

A woman in a purple top and grey skirt is holding a baby in front of a thatched hut. The hut has a thick, light-colored thatched roof and a dark wooden frame. The background shows lush green trees and a clear sky. The overall scene is peaceful and rural.

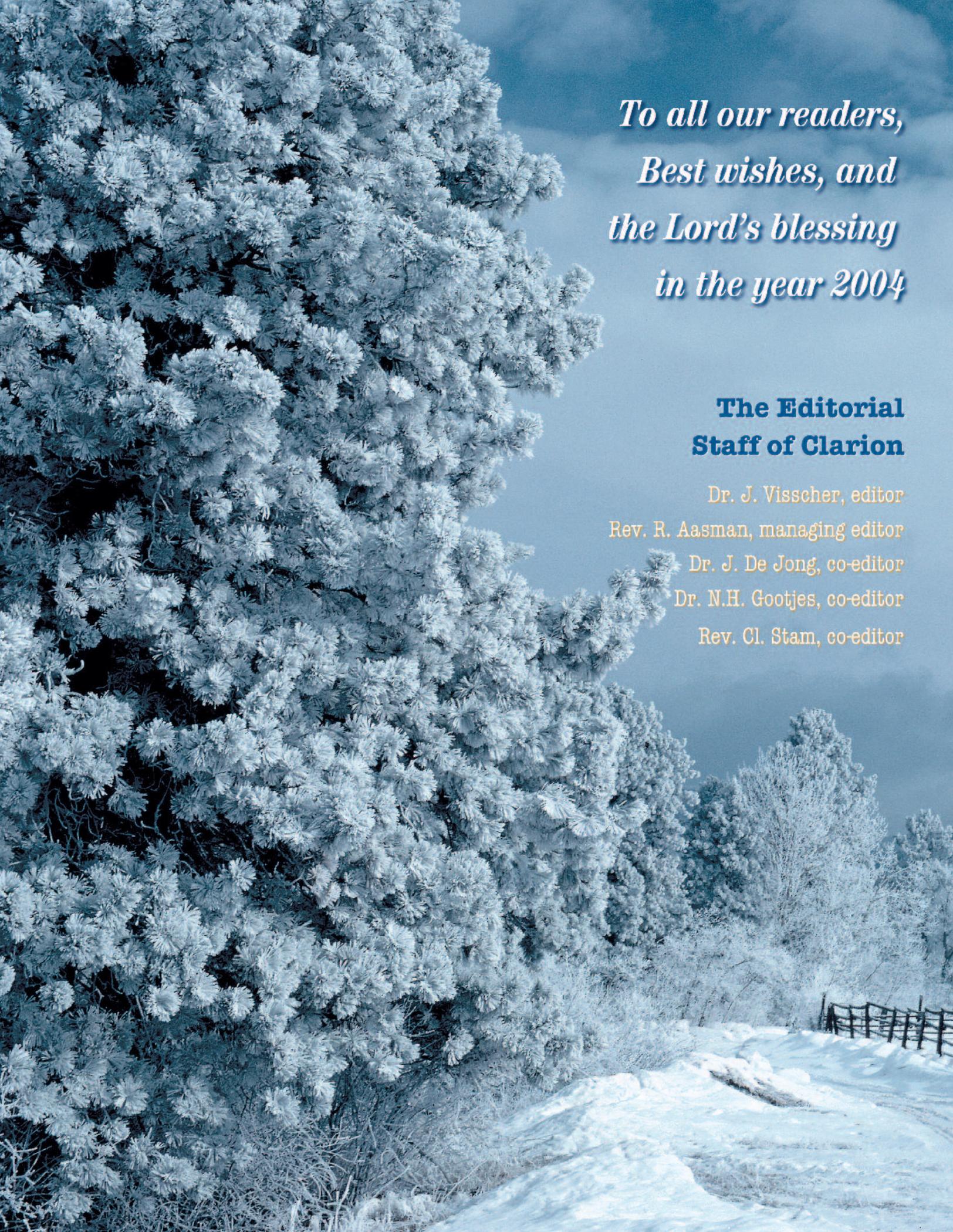
Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

... Jesus said:

*“Whoever receives
one of these little
children in my name
welcomes me”*

Mark 9:37



*To all our readers,
Best wishes, and
the Lord's blessing
in the year 2004*

**The Editorial
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Wishing you a Joyous Season



'Tis the Season to be Jolly – or Is It?

Looking at the state of affairs in the world today one can be forgiven for forgetting that this is supposed to be a season of joy. Even a casual glance at our nation of Canada from a Christian perspective can not help but raise expressions of deep concern. The unborn die as abortions continue to be performed at an alarming rate. Marriage as a basic societal building block is in the process of being re-defined by the courts and the Parliament due to unremitting pressure from the advocates of gay rights. The relaxation of our marijuana laws is under consideration. Property crimes are skyrocketing. All in all, it begs the question: is this really a good time to rejoice?

Still, if Canadian concerns threaten to put a damper on the joy of the season, what about international events? The evening news broadcasts present us with an almost relentless stream of discouraging information. Bombings, terrorist attacks, atrocities, swindles, civil strife – the litany is never ending. Especially tragic is the fact that so much of the unrest and violence comes from that part of the world where our Saviour was born and where the Gospel was first heard.

Oh and lest we forget, what about closer to home in our own church life? This year we have witnessed an unparalleled increase of sickness in the ministerial ranks of the Canadian Reformed Churches. There is also no lack of vacant churches who find themselves in a dogged search for a pastor and teacher. And what about those church members who are discouraged because of disagreement in their ranks or a lack of growth in their numbers?

Yes, and then we have not even added personal trials and setbacks to the mix. For some of our readers, 2003 has not been a good year as sickness, family problems, unemployment, business difficulties, or other hardships have made their presence felt. When the Form for the Baptism of Infants calls this life “a vale of tears” some of us have been known to scoff and dismiss it as an expression of pessimism. Nevertheless, as we plunge deeper and deeper into this life, we begin to see the “rightness” of such a description.

Hence the question may be asked, “Is this Christmas season with its great stress on gladness, peace and mirth not out of harmony with our lives and our experiences? Is ‘joy’ not a misplaced reaction in times such as these?”

Another joyless time

As I pondered these questions I was led to reflect on another time and place long ago when circumstances also made a celebration of joy utterly inappropriate. Consider the days of the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

At that time the people of God were reduced to a remnant. Almost all of the members of the ten tribes were nowhere to be found, having been dispersed to the four corners of the earth. What remained of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin was a rather pathetic remnant. The glory that had once been Israel’s was nowhere to be found. The royal line of David that had ruled for so many years, ruled no longer. Instead, foreigners dominated the land. The Romans were in control and they had placed an upstart called Herod on the throne.

As for the common people, they were caught in a vise. On the one side they came under pressure from their new political masters and on the other side they were under the thumb of their religious masters, the scribes and the Pharisees. Freedom was severely limited. Taxes and levies were exacted, as the publicans squeezed the population. Rules of suffocating piety were multiplied by the teachers of the law.

In short, the days of the birth of our Lord were neither nice, quaint nor romantic. They were hard, cold and depressing. They were filled with oppression, suffering and poverty. In their own way they too were inappropriate times for rejoicing.

Joy penetrates

Did any of that deter our God and heavenly Father from acting and intervening? Not at all. The New Testament opens and what greets us but repeated expressions of joy.

We see it first with an old priest called Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. While doing his duty in the temple, he is interrupted by a most unusual visitor. An angel appears on the right side of the altar of incense. Undoubtedly his

When the Form for the Baptism of Infants calls this life “a vale of tears” some of us have been known to scoff and dismiss it as an expression of pessimism.

eyes must have bulged and his blood pressure must have gone up a notch. Fear grips him. Nevertheless, the angel calms him with the soothing words “do not be afraid.”

Thereafter, the angel proceeds to tell him something that completely turns his world upside down. His wife, his old wife Elizabeth, is going to give him a son. The angel says that “he will be a joy and delight to you” (Luke 1:14). But that is not all for he will not be an ordinary son. No, “many will rejoice because of his birth” (Luke 1:14). Why will they do so? Because “many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God” (Luke 1:16). John is going to bring great joy both to his parents and to his people.

Joy climaxes

Still, the joy does not stop with the birth of John. His birth merely starts the process and sets the stage for its continuation and climax. Again, an angel comes down from heaven to earth. Again, we would say that he goes to the wrong address. What was he doing first with an old priest and what is he doing now with a young, unmarried girl? Why target such humanly insignificant people?

Yet that is God’s way, God’s all too common way. The angel appears to Mary and announces the impending birth of another son. Only this time it will be a son unlike any other! His name is to be Jesus and “he will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:32, 33).

Mary’s life is instantly awash in glorious tidings. The announcement of her very special Son, the greatness of His Person and His reign, the involvement of the Holy Spirit, the news about her relative Elizabeth, it all floods into her life.

Yes, and something comes into as well, namely joy – incomprehensible and overwhelming joy! She cries out, “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour” (Luke 1:46). Mary knows that the Lord is about to visit his people as never before. Finally, the desire of the ages is coming. Finally, the ancient hopes and dreams and prayers of God’s people are coming to fulfillment. Finally, the Messiah is coming, coming in the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary!

Joy spreads

Oh, and come he does in the fullness of time. Mary and Joseph are called upon to travel together to the town of Bethlehem and there the Christ is born. Simply and succinctly, but so significantly, Luke writes, “and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son” (Luke 2:7).

Thereafter the news spreads. Angels were charged with the honour of announcing his coming and angels are given the added honour of announcing his birth. To the shepherds it is told, “Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (Luke 2:10). This joy is meant to be spread. This joy is meant to go out to people everywhere. This joy is meant to change lives.

And it does! It impacted the shepherds in a most positive manner, for we are told that after they saw the Child, they “returned, glorifying and praising God” (Luke 2:20). It has the same effect on Simeon who later took the child “in his arms and praised God” (Luke 2:28). Anna too is caught up in the fervour for it says that “she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38).

Joy takes root

It is obvious from the various gospel accounts that the coming of Christ brings a deep and abiding joy into the lives of God’s people. It did so in the days of his birth. It did so too during the days of his ministry on earth. We read, for example, about the seventy-two who returned from their mission filled “with joy” (Luke 10:17). It did so as well after the news of his resurrection from the dead and his ascension into heaven.

