

Clarion



**A Christian
is a refugee**

**HARSH RELIGIOUS WINTER SETS IN
CLARION KIDS
YOU ASKED**



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Refugees

A Christian, by definition, is a refugee

The plight of refugees from Syria and many other countries continues to be in the news. While the population in general may be getting compassion fatigue, various congregations are still very much aware of the situation as sponsored refugees arrive in their midst. It requires a great deal of compassion to receive these refugees and help them adjust to life in Canada.

It is not surprising that a large number of sponsorship groups have been Christian congregations. After all, Christians should know all about being refugees. We can go so far as to say that a Christian, by definition, is a refugee. We can add that the church is a refugee camp.

Christians as refugees

For the purpose of this editorial, I will limit myself to the Book of Psalms. It is rich in refuge language. We find it already in Psalm 2:12, “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.” The expression “take refuge” is found numerous times throughout the Psalms, with the next one in Psalm 5:11 and the last one in Psalm 144:2. There are similar expressions, such as “seek refuge” (Ps 141:8). We also find such expressions as the LORD being a “saving refuge” (26:8) or “a rock of refuge, a strong fortress” (31:2). A number of times we have the expression about taking refuge under the shadow of God’s wings (36:7; 51:7; 61:4; 63:7; cf. 91:4). This particular expression is also used by Boaz when he commends Ruth for having left her own people and joined herself to the people of Israel, seeking refuge under his wings (Ruth 2:12).

When you reflect on these Psalms, it is evident that they often refer to finding refuge with God in the face of physical danger. Enemies were in pursuit. Like refu-

gees forced to flee because enemies are invading and destroying everything and everyone in sight, so the Psalms portray a people running from danger, finding safety by turning to God. The LORD repeatedly showed himself to be a refuge by bringing deliverance from enemies.

As New Testament believers, we can identify with this type of language. We may want to think in the first place of how we find refuge under the shadow of God’s wings from the ancient enemy, Satan. We know our own form of ISIS, the *International Satanic Intent to Seduce*. Satan may have been dealt a death blow on the cross, but, like a roaring lion, he is out to see how much damage he can still do. There is daily need to pray the petition, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” In the daily fight against sin, as well as in the daily struggles of life, we seek refuge under the shadow of the wings of our God. As New Testament believers, we also may put it in terms of taking refuge in the blood of Jesus Christ, shed for the forgiveness of our sins. Should situations of persecution arise, we know we can find refuge with our God. Enemies of God’s people may kill the body, but they cannot kill the soul. Even if they kill the body, we know we will receive a resurrection body on the last day of the age.

Church as refugee camp

The Apostle Peter addresses his readers as exiles (1 Pet 1:1). Exiles are people chased away from their homeland. In the last chapter of the letter to the Hebrews, it is written that we do not have a lasting city on this earth but we seek the city that is to come (13:13). We are in this world but we are not of this world. It will be like this until the Lord Jesus comes in glory.

For this reason, we can describe the church as a refugee camp. It is the community of those who have fled from the great enemy, Satan. Just like a refugee camp cannot guarantee absolute safety, neither can the church. There will continue to be attacks. The enemy will also try to infiltrate and destroy from within. He sends his spiritual suicide bombers, who confuse and lead others astray by false teachings.

On the whole, however, the church functions as a refugee camp. For what is the purpose of a refugee camp? It is to give people

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Have you ever taken the time to think the plight of refugees in our world? And if you have, did you do so with the attitude that Christians are, by definition, also refugees? This is what Rev. Eric Kampen's editorial does.

In China, new regulations regarding police power may have serious implications for churches. Take a look at the report: "Harsh Religious Winter Sets In." We also have news from our federation: the grand opening of Emmanuel Christian High School in Fergus.

Issue 24 contains a number of our regular columns: Treasures New and Old, *Clarion Kids*, Education Matters, and You Asked. There are both book and music reviews, and a Mission News insert.

Laura Veenendaal

- 606 EDITORIAL**
Refugees
- 609 TREASURES, NEW & OLD**
In the Spotlight
- 610 Harsh Religious Winter Sets In**
- 612 Grand Opening: New Building for**
Emmanuel Christian High School
- 614 EDUCATION MATTERS**
- 616 CLARION KIDS**
- 617 YOU ASKED**
- 619 MUSIC REVIEW**
- 620 BOOK REVIEW**

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shelter, a degree of safety, and food and drink, waiting for a better day. That's what the church community does. Within the community, there is the communal protection against the attacks of Satan. Believers encourage one another and remind one another. They stand together in the unity of faith.

As refugees ourselves, we should be particularly sensitive to those who have had to flee to a safe place

Furthermore, in the church the believers as refugees receive nourishment while waiting for a better day. There is nourishment especially in hearing the gospel. God's Word is food for the hungry soul as it reminds the hearers of God's mighty deeds in history, climaxing in sending his Son. There is also the nourishment of faith that comes through the sacraments, the visible signs and seals of God's promises in Jesus Christ.

