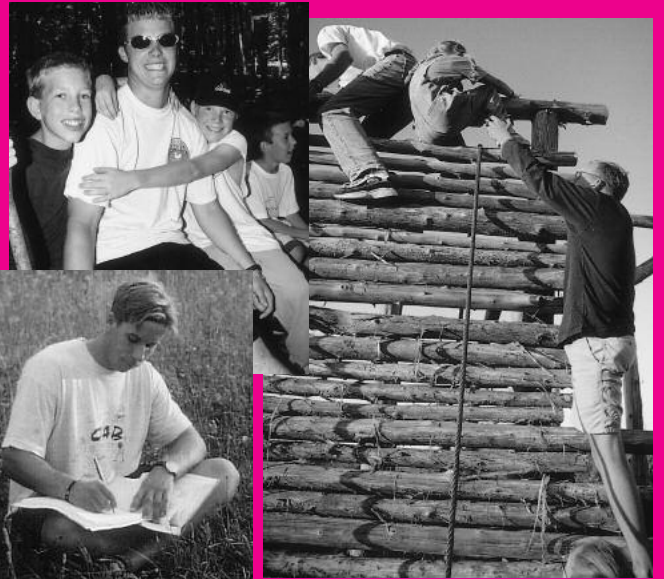
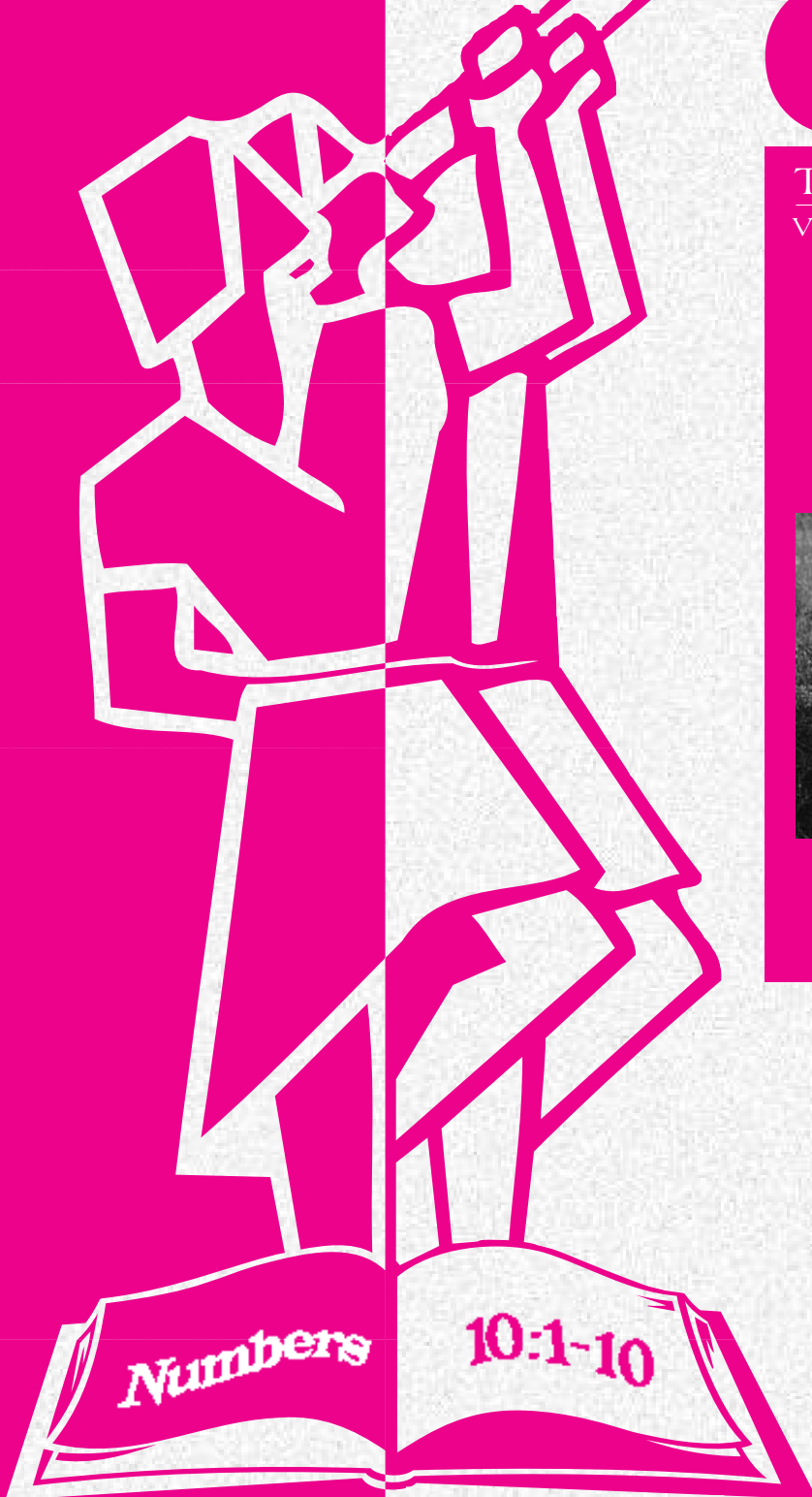


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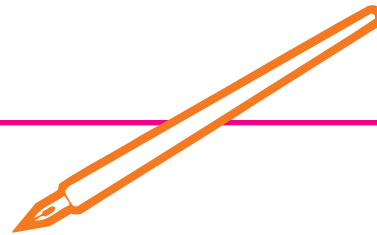
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE  
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*Campfire!  
Summer Bible Camp 1999*



By N.H. Gootjes



## Intercession

### Intercession and prayer

During the congregational prayer in the worship service, we pray for particular people. Their needs are brought before the Lord, and a petition goes out to Him to provide specific help. Often the prayer of the whole congregation is requested for members of the congregation who suffer from a severe illness. Such a prayer can be addressed to God both in the worship services and at the homes. We will briefly consider this important aspect of our worship.

Prayer belongs to the ongoing conversation between the Lord, our God, and us. Over the course of many centuries, God has spoken many words to people living in this world. He spoke to old people (Moses) and to young people (Samuel), to kings (David) and farmers (Amos). What was important for later generations was recorded in the Bible. Through this book, God tells us every day who He is and how we should live in obedience to Him.

God does not want to have a one-sided relationship with his people, He also wants to hear from us. He created us not only with ears to listen to Him but also with tongues to speak to Him. People should not be silently holding out their hands to God to receive some good gift from Him. He wants us to interact with Him, to respond and to cry out to Him. The Psalms show many ways in which we can approach God in our prayers.

Intercession is part of this ongoing interaction between God and us. It has a specific character, for in these prayers we do not ask something for ourselves, but rather for other people. We intercede, we plead to God to grant something to them. Often this request is very specific. We know what these people need and we pray that God will grant this to them.

God provides a wide range of possibilities for our prayers. Just as the command to love is not limited to the family circle, but extends beyond that, so intercession reaches out from the people around us to all kinds of people. The Lord Jesus taught us to even pray for those who persecute us (Matt 5:44). God wants our prayers to be as comprehensive as his care for this world.<sup>1</sup> Intercession is an important aspect of this.

### Intercession in the Bible

The very first prayer recorded in the Bible is an intercessory prayer.<sup>2</sup> Abraham prayed it when God came to visit him. The Lord made known to him that He would destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their sins.

Abraham responded with the prayer: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the fifty righteous people in it?" (Gen 18:24). Although it might have made it easier for Abraham to live in Canaan when these two cities were destroyed, yet Abraham interceded for the righteous people living there. In this instance, God heard Abraham's prayer only partly. He did destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, although He saved Abraham's relatives, Lot and his family.

Another instance of intercession took place when Israel was camping in the desert, after they had seen God's mighty work in leading them out of Egypt. Israel made a golden calf, a blatant sin against the second commandment. God had threatened to destroy this stubborn people, when Moses interceded for them (Exod 32:11f.). In this case, God listened to Moses' prayer and did not summarily execute those people. Moses' intercession saved their lives. There are several

other prayers recorded in Scripture in which God is asked to spare his obstinate people.

There are more occasions for intercession. To mention some, there are prayers for the government. Psalm 72 is such a prayer for the government, in which God is asked to make the king rule with justice. This prayer should not be limited to God-fearing governments. The apostle Paul commands the preachers to pray and make intercession for kings and other people in authority (1 Tim 2:2). Most of those, if not all, would have been worshipers of other gods, but that should not cause Christians to skip praying for the government.

We are also taught to pray for the peace of God's people (Ps 128:6). We should also pray for the continuation of the preaching of the gospel (1 Thess 5:26; 2 Thess 3:1). We are commanded in general to keep on praying for the saints (Eph 6:18). Prayers are said for the sick, as well. A specific Old Testament example is the prayer for Miriam when she was punished with leprosy (Num 11:2, see also 14:13ff), and a New Testament instruction is given in James 5:16.

The Bible does not particularly single out health and healing as the most important topic for intercession. This does not mean that we should not remember those who are ill in our prayers. It does indicate, however, that such a prayer should not be the only concern, or the most important part of intercessory prayers. When we pray we ask for God's comprehensive care for this world and the people living in it. Within that larger context, the prayer for the sick has its own important place. The church has recognized

**We remember before Thee  
all those whom Thou art  
chastening with poverty,  
imprisonment, physical  
illness, or spiritual distress.  
May it please Thee to heal the  
sick and to restore soundness  
of mind to the mentally ill.  
(Book of Praise, 644)**

this for a long time, and a good example of prayer for the sick within the larger context of intercession can be found in the Book of Praise.<sup>3</sup>

### Intercession and gratitude

When people in the congregation have been seriously ill and God has granted restoration of health, they are thankful. They thank the doctors and nurses for their care. They are grateful to the members of the congregation for their moral support and for all the things done for them during their illness. Above all, they will thank God, for it is He who has given his blessing to the treatment. Under God's providence they were restored to good health.


