

THE MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF NORTH AMERICA



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THE ABIDING PRESENCE

“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20)

I am sure we have all felt the difficulty and perhaps pain of not being able to visit with people we love in recent months. It is often in a person's absence that we realize just how much we love and miss that person. We have all, to some extent, felt the absence of fellowshiping with the saints on the Lord's Day. Perhaps some of you have not been able to be present at a graduation, a wedding, or a funeral. That is very hard! While we are thankful that we live in a time when technology “has made the world a smaller place,” yet these last months only highlight the fact that nothing can replace being really present with the people we love! Yet, we have been reminded that sometimes it is simply not possible to be with them.

This reality should all the more impress upon us how absolutely astounding is Jesus' promise to His people: “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20). Who can make and keep a promise like this? It struck me recently that Jesus never makes the same promise to His people that a bride and groom make on their wedding day. For all the happiness of their day, there is this tinge of somberness in their promise to faithfully love each other “until death do us part.” This, however, is a promise Jesus has never made. His promise is: “Lo, I am with you *always!*” The “always” of Jesus is not interrupted by death. He never promises to love “until death do us part.” How magnificently Paul captures this uniquely Christian comfort in Romans 8:38-39 when he says, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

But perhaps (like the disciples) we wonder: how this can really be true? After all, Jesus is a real man. As to His humanity, He can therefore only be in one place at one time. We know that, at this very moment, Jesus Christ is in heaven. He is surrounded by worshipping angels, by the adoring “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven,” and by “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:22-24). To us, this land can often seem very far away (Isa. 33:17b). Physically, Jesus is in heaven and He is not here on earth. However, here we also must recognize a great difference between Christ Jesus and ourselves. To be *really* present with someone we love, we need to be *physically* present. But Jesus Christ can be *really* present even when He is *physically* absent. Indeed, wonderfully, He is even more *really* present with His people now than He was when He was *physically* here 2000 years ago (John 16:7). So, Jesus is not simply saying to His people, “I will think about you

often” (though to be in the thoughts of Jesus would already be such a wonderful thing!). Neither does He say, “I wish I could be there with you.” Dear friends, Jesus is speaking as “the faithful and true witness” (Rev. 3:14) when He says, “Lo, I am *with you* always.”

The *real* way in which Jesus is present with His people is by His Word and Spirit. You need both. If you had the Word without the Spirit, then you would have a tremendous biography. You could, like McCheyne, read “Isaiah’s wild measure and John’s simple page.” You could agree with those who said, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). You could be amazed like those who said, “What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (Mark 4:41). But you would be left with an emptiness and a pile of “if only’s”: If only I could have been there when Jesus was there! If only I could go and ask him, “Lord teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). If only I could fall at His feet and say, “Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24). If only I could touch the hem of His garment and be made whole (Matt. 9:20, 14:36). If only!

On the other hand, if it were possible for us to have the Spirit but not the Word, I suppose we might have a great sense of awe in our souls. We might feel ourselves solemnized and searched (Psalm 139, Rev. 11:11). We might well have a great sense of a spirit of love shed abroad in our hearts (Rom. 5:5). Yet, if the word were absent, would everything not simply be left like an undefined and vague shadow? We might then be more like the blind man who sees men like trees walking (Mark 8:24). We would be more like Saul of Tarsus asking, “Who art thou, Lord,” except there would be no voice answering, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest” (Acts 9:5). Ultimately, we would be no better than the pagans in Athens, ignorantly worshipping “the unknown God” (Acts 17:23).

In the gospel of the grace of God, Christ has given His Word and He has sent His life-giving Spirit. When we have both, we have the *real* presence of the blessed Savior. With the Bible in our hands, we are not left with, “The memoirs of Jesus Christ” (cf. Matt. 1:1, Mark 1:1, John 1:1-4, Acts 1:1). Neither are we left orphans (John 14:18). The implications of these things are profound. Basically, what this means is that every one of your “if only’s” immediately dissolves. It means that Jesus Christ will deal with your spiritual condition as truly and as really as He did while He was here on earth. He is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). We sing of Christ in Psalm 102 – “Thou eternal art and great, heaven and earth thou didst create, Heav’n and earth shall pass away, changeless thou shalt live for aye” (Psalter 275:3; cf. Heb. 1:10). But what is also emphasized in this stanza is the timeless help Christ gives to those who call upon Him: “This *all ages* shall record, for the glory of the Lord, thou dost hear the humble prayer, for the helpless thou dost care” (emphasis added).

Practically, what this means for you is this: You don’t have to go searching for Jesus on another side of a lake (John 6) and He won’t be away on a mountain top praying alone (Matt. 14:23, John 6:15). Now, He is *never* inaccessible. Can you see how He is more *really* present now than He was when He was physically here? If you are spiritually sick, you *can* come to Him and say, “If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole” and you will find healing virtue in Him still (Mark 5:25-34). It means that if you are plagued with unbelief, you *can* fall down before Him and cry, “Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24). It means if you are grieving a loved one in Christ, Christ still stands beside you and with His matchless comfort says, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25). It means, finally, that there is a day coming when Christ will return on the clouds of heaven so that He will be with His people *really* and *physically*. “So shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17). What a glorious Person Jesus Christ is! ¹

Rev. I. Macleod is pastor of the Free Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. He notes: “Several of these thoughts have come from Hugh Martin’s classic book, *The Abiding Presence*. If you are not familiar with Hugh Martin, I would very highly recommend anything he writes. In particular, *The Shadow of Calvary*, *Christ Victorious*, *Jonah*, but perhaps the best place to start would be *The Abiding Presence*.”

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THE WHOLE FAMILY IN HEAVEN AND EARTH

Many throughout our world wonder how people from different backgrounds, social and economic classes, and political persuasions will ever get along. Strife between people abounds and often runs very deep. In the United States and elsewhere, many fault lines have reappeared recently and given rise to tensions. Politics can often aggravate or take advantage of these tensions. There is the charge of prejudice against certain people groups, which no doubt exists and operates in very open as well as subtle ways. This should not surprise us, given that we are conceived and born in sin, and are by nature “living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (Tit. 3:3).

Sadly, the history of the church provides too many evidences that Christians and the church are not free from prejudice and partiality. At times, the church has in fact defended prejudice from the Bible and fostered environments that allowed it to be viewed as God’s will. We do not jump on the bandwagon of the world when we say this. It is enough to listen to what the Lord charges His church: “Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? ... But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors” (Jam. 2:4, 9). The Bible gives no sanction to or toleration of prejudice or partiality. Quite the contrary: it aims to convict all sinners of all sin.

When the Word of God applied by the Holy Spirit convicts us, we seek for forgiveness from God in Christ for sins of the heart, mind, and will, sins against God, and sins against our neighbor. We then find that the Word of God also shows us a better way. This way is shown throughout the Scriptures. One place is in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, which is full of teaching on the “whole family of God” (see Eph. 3:15).

Peace Through the Death of Christ

Saul of Tarsus had long raged against Christians, boasting to be of the stock of Israel (Phil. 3:5). He must have pictured his old self when he wrote: “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself” (Rom. 2:1). But united to Christ, Paul knew himself bound to the whole family of God, from all tribes, tongues, and nations. In prison, the mystery of the unity of Jews and Gentiles as “fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph. 3:6) occupied and delighted him. God had purposed in “the fulness of times ... [to] gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him” (Eph. 1:10).

Formerly dead in sins and trespasses, believers have been made alive in Christ and are seated with Him in heaven, in the Spirit (Eph. 2:1-6). They are such by faith alone, and not works, and they are such in order to do good works (2:7-10). This new creation is by the gospel, and thereby dead men and women are made to walk in newness of life!

God's agenda in Christ was to make peace through the death of the cross (2:14ff). This is not just a peace with God, but a peace that works itself out among people, especially Jews and Gentiles. The middle wall of partition that divided everyone is down because of what Christ has done. God is making a new building of God, built on the apostles, Christ being the cornerstone (2:24), and Gentiles as much as Jews have part in it. Sinclair Ferguson writes:

The double emphasis here (joined *together*, built *together*) reminds us that the church is not an aggregate of diverse people, but individuals united to each other in their union with Jesus Christ. They are brought closer to one another in Christ, united together like the great stones of the Jerusalem temple. The stones were so perfectly carved by the skilled stonemasons that they fitted perfectly, sustained one another in place, and took the weight of the next level of the building. What a marvelous picture of the church.¹

Mystery of the Family of God

Having set forth this magisterial vision of the church, Paul pauses to reflect and teach on the ministry to the Gentiles which God gave him (Eph. 3:1-13). He opens chapter 3 with mentioning that he is a prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles (v. 1) and then ends by asking that they not faint at his tribulation for them (v. 13). Paul begins by stating that he was made a steward of the grace of God on behalf of the Gentiles. As a steward, he was given the responsibility of administering the 'mystery' to the Gentiles. The Biblical concept of mystery refers to things that are hidden and inaccessible to us unless God reveals them.

Based on what Paul knows, he prays. He bows his knees out of reverence and adoration for God, whom he calls "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 14). He goes on to say that this Father gives His name to "the whole family in heaven and earth." Just like earthly fathers normally give their paternal names to their children, this heavenly Father has a family, and they bear His name.

