

VOLUME 71 NUMBER 11 · DECEMBER 2024 EDITION

# THE MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF NORTH AMERICA



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HAS COME

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MUKHANYO'S HUMBLE BEGINNINGS



# “THE TRUE LIGHT HAS COME”

*“That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” John 1:9-12*

As Advent approaches again, we are reminded of the coming of the Lord Jesus. It is a time of hope and joy, when we gather with family and church. But it is also a time for personal reflection and spiritual self-examination. When we think about the seriousness of our sin — the darkness we need to escape — then the grace of God in Jesus, the Light of the world, becomes even more amazing to us.

In the opening verses of his Gospel, John introduces us to the Light. He declares that Christ is the true Light, the One who shines in the darkness, exposing sin and bringing life. Yet, the tragedy is that this Light came into the world, and the world did not know Him. Even those to whom He came — His own people of Israel — did not receive Him. This speaks, doesn't it, of the hardness of the human heart! How often do we not also resist the Light that comes to shine upon us?

## **The Condition of Darkness**

The image of darkness is a vivid and appropriate one when speaking of sin. It conveys more than just ignorance; it speaks of moral corruption, rebellion, and estrangement from God. From the fall of Adam, mankind has dwelt in darkness. Sin blinds us, distorts our understanding of God, and hardens our hearts to the point that, by nature, we do not desire the light, nor can we comprehend it apart from the grace of God.

Isaiah speaks of this condition in his prophecy: “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined” (Isa. 9:2). This is the state of the world into which Christ came — a world enslaved to sin, under the curse of death, and utterly incapable of freeing itself. The darkness in which we once lived is the darkness of spiritual death. It is a darkness that not only surrounds us, but resides within us, affecting every part of our being—our thoughts, our desires, and our will. This darkness renders us spiritually dead and incapable of coming to God on our own.

## The Rejection of the Light

John's Gospel presents a sorrowful reality: "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

Here we see the depth of human sin. Christ, the Creator, enters His creation, but His creation does not recognize Him. The One who gave life and breath to every man is rejected by the very ones He formed in His image. This rejection is not merely an intellectual ignorance, but a willful turning away from the Light. Jesus Himself testifies, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (Jn. 3:19).

This is not an ancient problem alone — it is our problem. Each of us, by nature, resists the Light. We love the darkness. We do not want our sins exposed. We do not want to be told that we are in need of salvation. Even within the Church, how often do we grow comfortable with a superficial faith that allows us to keep our sins hidden? How often do we resist the deeper work of God's Spirit, who desires to shine the light of truth into the recesses of our hearts? Advent calls us to face this uncomfortable reality: we are sinners in need of grace, and, apart from the intervention of Christ, we are lost.

## Receiving the Light

But John's Gospel does not leave us in despair. Verse 12 offers the glorious hope of the Gospel: "But as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

Here is the wonder of God's grace. Though the world did not know Him and His own people rejected Him, there are those who receive Him. How can this be? How can a people who love darkness, who are dead in sin, come to receive the Light of Christ? The answer is found not in us but in God's sovereign grace. It is God who makes the light of the Gospel shine in our hearts. It is God who opens our eyes to see the beauty of Christ, who softens our hearts to receive Him by faith.

This is the heart of Advent. It is a season that not only remembers Christ's first coming but also points us to the grace that flows from His coming. Christ came into the world not simply as a teacher or a healer but as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He came to bear the weight of our sin, to endure the wrath of God in our place, and to bring us into the glorious light of His salvation.

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave he power to become the sons of God." Do we grasp the depth of this gift? We, who were once children of wrath, have been adopted into the family of God through Christ. We have been brought out of darkness and into His marvelous light. We are now heirs of the promises of God, not because of anything we have done, but because of His great mercy.

What does it mean to receive Christ? To receive Him is not merely to acknowledge Him intellectually or to admire His teachings. It is to bow before Him as Lord and Saviour, to recognize that apart from Him, we have no hope. It is to confess that we are sinners in need of redemption and to trust in His finished work on the cross.

Receiving Christ means turning from the darkness and walking in the light. It means allowing the light of God's Word to penetrate our hearts, exposing our sin, and leading us to repentance. It means living daily in the grace that Christ has secured for us, knowing that we are no longer condemned but have been set free to walk in the light of His love.

As we journey through Advent, let us examine our hearts. Are there areas of our lives where we are still clinging to the darkness? Are there sins that we are reluctant to bring into the light of Christ's truth? The true Light has come, and He calls us to walk in His light. May this Advent season be one in which we experience the purifying, transforming grace of God in deeper ways.

**"But as many as received Him, to them He gave he power to become the sons of God." Do we grasp the depth of this gift?**

