



August
2021

Emo Christian Reformed Church

Care & Share

God Our Father

By Dr. Marno Retief

The first article of faith in the Apostles' Creed invites us to faith in God the Father. Any notion of God as some impersonal force or mere philosophical idea is ruled out right from the start. God is a personal God – God is a Father. But still, how should we understand the term *Father*? After all, the very notion of fatherhood has been vigorously debated and critiqued in our contemporary world. As Christians, we need to determine what a biblical theology of the Fatherhood of God looks like. Such an understanding will also help us to arrive at a healthy and balanced understanding of what fatherhood should look like in the family. Holy Scripture reveals at least three important senses in which God may be called Father.

Firstly, we call God Father because he's the Father of Creation. The Apostles' Creed affirms God as "the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth". God is the Creator – the universe and everything in it owes its existence to him. This notion of God as the Father of creation is firmly rooted in Scripture. In the Old Testament, Israel recognised God as their Father and Creator. In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses confronts the Israelites about their unfaithfulness to God, asking them, "Is this how you repay the Lord, you foolish and senseless people? Isn't he your Father and Creator? Didn't he make you and sustain you?" (Deut. 32:6, CSB). Similarly, the prophet Malachi asks, "Don't all of us have one Father? Didn't one God create us?" (Mal. 2:10, CSB). In the New Testament, the apostle Paul emphasises God's universal Fatherhood by even quoting from the pagan Greek poet Aratus. In the Book of Acts, Paul preaches to the people of Athens and approvingly quotes the following saying of Aratus: "For we are also his offspring" (Acts 17:28, CSB). And Paul interprets Aratus' saying as a reference to God's Fatherhood of all humanity.

In our conversations and interactions with people from other religions, it's good and right to acknowledge our common humanity, as well as the fact that our Creator God is the Father of all people. However, we need to be careful not to interpret God's universal Fatherhood in the wrong way. All people owe their existence to God and, in this limited sense, God is the Father of all. But this does not mean all people are born as children of God, as if all people are by nature born with the Holy Spirit indwelling them. Such thinking is totally alien to the Word of God. None of us are born as Christians. Rather, Holy Scripture teaches that human beings are by nature totally depraved. Our natural inclination is not towards godliness but towards sin. Rather, our natural spiritual condition is one of spiritual death, of alienation and separation from God. As the apostle Paul explains to the church in Ephesus,

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously lived according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. (Eph. 2:1-3, CSB)

Therefore, the apostle Paul issues a stern warning to people who stubbornly refuse to repent and commit their lives to Jesus Christ, warning them that they are “storing up wrath for [themselves] in the day of wrath, when God’s righteous judgment is revealed” (Rom. 2:5, CSB). So, while it’s true that God’s fatherhood extends to all people - in the sense that he created all people – yet it’s equally true that all people need to be spiritually reborn before they can become part of the family of God. But this brings me to the second sense in which we may call God Father.

We call God Father because he’s the Father of every person who’s adopted as his child through grace. The most well-known prayer in all of Christendom is, of course, the Lord’s Prayer, or, as it’s often called, the Our Father (cf. Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). But who has the right to address to address God as “Our Father”? Can anybody pray this prayer, regardless of whether or not they believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour? No, this prayer is reserved for people who have been adopted as children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. This adoption is something none of us deserve – it’s a supernatural gift of God, thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

All people who trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour are adopted into the family of God. They become sons and daughters of God the Father. John 1:12 (CSB) puts it this way: “But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name”. The apostle Paul explains how this adoption connects us to God as Father. Writing to the church in Rome, Paul says, “For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Rom. 8:15, CSB). Paul repeats this important truth in his *Letter to the Galatians*, telling them, “And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Gal. 4:6, CSB). It’s because the Holy Spirit is present in our lives that we have both the right and the freedom to call God “Our Father”.

Furthermore, because we have the same Father as Jesus, we are brothers and sisters of Christ. As the writer of Hebrews explains, “For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters” (Heb. 2:11, CSB). After his resurrection, Jesus instructed Mary Magdalene, “[G]o to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (John 20:17, CSB). If you believe in Jesus Christ, then you’ve also received the Holy Spirit – the “Spirit of adoption” (Rom. 8:15, CSB) – and you have the same Father as Christ who is now your brother. But the apostle Paul highlights another important truth – since we’re children of God, we’re also “coheirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17, CSB). What does this mean? The glorious resurrection life that Christ is now enjoying in the presence of God the Father will ultimately be enjoyed by every child of God. This is something every follower of Christ can look forward to.