It is important to note that this family has a heavenly part and an earthly part. By this heavenly part, Paul no doubt refers to the unfallen angels, who are also under the headship of Jesus Christ (see Eph. 1:10). He also has in mind all believers who have died and are in heaven with Christ, which "is far better" (Phil. 1:23). Of course, there is Christ, the Elder Brother, who has made it possible that there is a family of redeemed sinners.

The Prayer for Strength

When Paul considers this family and their chief need, his mind goes to our need for strength. He has already referred to his desire that the church "faint not at my tribulations" (3:13). To that end, he prays that the Father "would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (v. 16). In other words, we do not have strength from ourselves and we cannot give it to ourselves. We need God to "grant" us "to be strengthened." And this need for strength is not in the first place to fight discouragement or fight the various enemies of our soul, though that certainly is necessary (see Eph. 6:10-18).

We miss a very comforting and fortifying truth if we fail to see that Paul prays that believers be "strengthened ... that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. 3:17). In other words, we need strength in order to know all Christ is and has for believers through His indwelling presence and power in their hearts. Paul is speaking here of true union and communion with Christ in our lives. We need more than Christ's name on our lips and doctrine in our minds. We need fellowship with Christ in our hearts.

We miss a very comforting and fortifying truth if we fail to see that Paul prays that believers be "strengthened ... that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. 3:17). In other words, we need strength in order to know all Christ is and has for believers through His indwelling presence and power in their hearts. Paul is speaking here of true union and communion with Christ in our lives.

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What a miracle it is that Christ dwells in hearts of sinners. By His Spirit, He takes up His abode there and does His work of cleansing, illuminating, mortifying, quickening, guiding, comforting, instructing, and so much more, all by faith. This is not some extraordinary experience for some Christians beyond faith. No, all believers have the Spirit of Christ and have Christ through the Spirit indwelling them. "Faith," Calvin says, "is not a distant view, but a warm embrace, by which he dwells with us, and we are filled with the divine Spirit."

Yet we do need to be strengthened to know and live out of that indwelling. For that grace Paul prays. This is so very different than the methods, programs, practices, and rituals that people try to impose in their lives. All these things bring bondage, but Christ in us is the hope of glory. Do we know something of this strengthening work of the Father, the indwelling presence of the Son, and the rooting and grounding work of the Spirit?

Dimensions of the Love of Christ

Having set forth the indwelling presence of Christ as something we so need, Paul shows how overwhelmingly magnificent Christ's love is. He had already made clear that we need to be strengthened to know it (Eph. 3:16). We do not have from ourselves what it takes to know the love of Christ. We need to be strengthened by Another to know it. If we were not upheld by the divine hand, we would be utterly consumed. Think only of what happened to the apostle John, when he saw Christ on the island of Patmos: "I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last" (Rev. 1:17).

Paul, however, shows more of the weight of glory when he unfolds this love in the next verses (Eph. 3:16-19). He does so first of all by indicating the four dimensions of that love: the breadth, length, depth, and height (Eph. 3:18). Paul does not necessarily have anything specific in mind with each of these dimensions other than to imply that we can never scale its height, never plumb its depths, or reach the limits of its width. The love of Christ is a whole universe by itself.

When we confess our faith in public worship with the church of all times and places, we should know ourselves bound to a family of God that is partly in heaven already and partly still on the earth.

Paul verifies that this is his meaning when he explicitly says that to know the love of Christ is something that "passeth knowledge" (v. 19). His love is simply beyond us. It is not just beyond each believer personally, but beyond all believers together. In fact, we need each other to comprehend even some of these dimensions of this divine love.

With All the Saints

When we confess our faith in public worship with the church of all times and places, we should know ourselves bound to a family of God that is partly in heaven already and partly still on the earth. This family is the object of the

love of God in Christ. They receive their name from the Father, and among them His glory is known and His love experienced. That love is needed to live and endure tribulations. As with human families, being bound together and having love for each other helps give solidity in the midst of turmoil, so too spiritually. No wonder Paul speaks of "being rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:17). The trials God sends our way serve to give more solidity in the soil of divine love.

Through them, we learn to lean less on self and more on the unconditional love of the Lord, which is revealed in the gospel of Christ crucified. It was there before the world began and will last far beyond whatever end this world will know. It has indeed no beginning nor end, no limits at all. Ask a sister who has gone toward the deep places of trouble and experience. She might not know it in the moment, but afterwards, she will testify: "In love, He afflicted me." Ask a brother what reached past him when he strayed far from the fold, even if you have not gone that far. He will tell you something of the breadth of the love of God that brought him back.

Are you part of this great family? If we are not here on earth, we won't be in heaven. The gospel of free grace is based on the love of God in Christ for sinners. This ought to break our hearts and make us small before a great God, who has found a way in His wisdom to love a loveless and unlovable people, sinners. Do we seek to know what is unknowable "with all the saints?" The dimensions of this world are too small, and the span of time too small. It will take an eternity. As Calvin says:

The love of Christ is held out to us as the subject which ought to occupy our daily and nightly meditations, and in which we ought to be wholly plunged. He who is in possession of this alone has enough. Beyond it there is nothing solid, nothing useful, - nothing, in short, that is proper or sound. Though you survey the heaven and earth and sea, you will never go beyond this without overstepping the lawful boundary of wisdom.

Endnotes

1. Sinclair Ferguson, *Let's Study Ephesians* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 73.

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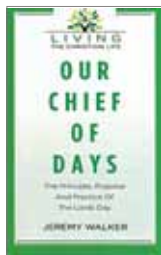
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WAVES OF EXODUS 8: PETER'S EXODUS FROM PRISON

READ: ACTS 12:1-25

The Book of Acts tells us about Christ's work from heaven, applying His redemption to all the nations of the world. By the preaching of the Word and the power of the Spirit, Christ's redemptive grace changes lives from the service of sin and Satan to the service of Christ. The apostles of Christ call nations to turn from idols and bow before Him (see e.g., Acts 17:30-31). Redeemed from the slavery of sin and death, many people turn to God and serve Him with joy and gladness.

The way that Luke unfolds his narrative reminds us in many ways of the Exodus pattern, which we have been studying. Though there is no Passover sacrifice, the message of Christ's one sacrifice sets people free. Though no armies are defeated and drowned, Satan cannot deceive and keep down the nations like he used to. Though there is no literal building of a temple, there is a spiritual house being built up to the praise of God the Redeemer.

There are other similarities as well. Just as Moses and Aaron spoke the Word of God to Pharaoh, so the apostles witnessed boldly the Word of God to the rulers of their time. Just as Moses did signs and wonders through the Word of God, the apostles too did many miracles showing the power of God. Just as the Lord Himself protected the nation as they travelled through the wilderness, so the Lord watched over His church and people.

One of the times that God so extraordinarily protected and freed one of His servants was the time when Herod was set to kill Peter, but God miraculously allowed him to go free, and interestingly, it was at the time of the Passover ("Easter"), recalling the first Exodus (Acts 12:4).

Peter Bound in Chains

From the start, the narrative echoes Israel's suffering under Pharaoh, though this time the enemy's name is Herod. He was stretching "forth his hands to vex certain of the church" (12:1). In verse 2, we read that the first thing that Herod did was to kill James, the brother of John. For James, deliverance did not come through a prison break, but rather through entrance into glory (Matt. 10:25-39). When Herod saw that what he had done seemed to please the people, he went after Peter as well, imprisoning him and planning to kill him after the feast of unleavened bread (Acts 12:3). Four quaternions (4 times 4, so 16) soldiers were appointed to guard Peter, obviously quite the prized prisoner. He lay chained between two guards, and behind multiple doors and gates, securely locked away. If Peter would escape, the soldiers would pay with their lives (Acts 12:19). You can be sure that they would watch this prisoner to the utmost of their power.

In the meantime, the church was praying without ceasing (12:5). They realized that their weapons are not "carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Cor. 10:4). Likely, they had prayed for James as well. With James, the Lord answered their prayers, but not by delivering him from death. With Peter, He would. God does whatever He will

in the army of heaven and on the earth (Dan. 4:35). Peter must have felt that conviction that whether he lived or died, all was in the Lord's will and under His control. We read of him sleeping peacefully in prison between his two guards, on the very night before Herod was to have him executed (Acts 12:6).

Peter Delivered by the Lord

During what Herod wanted to be Peter's last night on the earth, suddenly, in the darkness and stillness of the night, an angel entered the cell where Peter was lying. Angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:13). What a wonderful errand this angel was given! The brightness of heavenly glory enlightens Peter's cell, but Peter was still so fast asleep that the angel had to hit him on his side to wake him (Acts 12:7). The angel commanded him to put on his clothes and shoes. As he obeys the angel's command, the chains slip off Peter's hands. The puritan commentator Matthew Poole writes: "Chains will not hold any whom God will have free." Without disturbing the guards, whom the Lord was undoubtedly keeping asleep, Peter dressed himself and followed the angel. Scholars think that Peter had been placed in the innermost dungeon, because once he left his cell, he probably went through two other guarded areas with doors, before finally arriving at a massive iron gate, on the other side of which was freedom.

