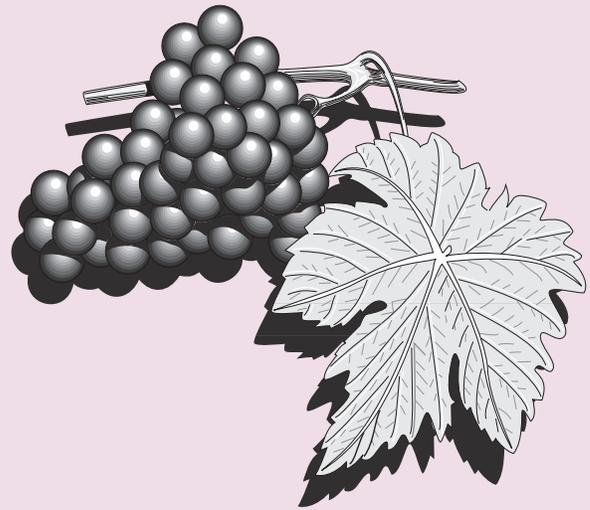


Clarion

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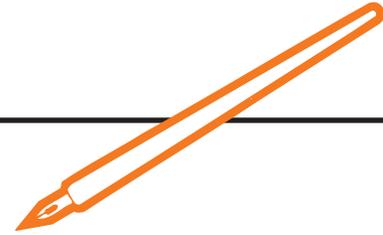
Church Unity



"I am the vine. . . ."

Numbers

10:1-10



Church Unity and the Lord's Table¹

An increasing number of our churches are getting involved in talks with neighbouring churches with a view to pursuing ecclesiastical unity. Some wonder whether we need to put much time or energy into this. Yet on the whole, I think our churches realize that we have an obligation to work for the unity of all true believers, and of all those who confess the name of the Lord. After all, if we are serious about our faith, we must be serious about promoting the unity of the church, and the unity of all true believers.

Setting the goal

In all of the current discussions, as far as I know, full federative unity remains the goal and aim. This involves a complete merger: unity at the table of the Lord. And there is every reason to pursue this aim! Augustine called the table of the Lord the **sign of unity** and the **chain of love**.² So the Lord's table is also defended in Scripture! The apostle Paul refers to the Corinthians as: the body of Christ. "You are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor. 12:28). The body cannot be divided, and there should be no factions in the body (1 Cor. 1: 13; 1 Cor. 11:18). The body is one. And the Lord's Supper must be maintained and celebrated as one body (1 Cor. 11:33ff).

The one table of the Lord as ordained by Christ is an incentive for us to pursue true ecclesiastical unity, in our own congregations, and also with those with whom we share a common background, those seeking to maintain the service of the Lord in their situation. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul says: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all." Here the *one* faith is connected with the one sacrament. There is *one* baptism, and by extrapolation we can add: *one* table, one covenantal bread, one communal cup. Therefore we are to pursue the unity of the church as much as possible. A unity confessed must be put into practice. Paul says in the same context:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love; eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

The ideas of humility and forbearance are also connected with the unity of the Lord's table in the first letter to the Corinthians. Concerning the fellowship meal Paul says: "So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another" (1 Cor. 11:33). The term used for 'wait' in this passage has many shades of meaning, but is closely connected to the idea of receiving one another, welcoming

one another in love and forbearance. The word also includes the idea of being patient with each other in the church.³

A similar view of the unity of the believers is found in Paul's letter to the Colossians. The apostle speaks about the unity of the saints at Colossae, but connects this to the unity of all the saints when he says:

"For I want you to know how greatly I strive for you, and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not seen my face, that their hearts might be encouraged, as they are knit together in love, to have all the riches of the assured understanding, and the knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:1-3).

Here the apostle speaks not only of the unity of the local church, but also of the unity of the churches together. It is incumbent for *all* the believers to be knit together in the bond of love. Hence we can say: all true believers belong around the one table of the Lord, (see Article 28, Belgic Confession).

Waiting for one another

This is the unity that the table of the Lord demands. It does not look only to the local situation or to the local church, but looks to all the churches. The prayer of the Lord Jesus is that *all* the followers of the Lord may be one (John 17:21). This cannot be tied to one specific congregation, but refers to the churches *together*. The churches must be united in a common bond of mutual love, commitment and fellowship. And it is as one fellowship that the churches are called to go forward and to promote true unity with all those who name the name of the Lord and desire to serve and worship Him in spirit and in truth.

This implies that a local church should not establish relations of fellowship with other believers on its own. Part of being together in one federation means that we as churches are all knit together in one bond of love, and we all have the mutual obligation to consult each other and move forward with willing subjection of the one to the other (Eph. 5:21).

At any given time a local church may feel frustrated in its progress by the requirements of the church order. People then say: If you feel one on a local level, why wait for the other churches of the federation to get involved, and give their approval? Can you not simply inform them and proceed? The difficulty here is that unity on a local level is gained at the cost of federative unity. In fact, a church can end up severing the lines in its own federation.

Why is the approbation of the federation so important? The federative ties we have established are meant to serve as safeguards – checks and balances so that we do not end up derailing from the right track. Sometimes we can become so enamoured with the progress in a local situation that we

lose sight of the broader picture. That broader picture implies that where other churches outside our federation are bound by federative commitments, we not only must honour our commitments, but also urge them to do the same! That requires patience – precisely the patience of which the apostle Paul speaks. But that is the patience by which the unity we seek is truly tried and tested, so proving itself to be a lasting unity.

Unity in the truth

Ultimately the unity we desire is a unity in the truth. The unity of which the Lord speaks in His “high priestly prayer” is to be understood as a unity in fellowship of the truth. Many misunderstand the well-known words of John 17: 21 – That they may all be one. They place the notions of love and understanding first. But the prayer of John 17 must be kept in its context.⁴

Jesus called Himself the way the truth and the life (John 14:6). True love of God and His Son are manifested in keeping to the *truth* (John 14:23). The mark of the true unity is to hold to the words of Jesus (John 8:31, 32, 51). Then Jesus makes allusions to the holy meal: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser . . . Abide in me and I in you . . . I am the vine and you are the branches . . . He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:1-5).

It was after He had set the connection between the bread and His body and between the wine and His blood that Jesus prayed to the Father: “Sanctify them in Thy truth” (John 17:17). Therefore the phrase “that they may all be one” refers to those sanctified in the *truth* of the Father and His Son. We cannot have true unity without this unity in the truth, and we cannot have the true love of each other without love in the truth.

How is the unity in the truth to be found? By going back to the word of the Lord Jesus and holding to that. That also means that we follow the way of repentance and faith, and reform life – including our church life – according to Reformed principles. The Reformed church is constantly reforming!

Only in this frame of mind can we as Canadian Reformed believers reach out to others; and it is only in this frame of mind that others with us can discover and cultivate a unity that endures, and promotes the healing of life, and the healing of the brokenness of the church caused by sin and error. We must remember that there is *one* flock and *one* Shepherd (John 10:16). For the truth still applies:

Elect from every nation,
 Yet one o’er all the earth,
 Her charter of salvation,
 One Lord, one faith, one birth:
 One holy name she blesses.
 Partakes one holy food,
 And to one hope she presses,
 With every grace endued.

¹This is an abridged and slightly altered version of the talk I gave in the West this spring on the subject of the Lord’s Supper and church unity.

