

Regional Synod News

Wainfleet: Pastor Emile and Jenny Schmid have commenced their pastoral ministry at Maranatha Reformed Church.

Kingsville: We welcome Pastor Ken and Christina Labbe to their new ministry at Faith Reformed Church.

Langley: Thursday, October 4th, Pastor Janelle and husband Angel of Emmaus Christian Fellowship were blessed with the arrival of their new daughter Miriam Elena.

Lantzville: Rev. Les Clark has announced his retirement effective June 2008.

Upcoming Events

- Nov. 2-3 - Women's Fall Conference , 2007, Thorold- 'PRAYER: BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD
- Nov. 3rd, 2008, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. a One Day Christian Ashram will be hosted by Emmanuel Reformed Church, in Whitby.
- Dec. 5th, Hamilton - Coaching Excellence Day for Pastors and Lay Leaders

Pastor Profile

Stewart Vander Velden: In 2005, Stewart and April and their two children, Kyle and Ashley, went to plant a new intercultural church to reach a population of young people in the West side of downtown Toronto. Uncertain of the challenges that lie ahead they willingly headed to the city for a life altering season. Today, the average age is 23, the median 19 and over 60% of the regular attendees are less than 26 years old. This family opens their arms, home and their lives to foster meaningful relationships with this generation as they search for hope and

meaning in life. The gospel is shared and lives are changed through the work of Christ by the power of His Spirit. One of their goals and passions is to see these young people live out their faith in Christ and share it in meaningful ways that transform community in addition to themselves. Their family has grown, including two additional high school foster boys and a missionary from Child Evangelism Fellowship who is assisting their ministry with children and youth in the community and church. This family, young church and ministry team need your prayers as they continue breaking down the dividing walls of hostility between the youth of the 21st century and the church with children and youth in the community and church.

April and Stewart both grew up CRC. Stewart was born in Vancouver, B.C. and raised in the lower mainland... mostly in Langley, B.C. a member of the Langley CRC, and part of the founding membership of Immanuel CRC in Langley. He moved to Ottawa to complete his undergrad at Ottawa University in criminology. While there, he met April at the Calvin CRC 19 years ago. They were married less than a year later and went to Calvin Seminary which kept them in the USA for over 16 years. April was born in London, ON but raised most of her life in the Ottawa region. She grew up in the CRC in Ottawa area.



Regional Synod of Canada Inc., RCA

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Mobilizing for Mission

We are introducing our new logo which contains our vision. 'Mobilizing' has a sense of motion to it and the word 'Mission' is bold and stands out as the main thing.

Kapteyn's Korner



It's a busy but wonderful time of the year. Farmers are in their fields harvesting their corn, soybeans and wheat. I remember in Chatham seeing wagon loads of tomatoes, pumpkins, and squash being taken from the field to the processing plants.

Months earlier the farmers would have plowed the fields and planted the seeds. Weeks later, evidence of the seeding was seen as small fragile plants appeared above the ground. Sometimes we wondered if the plants would even grow. Dry periods of time slowed their growth. Hail threatened the survival of the crops. In the end, the yield was plentiful

Harvest is a time when we see the fruits of our labors. A time when we realize a return on our investment. A time that we see the effort was worth it. It is a time when we are reminded of God's faithfulness and that we are reminded that we reap what we sow.

In Mark 4:26-29, Jesus says that the kingdom

of God is "like a man who scatters his seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, this seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself soil produces grain-first the stock, then the head, then the full colonel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it because the harvest has come."

The farmer cannot force grain to grow although he can provide conditions that help its growth. Although the seed seems to grow by itself, we know that it is God who creates that growth. And, of course, the farmer has to plant in the first place.

As individual believers, churches and a Regional Synod, are we in a season of Harvest? Do we see fruit all around us? Are we experiencing growth - qualitatively or quantitatively? Do we see fields that are right for harvest?

Although only God can provide the harvest, the harvest is also an indication of what we have sown. How much have we planted the word and love of God into the soil of the communities where we live? How much of our time and money and talents have we invested and committed to the growth of the kingdom of God?

Communications News

1. Emile Schmid is our new Communications Team Coordinator. Thanks to Bill Zwiep who is transferring to our CP&D Commission.
2. We are looking for a communications coordinator for Classis British Columbia.
3. We are in process of changing our format and content. Suggestions are welcome.

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Reflections on Ministry

Part 1

By Rev. Joe Fenton

It has now been a full two years since I was ordained as a pastor in the RCA. Over those two years I must admit that the learning curve could be quite steep at times but through that learning God always was faithful to produce fruit. I was asked to reflect on my experience as a new pastor in the RCA and share some of what I have learned and what I have seen so these are merely musings. My dad always tells me that the more you know the more you realize just how little you know—such is the case here.