This aspect of being a refugee camp is good to keep in mind. There is the danger that the church begins to see itself as an established part of society. There have been long stretches, especially in Western history, where church and state were so woven together that the church was prone to forget they were refugees, waiting for the city that is to come. The fact that the church may have times when it has impressive buildings and when being a Christian seems quite easy, should not make us forget it can all disappear in a moment. In a way, the secularizing trend in Western Society that has been going on for more than two centuries has made it increasingly clear to us that we are refugees in this world.

Sympathy for refugees

In the fourth commandment as repeated by Moses on the plains of Moab, Israel was called to give rest on the Sabbath day also to the slaves in their households. He said, "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" (Deut 5:15). Their own plight in Egypt should make them particularly sensitive to the plight of slaves now they were free. In a similar way, in a country of immigrants,

where many are the descendants of immigrants who were welcomed to Canada to begin a new life, we should be particularly sensitive to current immigrants, desiring that same opportunity. In our setting today, however, it is more than just being sympathetic to immigrants wishing to make a new start. It is being sympathetic to those who are refugees. As refugees ourselves, we should be particularly sensitive to those who have had to flee to a safe place. If we reflect on our place as children of God in Christ, we should have a sense of the mind of a refugee, and the relief of finding refuge.

Learning from refugees

In most of the sponsorships by Christian communities, those being sponsored will already be Christians. In their hardships, they will have sought and found refuge with the Lord. This may serve as an example for us, who live in relative ease. It gives opportunity to be refreshed in our own sense of having found refuge under the shadow of God's wings.

Opening the door to refugees

When we keep in mind that, ultimately, we are refugees from sin and Satan, we will also realize that our compassion for refugees should not be limited to those who have experienced the horrors and miseries of war in faraway places. ISIS and other terror groups may wreak havoc in many parts of the worlds, but Satan is fighting the coming of Christ's kingdom all around us. Satan refuses to let go of his caliphate without a fight. The sad thing is that many people do not realize that they are under the dominion of Satan. There is also danger for someone who rejects the dominion of Satan and seeks to follow Christ, while the rest of his family and friends continue in their old ways. Such a person will become a spiritual refugee. We need to make it known that Christian churches are refugee camps, the place to wait with other refugees for the coming of Christ in glory.

Knowing ourselves as refugees should, therefore, make us open and eager to welcome those who have become refugees through the horrors of war and oppression, as well as those who have become refugees because they embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we also should do our utmost to ensure that the church indeed is, and remains, a place of refuge.





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In the Spotlight

"It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this man complete healing."

(Acts 3:16)

After healing the lame beggar at the Beautiful gate, Peter and John find themselves in the spotlight. Like a child staring at one of their childhood heroes, all the people are astonished at Peter and John (v. 11). They are famous! Now it might have been tempting for them to bask in this fame, maybe sign a few autographs, but they don't. Once all the people are gathered, Peter witnesses to the truth. He sets the record straight. It's not by their "power or godliness" that this man walks (v. 12).

This doesn't mean Peter and John don't have power or godliness (see 2 Peter 1:3-11), but these things are not what made this man walk. Jesus Christ. God's "glorified servant" (v. 13), is the source of this man's healing. He is "the Holy and Righteous One" (v. 14). He is "the author of life" (v. 15). And it is "the name of

Jesus" that this beggar received complete healing (v. 16; cf. v. 6).

So Jesus Christ is the *source* of this man's healing, but faith also has a key part in this healing. Peter says that it was the "name of Jesus *and* the faith that comes through him" that healed this man (v. 16). Peter and John believed they could heal this man in the name of Jesus Christ. Without faith Peter and John could have commanded that man to walk till they were blue in the face, but it wouldn't have happened.

So faith is crucial to this man's healing, but it's not faith that ultimately heals this man. Just like faith doesn't make us right with God, so faith doesn't heal this man. Jesus Christ does. And yet, Jesus Christ uses faith. Faith is the instrument or tool that Jesus Christ uses to bring about this man's healing. *Jesus is*

the source; faith is the instrument (cf. BC, Art. 22). Peter and John understood this very well. That is why, while in the spotlight, Peter didn't boast or brag about their power, their piety, or even their faith. He knew their faith was a gift from God, worked in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. So he uses that faith to re-direct the spotlight to where it belongs – on Jesus Christ.

This ought to be the response of all God's people who find themselves in the spotlight. We must never use the spotlight to boast of our own power, piety, or even our faith (as important as they are in our Christian walk of life). Instead, as faithful servants, we must always redirect the attention back to Jesus Christ. He is God's glorified servant. He is the Holy and Righteous one. He is the author of life.

For Further Study

1. How can we be more intentional about redirecting the spotlight on Jesus Christ in our day to day lives?
2. Is it possible that we sometimes minimize the important role of faith and godliness in our lives?



Harsh Religious Winter Sets In

In Shanghai, China, there is a beautiful residential complex that houses some 2,000 people in high rise apartment buildings. It is a clean, well-designed precinct, enclosed by a high wall making it relatively safe from intruders. It is. Access into the complex is limited to two gates, each manned 24/7 by guards employed by the strata company. The guards not only observe every entry and exit but also know each resident by sight. Most of China's urban population lives in complexes like these, although not all are clean and well designed. However, virtually all have manned gates and watchful guards.