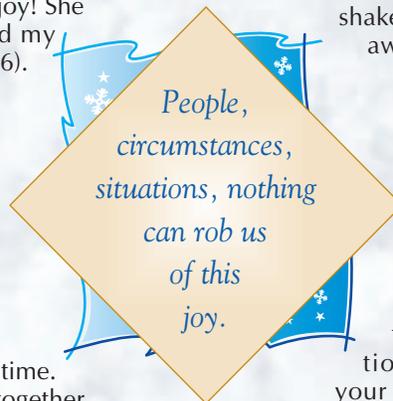
Indeed, joy becomes a hallmark of those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider only that most interesting case of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. We do not know a lot about this man, but we do know that he came to faith in Christ and that he was baptized into Christ (as well as into the Father and the Spirit). And one more thing is made known to us, and it is that he “went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:39).

Joy forever and always

It is against the backdrop of all of this that we can also make sense of the command that the apostle Paul gives to the Philippians when he says, “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Phil 4:4). The apostle is reminding them and us that this joy that Christ Jesus has brought into our lives is so deep, so unshakeable, and so great, that nothing can take it away from us. People, circumstances, situations, nothing can rob us of this joy. When we look to God and see all that He has done, is doing and intends still to do for us through his Son, then we have cause to give thanks. Even amidst the tears, we have reason to rejoice.

Dear reader, let nothing take that away from you. Do not let the shadows that hang over our international and national life, nor the pain that is present in your personal lives, choke out this joy that is yours in Christ.

The calendar tells us that it is time once again to celebrate the birth of our Saviour, a birth that represents the “good news of a great joy” (Luke 2:10). May that joy in Christ be yours! May it be yours in spite of your circumstances! May it be a joy rooted in his first coming and a joy that sees its consummation soon in his second coming.



Dr. J. Visscher is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley, British Columbia. jvisscher@canrc.org

What's inside?

With this issue, *Clarion* comes to the end of another year of publication. In this issue, both reflecting on Christmas and a Year End Review are featured. You will also find articles on graduations, a league day, outreach and mission work. For instance, with Campfire! we are reminded of the tremendous blessings of this outreach work – both for those who are taught as well as the counsellors themselves and everyone else working at Campfire! May the LORD grant his continued blessing on this.

Dr. R. Faber continues his series of articles on the role of hymns in the Secession of 1834 in The Netherlands. The Secession churches loved to return to the psalms. While not condemning the use of hymns, they were deeply concerned about unbiblical and unconfessional hymns being imposed on the Reformed churches.

Dr. C. Van Dam updates us on activities at the Theological College. He also provides us with some brief book notes on publications which you might want to consider for your reading enjoyment and benefit. Dr. W. Helder has enriched us with yet another rendition of one of the psalms – this time it is Psalm 84.

We have our regular columns: *Treasures, New and Old, Ray of Sunshine* and *Education Matters*. We also have one letter to the editor.

At this time, on behalf of all those who are working for the *Clarion* magazine, I would like to wish the readers the Lord's blessings for the Year of our Lord 2004.

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A Truly Happy Birthday

Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Psalm 51:5

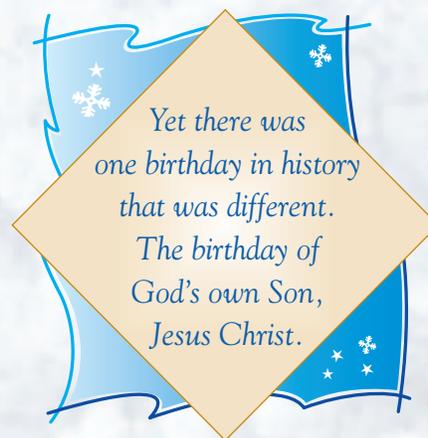
When is it your birthday? Just as Christmas is a celebration of Christ's birthday, so we have the custom of celebrating our own birthdays. People say "Happy birthday" to you. They congratulate you, maybe give you gifts, throw you a party, or take you out to dinner. But have you ever thought about why we celebrate birthdays? Is your birthday really worth celebrating?

What is a birthday? It is a celebration of your literal *birth*-day, the day of your birth. We have the custom of counting how old we are in years from that day. Birthdays are a time when we reflect on the beginning of those years, the beginning of your life. The Bible teaches plainly that life begins already when you were conceived. But since we don't always know exactly when conception happens, we don't start counting days and years from the moment of conception, but from the moment of birth. That's why we celebrate birth-days, not conception-days.

But that doesn't change the fact that life begins at conception. God creates human life in the womb. David describes it in Psalm 139: "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body." So even before your birth-day, you were an unborn living child.

And what were you like when you were conceived and born? Physically it's

a miracle! At birth you see the result of the amazing work that the Creator has been busy with for nine months. His marvellous handiwork: a little body with ten fingers and ten toes; a baby that breathes, kicks, cries, sneezes, burps; a complete respiratory system, circulatory system, digestive system. Absolutely incredible! That's worth celebrating!



Yet, with every baby born, there is something seriously wrong. Probably the doctor didn't tell your parents this at the hospital. Because it's a spiritual problem, not a physical problem. Every baby is born with it. Babies look sweet and innocent. But are they? The same David who marvelled at human life and birth in Psalm 139 had this to say in Psalm 51: "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." Innocent at birth? David says: *No!* Innocent at conception? David says: *No!*

Instead of innocence there is guilt. From your beginning as a baby, you were covered with the guilt of sin and evil. When God tells you in the Bible that babies are sinful from conception and birth, you can be sure this is an accurate assessment. He is the Great Physician. He knows when there is spiritual disease of sin and when there isn't. He doesn't make a wrong diagnosis. It's accurate. This is why you and I didn't need to be *taught* how to lie or argue. It's what we are like from birth.

That's what is sad about birthdays. Every child is born infected with the deadly disease of sin. I am no exception, nor are you. So is your birthday still something to celebrate? From this perspective, the answer is: *No!* Because you were born as a sinner, spiritually dead. From the moment of your birth you deserved God's punishment. That is nothing to celebrate. It's a *sad* birthday, not a *happy* birthday.

Yet there was one birthday in history that was different. The birthday of God's own Son, Jesus Christ. Christmas! Unlike all babies born before and after Him, the baby in the manger was not infected by the deadly disease of sin. Here was the first and only baby ever born innocent, without any guilt. As a sign of his perfection, He was conceived and born without the involvement of an earthly father.

Jesus Christ was born as a man so He could take the place of every imperfect and sinful person who believes in Him. Your spiritual problems began from your conception and birth. So Jesus Christ's work of salvation began with his conception and birth. From the

moment of his conception and birth, He lived the perfect life that you never can live! Beginning in Mary's womb and Bethlehem's manger.

That's why for those who believe in Him, his birthday is a happy birthday! It's why the great company of angels sang that birthday song on Christmas day: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests." Christmas day, the birthday of Jesus Christ, is at last a birthday to celebrate! Celebration because He takes away guilt and sin.

This gives you a new perspective on your own birthday. Although by nature you were conceived and born under God's curse, in Christ you are now under God's blessing! The day of your birth is now no longer a sad day, but a happy day! Because the condemnation you deserve is gone! Now you can sing happy birthday and mean it!

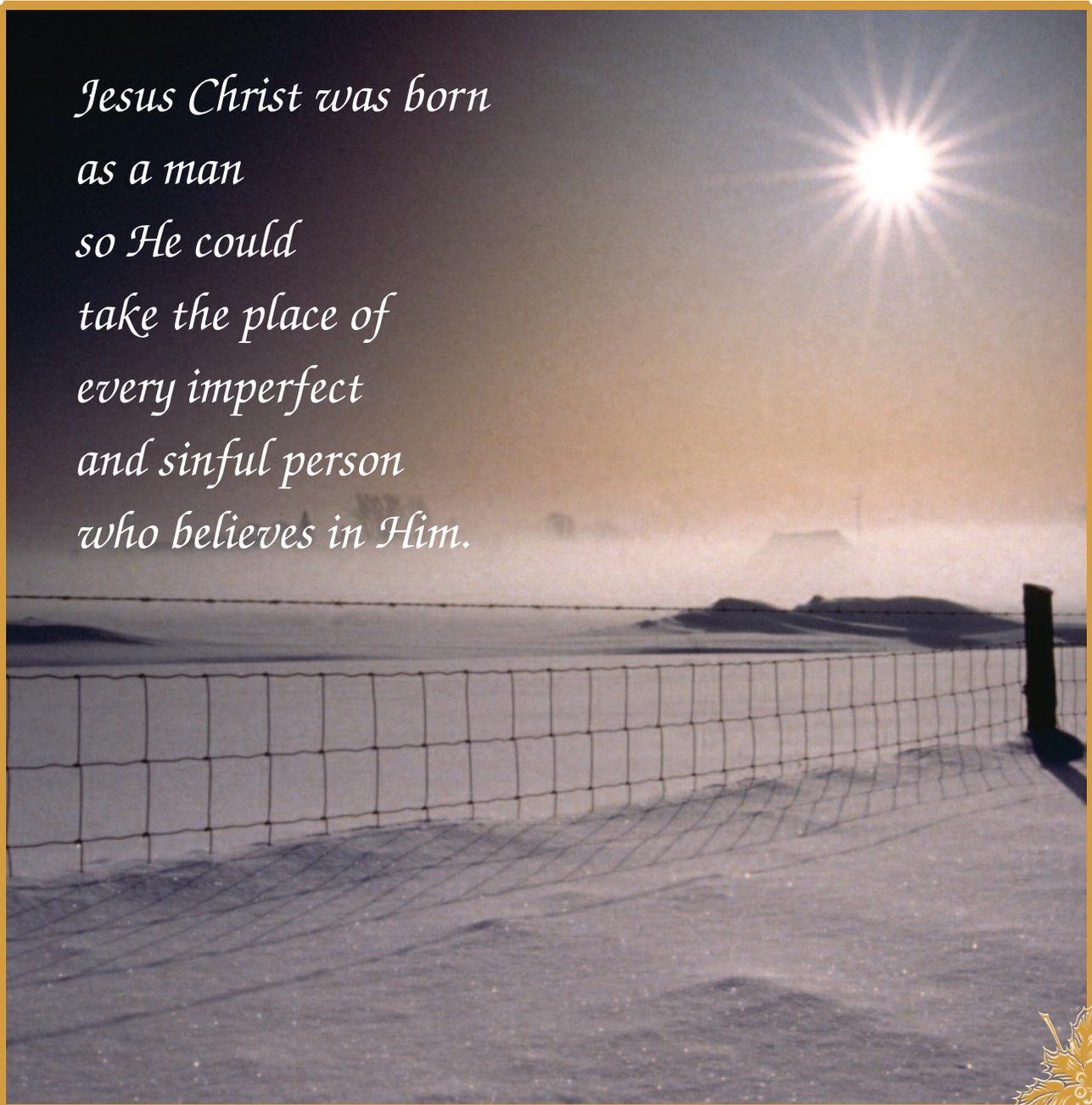
Can you celebrate your birthday? Those who reject Christ will discover on the day of judgment that all their birthday celebrations were in vain,

because they were sinful from birth. They will receive God's eternal judgment. But those who believe in Christ enjoy the benefits of his work. You will be covered by his perfection that started from conception and birth. Because of Christmas, birthdays for Christians are truly happy birthdays. May your next birthday be that kind of truly happy birthday!



