons ought to be chosen to their offices by lawful election of the church, with prayer and in good order. . . ." Similarly, in the Church Order the churches have agreed to the following procedure: "The election to any office shall take place with the cooperation of the congregation, after preceding prayers" (Art. 3).

Prayer

The reference to prayer is striking – and predictable. Recall that the passages quoted above from Acts 1, Acts 6, and Acts 14 all make mention of prayer as a critical step in the calling procedure. The believers of the early church gave themselves to praying for office bearers because they understood that it is ultimately God who calls to office, and the congregation (under the consistory's leadership) forms the tool by which God indicates the man of his choosing. So it is fitting and proper that the church petition the Lord to make clear whom he wants as shepherds over his people. In fact, there was a time in the history of the church that before a minister was to be called the congregation gave itself to a day of fasting and prayer.

Consequence

How, then, is the congregation concretely to be involved? Three steps need our attention.

1. The congregation needs to pray that the Lord God will supply the office bearers the congregation needs. This should be done not just in church services, but also in the homes. We cannot expect to receive good office bearers if we do not ask the Lord to provide suitable brothers. This is the more pressing when it comes to nomination time; let the congregation prayerfully look about for whom the Lord has prepared for office.
2. The congregation needs to draw to consistory's attention those in their midst whom (in their considered judgment) the Lord has prepared for office. Of course, letters of nomination should include also the reason why one thinks a particular brother has been prepared for office, for the brothers reading your letter might not see things your way if you do not argue your case.

This is a responsibility the congregation needs to take seriously

3. Once the consistory has put forward a list of nominees for the vacant office(s), the congregation needs to weigh – prayerfully! – how the Lord would have one to vote. It is the men of the congregation who cast the vote, but the input of the sisters needs to have a place as the men consider for whom they should vote. (This, of course, concerns in first place the family – though not exclusively.)

You will notice: congregational involvement is not limited to suggesting names or to voting. Rather, the emphasis for congregational involvement falls on (ongoing) prayer – in church, in the home, and personal. This is something for the entire congregation, older and younger, men and women, to do. That is why the congregation should be present at the election meeting, and not just the men. Central to that meeting is not ticking a ballot; central is prayer for guidance and wisdom.

Conclusion

It is God who calls brothers to office. He in his providence, however, is pleased to use the congregation as his tool to specify which brothers are to become office bearers. This is a responsibility the congregation needs to take seriously.

Consequently, when a person becomes an office-bearer (that is, when he gives his affirmative response to the questions put to him at his ordination), he must say in so many words that he is convinced "that God himself, through his congregation, has called [him] to [his] office" (Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons). The conviction that it is God who calls is what makes the office so serious. At the same time, it's that same conviction that gives the brother the assurance that God will give the strength to do the task. Meanwhile, the knowledge that the congregation continues to pray for the office bearer is most encouraging for the brothers as they set themselves to carrying out the office God has laid on them.



Welcome Rev. S. Vandavelde!

Entering a new year is generally a time of renewal and optimistically looking toward the future. The past turning of the calendar page was no different, particularly for the congregation of Carman East, Rev. Steve Vandavelde and his family. We could not but thank the Lord for blessing us with a new pastor and teacher, as well as for supplying us with the work of Rev. R. Kampen during our vacancy. Thus it was with great joy that we could meet for worship on January 8, 2012 and witness the ordination of Rev. Vandavelde.

Ordination

Dr. A.J. Pol led the morning service focusing on how the Lord equips his servants with what they need and is ultimately the source of blessing for all the work of a minister. We could later observe the laying on of hands, whereby we were assured that Rev. Vandavelde will not be working for himself or in his own strength but rather that his authority and voice comes from God. The afternoon service was led by Rev. Vandavelde who preached his inaugural sermon under the theme: Our Lord sends out his effective word to give life. We were wisely told to give attention to the message rather than the messenger because it is through the preaching of the Word that God works faith in us. We were shown how God's Word is fitting for us in all circumstances, forceful in that it demands a response from us, and that his Word is focused.