But what about those who have prayed for them? Do they add gratitude to intercession? They have not themselves experienced the illness. For them, this hardship stayed on the outside. Neither did they experience that God granted health. It is easy for them to go on with their business, without thinking of the healing that took place under God's control.

Yet, we should not merely intercede for others. When God grants restoration of health we should also thank God for this. Intercession and gratitude go together. Intercession without gratitude takes away from the uprightness of the prayer, and means slighting God. It means thinking of God when we need Him without honoring Him when He hears our prayer.

In a society dominated by our technical achievements, there is little attention for God's government of our lives. As Christians, we know that God is in control. We regularly pray for ourselves and intercede for others. We should be Christian all the way, and not stop halfway. We should not only go to Him in prayer when we need Him, but also by thanking Him when He gives.

<sup>1</sup>See on this, my article 'Can Christians be perfect' in *Clarion* 47:18 (1998) 182f.

<sup>2</sup>This was pointed out by J. Meijer, *Wat zegt de Bijbel over het gebed*, (Kampen: Kok, 1965) 57.

<sup>3</sup>See the second prayer, "A Prayer for All the Needs of Christendom", in our *Book of Praise*, p. 644. 

### What's inside?

Scripture teaches that one of the very important things we do when we get together on the Lord's day to worship our God is pray. Dr. Gootjes address the matter of intercessory prayer in the editorial.

Rev. W.B. Slomp of Neerlandia supplies us with the meditation today.

The Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) is a worthy organization that finds good support among us. We publish a news report about the work of MERF as well as an article written by its main teacher and co-ordinator, the Rev. Victor Atallah.

We are, if you can believe it, about half-ways between General Synods. In May 2001, General Synod Neerlandia will meet, Lord willing. It's time to start getting ready for it. Dr. J. De Jong, professor of church polity, writes about the proper determination of the agendas of broader assemblies.

A great hit every summer is *Campfire!* Mr. Allan Buist reports on this past summer's camp.

This issue also includes a number of the regular columns. We hope you enjoy it.

GvP



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By W.B. Slomp

*“By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen,  
in holy fear built an ark to save his family.  
By his faith he condemned the world ...”  
Hebrews 11:7*

Recently I read a story about a blind girl who was perched on a fourth floor window of a burning building in New York city’s Harlem. The firemen had become desperate. They could not fit the ladder truck between the buildings, and they could not get the little blind girl to jump into the net, which she, of course, could not see. She was understandably terribly afraid. Finally her father arrived and shouted at her through the bullhorn that there was a net down below and that she was to jump on his command. Once she heard her father’s voice, the blind girl no longer was afraid to jump. And so she did. It was reported that she was so relaxed as she jumped that she did not break a bone nor even strain a muscle in the four-story fall, for she trusted her father completely. When she heard his voice she knew, although she could not see the net, that it was there and that she would be safe.

When the Lord God came to Noah and spoke to him about the impending destruction of the world by the flood, Noah had to believe. He had to trust that what God told him would indeed take place. Noah did believe. He built the ark. He did so in spite of the fact that he had to build it on dry land, far away from any large body of water. He withstood the ridicule of the people; he persevered although the whole world condemned him as a deranged man.

Why did Noah believe? He believed because he knew his Father’s voice. Noah had been listening to the voice of the Lord his God all his life. He knew Him intimately. He knew how He dealt with his covenant people. In addition, he knew about God’s great love for him and for all those who call upon Him in true faith. He knew that his Father would never harm him, and that his voice could be trusted.

**Noah knew that his  
Father would never harm  
him, and that his voice  
could be trusted.**

Noah also knew of what his Father in heaven was capable. He had seen his hand in creation, and stood in awe of his power. When his Father said that He would destroy the earth, but that he and his family would be saved, Noah believed. But then Noah had to go to work. He had to act in obedience to the Lord’s command and build the ark. And so he did.

Today we also live in a world that does not believe. The vast majority of mankind does not believe that God has created all things, and that He upholds and governs it. Once again, the people do not believe that this world is going to be destroyed, this time by

fire. Something new will arise out of the ash heaps. It will be so wonderful that we can hardly even begin to imagine its greatness. That is what our Father in heaven tells us. We must believe Him.

The world, however, ridicules such faith. Noah had to put his faith into action by himself. He, along with his family, was the only one on earth who believed that God existed and that his words were trustworthy. And he persevered. He withstood the taunts of the people. He resisted the urge to go along with the rest of the world, and to live as if God does not exist. He built the ark in holy fear. For he knew that whatever God says, will happen.

For us today it is also important to know our heavenly Father’s voice and to trust Him. For He is bringing this world to its final end. His Son is going to come a second time. It will be the final judgment. The world may laugh at us and ridicule our faith. In the midst of it all, we too must persevere, as Noah did. However, we do not stand alone here on earth. We have each other, to encourage and exhort one another. How precious is the fellowship of believers!

Noah’s faith saved him. He heard his Father’s voice, and he acted in accordance with it. His Father in heaven told him that He would save him and his family. Our Father in heaven says that to every one who believes. He says that He will save them. He will save them, although all kinds of adversity will come their way. He will save them through His Son Jesus Christ. Do you also hear your Father’s voice? Do you trust Him? Does your faith also cause you to act in accordance with your Father’s commands? Do you dare to stand up for your faith?

*Rev. Slomp is the minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in Neerlandia, AB.*



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# Christ Anointed Chief of the Prophets

By P.G. Feenstra

What is the significance of knowing Jesus is the Christ? How did Jesus fulfil his task as the Messiah? Your initial reaction might be, "Jesus fulfilled his task through his deeds, especially by his suffering, trial, condemnation and crucifixion." That's true, of course, but there is more to it. With Lord's Day 12 of the Heidelberg Catechism we confess that Jesus is given the name "Christ" because "he has been ordained by God the Father and anointed with the Holy Spirit, to be our chief Prophet and Teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption." When our Lord Jesus commenced his earthly ministry, He was consecrated by the Holy Spirit to be chief of the prophets. Not only are his works of significance but also his words will be of lasting value. For the ministry of a prophet is a ministry of the Word.

During the course of his earthly ministry Jesus spoke many words. He addressed the crowds with sermons and discourses. He held private talks with his disciples, with Nicodemus and with others. The multitudes were stunned by the authority with which He addressed them. His disciples were perplexed when He taught them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

## Words are essential to Christ's work

Wherever Jesus went, He spoke, taught and educated the people by word of mouth. He preached and proclaimed the good news of salvation. In Luke 4:18,19, Jesus gives his own job description in the synagogue of Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives . . . to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

All Christ's words were a meaningful part of his office and earthly min-

istry. Jesus did not speak to kill time while He awaited his arrest, trial and death. His words belong to his messianic vocation. By his word He called the twelve to be his apostles. Through words He spoke about the redemption and restoration of life. His words cut to the heart and exposed sin. What He said offended those whose hearts were hardened against Him but they were wholesome and refreshing to those who believed in his name. In what He said Christ gave the correct diagnosis of the problems plaguing the world but at the same time He offered the remedy. His preaching spoke of the good news of the cross and the coming of the kingdom of heaven.

## Christ fulfills the words of the prophets

The work of the Messiah was very similar to that of the mighty prophets of the Old Testament. He is not a new phenomenon! Christ fulfills what the Lord promised in Deut 18:18, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him." As such He rises above the prophets. Christ does what no other prophet could do. He fully reveals the secret counsel and will of God concerning redemption. He has the same office as the Old Testament prophets but He towers above them all because He himself is God. He speaks on his own authority because his words are the Word of God.

The ministry of the Old Testament prophets was determined by the coming of the Messiah. Peter writes, "The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory" (1 Peter 1:10). That's why Jesus

could stand up in the synagogue of Nazareth and declare, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

## The message is the same

The prophets spoke of sin and grace, of wrath and love of punishment and mercy. Christ's message is no different. It couldn't be different because He had already spoken through them! Consistent with what had already been declared, Jesus Christ comforted those who were burdened by sin. He said to them, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28). Nevertheless, He did not hesitate to speak harsh words of condemnation to those who rejected or neglected his word and ministry.

The ministry of Christ validates the words of all those who spoke in the name of the Lord. Therefore, no one has the right to say regarding the words of Scripture, "But that does not have any value or meaning for us today!" Once again I refer to what the apostle Peter wrote. He says that in Christ, the prophetic word has been made more sure! We do well to pay attention to what is said about God's redemption, grace and mercy as well as to what is said about his justice, wrath and punishment (2 Peter 1:19).

## Christ and the Christian

In the old covenant the prophets were few in number but in the new covenant all of that changes. Christ creates a multitude of prophets to whom the will of the Lord is revealed. This is the task you and I are given as followers of the Messiah. True Christians are not only called to action but they are to speak the Word of the Lord; they are to confess the glorious and mighty deeds of their Saviour. Christians are anointed to their task by the same Holy Spirit who equipped Jesus to his office. Actually, as members of Christ they share in his anointing. Sharing in the anointing of

the chief prophet does not come automatically but by faith.