But thirdly, and lastly, we call God Father because he’s the Father of his Son Jesus Christ. On the day we were baptised, we were baptised “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19, CSB). Our faith in one God who exists as three Divine Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is central to our Christian faith. How’s it possible for one God to exist as three Divine Persons? The nature and inner workings of the Holy Trinity will always remain a mystery to us, no matter how much we theorise or speculate. So, as we seek to understand the relationship of between God the Father and God the Son we can only go as far as God has chosen to reveal this mystery to us in Holy Scripture.

We live in a world where there’s increasing sensitivity regarding gender issues, especially as it relates to notions of masculinity and patriarchy. Some Christians feel uneasy with language about God as Father, concerned that calling God Father will somehow lead people to believe God has a specific biological gender. These concerns aren’t exclusive to our modern age. In fact, during the early centuries of the church, various church leaders sought to address this very issue. In the context of the Greco-Roman world, there were, of course, a vast number of male and female gods who were worshipped by non-believers. Often these gods had quite amusing and even scandalous stories attached to them. The early church wanted to clearly distinguish the doctrine of the Trinity from the shenanigans of these false gods. So, one of the most important things the early

church fathers pointed out is that the terms *Father* and *Son* should not be understood in some crude physical or biological sense. Rather, the terms *Father* and *Son* should be understood as relational terms. These terms point to the kind of relationship that exists between God the Father and God the Son. God the Father is the source of the divine life in the Trinity, while God the Son finds his origin in that source. Father and Son are so closely connected, the one cannot be considered apart from the other. In his treatise, *Against Praxeas*, the church father Tertullian explains it this way:

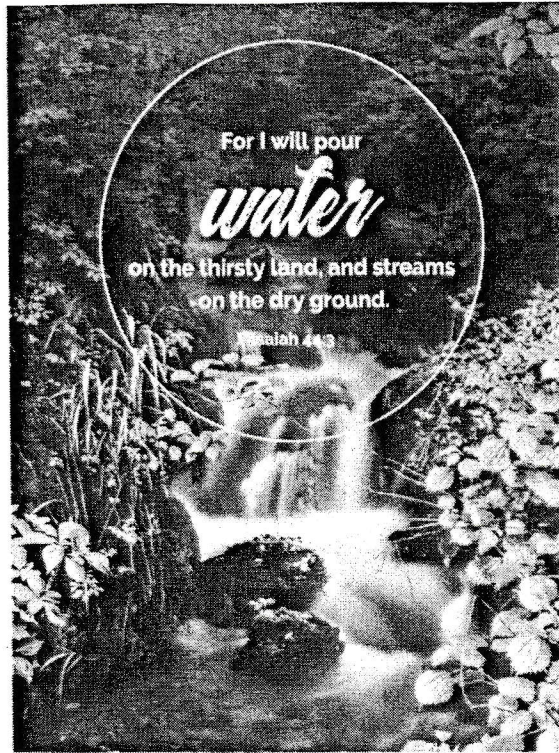
[F]ather makes son, and son makes father, and those who become what they are by relationship with one another cannot by any means so become by relationship with themselves . . . The rules God has made, he himself observes. A father must have a son so as to be a father, and a son must have a father so as to be a son.

In the New Testament, this family relationship between God the Father and God the Son is evident. In the Gospels, Jesus refers to God as “My Father” no less than forty times. When praying, Jesus addressed God as *Abba*. The word *Abba* is an Aramaic word that Jewish boys and girls, and even adults, used to address their father. It’s a respectful yet intimate word, rooted in the relationship of care and affection that existed between the father and child. *Abba* is more or less equivalent to our English word *Dad*. By calling God *Abba*, Jesus pointed us to the fact that God is a loving Father, a Father who’s gentle, understanding, and affectionate. Because the Son loves the Father, he does what the Father commands him to do (John 14:31). In the same way, the Father loves the Son, declaring, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased” (Matt. 3:17, CSB). This loving relationship between Father and Son serves as a model for what the relationship between parent and child should look like in our families.

A number of years ago, Ray Boltz and Steve Millikan wrote a song called, “Always be a child”. Through all my years of ministry in church, I don’t think I’ve ever come across a song that better summarises what it means to be a beloved child of God the Father, loved completely and unconditionally. During the chorus of the song, God the Father declares his love for you and me as his children. Listen to these words and hear the Father speaking them to you today:

You will always be a child in my eyes
And when you need some love
My arms are open wide
And even when you’re growing old
I hope you realize
You will always be a child in my eyes

OUR CHURCH FAMILY



“Aan ‘s Heeren zegen is het al gelegen.” Everything depends on God’s blessings.

