

Together...nurturing God's children as Royal children

Summary of the Association Chairman presentation to the school catchment AGM's 2019

Preamble

I'd like to share with you a short story and a message on the topic of **'Together... Nurturing God's Children as Royal Children'**.

To give some context to this presentation I observe that for over 60 years now, which is nearly three generations, the John Calvin Schools have walked hand in hand with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia in the task of equipping and training the children of the Church. Reformed Education in the context of the covenant and the Church has its origins in the Great Reformation more than 500 years ago.

As time passes, it is good that each generation again seeks to understand, articulate and embrace the importance of Reformed Education, and its connection in the context of the covenant and the Church. It is for that purpose, that I stand here, as a voice to refresh the understanding of Reformed Education; a voice to reach a new generation; a voice to call the whole church community to work together in the glorious task of equipping and training the children of the Church.

Allow me to make that call to you, using a short story, and it's based on a true story!

Introduction

The Sunday morning worship service was almost over. I stood up for the last Psalm and glanced at the pew in front of me. The bouncy three-year-old boy, who nearly had his mum in tears during the first Psalm, was now laying sound asleep, unaware of the noise and movement of some 400 people rising from their pews. The young family behind me were still tirelessly doing their best to keep some order, as their four young ones dismounted from their pew, while juggling books, bags and pencils, and simultaneously preparing for the last Psalm and the blessing. It had been a restless service; with so many extra people to witness the baptism; numerous wriggling toddlers; and a steady convoy of people walking out

and back to their pews. Peering through the singing throng, I could just glimpse the newest parents in the building, they looked overwhelmed, exhausted, and ready to retreat back home for a quiet cuppa, baby feed and snooze.

My heart smiled, and the Psalm took on a renewed sense of joy. The bouncy three-year-old, the noisy family behind, the numerous wriggling toddlers (and older kids), the packed building, and the tired new parents now warmed my heart. Here was a glimpse of Christ's kingdom, coming in power and glory. Here was God's graceful covenant on display in the reality of Christ gathering His people, in their generations, for His new Jerusalem. Also on display was God's work in committing the hearts of parents and the wider Church family to the task of nurturing and instructing His royal children in godliness. Another powerful assurance of Christ's coming kingdom was the manner in which the preaching, the sacrament, and the communion of saints united in fulfilling God's promises to gather, defend and preserve His Church.

Over the past number of weeks I had feasted on a smorgasbord of articles and speeches on Reformed Education, and as I allowed these to percolate in my mind, a common thought crystallised into a question:

How does nurturing and educating the children of the church connect with the coming of Christ's kingdom in power and glory?

To explore that question more concretely I'd like to share with you three (3) key thoughts, and as I do that you may also recognise some of the material I have drawn upon for this presentation.

The first thought – Christ's kingdom comes in the gathering of His people, in their generations.

God's kingdom building work of gathering, defending and preserving for himself a Church chosen to everlasting life, commenced already in paradise and continued to be worked through the generations; in the covenant of grace with Noah; Abraham; Isaac; Jacob; and Israel.... Each generation



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appears in that covenant of grace and in the Church, in Zion, where God provides safety and security from devilish attacks.

Today we see the miracle of God's kingdom building work before our very eyes, when each year approximately 80 children are born and baptised in our metropolitan and south west churches. We see that miracle work grow, as these children fill our church pews and are nurtured in the ways of the Lord. We see that miracle when parents, with support from the communion of saints, ensure that these children are trained, instructed and equipped with the whole armour of God.

Christian Schooling too is part of the nurturing and training provided within the walls of Zion, for the royal children of Zion. As the body of Christ, all Church members are a hand and foot to one another, so that parents with the cooperation of the whole communion of saints may give their children education which is based on scripture and confession. Indeed, Christ's Kingdom is coming, He is gathering His people in their generations.

The second thought – Christ's kingdom comes through God's children living in obedience.

In the 16th Century John Calvin called, not only the parents, but also the Church to its task of teaching the children to live in obedience to scripture so that the image of Christ might be restored in them.... and in this way too Christ's kingdom comes in power and glory.

At baptism, the whole congregation acknowledges that this child is being raised in the midst of the congregation, and therefore the congregation will also support these parents in the upbringing of their children.

Christ's Kingdom comes when covenant children are trained in godliness, in the protection of home, church, and school. Christ's Kingdom comes when throughout their school years, children grow to understand what it means to be Holy and Royal children. Christ's Kingdom comes when these children are encouraged to live the life of a covenant child in the society, community and world in which they will end up. Christ's Kingdom comes when the children of the church learn to work with the knowledge which



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they receive in all their various subjects, particularly in the instruction of scripture and confessions.

The third thought – Christ's kingdom comes through God's faithfulness in preserving His Church.

The Church, including the children of the Church, will be under attack in the ever-present spiritual warfare, but they are safe in Father's care, for God has given parents and a Church family to help, protect and equip these children with the whole armour of God. Parents realise they cannot do this on their own, they need the help of the Lord, which He gives in the Church by the preaching and by the support of the members of the Church.

Children need to be equipped to understand how the Church of today has its place in society. These Royal Children also must understand what the promises and obligations are for royal children of the heavenly King, to live in the midst of the world. A reformed life in service to God and the neighbour in today's society encompasses all of life, hence the John Calvin Schools are mandated to lay a sound scholarly basis for a Reformed view of this world, culture, and society.

Reformed Schooling should educate, equip and encourage the students to stand in the spiritual battle. Our John Calvin Schools are the training grounds, the barracks, the exercise field, where the windows are opened to the world to make our children aware of the spiritual warfare that is raging. And for that warfare they need to be training, exercising, to be prepared, knowing the armour of faith in order to face and interact with the enemy in the gate.

Indeed, Christ's kingdom comes through God's faithfulness in preserving His church, as each generation receives through word and spirit all they need to stand in the spiritual battle.

Conclusion

In my mind's eye I'm back at Church, waiting for the final blessing at the end of that baptism worship service. The three-year-old is now standing on the pew, sheepishly clinging to his mum. The four kids behind me

are standing still. The whole congregation waits in silent expectation. Indeed, Christ is building His kingdom. You can see Christ gathering His people in their generations in the families of the Church. You can see Christ working through parents and His church to nurture and instruct the children of the church in godliness. You can see it in God's faithfulness in preserving His church by equipping the children of the church to stand in the spiritual battle.

When I think of these little children of the church around me, and the newest one at the front of the church, I am moved to support, protect, love and nurture these Royal Children of God. I am moved even though they are not my own children. I am moved even though my own children are mostly grown up. My heart goes out to those little church members and I desire to see them nurtured in the ways of the Lord, to be trained, instructed and equipped with the whole armour of God.

I look around the congregation and recognise a great many brothers and sisters, young and old, married, unmarried, parents, grandparents, widows and widowers, a communion of saints, who are also lifetime supporters of Reformed Schooling. Here is a communion of saints, who together with the parents, stand hand in hand and work shoulder to shoulder, in the rich privilege and task they have been given, to protect, nurture and equip the children of the Church. Christ is pleased to use all these members, and all of us, in His kingdom building work of gathering; defending; and preserving His people.

The minister raises His hands and proclaims the blessing, that same high priestly blessing proclaimed perfectly by our Lord Jesus Christ when He ascended into heaven, from where He will come again. Indeed, Christ's Kingdom is coming in all its fullness, power, and glory, and we, God's children, His Church, may already be part of His eternal kingdom, serving Christ our King!

H Dykstra
FRSA Board Chairman