Just as the Old Testament prophets had to listen before they spoke so we as Christians must listen carefully to the Word of the Lord before we speak. Unless we listen to the Word of Christ we will remain ignorant and we will be cut off from the people of the Lord. Peter says of the Christ in Acts 3:23,

“And it shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.”

Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, was appointed by the Father and anointed by the Spirit as chief of the prophets. In this manner as well He is chief of every Christian. True Christians sit at Christ’s feet and listen to what He says. This means the Bible has

to be an open book in our personal life and in our relation with others. Through the proclamation of the Word of Christ and by reading and meditating upon it we are equipped to our prophetic task. True Christians follow Christ, the anointed chief of the prophets. They believe the words He says and they live by them in their works and words.



## THE HI-LITER

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### News from Here and There

By J. de Gelder

#### Grace – Winnipeg

With several new churches instituted over the past few years, old issues come up sometimes, such as how to look at and to deal with borders between congregations. After considering previous arrangements and decisions the consistory in Winnipeg reviewed the matter of church borders and decided:

1. That members are duty bound to join the church in the area where they live.
2. To continue to encourage and urge church members to join the church situated in their area of residence in accordance with the agreed church borders.
3. That common sense shall prevail when someone moves outside our borders and does not request an attestation.
4. That changes in membership for any other reason than location, must have compelling reasons.

For some (not only in Winnipeg) this whole matter seems to be quite significant. I guess I am not too sensitive towards this whole border issue. I don’t know anybody in Winnipeg, so if I do step on anyone’s toes at least you know that it’s not on purpose, but for me the first rule would suffice: “members are duty bound to join the church in the area where they live.” What more do you need? Are there never any exceptions possible then? That’s not the point. But as soon as you start regulating exceptions it is not an exception anymore, but it becomes a new rule.

#### Grand Valley

By now the Catechism instruction is halfway through the season. This interaction between ministers and students on a weekly basis is a very important, but often underestimated, part of our church life. Rev. P. Aasman made the following observation:

It was very nice to have some of the parents visiting our first catechism class this week. The teaching ministry of the church is so very important. It occurred to me (and I mentioned it in class) that the pattern in the life of our Lord was clearly more focussed on teaching than on preaching, since he preached only on the Sabbath; he was teaching the people and the disciples on much of the

other days of the week. There is much in the NT epistles which confirm the point that the church’s calling to teach is so very important.

#### Elora

In Elora Rev. Slaa began a series of evenings at the Men’s Society for the training of office bearers. A combination that makes much sense, when you come to think of it.

One should not feel that if he comes to this meeting he is suggesting that he wants to be/thinks he should be an office bearer. The purpose is first of all to train the existing office bearers. However, there are also many former and future office bearers attending Men’s Society, and this course will be of interest to them as well. At the same time, all male confessing members, including our older young people, are given the important task of choosing office bearers every year. I believe that this course will also give direction in that important duty, as we learn to choose those who are best qualified for these offices.

#### Fellowship – Burlington

Every year at the end of October we ran into the awkward combination of Reformation Day and Halloween. What are you going to do when the ‘trick-or-treaters’ are roaming through the neighbourhood? Make sure that you are not home? That’s one option. Or just hand out your candies? Rev. Bosch has an alternative:

Today the wonder of Christ’s work of reformation is lost on many. Halloween will appear to rule this evening and it is not funny anymore (if it ever was). The powers of darkness are at work and the evidence is seen by the gross displays on some people’s lawns. We should have no part in it. Yet we may use this evening for Christian good. We can put a message concerning the love of Jesus Christ in those bags that show up at our doors. His Word is no trick but a gracious ‘treat’ that’s able to turn darkness into light.

#### Hamilton

Some years ago Rev. Stam published a series of sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism, titled *Living in the Joy of Faith*,

which has also been translated in Indonesian. Recently the author wrote in the Hamilton bulletin:

Last week, much to my surprise, I received another request to have the same catechism sermon series translated and published, this time in Sinhala. This request came officially from Sri Lanka, from the Synod of the Lanka Reformed Church. I understand that the sermons will be recorded on tapes by local readers so that people who are illiterate can also hear the sermons. I share this with you because it shows how our small and weak efforts are still used by the Lord even to benefit Christians far away. It appears that our Dutch sister churches, as well as the Free Church of Scotland, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia have in the past already offered help. The Lanka Reformed Church recently attended the ICRC in Seoul, Korea.

Mutual building up of each other in the unity of the true faith – is that not what ultimately international ecclesiastical contacts are all about?

### Rockway

Rev. Wieske wrote extensively about the annual home visitation by the elders. He asks attention for many aspects of this beautiful and important work. I will quote here what he said about proper preparation for the home visit, not so much by the elders, but by the family to be visited. We can all learn from it:

How do we prepare for the home visit, brs and srs? Do we bring it to the Lord in prayer? And do the children hear that prayer? Do you thank the Lord for his care and oversight that He is pleased to extend by means of the office bearers? Also when they come for a family visit? And do you ask Him for a blessing over it? And for the grace that you may boldly speak about those matters which ought to lie closest to our hearts? And for God's help for the brother elders that they may ask the right questions which promote a good discussion about the Lord and His service? And besides: do you have your Bibles ready? Is everyone able to follow what is read at the beginning of each visit? Including the children? Sometimes I get the impression as if the home visit is seen as a matter that belongs to the elders. It just happens to be part of their task and we will see how they acquit themselves of it. And once it's over we will give them a mark. Which often isn't too high. Criticizing and complaining are not our weakest points, as a rule. But can you expect something else if that's the way we look at home visits? Is it not bound to become a failure, when we hardly prepared ourselves for it? Or not at all? For the home visit to be an occasion of blessing, it demands not only that the office bearers come well prepared but that we prepare ourselves first of all. Make sure you are ready when the brothers arrive. And have your children present. Explain to your children what it means when two men arrive at your door. Men whom they may know as a close neighbour or a good friend of the family. But who don't come in that capacity tonight, but as servants of Christ. As his delegates to extend his care and love towards his people.

### Attercliffe

In several churches it has become the rule that not only the elders make regular home visits, but also the deacons. In the Attercliffe section of the Family Post Rev. Agema wrote about this experience:

The deacons have almost completed the first set of visits. Most of us have received a visit from them. Going by

the reaction of the congregation and the brothers deacons these visits were well received. The deacons are now preparing for a new cycle of visits. As a rule each family will receive a visit by the deacons once every three years. What I said about the home visits (that the elders come in the name of the Lord) applies to the deacons as well. Although they have a different mandate, they too have authority given by the Lord.

### Smithers

In Smithers the deacons are also active with such regular visits. They inform the congregation about the purpose and the structure of these visits as follows:

The purpose of these official deacon visits is to speak together with the members of the congregation from a Scriptural perspective about the serving task of the congregation. To prepare the congregation for these visits, we would like to give you a basic agenda we will be following. It consists of the following items:

1. Opening: Bible reading and prayer
2. Form for Ordination: Review and discussion of the task of the deacons as described in the Form for ordination.
3. Possible needs: Identification and discussion of possible needs the visited family may have.
4. Service in the Congregation: Identification and discussion on ways and means the family can be of service in helping relieve needs in the congregation.
5. Stewardship: A discussion of the Scriptural norms for Christian stewardship. Exchange of information on purposes of the various collections and any worthwhile organizations in need of support and prayer. Suggestions will be appreciated.
6. Summation and Closing: Summary of commitments made by deacons and/or family. Closing in prayer focusing in particular on the needs of the family and the needs in the congregation.

Helpful material to prepare yourself for when you get a visit from your deacons.

### Albany

Finally, in Western Australia the consistory of Albany dealt with a report regarding Congregational Development: The report suggests that it would be beneficial for Consistory to do a thorough evaluation of congregational strengths and weaknesses in order to guide and direct future congregational development. Consistory agrees to do this at a meeting including also recently retired and future office bearers.

Something like this would no doubt be beneficial for more councils or consistories, if not for all!

By the way: do you know the colour of your minister's car? If not, you better familiarize yourself with that. If you don't you may run into trouble. My colleague in Albany wrote:

When you see someone driving by in a red Spacia and wave to him thinking you greet your minister, it might well be that you are greeting my colleague next door. And he will surely appreciate that. As regards your own minister, he has now a white car.

That's it for this time.

One final remark. I love reading through the bulletins and putting the HILITER together, but I have to do this with only about 50 % of the churches participating. I really appreciate the faithfulness of those who regularly send their bulletins (often once per month), but I was wondering if we could increase this number.





## Warring sisters

With the formation of the Netherlands United Protestant Church – the “Together-on the way” churches, (Dutch: *Samen op weg*) the need for the five existing seminaries (three state university faculties, one faculty at the Free University and one theological university in Kampen) has sharply diminished. Five seminaries for one federation is just too much of a good thing. Cut backs has become the order of the day, with the goal to cut down five schools to three. But who will stay and who will go? The Reformed Ecumenical Council news bulletin reports on the talks between Kampen and the Free University:

### Kampen and the Free University Will Not Join

Although the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) and their partners decided that the two GKN faculties of theology should merge, it appears now that this will not happen. Discussions between the Kampen Theological University and the Free University of Amsterdam have not been successful, and Kampen will now seek an affiliation with another university.

The original plan called for three faculties of theology for all three churches in the union process, Together on the Way. Kampen and the Free University were to join in Amsterdam. The faculties at Utrecht and Groningen, affiliated with the Netherlands Reformed Church (NHK), would have continued, while the NHK faculties at Leiden and Amsterdam would have dropped away. The plan would have blended Lutheran training in Amsterdam into the Kampen/Free merger.

