

# Clarion

Numbers 10:1-10

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*The  
Prince of Peace  
has come  
and gave the  
ultimate sacrifice*

## Inside this Issue

- *Abortion in God's Family*
- *We Will Remember Him*





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# Abortion in God's Family

~~~~~  
*Let grace resound  
 in our homes and congregations*  
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Can you imagine your seventeen-year-old daughter having an abortion? Or the girl who sits behind you in Grade Twelve homeroom? This may or may not come as a shock, but it is happening among our Christian friends and in our Reformed families. The sad and distressing reality is: abortion is happening right in God's family.

## Secrecy

Of course, this has been a well-kept secret – at least from parents and those who “must never know.” And yet there is talk. The burden of guilt is felt and a friend is told. Or a counsellor. I've encountered it personally. Others who have contact with young Reformed sisters in different areas of the country have confirmed to me that more than a few of our very own young ladies have visited an abortion clinic to get rid of an unwanted pregnancy.

## Why?

So why is this happening? Surely our young people know it is wrong to murder their unborn child? We teach this at home, school, and church. We write letters to our politicians and newspapers. We take our teens to the March for Life walks. And yet, some who publicly parade with placards on Parliament Hill one month, find themselves the next month quietly visiting an abortion clinic for a consultation. What is going through their minds?

## Motives

We need to pay attention to their motivation. It's true for all of us that our actions flow out of our desires. When facing temptation, each of us will decide to do what we most want to do at that moment. It's just like the decision some make to have sex before marriage. They know God is against it. They likely have seen certain embarrassing results of it in the lives of other church people, they know what can happen, but in that moment of decision the desire for pleasure (theirs, that of their partner, or both)

exceeds the desire to please God. And the potential consequences are irrationally pushed out of their mind thinking, “That won't happen to me!”

If we wish to have our teens and young adults keep their bodies sexually pure, we need to convince them that the greatest pleasure ultimately comes from seeking to please God in every decision. Just like with Eve, reaching for the forbidden fruit comes from the conviction that doing so will result in a better outcome – usually some form of self-pleasure. Yet we know what misery followed Eve's decision – and every such decision since! But if we and our children understand that God will freely give us pleasure and fulfillment as a gift so long as we give our heart to him in love and obedience, that will be the strongest defence against sexual temptation.

## Fear

When it comes to the decision to abort, it's not pleasure which motivates but most often fear. Consider the predicament one of our seventeen-year-old girls might be in when she learns she is pregnant. All her life her parents have taught her that pre-marital sex is a sin. The feeling of her personal shame is high. She realizes all at once that if this comes out in the open, her parents and family will carry the shame as well – and they will be upset! Perhaps her father is an elder – what a public embarrassment for him! She anticipates an angry response.

She also worries greatly whether she will be able to raise this child on her own, whether she will be capable as a mother. The more she thinks about the future of her child, the more anxious she becomes: will he be labelled all his life? Maybe my child will be picked on and bullied. As an unwed mother, she thinks her reputation will follow her all her life and her child will have to always live with a social stigma too. The window of opportunity to decide is short (soon she'll start to show!) – and she concludes: *I can't do it! I won't do it!*



## Accessibility

When these fears are at their height, a young pregnant woman searches in desperation for a solution – and she finds a straight-forward one via the Internet at the abortion clinic. She can't talk to her parents and she dare not talk to her friends or even the child's father – no one must know! Fear drives her to be anonymous and to seek a quick remedy – and both are freely offered at the local abortion clinic. Over the last thirty years, these clinics have not only sprung up in many Canadian communities but they are prominently advertised and their costs are covered by the government. Abortion is promoted as a socially acceptable, "easy," and even "safe" solution to the "problem" of an unwanted pregnancy.

Imagine being in the shoes of such a young lady. You only have yourself to reason with, or possibly the people at the clinic who favour abortion. Many thoughts go through your mind: *"It's not that different from using birth-control is it? If only I'd been smarter, I wouldn't have gotten pregnant – one visit to the clinic and my problem is over! I've only been pregnant three weeks – it's not really a baby in there yet, is it? Having an abortion this early is not murder – it's just a group of cells! It's just a miscarriage that's been organized, that's all. God won't mind because he knows it was all a mistake and I'm too young to be a mother."* So many emotions, so many thoughts (many not rational), but in the end the immaturity of youth, a frantic need for a quick and quiet solution, and the lack of a supportive Christian sounding board makes the choice to abort the most attractive at that moment. What she wants most at that moment is to avoid the troubles of admitting her sin – and the die is cast.

## What's Inside

Issue 22 brings an editorial to our readers from Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer. In his editorial Rev. Holtvlüwer talks about abortion within the church. What motivates a girl to make this choice and how can we as a church community both help and prevent these situations?

Dr. James Visscher writes about the Holy Spirit once again, this time the relationship between the Spirit and the Saviour. This article discusses the Spirit's involvement in the conception, baptism, ministry, and ongoing work of Christ.

In "Smithville is Sixty," Rev. Clarence Bouwman leads us through the history of the formation and institution of Smithville church. We also have an article reporting on the welcome of Rev. David deBoer and his family to Chatham.

In addition, Issue 22 has the regular Treasures New and Old meditation, Ray of Sunshine column, and a press release.

Laura Veenendaal



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## Climate change

That is what we as church community and as families must change – the forceful pressures which make our daughters feel trapped in the consequences of their actions. Let me be crystal clear: we must not dumb-down or minimize the sin of pre-marital sex. It remains contrary to God's will. But there is forgiveness in the blood of Christ for all who repent – forgiveness and reconciliation! It's maddening to think that some of our young people would rather murder their unborn children (with all of the dire consequences) than seek the help of their parents, office bearers, or extended church family!

We need to adjust our social climate so that conditions favour dealing with the sexual sin (and resulting pregnancy) in a spirit of Christ-like love, forgiveness, and restoration rather than hiding it. And with forgiveness needs to come support. When a church member falls into sin, we are called to restore him gently, remembering how prone we are to fall ourselves (Gal 6:1). Paul even says that we are to "carry each other's burdens" in this way. From our attitudes to our actions, our calling is to surround every repentant sinner with grace-filled care, remembering that this is precisely how our Father in heaven deals with us (Luke 15:20-32).

## Test yourself

Does your daughter (and your son too!) know if she falls into sexual sin, she can talk to you about it without you having a fit of anger? Does she believe the consequences of admitting her sexual sin to you as mother or father would be worse than not to do so? Has it been stressed so much in your home that (in her mind at least) it is a "greater sin" to bring shame on the family name than it is to quietly snuff out the life of the unknown unborn?