Peter thought he was having a vision (v. 9-10). Perhaps he thought that God was giving him this special vision because the next day, it looked like he was to be freed from the prison of this world to be with God in heaven. But it wasn't a dream. It was reality. Something remarkable happened when he came to the last iron gate. It opened of itself! Peter must have been astonished to find himself walking through it and suddenly entering freedom in the streets of the city. As he did so, the angel suddenly disappeared, his work having now been completed.

We read first of Peter's thoughts. "I know of a surety, that the LORD hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews" (Acts 12:11). Do you see how the Lord is first on Peter's mind? His first thought was not: What shall I do? Where do I go? What's next for me? No, first, all praise and honor went to God.

Next, we read of Peter's actions. Peter went to the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, that is John Mark. He wanted to be with God's people (Acts 12:12). They were his family, his brothers and sisters spiritually. Only they would understand what

had just happened to him and they would have been concerned about him. Peter was eager to tell them the great things that God had done for him!

What great things the Lord does for all His people and all His servants. He is a glorious and gracious Deliverer of them all. No chains are too heavy and no situation is too impossible for the Lord. He saved from the grip of Herod. He can save from the grip of sin and Satan. He can save from darkness, deceit, and death. No dungeon is too deep, no iron gate too heavy, no tyrant too terrible. God is mighty to deliver from them all. As Psalm 68 proclaims:

He hears the needy when they cry;
He saves their souls when death draws nigh.
This God is our salvation."

All sorts of chains can bind us spiritually, emotionally, and mentally. There is the chain of unbelief and discouragement. There are addictions that have led people into deep, dark prisons. Can the Lord, who redeemed millions of Israelites from the harsh and cruel bondage of slavery in Egypt, not deliver still today? God's Word says: "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Heb. 7:25).

What happened to Peter was on the eve of the Passover (translated "Easter" in the AV). Many believe that it was Herod's intention to bring Peter before the people to be killed on the day after the Passover. The plan would have been to duplicate the execution of Jesus, who was tried the night of the Passover and killed on the following day. Herod was probably hoping this would impress the people. Yet Herod forgot that some time before, also just after Passover, Christ had burst the bonds of death and was raised to immortal life.

If you are enslaved, don't wait for an angel, but look to the gospel as God's message. It is better than an angel. It is God's own voice which speaks to you. He alone can break your bonds through His Word, applied by the Holy Spirit. Don't wait till you are delivered before you obey the Lord. If Peter had asked the Lord to do everything, including opening every door, before he would get up and walk, he would have been a disobedient fool. The doors didn't open until he got up and obeyed step by step. The chains fell off when he obeyed. The doors open when he obeyed. That's also true in the life of grace.

The Lord Saved Above Expectation

The name Rhoda, which means Rose, has come down through Biblical history for the woman who left Peter standing outside (Acts 12:13). I think many of us have a negative impression of Rhoda,

QUESTIONS

- 01** Explain how this event happened in connection with the Passover. What message was Herod probably trying to send and what was God's message through Peter's remarkable deliverance?
- 02** What sorts of chains can the Lord break today? Think of physical, spiritual, and other chains. What similarities are there with what Peter experienced here?
- 03** How is Rhoda a good example to us? In what ways can we follow her example?
- 04** In what way are unbelievers often "better" in expectation than believers?
- 05** What does this passage teach us about the unbeliever's vain expectation and the believer's true hope?

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved"

Romans 10:1

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BIBLE STUDY *Continued...*

thinking her rather foolish for leaving Peter standing before the door. It is interesting to note that the iron door opened on its own in front of Peter as he left prison, while the door into this church meeting remained closed for a while as Peter knocked on it.

Yet when we look carefully at the text, we can conclude that Rhoda was an impressive example in a few different ways. First, it was courageous of her to go to the door in the middle of the night. James had been rounded up and killed, and as far as Rhoda knew, Peter was in the innermost prison. No doubt, the authorities were on the look-out for other Christians and Mary's house was probably known as a meeting place for Christians. The fact that Peter didn't stay there long probably proves this.

Secondly, Rhoda immediately believed that it was Peter when she heard his voice. She didn't become superstitious or try to understand how Peter could be there when he was supposed to be in prison. She believed what she heard, rather than doubting that the church's prayers could have been answered. Believing, she ran to report to the others that Peter was at the door.

Thirdly, she clung to her assurance that it was Peter at the door, even when the others tried to tell her it was impossible and she was mad. Others assumed it must be Peter's spirit at the door. But Rhoda knew differently.

This passage teaches us something about expectation. The God of the Exodus works above and beyond expectation. In verse 11, Peter said: "Now I know that of a surety, the Lord has sent his angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people." In other words, Herod and the people expected the demise of Peter – that he would be a man of history this 15th of Nisan, just like Jesus was. Those without God are quite firm in their expectation ... and very wrong. Take Herod specifically: It was Herod's plan to end Peter's life, but Herod's own life would soon come to an end (Acts 12:23). However, the righteous are safe, though they may struggle and have their expectation attacked many times.

What is your expectation? Think back to Peter. When he was being delivered, he thought it was a dream. It was too good to be true. Yet, God was doing it! Many people whom the Lord is delivering from bondage, like Peter, don't know quite what is happening to them. It feels as if they are dreaming. Yet, if we are believers, we should expect great things from the Lord. After all, He is the God of the Exodus. He is the God of wonders. **11**

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Many are the plans and desires of a man's heart. As believers and church-going people, we desire to belong and be united to Christ and live in unity with each other. There are many moments and times in the life of the church when occasions and events draw and strengthen the congregation together.

Lacombe FRC was truly blessed to be able to purchase their own church building in the year 2019. After being organized and installed as a church for the past 15 years, the Lord made it possible for us to purchase a church building of our own. A United Church about 10 kilometers south of Lacombe in Blackfalds, Alberta came up for sale. After much prayer, searching, and encouragement, the possibility became a reality. The church measured 55 feet wide and 100 feet long. The church was being sold for \$700,000, and we bought it for \$550,000.

Ephesians 3:20 says *"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask our think, according to the power that worketh in us."* Every congregation desires and longs to have a house, tabernacle or temple in which to worship. We can say that the Lord has provided; the Lord has seen our hearts' desire.



It is most beautiful to see that it is all in God's timing. What a blessing to have a beautiful church building where we can gather to see the beauty of the Lord, to inquire in His temple. One thing have I desired, one thing have we delighted in. Our heart's desire and prayer to God was that we might have a church to call our own and surely God has granted our heart's desire. The Lord has granted us a place to enjoy, to fellowship with God, and rest in God – a true habitation of the Lord. As we frequent this house below, may we be made noble servants of His house above!

Our church building is in Blackfalds, Alberta. Our building is all one level, wheel-chair accessible. It has been well planned for our members, suitable and financially feasible. It still seems so unreal to call it our own place of worship.

Now to God who does exceedingly great things in us and for us, we pray that we may have a shepherd to lead many sheep to that place and fill it to overflowing. 🙏

Mr. Clayton De Groot is an elder of the Cornerstone Free Reformed Church of Blackfalds, Alberta.

INTERVIEW WITH BROTHER JUNHO HWANG

Brother Junho Hwang is doing some translation work into Korean for us as a federation via the Outreach Committee. This interview with him, based on questions given by the secretary of the Outreach Committee, is intended to help us gain better acquaintance of brother Hwang, and more awareness and appreciation of the work he is doing. Please pray for this brother and God's blessings on his labors. — *Pastor Hans Overduin*



1. Please tell us about your background, coming to faith, family, and where you live and attend church, etc...

I am living in Surrey, BC, with my wife Irene and three children, Samuel (7), Daniel (4), and Grace (1.5). We worship the Lord with brothers and sisters in Langley FRC. I was raised in a non-Christian family. The Lord opened my eyes while I read Bunyan's *Acceptable Sacrifice* in my twenties. My whole man changed. The science I loved lost its attraction before the beauty of Christ. My pilgrimage to Heaven started with the sweet communion of first love

with Him. In 2007, I came to Canada to study. There we belonged to a church of Reformed persuasion and had a blessed church life. But my wife and I found the Lord is leading us in experiential faith. Our hearts were attracted to Puritan works. We joined the FRC three years ago for spiritual food. I count it a great blessing that in the FRC I have met brothers whose faith and life is the realization of sermons I heard and read before.

