Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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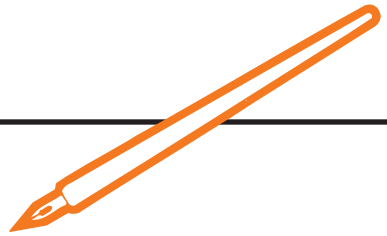
The House of Commons and the Church of God

EDITORIAL

By R. Schouten



Should a Minister Pray in Public Worship for the Unity of Canada?

When children make maps in social studies classes, they usually regard the boundary lines of countries and provinces as permanent. Just as the lines of rivers and mountain ranges and seas are fixed, so also the lines dividing one people and one nation from another are seen as stable and enduring. The late 20th century shows this to be indeed a naive misunderstanding. Boundaries are changing rapidly. The former USSR has divided into at least 14 nations. Yugoslavia has disintegrated and nobody knows for sure what will arise from the fires of war. Hong Kong is about to return to the Chinese after a long lease to the British expires. China also is looking with nationalistic aspirations upon Taiwan. East Germany has united with West Germany. Struggles continue in Northern Ireland to break that land and people out of the United Kingdom.

And then, there is Canada with its Quebec problem. We have a secession-minded party in control of Quebec's government. We have a large group of federal members of Parliament from Quebec who are also committed to Quebec sovereignty. The recipe for massive change is being daily mixed. Canada as we know it is in serious jeopardy, after a lifespan of only 130 years. Apart from the Quebec question, we also have massive sections of land being ceded to aboriginal control. For example, in the North, we have seen the creation of essentially a new province in which fewer than 18, 000 aboriginals will gain a portion of land almost half the size of British Columbia (the Nunavut deal).

The thoughts of church members differ widely on the question of Canada's future. Some are of the mind that it would be better for Quebec to separate as soon as possible so that the rest of the nation can get on with its life. According to them, the national agenda has far too long been dominated by Quebec concerns and influence. Other church members are convinced that Canada must remain unified, even if force will be required to maintain that unity. Then, too, we also hear voices of separation in parts of the country other than Quebec and even opinions for amalgamation of one or more provinces with the U.S.A.

In such an unsettled political environment and with such diversity of opinion, how must the church pray? May a minister pray in public worship for the unity of Canada? How can he do so when some members of the congregation may be well convinced that the dissolution of Canada as we know it is not only inevitable but even desirable?

Such questions force us to think about the relationship between the church and the nation, between Christians and the political organization of society. How do we see ourselves as church in the midst of the nation? What is the place of a nation in the light of God's everlasting Kingdom?

Judgment of God upon the nations

In the first place, it should not surprise a Christian that nations come and go and that boundaries change. Change is not new. Think of how the Israelites displaced the Caananites only to be themselves exiled by the Assyrians and Babylonians. Recall, too, how the power of Assyria was overcome by Babylon which then fell to Persia only to be succeeded by Greece and Rome. In more recent eras, we can call to mind the predominance of the British Empire as well as the might of other colonizing nations such as Portugal or the Netherlands. Today, their territory is lost and their power diminished. For God not only raises up the nations to do his bidding but also brings them down again. The nations are in his hand as a drop in the bucket.

The reality is that nations may experience God's judgment in their history. When nations drift from godliness, abandoning a way of life shaped by the Word of God, they come under wrath. Large sections of the Old Testament prophetic writings are devoted to oracles against the nations of that time (see, for example, Isaiah 13-23; Jeremiah 46-51; Ezek. 25-32). In a similar vein, we may also call to mind the reluctant journey of Jonah to Niniveh, the capital city of the Assyrian empire, to proclaim God's sovereignty over its citizens.

In such portions of Holy Scripture, we see that Almighty God never relinquishes His claim and jurisdiction over the nations. Whether they know it or not, they are answerable to Him for the way they live as a people before Him. After all, He is King of all the earth, not just of Israel. Interspersed throughout God's oracles of judgment upon Gentile nations are to be found rich messages forecasting the ingathering of the Gentiles. In other words, the judgment upon the nations only serves the larger purpose of extending God's eternal rule in the hearts of men. The fall of nations and the rise of nations must serve God's church-gathering work.

Is Canada as a nation under judgment? It can only amaze us that the Lord's wrath has not broken out with fiery intensity. We live in a nation that largely disregards the living God. It is a nation that has banished the Name of the Lord from public life and only barely tolerates at this time the already all-too-quiet witness of a believing Church. The Church's critique of society has largely focused upon issues of public morality such as a declining marriage ethic, growing aggressiveness of the homosexual movement, abortion and similar horrors. Of equal concern, however, are the more refined and socially-acceptable iniquities like greed, lust and selfishness. These sins affect the Church in very powerful ways. It may even be asked whether Canada as a nation has declined precisely because a spirit of world-conformity has entered the church. If the church fails to be salt by seeking God's Kingdom and its righteousness, why should anyone be surprised to see the world rotting? After all, there is no other salt! Also for this reason, judgment begins with the household of God. But it does not end with the household of God. It extends to the nations, too.

Idolatry of government

As church members who want to keep the first commandment, we also need to reflect upon our understanding of the role of government. It would seem that despite a modest turn to the right, Canada is still in many ways a nanny-state. Government is regarded by most citizens as a provider of all sorts of good things. Job security, welfare payments, help for childcare, guidance for business, funding for students, permission to broadcast, grants for research – all this must come from the omnipotent and everywhere present hand of government. Instead of seeing God as the overflowing fountain of all good, many so regard the state. Through the strong arm of the state, we are all enabled to reach our potential! Blessings come from Victoria, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto or Ottawa as governments pursue their vision of what makes for the good life. It would seem that many people will experience great disappointment as also this idol comes crashing down around their feet under the judgment of God. The truth is that government cannot guarantee welfare nor did God assign that role to them. All those who trust this idol will one day stand empty-handed as it turns out to be bankrupt and unable to help. Christians need to repent of their trust in government and turn in humble, daily dependence to God who alone can provide us with all things needful for body and soul. Our security is in Him alone, for He hears the cry of those who call upon Him and His arm is not shortened to help them.

Multicultural communion?

Canada has long been proud of its multicultural approach to civic life. The goal is integration of varied cultures and ethnic groups into a rich national life characterized by mutual respect and unity, while retaining diversity. Many of us have been conditioned to accept the rhetoric of multiculturalism without question. It goes without saying that believers should demonstrate love and respect for all and seek to do good to all men and women. It is also true that the rich diversity of human culture is something to be celebrated not deplored. Nonetheless, we should be willing to ask some questions of the multicultural philosophy.

In many ways, multicultural philosophy sounds like a secular version of the communion of the saints in the Church of God. As Christians who confess the catholicity of the Church, we believe that all ethnic groups, all languages, all cultures are made one in Christ. In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for all are one in Christ (Gal. 3:28). According to Paul in Eph. 2:11-16, it is in Christ that previously hostile people are reconciled to one another. In the body of Christ, people find each other and are united as brothers and sisters under God their Father. Unity of mankind is ultimately possible only through the blood of the Mediator who came and preached peace to those who were far away and peace to those who were near.

In other words, the answer to racial tension, to ethnic rivalry and international warfare is the Church of Jesus Christ. In the Church and there only, the curse of Babel is reversed and the unity of mankind becomes a living reality in the one Spirit Therefore, apart from a strong church with a living witness to Christ, fragmentation of the national fabric in a multi-cultural and multi-racial country such as Canada is inevitable, especially in the face of a decline of strong national government. Where there is no unifying faith and no strong national leadership, people will tend to divide along racial lines. We may conclude that multiculturalism is an idol in danger of imminent collapse.

Our prayers

How do we pray for a country which wants to build its national house on a rotten foundation? Should we pray for unity pure and simple? It would seem better to pray for justice and peace, for the restraining of the ungodly, so that as church members we may live quiet lives in all godliness and holiness (1 Tim. 2:1-2) and so that the ministry of the Gospel of peace and unity in Christ may progress. We should pray that the Church would be faithful in Canada as salt and light, thus showing the way to God's lasting city.

As believers we know that all political organizations have lifespans determined by God's blessing or judgment. Besides, we have no long-term commitments to any national government. True enough, we want to be good citizens. We want to do good to all men and show respect for authority. However, our aspirations are not tied to the well-being of Canada as such. For here we have no lasting city (Heb. 11:10, 14, 16, 13:14). In a sense we are strangers to the proceedings of national life. We have our citizenship in God's Kingdom (Phil. 3:20, 21). Our loyalties lie in this Kingdom and for it we work and pray. The only permanent nation, after all, is God's holy nation, His chosen race, His royal priesthood (I Pet. 2:9, 10). which He has called and saved to live with Him in eternal blessedness in a new creation. May our life in Canada today serve the life to come in God's everlasting Kingdom.

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MEDITATION

By H.J.J. Feenstra

BE WISE WITH WISDOM!

Priorities, loyalty and faithfulness

Originally published as
Wees wijs met de wijsheid,
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Translated by T.M.P. VanderVen

The Lord comes first (Proverbs 3:1-2)

A fairy tale often ends with the statement that they lived happily long ever after. The wisdom teacher, on the other hand, starts with the happiness of a long life. Listen:

> *My son, do not forget my teaching,*
> *but let your heart keep my commandments;*
> *for length of days and years of life*
> *and abundant welfare will they give you.*

These verses repeat the promise which Moses had passed on to all the people of Israel in the Name of the LORD, but now these promises have a personal address. Recognize in all of this the nature of the proverbs; but do not, therefore, belittle the deep truth contained in this admonition and promise. If we acknowledge the LORD to be the First One in our life; if we reckon with Him in all aspects of our life, then we will experience how His peace will penetrate everything and will make our life full and rich in all its dimensions.