Welcome evening

The congregation of Carman East gathered together on Friday, January 20 for the welcome evening of Rev. Vandavelde, his wife Cecilia, and two children Evan and Emily. A jovial and enthusiastic Mr. Jacob Bosma, who emceed the evening, called on the chairman of council Mr. Talbot Bergsma to open the evening. Following the opening comments Jacob Bosma called all council members to the front to sing Hymn 6 in order to demonstrate to Rev. Vandavelde the harmony



that exists at the council table. The Women's Society "Rejoice in the Lord" then presented Rev. Vandavelde and his family with a scrapbook of the congregation which introduced every member

of Carman East as well as provided useful directions to their homes. The president of Carman East Young People's Society called on Rev. Vandavelde to sing "Mary had a Little Lamb" and had the very young in the congregation to judge his level of competence in that area. This harsh jury sentenced the new minister to more practice singing. Following these presentations the Alleluia choir, consisting of members in Carman East and West, captivated the audience with a number of remarkable sung choral arrangements. The Young Adults Bible Study then introduced themselves and invited Rev. Vandavelde to join some of their study evenings. The Wednesday Women's Society involved the entire congregation by hosting a quiz game show with questions about the Carman East congregation. The Men's Society followed up with a brief history of their society in rhyme. Everyone was invited to sing "Jesus Shall Reign" after which Rev. Vandavelde made some closing remarks and gave thanks.

In the spirit of the evening there was time to mingle and particularly to meet and greet the Vandavelde family. Throughout the event we could joyfully see the communion of saints which no doubt serves as a great encouragement for all at the beginning of this new era in Carman East. Indeed, the ordination of Rev. Vandavelde and the welcome evening all serves as a reminder of God's faithfulness toward his people. All praise belongs to him.





Shifting Goal Posts?

Rote learning: time tables, number facts, books of the Bible, psalms, hymns, and Bible texts. These are certainly not the most exciting ways to learn, but definitely necessary! Do you remember droning on and on when you learned the times-tables? Do you remember repeating psalms or bible texts endlessly in your mind? In the past, school curricula and teaching methodologies gave far more prominence to *rote learning* than we do currently. Some educators even discredit the mindless repetition of rote learning as mind-numbing and useless. A Christian may have a different perspective on this process, especially when this learning involves aspects of our Christian identity. Though rote memory is one of the oldest methods of learning, our digital generation may balk at such a thoughtless process.

How effectively does Deuteronomy 6 function in our families?

A catechism teacher in The Netherlands experienced a surprise when he asked his students to look up Ephesians 4. Several of them could not find it, probably because they had not learned (or had forgotten!) their Bible books. For many (younger) people today, they would consider much of this rote memory work stupid and mindless. With the prevalence of Smart phones, iPads, computers, etc., an app or a few key strokes will provide access to the Internet: Bible translations, commentaries, history, science, math – you name it, you can find it. Some people even use their Smart phones to access Bible readings rather than leaf through a “real” Bible. Though more information is readily available than ever before in history, there is something the Internet, a Smartphone, or an iPad can never replace.

The question raised in this context, is a growing *illiteracy*, a decrease in the basic knowledge of the

Christian faith. On the whole, I believe most of our catechism students (still) have a reasonable level of Bible literacy. (Though most teachers wish it was much better!) Hans Meerveld, who teaches catechetics at the Reformed College (Zwolle) and at the Reformed Seminary (Kampen), wrote an interesting and thought-provoking article in the Dutch bi-weekly, *De Reformatie*. I will translate and comment on his article:

Complaints about a lack of knowledge are not new. Hosea mentioned this as well. This same concern about a lack of knowledge was an important motive for Luther and Calvin to invest a lot of energy into catechesis (catechism instruction). During the past century, almost all research done among the youth in the context of their faith and church membership also discusses their lack of “faith” knowledge.

