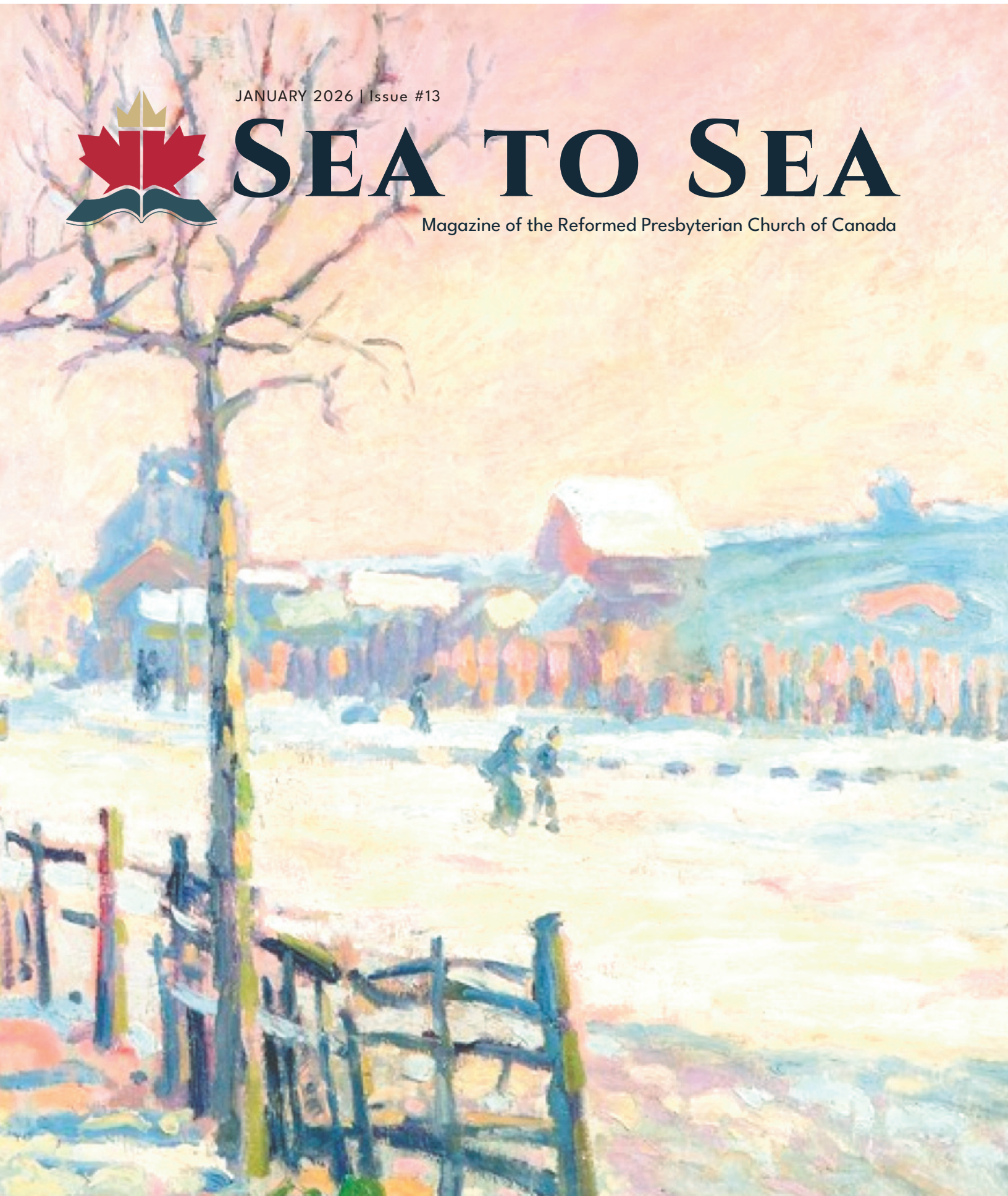




JANUARY 2026 | Issue #13

SEA TO SEA

Magazine of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada



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EDITORIAL

This past November, I attended the 50th anniversary of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC). This council provides a forum for working, in God's grace, toward answers to the prayer of Jesus in John 17 that his people would be one. This magazine naturally focuses on our own denomination, but we should never forget our place in the broader visible church. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, which hosted this last meeting of NAPARC, has in its history a document called the "Covenant of 1871". In part it reads:

"Believing the Church to be one, and that all the saints have communion with God and with one another in the same Covenant; believing, moreover, that schism and sectarianism are sinful in themselves; and inimical to true religion, and trusting that divisions shall cease, and the people of God become one catholic church over all the earth, we will pray and labor for the visible oneness of the Church of God in our own land and throughout the world, on the basis of truth and of Scriptural order. ...we will

strive to maintain Christian friendship with pious men of every name, and to feel and act as one with all in every land who pursue this grand end..., and by cultivating and exercising Christian charity, labor to remove stumbling-blocks, and to gather into one the scattered and divided friends of truth and righteousness."