Peace – *shalom*. These words mean much more than the absence of war. The Bible even speaks of the *shalom* of war, as when David asked Uriah for a report about the success of the military campaign. *Shalom* – peace, that means welfare and prosperity, order and harmony. Peace is not merely a feeling; it is a particular state of affairs. Wisdom prepares the way towards such a state of *shalom*.

From Scripture
Proverbs 3:1-2
Deuteronomy 6:1-3
2 Samuel 11:7
Luke 2:14

Loyalty and faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

Loyalty and faithfulness are essential ingredients of wisdom. The King James Version calls these qualities *mercy and truth* – typical covenant words. The words *loyalty* and *mercy* indicate an attitude of solidarity in outlook and inclination, as well as in deeds. With this attitude we approach others with whom we live in close relation in our family, marriage, the church, our work. These relationships are not governed by our own subjective self as voluntary members of a particular group. Mercy and loyalty must govern each relationship in which we live and work, expressing true Christian solidarity in an attitude of openness to the other. We will help and defend the other when necessary; we will assist and support each other.

All of this does not come about in a sudden emotional outburst, but as an expression of continual faithfulness. Faithfulness should be there all the time, without interruption – loyalty *and* faithfulness. Faithfulness refers to truthfulness, reliability, and enduring resolve.

To whom should this loyalty and faithfulness which is demanded from us be directed? The answer given by the Bible is perfectly clear. This double command of faithfulness points us in the very first place to the LORD and then to our neighbour. In this way, the Lord Jesus summarized the whole law according to its essence and meaning.

We must do our best to gain a good reputation and to obtain the favour of people and of God. Remember what was said about Jesus as a young boy, *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and*

What's inside?

"Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law . . ." These are the opening words of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Noble words. Good words. But does the recognition that God is supreme really function in the country – in the Parliament? The recent passage of Bill C-33 suggests No. We have included three articles which deal with how we ought to interact with the civil government. Mr. James Dykstra tells us about how the RefNet was recently used to send thousands of e-mail messages to parliamentarians. Rev. John Van Popta seeks to answer whether consistories of churches have an obligation to address legislators on ethical matters. Another issue which has been bothering Canada of late is the threat of Quebec's secession. The editorial, by Rev. Rob Schouten, addresses whether ministers ought to pray in public worship for the unity of Canada.

The Lord Jesus warned His people that in the world they would face persecution. Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff writes about persecuted children of God in Africa.

You will also find a report on a church building project in the Dominican Republic, and a little article on fasting.

We wish you a pleasant Canada Day on July 1. And to our American readers: Happy Independence Day (July 4)!

GvP

man. It can be difficult at times to gain such favour and such a reputation with God and man. Even fellow church members may hinder you in your efforts. Catechetical students who want to do their best are often laughed at by others. Gossip about families can be hurtful. Instead, we should encourage each other to increase in stature and in favour with God and man, and in that order – God and man.

There is much apostate theology which turns everything upside down and disrupts life. Liberal theologians suggest that the second great commandment should become the first, and the first should become the second: When you love your neighbour (i.e., allow him to live his own life), then you demonstrate that you love God. However, this view is without goal and norms for the love for one's neighbour. Only when we first of all love God and accept all that He says, only then do we know how to treat our neighbour in love – also when necessary by opposing him.

Loyalty and faithfulness – make sure that these two are kept together! Hang them as a necklace over your heart; wear them as a wedding ring which you will never take off your finger.

From Scripture
Proverbs 3:3-4
Matthew 22:37-40
Song of Songs 8:6
Luke 2:52

C

The House of Commons and the Church of God

By G.Ph. van Popta

Recently the Canadian House of Commons passed Bill C-33 which amended the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to include a clause which forbids discrimination on the basis of "sexual orientation." The Prime Minister earlier had suggested that this would not happen because the term "sexual orientation" was too ill defined. Yet, because of enormous pressure from the homosexual lobby in Canada the Minister of Justice introduced a bill amending the *Charter* and the Liberal majority in the House moved it through the mandatory three readings in less than two weeks. At the time this is being written the bill is before the Canadian Senate for approval and then when passed it will go to the Governor General for Royal assent and so will become the law of the land.

As Reformed Confessors we believe this to be an abomination before the Lord God. There is an increasing tendency to treat or regard homosexuals as a special class of human beings entitled to special consideration with respect to their "orientation" or "inclination." This has happened over the past decades. As our society has fallen away from the truth of God's Word the norms and standards of Scripture are heard less and less in daily life.

What role if any does the church have to play in all this? In the past decades among the Canadian Reformed churches in Canada various political action groups have formed (ARPA). The Christian Heritage Party has been formed. Many church members have addressed governments and political parties and election candidates about issues and presented policy ideas based on Scriptural principles. But does the church have a role as church? Should the church as consistory address governments on issues that affect the moral fabric of the nation or must it be silent and leave this work to the members of the church?

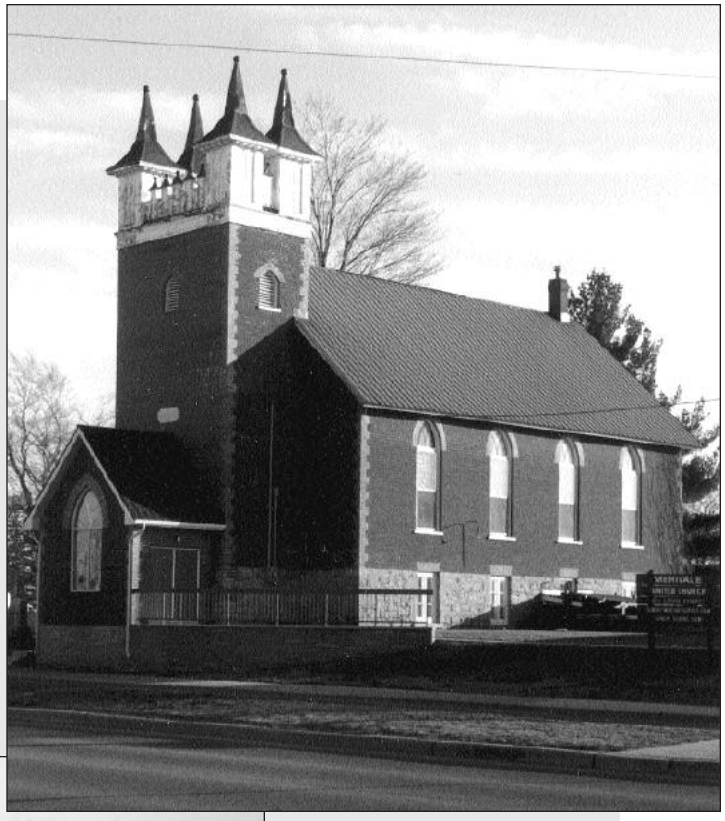
SCRIPTURE

Calvin on Government

In Paul's first letter to Timothy he urges Timothy and us to pray for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions. When Calvin writes about the magistrates in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* he says that the magistrates should be faithful as God's deputies.[1] The civil government is placed in authority by God and the magistrates are to exercise their rule to His honour. The condition of the church is entrusted to the magistrate's protection and care.[2] Calvin points us to Psalm 2:2 where David urges all kings and rulers to kiss the Son of God. They are to "submit to Christ the power with which they have been invested, that He alone may tower over all."[3] Calvin argues that the magistrates are the "protectors and vindicators of public innocence, modesty, decency and tranquillity. . . ."[4] This teaching of John Calvin is reflected in the Belgic Confession, Article 36. The Reformer also wrote that though a nation was free to make such laws as it saw fit, he denied that "those barbarous and savage laws such as gave honor to thieves, permitted promiscuous intercourse, and others more filthy and more absurd, are to be regarded as laws. For they are abhorrent not only to all justice, but also to humanity and gentleness."[5] Calvin, however, granted the state freedom to legislate punishments according to need. There might be times when certain vices need the special attention of the magistrates lest everything go to ruin.[6]

Sermon on the Mount

The Lord Jesus teaches His disciples that they were to be the salt of the earth, a light on a lamp-stand, and a city on a hill top. Salt is a preservative that when liberally applied will prevent decay in meat and other foods. In and of itself it has little value. You cannot eat



only salt. A lit lamp has no value when hid. Light is not hoarded and kept in a bushel or trapped under a bed. Salt and light give benefit only when applied to their surroundings.[7] The Lord Jesus also taught that a city on a hilltop cannot be hidden. The church must not think that it exists for and of itself, as if it has intrinsic importance.[8] It is to be preserving salt. It is to be a bright light. It is to be a visible city. Only one thing is important. The spreading of the light of God and reflecting the glory of His Son. What counts is the glory of God.

The Ten Commandments

The law of God must have an impact on the world. J. Douma points out that since the time of the Reformation a three fold distinction has been made in the function of the Law.[9] The first concerns the meaning of the law for public and political life. The second uncovers the guilt of sin. The third use is as a rule of thankfulness. The third use is as a norm, the second as a mirror, the first as a safeguard. Calvin says that this first use of the law restrains men from sin. This is especially true for those who are not yet believers. He points us to Paul who writes in 1 Tim. 1:9-10 that "the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, immoral persons, sodomites, kidnappers, liars, perjurers. . . .(RSV)." This shows that "the law is like a halter to check the raging and otherwise limitlessly ranging lusts of the flesh."[10]

CHURCH ORDER

Article 28

The church order of Dort as revised and adopted in the Canadian and American Reformed churches addresses these matters. Article 28 says that the office-bearers are to encourage and teach the congregation that they are to show obedience, love and respect to the civil authorities. They are also to endeavour, also by communication, to secure and retain the favour of the authorities toward the church so that the church of Christ may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectable in every way. We see here then that it is the duty of the office-bearers to communicate with the civil authorities. W.W.J. Van Oene suggests that beyond church, family and personal prayers letters could be sent to newly elected officials assuring them that prayers and intercessions will be raised to God for them.[11] In the past Dutch synods, for example, have sent communications to their monarch to assure the love and the respect of the churches represented at synod.