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*Jesus Christ was born
as a man
so He could
take the place of
every imperfect
and sinful person
who believes in Him.*



The Introduction of Evangelical Hymns in the Dutch Reformed Churches: The Reaction in the Secession of 1834¹

Introduction

The Secession of 1834 was a movement against liberalism and false church government in the Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederlands Hervormde Kerk*) which resulted in the separation of several congregations from the state church. The *Evangelical Hymns* (*Evangelische Gezangen*), the collection of spiritual songs used by the church, played an important role in the Secession, for both in content and in the manner in which they were introduced, the hymns were seen as evidence of deviation from scriptural truths and the Reformed faith. Thus the *Evangelical Hymns* were a catalyst for the Secession and a factor in the formal decisions of the new congregations. Indeed, the singing of spiritual songs during the worship services was discussed so widely and seriously during the first half of the nineteenth century that the “*Gezangenkwestie*” (issue concerning the hymns) affected Reformed churches in The Netherlands for generations. The wary attitude towards non-scriptural, man-made compositions became a hallmark of the seceded churches, and was passed on eventually to the Canadian Reformed Churches via the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in The Netherlands and their ancestors, the Reformed Churches (*Gereformeerde Kerken*).

The *Evangelical Hymns* consist of 192 spiritual songs composed by European poets of diverse backgrounds. Foremost among the poets represented are Christian Gellert (1715-1769), Friedrich Klopstock (1724-1803), Georg Neumark (1621-1681), Jodocus van Lodenstein (1620-1677), and Isaac

Watts (1674-1748). A wide range of subjects is covered, including meditations upon God and his attributes, faith and trust, prayer, and death and immortality. In subject and tone, the songs reflect a variety of theological and philosophical ideas, including Arminianism, rationalism, Puritanism, deism, and tolerance. One unreformed song is Hymn 72, a hymn of blessing for the one who out of sympathy for his fellow man provides help in time of need. The song implies that human capability and endeavour are to be highly regarded.



Particularly disliked by orthodox believers in the nineteenth century was Hymn 31, which begins with the words (in Dutch), “O Mortal, sense thy worth.” Hymn 77 has been called Arminian for its suggestion that salvation can be obtained by human efforts to combine virtue with intelligence and patience. Pietistic elements may be found in the poems written by van Lo-

denstein, namely Hymns 21, 43, 62, and 68. To be sure, several of the hymns would be approved by even the harshest of Reformed critics, but the overall impression given by the ideas, tone, and diction of the hymns is that they reflect many unorthodox and worldly values of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Leaders of the Secession summarized the shortcomings of the hymnbook by labelling it Remonstrant and supra-naturalistic.

Compiled by a committee appointed by the executive council of the Dutch Reformed Church, the *Evangelical Hymns* were implemented in 1807 by command of the governors of the provinces. Deeming the input of the churches via broader assemblies unnecessary, the government of the church (“*Kerkbestuur*”) introduced the hymns with the threat to depose ministers who failed to employ them. Perceived as embodying false teachings that caused the lapsing of the church, the *Evangelical Hymns* figure prominently in the critical writings of the leaders of the Secession.

Views of the Secession leaders H.P. Scholte

One of these leaders was H.P. Scholte, who summarized the deterioration of doctrinal and ecclesiastical standards within the Dutch Reformed Church as follows.² Due to tolerance and liberalism, unreformed teaching and conduct entered the churches. During the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment and much-praised culturalization led people to believe that Reformed teaching was out of date and irrelevant. Consequently, catechism

instruction was superficial, and the pulpit no longer served as a means to instruct believers in sound scriptural doctrine. In place of substantial Reformed teaching, ministers promoted a shallow love, peace, and patience that were not based on the double-edged sword of the gospel but on humanist principles.

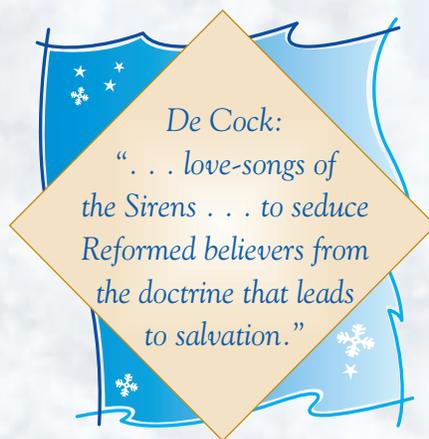
For Scholte, the declining theological and ecclesiastical standards were revealed in the changed attitude towards the singing of the 150 Psalms, which according to a decision at the Synod of Dordt (1618) were to be sung in the worship services. In a sarcastic tone Scholte writes of the way in which liberal leaders “solved the problem” of singing metrical Psalms. Whereas they could not be abandoned, the Psalms could be “supplemented” by spiritual songs composed in the spirit and tone of the fulfilled gospel – as the liberals put it. Scholte reminds his readers that the church of all times and places sang the Psalms, and that the apostles used the Psalms for the edification of the congregations. In his own day, however, a collection of songs (the *Evangelical Hymns*) was produced in which “was found all sorts of material for all sorts of singers except Reformed believers (28).”

Scholte reacts especially to the pathetic tolerance and “so-called love” promoted by modern thinkers. He may have been thinking of Hymn 70, which is about love towards one’s enemies. The poem suppresses the antithesis between righteous and wicked by stressing that love conquers all, and that suffering the onslaught of enemies is a noble virtue. Scholte exposed this and other unreformed teaching in the *Evangelical Hymns* especially in his catechism sermons. This does not imply, however, that he rejected the singing of hymns altogether, or even that he did not appreciate some of the poems in the collection. He was fond of the poetry of van Lodenstein – despite the admittedly Puritan elements in it – and considered his poems about conflict (in Dutch, the “*strijdliederen*”) apt for the time of persecution in which he and other orthodox believers lived.

H. de Cock

Hendrik de Cock (1801-1842), the most well-known leader of the Secession, influenced believers with strongly-worded brochures in which he attacked also the *Evangelical Hymns*. One widely-quoted tract is the intro-

duction to a booklet denouncing the collection of songs, in which de Cock describes the *Evangelical Hymns* as “love-songs of the Sirens, which serve to seduce Reformed believers from the doctrine that leads to salvation.”³ Just as the Sirens of Greek myth distracted sailors from their true course by means of song and caused their ships to founder on the rocks, so too the *Evangelical Hymns*, with their attractive heresies, cause Reformed believers to be drawn from their path of orthodoxy.



For de Cock, the *Hymns* were characterized by notions such as conditional election on the grounds of foreseen faith, universal atonement, partial depravity and other Arminian notions that would appeal to the Christian living during an age when the capabilities of human reason are championed, cultural advances lauded, and tolerance for fellow-man promoted. Their content was in conflict with the teaching of the Three Forms of Unity. He called the collection “so-called *Evangelical Hymns*,” implying that they did not accord with the complete gospel of damnation for the unbeliever and salvation for the righteous. The reader will not be surprised to learn that during the years of the Secession and thereafter, de Cock requested only the singing of Psalms during the worship services.

A. Brummelkamp

Anthony Brummelkamp (1811-1888) did not object to the *Evangelical Hymns* per se, but to the fact that they were foisted upon the congregations, and the stumbling blocks which they threw up for many of the members in the church he served. Readers

may recall that no general synod had been held for many years, and the church was being governed by a council. For Brummelkamp this meant that the decisions made at the Synod of Dordt (1618) continued to be valid, including the one that the Psalms of David are to be used during public worship services. In August 1835, when the council of church government in the province Gelderland asked Brummelkamp to confirm that he had announced to the congregation at Hattem he would no longer request the singing of hymns, Brummelkamp responded by stating that since the spirit and tone of the *Evangelical Hymns*, and the motivation for introducing them were contrary to Reformed doctrine, there were many believers who could not identify with the spiritual songs, which were a stumbling block. After all, Brummelkamp writes, since he does not know of a decision at a general synod that rescinded the one of Dordt, he did not think that he was acting contrary to church order.⁴

Brummelkamp realized that the “*Gezangenkwestie*” (issue concerning the hymns) was becoming a matter that pricked the Christian conscience, and that orthodox members in his congregation objected to the singing of one hymn per service, as required. Some members departed the building before the final song – the hymn – was sung. Others ostentatiously put on their hats, or stood up during the singing of the hymn. Brummelkamp knew that they objected out of concern that false teaching was entering the church through the singing of the *Evangelical Hymns*. In Brummelkamp’s view, his duty as minister to ensure that all things be done decently and in good order was being compromised by the “*Gezangenkwestie*,” as chaos resulted from the imposed rule.