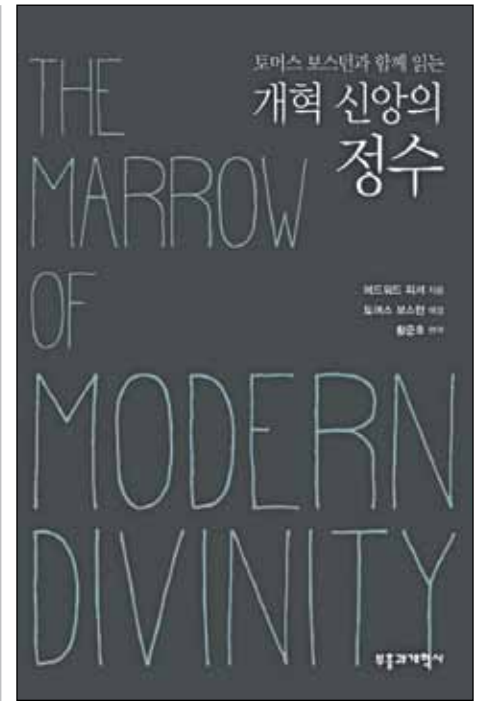
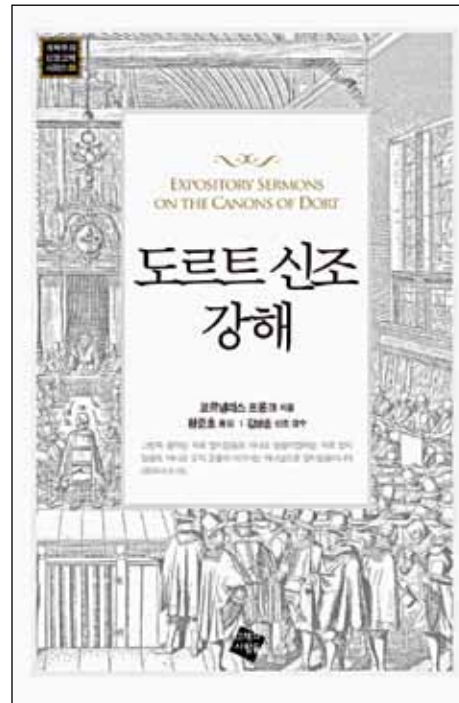
2. What led you to become interested, and feel compelled even, to do some translation work?

Since my conversion, the Lord blessed me much through Reformed literature in English. In Korea, there has been increasing interest in Reformed theology and many struggles to establish Reformed churches. I hoped my translations would be helpful to them.

In 2009, I saw that Federal Vision theology was spreading in Korea as the right Reformed covenant theology. People were confused or deceived. I felt a need to inform Korean brothers of the truth and began to translate English materials which defend Reformed teachings and refute Federal Vision. I have posted them on my blog.

I was edified much by listening to Rev. Pronk's sermons, especially those on the Canons of Dort from sermonaudio.com. I felt that they must be introduced to Koreans. Later, I met a church which became vacant after being troubled by Arminian and legalistic teachings. They needed divine cordials for comfort and firm establishment in truth. I first suggested Calvin's sermons on Ephesians for their elders' reading sermons, but the congregation had difficulty with its old style. So, I began to translate Rev. Pronk's sermons on the Canons for them. Later it was published and the Lord abundantly blessed Korean Christians using it. Five thousand copies were sold and 122 reviews in online Christian bookstores are full of God-praising and humbling testimonies of the Lord's gracious works on their souls.

3. Can you name some of the works you translated so far?



Another published work is *Marrow of Modern Divinity* by Edward Fisher and Thomas Boston. This gem in experiential faith has a good balance between looking unto Christ and self-examination. While the free-offer was introduced to Korea through the sermons on the Canons of Dort, I felt a need to further promote it. We need to listen to God’s call to come unto Him every day.

There is a Korean booklet called *The Gospel*. The Langley congregation has had Korean visitors. But most of them quickly left the church after the benediction. Maybe English was a barrier. So, I translated some radio messages of Rev. Pronk which represent our faith well. Originally, they were printed on individual sheets of paper, but brothers in Langley suggested and supported printing them in a booklet form for better distribution. It was used in distribution to the Vancouver community at Missions Fest and has sold well in Korea with encouraging feedback.

I have also translated with the support of the FRC *The Heidelberg Catechism in Simplified Questions & Answers*, and radio messages on *The Beatitudes*. Now I am working on the series on *Hosea* and one-page Evangelism tracts.

4. When Synod 2019 approved that you do some translation work, they clearly had in mind that your work might be helpful in view of the new field of labor with home missionary, Rev. Young Jae Lee, and Urban Missions in the New Jersey/New York area. How do you think some of your translated works might be useful in that setting?

I first want to show my deep appreciation to FRC brothers and sisters for supporting my works with their prayers. The Word of God must be in the center of mission works. Suitably chosen and well-translated materials can be good tools for spreading the Word and building up the church. Our denomination is blessed with Rev. Lee who is a bold missionary spreading the Word, serving on the ground. I hope the Lord uses my gift in His mission work through him. In the mission field there are three kinds of people: unbelievers, unregenerate churchgoers, and regenerate souls hungering for spiritual food. Unbelievers or weak believers need simple but powerful Gospel messages. I think short Evangelism tracts and evangelical messages from the Banner of Truth Radiobroadcast could help them. For those who want to grow more in grace, *Marrow of Modern Divinity* and *Expository Sermons on the Canons of Dort* could be helpful. *Hosea* and *The Beatitudes* could be suitable for a group Bible study. I love to receive requests for materials needed in the mission front line. As it is hard to find Reformed materials that are accurately translated and faithful both with explaining and applying God’s Word, I hope my translation work would be useful in spreading the Christian deposit of faith; “that good thing” (II Tim. 1:14), which also the FRCNA cherishes and loves to hear and proclaim to others.

5. What are some challenges in translation work?

The challenges are small compared to the benefits. Translating a book helps me to have a better understanding of it. The basic challenge is to make the translation readable.

Nutritious foods need to be well cooked for easy swallowing. Thankfully, the Lord provided me able and godly Korean brothers who review and refine my translations. A translator should know both the source and target languages well, along with translation techniques. But I think the most important factor is understanding the material. For me, comprehensive knowledge of Reformed doctrine, experiential faith, confessions and catechisms, and Bible passages are crucial for this work. Brothers in Langley FRC are a great blessing to me as I learn important lessons of experiential Reformed faith from conversations with them which I couldn't learn from books.

6. How do we avoid stockpiles of translated materials and not distributing them where they're needed?

This is being further investigated with others on the Outreach Committee. Ideally, I and some friends are praying for the opportunity to start a new Korean publisher, specialized in materials from the FRC and materials reflecting the experiential Reformed faith. Publication through an already established publisher seems easier, but I have

found it can cause changes of contents by editing and loss of the right to preserve the faith we cherish.

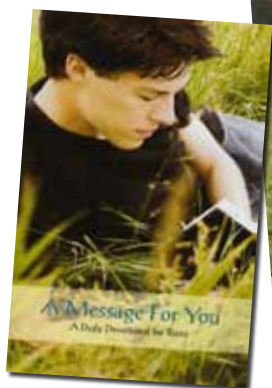
7. In your last report to the Outreach Committee of our denomination, about some of your translation work to date, you wrote at the end the following paragraph:

“Following about 12 years of experiences with Christian people in the Vancouver area, I, as well as other Korean pastors here, have learned that when we try to promote the Reformed faith in the Korean community in North America, it seems wise to approach people with common Christian ground rather than Reformed distinctives (unless people first came to us asking for Reformed teaching). Ministries that emphasized Westminster Confession/Catechisms, Psalm singing and our differences with general evangelical churches all failed here. People misunderstood those as not orthodox because they are different from current Korean churches' custom. So, they closed their mind. A message with a gracious reality of Reformed faith is more powerful and necessary than emphasizing the label of “Reformed.” Real Christian experiences (according to Reformed truth) seems a good point of contact. For this

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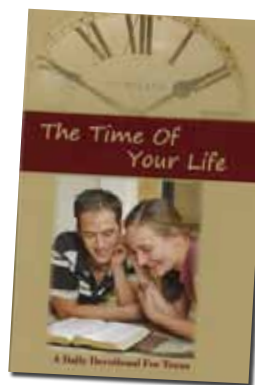
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reason, I thought Rev. Pronk's Banner of Truth messages fit for the evangelism toward unbelievers as well as for the edification of believers. Those messages are easy to read and contain essential and deep Christian truths which man need to learn experimentally through all his life. Their warmth also attracts people...."

I am also learning that a close relationship with God is important in evangelism. The closer fellowship we have with Christ, the more love for lost souls will be given to us.

8. What further counsel would you give in connection with evangelizing those around us?

We can deliver Reformed faith without using Reformed terminologies. For example, we can speak about the unconditional and eternal love, grace, power, and faithfulness of God to unworthy, poor, and helpless sinners summarized in TULIP without using the term "election." If we meditate on the Word expounded in the Reformed faith so that the Word be engraved in our soul, then we may be able to testify of Jesus more fully to neighbors. I am afraid that emphasis on the label of a Reformed church would attract those who seek a religious form of self-righteousness. I hope people could see that we hold to Reformed faith because we want to know God's love toward us in Christ and experience the power of the Holy Spirit in applying Christ's death and resurrection to us.

I am also learning that a close relationship with God is important in evangelism. The closer fellowship we have with Christ, the more love for lost souls will be given to us. We will be praying for and reaching out to them, and more earnestly seek the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. Sometimes, the simple confession of brothers and sisters about what the Lord has done to them has a deep impact on my soul. If we count the blessings God has bestowed on us, yes, Christ and all His benefits (Eph. 1:3), then we will be filled with love and thanksgiving to God (I Pet 3:15). If we meditate on His promises, our heart will be enlarged with joy and hope enduring hardships. People around us will see new life in us and may be drawn to God by His grace. However, I am not saying our experience and godly life is more effective than the Word of God, nor saying we can't evangelize without feeling a close relationship with God. I think II Timothy 4:2 also applies to our evangelism. Finally, when our evangelism is fruitful, we will be encouraged. When it seems unfruitful, we learn how blessed we are to receive such a rare grace of regeneration by His almighty power, and wait for Him to harvest in His time (Isa 55:11).