New regulations

In a radical move the central government in Beijing is about to give these private guards certain police powers. If they see anything suspicious they will have the power to enter and investigate. If they discover "illegal" activities, they must lay charges. These must be reported to higher authorities which have the power to arrest guilty parties and mete out appropriate punishment, including heavy fines, imprisonment, and property confiscation. By the stroke of a pen the government is about to give a huge boost to its surveillance capabilities.

What is happening? The answer is very disconcerting. The central government's State Administration for Religious Affairs has just issued a new set of draft laws designed to tighten the Government's controls throughout the country in an effort to wipe out "illegal" activities. Illegal activities include all unregistered churches, places of worship, and theological training; overt criticism of the government; secessionism; terrorism and infiltration of foreign powers. Whilst all religions are affected, unregistered (or underground) Christian house churches seem to be the main target.

The regulations, which are already being implemented, are worded very carefully. According to Christian lawyers and other experts in China, once the regulations become law they will "leave no space for the house or unregistered Church in China, and will significantly curtail many

of the activities of the TSPM [Three-Self-Patriotic Movement, the state-controlled Protestant Church] as well."¹

In terms of religion the fundamental issue is that all churches and places of worship must be registered so that the government can control them; alternatively, church members can join the TSPM churches which are already government controlled. Either way the results would be the same: churches must promote Communist ideology and the Communist Party before all else. Preaching and teaching may not contradict any government policies. China's president Xi Jinping recently said that churches "must adhere to the leadership of the CPC" (Chinese Communist Party, which is officially atheist), "and support the socialist system and socialism with Chinese characteristics." Religious groups should "abide with Chinese laws and regulations. . . and interpret religious doctrines in a way that is conducive to modern China's progress and in line with our excellent traditional culture." The message is blunt: Christian doctrine must be brought in line with Communism and China's pagan culture.

Implications

To acquiesce would of course mean denying the fundamental teachings of the Bible; indeed it would be a denial the Lord Jesus Christ. The government's requirements, which in milder forms have been around for a long time, are the very reason many Christians refuse to register their churches or join the Three Self Patriotic Church. It's a straight forward case of being faithful to Scriptures or not. The house churches' position is, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

There is some important background to this development. First, since 1978, when China's trading doors were opened, religious freedom also improved slowly. This eventually resulted in an extraordinary increase in the number of unregistered churches, many supported by foreign mission. *The Telegraph* newspaper of 4 October 2016 reports that Prof. Yang, a leading expert on religion in China, believes that by 2025 the number of Christians

in China could be around 160 million. The newspaper adds, “That would likely put China ahead even of the United States, which had around 159 million Protestants in 2010 but whose congregations are in decline. By 2030, China’s total Christian population, including Catholics, would exceed 247 million, placing it above Mexico, Brazil and the United States as the largest Christian congregation in the world, he predicted.”

Second, the government is concerned about increasing criticism, dissidence, unrest resulting from the economic downturn, terrorism, and groups clamoring for political independence.

The Communist Party believes these factors are threats to its power and legitimacy, so it is pulling out all stops to fortify its control. The new regulations just released have been designed to do just that. For the house churches these regulations mean, *inter alia*:

- much stricter detection and policing efforts to register places of worship, including even small house churches of fifteen or so people (giving residential gate keepers police powers is likely to be quite effective)
- greater efforts to wipe out other underground religious activities such as religious teaching at schools and universities
- more thorough surveillance of the Internet; more Christian websites are likely to be blocked
- the prohibition of church office bearers traveling abroad for education and training
- seeking government approval for all persons wanting to do theological training
- harsher penalties for non-compliance; these include confiscation of property, heavy fines, job dismissals, and jail sentences.

Once a church is registered it will be subject to strict surveillance and control; for example, in some places the following rules have already been implemented:

- Government officials are to be given access to the pulpit to speak at church services
- The government has established office space within churches, and assigned officials to closely supervise and regulate all church activities
- Church office bearers must attend regular “education” seminars to re-inforce Communist Party ideology
- Some churches have been forced to hand over all their income, including donations, to the government. Churches will have money returned for government approved expenditure.

Small churches are likely to be refused registration; their members will be told to join larger churches to make government control easier. The government is also watching foreign mission work in an effort to stifle it. President Xi referred to this recently when he said, “We must resolutely guard against overseas infiltrations via religious means.” A number of underground church leaders have recently been arrested, and charged with subversion because of contact with “foreign groups,” which includes western churches that do mission work.

A Chinese pastor says that the regulations will bring a religious winter so harsh that we must seek guidance from God. Another house church leader believes most house churches will not seek registration. Consequently they will have to be much more vigilant and change their *modus operandi*. In practical terms the larger congregations will have to break up into little groups and meet in secret places to escape detection. This means many more preachers and elders are needed – but they are scarce. It seems, however, that hardship such as fines, jail sentences, the scattering of congregations, will be inescapable.