One of the considerations of the church government in judging the actions of Rev. Brummelkamp was that he refused to abide by the decision of the provincial synods that as of January 1, 1807, the *Evangelical Hymns* would be sung during the worship services. Hereby Brummelkamp was opposing the authority of the church government (“*Hervormd Kerkbestuur*”) that had been instituted in 1816. Yet while the decision was made to punish Brummelkamp for his refusal to prescribe the singing of hymns, Brummelkamp rightly pointed out that the non-singing of hymns was in itself insufficient

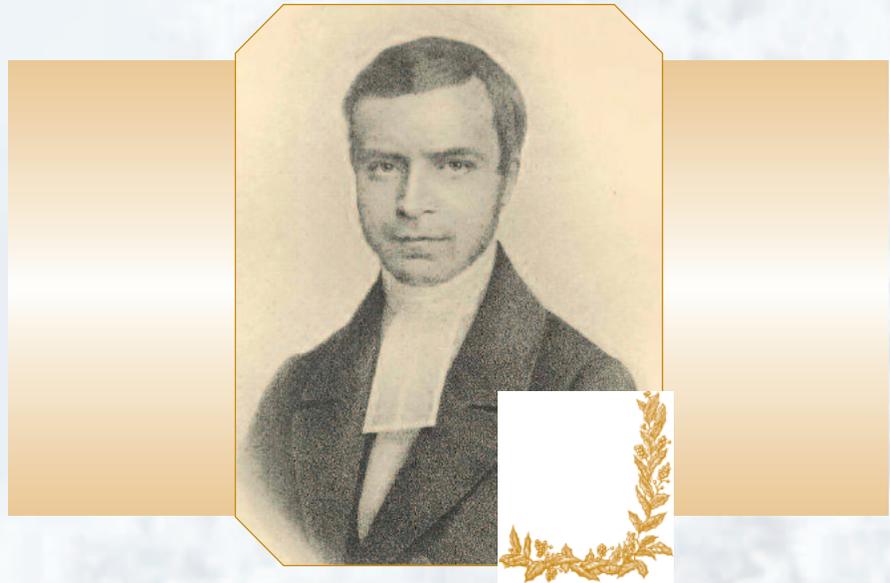
grounds to depose him. In other words, Brummelkamp knew the proper value that should be assigned to the issue of hymn-singing, and that it was not so much spiritual songs that were at stake, but these particular songs with their unreformed content.

The Secession of 1834

In the *Declaration of Secession or Return*, which formed the official statement of the seceders, the newly formed congregations express the wish “to direct our public worship services according to the time-honoured ecclesiastical liturgy.” As far as the psalter was concerned, this meant a return to the edition of the metrical Psalms published in 1773. Technically this change was against the synodical regulations, and numerous early worship services of the seceders were interrupted by town mayors, police, or militiamen. In response to the threatened or real disruptions, orthodox believers would sing the standard Calvinist “battle song,” Psalm 68:1, 2. In the *Book of Praise*, the first verse begins with the words, “God shall arise, and by His might / Put all His enemies to flight. . . .”; the second verse starts thus: “But let the just with joyful voice / In God’s victorious might rejoice. . . .”

Several leaders of the Secession were imprisoned for transgressing laws of church and state. Among them was Scholte, arrested in November 1834. Scholte kept a record of his days in jail, days which ended with Scripture reading, prayer, and the singing of a Psalm. One night, after his soul was encouraged by the singing of Psalm 34, Scholte writes: “How is it possible that Christians, once they have learned what spiritual need really is, do not find sufficient sustenance in the Psalms of David – that overflowing source of divine consolation – but still desire and strive after human songs that are introduced for the purpose of removing those valuable Psalms from our church! To such an extent can the spirit of the times, with its secular and superficial judgement, mislead the senses.”⁵

As time passed, the seceded churches were tolerated by the government and those appointed to enforce its laws. When the congregations settled, certain practices regarding corporate singing during the worship services developed. While a few congregations reverted to using the archaic versification of Datheen (*De Psalmen Davids* of 1566), most employed the



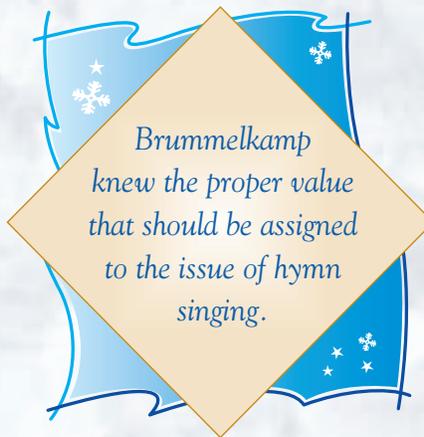
Hendrik de Cock (1801-1842),
leader in the Secession

Staatsberijming of 1773; in a very few places the custom was maintained of singing one hymn per service. Ministers now chose which Psalms were to be sung during the worship services, and abandoned the practice of singing in series, from Psalm 1 to 150. This change caused congregational singing to be linked more closely to the liturgy and the text of the sermon. In general,

Conclusions

It will be clear from the preceding that in the history of singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs the Secession of 1834 was a critical period. The aversion to the *Evangelical Hymns*, which conflicted with biblical teaching and the Reformed confessions in their Arminian and rationalist content, was linked closely to the response of orthodox believers to the liberal trends and increasingly improper government in the Dutch Reformed Church. The first synods of the seceded churches determined that only Psalms would be sung; it must be added that the singing of spiritual songs at events other than the worship services was commonplace. It appears that at gatherings where people of the Secession met with those who had not left the Reformed Church, there was little discord over the matter. This reveals that many of the seceders did not distort the issue concerning the hymns, or ascribe to it greater weight than it deserved.

Yet the Secession did identify the potential for the introduction of heresy via contemporary, man-made spiritual songs. By focusing upon the teaching promoted in particular spiritual songs, the leaders of the Secession drew attention to the trends in philosophy and popular belief that were contrary to the teaching of Scripture and the Reformed faith. Moreover, they alerted believers to the unbiblical language and secular tone of the *Evangelical Hymns*. In identifying



the return to psalm-singing was due to a conscious effort to return to the Calvinistic roots of the Dutch Reformed churches, and to the early form of the federation as expressed by the Synod of Dort in 1618. Psalm-singing was a central part of the activities of the seceders, both at home and in public; it gave them a sense of joy, comfort, community, liberation, and unity with the church of all times.

the contemporary tendency to join concepts of the Enlightenment to the Reformed faith, the Secession taught the lesson that man-made compositions may introduce ideas current in popular belief or philosophy.

We may also note that the Secession did not oppose the singing of hymns as such; it opposed the contents of the poems included in the *Evangelical Hymns*. Secession leaders did not argue against the use of hymns from Scripture or the confessions; the Bible neither commands nor forbids the singing of spiritual songs. What the seceders did oppose is the unbiblical and unreformed teaching in many of the songs included in the official collection of the Dutch Reformed Church.

The Secession leaders argued positively for the use of the Psalms. In

promoting the singing of the Old Testament Psalms, the Secession returned to the Calvinistic origins of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, and to the ecclesiastical principles and practices that were determined at the Synod of Dordt. By pointing out that the catholic church has a treasury of songs in the 150 Psalms, by noting the New Testament passages in which the Psalms function in the liturgy and daily life of the early believers, by stressing the redemptive-historical function of the Psalms and the importance of maintaining biblical language, expression and meaning, the churches of the Secession remind us of the abiding value and significance of the Psalms.

¹ For Dr. R. Faber's previous article on this subject, please see issue 19.

² In "Merkwaardig voorbeeld van Hedendaagsche Verdraagzaamheid van het Nederlands Hervormd Kerkbestuur", p. 21-33, and "Vervolg der Liefdelooze Handelingen van het Zoogenaamd Hervormd Kerkbestuur..." p. 58-154, in *Officiële Stukken Betreffende den Uitgang uit het Nederlandsch Hervormd Kerkgenootschap*, ed. H.P. Scholte, A. Brummelkamp, et al. 2nd edition. Kampen, 1886.

³ Quoted from J. Verhagen, *De Geschiedenis der Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1881), 140.

⁴ In *Officiële Stukken*, p. 310-311.

⁵ In *Officiële Stukken*, 72.



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Covenant Christian School students and their snow fort (8 feet tall), London, Ontario, January 2003



Re-roofing Covenant Christian School, summer 2003



Fleeting

Let me know how fleeting my life is. Psalm 39:4b

At year's end we tend to reflect on the events of the year gone by. Perspectives differ from one age group to another. The young may consider a year, with exciting and less exciting moments, a long time, and can hardly wait till the next. The older generation is confronted with the passage of life. The days seem to pass by faster and faster.

So, what is life, and how should we view it? The Psalmist reminds us it is all vanity, idleness. In fact, the psalmist inserts a *Selah*, a pause, at the end of each section where he mentions that life is “. . . but a breath.” David is saying as it were: “Think about the brevity of life. Watch what you do, what you say, what you think.” Young and old, we run around like madmen, busy with all kinds of things, bustling about in vanity. Therefore the Lord needs to rebuke and discipline us, until we cry out, “Lord, where shall we flee? Our hope is in you. Look upon us in our Lord Jesus Christ, the One sent to us from above, the One risen to life, the One seated at your right hand, our advocate.”

Therefore, youth, remember the Lord when you are young and life seems to be one big party. You older ones, remember the Lord in the busyness of life with all its cares and anxieties. Rejoice in the Lord always (see editorial).

Thank you, *Clarion* supporters

Each *Clarion* issue our editorial team reminds us of our life's hope in the Lord. Both Dr. J. Visscher and Rev. R. Aasman ensure a steady supply of edited articles for your reading. Thank you for your diligence and management. Dr. Visscher and Rev. Aasman are ably assisted by the editorial team members, Dr. J. De Jong, Dr. N.H. Gootjes and Rev. Cl. Stam. We appreciate your support. A special thank you to Dr. De Jong who has faithfully provided so much material in the past. Now that you must lessen your load because of illness, Dr. De Jong, we wish you and your family the Lord's strength and blessing in the days ahead. We welcome to the editorial team Rev. W.B. Slomp who has graciously offered his services for the readers' benefit. Thank you also to our regular contributors: Dr. R. Faber, Dr. E.G. Oosterhoff, Rev. G.Ph. Van Popta, Rev. P.G. Feenstra, Mr. A. Kingma, Mr. K. Sikkema, Mrs. Corinne Gelms, Mrs. Erna Nordeman, and Aunt Betty. We also appreciate the work of those who wrote meditations, reports, press releases and other submissions. Together, under the Lord's blessing, we were able to produce a regular volume of *Clarions*. As the saying goes, all this was made possible by you, our subscribers and advertisers. Thank you. We look forward to your continued support.

Greetings

In this life of fleetingness, we have this hope as an anchor of the soul, firm and secure: Jesus who descended and ascended, who went before us! Celebrate his appearance. Rejoice in him, now and throughout 2004.