Article 30

Article 30 of the Church Order also has bearing on this matter. There it says that the assemblies of the church shall only deal with ecclesiastical matters. This might seem to preclude the church speaking to the government at all and so contradict article 28 but this is not so. H. Spaan in his discussion of the matter suggests that "political, social and economical questions are ecclesiastical matters when doctrinal and ethical issues of sufficient moment and magnitude are involved according to the Word of God. . . ."[12] Not everything that a government does falls under this rule but there are times that the church should not be silent. It should speak up when issues of sufficient moment and magnitude are involved.

The church is not to take on the role of the state and begin to legislate and to punish with fines and imprisonment. Nor is the state to interfere with the authority of the church in exercising spiritual discipline and censure. Each has its role and function under God as office bearers endowed with authority in their own place. The weapon of the church is the Word of God. But it should then also use that weapon by addressing those in authority. Though the church must pray for those in civil authority it must not then think that it need not proclaim the truth to those very magistrates for whom it prays.

Van Dellen and Monsma, in their Church Order commentary, write that when article 30 states that only ecclesiastical matters are to be dealt with we should not think this means that the "instituted church as such has no message for and interest in things governmental, social, economic, educational. It assuredly has."[13] This is not a license, however, for the church to engage in all sorts of political action and lobbying. Nor should it be seen as a directive to set up all sorts of consistorial, classical or synodical committees to examine every kind of social and political problem in the land. The church's task is to remain a beacon of truth in a dark world. But part of that task is to speak out on ethical issues of sufficient gravity.

There is no law regulating abortion in this country. Should the church not speak to this issue? Shall we not bear the burden of guilt with our fellow citizens for our silence? Throughout the western world, the "right to die" groups promote euthanasia. The "gay rights" lobby badgers governments into removing the bridle of laws against promiscuity, adultery and sodomy. Shall we be silent? We must speak out as individuals but should we not communicate to the magistrates that the church which prays for them according to the direction of Scripture also abhors these things because of the teaching of that same Scripture?

Conclusion

As J. Douma writes, "we must not pull the church and the world apart, but we must differentiate them."[14] The first use of the law must not be isolated from the gospel for then we will quickly fall into humanism. But neither should we negate it by leaving it to function only in the church, for then we fall into Anabaptism. We must "not close our eyes to this world, with which God, in His long suffering, still wants to concern himself. And if *God* also gives His law in order to make possible a bearable society for Gentiles and non-believers, then *we* cannot remove our hands from the world."[15]

May the church then continue to be a light in this world, even as our nation abandons the direction given by God in His Word. Let the church also speak out on matters that affect the moral and ethical framework of our nation and so be a preserving salt. The church must raise a prophetic voice and point legislators and magistrates (for whom we pray) to the Word of God, lest the Lord turn in anger and come in judgment against our nation.

Rev. J.L. Van Popta is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in the Nation's Capital.

CHURCH NEWS

CALLED to the Church at Lincoln, ON

Rev. E. Kampen

of Port Kells, BC

* * *

CALLED to the Church at Coaldale, AB

Rev. J. de Gelder

of Smithville, ON

* * *

ACCEPTED call to Bedfordale, Australia

Rev. P.K.A. de Boer

of Carman, MB

* * *

Classis Ontario South held Wednesday, June 12th, 1996 declared eligible for call Mr. R.J. Eikelboom, B.A., M.Div., 1-905-318-0459, and Mr. J.P. VanVliet, B.A., M.Div., 1-905-318-6426 Classis gave "preaching consent" to Mr. R. Pot. Address: 505 Upper Paradise Road, Hamilton, ON L9C 5E2. Candidate R.J. Eikelboom received a call from the church at Fergus, ON and Calgary, AB.

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[1] 4.20.6
[2] 4.20.5
[3] ibid.
[4] 4.20.9
[5] 4.20.15
[6] 4.20.16
[7] J. Van Bruggen, *The Sermon on the Mount: a travel guide for Christians.* Premier: Winnipeg. 1986 (p. 24).
[8] ibid. (p. 26)
[9] J. Douma, *Christian Moral and Ethics.* [trans. J.P. Elliot, A. Pol] Premier: Winnipeg, 1983. (p. 44).
[10] 2.7.10
[11] W.W.J. Van Oene. *With Common Consent.* Premier: Winnipeg, 1990, (p. 130).
[12] H. B. Spaan. *Christian Reformed Church Government.* Kregel: Grand Rapids 1968 (p. 79-80).
[13] I. Van Dellen and M. Monsma. *The Church Order Commentary.* Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1951.(p. 136)
[14] J. Douma, *Christian Moral and Ethics.* [trans. J.P. Elliot, A. Pol] Premier: Winnipeg, 1983. (p. 46).
[15] ibid.

RAY OF SUNSHINE

By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

"He will not let your foot be moved, He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep."
Psalm 121:3,4

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is summer time again. Not only does that bring us (hopefully) the nice weather, but it is also for many people time to enjoy some vacation. Schools are closed, and many other regular activities are cancelled. During the summer months most people want to spend as much time as possible outdoors. And there are many different ways to do that. Many people are able to take some time off from work, and take a break from their regular routines. It is good to drop some of the heavy workload or the many responsibilities, to relax and to be able to do things that you really like to do. It makes you more fit to pick up the work again later.

Holiday time has disadvantages, too, especially for those who are unable to take such a break. It is not so easy when many regular routines are affected by it, which is the case when you depend on a lot of other people. When the people on whom you rely every day are gone, you look forward to the end of this holiday season. You miss the support from maybe a nurse, a counselor, a regular visitor, the minister, a friend. What may seem only a short holiday to those who enjoy it, is a very long time to those who are waiting at home.

How do we copes with inconveniences and maybe disappointments while we are unable to take holidays? Maybe we even have to stay home all summer, and always. Does it make us unhappy, and discontent? That probably could happen if we did not know any better. Fortunately we know that our happiness does not depend on holidays! It's nice if we can enjoy them, but we *can* do without them. The really important things in our life are always with us. For there is One Who will never leave us, that is the Lord. And the only thing from which we can never take a break is serving the Lord. The Lord is always there to support us and help us, and He never leaves us. He does not even sleep or slumber. This is our comfort when we see so many people go away.

We have even more than the certainty of the Lord's presence. We also have His promises for our future. Maybe now we cannot travel and/or see beautiful and spectacular sights. But a most exciting future is awaiting us. Our Lord and Saviour planned that future for us. He died for our sins on the cross. By doing that He opened for us the way to heaven, and to an everlasting future on a new earth. No one has ever taken a holiday nearly as exciting as the Life that is promised to all those who rely on Jesus Christ as their Saviour. It is a Life free of sin and evil, and it will last everlastingly. When the Holy Spirit works faith into our hearts so that we really believe that those promises are for us, then we can also be happy now. In spite of all the disappointments that we may have to endure. In faith we may know that it is only a little while longer until we are allowed to be with our Lord, and be part of the crowd that surrounds His holy throne with praises and thanksgiving. And that is not only for a short holiday, it will go on forever and ever.

Hark how the adoring hosts above
With songs surround the throne!
Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
But all their hearts are one.

To Him who sits upon the throne,
The God whom we adore,
And to the Lamb that once was slain
Be glory evermore.

Hymn 23:1,8

Birthdays in August:

5: Philip Schuurman
156 St. Catharines Street
Unit 12
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

9: Rose Malda
Oakland Centre
53 Bond Street
Oakville, ON L6J 5B4

18: Fenny Kuik
Box 35, Group 606
Winnipeg, MB R2C 2Z3

23: Jack Dieleman
5785 Young Street, Apt. 704
Willowdale, ON M2M 4J2

Happy Birthday to You! and until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen
7462 Hwy. 20, RR 1
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

The_Honorable_Member@parl.gc.ca

By James Dykstra

Anyone who has ever tried to steer politics in a Christian direction has likely felt lonely, and unable to make a difference. For a Christian to make a contribution he often needs back-up. It sometimes seems that he must either compromise his message to make it more palatable, or else somehow find support in the larger Christian community.

As Bill C-33 – an act to amend the Canadian Bill of Rights and prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation – passed Parliament a few weeks back, this support from the larger Christian community materialized. It started on an e-mail based Reformed discussion group called the RefNet. Someone mentioned that Bill C-33 was to be moved through the House of Commons in as speedy a way as possible. Haste was necessary for the government so there wouldn't be time to organize opposition to this potentially controversial and embarrassing bill.

With the government trying to pass this legislation as quickly as possible, knowing the average speed of letters sent by Canada Post, there seemed little opportunity to let Members of Parliament know that much of the Christian community was solidly opposed to this measure. However, the Internet – where this RefNet discussion was happening – is a strange and mysterious place. A response came quickly that not all hope was lost. There was a place in Nepean, Ontario which accepted e-mail messages and would forward it to a Member of Parliament as a fax.

This was a marvelous solution to the problem, but though it provided some hope, it was not a complete answer. Many of the Christians on the RefNet wanted to contact not just their own MP; Alan Rock, the minister sponsoring the bill; and the Prime Minister, but also the other 292 MPs as well. This fax service did not allow for that. Since it was provided free of charge, the operators of the fax-by-e-mail gateway asked that faxes be limited to ten per person per day. At that rate, to contact all 295 of the elected representatives would take a month. There only was about two weeks left in which to act, so a quicker method was needed.

The big break came when someone on the RefNet revealed that Members of Parliament had recently been given e-mail by the House of Commons. Happily, they even knew the domain name for Parliament, the oddly phrased "parl.gc.ca". For e-mail knowing the domain name is like knowing the street address of an office building for regular mail. It will get your mail to the right building, but you need more information to get it to the correct office.