Mr. Junho Hwang is a member of the Langley Free Reformed Church and involved in translating materials into Korean, a help to Rev. Young Jae Lee's Urban Outreach ministry.

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BIBLE STUDIES FOR WOMEN

Romans; Ezra and Nehemiah; 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude; Judges and Ruth; Revelation – Bible Studies by Sarah Ivill, published by Reformation Heritage Books and P & R Publishing.

Seeing Jesus In Exodus, Leviticus, & Deuteronomy; Seeing Jesus In Genesis; Seeing Jesus In The Historical Books, Seeing Jesus In The Psalms & Wisdom Books, Seeing Jesus In The Prophets by Nancy Guthrie, published by Crossway.

Really? A women's Bible study on Romans, on Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy? For women? Yes. I'll explain why.

Since the secular feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s, Christian women of all backgrounds have written on topics specifically geared to women. Radio and TV programs featured talented, beautiful, and well-dressed women, who created a huge following, many of them also reaping huge financial benefits. As more women, also in Reformed circles, felt challenged and studied the Scriptures to discover and define their traditional position in the family, at home, in society, and in the church, increasing numbers of Bible and topical studies with discussion questions became available. Often, perhaps unintentionally, these concentrate on women's desire to be valued in a world that sees women's worth according to successful achievements and careers.

Typical of many women's Bible and topical studies that became available is their emphasis on meeting the emotional and visual needs of feminine nature.¹ Some of these studies are quite good in many respects and some are not so good because the material and discussion questions often tend to focus on self. They also reflect the authors' doctrinal positions and lifestyles. Part of this movement includes massive women's conferences, widely advertised, featuring popular and gifted women speakers. Some are good and some not so good. The appeal of a large audience comprised of women is intend-

ed to give them a spiritual lift, and seemingly this is successful. Who would not be moved and motivated to see and hear wheel-chair bound Joni Eareckson Tada (who cannot even blow her own nose), give her testimony giving glory to God?

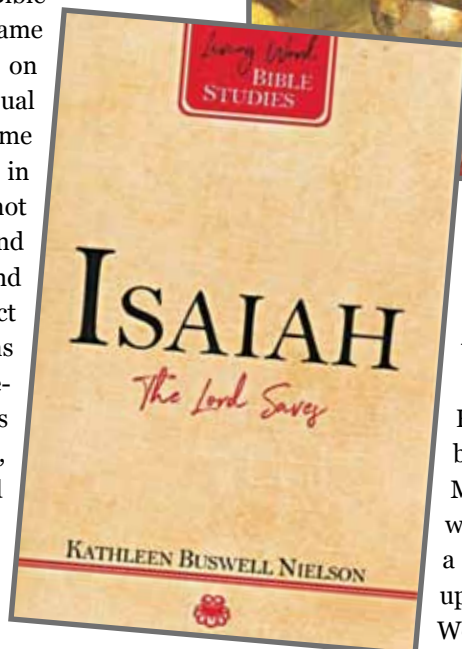
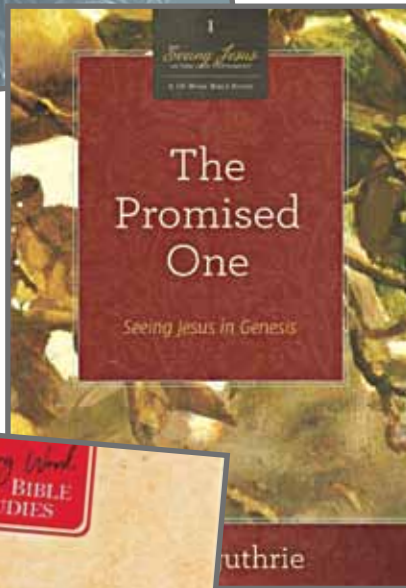
In their Bible studies at church, women tried to follow up by choosing similar topics and Bible studies. I don't mean to say that it was wrong to use some of these studies, for they meet a need, especially for the younger moms looking for support and affirmation in their biblical roles as wives and mothers. They also fill the need to fellowship with like-minded women. Usually

nursery care for young children is provided. These ladies' Bible study fellowships can be a highlight for the "stay-at-home-moms," but also for the older ladies seeking fellowship and more biblical insight.

Functioning under the oversight of an experienced and knowledgeable consistency and with the presence of mature women,² these meetings serve as an antidote in a culture where it is almost a sin against the environment to have more than two or three children and women everywhere claim their "rights" in society, the workplace, and in churches.

The better Christian women's studies and conferences are Bible-based and evangelical, howbeit, they often reflect a culture and atmosphere which is less than confessionally Reformed. Thankfully, the last few years have witnessed changes for the better.

Recent Bible studies by Sarah Ivill, Nancy Guthrie, Kathleen Nielson, and books on women's topics by Elisabeth Elliott, Susan Hunt, Starr Meade, Simonetta Carr, Mary Beeke, Christine Farenhorst, Rebecca VanDoodewaard, and others have a different twist. They represent a newer, well-versed, well-educated cadre of women who uphold a confessional Reformed standpoint of Scripture. Working under the oversight of conservative Reformed and



Presbyterian churches (and husbands?), they know the Bible and Reformed doctrines and on the whole, indicate a lifestyle becoming “reformed” women.³

A question: Do ladies’ groups necessarily have to use studies by women? When the woman author uses examples, it does seem more relevant, and the Bible studies mentioned above do this. But why limit ourselves when we have good Bible studies by our own Free Reformed Publications?⁴ What about studying classics such as John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* or *Holy War*? Some Bible studies come with DVD speaker presentations on a variety of topics with discussion questions. The DVDs from Ligonier Ministries and other resources are excellent and I have seen them in church libraries — hardly used.

So, let’s be discerning about what we study (there are good books on how to be a “discerning Christian”).⁵ This is especially necessary today when there are women in conservative Reformed and Presbyterian circles who *say* they want to uphold the biblical doctrines of male headship, but are making a plea for gifted, smart, and highly educated women as they are, to preach in worship services as long as they are under the supervision of an ordained pastor. Similarly, a more tolerant view of traditional sexuality is being introduced.


Let us take heed to the words of the Lord Jesus on the day of resurrection when He addressed “the eleven gathered together, and those that were with them” (no doubt including the women who followed Jesus [Luke 24:33; cf. Acts 1:13-14]). In the final analysis, all Bible studies should focus on Scripture and the salvation Christ earned for sinners. Let us listen to His admonition: “*These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me*” (Luke 24:44; cf. Luke 24:27). Let that be our aim when we prayerfully consider what to study in our church’s women’s (and youth and men’s) groups.⁶ ●

Endnotes

- 1 Eve, and not Adam, was approached by the snake in the garden (Gen.3:1-7). Apparently, the devil believed she was more vulnerable than Adam. She saw that the fruit was desirable to the eyes ... and desirable to make one wise.
- 2 See Titus 2:4-5 as a model for older women teaching younger women.
- 3 I confess I am biased and recommend these authors carried by Reformed Book Services in Brantford, which ships Canada-wide, and Reformation Heritage Books, in the U.S.A.
- 4 Check the FRC website: www.frna.org > Publications Catalogue and Order Form.
- 5 *All That’s Good: Receiving the Lost Art of Discernment* by Hanna Anderson and *The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment* by Tim Challies.
- 6 A helpful article is Rachel Jankovic, “Every Woman Needs the Whole Bible” <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/every-woman-needs-the-whole-bible>. She is representative of some of the younger conservative women writers.

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PROCLAMATION AND PRACTICAL MINISTRY.


kerkelijke Berichten
Van de Maatschappij
der Hervormde
Christenen
Oct 11 '20

Free Reformed Historical Centre

“What do I do with these things?”

Contact the Free Reformed Historical Centre

The Centre’s aim is to gather and preserve materials relating to the Dutch roots and North American establishment, development, and ongoing life of our churches. Specific materials are classified as unrestricted access, restricted access (available only to approved persons), and/or time-specified access (available after a specified date).

The Historical Centre is looking for:

- Printed materials from the churches.
- Audio recordings of worship services and speeches.
- Personal materials (letters, diaries, sermon notes, essays, etc).
- Publications from our ‘mother’ churches.
- Pictures of people and events.
- Interviews with ‘founding’ members.

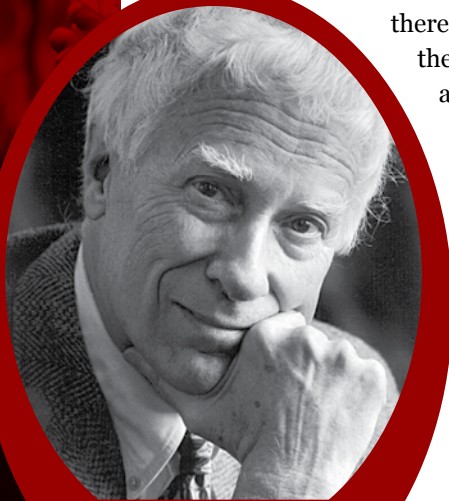
If you or your (grand)parents have any such materials, please contact:

Rev. D. Kranendonk (secretary)
Cell: 226-980-9607 • Email: kranendonk@frna.org

NICHOLAS WOLTERSTORFF:

NORTH AMERICA'S MOST RESPECTED NEO-CALVINIST (1)

In the last three instalments, we dealt with Neo-Calvinism. This movement began in the Netherlands during the late nineteenth century with Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck and spread from there to North America, South Africa, and other parts of the world. Wherever Dutch Reformed immigrants with a Kuyperian background settled, they influenced existing Reformed, Presbyterian and even evangelical churches. Neo-Calvinism first made inroads into Dutch settlements in the USA and later, following the Second World War, in Canada.