Our own nascent denomination has applied for membership in NAPARC, having asked the RPCNA and the ARP denominations to sponsor our application. Please pray for blessing on this process and also on our ongoing fellowship with like-minded churches. And perhaps reconsider your own and your congregation's relationships with Christians in your area. Remember, Jesus said, "...who is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:40).



Rev. Matt Kingswood
Minister, Russell RP Church

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Front Cover: "Paysage d'hiver" (Winter landscape) by Robert Antoine Pinchon, 1905



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All Bible quotations are from the ESV

NEWS

BECKWITH RP CHURCH ANNIVERSARY

On Lord's Day, October 28th, the Beckwith Congregation gave thanks to God for his faithfulness in establishing and organizing Beckwith RP Church one year prior. After worship, they shared a fellowship meal together—complete with cake and cupcakes—rejoicing in the Lord's goodness to them as a congregation.

They are deeply grateful for how he has sustained and grown them in grace, unity, and love for his Word. Their desire is that, in all things, Christ would be exalted and his kingdom advanced—in Beckwith and to the ends of the earth.

"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations." (Psalm 67:1-2)

To God alone be the glory.



SEMINARY UPDATE

At their last meeting, the Presbytery acknowledged the gift made by the Ottawa RPC to the establishment of the RP Seminary. This included the renovation of four rooms in the Ottawa building to create a designated Seminary facility, as well as reorganizing and digitizing the former OTH library, now located within the Seminary facility. These were significant projects, but they have provided a place for teaching and study that has been well-received by both teachers and students.

The Presbytery also acknowledged the ongoing investment being made by the Ottawa congregation through its continuing provision of accommodation and hospitality to lecturers who travel a distance to teach at the Seminary.

Course updates:

The Presbytery is pleased with the productive signs of progress being made by the three students, Marco Tochijara, Ethan Van Hoffen, and Ezra Wilkinson, under the tuition of the teachers the Lord has blessed us with.

The following courses have been taught to date this semester.

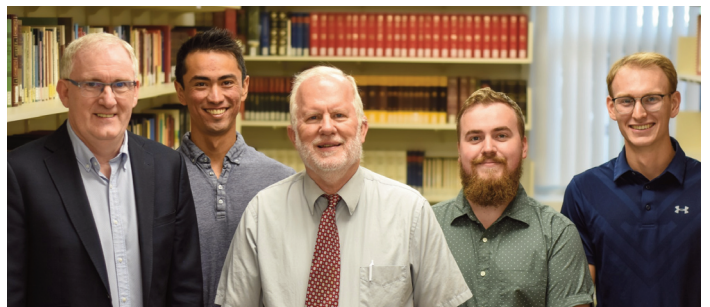
- Dr. David Weir taught the Bible Maps course from August 5th to 8th.
- Rev. Dr. Andrew Kerr taught the two-week intensive Hebrew course from August 19th to 29th. (Dr. Kerr

also teaches an ongoing weekly tutorial class in Hebrew.)

- Rev. Matt Dyck taught the Preaching course from September 9th to 12th.
- Rev. Scott Wilkinson taught the Old Testament survey course from September 23rd to 26th, and October 21st to 24th.
- Rev. Matt Kingswood taught the Systematic Theology course from November 21st to 28th.
- Dr. David Weir taught a second Bible History course from December 9th to 12th.

Please pray for:

- The students and their wives and families that the Lord will teach them much as the church continues to invest in them.
- The men who teach in the seminary, both those who come from the US and our own men.



KINGDOM LIFE: THE PATH

Matthew 5:1-12

It's likely the most famous, and so most familiar, sermon ever preached. It describes a life that God has always intended for his people, a life that Jesus came to make possible. Like Psalms 1 and 2 act as a kind of thesis that the rest of the psalms preach on, so Jesus' opening series of beatitudes serve as the template that the rest of the sermon expounds.

This is a sermon about Kingdom life. The Father's administration of grace ruled over by his own King. (Psalm 2) That means it's not a philosophy that offers a way of being, or even a series of proverbs on moral guidelines. It's a map, an invitation to a place, a pathway to the 'the blessed life', a life that Jesus calls, as He begins and ends the beatitudes, the "Kingdom of Heaven." (Matthew 5:3, 10) Jesus knew his life on earth was to make his Father's Kingdom accessible to his people. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32) This was how he understood his ministry. It saturated his preaching—"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

(Mark 1:15) These Beatitudes gives us the template of that Kingdom life lived out, a life that reflects God's Kingdom coming through his people. It is a radical Kingdom that challenges our world's power structures and values. It is a Kingdom that he brings because it is all about life in him.