Now they will probably implement a second plan. The churches will try to preserve education at Kampen, Leiden and Utrecht. However, they would end the relationship with the faculty at the Free

University and with the faculty at Groningen.

Those faculties could continue to teach theology for up to four years, but ministerial candidates would have to complete two years of training at one of the three church-approved sites.


The combined synod of the three Dutch churches had set some conditions for the Kampen/Free merger, namely that all faculty members could be incorporated in the new training center, and that the union would be budgetarily neutral. Unfortunately, they could not easily blend the faculties. Different retirement dates for faculty left an imbalance in some departments, while the combined faculty would have a shortage of “religious studies” instructors, an area where the number of students is growing.

So the steering group that was managing the negotiations gave up its mandate, and returned the matter to the synod executive for decision. In its letter to the synod, the steering group pointed out that the board and faculty of the Free University objected strongly to the new educational profile. They objected in spite of an agreement on all sides about the general outlines in May 1999. Free University people suggested the profile for education was too heavily ecclesiastical, with little room for other forms of theological education currently offered at the Free University. The steering group said this was unacceptable, and they were unwilling to revisit the decisions made in May.

The synod executive agreed there was little chance for a successful outcome. They decided the church would have to opt for the second plan. “The plan for ‘Amsterdam-Utrecht-Groningen’ has now become impossible,” the executive said in a press release. The

proposal to adopt the alternate plan will go to the combined synod in early December.

Editors of *Centraal Weekblad*, an independent paper in GKN circles, noted that the smaller number of ministerial candidates reflects the declining number of youth in the churches. “A church that sticks mostly with the past will inevitably die,” they stated. It is time “to give the highest priority to the church’s mandate to bring the gospel in many ways to people in our pluralistic culture, especially for our youth.” They concluded, “In the crisis of theological education, the churches in *Together on the Way* are the losers.”

The remarkable feature of this development is that the Theological University in Kampen, which has a long history of Reformed theological study, now is bandied about, and itself sways around like a kite with no direction. For years, the annual “birthday” (*dies natalis*) of the school was observed in December and upheld as a hallmark of God’s faithfulness and care. But once the school sided in favour of modernism and modernistic approaches in theology, – and here we mean approaches which no longer maintained the inflexible and inspired character of the scriptures as the Word of God – its own sense of direction was uprooted. And what is left of that tradition of instruction in the Reformed approach to life and the gospel? Economic considerations rule the day, and the line with history is essentially severed. It all forms a clear picture of the sad results of departing from the standard of faith once handed down to the saints (Jude 4). And it forms a warning for us that if one wishes to truly prosper, he must build on the sure promises of the covenant God, and strive to walk in faithfulness to his word. 



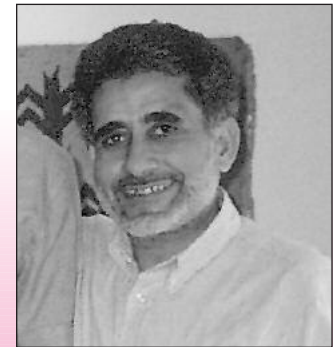
# Reformed Witness in the Sudan

By Victor Atallah

The Sudan is the largest country in Africa, bordering nine other nations. The term Sudan comes from Arabic and means “place of black people.” Ancient Egyptians called the region Cush. The Romans called it Nubia. Sudan, located up the Nile (south) from Egypt, enjoys a rich diversity of terrain, climate, and people, and is endowed with many natural resources. Many consider it the African country with the greatest potential after South Africa. Yet, devastated by continual war and upheaval, Sudan has become one of the poorest countries on earth.

There are two kinds of people in Sudan. The northerners speak Arabic and are largely Sunni Muslims. They tend to be relatively light skinned, coming from Arab or Egyptian stock. Northern Sudanese Muslims constitute the majority of the population and have ruled the country for the past forty-five years.

The southern Sudanese are black Africans, belonging to many tribes. More than two hundred languages and dialects



Rev. Victor Atallah

are spoken in the south. The largest four tribes are the Dinka, Nuer, Nuba, and Shilluk. The enmity between the African tribes and the colonizing Muslims of the north insulated them against the Islamization that occurred in central and western Africa. The Nubian tribe established a nominally Christian kingdom for more than seven centuries, but later embraced Islam. All other southern Sudanese people practiced various forms of animism until this century.

During the colonial era, the Sudan came under British control. While the British did not promote the spread of Christianity, their presence provided unified authority and stability as well as a degree of freedom. This environment facilitated gospel outreach first in northern Sudan and later in the rest of the country.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Reformed missions in Egypt were very successful. The translation and publication of the Arabic Bible brought about an immense spiritual revival among the large Coptic “Christian” minority in Egypt. Many Presbyterian congregations were organized throughout the country. Many Egyptian Presbyterians took jobs in the Sudan as part of the British civil service. Arabic congregations were established in Khartoum and other northern Sudanese towns.

In the meantime, American Presbyterians and British Anglicans began to establish mission stations throughout southern Sudan. At that time, most of the Presbyterians and Anglicans were evangelical and Reformed. Anglicans worked mostly among the Dinka tribe, and the Presbyterians worked mostly among the Nuer and Shilluk people. Their work was richly blessed by the Lord. Many southern Sudanese were converted, and churches were organized throughout the southern third of the Sudan. Their work involved not only gospel proclamation, but also deeds of mercy such as medical work, literacy classes, and the establishing of schools and clinics. Other parachurch and independent mission agencies also became active among southern Sudanese people.

One major factor contributing to the lasting success of evangelical Reformed witness in the Sudan has been that the missionaries quickly provided basic training for qualified converts to take over the spiritual leadership of their own

people. This freed the missionaries to move on to other towns and villages with the gospel.

In 1964 the Muslim-dominated government gained independence from British rule. It clamped down on Christian missions. This led to the "Sudanization" of church work in the country. Also, tensions between southern Africans and northern Arabs increased. Black Sudanese, feeling underrepresented and repressed, began a long civil war, seeking to gain liberation. In the last ten years, a military takeover and the introduction of an Islamic constitution have heightened the tension and the armed conflict.

The Islamic government has used economic, educational, military, and other tactics in an effort to Islamize southerners who have become more and more attracted to Christianity. By God's grace, the church in the Sudan has not only survived, but also continued to grow. It is unofficially estimated that 1.8 million people are associated with Presbyterian churches in the Sudan. As a result of the conversion of the Nuer people, the door has opened wide in recent years for the conversion of hundreds of thousands of Nuer people in southwestern Ethiopia.

African Sudanese Christians are among the poorest people in the world. Yet they are persistent and steadfast believers, who know what it means to remain loyal to Christ under very harsh conditions. They tend to be very zealous for the conversion of the rest of their animist tribesmen. The believing communities in the Sudan are among the largest and fastest growing in all of Africa.

Several significant problems face the Reformed communities in the Sudan. The most serious one is the lack of trained evangelists, pastors, elders, and

deacons. The majority of church officers and other active workers lack the most elementary biblical training needed for discipling and building up their own people. Those engaged in the training of elders and lay evangelists realize the immensity of the task facing them. A major program of biblical and theological education will be needed over the next thirty years or more to catch up with the needs of the Sudanese churches for trained workers.

Lack of food and medical care in southern Sudan has given rise to one of the highest mortality rates in the world. The desperate economic situation has created a class of professional clergymen who are knowledgeable in fundraising and who live comfortably away from their own people in surrounding countries. There has also been a wave of immigration of educated Sudanese believers to prosperous and stable places like the United States, Canada, Australia, and Europe. These include theologically trained young men. Thus, the Sudanese church is deprived of precious potential leadership.

Another matter for fervent prayer is the racial divide among the Sudanese people. Tribal tensions and conflicts have spilled over into the church. Tensions over the distribution of relief materials among factions within the same tribes remind us of tensions that arose in the early church (see Acts 6).

Still, there is much cause for joy. Arab and African Sudanese believers have learned to care for, and fellowship with, one another in the Reformed churches of northern Sudan. The average Sudanese believer is very teachable and receptive to instruction from God's Word. The gospel has also had a significant impact among the Nubian



**C**ALLED by the church of Cloverdale, BC for urban mission in the Greater Vancouver area:

**Cand. Frank Dong**  
of Hamilton, ON

Muslims. Even among Muslim northerners, there are indications of growing interest in studying the Arabic Bible. There are confirmed reports of conversions among Sudanese army personnel and other northern Muslims.

As we contemplate the affairs of our Sudanese brethren, let us remember that the spiritual battle for the hearts and minds of the vast majority of the Sudanese people is far from over. Our concern and prayer support for them ought not to be governed by the news media's sentimental or this-world agenda. Let us also guard against viewing the battle as primarily political or military, or becoming overly burdened with stories of sufferings and persecution. Let us remember that the almighty Lord, in his infinite wisdom, allows the church a measure of suffering for her own good and his own glory. Let us pray for the conversion of many more northern Sudanese Muslims through the enduring faith of the suffering Sudanese church.

It is a privilege to be part of bringing the gospel to the Sudan and building up God's people there through the ministries of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship. We broadcast the gospel in Arabic over the radio, provide for the training and support of Sudanese pastors and evangelists through their churches, and provide diaconal aid to help alleviate the great physical needs as part of the overall witness of the church.

This article originally appeared in the November 1999 issue of *New Horizons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*. It is reprinted here with permission.