Have previous cases in the church been handled roughly or insensitively by the consistory, bringing unnecessary difficulty upon a repentant woman or couple? Has total silence of the consistory contributed to damaging rumours? Do congregants expect a public shaming or is there a track record of gentle, public restoration in the case of sins which become public? In short, does the young lady have reason to fear reaction to her news in her family or church?

## New emphasis

If there is any doubt about the answers to these questions, we need to sound a new note in our homes and congregations. Or rather, we need to sound an old note more clearly and consistently across the board, the note of grace. To be sure, our children need to grow up knowing right from wrong and the consequences of sin, but just as well, they need to know forgiveness and renewal in the blood and Spirit of Christ. Grace never glosses over sin or dismisses it but rather grace – God's work of salvation in Christ – pays the high cost of our sin and goes to work transforming our hearts and lives.

The fears of our young adult children are often times our fears as parents passed down to them – the fear of man. As parents, we fear a bad reputation and embarrassment and will do virtually anything to protect ourselves. We don't want anyone thinking poorly of us and so we let people see only our "good" side, our strong features. We never show our faults or at least we minimize them as much as possible.

We carry on this same pattern with our children. They must never see our weaknesses or sins. If you've never said to your kids, "Dad was wrong and I'm sorry" or "Mom sinned against you earlier today – can you forgive me," then chances are you've never heard them say that to you voluntarily, from the heart. And if they don't feel free to admit their more common sins knowing they will find a kind and forgiving heart, what makes you think they will come to you when the issue is weightier like a pre-marital pregnancy?

## Transparency

What we need is more transparency and humility as parents and also as office bearers. We need to be less afraid of man and instead develop a healthier fear of God. We ministers and elders along with fathers and mothers need to be more open about our mistakes and sins – and what we do about them. We all know each person is a sinner. We all know that Christians are people who struggle against sin and daily need forgiveness. Yet we can't seem to let this show to our neighbour! The example of the Apostle Paul is just the opposite (1 Tim 1:15, 16)!

I'm not saying we need to hang out all our dirty laundry. But let's not pretend we don't have any either! Let's live in the reality that all our dirty laundry is washed whiter than snow in the blood of the Lamb – and let's encourage our family and friends to live this way too! Our past sins and mistakes can be lessons for another's benefit, as the Bible demonstrates in more than one place.

## Soft landing

Let's be real and honest with one another, encouraging the confession of sin and sincere repentance. In our dealings with our children and teens, with our parishioners and fellow congregants, let us do what we can to let them know there is a soft landing in our home and church for broken sinners looking for forgiveness. As grace abounds, fear will melt away – also for those who have had an abortion.

As much as the unlawful killing of our pre-born family and church members hurts us all and is an offense to God, yet the blood and Spirit of our Saviour are there to wash also this sin away. It's a great burden for a conscience to bear alone but let us offer help and healing by households and churches filled with compassion. Let's start the conversation about grace with our sons and daughters today – and let's keep it the centrepiece of our relationships all throughout God's family.







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**MATTHEW 13:52**

# We Will Remember Him

*"He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."*

(Psalm 46:9-10)

On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, we as Canadian citizens remember our soldiers: those who died in the wars that we as a country have been involved in. More than 100,000 Canadian soldiers lost their lives in those wars, and it is often said that they brought the "ultimate sacrifice" for our freedom.

And it is true that the sacrifice they brought was "ultimate." It was ultimate in the sense that they gave their life, for what more can a person give than that! It is then very fitting that we as citizens remember our fallen soldiers.

We remember them with one minute of silence on November 11. At memorial sites a trumpet will play the "Last Post," and the "Act of Remembrance" will also be recited:

They shall not grow old,  
as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them,  
Nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun  
And in the morning  
We will remember them.

And the people respond by repeating, "We will remember them." So we remember those who with their own lives bought the peace which we still enjoy today.

But Remembrance Day is also, or actually even more so, a day to remember what we read in Psalm

46:9-10, "He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth." This psalm is an assurance that our God is in control, and with that assurance comes a promise of broken bows, shattered spears, and burned shields. In other words, it is a promise of complete and absolute peace. It is a promise that is repeated and expanded in Isaiah 9:5-7, "Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end."

It is this child who has now been born to us. This "Prince of Peace" has come, and with his ultimate of all ultimate sacrifices, he made it possible that we sinners who live in a fallen and broken world may experience true peace.

The blood of our fallen soldiers bought us a peace that is temporary and very fragile. The peace we have today is threatened continuously from many sides. But we have another peace that is a gift of God's grace, and it has been bought by the blood of our Prince of Peace, the

Lord Jesus Christ. His blood bought that ultimate and absolute peace for everyone who is a citizen of his kingdom.

And although we are living in a world that is increasingly torn by wars, we may be assured that the blood which was shed by our Prince of Peace will yet bring us the peace that was promised through the Psalmist and through Isaiah. One day soon Christ will return upon the clouds, and in his kingdom we and all its citizens will then fully enjoy the peace of God. It will be a peace that transcends all understanding.

Our Prince of Peace has also given to us days of remembrance. These are the days when we as citizens of his Kingdom may come to his table. There, with the bread and the wine, we may remember his "ultimate sacrifice," until he comes.

"Until he comes." These words point us to the reality that his ultimate sacrifice bought an ultimate victory, a victory that gives us a hope and a future. We may look forward to the day when he will drink the wine new with us in the kingdom of his Father, where together with him we may enjoy peace forever! In the meantime, "We will remember him" – also on Remembrance Day.





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# The Spirit and the Saviour

## Relationships

Life is filled with relationships. "No person is an island unto himself," English poet John Donne once said. We all have parents and grandparents. Many of us also have brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews. Family is all about relationship.

And so is marriage. When a man and a woman marry they are said to enter into a formal and legal relationship; however, before that even happens there is already a love relationship. And should all go well, this relationship will deepen over time as husband and wife love, share, forgive, beget, nurture, travel, and spend time together. Marriage is about relationship.

The same can also be said about the Christian faith. It too is all about relationship. When a person comes to faith, that faith must have an object, and the object is God. More specifically, it is common to hear evangelical Christians speak about having "a personal relationship with Jesus Christ." And indeed, that is at the heart of the faith; however, while the believer's relationship is personal, it is not just with God the Son, it is also with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Sometimes Christians run the risk of elevating one person in the Godhead at the expense of the other two. Christians really live in a covenantal relationship with the God who is Triune: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Yes, and out of this relationship flows another, namely a relationship with other believers. The Bible speaks about "the fellowship of the believers." The Apostles Creed confesses "the communion of saints." Because Christians share together in the Triune God, they stand in a relationship with him and with one another. They may have a personal relationship with the Triune God; however, that relationship is never isolated and individualistic. It is also corporate and communal.