²Quoted in G.C. Berkouwer, *De Sacramenten – Dogmatische Studiën*, (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1954), 372, note 4.

³S. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians* [NTC], (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 405 : “[The word] supports the intent of verse 21, where Paul decries the lack of patience on the part of those Corinthians who failed to wait for fellow Christians.”

⁴See J. Smelik, “Verbondsdis en Pluriformiteit,” in *De Reformatie*, Vol 33, no. 10 (December 7, 1957), 63ff.



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By H.J.J. Feenstra

BE WISE WITH WISDOM!

Wise words about the way – Proverbs 4:10 - 27

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The Two Roads (Proverbs 4:10-19)

It is not the first time that we read about two roads. We heard about them already in Proverbs 1 and Proverbs 3. The repetition emphasizes the importance, and illustrates our obstinacy. There are many things which need to be told us more than once. And that is certainly the case when talking about these two roads: the road to life and the road to death; the shining path of the righteous, or the dark path of the wicked which disappears in the night. Again we are placed before a choice. And it is perfectly clear what choice is the right one!

From Scripture Proverbs 4:10-19
 Psalm 1
 Matthew 7:13-14

Guarding the Christian Heart (Proverbs 4:20-27)

One of the basic lessons of the ABCs of wisdom deals with *keeping your heart with all vigilance*. And that is necessary, because from the heart flows the springs of life. The thoughts of the heart will come out. All that we say and do stems from our innermost

thoughts. Therefore, our heart is like a position from which to attack the world around us.

But there is also traffic in the opposite direction. We are bombarded by many things which struggle to enter our thoughts, and want to settle in our heart. Our heart, therefore, is also like a reception centre. There is traffic from the inside to the outside, and from the outside to the inside. That heart with its hidden recesses, and with coming and going traffic, needs to be guarded. It must be kept against dangerous intruders, and against its own foolish actions. Most people maintain their house with care, and often their car with exaggerated care. But few keep their heart with vigilance. Of course, no one will deny that it is necessary to take care of many things, but it is also necessary to set priorities. Your heart needs to be guarded and kept above all other things.

How should you do that? Well, by now you ought to know the answer: by mastering wisdom, and by filling your heart with it. Wisdom works like a sieve, like a sluice through which things go into and out of your heart. It is the key to your heart. That key is built by regular bible study and regular church attendance.

The thoughts and considerations of our heart determine what we say and what we look at, how we look and what we do not want to say. Our heart deter-

mines where we want to go, where we want to put our feet, to the right or to the left. Therefore, many of life's questions concern our heart. Ethical matters and practical choices are determined by our heart: what is allowed and what is not? what is right and what is wrong? should we choose this or that? Every day we are confronted by such questions, questions related to our walk of life, our Christian conduct, and our reformed customs. The questions are basically the same. Yet the answers are often radically different. Today, reformed customs and manners are no longer clearly and easily identifiable. Without wanting to defend the thesis that reformed people always ought to act and behave in the same way, we can readily conclude that we are often poles apart. The one rejects radically what another defends. One person may do some things that another would never do. In particular when our actions cannot be based on one text, and when we have to consider all of Scripture, our choices and answers can be radically different.

Yet, in all these matters it concerns our heart. Those differences are not merely external, they are very much internal in nature. Behind those different answers and choices hides a different heart, a different attitude towards life. That causes the breach between the one and the other. One person may consider the covenant with the Lord as a

What's inside?

In the lead editorial, Dr. J. De Jong writes: . . . *we have an obligation to work for the unity of all true believers, and of all those who confess the name of the Lord. After all, if we are serious about our faith, we must be serious about promoting the unity of the church, and the unity of all true believers.*

This is a sentiment that anyone who holds to the teaching of Scripture and loves the Reformed confessions will echo. Among those who love the unity of the church, there are slightly different ideas on how best to proceed. Recently, we published Dr. De Jong's speech on this point. In this issue, Dr. J. Visscher also addresses the matter and advocates a different procedure. Read it. Study it. Discuss it.

The Rev. VanOene contributes an article on a related issue – the question of whether churches while still striving for unity may already enter into pulpit exchanges.

With apologies to Dr. C. Van Dam and our readers, we had to hold back the second installment of his speech, "Which Bible Translation?" due to space constraints. Please look for it in the next issue.

GvP

contract, and may try to find loopholes in order to escape. Another has given his heart to the Lord and wants to honour God's covenant in full by acknowledging that throughout all of life.

Deep down, one person may well be unwilling to give himself or herself to the Lord and may be searching for an escape. For another the Lord's commandments may sound as music to his ears. The one is quite happy when he

thinks he can say that there is no particular Bible text which forbids this or that. Another may struggle with the same question, may continue to read the Bible and prayerfully tries to gain a clearer insight.

Pure in heart – that belongs to the picture which the Lord Jesus painted of the children of the kingdom – pure in heart, genuinely so. And that needs to

be applied in all practical things: pure of heart and clean of hand.

Wisdom wants to make us into people of integrity, people who have locked wisdom in their heart.

From Scripture Proverbs 4:20-27
Psalm 24:4
Psalm 101:2
Matthew 5:8; 6:21
Psalm 86:11-12

“That They May All Be One:” A modest proposal for the unity of the church

By J. Visscher

No one can deny that the present ecclesiastical landscape of North America is filled with quite a number of conservative Presbyterian and Reformed churches. To mention only a few that may be familiar to our readers: there is the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Free Reformed Churches, the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Orthodox Reformed Churches, the Reformed Church in the United States, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.

Now, it is not the intention of this proposal to cover all of these churches. While they are all Reformed in theology and Presbyterian in church polity, there are differences between them in organization, history and practice that at the moment defy any workable proposal. Hence this proposal will be restricted to four churches on the above list. They are the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), the Free Reformed Churches (FRC), the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches (FURC) and the Orthodox Reformed Churches (ORC).

Part of the reason for this restriction relates to their confessional basis, in that they all have the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort and the Heidelberg Catechism. Part of the reason also relates to church government, in that all either have the Church Order of Dort of 1618-19 or various versions based on it. As well, part of the reason has to do with history, in that all of these churches

trace their roots back to the Netherlands and to the Secession of 1834.

Background

Of course, you will understand that what is about to be proposed did not suddenly fall out of the sky. Rather it is the result of years of personal reflection and communal discussion.

For the past 18 years I have been pastoring Canadian Reformed Churches in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia, first in Cloverdale and at present in Langley. During those years I have been involved in a great many discussions with colleagues and consistories of the Free Reformed, Orthodox Reformed and, what of late has become known as, the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches.

In addition, for the last ten years we have had what is called the Pacific Reformed Ministerial which meets on a bi-monthly basis in either BC or Washington and is composed of colleagues from the above churches, as well as from some independent Reformed churches. Together we have dealt over the years with all kinds of subjects and topics. We have even targeted issues that were perceived as keeping us apart or on which we are supposed to have differences.

What have we discovered? We have come to the conclusion that real unity exists between us. Whether the topic has been covenant, experiential preaching, church, regeneration, preaching, church discipline, women in

office, and a host of others, there has been a real meeting of mind and heart.

This is not to say that we have always agreed on every detail or that we have a common approach to all issues and problems; however, even when we have agreed to disagree it was in a brotherly fashion and it did not endanger our fellowship.