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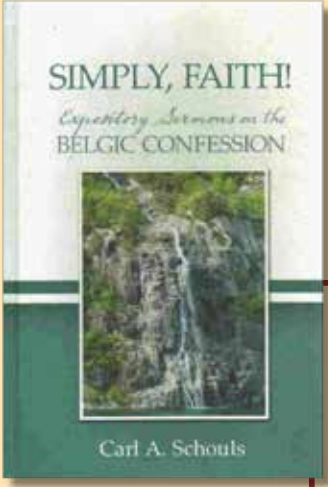
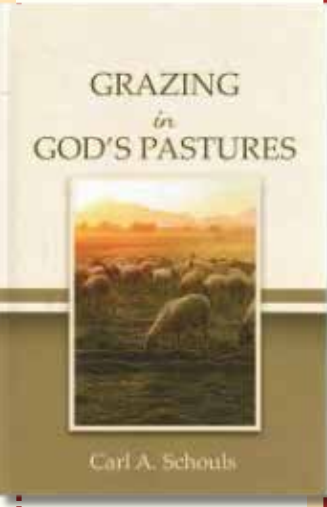
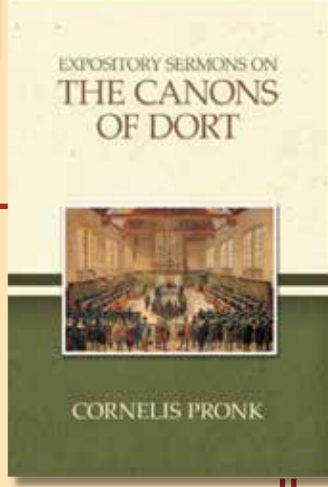
Finally, Advent not only looks back to Christ’s first coming but also looks forward to His return. The Light has come, but we still live in a world where darkness lingers. Sin, suffering, and death are still present realities, but they do not have the final word. Christ will come again, and when He does, all darkness will be banished forever. The Apostle John gives us this glorious vision in Revelation: “And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 22:5).

This is our hope as believers. The light that has dawned in Christ will one day fill the entire cosmos. Every shadow will be dispelled, every tear will be wiped away, and we will dwell in the fullness of God’s glorious presence for all eternity.

As we wait for that day, let us live as children of the light. Let us reflect the light of Christ in our lives, bearing witness to His grace and truth. And let us rejoice in the knowledge that the true Light has come, and He will come again. ①

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Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

2 TIMOTHY 2:15-16



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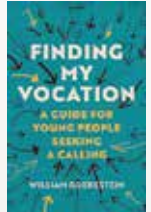
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# THE ONE WHOM GOD ELECTED

Canadian federal elections are rather tame affairs. The campaign period must be between 37 and 51 days prior to election day. The American process is an almost two-year ordeal. No wonder the American election hype spills over into Canada, drawing the attention of many Canadians. I suspect this recent election has captured more of their attention than ever. Whatever attention and interest there may be in Canada is dwarfed by the ability of the election to take America in its tightening, estimated 16-billion-dollar grip leading up to the November 6 election date.

The American presidential election of 2024 is the first I experienced on American soil. For many, it almost took on the role of entertainment, until guns reminded it was deadly serious. Most people seemed to agree that one candidate was the greatest threat to America and the other was the greatest hope for America; only they differed in identifying which candidate played which role. Amid it all, Psalm 146 went through me more than once: “put no confidence in princes, nor for help on man depend. He is dust to dust returning and his purposes shall end” (Psalter 400:2).

In whom then may we trust? God declares in Isaiah 42:1: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.” Many have said the 2024 Election would be decisive for America’s future. But far more fundamental than this election is God’s election of His Servant who lives today.

## His Position

This Elect One is called the LORD’s Servant. A servant serves another in fulfilment of the task given to him by that other. The LORD’s servant does the LORD’s work. He already called Israel His servant (Isa. 41:8), but now the focus narrows. The description of this Servant is so lofty that He must in the first place be the Messiah Himself. Amid all the striving for greatness, what a humbling reminder that the greatest One who ever walked on this earth came as a Servant.

This One is God’s chosen One, His Elect. There was no election campaign. There were no rival candidates for this office. God Himself saw that only One was qualified to be the Messiah who would bring salvation to the ends of the earth. Already before anything was created, God chose His Son to be the Mediator of a people who would be created as His servants and fall so deeply into sin. Whatever candidates people put forward to rule them, God’s choice is made: “Behold, my servant...mine elect.”

This Servant-King would also be anointed and upheld by God. He promised, “I have put my spirit upon him.” His Spirit would fill Him without measure to equip Him to carry out the work His Father gave him to do as a real righteous man.

Is it any wonder that the LORD calls Him “mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth”? God takes such pleasure in His Servant. He

repeatedly declared during his ministry: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” The Lord Jesus could say, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4). God continually sets His delightful choice on him!

Through this text, God calls, “Behold!” Look with delight at the One on whom I look with delight. Many things demand our attention. We should be aware of what is going on in our society and politics. But as the end of Isaiah 41 declares, all other helps are “wind and confusion.” The glory of God’s Servant is incomparable, delightful, and enduring! Here you need not be torn between things you appreciate and dislike about a leader. Just look not only at who He is, but also at what He does.

### His Gentleness

The Servant’s task is introduced in a glorious way (v.1): “he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” We picture a mighty conqueror destroying forces of evil. Verse 2 then gives such an unexpected picture of his character: “he shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.” He is so different from the worldly contestants for power who stir up hype, shout in microphones, and bash others with verbal blows. Sometimes the louder the volume, the less the substance. This Messiah need not put on a show. In three parallel lines, verse 2 shows that he will exude gentleness. He will speak truth with clarity and conviction, knowing there is a greater power in His truth than His enemies’ clamour.

His powerful gentleness will be shown especially to the bruised and broken (v.3): “A bruised reed shall he not break, and a smoking flax shall he not quench.” These are the only specific descriptions of those whom he addresses. Great leaders want to gain power by connecting with and getting endorsements from other great ones. What great leaders have time for the abused, the homeless, the cancer patient, the depressed, or the spiritual sufferer? The Lord Jesus’ attention is especially for the bruised reed and smoking flax.