"Blessed"

That is our Lord's word to describe what it means to live in his Kingdom. The blessed life describes the soul connected to its Creator, says Psalm 1. It is, to use Irenaeus' phrase, "Man fully alive", which he described as "the glory of God". As we move through the Beatitudes, consider the first three beatitudes as a kind of path that leads to the very door of the Kingdom itself, righteousness. (v. 6) This qualification for life in this Kingdom comes only from, and in, Christ. D. A. Carson said, "Nothing could be more calamitous than to meditate long and hard on Matthew 5:1-7:12 and then to resolve to improve a little. The discipleship which Jesus requires is absolute, radical in the (etymological) sense



that it gets to the root of human conduct and to the root of relationships between God and men. A person either enters the Kingdom or he does not. He walks the road that leads to life or he walks the road that leads to destruction. There is no third alternative. Nothing at all could have more crucial significance than following Jesus.” While these qualities describe the “blessed” state of soul at all times for one who abides in this Kingdom, they also serve as steps to Christ for the first time. They also describe our daily approach to him. If you long for the blessing that God wants to bestow, start here with these first three steps of the blessed life.

1. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

The first step has to do with an acknowledgment of a spiritual bankruptcy. Against a self-help culture of “believe in your self” Disney-isms, Jesus says your journey into the Kingdom starts when you realize you lack any spiritual competency to merit entrance into this blessed life. The first step is to see how lowly in spirit we truly are. (Isaiah 57:15) Thomas Goodwin wrote, “Until we are poor in spirit, we are not capable of receiving grace. He who is swollen with self-excellency and self-sufficiency is not fit for Christ. He is full already. If the hand is full of pebbles, it cannot receive gold. The glass is first emptied, before you pour in wine. God first empties a man of himself, before he pours in the precious wine of his grace.”

The Kingdom of Heaven is for those who see they have nothing apart from Christ.

2. “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

What keeps us from the Kingdom is not just a lack of resources but a rejection of God (see Romans 1) Such a relational offense requires repentance. (Psalm 51) What do you do when you see that your poverty is because you have vainly crowned yourself and pursued your own Kingdom? What do you do when you realize such a heart can only be redeemed by the blood of the eternal Son of God? You mourn with a broken heart (see James 4:9). This is not mere rule-breaking regret but an awareness that the Holy God was offended and that the good Creator was rejected. Jesus says his Kingdom is filled with divine comfort for those who mourn. Have you lamented over sin the way you weep at other griefs?

“Until we are poor in spirit—Christ is never precious.” (Thomas Goodwin)

“Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet.” (Thomas Watson)

“This is a daily step” (Martin Luther)

“the constant pathway.” (R. L. Dabney)

There is lavish comfort in Christ for those who mourn for their sin.

Nothing at
all could
have more
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following
Jesus

3. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

Something is created when gospel poverty and mourning grow in the heart. It’s a trait even used to describe the sinless Christ himself—“meekness.” (Psalm 37:11) It is not weakness but rather a radical humility not concerned with its own glory. (Philippians 2:5-8) Meekness no longer feels the insecurity of pride and the instinct to demand respect. It no longer needs assert itself to be served but looks to serve others in gentleness. This is how

Jesus defines himself, “meek.” (Matthew 11:29)

Martyn Lloyd-Jones commented that “the man that is truly meek is the one who amazed that God and man can think of him as they do and treat him as well as they do.... we are to leave everything—ourselves, our rights, our cause, our future in the hands of God.”

This is the Kingdom promise—forfeit all pursuit of your own glory and regard and the Father will give you the earth as your inheritance.

What does a heart filled with poverty and mourning and meekness bring you to? By God’s grace it produces a desperation for Christ. Jesus describes it this way, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” (v. 6)

Jesus has not given you only parables, but a pathway to take daily to be satisfied in him and to enjoy the Blessed life.

Rev. Matt Dyck
Minister, Hillside RPC



INTERVIEW

Mr. Chris Farenhorst
Ruling Elder in Russell RPC



Give us a brief life history.