Wrong perceptions

In this connection there is sometimes a perception out there that all Orthodox Reformed ministers or Free Reformed or Canadian Reformed ministers think alike. They all come out of the same mould. That is a myth. In reality, we each bring our own perspective, our own personality, our own background, our own upbringing to the discussion table. Quite simply, there is a lot of diversity among us; however, at the same time it is diversity within the bonds of unity. We may have different views or emphases on different matters but they are all still within the limits set down by our confessional documents.

Another thing that we have discovered is that our separate existence as church communities has led to the rise and usage of different terms, expressions, distinctions and emphases. What do the Free Reformed mean when they use a term like “experiential preaching?” What is the Canadian Reformed understanding of the “church” and “covenant?” What is the Orthodox Reformed view on the matter of church federation?

At first sight some of these things come across as real obstacles and road-blocks, but on further exploration, it has often proven to be a matter of coming to grips with a view that we all hold but that we express in different ways or it is a case of a certain practice or procedure that we have misunderstood and even do ourselves, but then under a different heading.

Another lesson learned from these discussions is that each federation comes with baggage and image problems. The Canadian Reformed are viewed as being sectarian when it comes to the doctrine of the church. The Free Reformed are seen as excessively subjective. The Orthodox Reformed are regarded as a group of independents who have reluctantly banded together. The Fellowship Churches are considered to be a company of churches filled with malcontents.

In the process of getting to know each other, however, we have seen many of these stereotypes disappear. True, every church federation has its extremists, and sometimes the loud, exaggerated statements of a few have managed to put a whole church federation in a bad light. As a result, we have spent considerable time over the years working our way through views and teachings attributed to our respective churches, but that none of our federations even hold.

And the result? It has proven to be a success. The fog of misrepresentation, innuendo and suspicion has lifted. A spirit of brotherly harmony and communion prevails. In short, the Lord has seen fit to bless our humble and halting efforts.

Indeed, He has blessed them to such an extent that we are now asking, "What next? Where do we go from here?"

Not ministers only

In asking these kinds of questions we are acutely aware that we in the Pacific Reformed Ministerial are not the only ones doing so. Ministers are not the only ones building bridges. Many local churches are too.

To cite some examples in our area. There is contact on a consistorial level between the following churches: the Orthodox Reformed Church of New Westminster and the Canadian Reformed Church of Surrey, the Orthodox Reformed Church of Surrey and the Canadian Reformed Church of Cloverdale, the Free Reformed Church of Abbotsford and the Canadian Reformed Churches of Aldergrove and Langley, the Orthodox Reformed

Church of Kelowna and the Canadian Reformed Church of Vernon.

In addition, there are consistories that are in the process of initiating contact. Recently the Free Reformed Churches sponsored an Office bearers Conference and extended an invitation to the Canadian Reformed Churches. Every year a Reformation Rally is held in Langley organized by the Orthodox Reformed Church of New Westminster but co-sponsored by a number of Canadian Reformed and Free Reformed Churches.

Going further afield, it is obvious that contacts are growing elsewhere. Representatives from Orthodox Reformed Churches and Fellowship Churches in Western Canada have recently met and had a very positive meeting. In the month of May Canadian Reformed and Fellowship pastors had a conference together in Edmonton, Alberta.

Already in 1992 a series of meetings were held in Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario, at which men from all four federations spoke. The great turnouts on three successive Thursdays indicated that this is a matter that lives just as much among the members as the ministers.

While not being familiar with all of the local discussions in the east, I know that also there an increasing number of churches are taking up contact with each other.

More and more a consensus is developing that our churches have much in common. True, we have our differences, and those should not be glossed over, but what unites us is so much more than what divides us. Should we not be together? Should we not get together?

Is that really necessary?

Such a sentiment immediately raises the question as to whether this is really necessary. Would it not be better to come to some sort of accommodation together in which we agree to respect each other and be civil to each other, yet continue to live beside each other? In other words, why not adopt an ecclesiastical good neighbour policy?

In some respects that would already be a step in the right direction. Up until now we have not been without border skirmishes.

What I mean is that a person leaves the Christian Reformed Church and has to decide whether to join a Orthodox Reformed Church or a Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Church. Both may want him, but only one can receive

him. A choice has to be made and it can create hard feelings.

Or a member of the Canadian Reformed Church marries someone from the Free Reformed Church and leaves. How is this announced to the congregation? Some Canadian Reformed Churches have been known to state that this person has "withdrawn from the Church of Jesus Christ." Needless to say this gives the impression that by leaving the Canadian Reformed Church you are leaving the Church of Jesus Christ altogether and joining a false church or a sect.

Thankfully, in many places local churches are reflecting on these things and there is a growing attempt to be more sensitive and civil to each other. Colleagues in different churches are beginning to pick up the phone and discuss how best to deal with potentially difficult cases. Members under discipline in one church are finding it harder to move next door and be received as if nothing happened.

Is this enough?

Still, the question needs to be asked as to whether getting along is good enough. It may suit us as churches, as members, as pastors; however, that is not really the question. The real issue is not trying to find our comfort zone. It is this: "What does the Lord and King of the church Jesus Christ expect from us?"

My reading of John 17 tells me that what He wants to see among His people on earth is unity. He wants us below to be as united as Father, Son and Holy Spirit are above (v. 21). He also wants us to be so united that we become a witness to the world (v. 21).

Yet that in turn raises the question as to why spiritual unity is not enough? Why does it have to become concrete? Why do we have to strive towards organizational oneness as the ultimate goal?

Surely this arises from the fact that in the NT we see that the unity of the church is more than just a theoretical or spiritual concept. It is something that becomes tangible when the church of Jesus Christ meets for worship, celebrates the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, holds offerings to deal with the needs of fellow saints. Members have a calling to be a hand and a foot to each other, and churches do too.

Indeed, is it not so that as churches we need each other? Is it not so that we can learn from each other? Is it not so that we should support each other? Is there not more than a little truth in the motto: United we stand, divided we

fall? It cannot be pleasing to the Lord to see each of us doing our own thing in our own corner, while all the while professing to be spiritually one. What kind of oneness is this anyway? If we are convinced that we are one in the Lord, then we need to make every effort to live as one and to act as one.

How?

Still, expressing a desire for federative unity and finding a way to realize it are two different things. Sometimes two people or parties know where they want to go but they cannot agree on which road to take.

Merger?

Church history reveals that a number of different roads to unity have been taken over the years. The most common one is merger. In other words, two churches meeting in their respective broadest assemblies agree in principle to merge. They strike committees, hold discussions, enter into negotiations and come to terms of union that are agreeable to all the parties concerned. Through an agreed upon mechanism they bring the different churches on both sides together.

Of course, this is describing an often complex process in a few words and in a simple manner; nevertheless, the question is, "Would it work for us?" Most of the indications are that it would not. For one, this is not a case of two churches entering into negotiations together, but a case of four churches being involved. What an abundance of committees that would spawn! What a complexity there would be to the discussions and negotiations that would follow! There is every likelihood that in such a situation the process would bog down and die a slow but sure death.

Join and receive?

Some of you may know that a number of years ago the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) invited the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod (RPCES), to make application to join and be received into the PCA. The result was that the former decided to decline the invitation, whereas, the latter accepted.