Reeds growing in marshy areas are weak. If their stem is bruised, they flop right over, ready to be utterly trampled underfoot. Here are ones crushed under forces too great to withstand. Here are the weak and helpless socially, physically, or mentally, and especially those who are spiritually bruised reeds, who have spiritual life and yet are bowed down with burdens of sin and trouble. Smoking flax is a wick that has begun to send off more smoke than clear, cheerful light. Perhaps it is a wick in a lamp that is running out of oil and is about to be utterly extinguished. What a picture of one who has no resources to go on: burned up, dried up, and emptied out, with only the feeblest glow.

This Messiah shows His very greatness in not breaking off the bruised reed. He does not say: This weak one is of no use to me. I want strong supporters! No, He has come to support the helpless and lift up those who are bowed down by sin and need. He will not snuff out the smoking flax in irritation. He tends it, revealing His almighty grace to those whose hope, faith, and love are so flickering that they hardly dare to acknowledge their presence.

This grace of the Messiah makes God delight in Him, for He has sent Him to preach the gospel to the poor and lift up the downcast (Isa. 61:1-3). Does this draw us to Him as well, confessing our burdens, brokenness, weakness, pain, sin, and failure? Oh, to fall into the hands of this gracious and gentle Saviour. Yes, His hands will break idols and snuff out self-confidence, but in that way, they lift up! That is because this gentle Saviour is also so full of power.

### His Power

Verse one already proclaims that He “will bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” Amid all the heathen sin and unrighteousness, this Messiah will shine forth with the brightness of God’s law and judgment, exposing injustice, convicting of sin, defeating enemies, overcoming iniquity, and causing the nations to hear the most amazing judgment: “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isa. 1:18). As the Servant of the Lord, He will secure that salvation and justify many (Isa. 53). He will cause the truth to overcome all the deceits of man and bring many into the true grace of God. As a result, the far-off isles will “wait on his law.” They will desire and hope in His law and whole word.

On the throne, this mighty Mediator “will not fail nor be discouraged.” Broken reeds fear they will

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**SUBMISSIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/NOTICES:** All articles, notices for family announcements, obituaries, anniversaries, and non-commercial advertisements for the **JANUARY 2025** issue should reach the editor no later than **WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4TH, 2024** and should be sent to:  
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This bi-monthly publication for children is under the direction of the Free Reformed Publications Committee:  
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fail, and smoking flax may be discouraged, but not this mighty King. Literally “he will not grow dim and he will not be crushed.” Instead, “The Christ refreshed by living streams shall neither faint nor fail, but he shall be the glorious head exalted over all” (Psalm 110; Psalter 303:3).

His task of accomplishing and applying redemption and ruling over His kingdom is immense. His enemies are powerful. But

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God says, “Behold, my servant!... he shall not fail!” So, put no confidence in princes, but instead, in this glorious king.

**His Reflection**

This One whom God has elected to rule forever is such a contrast to human authorities. The 2024 presidential election selected a man to serve as president. He now has the opportunity to turn his promises and aspirations into realities. He is hard at work making plans, and we may hope a number of them will succeed. But we know his most grandiose promises will fail. He cannot make this a golden age for America, as long as America does not bow the knee for God’s elect King. America’s greatness will one day turn to dust, but Christ’s kingdom can never be moved and has a great, eternal future.

Let us pray earnestly for the new president and all in authority in America, Canada, and elsewhere. Let us pray for God to give them wisdom, strength, integrity, and care. Let us pray God to cause all authorities to bow for the supremacy of this Chosen One of God. Psalm 2 (v.10-12) sings,

Be wise now therefore, O ye kings:  
 Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.  
 Serve the Lord with fear,  
 And rejoice with trembling.  
 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry,  
 And ye perish from the way,  
 When his wrath is kindled but a little.  
 Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

In that way, authorities will begin to reflect something of this Chosen One of God in a love for righteousness and truth, as well as tenderness toward those who suffer.

Whatever our authorities show or do, may our deepest desire be: “Thy kingdom come!” What can be compared to having this King who will never fail as your king and to belong to the most glorious world-wide kingdom which will culminate in a multitude of all nations being gathered before the throne of God? Let us pray that even all that happens in politics would be a means through which God causes His kingdom to come. ①

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# THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM: A TREASURE

**The GOOD NEWS WE ALMOST FORGOT:** Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism by Kevin DeYoung, with foreword by Jerry Bridges. Published by Moody Press. Softcover, 252 pages.

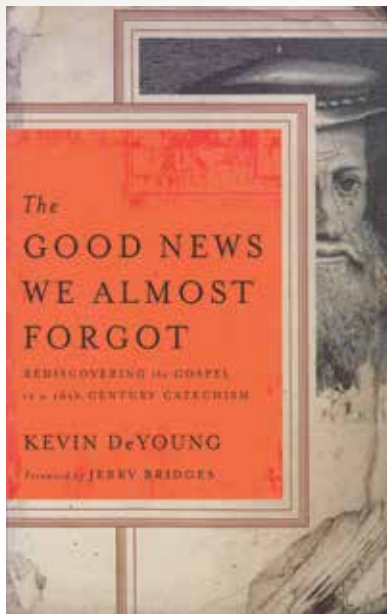
The Heidelberg Catechism a treasure? It's boring," some young people say. "Just more of the same doctrine we already know." "Why not be relevant and just preach the Bible?" some church members tell their pastors, who are committed to Catechism preaching regularly as specified in our Church Order: "At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism, following its sequence (Article 68)."