Now, suffice it to say that we can go on and on about this matter of the various relationships that we have in this life; however, we need to stop for a moment

and consider what is surely one of the strangest, most mysterious, and most wonderful relationships of all. Can you guess what it might be? It is the relationship between God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, or between Jesus and the Spirit.

Why do I say that? It has to do with what the Holy Scriptures reveal about the conception, baptism, ministry, and ongoing work of Christ, and the Spirit's involvement with all of these events and developments.

## The Spirit and Mary

Long ago the angel Gabriel was sent by God to the Galilean town of Nazareth and to a virgin who was pledged to be married to a certain man named Joseph. To her the angel said,

"Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus" (Luke 1:30, 31).

Thus far, the nice news, but immediately thereafter comes some startling news. "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:32, 33).

Now, this is quite the birth announcement! Mary is told by a very strange source that she will have a son, a very special son, with a very special name and a very special throne. On the one hand he will bear the common name "Jesus" but on the other, he will receive the exalted title – "the Son of the Most High." In addition, he will inherit the throne of his great ancestor King David and this time it will prove to be an eternal throne for an eternal kingdom. Little wonder that Mary is stunned.

Yet she is not so stunned that she forgets to ask a very important question. And the question is this, "How will this be since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:34) In other words, how will this utterly impossible promise come to fulfillment?

Thankfully, Gabriel is not stuck for an answer. He replies, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

I suspect that this answer raised even more questions in the mind and heart of Mary. "Did I hear right? Did Gabriel say that the Holy Spirit is going to come to me and overshadow me? Did he say that I am going to conceive and in due time give birth to 'the Son of God'?" How all of this must have perplexed Mary. Still, it did not make her doubt. After she has heard it all, she replies "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said" (Luke 1:38). Mary submits without knowing all of the details. She trusts that her God will take care of the details.

Indeed, she trusts that her God will take care of the miraculous details, for that is what they are. Still today we are no closer to understanding what this all entailed and how it was that the Holy Spirit conceived the Christ Child in Mary. All of this belongs to the realm of mystery and majesty.

Of course, some are not content to leave it at that. They want to know more, and because there is no further explanation forthcoming, they become doubtful. As well, there are those who simply deny what the Bible says here. They maintain that all of this about a special conception of Christ is an invention or a fabrication of the early church. The church wanted a special leader so it concocted this tale about a unique and miraculous conception.

### **A critical birth**

What such doubters and deniers fail to realize, however, is that this birth is not just miraculous and mysterious. It is also necessary, absolutely necessary. Indeed, it is critical and crucial to the Christian faith and to our very salvation.

How so? In what way? Well, imagine for a moment that the conception of Jesus did not happen this way. Imagine, as the skeptics insist, that Jesus is really the product of a premature union between Mary and Joseph. What would be the consequences of that?

Would it not be a tainted, polluted Saviour? Would it not be a powerless Redeemer? If he were of the flesh and blood of Joseph and Mary, he would be infected with a special hereditary disease.

We know something about such diseases today. If your parents have something wrong with their genes, then the likelihood is high that you will also have something wrong with your genes. At best, the problem

can be identified and something can be done about it. At worst, it is incurable and you have to cope with it as best as you can.

Yes, and Mary and Joseph had something wrong with their genes, their moral genes. It is called "original sin." They were both infected with the sin of Adam and Eve. The Belgic Confession describes it as "a corruption of the entire nature of man and a hereditary evil which infects even infants in their mother's womb. As a root it produces in man all sorts of sin." (Art 15)

Hence if Jesus had been born of Joseph and Mary, he would have come into the world with a corrupt and infected nature. He would have been sinful.

"But that cannot be," says God. "That will never secure the redemption of my people. So what I am going to do is see to it that he is conceived in a vastly different way so that the result will be a vastly different person, a Redeemer and a Mediator who can really save my people from their sins."

So what does the Lord God do? He decides to call on the Holy Spirit. He will be given the charge to conceive the Messiah. In this way the endless cycle of hereditary disease will be broken. In this way a godly child can be conceived, a new and pure Adam can appear, a real Son of God. And because he will be born of the virgin Mary, he will also be truly and fully human, a real Son of Man.

### **A miraculous birth**

What a miracle this is! Indeed, what a miracle he is! In commenting on the uniqueness of Jesus with respect to his two natures, the Heidelberg Catechism drives the point home when it asks, "Why must he be a true and righteous man? He must be a true man because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which has sinned should pay for sin. He must be a righteous man because one who himself is a sinner cannot pay for others" (Q/A 16).

Also, "Why must he at the same time be true God? He must be true God so that by the power of his divine nature he might bear in his human nature the burden of God's wrath, and might obtain for us and restore to us righteousness and life" (Q/A 17).

Hence the first involvement that the Spirit has with Jesus as far as his earthly life and work is concerned is that the Spirit conceives him. The Spirit brings about a most unique beginning for a most unique ministry.

In this connection it may also be noted that the involvement of the Spirit did not stop with Mary. The gospels reveal that also Elizabeth, the kinswoman of Mary, was filled with the Spirit (Luke 1:41). In addition,

Zechariah, the husband of Elizabeth, was told that the baby that Elizabeth was expecting would also be special, for he too would "be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Luke 1:15). As such this filling did not extend to conception, but it did underline the fact that in these days of Herod and Augustus, God was doing mighty things for his people through the power of the Holy Spirit.

## The Spirit and the baptism of Jesus

But then if the Spirit was very much involved with the conception of Jesus, the Holy Scriptures also reveal that the same Spirit was very much involved with the baptism of Jesus. When John the Baptist grew up and began his work as the forerunner to Jesus, the people wondered about whether or not he might be the Messiah. Upon hearing this John said to them,

"I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Luke 3:16).

Notice that John says that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit; however, before he can baptize others with the Spirit he needs to be baptized himself by the Holy Spirit.

## The event

And that too is what happened. For one day Jesus comes to John and requests to be baptized. First, John is scandalized, but then when Jesus persists and tells him that this has everything to do with righteousness being fulfilled, John relents and baptizes him. No sooner does he do so and both God the Father and God the Spirit spring into action.

Matthew writes, "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son whom I love; with him I am well pleased'" (3:16, 17).

Mark tells us, "At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased'" (1:9-11).

Luke records that "as he was praying heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased'" (3:22).

John, the gospel writer, comments about the John the Baptist and quotes him as saying, "I saw the Spirit

come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God" (1:32-34).