Could such an approach serve as a model for us? Again there is reason to doubt that it would. In the case of the PCA, the OPC and the RPCES, it was obvious who would do the inviting, after all the PCA had the numbers and the momentum. In our situation the inviting could be done by any of the

four churches; however, we need to be honest with ourselves. The newly federated Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches is still organizing itself. The Orthodox Reformed Churches, seeing their relatively short history, would be reluctant to do so. The Free Reformed Churches are also not ready to take such a bold step. The Canadian Reformed Churches may be in the best position of all to extend such an invitation, but what possibility is there at the moment of a positive response from the other three churches?

Summing it up, while all of the churches are in a position to issue a "join and receive" invitation, it is doubtful that any are ready to do so, and that any of the others are in a position to react positively to it.

Immediate federation

Recently, at a number of meetings in the West, Prof. Dr. J. DeJong of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches proposed that the CanRC and the Fellowship Churches work towards immediate federation. He recommended that this be done on the basis of the old Christian Reformed Church Order of 1920 (that should probably be 1934 – JV). He also suggested that both federations should keep on using for the time being their respective song books, the Psalter Hymnal and the Book of Praise, that a common procedure for admission to the Lord's Supper be used along the lines being proposed by the Immanuel Church of St. Catherines, and that there be occasional pulpit exchange. (For the complete proposal see previous issues of *Clarion*.)

On the whole what Prof. DeJong is proposing is a bold move which has a certain attractiveness to it. Nevertheless, I doubt that his proposal will receive serious consideration.

To begin with, it encompasses only two of the four federations. Then too there is the fact that while he proposes a federation, it will obviously not function immediately or fully as a federation. All kinds of details would still have to be worked out. Also, there is the fact that all of my colleagues in the other federations that I spoke with about this proposal are of the opinion that it is premature and has little hope of succeeding.

So where does that leave us? Is there another route that we can take, one that might be acceptable to all parties?

Recently at a Ministerial Conference in Edmonton attended by pastors from the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches, I proposed another approach.

For want of a better term I have called it ARCH. (The fact that McDonald's Restaurants recently began to market a new hamburger called "the Arch Deluxe" is strictly coincidental. Besides, this is simply ARCH. There is nothing "deluxe" about it.) What is ARCH?

ARCH stands for the Association of Reformed Churches and the proposal is as follows:

- a) that representatives from the CanRC, FRC, FURC and ORC come together and form an Association called The Association of Reformed Churches (ARCH);
- b) that the purpose of this Association is
 - i) to promote good relations between the member churches;
 - ii) to promote the unity of the member churches, and, should the Lord bless it, federative unity;
- c) that the member churches of the Association go on record as recognizing in principle the preaching, sacraments and discipline in each others churches;
- d) that each member church appoint two or three delegates to a Standing Committee that will
 - i) meet annually to monitor progress being made in promoting harmony and unity;
 - ii) offer its good offices to assist in resolving disputes between the local churches of the members;
 - iii) receive and distribute committee reports;
 - iv) make recommendations to the local churches of the members and to the synods, as mandated by them;
- e) that at least three Study Committees be struck to deal with the following areas:
 - i) The Committee on Church Government, which will have as its purpose to formulate a Church Order, based on the principles of Dort, that would be acceptable to all the member churches;
 - ii) The Committee on Liturgy, which will have as its purpose to make proposals on matters relating to a common Psalter, to Bible translation, and to Liturgical Forms;
 - iii) The Committee on Theological Training, which will have as its purpose to make a proposal on the future training of ministers for a united federation, keeping in mind the existing institutions in Chicago (Mid-America) and Hamilton (Theological College);
- f) that each member church agree to urge its local churches to initiate

contact with local churches of the other members in their area.

No deadline

In making this proposal a few additional words are in order. In the first place, there is no time limit or target date attached to this proposal. Time and again in our discussions the plea has been raised that we need time to grow together, and that perhaps the members in the pew need more time than the ministers or elders. This may well be true, hence the wisest course of action would be to simply come together in an association type setting for the time being in order to give both time and opportunity for the local churches of each member to get to know each other and develop a common trust in each other.

In any number of places it has already been shown that when local churches meet together, misunderstandings are addressed, misrepresentations are cleared up and the barriers begin to come down. If local churches commit themselves to seeking each other and do that in a humble and prayerful manner, the Lord will be gracious and bless it. *Ora et labora* – work and pray – is also in this matter the best motto and approach.

Preaching

In the discussions that have taken place thus far the topic of the preaching has been a point of some difficulty. My experience has been that the FRC, FURC and the ORC are more open to inviting outside ministers on their pulpits; whereas, the CanRC has a history of stressing that first an official relationship be established before ministers of that federation can be invited to preach. The reasons for these differences may well relate, at least in part, to somewhat differing views on the church, as well as to different historical traditions. At the same time there is a concern in the CanRC that allowing access to the pulpit without any official contact will lead to a very confused and disorderly situation.

On the other hand, if the churches mentioned can agree to join together in an Association and there recognize in principle also each other's preaching, a great deal of disorder could be avoided. As well, it will expose the members of the pew to other faithful servants of the Lord and in that way promote trust and confidence.

At the same time it should be also be said that such guest ministers on the pulpit from other member churches, or the occasional pulpit exchange between

colleagues of the member churches, should not happen without the involvement of the consistories and the congregations. To simply leave it in the hands of the local minister as to whom to invite will surely create difficulties.

As a result, it would be advisable that before an invitation is extended to a neighbouring or area minister of a member church that contact be established between the respective consistories and that they meet each other and discuss necessary matters. In some cases it may also be advisable to have joint congregational meetings to introduce each other and get to know each other. As well, when consideration is being given to inviting a minister whom the members of the consistory do not know, that minister should be invited to attend a consistory meeting and there a proper exchange of views can take place.

In short, everything should be done to ensure that the pulpit not be used in an experimental manner or as a proving ground. The preaching of God's Word is too holy to be used as a trial balloon.

The Lord's Supper

One other area that would have the potential to cause difficulties among the churches mentioned is the matter of the Lord's Supper. Different practices prevail. Some are strict, others are less strict. Some stress the need for a piece of paper in the form of a travel attest, others are of the opinion that a simple request to attend is sufficient.

In order to avoid conflict over this matter, it would be necessary for the members of the Association to agree to a common protocol. This could be in the form of a written attest. It could also be by having visitors from member churches answer some commonly agreed upon questions put to them by the elders of the celebrating church. It could even be done by a phone call being made to their local elder or pastor. In short, there are a number of ways in which the sanctity of the table can be safeguarded and the elders can function properly as guardians of the flock.

In closing

What I am here proposing is, as the title suggests, a modest proposal. It is a step, the Lord willing, on the road to unity. No doubt the process will be long and it will meet with challenges and difficulties on the way.

At the same time, it is not my intention to insist that my way is the only way. If others have a different proposal, let them come forward and let us dis-

cuss together both in person and in the press. For what we seek is not the success of our plans and ideas, but the greater glory of God's Name and the well-being of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We live in a critical time. All around us the forces of godlessness are increasing. The dangers that threaten the church are many. Surely, in the face of such dangers, it is utter foolishness to maintain the status quo. I realize that some are quite content as they are, especially in the more established churches like the CanRC and the FRC, but are they also looking down the road? Do they realize that the real enemy is not each other as churches, but the evil that is in the world and the Devil who is still prowling around like a roaring lion?