Kevin DeYoung knows all about younger and older people who talk like that and addresses such persons in his Introduction: "I simply say, 'Come and see' ... whether you've grown up with confessions and catechism or they sound like something from another spiritual planet, I say, 'Come and see.' Come and see Christ in the unlikeliest of places—in a manger, in Nazareth, or even in Heidelberg" (p. 14).

The author wrote this mini-commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism when he was still a minister in the Reformed Church of America, where he learned to know and memorize parts of the Heidelberg Catechism as a youth. He does not think kids have to memorize every Question and Answer. "Nevertheless, I freely confess I love the Heidelberg Catechism. I love it because it's old, it's biblical, and it's true. It's not perfect. It's not infallible. It says too little about some subjects and too much about others. But it is through and through trustworthy and beautiful, simple and deep. Most of all, I love the Heidelberg Catechism because I love the gospel it expounds and the salvation it proclaims" (p. 14).

He learned this as a pastor doing a detailed study of the Catechism and sharing his findings with his congregation through devotionals. The result is this book, in which he enthusiastically, with passion and wit, brings out the treasures of the Catechism. Saddened by those, especially in Reformed traditions, who don't cherish the truths it proclaims, DeYoung is optimistic that the Holy Spirit might work if a new generation of children, students, pastors and Christians will examine it in updated language, which he entitles "The Good News We Almost Forgot."

Beginning where the Catechism begins, he expounds the well-known question: "What is your only comfort in life and in death?" He answers this question the usual way. The only comfort one can have is our need to know that we belong to Jesus and not ourselves. "But it doesn't help much to know all about our comfort and joy if we don't know what is required to live and die in this comfort and joy. Belonging to Jesus and not ourselves means knowing three things: guilt, grace, and gratitude. It is necessary to know all three parts of the Catechism." Following this up in his characteristic pointed way, he explains, "We find this comfort by admitting our sin, instead of excusing it; by trusting in Another instead of ourselves; and by living to give thanks instead of being thanked" (p. 23). Regarding Questions 3 to 5, he explains that "the first thing we need to experience the comfort of the gospel is to be made uncomfortable with our sin... While many people will tell us to stop focusing on sin and to lighten up because we aren't 'bad' people, the Catechism tells us just the opposite. In order to have comfort, we



must first see our sin-induced misery... And that is through the law" (p. 25). Similarly, regarding our corrupt nature, the author faces the readers with the truth of our bad nature. "Our fundamental problem is not bad parents, bad schools, bad friends, or bad circumstances. Our fundamental problem is a bad heart. And every single one of us is born into the world with it" (p. 30).

DeYoung anticipates opposition to such radical truths and allows his opponent to ask questions. But he refutes the questioner head-on with Scripture and life situations. "Trying to live a Jesus-life won't help us get into heaven and it will only discourage us over the long haul if we are not born again... We must be given a new heart. We must be regenerated. We must be converted. We must be changed" (p. 31). Regarding our corrupt nature, he states: "We are born with original sin and original guilt" (p. 35). Anticipating objections, he reasons: "When we minimize God's justice, we do not exalt His mercy, we undermine it. God's mercy exhibits

its full power and sweetness when we see it not merely as a general goodwill to all people, but as the means by which God's people are rescued in Christ, from their just wrath and condemnation" (p. 35).

So far, I have quoted DeYoung on the sin part of the Heidelberg Catechism. That is not his theme. "There is nothing more important in Christian theology than our theology of the cross. We must speak clearly that the heart of the gospel is the good news of divine self-satisfaction through divine self-substitution. Never compromise on the cross. Never dilute the message of the cross. Never stop glorying in the cross where Christ accepted the penalties that should belong to us so that we can claim the blessings that would otherwise belong only to Him" (p. 43).

The Lord's Day on the Apostles' creed, in which believers confess their faith in the Triune God, gets at the heart of the gospel. "With a biblical understanding of the Trinity, we can say that God did not create in order to be loved, but rather, created out of the overflow of the perfect love that had always existed among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who ever live in perfect and mutual relationship and delight" (p. 52). DeYoung is not afraid to show his emotions: "I've been visibly choked up in front of my congregation ... while reading this Lord's Day [28] in preparation for Communion" (p. 138). Still referring to Communion, he states: "I love how pastoral the Catechism is. Those who wrote off catechisms as dry and dusty, as freeze dried dogma, have never read this one. Isn't it comforting to know that the Lord's Table is not for those who smile all the time and have great self-esteem, but for those who are 'displeased with themselves because of their sins' (Answer 81)?" (p. 146).

As someone who has been exposed to the Heidelberg Catechism early in life and regular Catechism preaching, I found it refreshing and delightful how DeYoung consistently stresses the fundamental teaching of the Catechism but adds new perspectives and explanations relating to the culture we live in. Constantly, he emphasizes that, "either Jesus is the only Savior, the perfect Savior, and your only comfort in life and in death, or Jesus is for you no Savior at all" (p. 65). In Lord's Day 14, the topic of election is dealt with, and DeYoung points

out that he prefers particular redemption rather than limited atonement. He admits that the Catechism, though thoroughly Reformed, is often not as pronounced when dealing with Reformed doctrine as the Canons of Dort (p.112). Missions were not given a big place in the Catechism, because it was not the focus at the time of the Reformation, but it is present in Lord's Day 26.