Lesson #1: Church ministry occurs in spite of me. I have very little to do with whether or not ministry touches hearts and changes lives. From sermons to outreach programs God graciously works through my feeble attempts to please Him. That is not to say that excellence is not required in executing our calling, these are, after all, our sacrifices to God. But I have come to understand that calling out to God in prayer for Him to move is what causes His church to deepen and grow. As pastors, we need to get over ourselves and get back into God regardless of the busy schedule or the next great program to come our way.

Lesson #2: Growth and development in a church always goes slower than we want it to. People's hearts and lives take time to develop. Priorities get shifted as God transforms the person and the entire local body. The biggest surprise comes when fruit is produced in an area you didn't even know had seeds growing. For those of us who have inwardly reacted like, "How in the world did that happen? I didn't even see that coming!" we need to review the first lesson. God grows as He knows best and may all the praise and

glory and honor be His because of this truth.

Lesson #3: Pacing ones self in ministry is an art form. It is no wonder pastor's burn themselves out. Ministry can often seem like a gerbil wheel that no matter how hard we run to accomplish our pastoral "to-do" list the more there is to get done. Of course the other option is to submit to the list and do as little as possible because "what is the point." Again, where is the excellence of our sacrifice and where is our accountability? The key I am learning (and will be trying to put into practice for the rest of my life) is to properly prioritize, work hard in the time you can and then, at the end of the day, take time for yourself, your wife, your family...take time for "life." If there is no joy in ministry we either become bitter or unmotivated and if that occurs, how can we expect to lead our consistory and congregations? God wants to have servants who enjoy their ministry. He wants leaders who eagerly anticipate the miraculous movement of God on His people's behalf. Ministry is an adventure over time that calls us to run with perseverance and excitement.

Rev. Fenton is the pastor Elmwood Reformed Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba

Prayers

Healing and stength for Pastor Les Boyd of Thorold Community Church.

Athabasca Reformed Church in their Calling Lake Project. For clarity of direction and a person to lead this ministry.

We would all have a desire to become as Christ as we seek to be missional in our churches.

Chocolate for the soul

During the first weekend in June, 36 women from the classis of the Canadian prairies gathered for a two day retreat that was simply drenched in chocolate. Calgary Community Reformed Church hosted the delectable event that focused on how God's grace is extravagant – just like chocolate.

Every portion of the retreat was designed to "pamper" the guests, from the luscious chocolate fountain and delectable goodies to the candles and lotions in the bathroom. The expression of love was forefront in the mind of the leadership team as they tried to pay attention to the small details that make us feel loved.

The retreat had no main speaker - the ideas, teaching and worship sets came largely from a box published by Group called the *Chocolate Boutique*. For the leadership team the ideas in the box acted as a springboard allowing for creativity within a framework. After the retreat several women expressed their appreciation for the lack of a main speaker saying that it allowed the entire event to focus on the grace of God.

The weekend's teaching was based on John 2:1-11; Jesus' first miracle at the wedding in Cana. The main idea was that when Jesus turned water into wine, he didn't simply make enough for everyone to have another glass of mediocre merlot, but he went all out - making more than enough of the really good stuff. Jesus' first miracle was an expression of his extravagant grace.

Over the course of the two day retreat women participated in small group activities like the laughter boutique where they shared stories, laughed, and even cried together; chocolate tasting boutique; and guided prayer time using simple objects like a pencil and eraser. There were several crafty opportunities with the



creation of chocolate facials and chocolate cake bath salts, not to mention chocolate bars that were created to share grace with a friend in need.

There is nothing quite like the sound of voices raised in praise to the giver of all grace, and the times of worship were certainly delectable. The selected songs added to the constant reminder of the grace we have been given – take for example this sample of the lyrics from the theme song: ***“Extravagant grace, extravagant love. Taste and see that the Lord is good. He is gracious and compassionate. Slow to anger and rich in love. Extravagant grace flows down, extravagant grace all around, extravagant grace I can taste it I can touch it. It's like chocolate for my soul, extravagant grace.”***

The prayer of leadership team was that women at various stages of their faith journeys would share and experience grace by considering chocolate and God's gift of love in Jesus. God was faithful. May each of us be blessed by the reminder of God's extravagant grace demonstrated on the cross as we savor our next piece of chocolate.

*Submitted by: Mrs. Christina Labbe
wife of Pastor Ken Labbe,
beginning new ministry in Kingsville*