In comparing these passages we cannot miss the involvement of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, in harmonizing all of these accounts it would seem that no sooner has Jesus been baptized by John, he comes out of the water praying, and immediately the Spirit came down on him.

How did the Spirit come and in what form? The gospel writers all say that it was "like a dove" or in the form of a dove. What this means precisely is hard to say. Most likely what John and the people saw was some dove-like shape or image come down from above. Earlier John the Baptist had been told that the Spirit would come on Jesus in this way and that he was to watch for it (cf. John 1:32-34). Well, now he sees it, and he knows that this is it. This must be the moment!

## *Jesus needs the gifts, talents, and abilities of the Spirit to fulfill his special mission and calling*

In addition, he also hears the voice of God the Father himself confirming that Jesus is his Son, revealing his love for him and expressing his approval of him. Hence there is ample proof that the Spirit has come on Jesus Christ.

## The meaning

Now that is interesting, but we need to ask, "Why did this happen and what does this mean? What significance does this have?"

First, there is the fact that this baptism and coming of the Spirit upon Jesus represents empowerment and endowment. It is something that we see time and time again in the Old Testament, wherein the Spirit comes upon men appointed by God and chosen by him to be priests, prophets, and kings and equips them with the skills that they need to fulfill their office and calling. It is the same with Jesus. He does not begin his messianic work in his own strength and rely solely on his own abilities. No, he too receives and needs the gifts, talents, and abilities of the Spirit to fulfill his special mission and calling.

Second, while the baptism of Jesus by the Spirit identifies and connected him to his Old Testament predecessors, it also sets him apart. For only in his case is the voice of the Father heard testifying and



confirming that Jesus is unique. This is God's Son who is being baptized. This is the Son of his love. This is the Son who has his approval. Indeed, what we have here is confirmation that here at last is the great Messiah, the One who will fulfill all righteousness.

Today we look around in the world and we see confusion among many who do not know what they need when it comes to salvation. We also see rejection in that many laugh and mock the whole idea that they need a Saviour. As well, we see opposition in the fact that there are any number of religions and cults who either deny that Jesus is Saviour or else they claim the need to supplement him with human prophets and teachers. In the face of such a world of conflicting opinions it is good to hear God the Father proclaim loud and clear for all to hear that Jesus is it. There is no other Son like him. There is no other who is so loved. There is no other who is so able and willing to save. There is no other who is so visibly and publicly baptized with the Spirit. Jesus is the one, the only one.

In other words, no one needs to look anywhere else for anyone else. Just look to Jesus! Already at the start of his saving work the stage is set for what Peter will later proclaim, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

### **The Spirit and the leading of Jesus**

Thus far we have seen that Jesus is conceived and baptized by the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Spirit is there at the beginning of his earthly life as well as at the beginning of his special ministry. For after his baptism, the work begins in earnest, the working of saving a people.

Yet it is important for us to realize that also this work was not done in isolation or apart from the Spirit. Interestingly, all of the gospels remind us of this. They all mention the fact that after his baptism Jesus "was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil" (Matt 4:1) or that "at once the Spirit sent him out into the desert" (Mark 1:12) or that he "was led by the Spirit in the desert" (Luke 4:1).

What is of particular importance here is first of all the fact that the gospel writers all reveal that it was the Spirit who led Jesus into the desert. In other words, he did not go there of his own accord. It was not a matter of his own choosing. Rather, the Lord Jesus was following the agenda of the Spirit. Indeed, the Spirit was guiding him.

Why are we told this at the outset of his work? It is probably to make us realize that there is a sense in which all through his ministry it is also the Spirit who is setting the agenda. Jesus is no Lone Ranger Saviour.

Rather he goes about his messianic work in close communion with the other Persons of the Triune God. Regularly He prays to the Father and consults with him. Continually as well the Spirit is leading and guiding him in his ministry.

Yet there is more, for while the Spirit leads him into the desert, the Spirit also leads him in such a way that he is tested and tempted by the devil. Why did he do this? Perhaps the best answer is to remember that God has two earlier sons, and they both failed the test. First, there was Adam. He too had been clothed with great talents and ability, but then he failed the temptation test. Instead of resisting the devil, the first Adam succumbed to the devil and his evil devices.

Second, there was another son. This son was called Israel. The prophet Hosea records God as saying, "When Israel was a child, I love him, and out of Egypt I called my son" (11:1). Later Matthew applies these words to Jesus (Matt 2:15).

The thing to note about this second son is that he was also tested. As a matter of fact he was tested by the devil in the desert of Sinai. What happened during those forty years? He too failed the test and was defeated by the devil.

In light of the failure of God's two great Old Testament sons, is it any wonder that the third son is also put to the test? Is he like his brothers? Will he fail as well? Must God go looking for still another son? Thankfully, the answer is "No!" Armed by the Spirit with the Word of the Spirit, he resists the devil time and time again. He shows himself to be the obedient Son, the perfect Son, and the best equipped Son. The Spirit helps him to triumph and to enter into his saving work in fine form and with good confidence.

### **The Spirit and the remembering of Jesus**

Thus far we have seen that Jesus was conceived, baptized, and led by the Spirit, and now we expect that as Jesus takes up his mission in earnest we will hear a lot more about the Spirit. Only that is not the case. Of course, from time to time the Spirit is mentioned. Jesus quotes Isaiah's words about the Spirit (Matt 12:18). He speaks about blasphemy against the Spirit (Matt 12:31). He mentions that David spoke by the Spirit (Matt 22:43). He is even described as being "full of joy through the Holy Spirit" (Luke 10:21). Also, in the gospel of John we come across Jesus making reference to the Holy Spirit (3:5, 6, 34; 7:39; 20:22). Still, the references are not numerous.

Naturally, this raises a few questions, "Why does the Spirit who was so prominent in Christ's conception and baptism fade into the background? Why does Jesus not mention him more?" In all truth we have to

acknowledge that we have no ready answers to these questions except to deduce that it is the intention of the Triune God that Jesus should be in the spotlight during these years of active ministry. Now it is his time to step forward and it is the time for the Father and the Spirit to take a step back into the limelight.

## The other Counselor

Only we must be careful not to drive this point to the extreme, for the fact of the matter is that there are at least two places in the gospel of John where special and extensive attention is given once again to the Spirit. Turn first to John 14, where Jesus says to his disciples, "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. . . . The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you" (vv. 15-18, 26).

### *We cannot miss the involvement of the Holy Spirit*

Later on in chapter 16 Jesus comes back to this subject and elaborates on it when he says, "Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you" (vv. 5-15).

Naturally, it takes some time and effort to digest the full import of these words of the Lord Jesus.