**NICHOLAS
WOLTERSTORFF**

Mainly through one of Kuyper's disciples, Herman Dooyeweerd, the so-called *Reformational Worldview* movement became popular in certain sections of the Christian Reformed community in the 1970s and 80s. More recently, neo-Calvinism has had an impact beyond the Christian Reformed Church, especially due to the efforts of men like Albert Wolters, Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff. Especially the last two, Plantinga and Wolterstorff, have earned the respect of the wider academic community for their scholarly contributions to Christian philosophy. However, their scholarly prestige has not come

without a price. Both of these highly-esteemed scholars have moved far beyond Kuyper and Bavinck into a more liberal or neo-orthodox direction as far as their view of the nature and authority of God's Word is concerned.

This trend away from the founding fathers of neo-Calvinism began with Berkouwer, continued with Dooyeweerd, and as we will see now, with Nicholas Wolterstorff who may be regarded as the spokesman for the more progressive wing of neo-Calvinism today.

Biography

Nicholas Wolterstorff was born in 1932 to Dutch emigrants who settled in Minnesota, USA. After earning his BA in philosophy at Calvin College (Grand Rapids, Michigan) in 1953, he entered Harvard University, where he earned his MA and PhD in philosophy. Upon completing his studies in 1956, he spent a year at the University of Cambridge, England, after which he served as an instructor in philosophy at Yale University from 1957 to 1959. He then took the post of Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College where he taught for thirty years. In 2002, he retired from full-time teaching but continues to write and teach at various universities and other venues.

Shalom Neo-Calvinist

Although all neo-Calvinists focus on the creation and its ordinances as the norm or guideline for social and cultural institutions, Wolterstorff concentrates on the importance of peace and justice as the goal to which we must aspire, while working within the present evil conditions of society and culture. His basic premise is that Christians should not be content with the way things *are*, but concentrate on the way things *ought to be* for humanity and creation.

Wolterstorff has written several books and has authored over 150 articles in journals. We will focus on what many believe is his most important book: *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*. This book, comprising a series of lectures delivered at the Free University of Amsterdam in 1981, represents what the author calls “the Reformed/neo-Calvinist tradition at its best.” It is superior to earlier Christian traditions like Medieval Christianity whose dominant character was that of an avertive (socially disengaged or world flight) mentality, whereas original Calvinism was characterized by formative (socially engaged) religion. The sad thing, says Wolterstorff, is that this early activity-oriented Calvinism lost its momentum during its later phase. “As I was growing up in the Reformed tradition,” he writes,

I saw very little of that world-formative impulse so prominent in its origins. For me the tradition represented a certain theology and a certain piety. The piety came through most clearly in the prayers. As I remember them, they were of the structure: ‘We thank you, Lord, for the many blessings you have granted us, and we ask you to remember those less fortunate than we are.’ The attitude communicated was that it was God’s business to take care of the oppressed and deprived of the world; our role was simply to pray that he not neglect to do so... Since then I have learned of the radical origins of the tradition in which I was reared... I hope the words that follow will help to change matters. But in any case, all any of us can do with the traditions in which we locate ourselves is *appropriate* from those traditions what remains of worth as we struggle shoulder to shoulder with other human beings toward a society of justice and peace (p. ix).

Here Wolterstorff is doing what all neo-Calvinist do, namely, criticize what they believe is the pietistic inward-looking mentality that characterized the Secession churches in the Netherlands and America until Kuyper appeared on the scene and taught them to get socially and culturally involved. This criticism has some validity but is often exaggerated and has resulted

in the loss of much that remains of the old Reformed traditions.

World-Avertive vs. World-Formative Views

In contrast with the avertive tradition in which he was raised, Wolterstorff strongly favours all world-formative traditions because they believe that faithfulness to God requires active involvement in society. As an example, he points to the liberation theology movement which emerged within the Catholic Church in revolutionary Latin America during the second half of the twentieth century. This world-formative movement focused on the extreme poverty of the masses and worked for political liberation from rampant injustice—even, if necessary, by violent means. According to Wolterstorff, liberation theology and neo-Calvinism have many similarities because they are both world-formative movements. They are both appalled by the injustices to which many in the world are exposed. Both heard the cries of the victims of injustice for deliverance. Wolterstorff sums up the concerns of the liberation theologians this way:

According to Wolterstorff, liberation theology and neo-Calvinism have many similarities because they are both world-formative movements. They are both appalled by the injustices to which many in the world are exposed.

Let us begin where they begin: with the cries of suffering humanity for deliverance ... whose misery is grounded in the social order... They are especially attuned to the poor, the hungry, the voiceless, the terrorized of the world. And since they live in the Third World, it is the cries of those in that part of our world-system that they hear most clearly... Why are those with whom they identify so wretched when others in the world are so wealthy and powerful? ... They have seen the coming and going of development programs since the Second World War [but] none has alleviated the misery of their people. Their net result has always been greater development for the core areas along with luxury for the oligarchies of the Third World. The benefits of developments do not trickle down to the masses... Liberation theologians declare that the people must be liberated from oppression if they are to be released from their misery and that liberation is their project (p. 45).

Wolterstorff fully agrees with this assessment. He states,

We in the West must let these words sink in. We believe that a bit of economic aid scattered here and there around the globe will get things moving, and we expect those to whom these crumbs are tossed to applaud our largess. But those in the periphery of the world increasingly see us as predators rather than benefactors. That is our sin. We live in a world-system shaped by the practice of treating economic growth as an autonomous and ultimate good... Lib-

eration theologians therefore, are determined to throw off the shackles of oppression of the rich and powerful (p. 45).

Similarities of Liberation Theology and Neo-Calvinism

As a liberation theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez writes, “A broad and deep aspiration for liberation inflames the history of mankind in our day, liberation from all that limits or keeps man from self-fulfillment, liberation from all impediments to the exercise of his freedom (p. 46).

Wolterstorff agrees that freedom from economic and other forms of oppression is greatly desirable, but for Gutierrez it involves far more. Liberation in its comprehensive sense “includes also liberation from

sin – that is, from hostility among men and between man and God ... and sin must not be seen as something in *addition* to social oppression; to the contrary, structures of unjust domination and exploitation are *manifestations* of sin (p. 47).

Wolterstorff sees a strong resemblance between Liberation theology and neo-Calvinism. Although he detects a certain hesitancy in Gutierrez’ reasoning with respect to the link between salvation from sin and liberation from social injustices, Wolterstorff realizes he is on the right track. “If we grant that history is in essence the history of liberation,” he writes, “then we must conclude that Gutierrez is suggesting that the liberation of mankind and the salvation of mankind are not two separate things, but one and the same. Salvation is the total liberation of humanity in all dimensions of its existence, achieved by Christ” (p. 49).

Differences of Liberation Theology and Neo-Calvinism

Although Wolterstorff sees an important affinity between liberation theology and neo-Calvinism, he is also aware of differences. These may be summed up with one question: what does Gutierrez mean by “all dimensions of liberation”? According to neo-Calvinism, man’s essential obligation to his Creator is to be engaged in cultural activity. In Wolterstorff’s words: “God at creation gave to humanity a cultural mandate. The obligation to act culturally, and thereby to set loose the dynamics of history belongs to the very essence of what it is to be human, it is indigenous to our creatureliness... It is the calling of humanity to bring to realization the potentials stored in creation” (p. 55).

This, Wolterstorff says, is where “the neo-Calvinist vision has an advance over that of liberation theology. It was struggling toward the same point but was hindered from attaining it by its acceptance of the contemporary theological dictum that God’s creation is of merely salvific significance” (p. 55).

What are these potentials stored in creation? Wolterstorff is referring to Dooyeweerd’s modal creation ordinances which need to be unearthed so to speak, by man’s cultural activity so

that they may serve as norms for the way we engage in science, art, the state, the church, industry, trade, the school, voluntary organizations, etc. (p. 56)

The Poor Lack Shalom

Only when societies understand and obey these norms or rules will they experience shalom or peace. “Shalom,” Wolterstorff writes, “is both God’s cause in the world and our human calling” (p. 72). It’s “intertwined” with justice but distinct from

it. In shalom, each person enjoys justice, enjoying his or her rights. There is no shalom without justice. But shalom goes beyond justice. Shalom is the human being dwelling at peace in all his or her relationships... But the peace which is

shalom is not merely the absence of hostility, not merely being in right relationship. Shalom at its highest is *enjoyment* in one’s relationships... To dwell in shalom is to enjoy living before God, to enjoy living in one’s physical surroundings, to enjoy living with one’s fellows, to enjoy life with oneself. Because shalom is about right relationships, it’s about ethics and responsibility. But if enjoyment and delight are missing, it’s not shalom (p. 70-71).