How true that saying is. I grew up with the Dutch version. We experience it today with the lack of rain. The forests are suffering and fires are out of control. Not much is growing. Is this a time for a lesson to be learned. Farmers spread fertilizer to make sure they have good crops. Not this year. Animals are getting sold and leaving the area. What about the forest animals, especially where there are fires. On the other hand, going to the beach is very enjoyable. It feels so good to go for a good swim on a hot day! When I was looking through some books, found a saying from C. R. Swindoll.

There is no impossible situation that God cannot handle. He won’t handle it necessarily your way. But he will handle it.

Trust God all the time, especially in a time when it is not going as planned.

When listing the graduates in last month’s Care & Share, we apologize for missing Ashlyn Beck. Ashlyn has graduated from grade 12 at FFHS. Ashlyn is going to the University of Toronto in the fall for political science, with intentions of becoming a lawyer. Congratulations, Ashlyn! We wish you God’s blessing as you go on to university.

Dove Stahn had cataract surgery on the 7th and 21st of July in Thunderbay. She will have to go back for a checkup but so far everything looks good and bright.

We praise God for the safe arrival of Caiden Derrens Kaemingk, born to Timon and Tina on July 7th in Fort Frances. 10lb 5oz and 22.5 inches tall. Congratulations, Timon and Tina!!

We wish the Pete Veldhuisen family a safe trip as they travel to Inwood, Iowa as Tianna and Benjie Lee will be married there on the 14th of August. We wish you a blessed day!

Emma Dykstra and Josiah Haynes are engaged and plan to be married on October 8 in Victoria, B.C. Congratulations and may God bless you as you continue with your wedding plans.

Last Sunday we enjoyed hearing from Ian & Jessica Friesen about their ministry. We wish them a good time visiting with friends and family while they are here and a safe and uneventful trip as they go back.

Bryan Petkau, (6 year old grandson of Arnold & Cindy Kaemingh) was injured in an accident in the shop at home. He was transported to Thunderbay but is home now with a cast on his leg. Pray for continued healing.

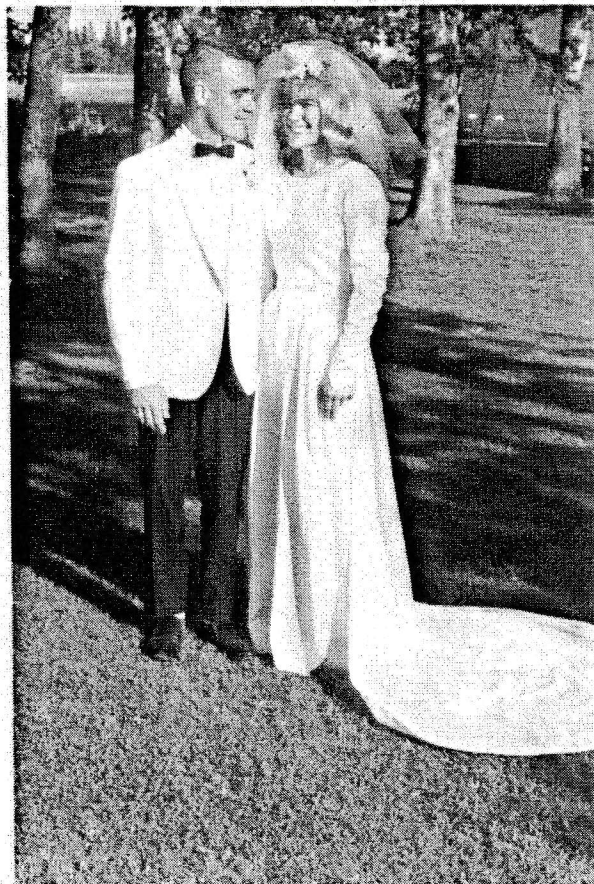
Our condolences go out to Britta deGroot (daughter of Theo & MarieAnn, living in Kelowna, B.C.) and the deGroot family with the passing away of Gabriel Dix, Britta's partner. Gabriel was struck down by a vehicle in Osoyoos, B.C. on Sunday, July 4th and passed away in Kelowna, B.C. on Tuesday, July 13th, from injuries sustained by the accident. A service, celebrating Gabe's life will take place on July 31 in Kamloops B.C. If you would like to send Britta a card, her address is: 2075 Lillooet Court, Kelowna, B.C. V1V 1Y2

The Dorcas Society will meet at the home of Sietske Van Zwol on the 23rd of August at 10:15 a.m. Lunch will be provided. Don't forget your wrapped gift, no more than \$5.