To begin with, it would be wise to contextualize this complaint. Is this Bible knowledge any better among adults? A few random tests of specific Bible facts could possibly advance the thought that it is a myth that in the past factual rote memory of the Bible was better than it is now.

Comparing Bible knowledge or basic knowledge of our Reformed faith to past situations may bear out an important (and embarrassing) fact, but that only raises more questions: are our (i.e., teachers, ministers, elders) expectations too high, or were there similar problems in the past that were left unaddressed? If Hosea’s complaint about a lack of knowledge is applicable today – as in the past – then the churches are coping with a perennial problem. Why?

Hans Meerveld poses a number of questions about effective catechism methodology and we can also add questions about the effectiveness of school Bible programs. Could they or should they be more effective in passing on basic knowledge? Should there be more rigor, especially for students who could easily accommodate such rigor? Differentiated instruction is often mentioned in the context of students who are challenged by a regular curriculum.

What do we do in Bible programs that challenge the gifted learners?

A more pressing question also comes up. Meerveld uses the comparison of the learning of a mother tongue as an example to point to a possible deeper, a more systemic problem within our Reformed community.

Learning your mother tongue almost appears to happen automatically. From the time of your birth, the people in your life have talked to you. Without deliberate lessons you use your listening skills to establish a context between an object and a word. Afterwards you begin to speak your first words. The learning process is not organized separately because it's the environment in which you grow up every day that imparts that language knowledge to you.

It is fascinating in this context to read Deuteronomy 6:6, 7 where Moses teaches parents what their task is with respect to keeping God's commands. Those commands must be etched upon the children's minds by means of daily use and instruction. "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." In other words, every moment of the day. "Impressing" in this context has nothing to do with rote memory because this instruction is simply present all the time wherever they are or wherever they go.

The situation highlighted in Deut. 6: 6, 7 presents us with an authentic form of learning. It's also a form of conveying knowledge which would be difficult to reject. You simply accept this instruction as presented to you because speaking this language is a requirement of (normal) communication and a qualification to belong to God's people.

Deuteronomy 6 has often been quoted to urge parents to support Christian education. Indeed, *daily* instruction should also include our children's schooling, but your children's instruction is much more. How many teachers get your children out of bed, have breakfast with them, or sit around a dinner table with them? Or walk with them along the road? From this Bible text it should be abundantly clear that *parents* have the primary task. Of course we all know that. . .

Hans Meerveld continues:

In this process of instruction, the place this faith knowledge takes in our lives is therefore very critical. The mother tongue/language is learned




without deliberate instruction because everyone in the child's surroundings uses this language as a matter of course. Is the use of our "faith language" also a matter of course in our children's surroundings? If the context of this language development is missing, that could be one of the most critical reasons why many children know so little of this "faith knowledge." Outside of our families and outside of the church, in society at large, this Christian language that is integral to the expression our faith has become a foreign language. Religion has become a matter for our private lives. This language is still integral to our church life. Basically that means the language in our church services on Sundays and in catechism classes.

As our children are increasingly exposed to the secular influences around us via the popular media, T.V., Internet, and secular schooling (especially secular trade schools, colleges and universities), we may witness similar experiences as those described by Meerveld. By and large, our church communities have been more insular than those in The Netherlands. Is this because of our immigrant mindset, the relatively closed enrollments of our schools, and the close relationship our schools have with our Reformed families and churches (the Triangle)? These relationships are not a substitute for effective Christian parenting. The language at home must resonate with the same sound of faith as that of the church and the school. (Turn the T.V. down! Or off. Perhaps the discussion of the hockey game could wait. . .)

It remains an open question how prevalent or pervasive “faith language” is in our homes. What is the status of the usage of religious knowledge (i.e., Bible knowledge and the knowledge of our Reformed faith) in our families? Does that language usage support the usage of faith language, or do discussions about faith issues only surface occasionally? If the latter is the case, then there will be few situations which provide an opportunity to use (and develop) the knowledge of faith. If this (faith) language learning is no longer a matter of course, integral to the family environment, the learning at catechism lessons will become isolated experiences. Consequently, such learning will soon disappear in the wave of information that washes over them everywhere else.