Because of their deprivations as social outcasts, the poor are in no position to enjoy the blessings of shalom. The liberation theologians claim that God has a special concern for the poor. Wolterstorff agrees with them and to support this claim he points to a series of passages from the Gospel of Luke (1:46-53; 4:16-21; 6:20-21; 7:18-23), and concludes with this conviction:

If we consider Jesus to be God incarnate, and these teachings from the book of Luke to be God-authorized, as I certainly do, then we cannot but conclude that God has taken sides with the poor... On the other hand, the poor are not romanticized: they are not praised; they are blessed. And, yes, they can turn aside the blessing. Blessing is pronounced on those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. But not all the poor do so (p. 77).

The Poor’s God-Given Rights

Scripture teaches that every human being is made in the image of God, and that is what forms the basis for Wolterstorff’s insistence on affirming the rights of the poor. “I want to say, as emphatically as I can,” he states, “that our concern with poverty is not an issue of generosity but of rights.” Therefore, if we don’t care about the poor, “we are violating the God-given rights of the poor person” (p. 76).

As we near the end of this series of articles, next time we will evaluate Wolterstorff’s theological/philosophical position and its practical consequences. ①

TREASURING PUBLIC WORSHIP

“The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” - **Psalm 87:2**

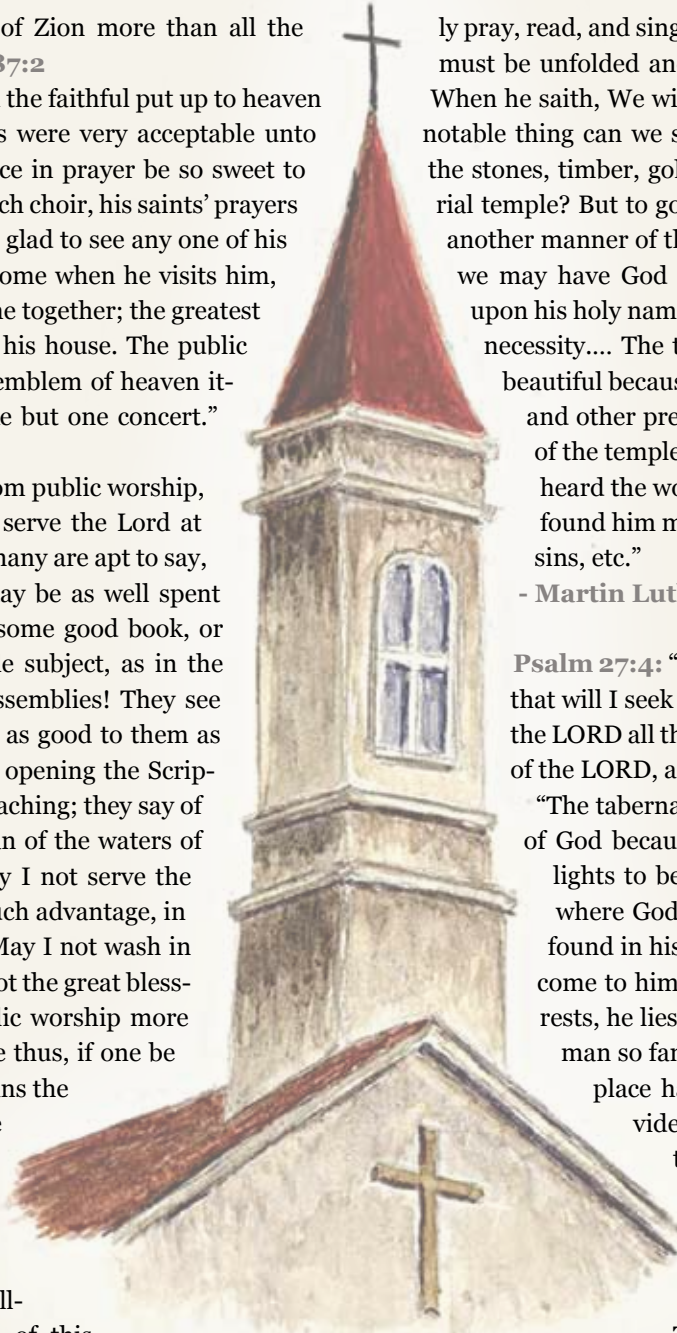
“No doubt the prayers which the faithful put up to heaven from under their private roofs were very acceptable unto him; but if a saint’s single voice in prayer be so sweet to God’s ear, much more the church choir, his saints’ prayers in concert together. A father is glad to see any one of his children, and makes him welcome when he visits him, but much more when they come together; the greatest feast is when they all meet at his house. The public praises of the church are the emblem of heaven itself, where all the angels make but one concert.”

- **William Gurnall**

“Some absent themselves from public worship, under pretence that they can serve the Lord at home as well in private. How many are apt to say, they see not but their time may be as well spent at home, in praying, reading some good book, or discoursing on some profitable subject, as in the use of ordinances in public assemblies! They see not but private prayer may be as good to them as public, or private reading and opening the Scripture as profitable as public preaching; they say of their private duties, as Naaman of the waters of Damascus (2 Kings 5:12): May I not serve the Lord as acceptably, with as much advantage, in private exercises of religion? May I not wash in these and be clean? They see not the great blessings God has annexed to public worship more than to private. Oh, but if it be thus, if one be as good as the other, what means the Lord to prefer one before the other? To what purpose did the Lord choose the gates of Zion, to place his name there, if he might have been worshipped as well in the dwellings of Jacob? How do men of this opinion run counter to the Lord? He prefers the gates of Zion, not only before one or some, but before all the dwellings of Jacob; and they prefer one such dwelling before the gates of Zion.” - **David Clarkson.**

Psalm 122:1 “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.”

“These words seem to be very simple, and to contain in them no great matter; but if you look into the same with spiritual eyes, there appeareth a wonderful great majesty in them; which because our Papists cannot see, they do so coldly and negligent-



ly pray, read, and sing this Psalm.... These words, therefore, must be unfolded and laid before the eyes of the faithful. When he saith, We will go into the house of the Lord, what notable thing can we see in these words, if we only behold the stones, timber, gold, and other ornaments of the material temple? But to go into the house of the Lord signifieth another manner of thing; namely, to come together where we may have God present with us, hear his word, call upon his holy name, and receive help and succour in our necessity.... The temple of Solomon was not therefore beautiful because it was adorned with gold and silver, and other precious ornaments; but the true beauty of the temple was, because in that place the people heard the word of the Lord, called upon his name, found him merciful, giving peace and remission of sins, etc.”

- **Martin Luther.**

Psalm 27:4: “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.”

“The tabernacle, the sanctuary, is called the house of God because he is present there, as a man delights to be present in his house. It is the place where God will be met withal. As a man will be found in his house, and there he will have suitors come to him, where he reveals his secrets. A man rests, he lies, and lodgeth in his house. Where is a man so familiar as in his house? and what other place hath he such care to protect and provide for as his house? and he lays up his treasures and his jewels in his house.

So God lays up all the treasures of grace and comfort in the visible church. In the church he is to be spoken with as a man in his house.

There he gives us sweet meetings; there are mutual, spiritual kisses. “Let him

kiss me with the kisses of his mouth” (Song of Solomon 1:2). A man’s house is his castle, as we say, that he will protect and provide for. God will be sure to protect and provide for his church. Therefore he calls the church of God, that is, the tabernacle (that was the church at that time), the house of God. If we apply it to our times, that answers the tabernacle now is particular visible churches under particular pastors, where the means of salvation are set up. Particular visible churches now are God’s tabernacle.”

- **Richard Sibbes**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

60TH ANNIVERSARY



We rejoice with our parents

HARRY & LINDA SLUYS (NEE KOOPMAN)

as they anticipate the celebration of their **60th Wedding Anniversary** on August 19th, 2020, D.V.

"Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name."
Psalm 63:3-4

With much love from their children:

Bonnie & Brad Tinklenberg

(Crystal, Minnesota)

Debbie & Stuart Brink

(Chatham, Ontario)

Bill and Debbi Sluys

(Chatham, Ontario)

Bob & Michele Sluys

(Fort McMurray, Alberta)

Charlene Sluys

(Chatham, Ontario)

Stacey & Henry Noordam

(St. Thomas, Ontario)

Josh & Fallan Sluys

(Chatham, Ontario)

as well as their many grandchildren and great-grandchildren

Home Address:

10 Heather Drive, Chatham, ON N7M 3E8

40TH ANNIVERSARY



AUGUST 28, 1980 - 2020

"...and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."

Isaiah 62:5b

With great joy and thanksgiving, we announce the **40th Wedding Anniversary** of our dear parents & grandparents.