Nevertheless, some things do stand out. One is that the work of the Holy Spirit will continue and will even expand. In the future Jesus predicts that he will be sent by the Father to the church and function there as "another Counselor." The name "Counselor" suggests that the Spirit will act as someone who stands beside the believers to comfort, support, and defend them. The fact that he is called "another Counselor" means that he will continue the work that Jesus himself has been doing. All through his life and ministry he has been busy counseling people. When he goes away, the Spirit will continue his work.

Another thing that stands out here is that the Spirit when he comes will not be acting as a free and independent Spirit. No, what he will be doing more than anything else is promoting Jesus. The Father will send him in the name of Jesus. He himself will constantly refresh the memory of the disciples when it comes to the words and works of Jesus. Indeed, when he comes he will not only cause them to remember these things but he will also teach them about these things. He will cause their knowledge to deepen and give them an even greater understanding of the truth.

Indeed, when you listen carefully you cannot help but conclude that after the departure of Jesus the Spirit will be the great and primary teacher in the church. Twice Christ calls him "the Spirit of truth" (15:17; 16:13). In other words, he will continue the work of him who is called "the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). He will speak the truth, guide into the truth, and promote the truth.

And one more thing, he will cause this truth to travel with his followers. As such Jesus says that this truth will accompany them for he says that it will be "with you" (v. 6). Furthermore, he declares that it will be with them "forever" (v. 16). Why, it will even become a very part of them and be internalized in them. Jesus says to his disciples that the Spirit "lives with you and will be in you" (14:17). Those who embrace Jesus will never be without the Spirit and his teaching ministry. They will never live in ignorance and superstition again.

At the beginning of this article I told you that one of the greatest and most mysterious relationships is the one between Jesus and the Spirit. In light, however, of what we have just learned we may want to expand on that. For actually the most amazing relationship of all may well be the one between Jesus, the Spirit and the children of God. Those who believe in Jesus are taken up into the most unimaginable of relationships. They are united both with Jesus and with the Spirit. They become rich beyond measure.





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# Smithville is Sixty

*This item was initially prepared as part of the commemoration activities relating to Smithville's diamond anniversary.*

## Sixty years in the Niagara Peninsula

It was exactly sixty years ago this past Friday, September 14, 1952, that the first Canadian Reformed Church in the Niagara Peninsula was instituted. Brothers of well-known name were ordained to the offices of the church in Smithville: A. vanEs, J.J. Knegt, K. Flokstra, and J.J. deBoer became elders, and C. Blokker, J.G. Feenstra, and C. Ouwersloot became deacons. Sixty years later descendants of all these men still have a place and task in the churches – if not directly in Smithville than surely in the neighbouring churches. It goes to show: the Lord has not forsaken the work he has begun. A little plant representing a rich heritage took root here six decades ago, and it has grown richly and wonderfully over the years that followed. We'd be negligent not to take note of this work of God, and to thank him for it.

The men and women present at the institution of the Canadian Reformed Church of Smithville did not parachute into the peninsula the day before. Some indeed were very recent migrants, arriving just months or even weeks before the institution; others had actually been in the area for some years already. In this contribution I'd like to tell something about the developments leading up to this institution. Specifically, was a *Canadian Reformed* church really necessary??

## Migration – and then?

It's well known that World War 2 ravaged Europe from 1939 to 1945. Holland was so economically devastated (and socially in turmoil) as a result of the war that many saw little future in The Netherlands, and so sought new opportunities overseas.

It's also well known (or should be in our midst) that the confusion and oppression of the war gave fertile ground for the apathy in the church to morph into

tyranny – where the Synod compelled the office bearers to embrace and teach a doctrine simply not found in Scripture (in relation specifically to the covenant). Worse, when its errors were pointed out, Synod held its foot stiff and, in the dark of war, ousted office bearers who objected to Synod's behaviour. The result was the Liberation of 1944, where many shook off the unbiblical and unconfessional doctrine the Synod had imposed, and continued on the true and tried path of simple biblical teaching. These churches were known as the (Liberated) Reformed Churches of The Netherlands, in distinction from the (Synodical) Reformed Church of The Netherlands.

As members of the Liberated Churches migrated to the New World, they had to consider what church to join in their new country. Start a new church they would do only if there were no options, for they confessed that the Lord gathered a catholic church – and that should mean that there might well be a faithful church of the Lord already in Canada. Four "Liberated" migrant families (the heads of families were C. Groenewegen, T.J. Hart, J.J. Knegt, and W.J. Hamoen) concluded that the Christian Reformed Church was a faithful church of the Lord, and so in 1948 we find them members of the CRC in St. Catherines, with Br. Knegt even serving in the office of elder. I understand that at the time the Harts and the Knegts lived in Fenwick.

## Christian Reformed?

The four brothers mentioned above (plus J.J. Knegt jr, unmarried communicant member) wrote a letter to their consistory dated 3 December 1948 in which they voiced concern about what they heard over the months in the preaching and in Catechism class on the matter of common grace. They also urged their consistory to initiate action to terminate relations with the (Synodical) Reformed Churches in The Netherlands and initiate relations with the (Liberated) Reformed Churches. They expressed the desire for an early and profitable discussion on these topics.



Consistory promptly answered the letter of these five brothers on 22 December 1948. They wrote that they would unquestionably maintain their position on common grace (as the CRC had formulated it in a statement adopted by their Synod 1924), and wrote too that they would not consider exchanging their sister-church relation with the Synodical Reformed Church for a relation with the Liberated Reformed Churches. They added that the five brothers were, by their letter of concern, actually advocating propaganda for the Liberated churches – something (Consistory wrote) they had pledged not to do when they submitted their attestations to the Christian Reformed Church. They insisted: do not bring the Dutch church struggle to Canada! Some three weeks later Br. J.J. Knecht sr received a letter from his consistory (dated 10 January 1949) stating that he had been deposed from his office of elder.<sup>1</sup>

What strikes me as I read this bit of history is the ruthlessness with which the consistory of the Christian Reformed Church in St. Catherines set about quenching this request for a discussion. No willingness for a discussion was expressed, and Elder Knecht was deposed with (if the record is complete) not a single word of admonition. I find this striking because this is precisely the sort of behaviour that characterized the (Synodical) Reformed Church in The Netherlands.<sup>2</sup> Here no room was given for the fact that all members have received the Holy Spirit, and so are able to ask legitimate questions and evaluate honest answers.

Not surprisingly, the five brothers (with their families) withdrew from the Christian Reformed Church. They had not become Liberated in The Netherlands in order to subject themselves again to doctrinal and consistorial oppression in another country.