How effectively does Deuteronomy 6 function in our families? What place in our families do we cultivate for “faith language,” discussions about our relationship with the Lord? Remember that often the parenting model your children experience at home will become the starting point for their own homes when they are married. The pressures of the world are like the storm and rain that beat upon the house in Jesus’ parable. Christian schooling can serve well to equip our youth for their task as adults in God’s kingdom, but both school and catechism only serve to support and assist the parents in the task they promised to carry out at the baptism of their children.

Meerveld stresses the importance of formal catechism instruction and the opportunities young people have to discuss faith issues, as well as their commitment to the Lord. In this context he addresses an issue that is very prevalent in educational circles: *life-long learning*. Teachers must model this. *All* adults must model this if they want their children to embrace it. Certainly as Christians, we must embrace this concept and realize that it is much more than attending worship services each Sunday! Deuteronomy 6 does not stop functioning when our last child has moved out of the house; it’s integral to whom we are as committed Christians: parents, grandparents, *all* adults.

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 Arthur Kingma abkingma@kwic.com. 



Ray of Sunshine

by Corinne Gelms and
Patricia Gelms

Do you hear it? Shh. . . listen. . . yes, it is. . . indeed a unique and most beautiful sound of music! Do you hear it too?

No? Well, here is a good opportunity to sit back and let the most beautiful sound of music fill your ears. It is the ever popular Anchor Band that can perform such a chord of musical delight (and of which we like to share some of their highlights.)

It all began in September of 1988 at the Anchor Home in Beamsville. Since its inception this band has been directed under the most gifted hand of Mr. Riese Heemskerck. Together they surely have a lot of fun and can truly make a magnificent noise!

Most of the participants in the band live at the Anchor Home residence. Grace Homan can be found playing the keyboard, and without referencing musical notation too yet. Tom Vanderzwaag and Jerry Bontekoe together make a loud bang on the drums and keep everyone in beat. Bernie DeVos adds to keeping everyone in the same beat with the clashing of the cymbals. Henry Vandervliet can be seen playing the tambourine with the sticks, while Trevor Buys



*The Anchor Band is eagerly waiting to perform.
From L to R: Terrance B., Henry V., Tom V., Jerry B.,
Trevor B., Grace H. in backrow*



The Anchor Band performing with a local choir.

contributes with the other tambourine. Last but not least, Rob DeHaan contributes to the joyful sound with sticks.

As this band progresses in playing as a group effort, the amount of volume they produce also increases immensely; at times it causes floors and windows to vibrate. You can understand well why the regular Friday night practices occur in the lower level of the Home.

Anchor Band also performs with various choirs throughout the year and in various locations throughout southern Ontario. The next performance will be with the Hossana Choir on April 27, at 7:30pm in the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church. If you would like the Anchor Band to perform at your function, please contact Anchor Home at 905-563-8641 or email them at anchor-home@anchor-association.com.

"Praise the LORD . . . Praise him with the tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD." Psalm 150:1a, 4, 5, 6.



Trevor Buys and Bernie DeVos in action! Grace Homan is performing on the keyboard behind Trevor on the left.

Congratulations also go out to those who are celebrating a birthday in the month of April. May you be blessed in this new year by our heavenly Father! We hope that you also enjoy a good day together with those who come to share in your special day.

There is also an address update for *Tinielle VanRootselaar*, as many of you may have received your mail back.