*The Rev. Victor Atallah, foreign missionary of the OPC, is the General Director of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship in Larnaca, Cyprus.*

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### In poor taste

The last sentence of the Editorial of November 26, 1999 ("Martin would be aghast.") is in poor taste. Maybe it sounds cute to some. But it does not show proper reverence for Martin Luther as a Reformer. Are we also going to refer to Calvin, De Cock, Kuyper, Schilder, Machen, Murray, Van Til, and others, by their first names? *Clarion* refers to our ministers as Rev. . . . Should we show a Reformer less respect than our ministers? Lack of respect for God's gifts to his Church is indirectly a lack of reverence for the Lord himself.

M. Werkman  
St. Marys, Ont.

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# Middle East Reformed Fellowship

## NEWS from MERF-Canada

### **New centres in Cairo and Beirut for expanding broadcast ministries!**

In a special meeting in Cairo earlier this month, MERF's Board of Directors ratified plans for development of its broadcast ministries to the Arabic-speaking world. The Back to God Hour recently joined MERF and its long standing partner in Gospel broadcasting, Words of Hope, for major expansion of the Gospel broadcasts produced by MERF in the Arabic language. Leaders of the three Reformed organizations meeting at MERF's Larnaca headquarters in August completed a detailed agreement which unifies their efforts in Arabic broadcasting.

The expansion of the work commits MERF to reaching the level of producing no less than 7 new broadcasts every week to be used on as many stations as the Lord enables the three partners to support. In order to meet this goal MERF will set up two adjunct radio ministry centres in Cairo and Beirut. The new centres will work closely with MERF's existing broadcasting team in Larnaca, not only to produce Gospel broadcasts, but also to insure the growing number of listeners responding receive the same personalized spiritual nourishment and care now provided. Initially, the recording and distribution of the broadcast materials will continue to take place at MERF's well-equipped facilities in Cyprus. Trained people will also fly into Larnaca from Cairo and Beirut to record Arabic broadcasts. The listener follow-up efforts will be conducted under the direct oversight of MERF's Local Administrative Committee in Egypt and the Lebanon Reformed Fellowship.

Suitable facilities have already been found and rented for the new radio ministry centre in the Egyptian capital, Cairo. It is conveniently located near the centre of the city in a secure church-owned complex. The new centre is now being furnished and equipped to officially open at the end of October, after a three-day consultation and radio training conference. About 30 potential writers, producers and voicers will participate in the training event. A well-qualified man-

ager and team leader has already been appointed for the Cairo centre.

Plans call for opening a second centre in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, within eight months. Lebanese, Egyptians and other Arab believers will join together for an intensive one-week study term at John Calvin Centre, in early December for writing and producing Reformed Gospel broadcasts.

Egypt and Lebanon represent the dominant cultural forces in the Arabic-speaking world. Egypt has a very large Reformed community and Lebanon enjoys much freedom for Gospel outreach. The two centres will make use of the gifts of believers not only from Egypt and Lebanon, but also from other countries, like Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine and Sudan.

### **John Calvin Centre Training update**

Three large groups received biblical training at JCC in July, August and September. In July, a group of youth leaders from churches across Egypt dug into the Scriptures together. Mr. R. Nijhoff, their Dutch instructor, sought to open the Book of Acts to these young workers to understand the way God operates in gathering his people and building them up. In August, Arab Sunday School teachers received instruction from Mr. Peter van Daalen on prayer and from Rev. A. Yacoub on effective communication of God's truth to the children. In September, about 40 university students and graduates from Lebanon, Jordan and Syria gathered at JCC to prepare themselves for witness to Christ in the universities and colleges of these three nations. Pastor Jiris Habash and Dr. Bernard Reytsma, both active in service among university students, served as guest instructors. Pastor Habash expounded the Book of Galatians while Dr. Reytsma led a stimulating Christ-centered look at the New Testament. Rev. Victor Atallah taught the JCC guests on aspects of biblical worship.

### **MERF's diaconal aid in Sudan**

The Lord continues to bless MERF's practice of ministering the Word along side deeds of mercy. In recent months


media coverage has concentrated on catastrophes elsewhere, but the suffering of millions of Sudanese continues. Reports from churches in central southern Sudan indicate that hundreds of thousands of southern Sudanese people are exposed to death due to lack of food, shelter and/or medical care. Over 40% of newborn babies do not survive more than a few days or weeks. Large numbers of women die of pregnancy complications or during the delivery of their babies due to their extreme undernourishment. Most remain inaccessible to relief agencies due to ongoing military conflict in the area between the Northern Muslim-controlled government army and the SPLA.

MERF's local Administrative Committee for Central Sudan was able to meet with representatives of the Reformed churches in the region during the meetings of the Synod, which took place earlier this year. In May MERF agreed to provide funds for two additional evangelists and one local medical worker to join the team of two Bible instructors who carry out an active mobile training ministry in the government-controlled areas of central Sudan. Two other teams work out of Northern Kenya to provide training for south Sudanese evangelists, elders, deacons and Sunday school teachers. In Juba, a team of two Egyptian physicians and a male nurse accompanied one of the biblical training teams for 26 days.

We thank you for your continued support. May the Lord richly bless the work of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship as they seek to proclaim the Gospel of God's grace to the Muslim people and seek to equip the Lord's people for a life of faithful service to Christ in the Muslim world.

If you would like to make a personal donation please make your cheque payable to MERF-Canada and send it to:

MERF-Canada  
1225 Highway 5, R.R. #1  
Burlington, ON L7R 3X4

Yours in His service,  
Rev. J. Mulder, chairman  
Mrs. J. Van Dam, secretary 

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# Yielding to Formalism?

By J. De Jong

## Introduction

Among our membership questions are sometimes raised concerning the way general synods make their decision, especially concerning the admissibility of certain proposals or appeals. A good example of what I mean are the decisions that General Synod 1995 and 1998 have made concerning the participation of women in the election of office bearers. In several of the submissions dealing with these cases, the issue raised was declared inadmissible on the grounds that the rule of Article 30 C.O. had not been followed. If we take a closer look at Article 30, we are confronted with a provision that is relatively recent in our Church Order. The question arises whether this provision is necessary, or are we yielding to a new formalism?

It is not my intention to go into the issue of the participation of women in the election of office bearers itself. I am strictly concerned with the procedural question concerning the use of Article 30 C.O. in this decision, or decisions of a similar kind. From time to time I gather from comments that I have received that this provision is not readily understood. Hence a closer examination of the provision may be helpful for our readers.

## A closer look

The new provision in Article 30 reads: "A new matter which has not previously been to that major assembly may be put on the agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it." If one examines the wording of this article as it existed before the revisions of the 1980s he will notice that this provision was not a part of the old Article 30. Essentially a new provision has been added. Again, the question easily arises whether all this does justice to the Church Order of Dort, or whether it involves a step towards formalism.

In effect the new provision is a combination of several elements that existed in the old Church Order. Article 33 of the older Church Order read: "Those who are delegated to the assemblies shall

bring with them their credentials *and instructions* signed by those sending them, and they shall have a vote in all matters, except such as particularly concern their persons or churches," (emphasis added). In the new Article 32, which is a revision of the old Article 33, the reference to *instructions* has been deleted. The phrase "and instructions" is no longer found in the new Church Order. Besides this, one will notice that the old Article 46 which dealt with instructions and how they were composed has been entirely deleted in the revised Church Order. And the old Article 45 concerning the provision of the Acts to the following meetings has also been deleted. What has happened? Essentially, the new provision added in Article 30 C.O. is meant to retain the essential elements of what was previously incorporated in the deleted articles. The Canadian churches adopted this revision of the article from the revisions introduced by

**The agenda for the broader assemblies is set and determined not by the delegates but by the churches themselves.**

Synod Groningen-Zuid in the Netherlands in 1978.<sup>1</sup> Apparently our deputies at the time agreed with the reasoning that was adopted by the Dutch churches in their revision process.

## Why the change?

One might ask why several articles were deleted in favour of adding one new provision in the new Article 30 C.O. The reason will be clear if one carefully examines the old articles. They hark back to a period in which the agenda of the assembly concerned was actually drawn up and adopted at the floor of the assembly itself, once it had been constituted. The old Article 33 clearly indicates that also the *instructions* had to be signed by the officers of the delegating body. Hence an important principle emerges from the old Church Order which the revisors felt

obligated to retain: the agenda for the broader assemblies is set and determined not by the delegates but by the *churches* themselves.

We have come a long way since the days when delegates carried the instructions given to them to the ecclesiastical meetings in their pockets so that the agenda could be drafted at the meeting. The mail services are such that the convening church can send a provisional agenda to the churches of the classis well before the meeting takes place. And all the churches can send instructions to the convening church of classis beforehand, so that the matters to be dealt with can be placed on the provisional agenda, and all the churches can be informed about them. That way all the churches know what is going to be discussed.

To be sure, there are some matters which come via instruction to the table of classis, and the delegates do not know beforehand what they are about. Matters of advice and discipline often come via instruction or as a request for advice ad Article 41C.O. But "regular" proposals are sent beforehand, and churches often receive them for their delegates well before the classis.

The same applies for those assemblies at the broader order of extent, that is, the regional and general synods. The clerks of the classes delegating brothers to the regional synods can supply the convening church of the regional synod with the instructions for the agenda of that meeting, and that provisional agenda will in turn be sent to all the delegates well before the meeting. Similarly, the clerks of the regional synods delegating brothers to the general synod can also send the instructions of their respective regional synods to the convening church of the general synod. In fact, so smooth and facile are our methods of communication, that most often local consistories affected also receive the agendas of these broader assemblies.