I was born in 1976 in the small town of Hanover, Ontario but grew up in Owen Sound. I am the third of 5 children. My family attended a Christian Reformed Church (CRC) until I was 13 years old. My parents left the CRC because of theological concerns in the denomination at that time, and we became members of a newly formed Canadian Reformed Church. I graduated from Redeemer University with a BSc (major in math, minor in chemistry) along with my B Chr. Ed. I taught eighth grade for one year in a Christian school after which I almost gave up teaching! I spent two formative years teaching in a Christian school in Paramaribo, Suriname, South America. After that I began teaching high school (mostly math and science) in a Christian school close to St. Catharine's and attended a United Reformed Church. In late 2004 I met the love of my life, Melissa van der Meer, and we were married in June, 2006. God has blessed us with 8 incredible children – Eleanor, Brenna, Edmund, Timothy, Hope, Bethany, Emily and Joseph. Thirteen years ago, I left teaching and began working from home as an insurance broker. We spent 3 years in Cambridge attending New Creation RPC before moving to the Russell area in 2015. We joined the Russell RPC and I became a ruling elder there in 2018.

What has been the greatest influence in your life for Christ?

I was very blessed to grow up in a Christian home and to know Christ from an early age. The godly examples of my parents have had a lasting impact on my life. I am grateful to God that he placed me in a home with loving parents who desired to be faithful to their Saviour. My parents, especially my father, instilled in me a love for the Word of God. My life has been guided strongly by the truth that Scripture is the infallible, inerrant Word of the living God. I believe that great blessings come to families when their earthly fathers take seriously the responsibilities that God gave them.

During my two years in Suriname, I was greatly encouraged and blessed by Rev. Rudy Poettcker, the headmaster of the school and pastor of the church. Although I grew up in the Reformed faith, this was the first time I was introduced to Presbyterianism and the Westminster Standards. I even taught a class at the school on the Westminster Confession.

Our time at New Creation RPC was the first time I experienced exclusive Psalm-singing acapella. Pastor Scott Wilkinson (my brother-in-law) was a wonderful influence and blessing to our family. I believe that the Holy Spirit used Pastor Wilkinson to convince me of the Biblical blessing of Presbyterian theology.

What has been the biggest challenge in getting where you are today?

Pride and love of self. I love to be right. I am learning rather to be wronged if it means that Christ is praised. Serving Christ is not about being right or serving myself. My purpose in life is to honour Jesus. God calls me to serve Him, and that means He calls me to faithfully serve my wife, my children, my church and my neighbour. I desire to be slow to speak and quick to listen.

What advice would you give to someone 10 years younger than you?

Pray continually. Be constantly in the Word of God. Look for ways to bless your family and your church.

If the Lord continues to bless, what would you like to see happen in the RP Church of Canada?

I would love to see the RP Church of Canada grow—churches planted and membership increased. I would love to see God raise up many men in our churches with a desire to be godly leaders. The church is in need of elders and deacons. The church is in need of men who are faithful in their callings as husbands and fathers. I truly believe that God's church will grow when this happens!

MISSION UPDATE



If you were in a small plane flying low over South Sudan, you would ask yourself: “Where are the people of South Sudan?” South Sudan is (still) the youngest country in the world (est. 2011) and contains a relatively small population of 12 million. While families are becoming larger, the buying power is getting smaller. South Sudan is at the bottom of the list in terms of GDP per capita, with 80% of the population living below the extreme poverty line. South Sudan is at the top of the list as the most corrupt country in the world.

With these overwhelming needs, why would the RP Global Missions (Cush4Christ) team be continuing to plan their “exit strategy”? The plan was in place from the start, with work beginning in 2006, and it has always been the plan.

We can see the work having gone through two phases thus far. The first phase (2006-2015) was to establish a national church and ministries to strengthen the church (officer training, radio, school, health training, agriculture, literacy, school clubs, etc.). The second phase (2015-2025) was to deepen the theological edu-

cation of the pastors, reform worship, and strengthen the indigenous leadership of the school. The final phase will focus on bringing the church to the goal: to establish a national RP church which relies on Christ to govern, train, propagate, and support itself. This will involve RPGM workers mentoring national leaders who fully oversee both the church and the agencies that support it.

In this final phase, the missionary team will work in very close cooperation with the national church leaders (7 teaching elders and 5 ruling elders), their churches (3 organized and 10 unorganized) and denominational agencies. The national leaders will show how the missionaries can come alongside them to assist in reaching their objectives. We see ourselves as scaffolding for them in their building project. We laid the foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10-11) of Jesus Christ and helped build the structural walls. Now it is time to assist the church in putting on their roof and finishings. One day, we pray, we will be able to take off the scaffolding and leave, celebrating what the Lord has built through the work of our hands.

“Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands.” Psalm 90:17

Pray with us that we might reach this goal, leaving behind the Reformed Presbyterian Church of South Sudan, growing in depth and breadth, and bringing the kingdom influence of increasing prosperity and integrity in South Sudan to the glory of God.