W. Gortemaker



Psalm 84

Melody: Geneva, 1562

- O LORD of hosts, almighty King,
The praises of Your house I sing.
How lovely is Your habitation!
Your holy courts I yearn to see;
Faint with desire, I long to be
Where pilgrims join in celebration.
My heart and flesh with joyful shout
To You, the living God, cry out.
- The sparrow finds a place to rest;
The swallow builds herself a nest
To rear her young beside
Your altar.
Your temple is their safe abode,
O LORD of hosts, my King, my God.
How blest are those who there find
shelter.
Your house, O LORD, is their delight;
They sing Your praises day and
night.
- How blest are those whose strength
You are,
Who seek the ways that from afar
Lead them to Zion's holy places.
As they through Baca's valley
pass,
They make that barren wilderness
A place of springs, a lush oasis;
The early rain on it descends,
And pools refresh the desert sands.
- They make their way from strength to
strength
Until in Zion they at length
Appear before their God and
Saviour.
LORD God Almighty, hear my plea;
O God of Jacob, answer me.
Bestow on me Your grace and favour.
O God, our shield, from heaven
above
Bless Your anointed with Your love.
- LORD, one day in Your dwelling
place
Is better than a thousand days
Outside the courts of Your salvation.
Yes, nothing gives me joy so great.
Only to stand there at the gate,
The entrance to Your habitation,
Is better than to dwell within
The tents of wickedness and sin.
- The LORD His goodness has
revealed:
He is to us a sun and shield.
With grace and honour He
delights us.
He shows His mercy, as of old,
And no good gift will He withhold
From those whose walk is just and
righteous.
O LORD whose word is firm and true,
How blest are those who trust in You.

William Helder, 2003



Year End Review 2003

One of the things that we all tend to do at this time of the year is look back and reminisce. On a personal level we may spend some time trying to identify the significant events that made a difference in each of our lives. Spreading the net wider, we may look at our family and consider how things went with children and grand-children, brothers and sisters, close relatives and distant ones. Or, for that matter, we may spread it wider yet and even include the church. How did things go in the household of faith in 2003? Specifically, what stands out as noteworthy in the life of the Canadian (and American) Reformed Churches in the year gone by?

Churches

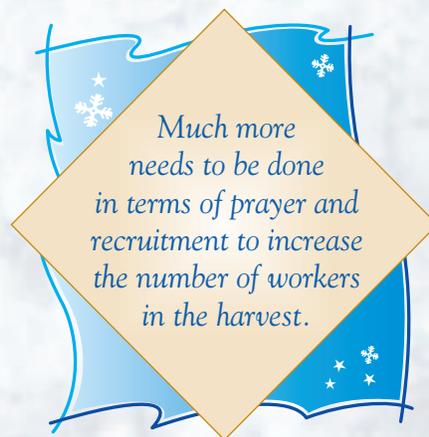
When we consider local churches we may say that one of the noteworthy developments has to do with the institution of two new churches, one in the east and one in the west. Close to the shores of Lake Erie in southern Ontario, the Church of Dunnville came into being. It said "good-bye" to "Mother Attercliffe," who really is not that old herself. It also did not take long before the calling machinery was up and working.

On almost the other end of the country, and quite a bit further north in Alberta, the Church of St. Albert came into existence. Situated just north of Edmonton, it parted company with the Providence Church. It also has the distinction of being the first church that is named after a saint. Perhaps someone from there can give the rest of us some background on this "Albert."

In any case, we welcome these two new churches to the federation and are confident that they too will make their presence felt in due time and in various ways. At the same time we shall continue to watch how things develop in the Fergus and the Quinte areas of

Ontario, as there too efforts are being made to establish new churches.

In addition to new and potentially new churches, there also remain a considerable number of churches that are vacant. At present these include the Churches of Burlington-South, Carman East, Cloverdale, Coaldale, Dunnville, London, Neerlandia, Rockway, and St. Albert. Almost all of them are actively involved in calling a minister and it is expected that at least one of them will have received a positive response by now.



One church that was formerly on the above list can be taken off, and that is the Church of Grassie. It saw its efforts to obtain a new pastor and teacher crowned with success.

Still, this leaves a considerable number of vacancies and that is always a cause for concern. Much more needs to be done in terms of prayer and recruitment to increase the number of workers in the harvest. Let us keep on asking the Lord to work with his Spirit in the hearts of young men who show the gifts and talents needed to enter the ministry of the gospel.

Church buildings

A number of congregations were also actively looking for new premises in which to worship, or else they were renovating old ones or making plans to build new ones. In British Columbia the Churches of Cloverdale and Smithers both completed plans to make some substantial changes to their existing buildings. Once the money is raised (or at least a part of it) and the permits are issued, the work can begin. The Church of Aldergrove is currently renting facilities from a local United Church but its fundraising efforts for the construction of a new building are continuing.

In Ontario, the Church of Toronto is still working on gaining approval for its plans from the various levels of government. All too often this represents a tedious, frustrating and expensive process. The Church of Hamilton is in the middle of a massive renovation and is currently worshipping elsewhere. I have also heard that the Church of Guelph has taken possession of a beautiful new building. Perhaps one of our readers from there could send *Clarion* some pictures.

Ministers

If vacant churches have been busy during the past year issuing calls, then any number of ministers have also been busy receiving and weighing them. The men in the spotlight have been especially the Revs. R. Aasman, R. Eikelboom, P. Feenstra, P. Holtvlüwer, T. Lodder, J. Louwerse, R. Pot, and R. Schouten. Thus far none of them has felt that the Lord was calling them elsewhere; however, this is something that can soon change.

One man who has decided to make a move is Candidate Carl Van Dam. After years of studying in Canada and The Netherlands, and with a good part of his doctoral thesis completed, he decided

that the Lord was leading him to the Church of Grassie, Ontario. As this is being written it is still not known what Candidate David de Boer will do, although it appears likely that either Dunville, London, or Rockway, will have received some good news by now. As for Candidate Walter Geurts, he is currently helping out the Church of Fergus and the Rev. J. Louwerse. Hopefully, the experience will prove to be a beneficial one for all concerned and it will help our brother find a church to pastor either there or elsewhere.

The year 2003 also saw a number of ministers move. The Rev. J. Moesker exchanged the prairie vistas of Carman, Manitoba, for the valleys and lakes of Vernon, B.C. The Rev. J. Huijgen and his family pulled up stakes in Cloverdale, B.C., and moved across the country to Waterdown, Ontario. The Rev. A. Souman made an even bigger move, coming from The Netherlands and settling down in Smithville, Ontario. Still, the honour of the biggest move of them all goes to the Rev. D.M. Boersma. He came from far off South Africa and took up his new charge in Denver, CO.

Retirements also took place in 2003. The Rev. G. Wieske reached that special age and decided to retire from his active service in the Church of Rockway. Good health are making it possible for him and his wife to spend some time helping out a vacant church in Australia. Perhaps, if he is willing and able, the Lord will allow him to do more of it. The Rev. C. Bosch, sadly, did not reach that special age before he had to retire. His health, which has been a concern for some time, made an early retirement necessary. At the mo-

ment neither he nor his wife are doing very well from a health perspective and it is hoped that the Lord will soon change their situation for the better.



Health concerns also continue to loom large in both the lives of Prof. J. de Jong and the Rev. Cl. Stam. Currently, Prof. de Jong, who is on sabbatical from his duties at the Theological College, is receiving various medications to deal with his memory difficulties. Rev. Stam is being given some very powerful drugs in the hope that the spread of his multiple sclerosis will be halted. Both men, and their families, have been and continue to be supported by the prayers and efforts of the saints.

On another sad but different note, the Rev. J.L. van Popta and the Church of Coaldale, Alberta, parted company. Classis Alberta, together with the Deputies of the Regional Synod, decided that under the circumstances it would be best to grant his request for

release. It is hoped that in the year to come another church will see fit to call him and that the Church of Coaldale will also receive another pastor and teacher.

Concluding on a happier note, it may be reported that a number of ministers reached various milestones. On Feb. 12, the Rev. J. de Gelder celebrated his twenty-fifth anniversary as a minister of the divine Word. On Oct. 22, Prof. J. de Jong commemorated a similar highlight. Finally, on November 7, 2003, the Rev. W.W.J. VanOene was so blessed as to be able to celebrate sixty years as a minister of the gospel. Needless to say, this is a milestone that not many ministers reach; nevertheless, the Lord has been gracious and given this gift to our brother. Congratulations to you and God be praised for his mercies! And that is not all, for it may also be told that around the same time as this one milestone was being reached, another was attained as well, namely sixty years of married life. Double congratulations to you, Rev. and Mrs. VanOene!

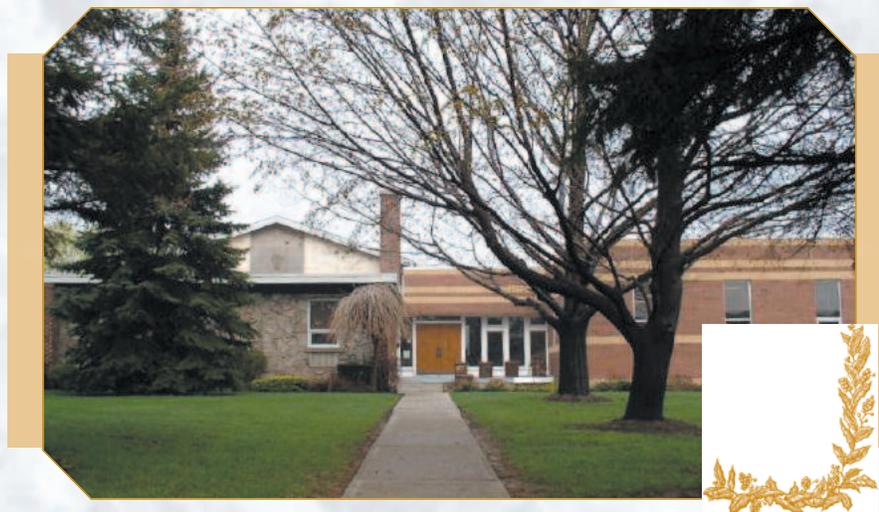
The Theological College

This past September saw the graduation and departure of only one student from the Theological College in Hamilton, namely Mr. David de Boer. It also witnessed the enrolment of a large new group of students, both females taking the diploma course and males taking the master of divinity course. Some of these students came from such diverse places as Russia, Sudan and Korea. A number of students either continued their studies or enrolled as auditors.

The sabbatical of Prof. de Jong during the year 2003 – 2004 called for some creative approaches to the teaching of his subjects. Under the able leadership of the Principal, Dr. C. van Dam, ministers from near and far were approached and found willing to give the required instruction.