In the face of the pressing need to bring the Gospel to the world and to defend the Gospel from the assaults of the world and the devil, we have a task to seek and unite with all those who hold to the same Scriptures and the same confessions. We need to make common cause against the real enemy. We need to do so for the honour of the Lord, for the well-being of the churches, as well as for the future of our young people.

If we do not, then there is every likelihood that the cause of the Reformed faith will suffer a serious setback on the North American continent. If we continue to live side-by-side but do not build bridges to one another, we will drift apart. The weaker, more vulnerable churches among us will splinter and collapse.

Why, there will be no end even to the tensions within. Already some local churches are frustrated in their own federations because of what they see as a lack of vision and commitment to working towards unity. Without some sort of a mechanism to channel those efforts and an orderly framework in which to stimulate those efforts, the danger is there that local churches will go it alone. Some may see their duty to the Lord and the unity of His church as being more important than federative loyalty.

So, let us give careful thought and much prayer to what we are doing and where we are going. May it please the Lord to guide us with His Word and fill us with the illumination of His Holy Spirit in all these matters.

Dr. James Visscher is pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church of Langley, B.C. He can be reached at Tel: (604) 576-2124; Fax: (604) 576-2101; E-Mail: visscher@eznet.ca.





By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

“You are not your own; you were bought with a price. . . .”
1 Corinthians 6:19c, 20a

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Yes, we know that we belong to the Lord, with body and soul, and in life and death. He made us, He takes care of us, nothing can happen to us beyond His will. But, does that always fill us with a happy feeling? Does that always give us so much comfort, that we do not worry about anything?

I am afraid that we have to say “No” to those questions. Often we do worry, often we are very unhappy, sometimes we may even need help from someone, because we do not see our way out anymore. It seems at times that the words from the Bible or from the Catechism do not reach our hearts, we do not find any comfort in them. At such times we may be trying to find comfort at places where we should not be going. For after a while we will find out that nothing and nobody can make us feel better, unless it or they will bring us closer to the Lord. And where can we be closer to the Lord than in the Church? That is where the people of the Lord confess that Christ the Lord is their Saviour. What the Church confesses is summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism. In Lord’s Day 1 Answer 1 we read, “That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.” That is the answer to the question, “What is your *only* comfort in life and death?” The Catechism gives a very simple answer to that question: we belong to our Saviour. He paid for all our sins, that was His payment for us. He bought us with His blood, and now we *belong* to Him. So we do not have to go hunting all over the place to find someone who will take care of us, no, we belong to our Saviour Jesus Christ. He is there for us, He is waiting for us, He is our comfort. This is true, this is certain. Every day, no matter how difficult our life may be, we may experience the joy of this comfort, our *only* comfort.

What is comfort? Something to ease the pain, to suppress our innermost anxieties, something to make us feel better for a little while? No, the comfort of the Bible is not only for the present time, it looks at the future. It does not look at what we feel, but it points to Jesus Christ. It shows that our Saviour is there for us, that He died for our sins, and that He restored our lives. He bought us with His blood. He owns us so completely, that He also protects us against the power of Satan. It is Satan who tries to make us doubt and unhappy. But he can only try that, for he has no control over us. Even when we die, then we

still belong to our Jesus Christ. He is in control of us, completely, in life and death.

We may be in doubt or unhappy, sick or handicapped, depressed or lonely. Most of us will have to experience some kind of hardships sooner or later, for they are the consequences of the fall into sin and the world is full of them. But nothing will ever become so bad that we cannot handle it any longer. For we are not our own. Our Saviour bought us with the price of His own blood. He makes our heavenly Father take care of us, He sent us the Holy Spirit so that we can believe all this and live a life of thankfulness to Him. We may have to suffer some, but not to death. We may have to endure, but not without hope. We may have to be strong, but not without help. For God is with us, and He will help us in everything that happens to us. He will strengthen our faith, so that the people of the world may be amazed.

So then let us pray at all times that the Holy Spirit may guide us in believing that we are not our own, but that we belong to Him. Now and in the future. That means for ever and ever.

*O righteous Lord, Thou in Thy sovereign grace
Hast saved my soul from death and woe ap-
palling,
Dried all my tears and kept my feet from falling,
That I may live and walk before Thy face.*

Psalm 116:5

Birthdays in October:

17: Alan Breukelman

2223-19 Street
Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4

22: Nelena Hofsink

“BETHESDA CLEARBROOK HOME”
32553 Willingdon Cr.
Clearbrook, BC V2T 1S2

25: John Feenstra

“ANCHOR HOME”
361 30 Road
RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0

28: Mary Ann DeWit

“BETHESDA”
6705 Satchel Road, Box 40
Mount Lehman, BC V0X 1V0

Happy Birthday to all of you and until next month,
Mrs. R. Ravensbergen
7462 Hwy. 20, RR 1, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

A Federative or a Local Matter?

By W.W.J. VanOene

The contact that several churches have with others, such as the Free Reformed and Orthodox Reformed, leads, in many instances, to the conclusion that there is unity of faith. As a result, unity of organization is pursued. This understandably puts various questions before participants.

One of these questions is: when would admission of each other's members to the Lord's Table be allowed? Another question is: when would pulpit exchange be permissible? As for this last point, a related question is: in whose province is it to decide? Is this a consistory matter or is it a matter for a general synod as representing the whole federation? And if the federation should decide against pulpit exchange (to restrict ourselves to this point), would a local church have the right to act on its own and to proceed toward it?

Everyone who is no "stranger in Jerusalem" knows that the latter possibility is being pondered in more than one place. I have even heard the not-so-veiled warning that if the forthcoming general synod should decide negatively, local churches will go it on their own.

The question is: would a church be permitted to act unilaterally in this respect?

Admittance to the pulpit

There is no doubt that admittance to the pulpit is within the province of the consistory alone. No other church or consistory, no broader assembly has any say in this matter. A consistory is not under any obligation to invite anyone to the pulpit and is not limited in its authority to invite anyone it wants to invite.

All this applies in the case that a church is standing all on its own, without any ties with others, without any binding arrangements, made voluntarily, and without obligation, taken upon itself of its own free will.

A church which is totally and unrestrictedly on its own, has the right to call anyone it wants to the office of minister of the Word, to examine him and, having found him capable, to ordain and install him.

The situation changes when a church has voluntarily entered into a federation with other churches and has adopted certain conditions for living together within that federation.

Lawful calling

Recently, I conducted a service in a church during which an elder was ordained and installed. Although I had read the Form often enough to know it practically by heart, I was struck by a certain sentence within it. As I was already pondering the question of pulpit admittance, it will come as no surprise that suddenly the following words of the *Form* took on special meaning: "They (the elders) must prevent anyone from serving in the church without having been lawfully called."

How is one lawfully called?

To answer this question, we have to turn to the agreement the churches have made and by which they have bound themselves: our Church Order.

In Article Four, we speak about the matter of "Eligibility for the Ministry." This eligibility is restricted to 1) those who have been declared eligible by the churches; 2) those who are already serving in that capacity in one of the churches; and 3) those who have been declared eligible or are serving in one of the churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches maintain a sister-church relationship.

It would be possible to call one who has served in churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches do not maintain a sister-church relationship, but such a person first has to be examined with "due observance of the general regulations adopted for that purpose."