Rev. Vince Ward
Interim Teaching Elder, Beckwith RPC



NEWS

PRESBYTERY UPDATE

On Tuesday October 28th and Wednesday October 29th, the elders (ministers and ruling elders) gathered in the Ottawa RPC church building for two days of meetings to discuss the Church's life and witness in Canada. The decisions made at these meetings are then implemented by various committees and working groups, these include the denomination's publications, the Seminary and finances as well as organising the various camps and conferences. Rev. Matt Dyck was reappointed as Moderator for another year with Rev. Dr. Andrew Quigley and Mr. Colin Postma being appointed Clerk and Assistant Clerk, respectively.

Logo: By a vote it was agreed to insert a line into the logo to better represent that Christ is our Prophet, Priest and King.

Finance: The presbytery is thankful to the Lord for how He has provided financially for the various works that are ongoing with the RPCC. In the coming months, the Finance Committee will be presenting a challenge to the congregations to continue investing in the training of men for the

ministry through the work of the Seminary.

RPC in BC: The Presbytery thanked Rev. Matt Kingswood for the considerable amount of work he has put in as a provisional elder in the Vancouver RPC, a role he will continue in until the Vancouver AGM in February, 2026. Going forward the Vancouver session will consist of Rev. David Matthes, the minister in Vancouver, Rev. Vince Ward, Rev. Scott Wilkinson and Mr. John Smid.

Camps and Conferences: The committee which oversees the annual Family Camp has successfully negotiated new dates for the Camp at the current location of Wesley Acres Campground. The camp will now be held the last week of August, i.e., before Labour Day, which will address the challenge of the Camp week-end clashing with children returning to school and young people going off to university/college. We are looking forward to hearing from Rev. Scott Wilkinson in 2026 on the topic of 'The Ascension of Christ'.



The RP Global Alliance website

www.rpglobalalliance.org

is the place to find news, information and prayer points about the RP Church around the world.

The RPGA Team also sends out weekly prayer emails and a monthly newsletter directly to your inbox.

Scan the QR Code below to subscribe.



NEWS

RPCC MEN'S RETREAT



Forty men from the local RP churches converged on Muskrat Lake, north of Cobden, ON this past October. The organizing committee hoped and expected that it would be a time of fellowship, faith, and growth in the Lord. It was encouraging to see the wide range of ages represented—young men early in their walk with Christ and older men who have walked with him for many years—all seeking a deeper relationship with the Lord.

Dr. Quigley led three sessions on the challenges of life, focusing on the biblical accounts of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness. Some key takeaways for me were the following:

- First, we should expect challenges—big or small, extreme or subtle—because Scripture warns us that we will face them and also teaches us how to respond. The real challenge is the temptation to ignore the Bible's guidance when trials come.
- Second, we should not whine or complain about the circumstances surrounding life's difficulties. They are not random but divinely ordained. As 1 Peter 5:10 reminds us: "And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."
- Third, we must recognize who the real enemy is. Is it truly the person or situation before us? We have been bought at a great price, yet the adversary still whispers in our ear.
- Fourth, we must know our weaknesses and watch and pray concerning them.

- Finally, if the adversary is sifting us, it is not without God's permission. The purpose is to refine and reform us, and make us more Christ-like.

The temptations of Christ were vividly described and examined. This amazing account shows that obedience is learned through suffering and that Christ can say to us that he has walked the road of suffering so that he may help us deny temptation and do the Father's will. Just as Satan urged Jesus to avoid suffering, we can expect similar temptations from him. But be encouraged: Christ remained steadfast and triumphant, and Satan fled from him. The Lord sympathizes and empathizes with us in our challenges and is able to help us in our temptations.

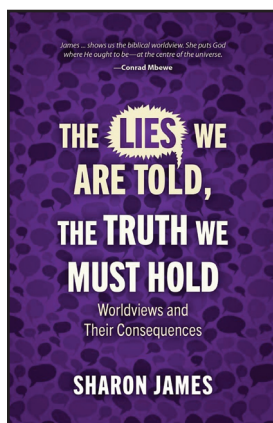
Outside the teaching sessions, the weekend was filled with abundant food prepared by the kitchen staff, much singing around the fire pit, and enjoyable outdoor activities made possible by bright, dry weather. One of the most meaningful aspects of the weekend was the time men took to sit together, share, and encourage one another. Many noted that such conversations do not happen often, but they are deeply needed.

As the working group meets in the coming days, we will reflect on how men tend to isolate themselves when life's challenges arise—another important takeaway from Dr. Quigley's teaching. We were very glad to have him with us in person. We would be pleased to hear from any participants as we plan for next year.