During the early part of the summer the NT professor, G.H. Visscher visited the churches in the Province of British Columbia on behalf of the College. Later on in that same summer Prof. N.H. Gootjes spent a number of weeks teaching in Brazil.

The regular support staff made up of the Administrative Assistant, Miss C. Mechelse, and the Librarian, Miss M. Vandavelde, were given the health to do their work.



The Theological College



Once again 2003 saw theological students who had completed their third year go out to the churches for a summer internship. Mr. R. Bredenhof and his wife went off to Guelph and worked there for two months. Mr. I. Wildeboer and his wife went to Langley, B.C. From the comments heard, it appears that both students and churches greatly appreciated the opportunity.

Foreign mission

At present the Canadian Reformed Churches continue to have missionaries in both Brazil and Papua. In the former place, the Revs. B. de Graaf, E. Venema and K. Wieske continue to be hard at work.

This past year has been especially trying for the Venema family, as sister Venema became serious ill and the family had to return to The Netherlands. Thankfully, she recovered sufficiently to be able to take her place in Brazil again, together with her husband and family. Since then the return has been marred by a robbery that took place on a trip to Recife during which the Rev. Venema and his wife were threatened at gun point and their car stolen. We hope that after such a stressful time, our missionary family there may see a return to safety and health.

Meanwhile the congregations in northeast Brazil are doing well. Students are being trained, indigenous pastors are maturing, churches are growing and new opportunities come along daily.

On the other side of the world in Papua, or what was formerly Papua New Guinea, the Rev. S. 't Hart and his family are hard at work. During part of this year they were helped by two sis-



ters, Caroline and Heleen Knol, who came from Canada and The Netherlands respectively. Soon they will be joined by a newly appointed mission aid worker who comes from Australia.

Further to the west lies another island called West Timor. There a graduate of the College, the Rev. Y. Dethan, is a minister of the Calvinist Reformed Church. A rather ugly church split caused great difficulties for him and his congregation, although there were signs by year's end that matters may be improving. Also, help is on the way as his brother, the Rev. E. Dethan, who has been called as a missionary by the Church of Smithville, will soon be joining him.

Foreign support efforts

Not only are the Canadian Reformed Churches involved in various foreign countries by sending and supporting missionaries, but other forms of assistance are also being given. An organization called Anak-Anak Terang Children of Light was formed to support the work of Christian education in places like Timor. Faithworks was active in Haiti, especially among handicapped and disadvantaged children. Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) continues to receive the support of the churches. The H. Feunekes, J. Koens, and C. Togeretz families from our midst are actively working for this unique organization. Much support is also being given to the Middle East Reformed



A Recife congregation with Prof. N. Gootjes.



Fellowship (MERF) which trains pastors at its home base in Cyprus, and is actively supporting churches throughout the region. As well there is the work of the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund, and the Manna organization in Edmonton, which continue to support orphanages, distribute aid packages and dispense disaster relief to various parts of the world.

Chinese and native mission

On the home front mission and mission aid work are also being done. As the nations flood into Canada, opportunities for working among foreign people are opening up right next door. Such is the case with the Rev. F. Dong, who continues to be active among the Chinese population in the greater Vancouver area. At the moment, what was once called the Chinese Christian Fellowship and is now called the Chinese Reformed Church (unorganized), is worshipping in Burnaby and keeps on growing. Together with the Church of Kelmscott in Western Australia, a web site is under construction that will reach Chinese people in their home country and around the world.

In the northern part of British Columbia a different mission work is being done among the Native peoples living in the Fort Babine district. There the Rev. W. Bredenhof is hard at work. Although he and his family live and work in a rather remote area, they have regular contact with the sending Church of Smithers, some ninety kilometres down the winding logging road.

Inner-city mission

In downtown Hamilton, a major Ontario city, outreach is being done by Streetlight Ministries. A full-time mission worker, Mr. R. Bultje, has been active for some time already among the poor, the addicted, and the lonely. He is being assisted by an able group of volunteers. Apparently there is so much work and potential that serious consideration is being given at this time to the calling of a home missionary.



Campfire!

For years already some of the children living in this inner-city area have been invited to attend the summer camping program developed in Ontario called appropriately – Campfire! At these camp weeks mostly children in the church, as well as some needy children from Hamilton, are brought together for a week of Bible study, song, fellowship and outings. This past sum-

mer the Campfire! program in Ontario was spread over seven weeks and once again attracted hundreds of children, as well as a large number of volunteers.

Indeed, word of the success of this program spread to the west coast of Canada with the result that this past summer Campfire West! was launched in the Fraser Valley. As a new venture it was decided to start small and to have camp for only two weeks. Soon, however, the word was out and the camp weeks were filled to overflowing. Plans are underway to do it again this coming year.

Outreach

In the midst of all of these missionary and evangelistic efforts, the work of the Voice of the Church should not be forgotten. This radio program continues to be produced regularly and to be heard in both British Columbia and Ontario. As well, a new radio phone-in program called “What Does the Bible Say?” was set up in Ontario. It is being hosted by the Revs. Cl. Stam and G. Van Popta and can be heard every Sunday evening.

On the literature end of things, the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce continues to publish the quarterly handout magazine called *Evangel*. It is also busy developing another introductory course to the Reformed faith. As well a new website is up and running and can be accessed by typing in www.reformedevangelism.com. Plans are underway to publish brochures and other suitable material for personal and congregational evangelism.

Special needs

Mention also needs to be made of all of the work being done for the special brothers and sisters in our midst. In Ontario Anchor continues to provide homes and support for the handicapped. The same is happening in Alberta through Rehoboth and in British Columbia through Bethesda.

Senior homes and care places are also spreading across the country. Ontario has its Ebenezer, Elim, Marantha, Shalom and Mt. Nemo homes. Manitoba has its Greenview Villa. Alberta has its Emmanuel Home and Summit Village. British Columbia has its Manoah Manor.

Christian education

The members of the Canadian Reformed Churches are also blessed to have great schools from one end of the country to the other. Dozens of able



Children's choir for the 25th anniversary of Rev. J. De Gelder.

principals, hundreds of dedicated teachers and thousands of students get together during the school year and are taught from a Reformed and Christian perspective how to prepare for life.

Over the past twelve months the regular activities associated with education went on, as did parent-teacher interviews, board meetings, school sports, teachers' conferences, even a principals' conference in Manitoba.

A beautiful new school was built in Lynden, Washington. It was a real community effort involving the time

and talents of many. If you look elsewhere in this issue you should be able to see what hands and hearts of faith have made.

Back in Hamilton at the Teacher's College the work also continues unabated. For some time staffing has been a concern; however, the arrival of Mr. A. Gunnink to teach there should improve the situation to some degree. In the meantime, skilled and able teachers are being trained and entering the school system. The downside remains that such teachers can not teach in the

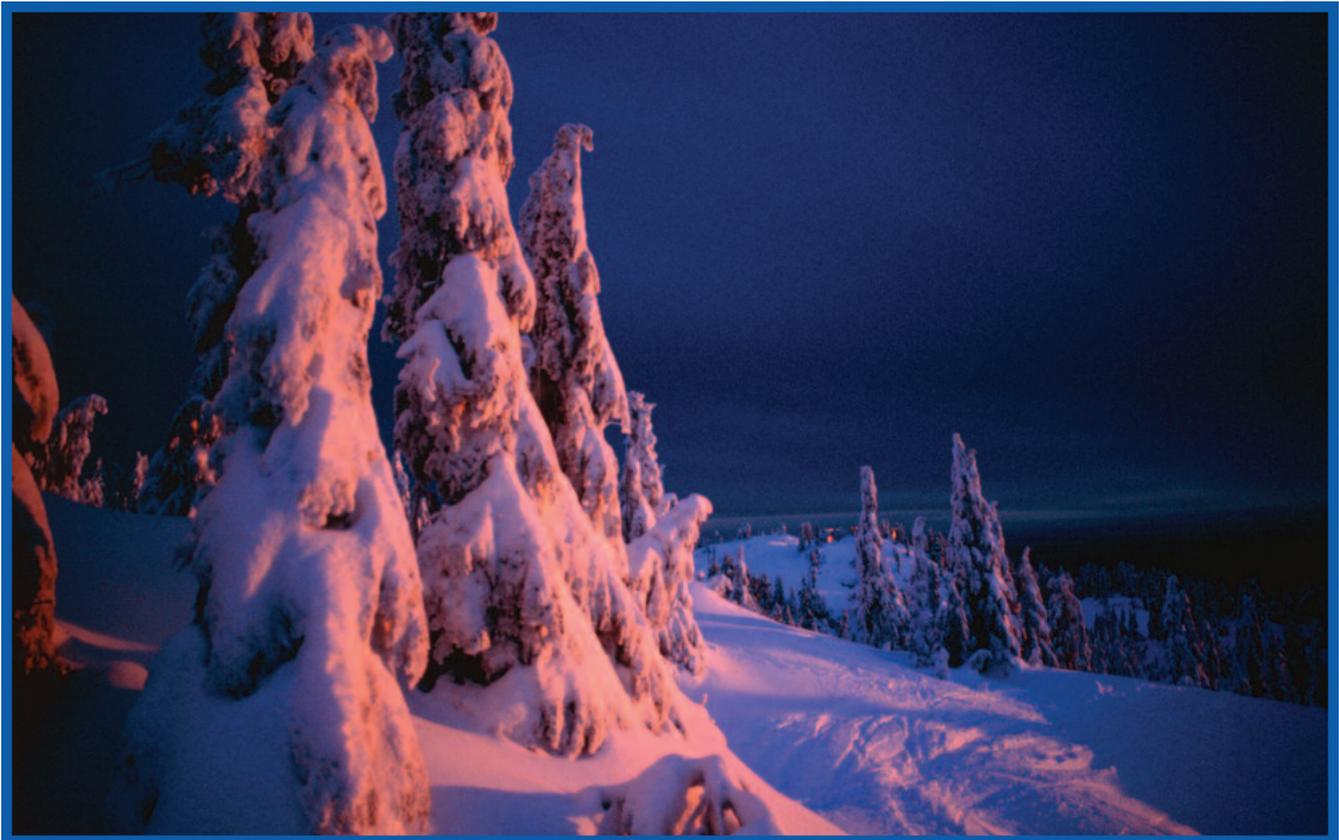
western provinces because their degrees are not recognized. As a result, schools in that part of the country benefit only in an indirect way from the College. Hopefully, a way will yet be found to rectify this situation.