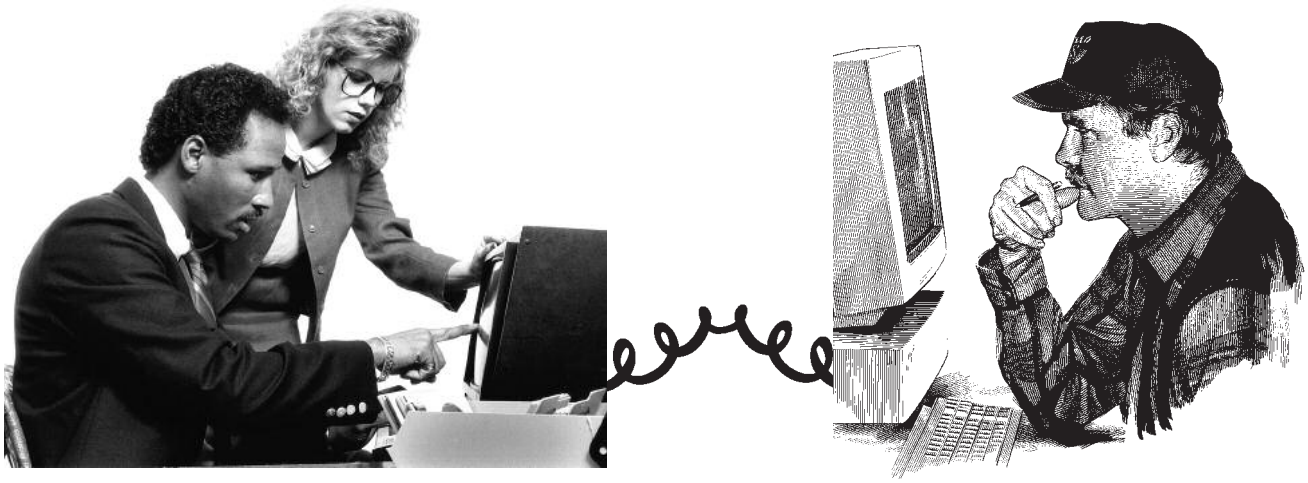
What had to be discovered was the individual address of each MP. The addresses were set up using the first five letters of the MP's last name, followed by the first initial. If I were an MP, this would mean that my Internet address would be dykstj@parl.gc.ca. The tedious task to see if this formula worked was undertaken by someone in Ottawa who mailed each MP, one by one, all 295 of them. He was able to discover 222 of the e-mail addresses this way.

Though this allowed most of the MPs to be contacted, it still meant that each person who wanted to mail all of these MPs had to type up all the addresses. This, to say the least, would be a tedious and time consuming project. So, using a student e-mail account at an Ontario university, a number of RefNet members managed to automate the process, allowing the owner of this account to forward messages from 874 people to each of the 222 MPs.

If you stop to figure it out, this is a staggering amount of mail. Since each of the 222 MPs received 874 messages, that meant that at least 194,028 messages were forwarded from that account in a matter of only a few days. This fact was not lost on the administrator of the Parliamentary server. The woman who maintains the House of Commons' Internet connection saw close to 200,000 message come from the same e-mail address in southern Ontario. She jumped to the conclusion that there was an attempt to "letter bomb" the House of Commons. Letter bombing is a serious charge, and though it does not actually involve any explosive devices, it can be incredibly disruptive to Internet service. Letter bombing is, in a nutshell, sending so many messages to one address that it causes that person's e-mail box to fill to overflowing. This either prevents new mail from arriving, or causes older mail, perhaps still unread, to be discarded. In an extreme case, this may cause the system at which the mail is being received, to slow down or even crash. Letter bombing is a way that the 'Net community disciplines those who have violated the often unwritten rules of etiquette that provide civility in the cyber world.

Though letter bombing was not the objective, it was an easy conclusion to reach. The Parliamentary administrator complained to the university administrator. The Internet account of the student who had done the e-mail forwarding was summarily cancelled. Watching this cancellation happen was much like an seeing an accident occur. Reading the final posts of the poor guy who had his account closed was like watching the inevitable collision occur, always knowing that it was going to be painful. One by one, I read this man's final posts, and dreaded the inevitable moment when I knew that there would be no more. He tried to do something good, and ended up losing his account.

Though it is tempting to portray the termination of this account as religious persecution, this would be an unjustified and unfair conclusion. It is true that the student who was forwarding the mail was doing so because of his religious opposition to the bill. However, at this university, and all others that I'm familiar with, Internet accounts are meant to be used only for academic purposes. University administrations will usually turn a blind eye towards a small of amount of personal e-mail, but when nearly 200,000 messages of a clearly non-academic nature went through this account, it became very difficult for the system administrator to ignore this violation of the rules. While I feel sympathetic towards someone who trips up while trying to do a good deed, I still have to acknowledge that they knew the rules (or if they didn't, they should've) and ignored them. Though the rules were ignored in the name of a good cause, they were still ig-



nored. Simply because you are doing something good doesn't give you the right to do something wrong. If something similar is to be tried again, it should done from a commercial account. If greater Internet resources are needed, there is the possibility for this and the charge for the service will be adjusted accordingly.

In attempting to portray a Christian political witness, certain questions must be asked. One of the most obvious is who were the 874 people who forwarded messages through this account? They weren't all members of the RefNet discussion group, since that group has at best 150 participants. The fact of the matter is that it's almost impossible to know who was forwarding messages via this service. News of this setup was made public knowledge when a RefNet member was interviewed on Edmonton-based gospel music station CJCA. This meant that the mail forwarding was widened from a conservative Reformed witness, to a more generally Christian testimony. However, news of the mail forwarding didn't stop at listeners to CJCA. An Edmontonian who had heard the broadcast posted the details of this to three widely read Internet discussion groups; can.general, can.politics, and ont.general. There is no way of knowing exactly who used the mail forwarding services after having read about it in these publicly available, internationally circulated forums. What is very well possible is that some who read the news and chose to respond, may have done so in an unchristian manner. What passes for an argument against the homosexual lifestyle is often little more than thinly disguised hatred and bigotry. While making this mail forwarding available to more people increased the potential to exercise our democratic rights, it may well have discredited the Christian message sent by mixing it in among a wealth of anti-homosexual hate mail.

One also has to wonder why the Parliamentary administrator complained about the flood of mail to her system. Though 194,028 messages is a staggering number, the best information I've been able to get suggests that it shouldn't have been that unreasonable for the Internet connection on Parliament Hill to handle that volume of mail. What did cause the problem was that all the e-mail messages came from the same return address and that gave the impression of letter bombing. Was that a fair conclusion? What I've been able to find out says that yes, it was. That many messages apparently coming from the same person makes you appear guilty, even if you're not. If Christians want to contact their MPs again in an organized manner, a way must be found to clearly and easily demonstrate that all these e-mail messages are from different people. This project is not as difficult as it sounds, for it is basically a modified use of an Internet mailing program such as the one that runs the RefNet. It's not a matter of inventing new technology, but of using existing capabilities in a more effective manner.

Ultimately, one must ask whether the exercise of mailing all those MPs was worth the trouble. Members of Parliament represent a distinct geographical area and it is their job to present the views of Canadian citizens within that area to the federal government. Since the Parliamentary system is based on this geographic representation, MPs will likely have little interest in hearing from Canadians who do not live within their particular riding. If you are not in an MP's riding, you can't vote for or against him, so practically he doesn't need to be concerned about your views. As well, under this geographical method of representation, an MP's job is to represent his own constituents. If you don't live within his riding, theoretically he should not be at all concerned with what you think. An MP who represents an area other than where you live is not morally obligated to listen, and practically may simply not care. If you don't believe this, have an off the record discussion with someone in your MP's office. Ask them how much attention they pay to mail that doesn't come from their own constituents.

None of this is meant to suggest that this whole episode was a failure. It was anything but that. True, mistakes were made, though not all would agree as to exactly what they were. However, even though errors were committed, and even though Bill C-33 was easily passed by the House of Commons despite the best efforts of the RefNet community, the entire affair can be considered a success. Christians in the Reformed community have not always taken seriously their duty to be the salt of the earth and a public witness to the world that a Christian vision of justice needs to be followed by the government. Sometimes this lack of involvement has been due to a lack of numbers. Other times it has been because of a lack of organization. The efforts made to present a Christian vision of justice to the government regarding Bill C-33 represent a remarkable change from this pattern. The Reformed community, using the technology of the Internet, found the numbers and the organization to call their rulers to account before the Creator. True, the bill passed anyway, but when dealing with the government, we may not measure success in those sorts of terms. Someone once said that Christians in the world are called not to be successful, but to be faithful. On that score, the Christians of the RefNet discussion group were a resounding success.

In the few minutes a day that he's not on-line, ***James Dykstra*** *is a junior high teacher and graduate student in history.*

When One Member Suffers

By F.G. Oosterhoff

A recent editorial in the magazine Christianity Today, *entitled "Our Extended, Persecuted Family," mentions that most western Christians do not live typical Christian lives. Whereas western Christians enjoy prosperity and freedom, the typical Christian life is one of persecution and suffering. The Bible makes that very clear: in the world, Jesus warned His followers, they would be oppressed and persecuted. The Bible also tells us that the church is a body. When one member suffers, so do – if the body functions properly – the other members.*

Persecuted Christians in China, in Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations, and also in a predominantly Muslim country like the Sudan, ask western believers that they show Christian solidarity with their suffering. They ask for our prayers, for material support (Bibles, Christian literature, in some cases medicine), and for political intervention (via letters to MPs , letters to the editor, and by similar means).