Mr. Bill Lowry, Hillside RPC and member of the organizing committee for the Men's Retreat

BOOK REVIEW

The Lies We Are Told, the Truth We Must Hold: Worldviews and Their Consequences by Sharon James



What is truth? Pilate's question to the Lord Jesus Christ (John 18:38) has never been so pertinent as in today's cultural landscape. In "The Lies We Are Told, the Truth We Must Hold" (Christian Focus Publications, 302 pages), Sharon James exposes the philosophical foundations of contemporary secularism before laying out a biblical vision for truth, human dignity, and social flourishing.

The author – who holds a doctorate in history from the University of Wales and has spent decades researching the intersection of worldviews, social policy, and biblical truth – invites readers to trace how modern culture has become so tangled in lies and how the Gospel offers not just critique, but hope.

The first half of the book – "The Lies We Are Told" – is a sobering tour through the minds that built our cultural moment: Feuerbach, Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Reich. The memory of these thinkers may have faded with time, but James shows how their ideas are still very much alive – and bearing bitter fruit. Whether it's the rejection of absolute truth, the breakdown of the family, or the rise of identity politics, she draws a straight line between abstract theory and real-world consequences. She doesn't sensationalize; she simply connects the dots. The result is both chilling and illuminating.

But the real power of this book lies in Part Two – "The Truth We Must Hold". Here, James contrasts the stench of secularism with the sweet aroma of Christ presented

in the gospel. In place of the empty promises of modern ideologies, she offers the solid ground of the biblical worldview arising from a God-centered life. It's not just a list of doctrines; it's a vision for life. A vision where human beings are made in the image of their Creator. Where marriage and family are sacred. Where truth is not whatever we feel, but what God has revealed. And where hope isn't found in progress or politics, but in Christ, who himself is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

What makes this book stand out is its accessibility. It's well researched without being dense, bold without being bitter. The chapters are short, the summaries are helpful, and the flow is easy to follow. It's the kind of book you could read alone with a pen in hand or discuss with the family around the dinner table. And yet, for all its clarity, it's never simplistic. James handles complex topics with care, avoiding jargon and offering just enough depth to stir reflection. The text is also rich with references and suggestions for further reading.

Ideas have consequences. The current presuppositions of Western culture affect all, believers and non-believers. God urges his elect to "not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of [their] mind" (Romans 12:2), and collectively, the Church is described as "a pillar and buttress of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). "The Lies We Are Told, the Truth We Must Hold" can be a wake-up call for those who are unaware the poisonous lies diluted in the cultural waters of Western society. More importantly, this book is a great resource to equip Christians to think clearly, live faithfully, and speak truth with grace.

Mr. Lucas Coelho, Ottawa RPC

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Combatting Hate

On Thursday, October 30, 2025, Liberal Minister Marc Miller, who serves as the chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, made the following comments during the committee meeting:

“In Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Romans — there’s (sic) other passages — there is clear hatred towards, for example, homosexuals... I mean, clearly there are situations in these texts where these statements are hateful. They should not be used to invoke or be a defence.”

The committee was studying Bill C-9, which the Liberal Government is calling the Combatting Hate Act.

When a government leader publicly calls passages of Scripture clearly hateful, it reveals something far deeper than a policy debate. It shows a government forgetting its duty before God. Civil authority is not ultimate. Scripture teaches that those in power are ministers of God, called to uphold justice and protect truth.

From the very book Minister Miller referenced, Romans 13:1, we read, “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.” And in Psalm 2:10-11, “Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.”

John Sikkema — Legal Counsel and Director of Law and Policy for ARPA Canada — had the opportunity to present to the committee a few hours after Minister Miller’s comments. As Mr. Sikkema said in his statement before the committee,

“Yet today in Canada, people are being accused, often by government officials, of promoting hatred simply for expressing moral or political views. Earlier this month, the British Columbia Legislature condemned ARPA as hateful... A BC government MLA even told a story... [that] defamed and vilified Reformed Christians as criminal harassers, which seems like a way, frankly, to stir up hatred against this group, while at the same time accusing these Christians of promoting hatred for the views that they hold.”

When leaders begin labelling parts of the Bible as dangerous or hateful, they place themselves above the very law that gives their authority any meaning. A nation cannot claim to pursue justice while rejecting the standard of the one who defines it.

Government serves under God’s authority, and it has a duty to ensure that his Word and those who live by it remain free to speak truth.