Other migrants to different places of Ontario (and throughout Canada) experienced similar frustration with the Christian Reformed Church, so that quickly the consensus arose that migrants who treasured the Liberation of 1944 could not join the CRC.

### **Protestant Reformed?**

Meanwhile, other migrants had followed a different course. A principle church leader in The Netherlands, Dr. K. Schilder, had enjoyed a lengthy correspondence and relationship with Rev. H. Hoeksema, an acknowledged leader of the Protestant Reformed Churches in North America. These churches, it should be noted, had their origin in 1924, as direct consequence of the CRC decision on Common Grace (mentioned above). There was much in Hoeksema's

thinking that Schilder could appreciate, and so he advised Liberated migrants to join the Protestant Reformed Churches. These churches, however, had no congregations in Canada, but were happy to send "missionaries" to Canada to help organize and settle the Liberated migrants. So, already in 1948 a number of PRC ministers came regularly to Hamilton to assist migrant families there.<sup>3</sup> While the Christian Reformed Church (see above) sought to silence the migrants about what happened in the Liberation in The Netherlands, these Protestant Reformed ministers encouraged openness and dialogue. Both the PRC ministers and the Liberated migrants soon realized that there were distinct differences between PR thinking and Liberated thinking, particularly on the subject of the covenant. But certainly from the side of the Liberated migrants there was a willingness to work along with the PR brethren, as long as the basis of cooperation was simply the Word of God as summarized and confessed in the Three Forms of Unity – nothing more and nothing less. As a result, a Protestant Reformed Church was instituted in Hamilton on April 19, 1949, made up of migrants from the Liberated Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. Members of this newly instituted church lived not just in Hamilton itself, but also in Smithville and even Fenwick – including the same T.J. Hart, J.J. Knecht, and C. Groenewegen who'd earlier been members of the Christian Reformed Church in St. Catherines.<sup>4</sup>

Quickly enough, this new congregation received a minister from the United States, in the person of Rev. Herman Veldman, a nephew of Rev. Hoeksema. From the start of his ministry he insisted on stressing those points of doctrine where Protestant Reformed thinking differed from the views embraced by the Liberated migrants, to the point that he demanded that new migrants take a new-members class where he would teach them how to read the Three Forms of Unity (and hence the Bible) in the light of Protestant Reformed distinctives.<sup>5</sup> That would include that you could not say that all your children, though born to believing parents, were actually God's children by covenant.<sup>6</sup>

Invariably, this stance on Rev. Veldman's part led to considerable friction between himself and the consistory. That tension increased when the Protestant Reformed "missionaries" to Canada suggested the PR Synod (in opposition to Liberated thinking) adopt a statement essentially equating covenant and election.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church in Hamilton decided in January 1951 no longer to recognize Rev. Veldman (with one elder) as their minister.<sup>8</sup>

Because Classis had sided with Rev. Veldman, the consistory recognized the difficulty of continuing in the Protestant Reformed federation, and so they became essentially an independent church known as the First Protestant Reformed Church.

The long and short: migrants in the Smithville area had sought a spiritual home in the Protestant Reformed Churches, and found out the hard way that there was no place for them there either.<sup>9</sup>

## Canadian Reformed

The flow of Liberated migrants to Southern Ontario increased as the years went by, so that the trickle of 1947 and 1948 became a veritable flood in the early 50s. The newer migrants took to heart the lessons learned from their brothers' experiences in the Christian Reformed Church and in the Protestant Reformed Churches, and so sought a third way. Since there were no other churches adhering to the Three Forms of Unity, many of them met on their own Sunday after Sunday, until there were sufficient numbers to institute a Canadian Reformed Church. With the assistance of Rev. J. Hettinga from The Netherlands (he was in North America visiting his children), the first Canadian Reformed Church in Ontario<sup>10</sup> was instituted in Georgetown (it later became Orangeville) on 13 August 1950. Present at the institution were persons living in Hamilton who had shied away from joining the Protestant Reformed Church because of the tensions existing in that congregation.<sup>11</sup> However, since roads and cars were not then what they are today, these brothers and sisters chose not to travel every Sunday to Georgetown, but met on their own in Hamilton. The Hamilton part of the Georgetown Canadian Reformed Church instituted their own church in Hamilton on 20 May 1951. Amongst the members were several who lived in the Smithville area. The first *Yearbook* of the Canadian Reformed Churches, published in 1952, lists a "Women's Society" in "Fenwick-Smithville," with "Mrs. H. Ouwersloot" as its secretary. A further note in that *Yearbook* explains that "church services are held in the Labor Temple" on Catherine Street in Hamilton, and adds, "A small part, living in Fenwick and surroundings, meet there on the Heesfarms, for so-called house-church services."<sup>12</sup> For the record it should be noted that the First Protestant Reformed Church in Hamilton and the Canadian Reformed Church in Hamilton signed an *Act of Union* on June 13, 1952 and so merged into one church.

## Smithville

The number of migrants settling in the Niagara Peninsula continued to grow. They were registered as members of the church in Hamilton, a congregation that (says the *Yearbook* of 1952) now numbered 422 members, consisting of seventy-three families. The services once held in Fenwick moved to the old Legion Hall in Smithville. Inevitably, discussions soon began on whether a Canadian Reformed Church could be instituted in Smithville. A meeting was held on September 5, 1952 to finalize the process and elect potential office bearers. On Sunday, September 14, 1952, Rev. Loopstra of Hamilton led the institution service, where the seven brothers mentioned earlier were ordained to their respective offices. The congregation at the time numbered 151 members, of whom sixty-one had made profession of faith.<sup>13</sup> In the years that followed, numbers grew so much that Lincoln was instituted in 1970, Attercliffe in 1985, Tintern in 1990, Grassie in 2001, and Dunnville in 2003.

## Conclusion

It's clear to me from the above material that the first Liberated migrants in the Niagara Peninsula travelled a difficult and circuitous route to come to the point of instituting a Canadian Reformed Church in Smithville. An "own" church was distinctly not the first option, but became a necessity only after the alternatives proved impossible. That is to say: the Lord God slowly and sovereignly made clear that it was his will that a Canadian Reformed Church be instituted here. What marked the efforts of the fathers (be it invariably with weakness) was their expressed desire to remain faithful to the Scripture alone, as accurately summarized and confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. That's the heritage the Lord placed in the Peninsula – a heritage that we are duty-bound to treasure and maintain.

<sup>1</sup> For more details, see J. Faber, "'Common Grace' in Canadian Reformed History," *Clarion*, August 17, 2001, p. 401ff.

<sup>2</sup> See the essay by Theodore Plantinga, "North American Developments," in Rudolph vanReest, *Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church* (Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications), 1990, p. 412.

<sup>3</sup> See further G. Denbok, "Early History of the Church in Hamilton," in *Clarion*, March 7, 1997, p. 105.