Her new address is:
1488 Highway 3 E
Dunnville, ON N1A 2W7

Also as a new addition to the birthday list in March is **David Rawson**, who celebrated his fiftieth birthday on March 9. It is never to late to send a card to him, and his address is:

Apartment #206, 1105 Jalna Blvd.
London, ON N6E 2S9

Birthdays in April

- 2** **DEREK KOK** will be 42
653 Broad Street West
Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

- 23** **ARLENE DEWIT** will be 51
31126 Kingfisher Drive
Abbotsford, BC V2T 5K4

- 29** **BRYCE BERENDS** will be 37
653 Broad Street West
Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

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 LOR 2A0
Phone: 905-957-0380
Email: jcorgelms@porchlight.ca



Dear Editor,

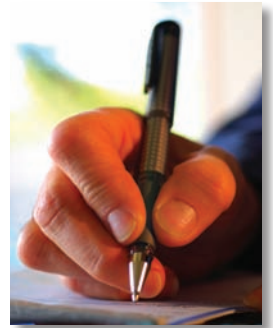
Please allow me to comment on Dr. Van Dam's editorial "When Science and Scripture Clash" (*Clarion*, Feb. 17, 2012). I share Dr. Van Dam's deep concern about the questioning of the historicity of Adam and Eve and appreciate his ongoing and tireless defence of biblical infallibility. Nevertheless, as I have told Dr. Van Dam personally as well, I have a number of problems with this editorial. For the sake of brevity I will restrict myself in this letter to only a few issues. Perhaps I will be allowed some day to go into more detail. It would be good if there were more of a two-way discussion in our media on important matters like these. Be that as it may, I thank the editor and Dr. Van Dam for their willingness to publish this letter.

Firstly, then, I miss in this particular editorial (as in similar messages in *Clarion* and related media) an acknowledgement of the real problems that many orthodox Christians, scientists and others, meet when they are confronted with developments in genomics and other sciences that appear to clash with a literal reading of Scripture. Believe me, they struggle with these issues, pray for light, and crave the prayerful support of fellow-believers.

I was also disappointed that the editorial restricted itself to one "definition" of evolutionary theory. I agree: for many it is indeed a foregone conclusion that evolution implies atheism – the idea that the world came about by chance, that there is no intelligent cause, and certainly no divine creator. In fact, however, this is not a conclusion of science as such. It is atheists who distort scientific theories to "prove" that God does not exist and that Christians who believe otherwise are simplistic and even dangerous. Such conclusions, rather than being scientific, are ideological or "religious." Science cannot say anything on such matters, and most scientists will admit this.

Thirdly, I wonder why the author used the example of Peter Enns (who, incidentally, is no longer connected with *Biologos*, which ended his contract last September), but did not mention men like Tim Keller, N.T. Wright, and C. John Collins (who recently wrote a book on the historicity of our first parents, which I reviewed on the blog *Reformed Academic*). Many of our church members turn to these authors for help because they at least admit the difficulties and do their best to come with answers to difficult questions. I regret that our media fail to give attention to such authors.

Finally, in his editorial Dr. Van Dam mentions a Dutch dissertation by one Hittjo Kruyswijk. I understand that an announcement of this dissertation, which appeared in the Dutch daily *Nederlands Dagblad* under the title "Opmars Evolutie Fnukte Schriftgezag" ("Advance of Evolution Crippled Authority of Scripture") has been circulating among our clergy. As far as I know, however, our clergy have not been told about a review of this dissertation, which appeared the very next day in the same daily. The reviewer, a church historian, points to the many deficiencies and errors in the dissertation and concludes that Kruyswijk's major thesis, namely that the work of authors on evolution at the Free University was the cause of the rapid decline in the Dutch Reformed Churches in the past century, has not been proven. Nor could it of course be proven: complex developments tend to have complex causes. For those interested: the review can be found in the issue of December 9, 2011.