The Lord's Days on the Ten Commandments and his exposition on the Lord's Prayer are very up to date. Dealing with the 7th Commandment, he gives much wise advice for youth, but also for adults. His pithy statements make you think. Summing up the explanation of 'Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors,' in the Lord's Prayer, he states: "You and I deserve hell. We were hopeless, helpless, and heavenless. But now we have life, redemption, forgiveness, and glory. If our lives are still marked by bitterness, grudges, and thoughts of retribution we just don't get it. You haven't understood forgiveness until you've given it away" (p. 237).

Living in the 21st century as we do, the basic doctrines of salvation taught in the 16th century Heidelberg Catechism have not changed, but the onslaughts of the world and Satan have intensified and come to us in different forms. This book demonstrates that the Heidelberg Catechism is indeed a treasure and very relevant. Let us, as Reformed churches, not forget it—or almost forget it.

This book is highly recommended by Jerry Bridges, Sinclair Ferguson, Tim Challies, and others. It could be used for family or personal devotions (especially for teens and young adults), for group or personal Bible study, or as a resource for catechism teachers and for catechism students as weekly reading assignments and discussion.

This book and others may be purchased in Canada at Reformed Book Services in Brantford, Ontario, and at Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A.

*Mrs. Ricky (Frederika) Pronk is a member of Grace Free Reformed Church of Brantford, Ontario.*

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GAL. 6:10**

## SPECIAL UNITY EXPERIENCED: FRC AND HRC

*“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”*

Psalm 133

*Unity is special (verse 1). God speaks of unity as something wonderful. “Behold” is the first word in Psalm 133. Notice! Pay special attention to this. How good and how pleasant unity is. The two “how’s” with the exclamation mark underscore the special goodness and pleasantness of unity in verse one.*

*Unity is precious (verse 2). It is like the precious ointment upon the head. Pouring oil upon the head pictures the Holy Spirit anointing a prophet, priest, or king—appointing and qualifying a person for an office. Ultimately, this points us to Jesus Christ as our only perfect, sinless Prophet, Priest, and King. In Biblical times, being anointed with oil was cleansing and refreshing. When brethren dwell in unity, it is special and precious. It is by this unity the brethren are identified as God’s chosen people, and their fellowship is good and pleasant—experienced by the saints and witnessed by the world.*

*Unity is life-giving (verse 3). It is like the dew of Mount Hermon – life-providing in a dry and thirsty land. It gives life as it descends upon Zion, God’s Church. Where does God command His blessing? Where there is unity among the brethren. This sets God’s Church apart. The Church’s anointing then is so special, so precious, so life-giving! And if this is true now, so that the specialness of His Church’s unity may even be observed by the world (John 17:21), what shall this unity be in heaven! There the LORD shall command the blessing perfectly, and that forever - “even life for evermore!”*

The Free Reformed Churches (FRC) and Heritage Reformed Churches (HRC) have experienced and are experiencing a special sense of this precious gift of unity from our God. As the FRC-HRC Unity Committee, we reflected on this truth and stated that we may be experiencing special gifts and experiences of unity like no other Reformed denominations are. As a Unity Committee, we felt that we should write and share this article with our members to the honour and glory of our Lord for the rich gifts He has poured upon us and for the unique sense of unity we already experience.

How are the HRC and FRC experiencing a special sense of unity? Let us humbly and gratefully consider the following:

**Pulpit Exchanges** – All of our FRC congregations have had HRC pastors preaching for them on their pulpits, and the same is true for all HRC congregations inviting FRC pastors to preach for them. This preaching has been edifying in the congregations. A

deep sense of heartfelt unity has been experienced by the people of the Lord through these interdenominational pulpit exchanges and pulpit supplies. This is unity in the Lord, in His Word, and in the gospel experienced at the deepest level within our churches. To God be the glory!

**Calling of Pastors** – HRC churches call FRC theological students and pastors and the FRC churches call HRC students and pastors. Currently, two former FRC pastors are serving in HRC congregations and five former HRC pastors are serving in FRC congregations. HRC pastors called by FRC congregations and FRC pastors called by HRC congregations do not need to undergo synodical ministerial examinations prior to being approved and installed in their respective calling congregations.

**Church Membership Transfer and Lord’s Supper Attendance** – FRC and HRC accept each other’s church membership papers without requiring additional examinations, and members in good standing (not under church censure) from both denominations are permitted to attend each other’s Lord’s Supper administrations.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! All the above are officially approved by both HRC and FRC Synods. These are remarkable manifestations of unity! And how wonderful they are. But there is more:

**Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary** – Both the FRC and HRC support and train their theological students at PRTS. Both HRC and FRC brothers serve together on the PRTS Board of Trustees and its committees. Both FRC and HRC pastors serve in unity on the executive, administration, and faculty at PRTS.

**Pastors and Office-bearers’ Conferences** – Many edifying ministers’ retreats and meaningful office-bearers’ conferences have been held with both HRC and FRC brothers in attendance. Men from both denominations have been called upon to serve as speakers and leaders for these meetings. Mutually edifying fellowship has been experienced through participation in these opportunities.

**Concurrent Synods** – Every other year, the FRC and HRC

Synod meetings are held concurrently in the same building. The combined openings, mealtimes, devotions, refreshment breaks, and other times of fellowship have proven edifying and conducive to developing and strengthening ties between brothers.

**Church Services and Abridged PRTS Courses** – Prayer Services prior to Concurrent FRC and HRC Synod meetings are held, and the pastor conducting these alternates between HRC and FRC brothers. Some Ontario FRC and HRC congregations have held combined Reformation Day church services. Combined PRTS instructional classes have been held several times in Chilliwack, BC with FRC and HRC members taking the abridged courses offered.