Conclusion

The new regulations are an extension of a new program of persecution that began in 2014 in some areas, apparently as a trial. During that time church services have been banned, congregations dispersed, church leaders jailed or fined, crosses torn down, and church buildings demolished. The following figure gives you some idea of the number of Christian churches affected: since early 2014, the government has removed the crosses from some 1,700 Christian churches in the Zhejiang province alone.

Satan continues to marshal his forces and agents against the church. Although our brothers and sisters in China face very uncertain times, they and we are comforted and assured by God’s promises that He controls all events and that the gates of hell cannot prevail against the church.

When one member the Christ’s body suffers, all members suffer with it (1 Cor 12:26). Please pray for our dear brothers and sisters on the China mission field. Please pray that the government may change its mind or be frustrated in its efforts. Please also pray that mission work not only in China, but also in other countries may continue.

¹<http://www.chinaaid.org/2016/10/christian-today-is-religious-freedom-in.html>.

Grand Opening: New Building for Emmanuel Christian High School in Fergus

*“One generation commends your work to another;
They tell of your mighty acts.” Psalm 145:4*

A thoroughly renovated historic school building and brand new full size high school gym drew lots of attention on September 1 in the community of Fergus, Ontario. Students and staff of Emmanuel Christian High School were eager to see their new work space. Parents, grandparents, and other supporters of Emmanuel came in large numbers to see the school after thirteen months of extensive renovation. And because the building has been the local high school since it was built in 1927, many former students, teachers, and principals in the community came out as well to take a look during the Open House. The event officially marked the official end of Project Eagle’s Nest, the school’s Capital Campaign that started in early 2014.

Tree planting

Local Mayor Kelly Linton and Wellington-Halton Hill MPP Ted Arnott together with former board chair



Tree planting officials: (L to R) MPP Ted Arnott, Principal Henk Nobel, Mayor Kelly Linton and former board chair Andrew Wildeboer planted an oak tree in the new gardens around the school



Old and new blended together: the renovated, historic high school build in 1927 in Fergus (right) with a new entrance and full size high school gymnasium (left) is the new home for ECHS

Andrew Wildeboer and Principal Henk Nobel planted an oak tree on the property. Current board chair Andrew Westrik called the new facility “a story of love,” involving hundreds of people coming together for the common goal of Reformed education for young people. Westrik: “May we never lose sight of the fact that all we are and all that we have is rooted in the abundant love of Jesus.”

Celebrations

In the evening the school society celebrated God’s goodness and blessing with an official ceremony and dessert social. Rev. Agema from the Canadian Reformed Church of Guelph Living Word opened the evening with Psalm 145. “The LORD has provided over and above what we expected by opening doors. He provided the opportunity to work together, across the generations, so that together we could experience that our God is a faithful God. We give thanks to him!”

Rev. Agema also highlighted the heritage aspect of the new school. “Something old, which has stood the test



The Eagle, mascot of Emmanuel's sports teams, welcomed hundreds from town and church community to the Open House and barbecue

of time, is made ready again for a new generation. As Reformed believers we too build on something that was passed on by previous generations. We received that heritage in our Lord Jesus Christ" He pointed out that it is now our task to put this new school to good use to God's glory. "Not just the building, but also the teaching and interaction between students and teachers to prepare a new generation for service as prophets, kings, and priests, and to confess his name in all of life." During the festive evening many songs of praise sounded, Emmanuel Christian Orchestra performed, as well as Te Deum Laudamus Choir and an ad hoc male choir.

History

Henk Nobel, principal of Emmanuel for eighteen years, highlighted the school's history that is very closely

linked to that of Maranatha Christian School. MCS started 1968 with twenty-nine students in grade 5 through 8. Five years after opening its doors, the school offered grades 1 to 8 for the first time. In 1977 Emmanuel Christian High School opened its doors for grade 7 to 10; this "junior high school" was first located in Guelph and later back in Fergus. However it would not be until 2005-2006 that grade 11 and 12 could be added. By then, both societies had split aiming to operate the schools on two different properties allowing Emmanuel to highlight its regional character. Nobel: "The membership blossomed, with support from members of Dufferin Area Christian School, Cornerstone Christian School, Harvest Canadian Reformed School, Maranatha, and members from the URC in Listowel. We were no longer a Fergus school, but have become a regional high school with a much larger membership base from a much larger geographical area, with a number of elementary feeder schools, located in this beautiful, historic town of Fergus."

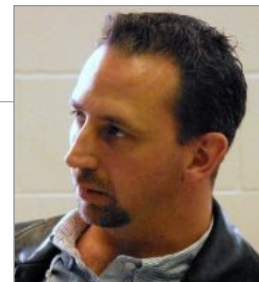


The board and society of Emmanuel Christian High School want to express a heartfelt THANK YOU for all the donations received from far and wide to make this new step in its history a reality. \$4,258,300 was raised. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

You can watch a video of the renovation of our school from beginning to completion on our Facebook page "Project Eagle's Nest."