Clarion *has drawn attention to the plight of persecuted Christians before, and some readers have responded. We intend to provide information on the persecutions on a regular basis, and hope that more and more our evangelism committees, schools, as well as private Christians, will come to the aid of our persecuted family members. We have an obligation to help. As the South-African Frontline Fellowship (an organization that concerns itself with providing help for persecuted Christians in Africa) reminded fellow-Christians in a recent issue of its Newsletter:* "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." *Mt. 25:40.*

Slavery in Africa*

Slavery lives on, in all its ancient horror. In the West African nation of Mauritania, between eighty and ninety thousand human beings are owned outright by other people. Across the continent, in the war-ravaged African country of Sudan, chattel slaves number in the tens of thousands, according to Christian Solidarity International. Most are the children of black Christian and animist villagers, taken in raids by their traditional Arab enemies, now formed into militia by the Muslim government in Khartoum in its war to subdue the south.

"Nothing has changed in the way of life of these Arab groups for the past hundred years," said a report written in 1995 by the Comboni Fathers, Catholic missionaries in the Sudan. Their only progress has consisted in the provision of large amounts of modern weapons and up-to-date transportation. The time of long lines of enchained slaves marching north is over. Now truckloads of children are seen moving in the same traditional direction."

These modern slaves often serve as maids or cooks, or as farm labourers or cattle herders. Many were taken too young to remember their homes or families. Some who have tried to escape have been branded, or have had their Achilles tendons cut; some have been castrated. Many, both male and female, are regularly raped.

Persecution

In the Sudan, the north and south have been fighting since 1983, and the war has killed one and a half million of the country's twenty-seven million people. Between six and eight million, mostly blacks, have lost their homes. Christian groups say that government-backed militia and troops raid black villages, burning huts, killing men, stealing livestock, and taking women and children into captivity.

"My mother, my two children, two of my sister's children, and I were at home when the Arabs came," Abuk Marou Keer of Nyamlell, a blind, twenty-five-year-old woman, told Christian Solidarity International last year. "My mother tried to hide some of our belongings," she said, "and then we ran toward the river."

"We were captured at the river bank. All the captives were gathered together and we were forced to walk, carrying the property looted by our captors. We were beaten when captured and from time to time en route to our destination – an agricultural labour camp at a place called Araith, eighteen miles to the north. On the way, four male captives were murdered by the Arabs and many women raped.

"We know of two children of our friend Achan Akol Kyii who were sold at Araith and sent away with their master on a horse. We were there for nearly two months. Ten days ago we were lucky to escape. We told our guards that we were going to stretch our legs. They probably thought we could not get away because of my blindness."

Anonymous and forgotten

Survivors of these raids say that Christians are often singled out and killed. Boys are often pressed into military service. Slaves are forced to convert to Islam. Sometime prisoners are ransomed. Bishop Macram Max Gassis of the Sudan testified before a congressional committee last year that his church had been instrumental in the liberation of fifty abducted children. "Their parents or relatives approached me after having identified their children and needed money to be given to the abductors in order to liberate them," he said.

Such testimony has helped bring the issue before the public, and public officials have taken some steps. The United Nations has condemned the slave trade. The United States has cut off its relatively small amount of development aid to Mauritania and has opposed World Bank loans to the Sudan and Mauritania. Nevertheless, the international community's clout is limited. The Organization of African Unity does not interfere in the international affairs of its member states. The Sudan receives open support from Lybia and other countries. Mauritania continues to receive aid from the French government, which argues

that quiet diplomacy and economic development will prove more effective in improving human rights.

Mauritania and the Sudan remain remote in Western eyes, their people handicapped by the realities of geopolitics and economics. The average annual per capita income in both places is roughly $55. They offer no sugar or oil or cotton or tea – nothing to hang a boycott on. As the twenty-first century approaches, the slaves of Mauritania and the Sudan are anonymous and forgotten.

*Excerpts from an arti10cle by Joseph R.Gregory, entitled "American Slavery 1996," published in *First Things*, an American religious magazine (R.C.), May 1996; 1-800-783-4903. Reprinted by permission.

The Value of Fasting

By Wes Bredenhof

Religious fasting is not very common today, either in the Canadian Reformed churches or elsewhere. Perhaps this comes from a lack of understanding concerning what fasting is and why we should do it. Fasting for religious purposes is denying the natural appetite for food out of a desire to bring glory to God's Name through the mortification of sin. Fasting is abstaining from food, not for legalistic reasons, but out of a sincere desire to glorify God. It is also for the purpose of putting to death sins which still cling to us (though we will never entirely succeed), humiliating ourselves before God, mourning and grieving over sin, and enjoying God's mercy and grace, knowing that God has washed away our sin with the blood of Christ.

Why should we fast? The answer is simple: because it is taught in Scripture. In Mt.6:16, Jesus says, "Moreover, when you fast do not be like the hypocrites. . . ." Jesus expects that His people will fast in the same way that He expects His people to pray and give alms (Mt. 6:2,5). Christ Himself fasted for 40 days in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13). When we look back to the Old Testament we find many examples of God's people fasting. Nehemiah fasted when he heard about Jerusalem's dilapidated condition (Neh.1:4). David fasted when the son he brought forth by Bathsheba was on the brink of death (2 Sam. 12:16). When we flip back to the New Testament we find the early church fasting at the ordination of elders (Acts 14:23). 1 Cor. 7:5 admonishes husbands and wives to "give yourselves to fasting and prayer." Other examples could be brought forward, but it should be clear that fasting is taught in Scripture both by way of example and exhortation.

But why does God teach us to fast? Fasting is always associated with grief and mourning in Scripture. In Luke 5:34, Christ says, "Can you make the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?" The disciples could not fast while Jesus was with them, because it was a time for rejoicing. However, we live in the time when the bridegroom has gone away, and now, Jesus says in Luke 5:35, is the time to fast. We fast out of grief and sorrow for our sins. We fast because we realize that we grieve God continually because of our inordinate wickedness. The end of fasting is the joy of knowing that Christ has paid for all of our sins and saved us.

Who should fast? Only those who can do it out of worship for God (not out of superstition, legalism, or hypocrisy) should fast. Generally speaking, all Christians should fast. There are instances where people may have medical or psychological problems (i.e. diabetes or eating disorders) in which fasting is not advisable. Children can also fast, but they should only do it for short periods of time so as not to deprive them of their necessary nutrition. They must also be taught the reasons for fasting, so as to give them a proper perspective on it.

When should we fast? We can fast as individuals when we have personal needs or problems in our lives. If you are wrestling with a particular sin or are experiencing some kind of personal turmoil, it would be advisable to set aside a day or days of fasting. We can also fast as families and churches under similar circumstances. Finally, we ought to fast as a nation if called upon to do so by the civil government.

How should we fast? Scripture gives us solid guidance on this question. In Mt. 6 Christ teaches us that we ought not to make a public spectacle of our fasting. Keep it to yourself as much as possible. Only tell those around you who need to know, such as your family. Don't look downtrodden or act peculiarly, your fasting is only between you and God. Do not try to draw attention to yourself in your fasting.

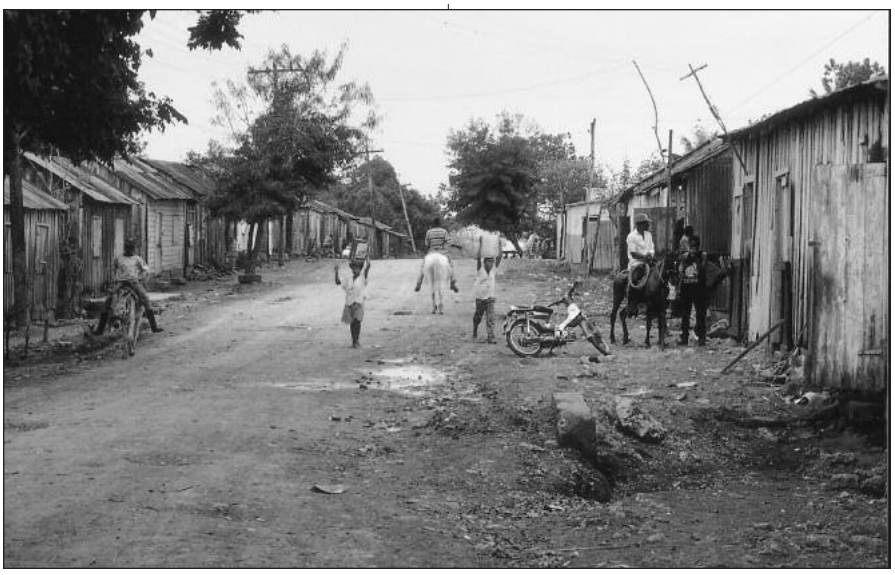
Also, do not fast to a point where you physically harm yourself. Set realistic times for fasting. If you have hard physical labour to perform consider a partial fast, eating only to satisfy what you need and not to satisfy your appetite. Drinking plenty of water during a fast is also necessary since your body cannot function very long otherwise. Spend the day as much as possible in Scripture reading, prayer and meditation. Avoid worldly activities and concentrate on your reason for fasting, namely sanctification.

We must continually desire to be made holy. The Puritan Richard Sibbes once wrote, "He that looks to be happy, must first look to be holy." Fasting is a means of sanctification, a way to holiness. It must not be viewed as a way to salvation, since that is a free gift of God's grace. Fasting is for God's children who desire to serve Him better and to each day more and more reflect His image until they are completely regenerated in the hereafter by the Holy Spirit and live in perfect communion with the Father.

Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund

From time to time, the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund responds to requests for support of Short-term Volunteer projects which fit our mandate. The following report is of a two-week work program which John, Ann and Jim Bultje went on to the Dominican Republic last year. We contributed towards the cost of building materials for a structure to be used for worship, education and other community activities. Local businesses donated tools needed for the project, and the Bultjes themselves paid for the trip and their living expenses. It was a good opportunity for them to show love and support to Reformed believers elsewhere who have not been blessed with the material advantages our society offers.