These "general regulations" require that he must submit proof that he has been lawfully called to the ministry, that he must submit a written exposition of the reason for his request to be declared eligible for call within the churches, that he is to submit a testimony concerning his conduct, and, finally, that he has to be examined at a classis in the presence of the regional-synodical deputies.

All of the above belongs to being "lawfully called" to the ministry, and the elders are allowed to admit to the

pulpit only those who have been thus lawfully called.

One should not adduce against this that "pulpit exchange" falls into a different category, since the one with whom a minister exchanges pulpits appears only occasionally and does not become a minister within the federation. What difference-in-principle is there between admitting someone who does not meet the above-mentioned requirements for just the occasional Sunday or permanently? The answer is: none whatsoever.

If anyone should wish to claim that our Church Order does not say anything about "pulpit exchange" with ministers not belonging to the churches or their sister-churches, he is pulling the wool over his own eyes, so that he cannot see clearly anymore.

I sympathize with the desire to recognize the faithfulness of others to God's Word as well as with the longing for ecclesiastical unity with all who stand on the same basis, but this can only be properly achieved when all things are done "decently and in good order."

At high school, I had a friend whose father was an "orthodox," solidly-Reformed minister in the Netherlands Reformed (Nederlands Hervormde) Church. My friend himself also became a minister in that church. As far as he was concerned, I would gladly have "exchanged pulpits" with him. But both he and I belonged to a federation, he to the collegialistic Netherlands Reformed Church and I to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Besides, I am still in agreement with the *Act of Secession or Return of 1834*, which states: "until the Netherlands Reformed Church (as such) returns to the true service of the Lord."

There were, and probably still are, many truly Reformed ministers in the Netherlands Reformed Church (I think, for example, of the late Rev. J.G. Woelderink), but they, too, live in a country-wide organization and are not free to act as if there were no restrictions. Besides, the Netherlands Reformed Church as such has still not returned to the true service of the Lord.

A federative matter

Whether one deploras it or not, unification as well as "pulpit exchanges" are *federative* matters. No one is permitted to proceed independently.

If two churches, belonging to two different federations, should decide to proceed on their own, this would basically mean that they break away from

their own federation and form a (new) two-church federation of their own.

Some promotion of unity, I would say!

We serve true unity only when abiding by the rule the churches have voluntarily adopted and by which they consequently are bound.

The Lord admonishes us "to strive for peace with all." That means: all to-

gether, so that no one stays behind but the whole army marches on with closed ranks without stragglers.

Our first responsibilities are toward our own federation. If two churches should betray their own federation instead of continuing their efforts to take all the churches along, this would be extremely sad and would achieve the opposite of their stated goals. 

Women's League Day of the Fraser Valley

By Joanna Vanderpol

On Thursday, June the 20th, the Women Societies of the Fraser Valley held their 33rd Annual League Day with the theme being *The Certainty of Faith*. On this beautiful sunny morning with Mount Baker shimmering in its beauty, 258 ladies made their way to Abbotsford. We were greeted with a cup of coffee before we started the meeting. At 10:00 Alida VanderHorst welcomed us all on behalf of the Women's Society of Port Kells, our host for the day. She made us aware of the fact that this would be the first and last League Day that Port Kells would ever host. This fall they hope to be in their own building in the Willoughby area which will mean a name change. We had some guests from the Free Reformed Church and from Holland. Alida also asked those ladies who were at the first league Day to stand up. They were thanked for starting this lovely tradition. After singing, prayer and Scripture reading, Jane deGlint presented her speech entitled *Certainty and Doubt in a 'New' Age*.

We all need certainty in all aspects of our lives. Doubt and especially doubt of faith is most oppressing. It interferes with our joy. There are different types of doubt. Some people have such troubled emotions that they are convinced that the blessings of salvation, the forgiveness of sins are not for them. But God has promised us that He is always near even if we don't feel it. Other people deny the existence of God and give in to devilish desire to be god to themselves. Even some heroes of faith, for example, Martin Luther, were assaulted with moments of fierce doubt. Doubt is called unbelief because it does not put total trust in God. In John 20 Thomas is told not to be faithless but

believing. In spite of being assailed with doubts and temptations, the Lord gives us a way out with His Word and Spirit.

The Rationalistic School teaches that belief in God is unreasonable. Scientific thinking is their god. Rationalism's rejection of God left an empty spot. This gap was filled by the resurgence of a 'New Age' of pagan practices. The unifying concept in New Age is that man's true inner self is God. Sin becomes negative thinking about oneself. Reincarnation feeds on the sense of immortality for every living soul. There is a need for a new consciousness which can be produced by witchcraft, channeling, mantras, trances, etc. These are the wiles of the devil already used in paradise. Lev. 19, Deut. 18, and 1 Kings 21 are some of the Scripture passages where God tells us how much He hates all pagan practices. The public schools are being infiltrated with these ungodly beliefs. Occult practices can cause dark days for the soul or excessive pride. New Age people believe themselves to be part of the great eternal light. If this is not achieved in this life time, they expect to achieve it in another cycle of life. Many self-help books which deal with self esteem, teach how to reach ones inner Source to achieve perfect peace. But there is no eternal peace outside of Jesus Christ. The Bible prepares us to live in a world of heresies and unbelief. The danger of addiction is great among those who dabble with the occult.

There is no human answer to the certainty of faith. Only the Father, who did not leave us alone but sent His Spirit, works faith in us through the Word. The Spirit leads us to the powerful conviction of Abba, Father.



Mrs. Alida Vanderhorst and Mrs. Jane de Glint

After an excellent discussion, Ann Bysterveld, representative of the Women's Society of Cloverdale, read a poem by Helen Steiner Rice which was in keeping with the theme of the day. She also read a short poem in honour of all grandmas who don't sit and knit all day, but who are now busy with their cell phones and are working out at the gym. Grandma has come off her rocker!

We all headed into the meeting hall for lunch where the tables were set with bright pastel colours to offset the rather dreary spring we've had up to now. At 1:00 we continued the meeting under the able leadership of Bernice Vreugdenhil from the Women's Society of Lynden. We first had some enjoyable entertainment by the Society of Maranatha. Janet Faber then read her essay entitled *Knowing the Will of God for Your Life*. The theme for her essay was: In order for us to know the will of God in our life we must live obediently to God's revealed will and we also possess the



Mrs. Ann Bysterveld

comfort of God's Sovereign will. We need to renounce our evil will which is called foolish in Eph. 5:17. We need a mind renewed in Christ. Since God has a will for us, we can expect Him to show it to us. We must study and meditate on God's Word and become saturated with it for that is where we find His revealed will. In many places in the Bible and especially in the Psalms, we find "guidance" as the main theme. In order to be guided we must submit to God's will.

We must also constantly examine ourselves if it is our sincere desire to serve God. It is also necessary to pray, asking for what we need according to God's revealed will and asking for the Holy Spirit to work in us.

In the Bible we read that God at times, used signs to reveal His will although not very often. In the Old Testament He used the Urim and Thumin. Gideon also received a sign. Today we do not depend on signs but on what God has revealed in His Word.