<sup>4</sup> See Denbok, p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> See J. Faber, "The 'Volendam' Congregation," *Clarion*, 1987, p. 194.

# Church News

## Ordination Examination Sustained

Examined by Classis Pacific East of September 13, 2012 and granted permission to be ordained to the ministry of the Word and sacraments:

### Candidate Abel Pol

Accepted the call to the Dunnville Canadian Reformed Church:

### Rev. J. Van Woudenberg

of Guelph (Emmanuel), Ontario

Called by the Langley Canadian Reformed Church to be a co-pastor:

### Rev. M. Jagt

of Taber, Alberta

<sup>8</sup> For details in this bit of history, the interested reader is referred to J. deJong, "Deposed?" *Clarion*, March 20, 1998. Dr. deJong had researched the archives of the Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church and related what he discovered.

<sup>9</sup> Of course, there was also a Protestant Reformed Church instituted amongst the Liberated migrants of Chatham, but that's a story beyond the scope of this article. See W.W.J. vanOene, *Inheritance Preserved* (Winnipeg: Premier Printing, 1975), p. 68f.

<sup>10</sup> Already Canadian Reformed Churches had been instituted in Coaldale (16 April 1950), Edmonton (9 July 1950), and Neerlandia (6 August 1950).

<sup>11</sup> see G. Lodder, p. 574.

<sup>12</sup> My translation. See *Jaarboekje ten dienste van de Canadese Gereformeerde Kerken – Eerste Jaargang*, p. 8. The "Heesfarms" is elsewhere called the "Haist Farm." A picture of the place is printed on page 5 in *Telling the Coming Generations*, the booklet published on the occasion of Smithville's fortieth anniversary.

<sup>13</sup> *Growing in the Lord: Celebrating 50 years of growth in the Niagara Region*, p. 7.



<sup>6</sup> As related by G. Lodder, "Some Early History of the Hamilton and Georgetown Congregations," *Clarion*, Year-End 1996, p. 573.

<sup>7</sup> This move in 1950 led to the infamous Declaration of Principles adopted by Synod 1951, a declaration binding on all Protestant Reformed office bearers.

*Tobermory sunrise*





# Chatham Welcomes the deBoer Family

*"Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD." Isaiah 2:5*

## An evening of celebration and thanks

That is exactly how we all felt when we left for our homes Monday evening – thankful and full. I want to write a brief article while still feeling the exhilaration of the abundant blessings we have received here at the Eben-Ezer Canadian Reformed Church in Chatham, Ontario.

While being vacant for a long three years, the Lord blessed us with a wonderful variety of pastors who ministered the Word, twice each and every Sunday – with I believe only two reading services that whole time! This was also due to the dedication of servitude of his under shepherd Rev. Van Hal, retired pastor of the URC. Rev. Van Hal not only preached many times in Chatham including Christmas and Easter services, but came to Chatham every Tuesday to visit the elderly, widowed, and sick, and to end his day conducting catechism classes. We wanted to show him our gratitude and respect as well as heartily welcome our new pastor, Rev. David deBoer, his wife Annette, and their four children, Katie, Alex, Josie, and Ethan. We are so thankful to God for answering our many prayers by way of the deBoer family.

The evening was bittersweet. After all, the Lord had answered our prayers by bringing Rev. deBoer and his family to Chatham. However, we had all grown very fond and appreciative of Rev. Van Hal and all his work here in Chatham. The much-anticipated event garnered a nearly full house and was very ably hosted by MCs Sr. Rebecka Heyink and Sr. Sarah Hutten. They started the evening by reading Isaiah 2:1-5, highlighting verse 5, "Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD," as well as opening with prayer and singing of Hymn 44.

The program was filled with contributions by all ages, an eclectic group representing all Bible studies, starting with our enthusiastic school children from



Eben-Ezer Christian School. Even though school was officially "out" the students managed to recite in song a beautiful poem of welcome and thanksgiving. Our school may be small, but the staff and students showed that quality is better than quantity, bursting with gratitude to our Lord!

Next, our youngest members who were able and "willing" to get up in front of everyone, presented each pastor with a bouquet of flowers and a poem "The Chosen Vessel" to share with their families. We enjoyed a duet from two of our "senior" members Mike DeBoer and Jenny Ytsma, singing "Faith of our Fathers."

Our "Adult Bible Study" presented the deBoers with a patio pot, with each couple contributing the soil, a flower and/or plant to work in harmony to create something beautiful. While the planter was being filled one member recited a poem called the "Farmer's Prayer," a play on Rev. deBoer's name in Dutch meaning - the farmer, and who is now our "Sower of the Seed."

The beauty of the evening was that each and every age group was represented, including that of our newest Bible study, "Contra Mundum," meaning



"against the world," comprising of our young adults. A clever game unfolded by this study group that while they explained who they were and when they met etc., they also called up quite a number of couples who were separated into men and ladies at the front. This detracted from the real reason why these "chosen" couples were called up. Now Rev. and Mrs. deBoer had to "match" the couples back up. This proved to be quite a, shall we say, "unfair" challenge, as they had only arrived a week and a half earlier. Since Rev. Van Hal has an exceptional gift for remembering everyone's name, it was felt that he was not allowed to help our unfortunate gamers. This was quite amusing as some couples found themselves mis-matched. Later in the evening Rev. and Mrs. deBoer received an appropriate gift of a photo album picturing most members in the congregation. It should prove to be very helpful!

Not to be forgotten, our Teen Society and Young Peoples sang with many various instruments, Psalm 150 – Praising the Lord!! This was followed by a couple of very funny skits from Bert Vanderheide and Doug Beintema, one called "Koekjes in bed" with Bert and Ernie ... are you getting the visual? Yes, these are two talented guys ... just to sample the gifts we have here in Chatham. A poem written and delivered by the clever Janice Vanderveen shared with the deBoers, "Oh, The People You Will Meet!" She sped through

the various jobs, vocations, hobbies, and talents that left one wondering why we mob to locations where lobbies lack gallant??? Janice's final conclusion was that the members offer many forms of gifts and talents to share here at Eben-Ezer Canadian Reformed Church of Chatham - all said while rhyming in perfect time - "Why move anywhere else?!"

Very fittingly, the congregation sang Psalm 133 and one could rejoice in being united and feel the Lord's arms gathering his people together in this place of worship. A mini choir presented the two pastors and their families with singing "The Benediction," an appropriate selection. While one pastor is coming and one is going, the message is still the same – our prayers go with you and are for you.