By way of background information, the Reformed churches in the D.R. began in the early 1980s in response to radio broadcasts of the Back to God hour and missionary effort. The churches were instituted in a Reformed manner, and according to all accounts, are faithful churches. Though young, also in terms of their spiritual maturity, they have not been affected by liberalism. Because of distance, there is no formal relationship with the CRC Churches of North America. There is a sincere desire on the part of members to be faithful to God's Word. As an example, there is tremendous pressure on many Haitians to work seven days a week in the sugar cane fields in order to earn enough to support themselves and their families. Yet, in faithfulness to the fourth commandment, they forego this and choose instead to gather in worship on the Lord's Day. Members of these churches are the poorest of the poor in the D.R. and have no means to construct such buildings for themselves. So, it is wonderful that they can be encouraged by the witness and practical help of believers elsewhere. Read on for an account of the Bultjes' experience.



Typical housing for the Haitians.

DOMINICAN WORK CREW

In January of 1995, a work crew of thirteen volunteers went to the Dominican Republic for the purpose of constructing a building for worship and education in the village of Juan Sanche and to repair other such buildings in the area. Our "tour guide" was Pastor Neal Hegeman, an Orthodox Christian Reformed pastor, now of Ligionier Ministries, who had spent many years in the D.R. as a missionary. He helped us through the cultural and language difficulties and taught us much about the people in the local area. Why must outsiders come to build churches is the question that comes to mind. There are two reasons. The main one is that most of the people in this area are Haitian refugees whose only abilities are to cut sugar cane. According to the law of the land, this is all they may do, and they are treated as dirt by the others. Another reason is that several of the churches have memberships made up only of women and children.

Before we left from Toronto Airport, two things had to be done. The first was to gather in prayer, asking for God's blessing and protection on our trip. The second thing was to divide the money among ourselves. We had received over $8,000 in donations, money to be spent on materials for the work we had to do, ie. paint, brushes, cement, lumber, etc. We were warned that pickpocketing, holdups, and bribes were very common in the D.R., so it would be safest not to have one person holding all the money. Since we had almost four times the amount of luggage allowed, Pastor Hegeman had to do some fast talking to the airline authorities in order to avoid paying extra charges. After learning that we were on a mission trip, they were very good about letting our luggage through.

After a long, but uneventful flight, we landed in the D.R. capital of Santa Domingo. At the airport there was a little bus waiting for us – we thought there was no way we and the luggage could possible fit. But we managed! The trip

to the village of Sabana Grande was very tiring. The roads were terribly rough, and we also had to deal with a flat tire. We arrived at the mission station at 1 a.m., quickly made ourselves some beds, and then tried to sleep. It seems, however, that everybody in this village owned several roosters, who crowed enthusiastically and early every morning. After having breakfast and preparing our lunches, we would go out to the building site, about half an hour's drive away. It seemed that everything had to be done the most difficult way possible. Cement blocks had to be taken off the truck by hand. We had to mix our own cement. The water for that we had to haul from a stream nearby. This stream provided the locals with their drinking water, and was where the women did their washing, bathing, and we even witnessed one woman cleaning out the innards of a butchered cow in the same stream! In order to operate a power tool, such as a circular saw, we would have to scrape a bit of coating off the wire and hook on. Even then the electricity was not guaranteed to be working. The building materials often had to be picked up by "taxi" – a motorbike. The building went up quickly, and we had plenty of time to go to check other buildings and make the necessary repairs.

Of course, it was not all work and no play. If time allowed, we would go into the city, and one afternoon we went to the beach.

Construction of the simple, concrete-block building goes on under the hot sun.

On Sunday we visited different Reformed churches with Pastor Hegeman. It amazed us that the Haitian refugees, in our eyes, had so little to be thankful for. They live in extreme poverty. They live in row housing, looking much like barns; but most of us wouldn't even keep our cattle in a building of such condition. They are uneducated and are not allowed to hold any job in the Dominican Republic except cane cutting, which is a job no one else will do. Yet on Sundays, it amazed us to hear them singing with full enthusiasm (by memory). How earnestly they listened to the gospel preaching, and how excitedly they greeted us as fellow Christians. What a sharp contrast from the voodoo drums that we heard nightly from the carnival.

We went there with the intent to help these impoverished Christians, but we came back with more than we went with. We all were strengthened and refreshed to witness the work of the Spirit and Word of God both actively at work here, and we could not help but share in the enthusiasm and love that the Haitian refugees display for God. What a blessing!

We thank the C.R.W.R.F. for their contribution and support for this project. We pray that their work may continue with the Lord's blessing; for the benefit of the poor and those who do not know the Lord, for the benefit of those who go out to proclaim God's Word and provide for the poor and needy, but most of all may this be done to the honour and glory of God.

In His Service,
John, Ann and Jim Bultje
Chatham, Ontario

Putting the finishing touches on the Reformed Church of Juan Sanchez.

Gifts for the works of CRWRF may be directed to:

Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund

PO Box 85225
Burlington, ON L7R 4K4

All gifts are gladly received. Donors of $10.00 or more will be issued a receipt for tax deduction.

Annual Women's League Day

of the Manitoba Canadian Reformed Churches held in Carman, MB

Around 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, May 8, 1996, approximately 95 women from Winnipeg, Carman and surrounding areas gathered for a day of fellowship and learning. At 10:00 we officially opened with the singing of Ps. 108:1,4. Our president Mrs. Marry Van Dijk led us in prayer and Scripture reading of Daniel 12, and 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11. She then welcomed all present including several elderly ladies over the age of 80. We sang the official league day song "Sing God's Glory."

Our guest speaker, Rev. R. Aasman of Edmonton (Providence) was introduced after which he gave us a very informative and thought-provoking speech on "Eschatology" (Life after death, Return of Christ). He stressed that we only have one life to live and where we stand in relation to Christ is very important. We are here to glorify God and comfort one another with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Three purposes for the speech were given: i) to whet our appetites for more Bible study, ii) to be comforted – nothing can separate us from Christ, iii) to give thanks to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Death is not a natural, biological part of life since man was not created this way. Death came as a result of sin, but Christ has defeated sin, Satan, and death by His death and resurrection. Death is no longer a punishment but a helper. God lets us leave this broken life and enter into the perfect life which is something great to look forward to. But we shouldn't glorify death or shorten our lives. Death is still the last enemy.

Rev. Aasman then touched upon what happens between death and the last day. The bible doesn't say a lot about this period. More is said abut what will happen when Christ returns. He went on to show what the Old Testament and the New Testament says on this subject. He denounces the heresy that the soul enters a deep sleep until the return of Christ.

He went on to talk about the expectation of Christ's second coming. We must be ready everyday. The signs don't say *when* Christ is coming but that he *is* coming. Signs have happened all through history, even in the Old Testament. Signs keep us on our toes, and encourage us to work hard to Christ.

The nature of the second coming was looked at next. The whole world will see Christ return. Humanly speaking we can't understand how this will happen, but with God nothing is impossible. It is advisable not to speculate too much, but to trust it will be paradise restored.

Why is there a final judgment? When we die are we not judged? Yes, but human ideas of judgment are not the same as God's. The Final Judgment will be for the glory of God and Christ. It will confirm the grace of Christ for the believers and unbelievers will know why they were not saved. Those who know the will of God and did not believe will be judged more severely than those who did not know. Those who work hard with their blessings and use them to glorify God will be greatly blessed. Judgment will be the triumph of God's glory.

Heaven and Hell were looked into more closely. Hell, also called Gehenna, is compared to a garbage dump, a burning place full of worms. A lake of fire and never-ending darkness with no last opportunity to repent. It compels us to focus on family life and not waste time. Heaven, or the new heaven and earth, is Paradise perfected. Heaven and earth will meet and the earth will be cleansed and renewed. There will be no more tears, pain, sin and death. Our lives have to focused on the glory of God, and we must use them in that way.

After Rev. Aasman's wonderful speech we enjoyed a fifteen minute coffee break during which we could write down questions and Rev. Aasman could sort through them. Discussion and question period brought us to the end of the morning with a half-hour break before lunch. Mrs. Celia DeWit presented Rev. Aasman with a gift and a poem and he was thanked for taking the time to spend with us. We then sang Happy Birthday to Mrs. Frances Slaa and entertainment sheets were handed out.

Rev. Aasman led us in prayer before lunch after which we enjoyed delicious salads and dessert pizzas. During lunch we were requested to fill in the blanks of a poem. The different versions were read, some serious and some funny. The original poem was then read and we all had a good laugh. Mrs. Louise DeWitt ended the lunch hour with the reading of Ps. 196 and led us in prayer.

After a fifteen minute break we all gathered in the auditorium for a skit called "Sweet Shop" which calls for audience participation. A number of ladies ended up being called "suckers."

We met back in the meeting hall to sing the "League Day Song" by Mrs. Liz Buist. Mrs. Maaike Borst read a poem she wrote called "A Smile of a Child." Mrs. Theresa VanDoodewaard read last year's minutes of the League Day held in Winnipeg, Mrs. Louise DeWitt then read a humorous story put together by the entertainment committee called "Why Farmers Farm."

Winnipeg thanked Carman for hosting and inviting them to League Day. All ladies were urged to sign cards for the Missionaries and Mission Aid workers in Brazil. Mrs. Grace Schriemer read a petition from a pamphlet called "Playing God" which deals with reproductive technology. We were asked to sign the petition against immoral practices. Mrs. Alice Vandersluis then read a poem written by the late Mrs. An Rook of Carman called:

LIVING STONES

We, as stones used by the Lord
Should humbly thankful be
He made us living by His Word
A spiritual house to be.

So Christ has set us in the place
He chose to fit us in.
Each one of us, put here in Grace
For we were lost in sin.

Yet one stone thinks his place too small
Another's place too wide.
One stone wants a more serious call
His neighbour wants more light.