God has a plan for each of His children. Our salvation is God's Sovereign will for our lives. Although we do not receive an individual road map, we do have a common destination. In His time and way He will lead us. No detail is too insignificant or no circumstance too difficult. When we slip and fall or when we make wrong decisions, the Lord will always catch us and lead us. We need to learn to trust in God.

After a short discussion, the League Day ended. Throughout the day the



Mrs. Bernice Vreugdenhil and Mrs. Janet Faber

enthusiastic singing was ably accompanied by Diane Jansen. The pulpit was nicely decorated with flower arrangements made by Janey VanSeters. As in the past, the League Day turned out to be a very enjoyable day where we could learn from each other and encourage each other. We thank the Lord that He makes this day of study possible for us. Thankfully the Holy Spirit works certainty of faith in us.

Living in God

Credo Christian High School Graduation – June 27, 1996

By Sarah Vandergugten

The end of another school year! It seemed only such a short while ago that the last graduating class had been standing eagerly ready to march in to the strains of "Pomp and Circumstance." Now, with a final straightening of caps and gowns the 1996 Credo High School Grads made their way to center stage at the Abbotsford Pentecostal Assembly. Chris Bisschop spoke the introductory words of welcome.

Central to this year's celebration was the text the grads selected as theme, Acts 17:28: "In Him we live and move and have our being." The first congratulatory words, based on Colossians 1:15-23, were spoken by the principal, Mr. E. Vanderboom. He emphasized that although all around us it seems that "things are quite literally coming apart," we can be confident that "in Him [Christ] all things hold together. Despite the fact that uncertainty seems to be the only certainty, we know better. God's world has been restored in Him



The Grads of '96!

who holds all things together. Parents and teachers have worked to make that a reality in the students' lives. Therefore with confidence in the Lord's covenant

blessings, the grads can be sent beyond the walls of Credo to continue their journey together with God's people on the road to Zion.

The Joy of the Journey

Mr. Bill Vanderpol, speaking on behalf the parents, entitled his speech, *The Joy of the Journey*. Mr. Vanderpol noted that the Credo tradition (having a parent whose youngest child was graduating do the parents' address) had special meaning for him and his family. Although their daughter Liz would be the last of the family to come through the school system, an evening like this reminded them of their youngest child, Ruth, who had a special graduation 3 1/2 years ago. She lives with her heavenly Father, having come to the end of her brief earthly journey.

This class – most of whom began their journey in the year 1978 – has always been somewhat different. Most families brought a daughter to Grade One. When the time to enter Credo High arrived, parents from the three different elementary schools were sure that finally the gender ratio would even out, but it was not to be. This grad class of 56 students has 38 young women, and only 18 young men.

One of the new faces entering Grade 8 with these grads was a very special student, Terence Berends. His presence in the school added a unique element. Terence taught us all that everyone is basically the same: we all need unconditional love and acceptance; we all need to learn self-discipline; we all need to be admonished at times. Terence also taught us what it is to have a child-like faith; what it is to sing enthusiastic praises to God with heart and mouth; what it means to be a hand and a foot to each other. We need to remember these lessons as we continue our journey.

Covenant companions . . .

Mr. Vanderpol noted that the grads do not travel alone. They may follow the well-marked road that has been traversed with confidence by the heroes of faith (Heb. 11).

Noah, Abraham, Sarah trusted that God would be true to his promises. Sometimes the journey of faith will take them to unexpected and uncomfortable places, something Joseph discovered when his brothers sold him. David, Job, Paul and even the Lord Jesus cried in anguish to God when their lives became difficult to endure. But it was Christ's unswerving obedience to his Father, even to death on the cross, that assures the grads that all difficulties on their journey will be turned to their good. Praise be to the One whose mercies are new every morning.

The journey will also take the grads to heights of great joy, where they may follow the example of Miriam, Hannah, Mary, Anna and Simeon who all rejoiced at the fulfillment of long-expected promises. Will life always be exciting? No. Life will seem mundane, even vain at times. Yet the grads need to heed the advice of Paul, who urges us to do our tasks heartily as serving the Lord. This focus will remove the ordinariness of any task.

Long or short . . .

We do not know how long our journey will be. Ruth's was not quite 11 years.

For a previous student at Credo, Rob Luinge, it was only 17 1/2 years. For some the journey is so short, they do not even see the light of day, but are taken back to the Lord at birth. Life is fragile. Mr. Vanderpol encouraged the grads to prepare for each day of the journey by putting on the armor of God every morning, remembering to give thanks for each new day. They will stumble; God will help them up and carry them in his arms. They belong to their faithful Savior, in life and in death. There is no need for worry or anxiety. Constant, thankful prayer will ensure unassailable peace and strength.

Living in God

by Andy Luiten

Living in God, when days of childhood
Come to their end.
Living in God, when time has come to say
Farewell to Friends.
Walking this far, to rest before His holy throne
And knowing that our walk was not alone.

We are children of the Lord
Looking to Mount Zion,
We are pilgrims on the road
marching on to Zion.

Yes, we stumble and we fall
On the road to Zion,
But in faith, we shall call
On our God in Zion.

Refrain:

We shall walk on, praise Him in song
Our God, our Lord,
And in humble prayer, we'll ask for care
From God, our Lord,
On the road.

We are chosen by our Lord
To walk in Zion.
As we grow, we look toward
Our goal in Zion.

Sins of youth, He won't recall
On our way to Zion.
We pray that He will keep us all
On the road to Zion.

Refrain:

Living, Living in God
Living, Living in God
We shall Live in God!

The journey is not a lonely one, even though each grad will take on new and greater responsibilities. This pilgrimage progresses within the context of the body of Christ, his Church, along the road to Zion, the New Jerusalem. Walk the journey in faith, living in God with joy!

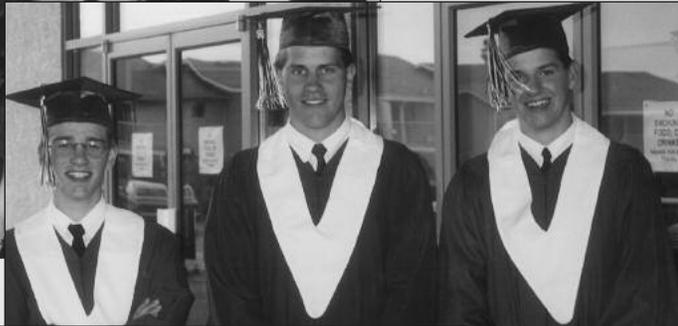
A warm round of applause confirmed the audience's whole-hearted endorsement of this stimulating yet comforting message so articulately expressed on behalf of the parents.

Living in God

The big moment had come. One by one, each of the grads walked the stage to receive a diploma. Cameras flashed, as parents came forward to take pictures of their special grad. Once everyone had reassembled, the grads were ready to sing, accompanied on guitar by Jonathan Luiten and Mr. Brad Davis. This year's grad song, *Living in God*, was particularly meaningful, since it was composed by Jon's father, Andy Luiten, especially for this occasion (see sidebar). The lead singers, Lisa DeHaas, Rosanne Kippers, Leanne



Carrie Driegen, Cindy Emmens, Leanne Leyenhorst and Suzanne Aikema are thrilled that grad night has finally arrived.



Friends for as long as they can remember: Jon Luiten, Mike Vandergugten and Verne Stel.



Terence Berends, Credo's favorite grad, takes his place in the receiving line beside Alisa Schouten.