**Women’s Retreats and Family Camps** – FRC and HRC combined Retreats and Camps have served as means for mutual instruction and fellowship.

**Youth Meetings, Camps, Sing-a-longs, College-Aged Conferences, Youth Apps, and Other Activities** – Mutual benefits have been experienced by both HRC and FRC young people through these types of opportunities.

**Joint Church Ministries** – Examples of FRC/HRC joint ministries would include such ministries as Ontario’s Migrant Ministry, BC’s Fraser Valley Reformed Christian Counselling Society, New York’s Gospel Mission, Bradenton Florida’s church services, Ontario’s Reformed Book Services, and South Africa’s Mukhanyo Theological College.

**Christian Education** – There is mutual HRC and FRC cooperation in Christian School operations; including new schools, such as Grace Christian Academy in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

**Instruction and Advice** – Examples of FRC and HRC brothers working together to provide instruction, guidance, and support would include such efforts as challenging counselling situations, vacant church services, church plant needs, combined consistory meetings, publishing articles in both the FRC Messenger and HRC Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth, and combined synodical committees – such as the FRC/HRC Unity Committee.

Yes, the Lord has granted us, the HRC and FRC, an amazing experience and demonstration of unity. Let us cherish this gift and always handle it as one would a very precious but fragile possession. Let us pray and work together, also for the proclamation and promise in the opening Psalm, Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ... For there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore (Psalm 133:1, 3). ①



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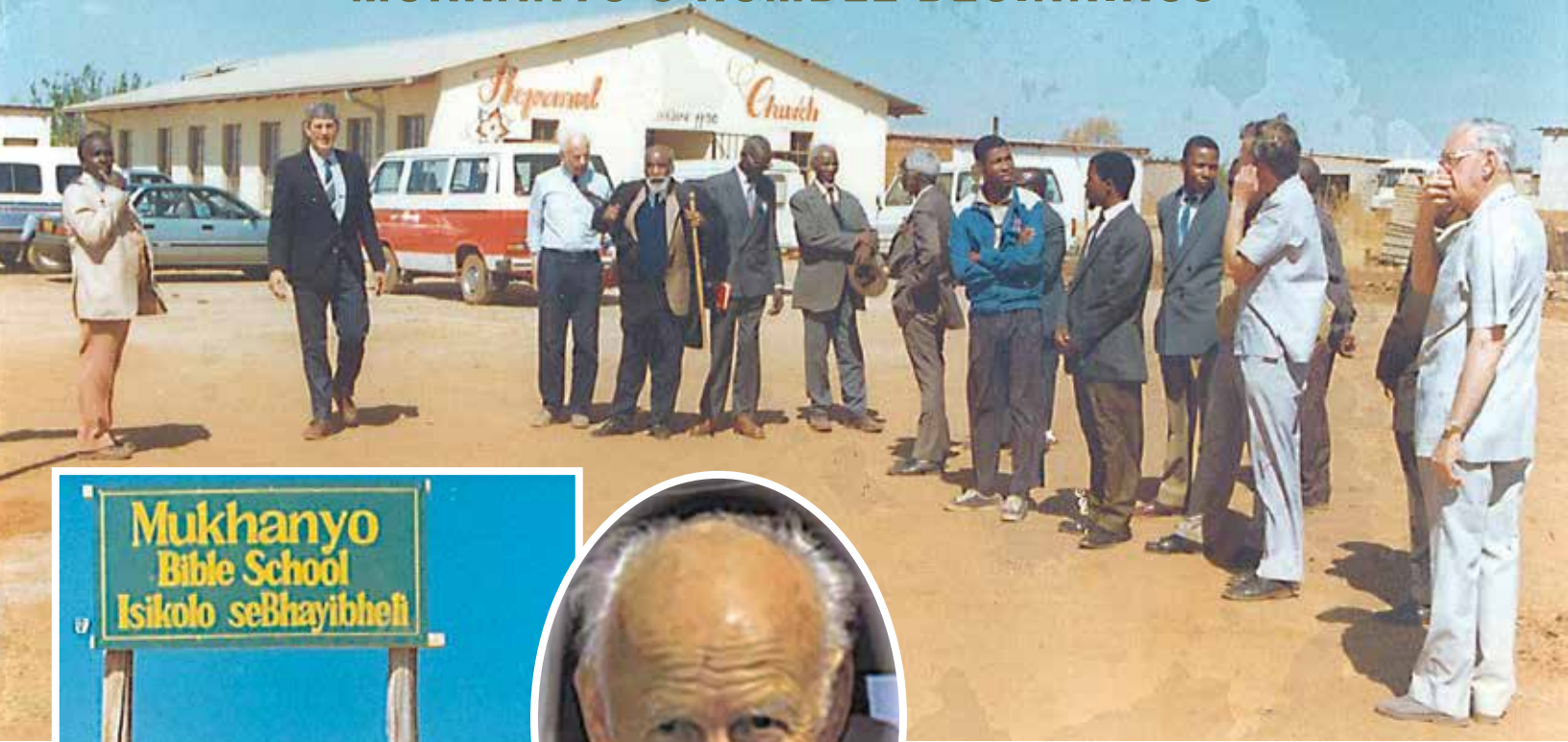
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John 6:12

# GOD'S MYSTERIOUS WAYS: MUKHANYO'S HUMBLE BEGINNINGS



Pastor Rebel

Very few members of the Free Reformed Churches in North America (FRCNA) know about the role their churches played in spreading God's word in a small part of South Africa. It shows that God's word shall not return to Him empty but shall accomplish what God intended (Isaiah 55:11), even in faraway places unknown to many of His people.