Under the old system the Acts of the previous assembly (of the same order of extent, so, if it was a *classis*, then the Acts of the previous *classis*, and so on) had to be read at the next assembly (i.e.

in the example above, the next *classis*, and so on) before the churches were permitted to write instructions concerning any matter to be dealt with. This practice was meant to prevent any matter that had been decided from being dealt with again, say, through a proposal from a church that had not yet been informed of what had been decided at the previous assembly. The clear inference was that all churches of a particular region had to have received the Acts of the previous synod before being able to put forward matters to the next synod. As one can well imagine, this was sometimes a long and labourious process!

Carrying through on the adopted rule in the broader assemblies, matters could arrive at the table of the next regional synod (the next assembly in the same order of extent) only after they had been dealt with by the local churches which had received the Acts of the previous regional synod, and only after these matters were also carefully considered by the *classis*. For even though it was a matter which concerned the churches in common, it was not proper for the local churches to send the matter directly to the regional synod. Why? The principle of tiered delegation implies that the agenda of the regional synod is made up by the *classes*. And the *classis* was not simply to function as a postal service, taking the letter from a local church and dropping it off at the regional synod. Rather, it makes its own judgment on the matter so that it can be sent to the regional synod as a matter supported and endorsed by all (or a majority of) the churches of a particular classical region.

All this the revisers have attempted to retain in the provision added to Article 30. Not only does this provision imply that the agenda for the broader assemblies is made up by the churches, it also implies that every step of the way there will be a significant number of churches represented at the assembly that have seen the proposal, are aware of its contents, and have formulated a judgment about it. In keeping with the principle of tiered delegation it implies that the agenda of the regional synod is made up by the *classes*, and the agenda of the general synod is made up by the regional synods. In principle, there is no place for submissions from local churches at a general synod, even though the matter may be one for the churches in common. For the local church does not make up the agenda of the general synod. It is made up by the regional synods that elect delegates to the General Synod, who in turn send the matters to the convening church for the general synod.

Now over the years our entire method of expediting matters of the churches in common has changed to the point that we have many reports of committees on the agenda of the broader assemblies, especially the general synod, and these reports are sent to all the churches well before the synod actually meets. In this case all the churches have had the opportunity to read reports and express their opinions on the matters in question. Letters of adhesion are sent in from various churches on any particular matter that has been placed on the agenda by the convening church. In this way the submissions of many local churches also find their way to the table of synod. Yet it should be remembered that in the original pattern, the agenda was not made up by the churches individually, but by the churches in their respective assemblies.

**If the matter is on the agenda of the regional synod, the churches of at least one classis of that region should have dealt with it and approved it beforehand, so that it arrives on the table as a matter endorsed by a substantial number of churches in the region.**

### The principles at stake

The point of this provision is then two-fold: first of all, the matter in question must be one which comes to the table from the churches. The *churches* determine the agenda of the assemblies, not particular individuals. That is part of the character of the assemblies as *ecclesiastical* assemblies where *churches* have come together, and where churches are represented by their delegates. And a second principle here is: all the churches must not only be aware of what is on the agenda of any given broader assembly, but must also have dealt with it in some form before it reaches either a regional or general synod. One church cannot make proposals to a regional or general synod without receiving first of all the support of the churches of their own classical region. And the churches of a classical region cannot lay matters to be decided on the floor of the general synod without the support of the rest of the churches (say, a majority) belonging to the regional synod.

The safeguard Article 30 builds into the Church Order is this: all the churches

of a particular classical region should know about a certain matter which appears on the agenda of *classis*. And if the matter is on the agenda of the regional synod, the churches of at least one *classis* of that region should have dealt with it and approved it beforehand, so that it arrives on the table as a matter endorsed by a substantial number of churches in the region. Only such a method promotes the greatest involvement of the churches, and the greatest awareness concerning what is being discussed and voted on. It also preserves a sound representative principle: that is, that any matter of the churches in common decided upon according to the rule and steps of Article 30 will represent the expressed will of the greatest number of churches.

### Decently and in good order

One paragraph in your Church Order can make a lot of difference! Although it may all appear cumbersome to the average church member, and may also have the appearance of formalism, there is a gold mine of thought and constructive order in the principles above.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand we have a safeguard against hierarchy or oligarchy: rule by a broader assembly or rule by a few person or churches. On the other hand we have a safeguard against independence. For the entire principle is meant to curtail the introduction of *arbitrary measures* at a whim. Let all the churches carefully consider a matter concerning their welfare before it becomes a settled and binding decision affecting all the churches in the federation. That, we may assume is the reason why the synods of the previous years have declared matters inadmissible which had not been brought before *classis* and regional synod. That is the way of 1 Corinthians 14:40, that “all things be done decently and in good order.” For, in all things agreeable to the Word of God, decisions taken must follow the will of the majority, but in proper deference to *all parties*. Only then do you shape the *consensus* which continues to build and to promote the love of the brotherhood.

<sup>1</sup>See the *Acta van de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*, Article 212, p. 91f., For the report of the deputies for the revision of the Church order, see Appendix 4, pp. 336-390.

<sup>2</sup> See also P.L. Storm, “De kerkelijke weg” *Nader Bekeken*, Volume 5, no. 4 (April 1998), 101-104.

*My thanks to Rev. R. Aasman of the Providence Church in Edmonton for his valuable comments on an earlier draft of this article.*



# Campfire!

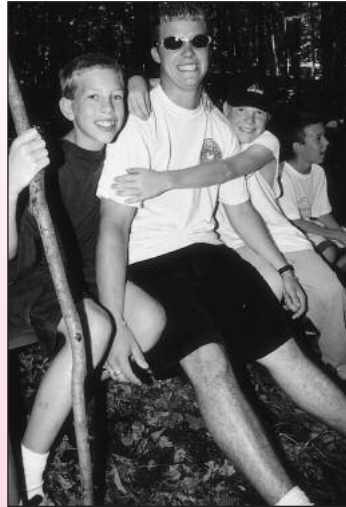
## Summer Bible Camp 1999

By Allan Buist

Last summer was witness to our third season of *Campfire!* Summer Bible Camp. God once again lavished fantastic blessings upon us. We grew again, adding two new camps to our summer program. Teens this past year had the option of participating in a more traditional camp setting at our Leadership Week, or taking the more adventurous option of joining "Woody" and "Buzz" at our Wilderness Week trek through the Canadian Shield. Also new was our Sprouts mini-camp, a two and a half day outing for five to seven year olds. With these additions, we were able to welcome almost two hundred children at *Campfire!* As in previous years, we were especially fortunate to host a large contingent of children from the St. David's Inner City Outreach over the course of our summer program. We were also very excited to see the number of "neighbours" grow again, as more and more children from our church community are inviting next-door friends along with them for a week of Christian camping.

We would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank all of the volunteers who helped to make *Campfire!* a reality again this past year. Without our staff, counselors, counselors-in-training, cooks, craft co-ordinators, camp moms, bus drivers, nurses, lifeguards, special speakers and clean-up crews (*I hope I didn't miss anybody*), our camp would have been little more than a collection of good intentions. We are enormously happy that each year the ranks of our army of co-ordinators and labourers increase. It is our prayer and hope that, in this way, the *Campfire!* project will continue to develop into a broad-based organization of the Canadian Reformed community with a healthy representation of the differing views, concerns and interests that make up our church family.

Plans are already in the works for our first camp of the new millennium. We have decided not to increase the size of our camp this summer, which we have tentatively scheduled to run from July 24 through August 27. Keep



*Counselor and campers on a hike.*



*Sprouts camp: counselors and campers.*



*Gordon campers lodge – "centre" of camp.*

your eyes and ears open for registration information which should be distributed in a number of weeks. If you have any questions, concerns or comments in respect of our upcoming camp program, or in respect of our project generally, please feel free to contact our executive committee at:

**Campfire! Summer Bible Camp**  
147 Markland Street  
Hamilton, Ontario L8P 2K4

As an organizing committee, we have been rather prolific in producing literature describing the nature, administration and operation of our camp. If you would like to receive some of this

information, including a copy of our 1999 Annual Report, please contact us at the above address. Instead, we have asked one of our camp "chaplains," Dirk Poppe, to reflect on last summer's camp in a more poetic fashion.

*Campfire! 1999:* A time that has gone down in the minds of hundreds of young people as memorable. Certainly they were memorable times. Let me share with you some of the memories and so let me try to give you a feel for the spirit that was present at *Campfire!* For it is only if you understand the spirit that you can begin to appreciate *Campfire! 1999.*

I remember the pep talk that the counselors got at pre-camp. "This is not going to be a holiday for you. This is a time when we are going to be focused on bringing glory to God and the way you are going to do that is by devoting yourselves to the care of your campers."

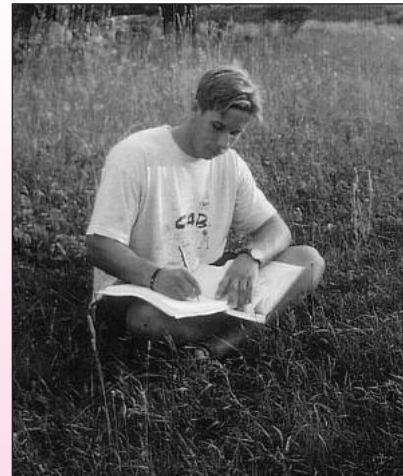
I remember the fun we had. The glee on one boy's face when he found out that the soup ladle he had chosen was the only utensil he would have to eat his chili. I remember the flushed face of another boy who had just flown over the valley on the zipline. I remember the laughter we had with the card game where the losers were at the mercy of Waldo and his games of feeding each other soup blindfolded, brushing each other's teeth blindfolded, shaving each other blindfolded and having an egg cracked over their heads. I remember the smirk on the girl's face who walked away from tuck shop with her fists bulging with candies. And I remember the taunting of the boys on my table when I had to do pushups for accidentally using Captain Crunch's real name instead of his code name. I remember the camper who sat on his seat in the bus leading the rest of us in his yodeling song. I remember the water fight I had with the boys in my own canoe. And I remember the little girl who moved like a shadow always making it to the other side in British bulldog.