Rounding off

These then are some of the highlights in our church life during the year 2003. Some of them give cause for much thankfulness, others are reason for deep concern and call for constant prayer. Indeed, it all makes one think of the famous words of the Preacher – "there is a time for everything" (Eccl 3: 1-8). Thankfully, this time is not in our feeble hands but in the far more capable and powerful hands of our heavenly Father. May He continue to support and lead us onward as we experience the passage of time with all of its many events and developments. In and through the process of doing so, may He also help us to gain "a heart of wisdom" (Ps 90: 12).



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Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things." Philippians 4:8.

"You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

Here we are at the last commandment and near the end of another year of our Lord. When we hear this commandment we may think that this has been dealt with in the previous commandments. However, it is here that we find a deepening of the entire law. Our actions and words do not fall out of the blue sky. As we read in Matthew 15, they come up out of the depths of our heart. This commandment goes deep: to the very core of our being. From the hand, through the mouth, it reaches into the heart. It is here that God is not concerned how we look from the outside, but, rather what lives inside. The law of God demands this inward purity, for the Lord asks for the renewal of the entire person.

No one is able to achieve perfection, however, as Christians we must still strive for perfection. Psalm 40 teaches us "I delight to do your will. . . ." The law sets a standard for us. This commandment teaches us to strive to continue on the race to attain the goal of perfection. Paul also speaks of this race in various books of the New Testament, i.e., I Corinthians 9:24-27.

By faith we make the right start to this race. We must always rely on our faithful and righteous Saviour. The more we live with Christ in our hearts, the closer we are to the redemption that awaits us in our Saviour. He lifts the yoke of sin, even before we start the race, through the forgiveness of sins. In Christ, He is the Head of the race, and the hope in glory.

Daily we must bow in humility before our Father in heaven. We must pray for the Holy Spirit to work mightily within our hearts and instil in us the ability to learn the process of rebirth. This is an ongoing process, and thus we must be aware and earnestly work on this each day anew.

We can never say, "well, now I've arrived." No, for Paul urges us to stay on the course. We must have an earnest purpose. We must die to sin and come to life in Christ. We must want to strive for the finish line. When we hold fast to the course, then we will reach the goal.

We must not look back in pride on things we've done but rather we must constantly look forward. He gives us the daily incentives and strength we need to continue on. We must daily keep our Bible open, study and continue to grow in faith to our Lord and Saviour. For we can but only uphold the law in Him.

In this commandment we are also brought to the main themes of the entire catechism. First we must humbly be grieved by our many sins and misery. It is then that we so desperately need Christ to deliver us from our sinfulness, which will then turn to thankfulness for all that He daily bestows on us wretched sinners.

As we come near to the end of another year, we may take time to reflect on God's mercy and faithfulness. In Him we were able to continue in our daily tasks and activities. And as we go on into a new year, we must continue to focus our lives on being like Christ. But we can only do this by staying on course. He wants a heart that is steadfast in his service. We must keep our focus on the goal that lies ahead. This is truly something which we may look forward to and for which to live and work for. Indeed, we may believe that God's promises stand true. We belong to Jesus Christ who has made us his own. Let us live in the hope of eternal glory and perfection.

*In all the strife of mortal life
Our feet shall stand securely;
Temptation's hour shall lose its power,
For Thou shalt guard us surely.
O God, each day direct our way;
Renew us by Thy Spirit
Until we stand at Thy right hand
Through Jesus' saving merit.*

Hymn 43:3

Birthdays in January:

- 2 LIZ KONING will be 43
9905 152nd Street, Edmonton, AB T5P 1X4
- 7 CHRISTINE BREUKELMAN will turn 32
2225-19th Street, Coadale, AB T1M 1G4
- 17 HENRY DRIEGEN will be 48
#19-31450 Spur Avenue, Abbotsford, BC V2T 5M3
- 17 GRACE HOMAN will turn 48
Anchor Home, 361, Thirty Road South,
RR 2, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B0
- 19 JANINE SMID will be 34
510 2nd Street RR 7, Strathroy, ON N7T 3H8
- 27 HANK ORSEL will turn 73
2424 Woodward, Apt. 10, Burlington, ON L7R 4E3
- 30 TYLER HOEKSEMA will be 15
6755 Lorne Drive, Sardis, BC V2R 2G3

Congratulations to all of you who are celebrating your birthday in the new year. May our heavenly Father continue to bless you in this new year with much health and happiness. May you all enjoy this time of year when we celebrate the birth of Christ our Saviour. Till next time,

Mrs. C. Gelms and Mrs. E. Nordeman

Mailing Correspondence:

548 Kemp Road East, RR 2 Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2

Phone: 905-563-0380





Events at the Theological College

A new academic year has started at the Theological College! With joy we could admit both new and returning students and we are well into our first semester. The teaching and studying are of course the heart of the work we do, and I want to come back to that, but allow me to begin with the highlight of the year so far.

Dr. J. De Jong's Anniversary

A most memorable event that took place was the twenty-fifth anniversary of Dr. J. De Jong in the ministry of the gospel. With gratitude to God for past blessings, the event was appropriately celebrated on Saturday, October 25, 2003, with a public open house and an evening with family, colleagues and friends. Both at the open house and during the evening, thanksgiving was given for the gifts that the Lord has given us in this faithful servant who pastored the congregations of London and Burlington-South for twelve years and for the last thirteen years taught in

both the areas of church polity and church history as well as the pastoral disciplines, including homiletics and missions. In view of the deteriorating health of Dr. De Jong, the celebratory thanksgiving for past blessings received was also combined with earnest prayer and supplication that the Lord continue to uphold Dr. De Jong and his wife, Margaret De Jong and the children in his grace and mercy. Representatives of the Board of Governors, Senate, student body and family spoke. Singing praises to God and hearing touching reminders of God's greatness from Dr. De Jong's own writings could comfort and encourage all in the Lord's unflinching faithfulness. A highlight in the evening, and the final point of the program, was a Power Point presentation by Rev. J. Mulder, who is very active in giving support to Dr. De Jong. Rev. Mulder provided a wonderful pictorial overview of the life of Dr. and Mrs. De Jong which concluded with the singing of:

**To our God be thanks and praise:
He through Christ made us
victorious.**

**Be then steadfast all your days;
See how death's defeat assures us
That in Him who comes again
All your toil is not in vain.**

(Hymn 51:8)

We commend Dr. and Mrs. De Jong and the family to the continuing care of our faithful covenant God.

New teachers

The Theological College is experiencing the blessing of enthusiastic ministers helping out in the absence of Dr. De Jong by sharing their expertise. Let me tell you who they are for this semester, following the order of the alphabet. Rev. J. De Gelder, minister of the Flamborough church, instructs the students in church polity, this year covering the final sections of the church order, including the exercising of church discipline. The minister of Hamilton, Rev. Cl. Stam, who is struggling with major health issues in the form of an aggressive MS, is undaunted and cheerfully makes his contribution by teaching homiletics, the art of preparing sermons. His Ancaster colleague, Rev. G. P. Van Popta, trains the freshmen students in pulpit speech. Last, but not least, Rev. H. Versteeg of Chatham and Rev. W. den Hollander of Toronto use their unique gifts respectively as former missionary in Irian Jaya and as chairman of the Toronto Mission Board, in educating the students in the principles and practice of Reformed mission work. Finally, it can be noted that the weekly sermon sessions are being conducted by the full time faculty.



Dr. and Mrs. J. De Jong



Rev. G.P. Van Popta



Rev. Cl. Stam



Rev. J. De Gelder



Rev. H. Versteeg

We are very grateful for the willingness of the ministers as well as of their consistories for making this invaluable contribution for the training of ministers of the gospel.

Special lecture

On Friday, October 31, the College community could enjoy hearing a special lecture by Prof. Mark D. Vander Hart, Associate Professor of Old Testament Studies at Mid-America Reformed Seminary. He spoke on the structure and themes of the book of Esther. He showed what a beautiful

part of Scripture this is. Although it does not even mention God's name, it is full of redemptive historical significance. This stimulating lecture was followed by a discussion.

The next generation?

Also this year we were pleased to welcome school children into the College for a tour and orientation into what takes place within the walls of this institution. On October 14, the grade 4 class of Smithville's John Calvin School visited us. Two weeks later grades 3 and 4 from the Attercliffe

Canadian Reformed Elementary School looked us up as well. We hope that these educational tours may plant a seed in young hearts to desire to prepare oneself for the office of minister of the Word. It is a beautiful calling and wonderful privilege. The next generation of preachers will have to come from the elementary schools!

Dr. C. Van Dam is principal and professor of Old Testament at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario. cvandam@canrc.org



News from MERF Canada

Growing Perils for Iraqi Christians

Each of the six Reformed congregations in Iraq (two in Baghdad, one in each of Basra, Mosul, Kirkuk and Erbil) are experiencing much hardship. Like most Iraqi people, the majority have no job or source of income, no regular supply of drinkable water, electricity or other amenities. The growing levels of crime and insecurity distress believers most, especially in Baghdad. Kidnapping for ransom was previously unheard of in Iraq. Now this phenomenon is growing frighteningly in the larger Baghdad area. In June an average of two to three kidnappings were reported every day. Now it has jumped to a weekly average of fifty-five cases. Of these an average of eight kidnapped persons end up dead every week. In some cases families recover the bodies of loved ones even after paying the ransom. Kidnappers are thus assured that they will not be identified. The incidents of kidnapping and raping of women are also increasing. The whereabouts of over 300 kidnapped women are still unknown, including about forty of Christian background.

The decline of the security situation has drastically diminished the numbers able to attend church activities. It has also made it very difficult for pastors and elders to visit church families. Residents of several Baghdad neighbourhoods have joined together to hire armed men to protect their homes and family members against thieves and kidnappers. Many Christian families have sent their daughters (and young wives) to relatives in the safer villages of northern Iraq. Please pray fervently for the restoration of law and order in Iraq and for the safety and well-being of the believers, especially in Baghdad.