The role of these churches in a small part of South Africa is an interesting story of mission work going on for many years and even continuing today.

It all started in 1910 when the Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA) started doing some mission work in the far north of the country, in a region called Vendaleland, the homeland of the Venda people.

This continued in a small way until 1950, when mission work in South Africa accelerated with the help of several groups including the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands (CGK-NL), the sister churches of the FRCNA. These churches were deeply involved in mission work in Indonesia but had to leave that country when it decolonized and became independent. So, these churches were looking around for new mission fields.

At that stage, the Reformed Churches in South Africa were active in Vendaleland, but they were short of manpower. Their timing was perfect to ask the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken for help, which they received, resulting in a few missionaries being sent to Vendaleland. Through their work, a few churches were planted, a hospital was erected and staffed from the Netherlands, and a Bible school started, all in cooperation with the South Africa Reformed Churches. These ministries still exist today in one way or another.



One of the missionaries sent from Rotterdam to Vendaland was Rev. Mijndert (Bob) Rebel. However, he soon became interested in another mission field, KwaNdebele, a region north-east of Pretoria that was a homeland of the Ndebele people from 1982-1994. The Dutch churches funding Rev. Rebel could not afford a replacement for him, so he started looking around for another sponsor.

It so happened that Rev. Jacob Overduin, a minister of the FRCNA, together with his wife, decided to go and visit their daughter who was doing mission work with women in Vendaland. When they returned to Canada, Rev. Overduin advised the local mission committee about the possibility of funding Rev. Rebel. The advice was heeded and eventually he was called by the FRCNA. He started working in KwaNdebele in 1974, starting a number of preaching posts there.

Apparently this project became too expensive for the FRCNA, and the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken were willing to take Rev. Rebel under their wings once again in 1981. Eventually the workload of Rev. Rebel became too much, and another missionary was sent to assist.

The preaching posts were also small-scale teaching points, and Rev. Rebel moved between the various venues which could be called a sort of mobile Bible school.

When he asked a local tribal chief for permission to start a Bible school, the chief asked him to come back the next day so he could call on his advisors. These advisors proved to be untrained teachers from African Indigenous Churches, many being syncretistic churches in which the Bible played a smaller role. They were in favour of a Bible school and asked if they could be the first students themselves.

This was the start in 1985 of the Mukhanyo Bible School. It began without a fixed address. Rev. Rebel wanted the ministry to be in the northern part of KwaNdebele, but that was far away from this region's main population center and lacking in infrastructure. Several people were consulted, and the school



was eventually established in 1993 within the Reformed Church Thembalethu, close to KwaMhlanga, where Mukhanyo's main campus is at present.

Rev. Rebel retired in 1994 and his place at the Bible school was taken by Dr. P.J. (Flip) Buys, a minister of the Reformed Churches in South Africa, who had been called to serve in KwaNdebele in 1993. Rev. Rebel and his wife Henny retired in Pretoria with several children in the area. He passed away on March 10, 2015 and Henny Rebel passed away recently on August 7, 2024, but the legacy of their work continues still today.

This history is only the beginning of the Mukhanyo story. For the next few years, the school continued to be housed in the Thembalethu church building as well as a few wooden huts. But Mukhanyo needed a suitable campus building with a hall, lecture rooms, offices, and a library. The Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken were willing to help with some of the funding.

The rest of the funding came through a contact that Dr. Buys made while attending a conference in America. A generous donor asked Dr. Buys how much was needed to fully complete the required building. After some hesitation, Rev. Buys gave his estimation: R50 000 ZAR (around \$25,000 USD in those days). Shortly thereafter, Mukhanyo received even more: R55 000 ZAR, "because there are always unexpected expenses."

As a theological institution, Mukhanyo has grown far beyond the dreams of Rev. Bob Rebel. In addition to the main campus in KwaMhlanga, it now has campuses in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Rustenburg and Durban, with a Cape Town campus opening its doors in 2025. Each campus duplicates the programme's theological training that has taken place in KwaMhlanga since 1994 and before.

Today Mukhanyo also has more than 100 local learning sites scattered across southern Africa. Asynchronous facilitated learning is the technical term that describes this model of

Bible education, with 160 tutors who mentor the students at these various centers. These local study groups serve church leaders all over the country, especially in areas where access to good Bible training is limited or non-existent. The Mukhanyo FOCUS program is a range of church-based training modules and courses. It is not accredited for higher education (post high school); rather it is designed to assist local churches in training their own members and future leaders. In this way, the original vision of Mukhanyo for the KwaNdebele region has been duplicated 100-fold across southern Africa.

In addition to a number of church-based training courses, Mukhanyo's campus offers a full range of accredited qualifications in theology. These include two accredited Higher Certificates in Bible Teaching and Church Ministry (diploma level), a Bachelor of Theology, a Bachelor Honours in Theology, as well as a Masters of Theology from the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in North America. In total, there are at present around a thousand students actively studying the Bible through Mukhanyo's courses and qualifications.

Originally, Mukhanyo was established to serve churches in the KwaNdebele region, a ministry that continues still today. But now the scope is much wider. Now Mukhanyo is serving most areas of South Africa as well as a growing number of places in southern Africa. Mukhanyo also serves all people groups in South Africa, including an increasing percentage of students from English, Indian, and Afrikaans backgrounds.