A crowd of over 700 people gathered for the official program and dessert social in the new gymnasium



Jason Heemskerk
League Coordinator for the League
of Canadian Reformed Schools
(LCRSS) in Ontario

Do We Have To?

Whenever I hear, “Do we have to?” burst from the lips of my children, it sets my teeth on edge. Even reading it, I can hear the whine, the upward pitch on “we,” and the drawn out pronouncing of “have.” I can picture the body language, complete with slumped shoulders and large lower lip. All these things display how my dear children would rather endure multiple root canals on their upper incisors than make a team effort to rake the lawn clear of leaves.

Of course, because we are adults, we tend to keep the whine out of our “Do we have to?” questions. We ask it in a more real way than our children do, because budgets are tight and expenses are high. The question of necessity comes into conversations a lot.

Do we need to?

When you have children in a Reformed Christian day school (or two), paying for your child’s education is likely one of the largest expenses on your household budget (at least it is in Ontario). It is possible that you have asked whether or not sending your child to a Reformed Christian day school is something that you have to do. Are parents who send their children to a League school fulfilling a want, or a need?

To say that setting up day schools for our children is a scriptural imperative is to read more into the Lord’s commands about how to teach our children (Deut 6; Prov 22; Matt 19) than is actually there. The Lord commands parents to instruct their children in the fear of his name, but day schools are never mentioned.

Reformed Christian day schools are not mentioned in the vows parents take (and the congregation witnesses) at baptism either. In their vows, parents promise to have their children instructed in the doctrine of God’s Word to the best of their ability (*Book of Praise*, p. 598) – they do not promise to send them to the local Reformed Christian day school.

Perhaps the most direct “command” to have Reformed Christian day schools comes from the Canadian Reformed

Church Order. Indeed, there is a very clear and reasonable instruction there: “The consistory shall ensure that the parents, to the best of their ability, have their children attend a school where the instruction given is in harmony with the Word of God as the church has summarized it in her confessions” (Church Order, Art. 58).

As clear as that may sound, Rev. Van Oene makes a point in *With Common Consent* (1990), that people should be careful of “sound-dogmatics” when it comes to this article. He claims that the article seems to make this equation:

**God instructs
us and parents
promise to have
their children
instructed in
God’s Word**

+

**Reformed Christian
day schools give
instruction infused
with God’s Word
and also teach
the doctrine of
Scripture**

Ergo

**Parents promise that
they will send their
children to a Reformed
Christian day school.**

However, Van Oene points out, while this sounds logical, people have used this logic to overstep what is actually in Scripture and the baptismal vow – neither speaks about day schools, only that parents are responsible for ensuring instruction in Godly doctrine to the best of their ability. While there is more to Van Oene’s argument than can be written about here, suffice it to say that while he is critical of the leaps of logic, he is supportive of parents sending their children to schools where what is taught at church and at home is not torn down at every turn.

Since the Reformed Christian day school is not demanded in Scripture, specifically promised at baptism, and thus not demanded by the Church Order, it is very difficult to argue that parents, and other church members, have to support the school (either by sending children, or sending money).

This, I think, is a reason for thankfulness.

Do we want to?

Why thankfulness? Because it moves our schools from the realm of something we have to do to something that we want to do. This changes the type of energy that we are willing to invest into doing it well.

We want to do the things we love. If we love to hunt, it is all we want to do. We make time to practice, plan, and participate in hunting. We spend more money on gear than we perhaps should, because, well, we love to hunt! If we love a certain TV show, we follow every episode – scheduling our lives around when it broadcasts, and if something else gets in the way of that schedule the show is sure to be recorded, or the episode bought. Everyone has something into which they pour their energy, their time, and their money, not because they have to, but because they want to. This is the position that our schools should have in our lives too.

Our attitude changes if these things become necessities. If hunting becomes a necessity, then an unsuccessful hunt means going hungry. If for an hour at a specific time on a specific day is demanded of us, we are more likely to see the hour as restrictive. And, if a Reformed Christian day school is forced upon us. . . we maintain it with the fewest resources possible (be that time, energy, or money).

Does this mean that in order to keep love for Reformed Christian day schools intense we need to treat them as optional? Perhaps, but their value as a tool to help parents teach the understanding of how the Lord works in this world is so great that it makes them an option worth striving for.

The Reformed Christian day school is a place where the whole communion of saints is able to work together to educate the children God has given us. Together we ensure that covenant children are taught in an environment where God's Word infuses the entire curriculum. Day schools allow us to use our individual gifts, given to us by God, for the benefit of the entire church community. There is no model of educating our children that does this better. Praise the Lord for the gifts he has given that makes having them possible.



CALL DECLINED

Declined the call to the Neerlandia South Canadian Reformed Church:

Rev. R. Vermeulen

of the Trinity Canadian Reformed Church in Glanbrook, Ontario

CALLED

Called by the Willoughby Heights Canadian Reformed Church in Langley, BC:

Rev. R.C. Janssen

of the Abbotsford Canadian Reformed Church in Abbotsford, BC.