Finally some presentations were made to Rev. and Mrs. Van Hal not only in the form of a purchased gift presented by Council on behalf of the congregation, but a very special gift, of a large table cloth, signed by nearly every member, young and old. It also held special comments of how Rev. Van Hal has not only blessed our congregation, but touched so many individuals with his humbleness, compassion, patience, and knowledge of our Lord and by showing love in action through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After our evening came to a close with comments and prayer by Chairman Rene Tamminga, we could enjoy refreshments and fellowship. I think I can speak on behalf of Eben-Ezer Canadian Reformed Church in Chatham, Ontario, a little far-away place, that God has taught us patience and that his grace, blessings, and the fellowship of the communion of saints are something we cherish deeply here in Chatham. We went away with our hearts full of praise and thanksgiving, ready to walk in the light of the Lord!





# Ray of Sunshine

by Corinne Gelms and  
Patricia Gelms

In Ontario, Anchor, the Canadian Reformed Association for the Handicapped, has four homes. The Lighthouse in Fergus opened May 2008 with four residents. Living there now are seven residents: Terence Berends, Jack Dieleman, Cameron Dantuma, Marsha Moesker, Katherine Nijenhuis, David VanVeen, and Frank Zegers. Our heavenly Father has blessed us greatly and we are thankful to him! Enjoy what Katherine writes about:

## Life at the Lighthouse

Breakfast is served to the sleepy residents each morning. Orange juice, medications, cereal, or sometimes bacon and eggs are items on the morning menu while the cheerful staff discuss plans for the day. Once a month we knead dough and bake big batches of cinnamon buns for Sunday breakfasts – a highlight! After weekday breakfasts, staff assign or remind the residents of daily “joys” (chores): dishes, dusting, vacuuming, laundry, sweeping, shovelling snow, weeding gardens, and cleaning of individual rooms.

Later, the residents attend school, college, day programs, volunteer, or work in the community. At mealtimes, especially supper, we converse about toddler antics, new babies, copper wire stripping,

computers pulled apart, the great finds we make like CDs, books, or clothes at the reuse places, sweeping, recycling, nature, birds, or holidays. Most residents assist in preparing meals and bake for Sunday or special occasions. We all try to exercise every day, usually by walking in the beautiful countryside or on the nearby trail.

After dinner and clean-up we puzzle, read books, play games, listen to music, watch videos, make crafts for the bazaar, or spend time in our rooms. Bible study takes place at the Lighthouse every other Monday night for the men and every other Wednesday night for the ladies. On other evenings, staff and residents play instruments such as piano, guitar, and recorder and we love to sing along! Sometimes visitors like families, friends, and members of the congregation join us and we gather in the living room to relax for tea or coffee time.

On Sundays, members of the Fergus North congregation host the residents at lunch time – thank you very much! We have also attended services at the nearby churches of Owen Sound, Guelph, Elora, Fergus Maranatha, Orangeville, and Grand Valley. This was enjoyed and greatly appreciated – for invitations were extended for lunch and often supper time too! What a wonderful way to feel included among the communion of saints!



*Residents of the Lighthouse maintaining the grounds and gardens of their beautiful place they call home.*



Recently, we have had the pleasure of hosting several groups of visitors: DACS Grade 1 and 2 students with teacher and parents, Fergus-Elora College and Careers Bible Study group – who included us in their meeting and enjoyed social time afterwards – and the MCS Grade 1 students and teacher.

Right now some highlights from April to July are: a Good Friday potluck luncheon, an organ and pan flute performance, the ECO orchestra concert, a local choir concert, a Silent Auction, a musical, the annual school garage sale, and finally our holidays at Anchor Camp! Hurray! We are looking forward to these events and excursions.

At the end of each day we come together for devotion time, thankful to God that he has kept watch over the staff and residents of the Lighthouse once again!

## **Birthday in November:**

### **3 WILMA VANDRONGELEN**

306-33375 Mayfair Avenue, Abbotsford, BC V2S 1P4

Congratulations to all celebrating a birthday in November. Wishing you God's blessings for this new year, and we hope you have a wonderful day together with your family and friends. Till next month.

### **A note to all parents and caregivers**

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

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## **Press Release Classis Manitoba September 28, 2012**

On behalf of the convening church of Carman East, Classis was opened in a Christian manner by Rev. S. Vandavelde. The churches were all represented by their primary delegates. Classis was constituted. Rev. R. J. Kampen was appointed to serve as president, Rev. J. Poppe as vice-president, and Rev. R. J. den Hollander as clerk. A letter of greetings was received from the clerk of Classis Central of the URCNA, and Brother W. Gortemaker was seated as deputy for contact with neighbouring classes and presbyteries.

As memorabilia we give thanks that a former theological student from Manitoba, Brother Abel Pol could sustain his peremptory exam and that, the Lord willing, he will soon be ordained to serve as pastor of the church of Chilliwack, BC. It was noted that since the last classis, the Redeemer church has extended calls to Rev. K. Wieske and Rev. J. Louwerse to serve as missionary for the Manitoba mission project. The ongoing health circumstances of former professors at the Theological seminary were noted. So was Rev. R. J. Kampen's upcoming wedding.

Classis dealt with various reports. A proposal from the committee for aid to needy churches proposed that the churches be assessed \$20 per communicant member for the support of the church of Denver. This was adopted. A report from the deputies for contact with neighbouring classes and presbyteries of the OPC, RCUS, and URCNA was received. Classis entered into

intercessory prayer for these churches. A report was received from the committee for students of theology. One of the highlights from this report is that brothers Iwan Borst and David Pol could begin their studies at the Seminary in Hamilton this September. In closed session, a church visitation report to the church of Denver was received with thankfulness, and prayer was offered for this church. During question period under Article 44 of the Church Order, the Grace church requested concurring advice to proceed in a matter of discipline. Advice was given, and prayer was offered.

The church of Carman West was appointed as convening church for the next classis. Suggested dates are December 7, 2012 (if necessary), and March 22, 2013. President for the next meeting will be Dr. A.J. Pol. Voting for delegates to Regional Synod took place. Appointed as primary delegates from the ministers were Dr. A.J. Pol and Rev. J. Poppe, with Rev. R.J. Kampen as first alternate and Rev. R. J. den Hollander as second alternate. Appointed as primary delegates from the elders were Brothers W. Gortemaker and G. van Dijk, with Brother L. Vanderveen as first alternate and W. Raap as second alternate. Appointments to various committees were made.

Personal question period was held. The chairman ruled that censure according to Article 34 of the Church Order was not needed. The acts were adopted and the press release was approved. The chairman closed the meeting in prayer.

*On behalf of Classis,  
Rev. J. Poppe,  
Vice-president at the time* 