What will be the future of the Mukhanyo ministry? God has blessed Mukhanyo much more than could be expected. These developments are the basic outline of what has happened over the past 40 years. There were many challenges and setbacks,

but God has continued to provide. We praise Him for His mysterious ways and gracious providence!

Mukhanyo's hope and prayer is that our graduates will remain faithful, leading churches and other ministries, and having a multiplier effect in Christ's kingdom. There will always be challenges, but our God who gives opportunities also makes it possible to use these open doors for the advancement of His ministry work. God's people are instruments in His hands to accomplish the plans He has for us. We continue to trust that He will continue to bless Mukhanyo for His glory. <sup>11</sup>

*Supplied by the Free Reformed Missions Committee.*





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# REFORMED EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH

## INTERNATION PLOWING MATCH & RURAL EXPO 2024



The International Plowing Match & Rural Expo (IPM) is held annually in different counties throughout Ontario. It is North America's largest outdoor agricultural and rural expo, attracting more than 80,000 visitors. The IPM is organized and run by the Ontario Plowmen's Association and takes years of planning and months of labour to prepare. This year, the IPM was held at the Lindsay Exhibition Grounds in Kawartha Lakes from October 1 – 5. This marks our 39th IPM that the Reformed Evangelistic Outreach has attended.

The Reformed Evangelistic Outreach committee (REO) rents a 20'x40' tent, where tables are set up with the tracts, Bibles, books, etc. We are grateful for the seven to ten volunteers that help in the booth each day handing out Christian calendars,

tracts, and bookmarks to those who pass by. We encourage them to browse in our booth where we have Bibles and hundreds of Christian books available for sale at a very low cost (approximately 140 books were sold). Frequently, there are conversations about the Bible, personal questions, doctrines, or "what is Reformed?"

Busloads of school children from the area visit the IPM daily and love to stop at our "free" table. First, they grab a candy or two, and are encouraged to take children's tracts, a Bible, and a laminated bookmark with a tassel and a text. Over a thousand free Bibles were handed out, mostly to children but also to some adults. Some children did not even know what a Bible was. On one occasion, a group of ten children (eight to ten years



old) picked out a Bible and other Christian material and were suddenly stopped by their chaperone and told to put everything back. The children looked at their chaperone with dismay. The chaperone said, “Only if your parents go to church, you can have a Bible.” There was silence until one little girl said, “My Nana goes to church,” to which one of our helpers said, “Okay, then you qualify!” Soon after another child piped up, “My Nana does too!” Soon all ten children had a Nana that went to church, and they all left our booth happy with a bag full of Bibles, tracts, bookmarks, and calendars. Overall, the five days went very well, with excellent weather each day. Approximately 16,000 tracts, 4,000 calendars, 1,000 Bibles, and many books were handed out.

First, the REO gives thanks to the Lord for the privilege of having this booth at the IPM, working with so many like-minded people, and for the good fellowship. Our prayer is that the Lord will add His blessings on the seeds sown. May He give the increase to His honour and glory and to the saving of souls. Secondly, the REO gives thanks to all the individuals and churches for their prayerful and financial support each year to make this endeavour possible at the IPM.

The Lord willing, the 2025 International Plowing Match and Rural Expo will be held in Grassie, Ontario, Township of West Lincoln, Region of Niagara, from September 16-20.

*On behalf of the Reformed Evangelistic Outreach Committee*  
[www.reoutreach.com](http://www.reoutreach.com)

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*“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”*  
 Colossians 3:17

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## OBITUARY

*"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Psalm 73:26*

On August 22, 2024, at the **age of 95 years**, Our Lord and Savior took to Himself Mrs. Alice Grisnich, who passed away peacefully with her family by her side.



### Alice Grisnich

March 15, 1929 (Oud Beijerland) – August 22, 2024 (Picture Butte)

Alice was predeceased by her dear husband **Reyer Grisnich** and her oldest daughter **Gerda Grisnich**,

She is survived by her children:

**Suzanna (Henk) van Rhee**

**Raymond (Elly) Grisnich**

**Grandmother of 13 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren**

Funeral service took place in *Shiloh Free Reformed Church* on Wednesday, August 28, 2024.

#### Contact information:

Henk and Sue Van Rhee  
Box 215, Picture Butte, Alb

## 60th Wedding Anniversary

1964 - September 5 - 2024

*"Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."*

*1 Peter 5:7*

With much joy and thanksgiving to God, we announce the **60th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents.



### John & Susan Vangameren

(nee Heikoop)

With love from your children,

**John & Jaquelyn Vangameren**

**Dave & Dinie Tamminga**

John & Alexandra Tamminga  
(*Theodore*)

Suzanna & Daniel Laman  
(*Abigail*)

Emma & Brad Heida  
(*Gabriel, Oliver & Lucy*)

David & Carey Tamminga  
Catherine & Jared Huizinga

**Delia & Derek Wolfert**

Dirk Wolfert

Daniel Wolfert

Hannah & Brendan Pennings

**Henry & Bettine Vangameren**

William Vangameren

Emma Vangameren

#### Mailing Address:

22 Morningside Drive, St Catharines, ON L2N 2Y9

## CALLED TO THE MINISTRY?

Is the Lord calling you to the ministry in the Free Reformed Churches of North America? If you sense He is, please contact your consistory for more information about admission requirements and procedures. Application deadlines are Oct 1 and Mar 1. The Theological Education Committee of the Free Reformed Churches of North America