Mr. Colin Postma
Ruling Elder, Ottawa RPC

**A nation
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defines it.**

PRAYER'S PRINCIPLES

Every true believer will pray

Jesus gives three examples in the first part of Matthew chapter 6 that teach how we are to worship God. The first deals with an outward dimension of worship—giving (Matthew 6:1-4); and another example deals with an inward dimension of worship—fasting (Matthew 6:16-18). In between, he deals with an upward dimension of worship—prayer (Matthew 6:5-15). Prayer places us as close to God as we can come in this life. Jesus assumes that every true believer will pray (Matthew 6:5), and that we all need instruction in how to approach God correctly. He teaches us about:

Prideless Prayer – As he did earlier in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21-48), he continues to contrast true Christian behaviour with the hypocritical behaviour of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:13). They followed precisely the outward ritual of their ancestors and stopped their work at the set times for prayer. But they didn't follow the example of a true man of God like Daniel who went to his private room to pray (Daniel 6:10). Instead, they made sure that their daily activities brought them near the intersection of two main streets at the time of prayer so that they would have to stop

their activity and pray in the view of others. They received their reward—the puffing up of their own pride—but their prayers bounced off the heavens.

Today most Christians aren't tempted to pray at the corner of Main St. and First Ave. But that doesn't mean we don't need to heed this instruction. We can just as easily pray to men rather than to God. We can pray out of an attitude of self-confidence, with a desire to be known as a person of prayer, to have our 'piety' in prayer noted, or to have people congratulate us for the elegance of our words. When we pray in the assembly of believers, we must try to shut them out of our minds and turn and face God alone.

Private Prayer – The true measure of our prayers is how we offer them to God in private. The essence of Jesus' instruction is not about the place, but the attitude with which we pray. Do we offer real prayers of sincere passion to God, the only hearer? Do we avoid rushing through our private prayer? Do we focus our minds so that we don't drift away from dwelling on God and his providences in our lives? Then our prayers will be heard and rewarded.



The sincere prayers of God's people will be rewarded through: 1) assurance that God hears them (John 1:48), 2) answers in God's time and way (Psalm 34:15), and 3) recognition with Christ in a glorious heavenly abode (Matthew 25:34).

Purposeful Prayer – True prayer does not consist of verbal formulas like incantations or of words offered as superstitious chants (Jeremiah 7:4; Matthew 6:7). True prayer consists of meaningful words offered to God with a purpose. But do not misunderstand the purpose. It is neither to inform God of our needs (Matthew 6:8) nor to change his mind about things he has determined in his eternal decrees. The primary purposes of prayer are first to honour God and secondly to humble believers. Prayer proclaims God as the creator and reminds us that we are dependent upon him.

We must not think that we are excused from hearing and heeding this instruction. We may not offer up repetitions to accompany beads on a string. We may not babble like those who claim to be praying in tongues. This does not excuse us. If we use the same 'pious' or trite phrases from one prayer to the next (e.g., before each meal) without consciously thinking about what we are saying, our prayers are no better than those of pagans and they are barren. We should use our natural language, as a son speaking to a father (Matthew 6:9).

Pointed Prayer – True prayer does not consist of many words (Matthew 6:7). It is clear that we don't have to list every need we have in each prayer. God knows our needs before we ask (Matthew 6:8). Consider how short the model prayer is that Jesus gave his disciples (Mat-

thew 6:9-13), and yet how much content it includes! It is true that, at times, Jesus prayed all night; and he also repeated his words (Matthew 26:44), as do many of the Psalms (e.g., Psalm 42:5, 11; Psalm 136:1-26). It is meaningless repetition that Jesus condemns. However, most of the prayers recorded in the Bible can be read aloud in five minutes or less. Since these should serve as our model, then we learn that our prayers should be short and offered often (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Prayer's Prototype – Jesus provides a model for prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). In our next topic we will consider this model prayer in more detail. For now, we should note that in this model he teaches us about both the form and content that our prayers should have.

Powerful Prayer – If our prayers lack power, it is because we have sin in our hearts that we have not dealt with. We cannot have fellowship with God if we have conflicts with our neighbours. A major challenge for us is forgiving others (Matthew 6:14-15). Jesus uses this particular sin as a fulcrum on which he balances prayer. If we want to have our prayers heard and we want them to be effective, then we must come to God with pure hearts (Psalm 24:3-4). If we come to him asking for forgiveness, and with a forgiving attitude, this indicates or symbolizes that we desire to purge out all sin from our hearts. This is at the root of powerful prayer.



Mr. Jim Hughes
Ruling Elder, Toronto RPC

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CHURCH UPDATE

Russell RPC

Lord's Day worship services: 10:00 AM and 4:30 PM

Membership: 159 (96 communicant, 63 baptized)

Teaching elder: Pastor E. Matthew Kingswood

Ruling elders: Mr. Christopher Farenhorst, Mr. Aaron Pol, Mr. Hank Vedder, Mr. Ernst van der Meer.