I remember the times set aside for devotions. Counselor devotions at 6:45 to start off our day before our God. I remember praying together for our campers, making sure that over the course of the week all were brought before the Lord in prayer. I remember the difficulties of the cabin pack devotions: one boy who had little interest, one girl who had all the answers, and one girl who had never heard the stories and promises of the Bible. I remember the chapels – singing together, listening spellbound to the stories, learning the memory texts and doing the sword drill (finding texts in the two edged sword). And I remember the campfire songs – singing loudly or softly or even praying what we sang.

I remember the good times we had. Lining up in rows, waiting for Waldo to allow us to go to our meals. I remember the display of dolphins and shells that one girl made. I remember watching one boy fill his plate with four pieces of pizza and eat them all up, one delicious bite after another. I remember making a sand sculpture on the beach. I remember one boy come running up to an area



*A section of the confidence course.*



*Camp director Ian Wildeboer taking some time out for personal devotions.*



*The ever popular game, "Giants, Wizards, and Elves."*

frantically searching for a clue to help find the bone which Dr. Schwarzenhower lost. I remember getting dressed up for the banquet and enjoying the good food. And I remember one boy sitting on the freezer swinging his legs as he watched the final skit on Friday night.

I remember the caring and sharing that we did. Sending a card or candies or maybe even singing a song to your secret friend. I remember at closing devotions one night praying for a friend who was very sick and standing in a circle afterwards singing songs filled with words of comfort. I remember watching one boy make sure that his little brother was with the rest of the group and not lost in some corner. I remember a girl help her fellow camper over a wall on the confidence course. And I remember a girl who was saving a seat on the bus for her friend on the way up to the beach.

I remember the ways *Campfire!* touched the lives of young men and women. I remember one boy telling us on Friday night that he had learned not to get so angry and that he learned to be patient with others. I remember the tear-filled faces of two boys and one girl

from the inner city who had to leave this place of love and joy and peace and go back to their other lives. I remember standing arm in arm in a big circle on the asphalt outside Dairy Queen singing songs to our Maker. I remember sharing hugs, handshakes and stories with fellow campers in the weeks and months that followed. I remember seeing huddles of *Campfire!* comrades forming outside church buildings sharing memories together. And I remember my two-year old son sitting in his car seat, clapping his hands and telling me to sing campfire songs with him.

I remember these things and my heart smiles. For I have been given the privilege of experiencing something of the love that God works in hearts of his people. I remember these times and I praise my God for the beautiful and life-changing ways he works in the lives of his children. I remember these times and I pray to my God that He may allow this great work to continue. For then young men and women can further grow in the service of our God and his Name will be praised by the next generation.



## Maranatha receives new missionary: Rev. K. Wieske

On October 10, 1999 the "Maranatha" Canadian Reformed Church at Surrey, BC, joyfully received a new missionary for its continuing task of bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people of Brazil.

### Ordination

In the morning Rev. C. VanSpronsen conducted the worship service applying the text of John 4:35-38:

*Do you not say, "Four months more and then the harvest?" I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying "One sows and another reaps" is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.*

He proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ under the theme "The Lord rejoices in the arrival of the time of harvest," and emphasized that the harvest time has arrived. This was also the Thanksgiving Day service, and so had a double meaning. The work has been done and it is now the church's duty to get out and gather in the harvest. After the sermon Br. K. Wieske was ordained as missionary by the laying on of hands by his father Rev. G. Wieske, Rev. C. Van Spronsen and the elders of the congregation. It was a moving and emotional experience for Br. Wieske, his wife and son as well as the entire congregation.

### Inaugural sermon

In the afternoon service Rev. K. Wieske preached his inaugural sermon based on Romans 1:16-17.

*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last,*

*Rev. Wieske, Sr. Wieske, and their parents looking on at the welcome evening.*



*Rev. Wieske, Rev. VanSpronsen, and Rev. Wieske sr.*

*just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*

In it he addressed the congregation under the theme "The Gospel of Christ is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." He proclaimed that Christ is the Power of preaching, the Revelation of righteousness, and the Focus of faith. He emphasized the power of the message as of more significance than the power of the messenger.

### Welcome evening

On Sunday evening the congregation and visitors from the neighboring churches in the valley came together once again, this time to extend their welcome to the Wieske family.

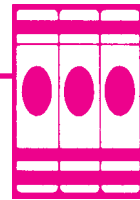
Mission Board chairman Br. L. Stam opened the evening and welcomed Br. and Sr. Wieske on behalf of Mission Board. After searching for several years for a replacement missionary for Rev. Boersema the Lord in his time has granted

our request. He read congratulatory letters from many of the supporting churches in Western Canada. Representatives of the local churches addressed the new missionary and congratulated the "Maranatha" congregation with this joyous event. Br. K. Hendricks on behalf of Mission Board presented Br. and Sr. Wieske with several volumes of The Word Commentary. An organ solo and singing concluded the evening. After the official part of the evening was closed, an opportunity was given to meet and speak with Rev. Wieske and his wife. Truly a blessed Lord's day was enjoyed by all. 

We welcome contributions for **SPECIAL EVENTS** – new buildings, arrivals and departures of pastors, etc. Contributions will be restricted to one page including pictures. Please keep to about 500 words.



By J. Visscher



## The Flame of the Word. Making Church History Come Alive.

**Apko Nap, Pieter Torenvliet and Christine Farenhorst, *The Flame of the Word: Church History Narratives. Book 1.* (Surrey: RCDF), 1999, 158 pages.**

(Order and inquiries may be directed to William of Orange Christian School, Box 34090, 17790 - #19 Hwy, Surrey, BC V3S 8C4  
Voice: (604) 576-2144  
Fax: (604) 576-0975  
E-mail: jcsyarrow@uniserve.com)

Many a student lets out a yawn when the subject of history is mentioned, and an even bigger yawn when it happens to be church history. They see no need to study things that happened ages ago. They think that the past is best left as a closed book. They are convinced that it is much more worthwhile to speculate about the future than to delve into the misty events of yesteryear.

This negative mind-set about history in general, and church history in particular, is in turn all too often reinforced by the way in which it is taught. Many a teacher finds it a never-ending challenge to deal with the past in a way that really holds the interest of the students and fosters in them a love for history. Rare is the teacher who can make it come alive.

What this means for most of us who teach history or church history is that we need a lot of help. We need text books that appeal to the students. As teachers we need approaches, suggestions, aids and resources. With the proper tools the task becomes much less formidable for the teacher and the results more satisfying for the students.

So where shall we turn for help? A great new place for teachers of elementary Christian or Reformed schools to begin is with *The Flame of the Word*. This large size book has come into existence mainly because of the tireless efforts of two teacher/principals, Mr. Apko Nap and Mr. Pieter Torenvliet. Together they have planned a three volume series, of which this is the first book.

In the process they have also managed to recruit a number of very able assistants. Mrs. Christine Farenhorst has done a good deal of the writing. Mr. Len VanDijk has done most of the illustrative work. Mrs. Grace Anema has done the bulk of the typing. Many others have assisted as well. Much of the fund-

ing was supplied by the Reformed Curriculum Development Fund.

What is the result of all of these labours? I would say that it is a church history text that stands head and shoulders above many others. In some respects it may even stand alone as being a rather unique contribution. What do I mean? I am referring to the fact that the authors have taken a narrative approach to church history. The traditional approach has been to simply relate the main details of church history and have the students memorize the pertinent facts, dates and names. In some cases authors have tried to approach church history from a storytelling format. These efforts have met with various degrees of success.

What Nap and Torenvliet have tried to do, however, is to combine narration with event. The result is that each chapter begins – and there are fourteen of them in Book 1 – with a story that immediately captures the attention of the students and then leads into a pivotal development, event or person in church history. Chapter 1 for example, tells a story about a young girl attending a worship service in a present day Reformed church (some of you may know which church by the faces that are drawn as illustrations). It uses this to introduce the subject of church history from a Reformed perspective: what it is and when it began.

Chapter 2 follows with an insightful story about a native girl who is attending a residential school somewhere in northern British Columbia. After the narrative it launches into the matter of mission among native peoples and tells about the work being done in Smithers.

Having thus placed church history in a modern context, the book proceeds to look at various key developments in the history of the church. Chapter three deals with the persecution of the early church. Subsequent chapters each begin with an illustrative story and then introduce us to the missionary work of Patrick and Boniface, monasteries, Luther, Tyndale, Calvin, Knox, De Bres, the Huguenots, and mission work in Brazil. Book 2 and 3 will in due time deal with other aspects and personalities.

How successful is this approach of Nap and Torenvliet? A firm conclusion can only be drawn after this material has been used and tested in the classroom.

For my part, however, I am already prepared to go out on a limb and predict that this will prove to be a very exciting and innovative way to teach church history, especially to students who would otherwise turn up their noses at the prospect.