BERT & JOLANDA BUDDING (NEE ZEGGELAAR)

We pray that the Lord will continue to bless you. With lots of love from all of us,

Bert & Marije Budding

Otterville, ON

Gerjanne & Geoff Otten

Cameron, Asher, Silas, Gianna

Grand Rapids, MI

Erik & Heather Budding

Kaylee, Chloe, Abigail, Savannah

Otterville, ON

Annelies & Leonard Oomen

Lillian, Manoah, Samuel

Tillsonburg, ON

Mailing Address:

773419 County Road 59

Norwich, ON N0J 1P0

thebuddings@hotmail.com

50TH ANNIVERSARY



1970 July 18 2020

'Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder' – Matthew 19:6

With praise and thanksgiving we announce the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents

RON & ELLYANNE SOMMER (VAN ZANDEN)

With love from your children

Heather & Harry DeHaan

Rhonda & John Kroesbergen

Jeff & Maria Sommer

Jenn & Len Brouwer

Greg & Amy Sommer

24 Grandchildren • 12 Great-grandchildren

Mailing Address:

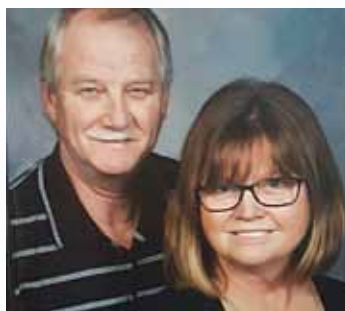
33-655 Park Road North,

Brantford, ON N3R 0A2

SYNOD 2020

Pending the easing of pandemic-related restrictions, Synod will be held **Sept. 8-11 in Hamilton, DV**. The prayer service will be held **Sept 8 at 7:30 p.m.** The deadline for submissions to synod is July 23. All submissions should be sent to Bert Klein, clerk, Emmanuel FRC (bertconsistory@gmail.com).

45TH ANNIVERSARY



Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. John 2:5b

June 6, 1975

Praising and thanking God for **45 years of marriage** to

JOHN & ALICE MAAS

With much love,

Mike & Janice Maas Adam (Tess), Nolan, Dylan, Carter

Paul & Heather Maas Seth, Hailey, Shannon

Steve & Joyce Maas Emily, Luke, Julia, Alivia

Kyle & Mary-Ann Hartman (nee Maas-Schuit)

Alyssa, Jenelle, Benjamin, Zachary



FREE REFORMED ASSOCIATION

PEACE HAVEN, a ministry of Free Reformed deacons, offers you and your family help with disabilities:

- a listening ear
- meaningful day and evening programs
- help accessing church and government resources
- respite or vacation care
- residential care

Margaret Heemskerck, mheemskerck.peacehaven@gmail.com or 519.770.8816

Contact your deacon
or Peace Haven
Director, (SEE BELOW)

OBITUARY

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints."
Psalm 116:15



It pleased the Lord to peacefully take to Himself

KEITH KOKE

at the age of 82 years old, on May 23, 2020. Keith was born in Zwolle, the Netherlands. Keith was the cherished husband of 58 years to the late (2019) **Marty Koke** (Antuma)

Dear son of the late Albert and Jantje Kok (Zonneberg)

A loving father to:

Debbie (Tony), the late (2017) **Cindy (Jeff)** and **Ken (Marg)**.

Treasured Grampa of **Adam, Lydia, Vanessa, Laura (Nick), Rachel (Matt), Michelle (boyfriend Shane), Shane (girlfriend Jess), Myles and Madi**.

A beloved brother to **Jane (Bas)**, the late (2019) **Ed (Cookie)**, and **Marianne (late Dennis)**.

An esteemed brother-in-law to the late **Simon (late Wilma)**, the late **George (Jean), Peter (late Inske), Fred (LeeAnn), Maryke (late Francis)**, the late **Jean (late Jeff), Driek (late Louis)** and **Els (Al)**.

The funeral service was held on **Friday, May 29, 2020**, at the Living Hope Free Reformed Church in Chatham, Ontario with Rev. Tim Bergsma officiating. Internment at Maple Leaf Cemetery.

Funeral can be viewed on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/sh8z-n1lwn8>
And family slide show video: <https://youtu.be/8KWoktBK76Q>

31 Zircon Place, Chatham, Ontario N7M 5Y9

OBITUARY

The Lord in His infinite wisdom took unto Himself our beloved mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, Lydia Jane Van Es (nee Van Holten) on Friday, April 24th, 2020 in her 85th year. She was predeceased by her devoted husband, John Simon, in 2016.

She will be affectionately remembered for her loving and caring ways by her children:

Jeanette (Bill) den Boer - Hamilton, Ontario

Alice (Clarence) Jonkman - Lynden, Ontario

John (Betty) Van Es - Strathroy, Ontario

Lydia (David-deceased) Johnson - London, Ontario

Peter (Julia) Van Es - Brantford, Ontario

Corey Van Es - Kemptonville, Ontario

20 grandchildren and 42 great-grandchildren.

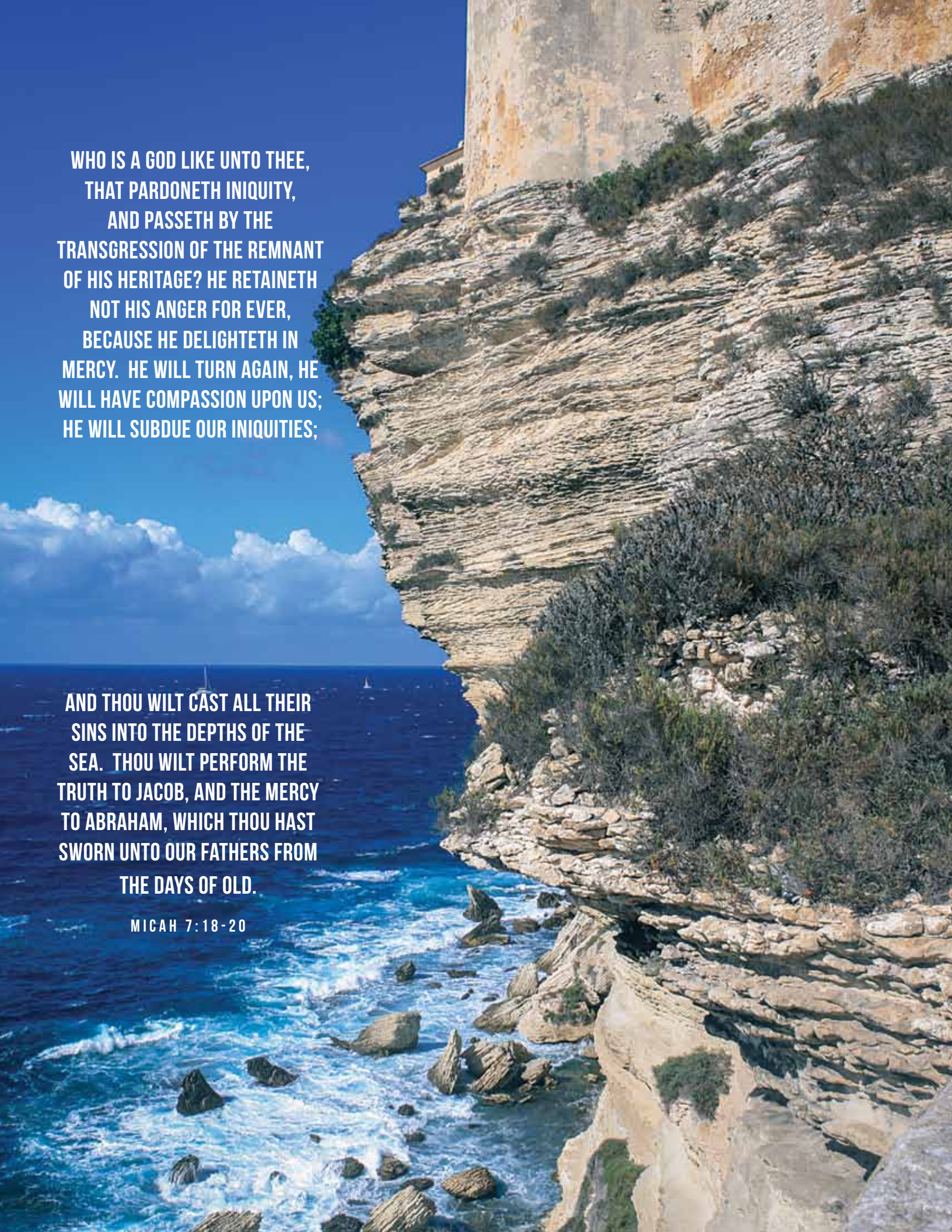
There was a private service at Forest Lawn Funeral Home, London, Ontario, on April 28, 2020, officiated by Rev. H. Bergsma.

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him." Psalm 103: 13

Contact address: Jeanette den Boer, 7 Maitland Avenue, Hamilton, Ontario L9A 3J4



LYDIA JANE VAN ES



**WHO IS A GOD LIKE UNTO THEE,
THAT PARDONETH INIQUITY,
AND PASSETH BY THE
TRANSGRESSION OF THE REMNANT
OF HIS HERITAGE? HE RETAINETH
NOT HIS ANGER FOR EVER,
BECAUSE HE DELIGHTETH IN
MERCY. HE WILL TURN AGAIN, HE
WILL HAVE COMPASSION UPON US;
HE WILL SUBDUE OUR INIQUITIES;**

**AND THOU WILT CAST ALL THEIR
SINS INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE
SEA. THOU WILT PERFORM THE
TRUTH TO JACOB, AND THE MERCY
TO ABRAHAM, WHICH THOU HAST
SWORN UNTO OUR FATHERS FROM
THE DAYS OF OLD.**

MICAH 7:18-20