Freda Oosterhoff
Hamilton, ON

Response

I would like to note the following:

1. With respect to the definition of evolution, I am convinced that Christians should not embrace the theory of evolution, period. Theistic evolution is not the way out for Christian scientists because the theory as generally understood is incompatible with biblical teaching and worldview. Furthermore, there are experts in science who say that this theory is not necessary to explain scientific data. See, for example, the recent fine essays (including scientific) in Norman C. Nevin, ed., *Should Christians Embrace Evolution?* (P&R, 2011). It includes a chapter on the genomic evidence. Christians should not feel compelled to subsume their theology to the theory of evolution. When leaders such as Tim Keller do so, they make a tragic mistake and I do not see them as models. I used the work of Peter Enns as an example because it shows the sad result of what happens when you are consistent in subordinating your understanding of Scripture to evolutionary theory.

2. I appreciate Dr. Oosterhoff's reminder that orthodox Christian scientists face enormous difficulties and I do not want to belittle their challenges. They need and deserve our full support. The pressure for conforming to evolution is enormous within the scientific community. (See, e.g., the DVD, *Expelled* by Ben Stein and Jerry Bergman and Kevin Wirth, *Slaughter of the Dissidents* [Leafcutter Press, 2011].) The solution, however, is not to adopt evolutionistic thinking but rather to interpret scientific data in a manner compatible with the clear teachings of God's Word, such as the special creation of Adam and Eve, a focus of my article.
3. With respect to the negative review of Kruswijk's dissertation, I was personally not too impressed with it. The review gave the impression of someone having an axe to grind. Very little positive was said. The fact remains that this dissertation was defended at one of Holland's premier universities, the University of Leiden, which is regularly ranked as one of the top universities in the world.

CVD

To the Editor,

I read with interest the editorial by Dr. Van Dam and the editorial sidebar by Dr. Margaret Helder in the February 17 issue of *Clarion*. As a molecular biologist who works in this area, I struggle with the implications of recent findings in genomics and I am anxious to see how other Christians view and interpret the data.

I won't comment on the editorial except to express my disappointment at how frequently science is cast in a negative light by editorials like these (and the caption on the cover). To be sure, some atheist scientists have hijacked the findings of science for their own agendas, but we must not forget that God is revealing himself in creation when we study it as scientists (B.C. Art. 2).

However, sometimes the findings of science and their implications are troubling to me as a Christian and comparisons of the genomes of humans and chimpanzees fall into such a category. Nonetheless, I'm afraid Dr. Helder's editorial sidebar exaggerates the differences between these two genomes and ignores the similarities, hence this response.

The paper cited by Dr. Helder describes the many insertions or deletions of DNA sequences that differ between the human and chimp genomes. Indeed, there are quite a few and they can be surprisingly

large. However, even in the human genome there are many similar variations between individuals. The Database of Genomic Variants website lists thousands of these variations that have been identified so far. The human genome is surprisingly fluid and individuals frequently lack or have extra copies of large stretches of DNA with no apparent consequences.

Dr. Helder also gave the impression that only two chromosomes have been compared between humans and chimps and that one of them (the Y chromosome) differs greatly between the two species. True, the Y chromosome does differ considerably between these two species but this is not surprising since the structure of this chromosome is not constrained like the other chromosomes and thus most rearrangements will be tolerated.

By contrast, all the other chromosomes have been quite closely studied, not just in chimps but most recently in gorillas as well. The UCSC Genome Browser website allows one to line up any part of the human genome with its counterpart in many other species. What is striking is that in addition to the high similarity of the gene sequences, their order along the chromosomes is also almost identical throughout the genome as well.

One other similarity between the genomes that was not mentioned by Dr. Helder is the identical positions of pseudogenes. Our genome has thousands of pseudogenes, which are (usually) defective genes that most often arise by a gene being copied and then reinserted elsewhere at random, but with its DNA sequence altered. The vast majority of these pseudogenes are found in identical locations in the two species. This is strong evidence for common ancestry. If I as a professor am marking tests and find two tests that are full of identical mistakes, it's pretty clear that one person copied from the other.