Called by the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk te Pretoria (Free Reformed Church of Pretoria), the Providence Canadian Reformed Church in Hamilton, ON and Smithville Canadian Reformed Church in Smithville, ON:

Candidate Johan Bruintjes

Called by Jubilee Canadian Reformed Church in Ottawa, Ontario:

Rev. Winston Bosch

of Église Réformée St-Paul de Repentigny, Québec

CHURCH NEWS

Summary of LCRSS and the League Coordinator position

The League of Canadian Reformed Schools (LCRSS) is an Ontario based organization that works to assist reformed Christian day schools in the work of maintaining high quality education that is infused with God's word. It has developed and supported many committees to work with schools for this purpose. To help with the organization and coordination of the activities of these committees the LCRSS hired Jason Heemskerk as fulltime League Coordinator in the summer of 2015.

The task of the League Coordinator is to assist the LCRSS committees in their respective functions, work with schools who are LCRSS members move toward a common curriculum and establish an organizational presence for the LCRSS in the public square.

Clarion Kids

Ruth

Ruth 1 - 4

During the time of the Judges there was a woman named Naomi. She had two sons who married women that were not Israelites. When her husband and sons all died, one of her son's wives wanted to stay with Naomi. Her name was Ruth. Naomi sent Ruth to collect food in the field of a man named Boaz. She knew that Boaz was a good man and that Ruth would be safe there. Boaz fell in love with Ruth and they got married. Boaz took care of Ruth and Naomi. Boaz and Ruth had a son named Obed. Obed had a son named Jesse, and Jesse had a son named David who would become king.

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Crossword Puzzle: Solve the clues to fill in the puzzle!



Down

1. Obed's grandson who God would make king of Israel.
3. Naomi sent Ruth to collect food in his field.
5. Boaz and Ruth had a son with this name.
7. She married Naomi's son.

Across

2. Naomi's sons married women who were not _____.
4. Her husband and two sons died.
6. Boaz and Ruth got _____.

by Emily Nijenhuis



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Q Why Do We Pray or Sing to the Holy Spirit?

**Since songs are prayers and praise to God,
why do we pray to the Holy Spirit or sing songs to the Holy Spirit?
Christ taught us to pray to the Father; and in the Spirit
all are present as we pray to the Father.**

A As we confess in the Nicene Creed, we *worship* and *glorify* the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son. Although we confess our faith in one only God (BC, Art. 8), we *distinguish* three persons who are really, truly, and eternally distinct according to their incommunicable properties; namely the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We confess and praise the Father as our Creator, the Son as the Word Incarnate who saves us, and the Holy Spirit as the power and might who proceeds from the Father and the Son. We, therefore, *praise* and *glorify* the Holy Spirit for his work of life-giving, life-renewing, faith-working, church-building, etc. He does so with the Word he inspired and fulfilled in his conception of Jesus Christ, whom the Father sent to save us. Hence, we *worship* and *glorify* the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son for these distinct and glorious works, as much as we praise the Son as our Saviour (Hymn 79) and the Father as our Maker and Provider (Hymn 65). We do so in our songs of praise and worship (Hymn 47) and we express this in our prayers in which we articulate our *specific* reasons for thanksgiving or for petitions pertaining to their respective works (BC, Art. 9).

Although it is true that the Lord Jesus taught us to address God as “Our Father in heaven,” he did *not* mean by that to abolish all other forms of address. In the OT already God’s people addressed him as “O, LORD,” while they already knew him as their Father (Ps 89:26, “He shall cry to me, “You are my Father;” Ps 103:13;

Isa 64:8; Mal 2:10). In John 8:44, the Jews also testified, “We have one Father even God.” When the Lord Jesus taught them to say, “Our Father,” he reiterated this revelation and taught his disciples to say, “Abba! Father!” Later on, however, God’s people still address God as “Lord,” or “Sovereign Lord” (Acts 4:24, 29). In other words, there *still* are *more* ways and forms in which we may address God in our prayers.

In the book of Revelation, 22:17, we hear the Spirit and the Bride call upon the *Lord Jesus* specifically, saying, “Come,” also encouraging the church, i.e. us (!), to say, “Come, Lord Jesus! Maranatha!” (cf. 1 Cor 16:22). To this call and request the Lord Jesus responds as well, “Surely, I am coming soon.” In the same way we may address the Holy Spirit specifically when we beseech him to revive and refresh and nourish us, raising us up to a new life (Hymn 47:5). True, he will do so through the Word, i.e. Jesus the Saviour, God the Son (Hymn 41, 44), and he will do so with the power that proceeds from the Father (Hymn 82) and the Son. Yet, a specific request like that may be expressed as directly to the Spirit as we ask the Son to come soon (Hymn 67) and the Father to help us and hold us by his hand (Hymn 65)! Of course, addressing God in *prayer* as “Our Father” is most common, or saying “Lord” is done quite often as well, yet when we have specific requests pertaining to the Son we may *pray directly* saying “Lord Jesus,” while our *petitions* that pertain to the distinct works of the *Holy Spirit* we may address him specifically as “O Holy Spirit, power of God,” or *praise* him for his great and mighty deeds (Hymn 47-49)!