Our seniors celebrating birthdays in August are Jacqui Hunsperger on the 6th, Leona Van Heyst on the 15th and Warren Toles on the 19th. Happy Birthday to all those who have August birthdays.

Happy Anniversary to all those who took their wedding vows in August. Theo & MarieAnn deGroot will be celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary on August 1st. Elmer & Helen Cates will be celebrating their 50th anniversary on August 28th.

Helen and Elmer, a special congratulations to both of you as you celebrate 50 years together. Both of you keep our church clean and tidy. Helen, you have taught Sunday School for countless years as well as being a Calvinette leader for years. Elmer, thank you for your time spent as deacon. You two always show a helping hand and a caring heart. If it is not for people, then it is for the animals in your yard. Yes, you both have let your light shine in the church and community. May the Lord bless you and strengthen you as you look to follow Him.



Elmer & Helen Cates
August 28, 1971
Married in Emo CRC
Pastor Duifhuis, officiating

UNITED STATES

1700 28th Street SE P (616) 726-1144
Grand Rapids, MI 49508-1407 P 877-272-6205

CANADA

3475 Mainway
PO Box 5070, STN LCD 1 P (905) 336-2920
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8 P 800-730-3490

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July 21, 2021

Emo Christian Reformed Church
PO Box 209
Emo, ON PoW 1E0

Dear friends at Emo Christian Reformed Church

Thank you for your generosity! Your investment in God's mission is helping the CRCNA grow in mission!

Across this denomination, we see a growing passion for mission. Your gift comes at the right time to deepen that passion and get our churches excited about God's mission. And what's more, giving through Resonate helps to strengthen our capability to join God's mission!

Your gift helps missionaries, church planters, and other ministry leaders worldwide live and share the gospel. And because you gave through Resonate, you are a part of the network of support that ensures ministries don't just survive, but thrive! Churches like yours provide the strength and sustainability that unites our church on mission.

When we come together—Resonate ministry leaders and Christians like you—the overall effect is that we amplify the message of God's Word, so that it goes out in every direction like an expanding sound!

We're grateful to partner with you as you live out your faith through your gifts, prayers, and support. Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K DeRaaf".

Kevin DeRaaf
Acting Canada Director

Below are details of your gifts in April, May and June 2021. If you have any questions, please contact Annette Van Soelen at avansoelen@crcna.org

4/13/2021	801110	Resonate: Ministry Share	\$2,797.25
4/13/2021	804163	Resonate: Friesen, Ian and Jessica	\$520.00
4/27/2021	801210	Resonate Global Mission: Where Most Needed	\$699.50


THANK YOU

Engaging People. Embracing Christ.



August

2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Theodore Esselink Theo & MarieAnn deGroot (40th) 10:00 WORSHIP	2 *Colin & Michelle Van Beek (7th) 	3 Klyde Laplante Jeannette Veldhuisen	4 *Warren & Bonnie Toles (36th)	5 *James & Holly Kaemigh (4th)	6 John Esselink jnr. Jacqui Hunsperger *Jack & Wilma Esselink (39th)	7
8 Lauren Esselink *Fred & Cathie Sinninghe (29th) 10:00 WORSHIP	9 Betty Esselink *John Laplante & Kerri Tolen (24th)	10	11 *Paul & Karen Koomans (32nd)	12 Emma Dykstra	13 Sam Esselink Doug Veldhuisen	14 *Arnold & Carol Kaemigh (39th)
15 Leona Van Heyst Natalie Veldhuisen *Marcus & Jenelle Veldhuisen (6th) 10:00 WORSHIP	16 Bridget Foster Benedict Retief	17	18 Avis Kaemigh Peter Osadchuk Fred Sinninghe	19 Warren Toles	20 Mika Kooistra Mark Van Heyst	21 Dirk Crans
22 *Luke & Marissa Esselink (6th) *Colin & Emma Kaemigh (7th) 10:00 WORSHIP	23 Gary Esselink Cindy Kaemigh 10:15 DORCAS	24	25 Dan Agombar	26	27 Jesse Esselink	28 *Elmer & Helen Cates (50th)
29 10:00 WORSHIP	30	31 Jenna Esselink				