So what am I as a Christian scientist to do with this information? I certainly don't like the implications but it is vital that I acknowledge the evidence that God reveals to me and not try to sweep it under the rug. On the other hand, when I look at the broader picture I see many problems with evolutionary theory and I certainly recognize the uniqueness of humans compared to the rest of the animal kingdom. However, to state, as Dr. Helder did, that the data do not suggest any line of descent between humans and chimps is simply a misrepresentation of the evidence. The creationist Todd Charles Wood, who is trained in this field, is more candid about what the genomics evidence suggests.

Being a Christian molecular biologist in the genomics era is not an easy calling but it is made more difficult by other Christians who cast suspicion on the scientific enterprise or who distort the evidence to make it more palatable.

Tony Jelsma
Sioux Center, IA

Response

Dr. Tony Jelsma, in his letter to *Clarion*, discusses the issue of human origins. In this context, it is possible to interpret the data in terms of separate creations of humans and chimps, or in terms of descent of the two groups from a common ancestor. However it is *impossible to prove* either position by appeal to observational data. For example philosopher of science, Del Ratsch from Calvin College, declared in his book *Science and its Limits: the Natural Sciences in Christian Perspective* (IVP): "It is now generally conceded that things other than just the empirical [observations] bear on theory evaluation and theory choice. Judgments are generally made against the canvas of one's *background beliefs and commitments*" (italics his). Obviously it depends upon one's starting assumptions or worldview what conclusions will be drawn from the data. The relevance of this is that scientific conclusions cannot be used to force a reinterpretation of Scripture.

When one starts with the assumption of common descent, then similarity between the groups is taken as evidence that confirms this position. Alternatively when one considers that Genesis chapters 1 – 11 are real history, then similarities are considered to reflect common design, or wise choices by the Creator.

The issue of similarities in DNA sequences is in fact highly complex. Scientists used to consider that genes were something that could be readily compared between various organisms. But scientists hardly know what genes are anymore. It presently appears that genes include smaller pieces of code which can be mixed with other pieces from various sources, to produce a huge collection of proteins. Whereas scientists initially expected to identify about 100,000 genes in humans, they actually only found about 21,000. By comparison, in a parasitic roundworm, 18,500 protein coding genes were recently identified (*Nature* Nov. 24/11 pp. 529-533). This is almost as many as in people! This situation would make no sense to us except that in humans especially, the relatively few

genes provide the raw material for producing a vast array of important proteins.

It used to be also that secular scientists considered that only three percent of the human genome contained useful information. The rest, they declared, was junk DNA, left over from evolution. But it has recently been discovered that many products of "junk DNA" act much like a computer operating system, manipulating information. Based on evolutionary assumptions, many scientists did not ask what the function of this DNA was; they simply assumed there was none.

In like manner, the term "pseudogene" is an evolutionarily loaded term which suggests a "mistake." In keeping with the assumption of common descent, pseudogenes are considered to represent corrupted genes located at random sites in the DNA. If humans and chimps were indeed descended from a common ancestor in which a pseudogene event occurred, then this misinformation might be expected in the descendant populations. Alternatively, in keeping with a young earth (literal Genesis) view, scientists consider that such artifacts represent common design choices on the part of the creator.

It seems unfair for Dr. Jelsma to suggest that individuals who support the young earth position actually cast suspicion on the scientific enterprise, as if his position represents "science" and other positions don't. There should be room in any discipline for differences of opinion on the significance of data. His final point is that people who disagree with him may "misrepresent" or "distort the evidence." This suggests that those who disagree with him are dishonest. We hear enough of that from secular types. There is no room for such insinuations between fellow Christians. It is perfectly possible to interpret the human genome in terms of a literal Adam and Eve, who lived mere thousands of years ago. This is especially so since what Dr. Jelsma interprets as evidence for common descent is totally dependent on an acceptance of an evolutionary paradigm. It would be more helpful to separate actual data from an evolution based interpretation of such data.