Deacons: Mr. Jared Ayer, Mr. Jason Vedder, Mr. Brian Vuyk, Mr. Don Zuiderveen.

Twenty-eight years ago, the Russell RPC took shape as a daughter congregation sent out from Ottawa. The eight original families were all of Dutch descent; we are thankful the Lord has added variety to our number. More and more, we are becoming a congregation that reflects the diversity of languages and backgrounds found in Canada. Growth has been especially noticeable since we started worshipping in our own building three years ago. Our building is located in a bustling commercial area and enjoys excellent visibility. People find us online, by driving by, or through contacts in the congregation. Each week, new people walk in our doors.

Russell is both a farming village and a bedroom community (about 25 minutes south-east of Ottawa). It's a stable community in which many people put down roots and stay for generations. We have several multigenerational families worshipping amongst us. Likewise, our leadership has been consistent. None of our elders nor

deacons have moved away from the area. Instead, with time, they come to know the congregation's needs, strengths, and weaknesses with increasing clarity.

I cannot remember the last time we did not welcome new faces on the Lord's Day. Visitors are always very warmly welcomed. Some do not return, some come a few times, and others make the congregation their home. The congregation has seen tremendous growth in the past few years. We make use of every suitable space for Sabbath school classes; Pastor Kingswood leads an adult sermon discussion class in the sanctuary.

Though our congregation is ruled by capable, godly elders, many ministries have started when people in the congregation saw a need and actively worked to meet that need.

In the fall of 2025, we started offering the Griefshare program, a 13-week Biblically-based small-group ministry. Our first session was for members of the congregation, but we look forward to opening it up to the community in the future. Members are being trained to facilitate this ministry in the future. There are grieving people both in the church and in the wider community, and both need the answers found only in the Gospel. We anticipate much blessing to come from this initiative.



Likewise, a Biblical counseling ministry is in the development stage. We have one certified Biblical counsellor already and look forward to seeing more members, as well as the eldership, receive training in counseling. The need is great; we look to the Lord for wisdom, strength, and good spiritual fruit.

Pastor Kingswood continues to feed Christ's sheep as he preaches through the gospel according to Luke in the morning and the life of David in the afternoon. We celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on the first Lord's Day of each month, in the afternoon service.

In addition, on these Sundays we enjoy a fellowship meal following the morning service which is a time of rich fellowship with one another and an opportunity to better know others in the congregation.

Our building is used often throughout the week. The men have a monthly Saturday morning Men's Breakfast, monthly Friday evening Psalm sing, and a bi-weekly Saturday morning Bible study (currently studying Philippians). The women gather every other Saturday morning to study God's Word (currently in Romans). Session meets monthly, usually on a Thursday evening, and quarterly with the deacons. Wednesday evening sees the four ruling elders leading district prayer meetings in various homes. The last Wednesday of the month is a combined prayer meeting at the church building. These prayer meetings are attended by all ages and have been a means of building intimacy and maturity in the saints in Russell.

Many children continue to be born in our congregation, and we are looking forward to the baptism of a little girl whose father was baptized as an infant by Pastor Kingswood in 1998, when the Russell RPC was only a few months old. Quite a milestone!

Every second Lord's Day, one of our men leads a worship service in a local nursing home. Youth Group,

young people 14-18 years of age, meets every second Friday evening. Many of these young people also meet for bi-weekly doctrine classes on Sunday afternoons. An enthusiastic group of younger boys meet for Calvinist Cadets every other Monday evening. There, they study the Scriptures, build friendships, and earn badges as they learn various life skills.

We have an Outreach & Visibility Committee. Community outreach events have varied, but some have become annual ministries the community has come to anticipate. These include a First Responder's breakfast—a ministry to show appreciation for our local police officers, firefighters and paramedics; and the "Carols by Candlelight" service, based on the English tradition of Nine Lessons and Carols and includes a gospel message.

Please Pray:

- For wisdom to meet our visitors where they are and to show them the love of Christ.
- For godly stewardship of our financial resources and our building.
- For discernment to know when and how to plant a daughter congregation.
- For creative ministry to our community and for good fruit.
- For our pastor. Pray that we might not take for granted this gift from God. Pray that he would be able to steward his time and energy well and that we as elders can serve together well.
- For willing, capable, Spirit-filled men to serve as future pastors, elders, and deacons throughout the RPC of Canada.

Mr. Ernst van der Meer, Ruling Elder



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