One stone says "That stone over there
Belongs not in this place
It may have come from anywhere
It's almost a disgrace."

The Saviour gathers stone by stone
He cuts and chisels all
He knows they're all to failure prone
Not fitting for His hall.

Yet all the stones He gathered in
And chosen by His Grace
Cleaned through His death and freed from sin
He will put in their place.

His Building shall through the ages rise
For every eye to see
A building to the Builder's praise
Completed perfectly.

The meeting was closed with the singing of Hymn 50:1,6,7 and Mrs. Celia DeWit ended with us in prayer.

A thankful participant. C

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty

Dear Busy Beavers,

You are just starting your summer holidays. It's so exciting, isn't it? A nice, long, hot summer full of fun waiting for you. Maybe you have plans to go camping. Or you will take swimming lessons. Maybe you are going on a trip to a different part of Canada.

Let's remember, that wherever we are and whatever we do, the Lord is there, too. Remember Ps. 139?

Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up;...
Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. Vs. 2 & 3.

What a comfort!
Have a great summer!

JULY BIRTHDAYS!

Congratulations to all Busy Beavers who celebrate their birthdays in July! You share this month with our country!

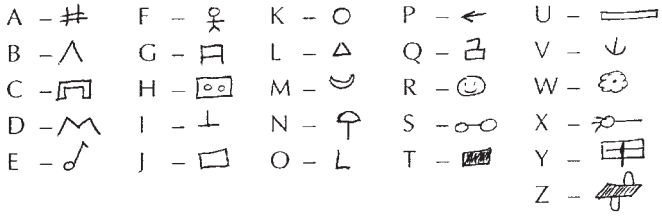
May our heavenly Father give you a blessed year, and a very happy day with your friends and family.

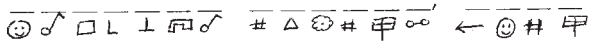
Kristin Vandergugten	July 1	Rebekah Barendregt	13
Deborah VanBeek	1	Barbara Bultena	15
Rebecca Kelly	1	Jared Helder	18
Joanna Vink	3	Karen Terpstra	20
Amanda Hoeksema	3	Jacquie Selles	22
Shaun Smeding	9	Kimberly VanderVelde	24
David Aikema	9	Crystal Slaa	25
Andrea Meliefste	11	Luanne Feenstra	27
Tim Hordyk	12	Melville Buist	29
Lorelle Barendregt	13		

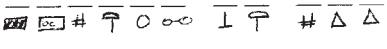
Quiz Time!

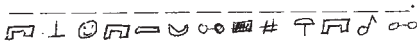
BIBLE CODE

By Busy Beaver *Barbara Bultena*









JESUS' MIRACLES

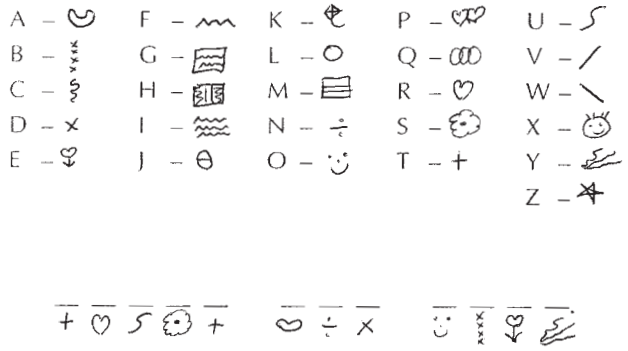
Match each miracle Jesus performed (did) with the person for whom it was done.

1. A nobleman, John 4:46-53
2. A multitude of people, Matt. 15:34-36
3. Jairus, Mark 5:22-41
4. Bartimaeus, Mark 10:46-52
5. High priest's servant, Luke 22:50-51
6. Peter, Matthew 14:29
7. Widow of Nain, Luke 7:11-16
8. Mary and Martha, John 11:39-44
9. A bridegroom, John 2:1-10
10. Peter's mother-in-law, Mark 1:30-31

a. son raised from the dead.
b. water became wine
c. son healed
d. brother raised from the dead
e. fed with seven loaves and a few fish
f. received sight
g. fever healed
h. walked on water
i. daughter raised from the deal
j. ear restored

FIND THE MESSAGE!

By Busy Beaver *Jennifer Post*



SUMMER WORD SEARCH!

By Busy Beaver *Deborah Voorhorst*

S	W	O	L	L	A	M	H	S	R	A	M	B	D	T
L	W	C	A	M	P	F	I	R	E	A	O	A	R	E
E	A	I	S	N	A	C	K	S	T	K	S	R	I	N
E	T	P	M	A	C	A	N	C	A	N	Q	B	N	T
P	E	L	D	M	K	R	H	F	E	E	U	E	K	P
I	R	A	F	K	I	E	H	I	G	E	I	Q	I	E
N	N	Y	A	I	S	N	E	R	C	B	T	U	N	G
G	L	B	T	F	P	H	G	E	J	O	O	E	G	S
B	S	Q	A	M	K	D	U	L	R	A	E	S	V	Y
A	C	S	P	A	R	K	Y	P	J	R	S	U	W	A
G	N	I	I	K	S	I	G	N	O	D	E	N	O	D
F	N	E	T	A	N	U	F	R	B	Z	H	B	W	I
O	U	T	I	R	E	T	U	B	E	V	S	U	X	L
O	S	T	O	V	E	R	O	A	S	T	I	R	V	O
D	B	O	A	T	L	A	M	P	M	Q	D	N	X	H

Can you find these words?
sleeping bag
play
mosquitoes
campfire
lamp
barbeque
stove
matches
marshmallows
food
drinking
dishes
snacks
boat
kneeboard
skiing
water
sunburn
tire tube
swimming
holidays
fun

That's all for this time.

Love to you all,
Aunt Betty

CLARION ADVERTISEMENTS

Births

It is with thankfulness to the Lord, who has again blessed our family, with the birth of another covenant child, a son

BRENT RUSSELL

Born April 12, 1996

Charles and Doreen VanderVeen

Danielle, Walter and *Tara*

9426-155st, Edmonton, AB T5R 1X1

There is none Holy like the LORD, there is none besides Thee; there is no rock like our God. 1 Samuel 2:2

We praise the Lord for answering our prayers and giving us a daughter

SOLÈNE KYTRELLE TERESA

Born on April 9, 1996

Placed in our arms on April 20, 1996

Bob and Theresa Lindhout (nee Veenendaal)

5139 Mulberry Drive, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B8

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above. . . . James 1:17

The Lord, in His wisdom, has blessed us with another child. It is with thankfulness to Him that we joyfully announce the birth of

JESSE HENDRIK

Born Mother's Day, May 12, 1996.

Fred and Theresa Post (nee Doppenberg)

A brother for *Helena* and *Joshua*

10 Baker Rd. S., Grimsby, ON L3M 5H6

Know that the LORD is God! It is He that made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Psalm 100:3

Rejoicing in the Lord, we joyfully announce the arrival of our little girl and sister

ROBYN DOREEN

Born May 10, 1996

Dan and Dorothy Flokstra

Ruby and *Cory*

1319 - 248 St., Aldergrove, BC V4W 2B9

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom He has chosen as His heritage! Psalm 33:12

The Lord in His graciousness has blessed us with another child, a son

KIERAN JACOB

Born April 16, 1996

Derek and Louise Willis (nee Van Veen)

Nathan†, Gavin, Janita, Christian

Westminster, CO

With great thankfulness to God, we joyfully announce the birth of our first child, a son

AUSTIN JOHN

Born May 23, 1996

John and Brenda Van Amerongen (nee Dallinga)

6th grandchild for Dale and Annie Dallinga

3rd grandchild for John and Margriet Van Amerongen

RR 5, Guelph, ON N1H 6J2

We thank and praise the Giver of Life for entrusting into our care one of His covenant children

BRIANNA JOLIEN

Born April 29, 1996

Andrew and Janet Wildeboer (Berends)

62 Crozier Street, Grand Valley, ON L0N 1G0

Thy hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments. Psalm 119:73

With thankfulness to the Lord, we announce the birth of another covenant child

HANNAH JANINE

Born June 10, 1996

John and Teresa Jongsma (nee Bouwman)

Martin, Lydia, Angela, Katrina and *Harmen*

545 St. Patrick St. E., Fergus, ON N1M 1N3

Engagements

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. 1 Corinthians 13:7,8a

With thankfulness to our heavenly Father who brought us together and continues to bless and guide us, we

LAURIE BLOKKER and BART LUDWIG

joyfully announce our engagement.

May 20, 1996

4531 Dufferin Avenue, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B5

Give thanks to Him, bless His name! For the LORD is good; His steadfast love endures forever and His faithfulness to all generations. Psalm 100:4b,5

Happily engaged on May 18, 1996

ELSA POPPE and GERRY VANLAAR

Box 273, Carman, MB R0G 0J0

Weddings

He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. Colossians 1:17

With thankfulness to our heavenly Father, we

CHANDRA JOANNE MEERSTRA and PETER EDWARD VANDERBOOM

together with our parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Meerstra and Mr. and Mrs. Peter VanderBoom, joyfully announce our marriage. The ceremony will take place D.V.. on July 5th, 1996 at 11:00 a.m. in the Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington East.

Future address: 329 Rawdon Street, Brantford, ON N3S 6H7

. . . Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a.

With thankfulness to our heavenly Father who has brought us together, we

ADRIAN PAUL VANDENHAAK and SYLVIA VANDERVEEN

together with our parents Mr. and Mrs. Andrew VandenHaak and Mr. and Mrs. Derk VanderVeen, joyfully announce our upcoming wedding, to take place D.V., on July 27, 1996 in the Providence Canadian Reformed Church of Edmonton. Rev. G. Snip officiating.

