

Newsletter Spring 2020

Introduction

Part of our rationale as Foreign Mission Committee in giving you a newsletter every three months is that a lot happens at the Study Centre in such a timeframe. Hopefully the reports confirm that for you—even if our reports only share a portion of the work of the RSC every quarter. Yet while much can happen over three months, we've all recently learned that it takes far less time than that to have your whole life flipped around. Seven weeks ago, none of us could have imagined having our lives characterized by social distancing, home schooling, working from home, self-isolating, hand sanitizing, and washing grocery packaging! But that's today's reality, with COVID-19 trending frequently in the news as well as in our minds. It's then to our comfort to know and profess that the future belongs to our strong God, to the one who has reigned over every pestilence and plague throughout human history. And so we, also at the Study Centre, are striving to think along the lines of what the apostle writes in 2 Corinthians 4:17, that "this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." COVID-19 is undoubtedly an affliction, but along with the suffering of the rest of this age, it is a light momentary affliction in comparison to the glory to be revealed at the return of Christ and our promotion into everlasting glory in his presence.

That perspective is what the Lord is using to guide the Study Centre as it carries forward with the work. And so we then want to again bring you up to speed on the labours of Rev. Kampen over the last bit.

Membership in the CRMA

In January we as church were received into membership in the Canadian Reformed Mission Association (CRMA). The advantages of such a membership are twofold:

- 1) we can thereby share with other local churches engaged in mission work the ongoing, wonderful work of the Lord through the efforts of the Study Centre;
- 2) we can also connect with such churches for mutual encouragement, as well as advice and/or resources when desired.

Canadian Reformed Mission Association

Reformed Missions is the place for everything Missions

Organized by the Canadian Reformed Churches

<https://reformedmissions.net/>

As we continue to look for ways to raise the profile of the Study Centre, we see this as a very happy development!

Being received into the CRMA coincided with the joint conference between the CRMA and CRTS in Burlington, titled “Discipling the Nations: Reformed Perspectives on World Mission.” For this conference, the CRMA gave each member church the freedom to highlight its mission project by means of a display table at the conference. Our Committee jumped at the invitation as another opportunity to make more broadly known the work of the Study Centre. Kerri Jans and Esther Kampen were gracious to put together a display board featuring the main projects of the Study Centre—thank you, ladies, for a job very well done! This display board, along with some RSC brochures, a recent newsletter, and a video newsletter, graced our display table for the duration of the conference. It facilitated a number of opportunities for yours truly to engage with conference attendees on the work that the Lord has given us to do.



*Rev. Kampen with the RSC Display
at the CRMA and CRTS joint conference*

Volunteer Work

We continue to be very grateful as Study Centre for the volume of help we get from our volunteers—over 90 of them. And in the Lord’s generosity, that number continues to grow steadily. I would like to draw your attention to a couple of new volunteer positions.

First, a “summarizer” (a glamorous job title, for sure!). A vast number of our users, pastors included, are undereducated. So while they crave helpful reading material, even extensive treatments of various topics, they need these in simple English. So there is a great need for basic articles, which are a challenge for us to track down. That has led us to enlist the help of volunteers willing to take existing articles written at a popular level, and summarize and simplify them into articles of, say, 1000–1500 words each. We have in this respect been blessed by the help of a

senior member of a neighbouring church, who for the last several months has been summarizing in simple English certain articles originally written in Dutch—over 40 in total at this point! For this we are very grateful to the Lord, and we continue to look to him to provide also in this important area of the work.

Second, the “gleaner” volunteer position. As a recent Church Social note explained, we are looking for volunteer help for our Living Word project. In our sermon outlines, we want to provide the pastors from the young church with material from open source material, including books and sermons. You see, we can hardly ask or expect the pastors to read through all of Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Matthew Henry, and modern authors on a specific Scripture passage. Yet such servants of times past have written many things that are valuable for the young church to know. We, therefore, have established the Gleaner position, with the purpose of reading through certain material from servants of all ages and places. Specifically, the Gleaner will read through sermons or commentaries from authors in order to find the sentences and/or paragraphs where the author gives a clear description of the message, or an application that can be helpful to a general Christian readership. The Gleaner is to copy and paste the material into a document, and the notes will then find their way onto Living Word. This, you will understand, is going to be of tremendous help to us in our aim to build a Bible exposition and application tool for the young church!

I can happily report that after my Church Social post, four members have come forward to volunteer their help. We are very excited about this, and are eager to see here too where the Lord will lead this special work!

Living Word

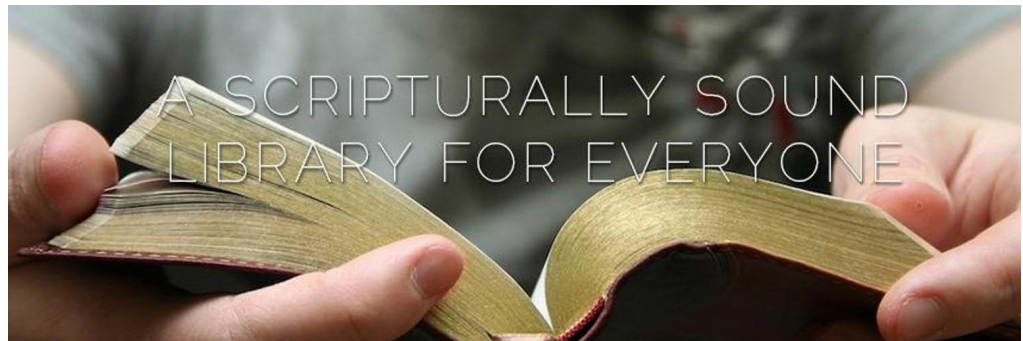
The last point of course implies that the work on Living Word continues. I may start to sound like a broken record, but while the public end of the software is still not quite ready for launch, we are making much headway in ensuring that when we go viral with the project, we will have a service that will be very user-friendly. It has been quite a treat to collaborate on this project with Rev. van der Linden, and through him with the IT fellows who are really the key players in making this service a success! Again, stay tuned!

Other Tasks

Our newsletter of course would not be complete without some stats on the work I've continued in relation to the Christian Library. In the first few months of 2020, here is some of the trouble I've gotten into (just checking to see if you're still reading!):

- 53 articles, and their summaries, that I have located on the web and submitted for publication on the Christian Library;

- 471 article listings uploaded by other theologians that I subsequently edited and published on the site;
- 43 articles translated from Dutch that I have then edited;
- 20 translated articles that volunteers have edited and of which I have made a final review;
- 34 children’s devotions that volunteers have edited.



Concluding Remarks

In the last newsletter, I alerted you to the joyful development that the Lord has given us an individual who in 2020 will be devoting a substantive amount of time every day to the task of editing. Her work began in earnest at the start of February—and it is going so well! 50 percent of her days are allocated to editing translated articles, and in a couple months’ time she has tackled some 34 articles, some of which were rather lengthy. It has been a personal pleasure to get to “meet” her (she lives in Cape Town!) and work together as editors. May the Lord bless her work richly!

Thanks very much for tuning in to this update on the work of the Reformational Study Centre! We continue to be in your debt, as we could never sufficiently repay you with our thanks for your prayers on our behalf. May our Lord nevertheless bless your prayers, and repay you with his kindness in Jesus Christ! Till next time!

Points for Prayer

- ❖ Give thanks for our membership in the CRMA.
- ❖ Give thanks for further developments in Living Word, for the theologians who are contributing notes, and for our gleaners.
- ❖ Give thanks for our new editor.
- ❖ Pray for the Lord to preserve the young church during this pandemic.