Tamara VanDyke receives the Student Council Scholarship from "The President" Reuben Bredenhof.



Standing in line beside a grinning Jacquie Bikker, an exuberant Lisa DeHaas reaches out to receive congratulations from a well-wisher.

Leyenhorst, Jeanette Visscher were enthusiastically joined by the rest of their classmates, especially Terence.

As valedictorian, Dana VanderHorst spoke on behalf of the grads. She began with a remarkable quote from Jean-Paul Sartre, "Man can will nothing unless he has first understood that he must count on no one but himself; that he is alone, abandoned on earth in the midst of his infinite responsibilities without help, with no other aim than the one he forges for himself on this earth."

For a moment, members of the audience wondered if they had heard correctly. Thankfully, Dana immediately refuted this despondent and depressing statement by reiterating that during the 12 years of schooling she and her classmates – each with unique talents and personalities – had not walked alone. They had enjoyed support of family, teachers, board members and bus drivers along the way. Now they look forward past grad, towards the next stage

of education. What they have learned so far can be likened to a bus ticket. It can take them around the corner or to new and exciting places. As the journey continues, they know they can count on continued support from those who love them. In particular, there is the One, who in answer to prayer will provide guidance to stay on the right path.

Mr. Sartre had it all wrong. "We are not alone; we do have a destiny beyond the goals we've set for ourselves . . . We have an aim to live in Christ . . . and . . . look forward to eternal life. For 'In Him we live, and move, and have our being.'"

Special Awards

Various representatives from community business firms, financial institutions, colleges and universities, as well as those representing the Fraser Valley Scholarship Foundation now had the pleasure of dispensing more than \$25,000 in scholarships and bursaries

to a large number of well-deserving students. The Governor General's Bronze medal went to Anna DeVries, Credo's top academic student as well as an outstanding athlete.

The evening drew to a close. As the grads left the auditorium, their exuberance bubbled to the surface. Jubilant cheers blended with the decorous tones of the organ recessional. The grads quickly formed a long receiving line, well away from the building, so all could enjoy the fresh evening air. Grandmas and Grandpas – one grandma, Mrs. Van Popta, had four grandchildren graduate – Moms and Dads, brothers and sisters, friends and relatives waited patiently to congratulate their special grad. A wonderful evening with many reasons to give thanks to God for his immeasurable blessings on these graduates, as they hail this landmark in their journey "on the road to Zion." 

Smithers Celebrates 40 Years

April 15, 1956 - April 15, 1996



Our MC: Mr. John VanVeen

It was with much joy that we gathered together as congregation on the evening of May 25, 1996. We came together to commemorate that the church in Smithers was instituted 40 years ago, on April 15, 1956.

Mr. John VanVeen, our MC, welcomed everyone and invited us to sing Ps. 108: 1,2. He then opened the evening with the reading of Hebrews 13:1-20 and prayer.

Br. VanVeen proceeded to read the letter that the new consistory of Smithers

sent to all the sister churches which informed them of its institution. He also related the parallel between our congregation and the early church of Israel. There were many struggles, but the Lord remained faithful. We still are sinful and prone to sin, but the Lord through His infinite mercy continues to bless. Br. VanVeen finished the introduction with the following paragraph. "Of the changes and non-changes I noted above we have the one thing that hasn't changed one iota these past 40 years, nor will change in the years to come. Our Lord and Saviour. In a world where our Lord and His work is ignored, profaned, and rejected, in a world where we see that the Lord has given man up to their own sinful passions, we may persevere. The times ahead are not going to be easy to remain faithful to our Lord but it is our prayer that he will be with us. Not to make it easy for us, but to make it all worthwhile. Our journey to the promised land is not over but it is in sight. Whether we wait a year, another 40 years, or another 120 years is of no concern to us, but we may to continue so that He may still find faith amongst us here in Smithers. On this note we have every

reason to praise his holy name, in song and fellowship. Let us enjoy this evening together. I would like to close this short introduction in a similar in which br. VanDijk, the chairman of the consistory at the institution, closed the address to the congregation. Ebenezer – Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.

We then were treated to the preschoolers reciting verse and singing songs in Praise to the Lord.

Next we were taken on a trip down memory lane as Br. F. Hofsink Sr. showed us slides of historical events including the building of our new (1970) church and some church picnics. Br. C. Barendregt also had some old 8mm film of congregational activities. These were a very entertaining look at the past.

After praising the Lord with the singing of Hymn 60:1,4,5, the floor was given to Rev. Louwse of our sister church in Houston, which was actually the Mother church of the Bulkley Valley. On behalf of the Houston church, he congratulated us on our 40th anniversary. 40 Years in which there has been both difficulties and blessings. As church in Houston they have seen us grown a lot faster than they have in the

past 40 years. He also points out that they would welcome new members.

Our own minister, Rev. Huijgen then addressed us on behalf of the Smithers consistory. He reflected on an old sermon which compared the church to a lawn. From a distance it seems green, although from close you can see there is also that which is unwanted. The congregation has to be all green. This reflects the churches unity. We can be different shades of green, but we must watch for polluting elements. In this congregation there is resemblance and diversity. These characteristics can exist in perfect harmony. We must hope and pray that we may



Preschoolers singing a song



Our Minister: Rev. Huijgen

find ourselves more and more in the unity of the true faith. We must be one in faith, but we can be different in how we take up our task in the church. As church we are young in the perspective of history. We hope and pray that the future may be more glorious and we must aim to reach perfection.

Br. K. Kort then treated us to a very nice piano solo, after which the Ladies Society gave us a game to play. Slides were shown of ministers of the Canadian Reformed Church, and the different societies took turns in identifying them.

There was also a round of trivia about the history of this church.

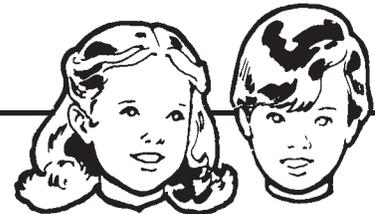
Br. J. Verhelst then performed an organ solo of Hymn 5 by M. Mans.

After the congregation sang Hymn 50: 1,2,7 our M.C. concluded the evening by touching on some responses that were received from those who had been invited to attend this anniversary celebration. After some thank you's to those who helped and participated, the M.C. John VanVeen invited Rev. Huijgen to close the evening in prayer.

By an observer 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

I hope that by now you are all settling into your school routines again. It is wonderful to live in a free country where we can learn about God and all the wonderful things He has created.

Here's some puzzles for you to enjoy in your spare time.

Quiz Time!

NEW TESTAMENT BEFORE OR AFTER?

(text clues at end of column)

1. Christ fed the 5,000 before or after He fed the 4,000?
2. Pilate sent Jesus to Herod before or after the release of Barnabas?
3. Stephen saw the glory of God before or after he was brought out of the city?
4. Barnabas and Paul went to Jerusalem before or after they were sent out from Antioch?
5. Upon His arrest Jesus was taken to Annas before or after He was taken to Caiaphas?
6. Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus before or after Jesus had raised her brother Lazarus from the dead?
7. There was a great earthquake before or after Christ's death?
8. There was a great earthquake before or after the Roman soldiers had left the garden?
9. There was a great earthquake before or after Paul and Silas had sung praises to God?
10. Christ raised Jairus' daughter before or after He raised the widow's son at Nain?