The scientific controversy may seem obscure, but as Dr. van Dam pointed out, the implications for doctrine are far reaching. One cannot support animal ancestors of mankind and at the same time a literal understanding of Genesis 1-3, or even 1 Corinthians 15.

MH

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

**Press Release: Classis Central Ontario
March 9, 2012 at Burlington Ebenezer**

Rev. D. Vandeburgt opened the meeting in the Christian manner. After the credentials of the member churches were examined and found in good order, Classis was constituted. The officers suggested by the previous classis took their respective seats. Chairman: Rev. J. DeGelder; vice-chairman: Rev. J.L. van Popta; Clerk: Rev. G.Ph. van Popta. Some matters of memorabilia were noted. The agenda was established.

Bethel Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto requested concurring advice from Classis for the imminent retirement of their minister, Rev. W. den Hollander. After relevant correspondence was reviewed, Classis, with the concurrence of the deputies of Regional Synod, agreed to this request. Appropriate words were spoken thanking the Lord for Rev. W. den Hollander's twenty-eight years in the ministry, his sixteen years in Toronto, and twenty-three years in this classis. Rev. den Hollander responded with thanks to the Lord and the churches for blessing these many years.

Two reports concerning the Fund for Needy Students were received. The first reported on the closing of the account, and that all funds had been transferred to the recently established National Fund. The other reported that an audit had found all things in order. Classis discharged the churches of their duties and responsibilities to maintain the fund, and to audit the books. Classis expressed thanks to all those involved in the smooth running of this fund over the many years of its existence.

One church asked for, and received, advice on a matter of church discipline.

Toronto Bethel requested a classis *contracta* on March 30 for the approbation of their call to Rev. C. Kleyn as missionary in PNG.

Classis appointed the church at Flamborough to convene the next classis on June 8, with September 14 as alternate date. The Acts were adopted and this press release approved. The meeting was closed with song and prayer.

For Classis,
J.L. van Popta

**Press Release of Classis Alberta, March 13,
2012, held via video conferencing in Barrhead,
Calgary, Edmonton, and Lethbridge, AB**

On behalf of the convening church of Neerlandia, Rev. J.D. Louwarse opened the meeting by inviting the assembly to sing from Psalm 122:2. He then read from the same psalm and led in prayer. Welcome was extended to all, including Rev. R. Pontier from Neerlandia URC, Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar, and Br. Melvin Hoeksema. Some matters of memorabilia were noted. After the credentials were examined and found to be in good order, Classis was declared constituted. The officers suggested by the previous classis took their respective positions: Rev. A.B. Roukema, chairman, Rev. J.D. Louwarse, vice-chairman, and Rev. W.B. Slomp, clerk. The agenda was adopted.

The following reports were received. 1) A report from the church at Edmonton – Immanuel for the inspection the classis archives. The archives were found to be in good order. 2) A written report from Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar with respect to contact with the provincial government. 3) A report from Rev. J.D. Louwarse concerning a visit to Classis Western Canada of the URCNA held in Neerlandia, on October 13 and 14, 2011.

Rev Pontier, fraternal delegate from the URCNA brought greetings and words of encouragement. The chairman responded in kind.

Question period according to Article 44 CO was held. All the churches answered the first two questions in the affirmative and the last question in the negative.

The Church of Barrhead requested continued pulpit supply. The request was for pulpit supply every three weeks. This was granted.

At the request of the Church of Taber a discussion was held about the etiquette of video conferencing. The Church of Taber will present a report at the next classis.

Classis appointed the church of St. Albert to convene the next classis on June 12, 2012, with October 2, 2012 as alternate date. The suggested officers are: Rev. R. Aasman, chairman, Rev. A.B. Roukema, vice-chairman, and Rev. J. D. Louwarse, clerk. Question period was held.

Censure according to Article 34 CO was not necessary. The Acts were adopted and the press release was approved. We sang from Psalm 122:3 and Rev Roukema led in closing prayer.

For Classis,
J.D. Louwarse (vice-chairman e.t.) 