Will we know each other in eternity?

Can a loved one in heaven see us now?

A few times I have read your answer to questions concerning what you called “the intermediate state and eternity.” I have two specific questions concerning what I hear at times but am unsure:

- 1. When someone is with the Lord, could that person still be looking in on the life on earth of say a son or daughter and being proud of an accomplishment (e.g. a graduation)?**
- 2. Will we recognize one another in eternity?**



Indeed, in a few answers to questions about the intermediate state (when body and soul are separated) I have indicated that the Scriptures show us some examples of remembrances, of involvement in the progress of the coming of God’s kingdom, etc., of those who died, as martyrs for instance, or of others. Each time, however, I also expressed the need to be very reserved and avoid speculations. We know very little and should not use what little we know to fantasize on what all the saints who have gone before us might know about our continued life on earth. Hence we have no basis in God’s Word which could answer questions such as articulated above: e.g. whether our loved ones in heaven would be aware of a graduation, a wedding, or so, on earth. We also lack every evidence and example regarding the feelings of those who died regarding accomplishments or encounters of success or defeat of those who are left behind in this life on earth. We simply don’t know at all!

The question also whether we will recognize one another in eternity requires the same caution: we know very little! We cannot and should not use our earthly thinking and imagination for such heavenly situations. In the OT we hear the expressions of the ones who died as being “gathered to *their forefathers*.” The LORD is known as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, *identifying* them, of whom the Lord Jesus testified that God is the God of *the living*. He, therefore, could also include in the parable of the rich man and the poor Lazarus that after his death Lazarus has communion with *Abraham* (who is *recognized* as such by the rich man from Hades). David also expresses certainty about his little son who died: “I will go to him, but he will not return to me” (2 Sam 12:23).

We need to realize, however, that in heaven and on the new earth there will be no longer a relationship in the *bonds of blood* but only a *spiritual* relationship of being united in Christ. When we die we go to *Jesus* – not to be with Mom or Dad or so. Will we recognize them? Seeing that the Lord preserves us in our identity in body and soul so much that each one remains the person he is (be it in

greater glory all the time!), we will know of each other who we are. But let us not be so naïve about it, thinking that this personal recognition could *mean* anything. We will belong to the communion of saints, the innumerable multitude, among whom there will be those whom we recognize indeed, but that will be part of our recognizing everyone whom the Lord has placed in this communion! Our knowing of each other will be richer, deeper, purer, and more intense than any bond, knowledge, or acquaintance we had on earth.

Our meeting each other and recognizing each other will be a *spiritual matter* of our being children of God together and as brothers and sisters in Christ. Then perhaps those whom we have helped on earth, to whom we have

been a blessing here and now by the support we rendered to them, “*they* may receive you into the eternal dwelling,” as a welcoming committee of sorts (Luke 16:9). In other words, there will be some remembrance, some recognition, but everything will serve the greater purpose of honour to Christ for his work in our lives and of the glory to God in whose presence we will be!

*Is there something you’ve been wanting to know?
An answer you’ve been looking for?*

Ask us a question!

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MUSIC REVIEW

O Tidings – A New Christmas Album



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A group of nine young people from the Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church in Burlington-Waterdown have recorded their first CD, a very nice Christmas album. The name of the group is Strength & Song and the title of the CD is *O Tidings*. The CD contains ten Christmas carols. Most of the songs are traditional hymns, such as O Come, O Come, Emmanuel; Joy to the World, and O Little Town of Bethlehem. The only contemporary song on the CD is Who Would Have Dreamed (by Hansen and Kauflin).

The songs are performed in a gentle and tasteful way which actually allows it to be excellent background music. Although some of the music is upbeat, the atmosphere is mostly intimate. For example, the way the group sings “O Holy Night” is modest and meditative – nothing like the exuberant way someone like Josh Groban will sing it. I was impressed by the quality of the singing, the harmonies and

the musical accompaniment. While the voices of the singers are not professionally polished, they charm the listener with a kind of natural purity. My personal favorite on the CD is Joy to the World, with its catchy accompaniment.

An enjoyable aspect of the CD is the variety of instruments that is used. Apart from the vocalists, there is lead guitar, acoustic guitar, piano, keyboards, vibraphone, flute, percussion, and drums. Although the songs are centuries old, the harmonies are sometimes quite modern. Many songs feature a vocalist (male or female) and background vocals or someone singing a counter-melody.

The price of the CD is \$10 plus shipping costs if CD needs to be mailed. Thanks to the group receiving a sponsorship for the production of the CD, all proceeds will be donated to the “Shine On” building project of Streetlight Ministries in downtown Hamilton. Copies of the CD may be ordered by contacting the group at strengthandsongband@gmail.com. This CD will make for a very nice Christmas present. Warmly recommended!



The Children's Story Bible You've Been Looking For



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Teach Them Your Way, O LORD

by Amanda DeBoer
(ill. Harold Sikkema and Jasmine Togeretz)

Choosing a good story Bible is both more challenging and more important than we often think. Let's begin with the importance of the choice. Story Bibles are an especially big part of our children's pre-school years, and those are the years during which they are soaking up everything like a sponge.