Even as an adult, I found the narratives captivating and supremely well-done. In almost every instance they serve as wonderful stepping stones to the subjects or time periods about to be profiled. The story about the Huguenot Lis family told at the beginning of chapters 12 and 13 is especially well-told.

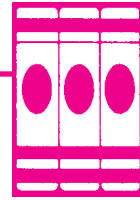
I might also add that what helps immensely to make these stories so appealing is the beautiful illustrations of Len Van Dijk. His work will go a long way in firing up the imaginations of the students.

Something should also be said about the Teacher's Manual that accompanies this book. It is not meant for general distribution but has been developed to supply the teacher with more than ample material for each chapter. What is particularly helpful is that each chapter opens with some pages dealing with learning outcomes, teaching strategies, student assignments and evaluations, as well as a list of learning/teaching resources. All sorts of information, suggestions for individual and group activities follow.

Why, a cursory look through all of this data in the Teacher's Manual leaves one with the impression that a mountain of work has produced a mountain of material. It should create a real itch in every teacher to tackle church history with renewed vigor and enthusiasm.

All in all, Nap and Torenvliet, along with their many co-workers, have done the subject of church history in the English language a real service. Congratulations on a splendid piece of work! I await the appearance of Books 2 and 3 with eager anticipation.

Parents and grandparents, here is a book to buy for your children and grandchildren. Christian schools administrators, here is a book to designate as a text book. Teachers, here is a curriculum begging to be taught. Believers, here is a book to refresh your knowledge of the church, and perhaps even to kindle that love for church history which you missed out on in days gone by.



By Margaret Van der Velde

## Coronation of Glory

***Coronation of Glory: the story of Lady Jane Grey***  
by Deborah Meroff

Inheritance Publications, Box 154, Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0 Canada; 1998 302 pages; softcover; \$ 14.95

The story of Lady Jane Grey, who lived in England from 1537 to 1554, is generally not well known. She was a playmate of King Henry VIII's children, and she herself was fifth in the line of royal succession after Henry's death. Unloved by her harsh mother, Jane had little contact with her family and was constantly being used to advance the family fortune. She was raised a Calvinist and was committed to the Reformation. Deborah Meroff's novel *Coronation of Glory* focusses on the years 1547-1554 and provides a compassionate account of how young Jane came to be Queen of England for nine days.

To be queen for nine days would seem to be a wonderful experience: not long enough to be burdened with all the nasty politics, but just long enough to enjoy the glamour, riches, and prestige. How wrong. Jane's coronation was the result of scheming and political intrigue by her closest family, and the end of her reign after just nine days was the result of more scheming by those very same people who would make her queen against her own wishes. For all this, Jane was made to suffer imprisonment and was eventually beheaded.


In the novel, Jane must deal with some difficult issues. When Henry VIII's widow remarries and dies shortly after giving birth to a child, Jane struggles with God's purpose for this death. Why did this young woman, who had such a difficult life with Henry have to die? She also struggles with discerning God's will. How do we really know what God wants us to do in a specific circumstance? Sometimes we think that we have done God's will, and then later we look back and discover that we were all wrong. Jane is convinced that it is God's will that she accept the throne and only later does she realize that she should not have accepted the throne. Most readers will be able to relate to these struggles, each with their own specific circumstances.

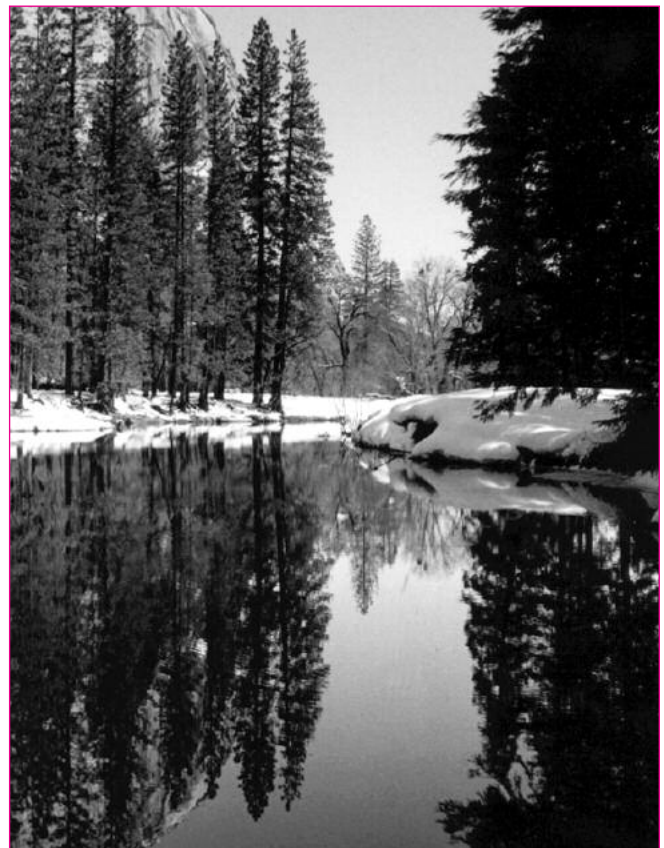
Deborah Meroff has written the book as a journal with first person narration. Initially, this reviewer found this somewhat of a drawback, finding it hard to relate to the main character. However, as the story progresses and Jane comes alive as the sensitive, caring girl she was, the reader is drawn into the story.

Meroff also aids the reader with a convenient list of principal characters. Those interested in understanding the Tudor dynasty will enjoy the chart at the back of the book. The book does not contain such a large number of characters, but since many characters already have or acquire titles of nobility as the novel progresses, the list of principal characters is helpful.

The novel is written as historical fiction. As such, readers should of course remember that it is fiction. But the author has certainly researched her story and has even used some source material to provide quotations and short speeches. Included in the book is a list of sources which readers could consult if they would be interested in reading biographies about Lady Jane. The quotations are in modern English and although the story is set some four hundred years ago, the characters seem real enough. This book is not a reprint of an older book.

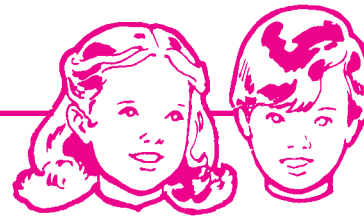
Jane is portrayed as an earnest girl who took her studies and her faith seriously. Consequently there are several scenes which seem somewhat out of place in the novel. They describe events in the life of Elizabeth, later Queen Elizabeth I, and the almost adulterous actions of another character. These actions reflect another aspect of royal society, but they have a somewhat jarring effect.

Overall, *Coronation of Glory* is a novel of compassion and one in which faith ultimately triumphs over earthly sorrows and aspirations. Those enjoying this novel may wish to read several others novels written by Deborah Meroff. 



# OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



## Dear Busy Beavers

Did you have a blessed Christmas and a great New Year break? What did you do during your school holiday? Was it very cold in your part of the country or quite warm? Did you have a white Christmas?

Now you will be back at school. Are you enjoying it again? Do you still have lots of fun in your classroom with your fellow students and teacher?

May God bless you and give you a wonderful year, safe from accidents and illness.

Love from Aunt Betty

## PEN PAL WANTED

Do you like reading, running, sports, baking and animals? Well, so does Alyssa Jansen, and she would like to have a pen pal. If you have similar interests, why not write to her at 98 Morgandale Crescent, Orangeville, ON L9W 3C7. Alyssa is 8 years old.

## Code Breaker

By Busy Beaver Jolene Breukelman

A=1    B=2    C=3    D=4    E=5  
 F=6    G=7    H=8    I=9    J=10  
 K=11    L=12    M=13    N=14    O=15  
 P=16    Q=17    R=18    S=19    T=20  
 U=21    V=22    W=23    X=24    Y=25  
 Z=26

9 12 9 11 5    19 3 8 15 15 12    22 5 18 25    13 21 3 8

23 5 14 5 5 4    6 15 15 4    20 15 12 9 22 5

## JOKE

from Busy Beaver William Bouma

Jim: Will you remember me in a minute?  
 Adam: Yes.  
 Jim: Will you remember me in an hour?  
 Adam: Yes  
 Jim: Knock, knock.  
 Adam: Who's there?  
 Jim: You don't remember me anymore!

## NAME SEARCH

Search for all of *Stephanie Kingma's* fellow students in her school at the Dr. K. Schilder American Reformed School.

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

FIND:

Mark	Mike	Tony	Matt
Chrissi	Rachel	Derek	Nicky
Aaron	Stephanie	Rebecca	Zane
Adrianna	Andrew	Billy	Alex
Leanne	Raymond	Dean	Dustyn
Simon	Alexandria	David	Chantelle



## FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *William Bouma*. Thank you for your card and the joke. It was a very funny joke, so I'll put it into Our Little Magazine. Write again and tell me some more about yourself, won't you William.

Thank you for your letter and puzzles, *Stephanie Kingma*. You do go to a very small school, don't you – only 24 students. Unfortunately, I am not allowed to tell you my real name. That is part of the fun of being Aunt Betty – I'm just a mystery to you all. Bye for now, Stephanie.

Thank you also to *Nelene Brouwer* for your letter and puzzles. That is very cute paper that you wrote your letter on. And the envelope was cute to match. Do you still have all your kittens or have you given them all away? Are you enjoying school, Nelene? I'm glad you love snow – so do I. Sledding, snow mobiling, and skiing are all lots of fun. Yes, I have read the Mandie books. They are fun. They're so full of mysteries, aren't they? Bye, Nelene.

Thank you also to *Jolene Breukelman* for your Christmas greetings. Thanks also for your puzzle. Write again, won't you, Jolene.