Future address: 6205 - 178 Street #221, Edmonton, AB T5T 2R5

Weddings cont'd

With great thankfulness to our heavenly Father, we
SYLVIA HENRIETTA SIKKEMA and MENZE JOHANNES FEENSTRA
together with our parents, Mr. and Mrs. Klaas Sikkema and Mr. and Mrs. Wim Feenstra, announce our upcoming marriage. The ceremony will take place, the Lord willing, at 1:00 p.m. in the Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church at Fergus, ON, on Saturday, June 29, 1996. Rev. J.G. Slaa officiating.
Future address: 5 Raglan St., General Delivery, Alma, ON N0B 1A0

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Romans 12:12
In the spirit of Christian joy,
ANGELA LAVONNE KIPPERS and LEROY DEAN VANSPRONSEN
together with our parents Andrew and Pieta Kippers and Joe and Dieta VanSpronsen, joyfully announce our marriage. It will take place, D.V., July 5th, 1996 at 1:00 p.m. in the Canadian Reformed Church of Coaldale, AB. The Rev. G. Ph. Van Popta officiating.

Sid and Hilda Alkema are pleased to announce the marriage of their daughter
ANNA JACQUELINE to DARREN BERNARD
son of Ben and Ingrid Bartels
The Lord willing on June 15, 1996 at 1:30 p.m.
Rev. G.H. Visscher will be officiating.
The ceremony will take place in the Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church, Burlington, ON.

Anniversaries

1961 – June 20 – 1996
With thankfulness to the Lord for guiding them and caring for them, we announce the 35th Wedding Anniversary of our parents
DIRK and MARY KOK (nee Leffers)
We pray that the Lord continue to be with them in the coming years.
Their thankful children and grandchildren
Taber, AB: Pete Kok
Edmonton, AB: Lyndon and Dini Kok
Coaldale, AB: Sharon and George Veurink
Gerard, Debra, Brent, Steven, Larissa
Barrhead, AB: Rod Kok and Diane Wemekamp
903 - 20th Ave. Coaldale, AB T1M 1B3

1956 – June 29 – 1996
Psalm 55:22
With joy and thankfulness to our heavenly Father for all His care, we with our family, are happy to announce our 40th Wedding Anniversary, D.V.
RICHARD and AMIE VELDKAMP (nee Tams)
Their children and grandchildren
Coaldale, AB: Harry and Hetti Bultena
Ryan, Brandon, Nicholas, Kaelee, Zachary
Chatham, ON: Harold Veldkamp
Brady
Coaldale, AB: Sharon Veldkamp
Alison, Geri, Richard, Kimberly
Morley and Johanna Pritchard
Trevor, Amber
Barrhead, AB: Doug and Danielle Veldkamp
Amanda, Daniel, Dustin
Box 1048 Coaldale, AB T1M 1M8

1966 – July 16 – 1996
With thankfulness to the Lord, we hope to celebrate the 30th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents
H. WILLIAM (Bill) and GERALDINE KEGEL (nee Grit)
With love from your children and grandchildren
Hillsburgh, ON: Marie and Andrew Kieft
Alan†, Rachel, Evan
Surrey, BC: Valerie and Arnold Sikkema
William, Kristin
Hamilton, ON: Lisa and Brian Vanderhout
Laura, Marlaina
250 "C" Line, Orangeville, ON L9W 2Y9

1956 – July 7 – 1996
Jeremiah 33:20,21
Praising God, who brought them together, we joyfully announce the 40th Wedding Anniversary of our dear parents and grandparents
CORNELIS HOFF and AAGTJE HOFF-SCHUILING
London, ON: Cathy and Ed Jager
Alanna, Jeffrey, Brittany, Gavin, Graeme
Ken and Cory Hoff
Hettie and Peter Engbers
Jessica, Christopher, Stephanie, Kaitlyn, Emily
Richmond Hill, ON: Anita and Fred Kampen
Waterloo, ON: Chris Hoff and Pearl Vandeburgt
Open House: July 13, 1996 2:00-4:30 p.m. at Pilgrim Canadian Reformed Church, London, ON
742 Millbank Drive, London, ON N6E 1W2

1971 – July 24 – 1996
The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Psalm 126:3
With thankfulness to our heavenly Father, we the children and grandchild of
JOHN and DONNA-MARIE BLOKKER (nee Beaudin)
announce the celebration of their 25th Wedding Anniversary. We pray for the continued love and guidance of the Lord in the years to come.
John and Marian Blokker
Tyson John
Tonja Blokker and Kevin Bos
Open house July 27, 1996 from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. in the Covenant Christian School
Reg. Rd. 614, Smithville, ON

1966 – June 11th – 1996
Through God's guidance and His infinite wisdom, He led our parents and grandparents to find happiness together. We joyfully announce their 30th anniversary.
TOM and GRETA HANSMA (Zeldenrust)
Their thankful children:
Houston, BC: John and Cheryl Fennema (Hansma)
Jason, Jolene and *Jesse*
Chilliwack, BC: Marc and Nicole VanWijk (Hansma)
Mitchell, Kelsey and *Jenna*
Surrey, BC: Tanya Hansma
Praise Him for His mighty deeds; praise Him according to His exceeding greatness! Psalm 150:2

50 50

1946 – July 11 – 1996

Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him, and He will act. Psalm 37:5

JACOB VANDERHORST and MARRIGJE VANDERHORST

(nee DeJong)

May the Lord continue to bless and keep them.

Langley, BC: Allie and Brian Dale-Johnson
Alana, Heidi
Ena and Rob Bontkes
Jeff, Natasja and *Kees VanRhee, Marc, Tim*
Justin, Renee

Surrey, BC: Dick and Alida VanderHorst
Alisa and *Tony Roukema, Karen* and *Julius,*
Dana and *John-Martin, Rachel, Linda, Meagan*

Abbotsford, BC: Danny and Wyn VanderHorst
Julia, Terry, Russell, Brenda

Burlington, ON: Jack and Linda VanderHorst
Jack, Marlaine, Chris, Kimberly, Derrick, Sara

Langley, BC: Margaret and Pete Aikema
Kevin, Suzanne, Bradley, Robert, Dennis
Mabel and Peter Roukema
Aren, Maria, Robyn, Ryan, Stephanie

Coquitlam, BC: Eric VanderHorst

Langley, BC: Conrad and Dinah VanderHorst
David, Kyle, James
Norman and Diane VanderHorst
Amy, Jason, Kayla, Matthew
Gordon VanderHorst
Peter Alan VanderHorst†

21828-52 Avenue, RR7, Langley, BC V2Y 2M7

Dad and Mom were married in Wapenveld, the Netherlands. They left the Old Country aboard the Kota Inten and arrived in Quebec City on June 15, 1948. They spent their first year in Canada in Van Kleek Hill, ON and then moved on to the beet fields of Lethbridge, AB. In 1950 they arrived in Beautiful B.C. and never looked eastward again. Their dream of owning their own dairy farm was finally realized in 1965.

The immigrant years were not easy. Living in small houses with a large family and a small income was trying. Dad worked hard to provide for his family. As well he was an active participant in church life and volunteered many hours to set up and run the William of Orange Christian School. With a new baby on the scene almost every year Mom certainly did not live a life of leisure. She had one week of holidays every year – in the hospital (with a new baby). No matter how poor the family was, Mom always made the house a home. Along with nurturing children, household chores and some farm work, Mom also gave freely of her time in Ladies Aid and Women's Society.

Leaving Holland with a dream, some furniture, a toddler and a baby on the way was adventurous but difficult. Saying good-bye to family, some of whom they never met again, was not easy to do. Yet, trusting that God was leading them to Canada and that He would provide for them, they took that giant step.

Throughout their 50 years together, they have indeed experienced God's faithfulness and guidance in their lives. They both enjoy relatively good health and are thankful for each day the Lord allows them to be together.

We, their children, spouses and grandchildren, give thanks to God for our parents and their marriage and are grateful that we can share this milestone with them.

Anniversaries cont'd

1971 – July 29 – 1996

Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forevermore! Psalm 113:2

We give thanks to God, who in His grace and mercy has given our parents

DIRK and LUCIA POT (Sikkema)

25 happy years of marriage.

We pray for the Lord's continued guidance in the years to come.

With love from their thankful children

Richard and Monica
Martin and Rtuh
Mariska and Jack

Obituaries

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. Psalm 116:15

February 8, 1907 – June 2, 1996

Our Lord called into His heavenly glory our dear friend and brother in the Lord

THIJS CREDIET

Predeceased by his wife Catharine

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(604)847-5924 (home) or (604)847-3912 (fax)

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(403) 674-6457 (home)
and/or
The secretary for the Board
Mrs. Margaret Otten
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Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0
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Fax: (403) 674-4883

Are there any Canadian Reformed Ministers in the Bulkley Valley on June 30th, July 7th, 14th and 21st, and willing to conduct our worship services at Houston?

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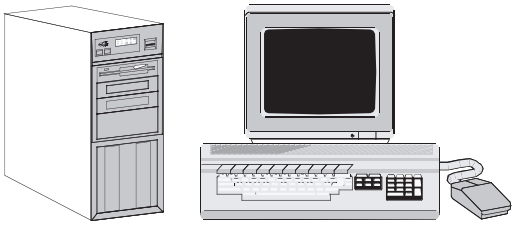

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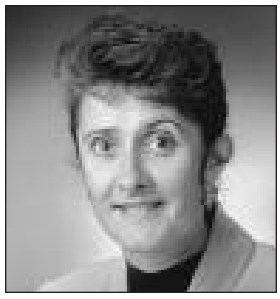

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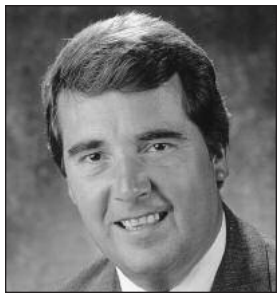

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