This truth was driven home to me one Christmas Day. I was preaching from the beginning of Matthew 2 about the wise men from the East. In the introduction to my sermon I mentioned that we don't actually know *how many* wise men there were. You can check Matthew 2 again; there is no number mentioned in the inspired text. However, after that Christmas Day worship service a young boy came up to me, looking rather perturbed I might add. With a determined voice he said, "Reverend Van Vliet, which Bible were you reading from? Because in my Bible at home there are definitely *three* wise men. I counted them myself!" Now a comment like that brings a smile to our face. At least it certainly did to mine. Also, in the grand scheme of things the exact number of wise men is a relatively unimportant detail. At the same time, it illustrates a truth we ought not to forget: at the most formative phase of our lives story Bibles certainly shape how we think about God and redemptive history.

This, then, brings us to the challenge of finding a good story Bible. For the sake of filling in the story a bit, some children's Bibles add details that are simply not found in the inspired Scriptures. Others leave out too many details and reduce the story to a bare plotline. Some story Bibles are bit too long for a given age group and others are too short. Also, beyond these practical details, some children's Bibles have theological overtones and undertones that we, holding to Reformed convictions, do not feel comfortable with.



So where do parents go for a reliable, engaging, just-right-for-my-kids-at-their-age story Bible? I warmly recommend purchasing one recently published by Amanda DeBoer, who is a member of the Trinity Canadian Reformed Church in Glanbrook, Ontario. It's called *Teach Them*

Your Way, O LORD. Let me give you a list of reasons that this is probably the children's story Bible you've been looking for.

- *It is conscientiously faithful to Scripture.* Sr. DeBoer has paid careful detail to how the Holy Spirit revealed things in the Bible. In every story she aims to make clear for children what Scripture says – no more, no less.
- *It captures children's attention.* Like most story Bibles, also this one is illustrated. Although there is not a picture for each story, there is a picture on each page. The illustrations are well-done, bright, and colourful – just the kind of thing that draws the eyes of pre-schoolers. In addition, many Bible stories start with some connection to the daily lives of children. For example the story about the Ten Commandments starts with the question, "Do you have rules in your house?" (p. 114). With a question like that children are engaged from the first sentence they hear.
- *It reinforces important biblical themes.* Repetition is the mother of all learning and there is repetition woven into the stories. Sentences like "God is so powerful" and "God always keeps his promises" come back time and again. In this way central truths about God and his salvation are constantly reinforced, and these are exactly the truths that we want to be imprinted on the hearts of God's covenant children. Sr. De Boer even asks the children to repeat key words out loud. In the 3-4 year-old stories there are little pink symbols from time to time which encourage you, as a

parent, to ask your child(ren) to repeat the word or name after you. Children love interactive reading like this, and they learn as they enjoy.

- *It is redemptive historical.* In some children's Bibles, OT stories regularly become moral lessons. The recurring theme is that we should do the good things that Abraham, Moses, and David did, and refrain from doing the bad things they did. Although moral lessons are still taught in *Teach Them Your Way*, it goes beyond that. Numerous OT stories end with a paragraph pointing forward to Christ, the Saviour whom we all need. Teaching children to think in a redemptive-historical way at such a young age will surely be a blessing for generations to come.
- *It is obviously written by a mom, and that's a very good thing.* You notice this characteristic of the book in subtle but significant ways. Many of the intriguing examples and practical applications are from daily life around the house. Moreover, the stories are just long enough. The stories for the two-year-olds are just short enough that they don't lose (too much) attention, and the stories for the three- and four-year-olds are just long enough to give them the added detail that they want and need. Obviously a mom who understands the attention spans of little ones has crafted these stories.
- *It is a two-for-the-price-of-one story Bible.* As soon as you pick up this story Bible you notice that some pages are orange and the rest are green. That's be-

cause Sr. De Boer works through the entire Bible twice: once at the level of two-year-olds and then again at a more advanced level for three- and four-year-olds. Beyond saving a few dollars, it's also true that children tend to become attached to their story Bibles, so it's nice to have one that lasts for three years of development.

All in all, this is a story Bible that my wife and I have felt entirely comfortable reading to our children. With so many other story Bibles you feel as if you are making a compromise. Either the theological orientation of the story Bible is a little bit skewed or the stories are a bit too easy or slightly too difficult. However, with this children's Bible everything feels right and the children love it, too.

If there is one drawback to this publication it is that there are no questions at the end of the stories. Several questions at the end of each story would make evening devotions with your little ones even more interactive and instructive. However, the stories are told well enough that if you want to ask some questions at the end, you will not have any difficulty formulating them yourself.

In short, if you are looking for a reliable, engaging, just-right-for-my-kids-at-their-age story Bible, then look no more. This one will serve you and your children well for years to come.

If you have any questions about this children's Bible or you would like to order a copy please write to teach-theyourway@gmail.com.