Palestinian Reformed witness

The Baraka congregation in Bethlehem held its annual family conference on August 9-10. Pastor Victor

Atallah spoke on the theme: "In Christ – One People of God and One Offspring of Abraham." Most families participating were Palestinians from Bethlehem and the nearby towns of Beit-Jalla and Beit-Sahour. Some were able to secure Israeli government permits to come from the Jerusalem area. Believers from other Palestinian communities like Ramallah, Jericho, Gaza and Nazareth were not able to secure passes. Participants in the conference prayed fervently that their testimony would bear much fruit in persuading both Muslims and Jews to seek peace with God and one another through faith in Christ, the true Messiah, the Prince of Peace. Pastor Danny Awad summarized their vision: "The Lord placed us here as both light and salt; we must not run away. We have an obligation to show both Jews and Arabs that there is one alternative to the hate and violence. They need to know the love of God in Christ and realize that the land over which they fight will ultimately burn up to give way to what Christ has prepared – the new heaven and new earth."

Algerian believers rejoice together

Algeria is a country which has not experienced political or social peace for most of the past fifty years. First there was the war of independence from French colonial rule. Algerians call that the war of one million martyrs. Then came the brutal one party rule which was (and still is) dominated by the powerful military. Now there is bloody conflict between the secularist government and the Muslim fundamentalists. Gruesome massacres of entire families, villages or other isolated small communities have been attributed to both sides. Most Algerians live in constant fear. Something else very different and far more peaceful goes on throughout Algeria these days. It is the positive impact of the Gospel of God's grace on the lives of a growing number of Algerians. There is now a

vibrant underground Christian church in the country. It is estimated that in the capital, Algiers, there are no less than seventeen groups of believers (numbering between four and thirty). E.B.S. leads one of them. He writes:

I came to faith in Issa the Messiah over three years ago. Until the middle of last year I had contact with only one believer in our neighbourhood. He too first heard the Good News on the radio. Now there are twenty-three disciples in our group. For security reasons we have decided not to keep a steady pattern for our gatherings. Still, we are able to meet together in smaller groups at least twice a week and most of us are able to get together every few weeks. We constantly try to encourage one another and are able to share Bible study notes and prayer items. Every time a new believer is added to our group we receive additional encouragement and joy.

Hunger for God's Word among young people in Eritrea

In the early 1970s, while a teacher in Lebanon, John Grotenhuis worked with Victor Atallah to establish MERF in Beirut. Later he moved to Saudi Arabia where he remained in active service to Christ as an English language teacher for over twenty years. Then several years ago, he took early retirement to serve the Lord in Eritrea as a small businessman. His love for the local people and his immense appreciation for and adaptation to their cultures have not only gained him many friends but also availed him with ample opportunity to present the Gospel of God's saving grace in Christ. Today we can give thanks to the Lord with John for the solid growth experienced by the six congregations now ministering in the Tigrinya, Tigre, Bilin and Somali languages. John has also had an active ministry among Sudanese refugees in Eritrea. John is especially

excited with the growing number of Eritrean and Somali young people who show keen interest in reading and studying the Bible.

The Wallaces move to Lokichoggio

Don and Dawn Wallace of Gore, New Zealand have had a blessed experience managing conference and lodging institutions. The Lord used them to establish the Waihola Family Camp near Dunedin which they managed for many years. Then they took on the challenge of revitalizing an international student hostel in Gore. Their sacrificial labours have borne much fruit to God's glory. As they prepared to hand this work over to others and contemplated a new place of service, they heard about the need for managerial expertise and spiritual leadership at MERF's new centre. Both the congregation, of which Don is an elder, and the Presbytery endorsed their appointment for service managing MERF's ministry center in Lokichoggio, northern Kenya, near the borders of Sudan, Uganda and Ethiopia. They will work alongside Rev. Tut Wan, Coordinator of MERF's biblical training in South Sudan. Rev. V.

Atallah views the establishing of the Loki Ministry Center as the most important milestone so far in the growth and development of MERF's ministries. The center was built for the training of pastors and other workers in South Sudan. Already it has become a Gospel broadcasting centre and it will also provide biblical and theological training for workers from throughout East Africa.

Magdy Youssef joins MERF's leadership team

Trained as an electrical/mechanical engineer, Magdy Youssef established a successful solar energy company. However, through the years he was drawn to dedicate more and more of his time and energies to kingdom ventures. Realizing his need for biblical and theological training, he enrolled in the evening program of the theological seminary in Cairo. In 1989 he was nominated by his church to attend one of MERF's study terms. Soon afterwards he was elected and installed as an elder at Hadaik El-Qubba congregation in Cairo. Gradually, he and his wife, Jacqueline, who also participated in MERF's biblical training programs, caught the vision and strategy for in-

digenous missions. MERF's ministries became part of their family's daily life. As volunteers, Magdy and Jacqueline have played an active role in MERF's ministries, especially in providing much needed local leadership for the broadcasting team. For many months, Magdy has also been giving a great deal of time and energy to the project of constructing and equipping the new ministry center in Lokichoggio, Kenya on the southern border of Sudan. As of September 1, Magdy joins MERF full time as Coordinator of Field Operations.

Thank you for your continued support!

The Lord continues to gather his people from all corners of the earth! What a privilege to be able to support a Reformed witness in the Middle East!

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

MERF-Canada
1225 Dundas Street, R.R. #1,
Burlington ON L7R 3X4

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

Press Release



Press Release of Regional Synod East, November 12, 2003, held in the Canadian Reformed Church at Elora

1. On behalf of the convening Church at Elora Rev. C.A. Vermeulen called the meeting to order, and requested to sing Psalm 127:1, 2. He then read Psalm 127. He briefly reflected on the significance of these words of Scripture for the work of Regional Synod, and led in prayer to ask a blessing over the work of Regional Synod. He then welcomed the delegates.
2. The credentials were examined by the representatives of the convening church, Rev. Vermeulen and br. K. Hutchinson, and were found to be in good order. All *primi* delegates

- were present, with the exception of Rev. J. Ludwig, who was replaced by the first alternate Rev. D.W. Vandeburgt. Regional Synod East 2003 was then declared constituted.
3. The following officers were chosen: Rev. D.G.J. Agema, chairman, Rev. J. DeGelder, vice-chairman, and Rev. P. G. Feenstra, clerk. The officers took their places, and the chairman thanked the Church at Elora for preparing Synod, as well as Rev. Vermeulen for his opening words. He also expressed his appreciation for the trust placed in the elected officers.
4. After a short break the agenda was adopted.
5. Several churches had submitted information concerning brothers who would be available to serve as delegates to General Synod

- Chatham, to be held in February 2004. This material was taken note of, and was taken into consideration at the time that the delegates to General Synod were chosen.
6. The request from the Board of Governors of the Theological College for the nomination of a governor to be appointed by General Synod was dealt with under appointments.
7. Synod decided to endorse the proposal of the Church at Hamilton, as supported by Classis Ontario West, and to overture General Synod Chatham 2004 to insert after the Prayer for Baptism in the *Book of Praise* the words: *Let us now profess our catholic, undoubted Christian faith (The Apostles' Creed may be recited by the minister, said in unison, or sung by the congregation.)*



The grounds are threefold. This insertion would be:

- a. A renewal of the catholic connection of baptism and the Apostles' Creed.
 - b. A return to the original Form of Baptism as found in the Church Order of Heidelberg 1563.
 - c. A restoration of a parallelism with the form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper.
8. Synod adopted the overture from Classis Northern Ontario of March 22, 2002 to add the following to article I.H. of the Regulations of Regional Synod East: *Although advice can be requested in particular matters, advisory members shall not be appointed.*
9. Synod adopted the request from Classis Northern Ontario of March 22, 2002 to overture General Synod Chatham 2004 to add the following as article I.G of the Guidelines for General Synod: *Although advice can be requested in particular matters, advisory members shall not be appointed.*
10. Synod received with thankfulness the reports of the Church of Brampton with regard to the inspection of the archives of the Regional Synods of 2001 and 2002, maintained by the Church at Toronto. It was reported that the documentation of both Synods was found to be in good order.
11. Synod thankfully received the financial report of the treasurer of Regional Synod, br. D. VanAmerongen, covering the period of August 1, 2002 - October 31, 2003. Synod decided to assess the churches for \$2.00 per communicant member in light of the fact that a General Synod is coming up in 2004.
12. The Church of Grassie reported that the books of the treasurer were audited and found to be in good order. Synod then discharged the treasurer from his responsibilities for the period August 1, 2002 - Oct. 31, 2003
13. The Deputies of Regional Synod (Art 48 CO) reported that their assistance was requested at the occasion of the Peremptory Examination of Candidate Edwar Dethan and the retirement of Rev. G. Wieske in Classis Niagara, as well as the retirement of Rev. C. Bosch in Classis Central Ontario. In all these cases the Deputies were able to give their concurring advice as re-

quired by the Church Order in the articles 5A1b and 13.

14. Regional Synod made the following appointments:
- a. Delegates to General Synod 2004:
Ministers:
Revs. D.G.J. Agema, J. de Gelder, W. den Hollander, J. van Vliet (alternates: J. Louwerse, J. Huijgen, P.G. Feenstra, J. Ludwig, in that order).
Elders:
Brs. J. Jonker, F. Kampen, H. van der Wel, G. van Woudenberg (alternates J. W. Temple, B. Horsman, T. Linde, B. van der Woude, in that order).
 - b. Nomination for a Governor of the Theological College:
Rev. J. van Woudenberg (alternate Rev. W. den Hollander)
 - c. Deputies ad Article 48 CO
From Classis Central Ontario (deputy for Classes Northern Ontario and Niagara) Rev. G. Nederveen (alternate Rev. W. den Hollander).
From Classis Niagara (deputy for Classes Central Ontario and Ontario West) Rev. D.G.J. Agema (alternate Rev. J. van Vliet).
From Classis Ontario West (deputy for Classes Northern Ontario and Niagara) Rev. Cl. Stam (alternate Rev. J. Ludwig).
From Classis Northern Ontario (deputy for Classes Central Ontario and Ontario West) Rev. P.G. Feenstra (alternate Rev. B. Berends).
 - d. Treasurer
Br. D. VanAmerongen, 342 Russ Rd, RR#1, Grimsby, ON, L3M 4E7
 - e. Church to audit the books of the treasurer
The Church at Grassie
 - f. Church to maintain the archives
The Church at Toronto
 - g. Church to inspect the archives
The Church at Brampton.
15. The Church at Ancaster was appointed as convening church for the next Regional Synod East, to be held, the Lord willing, on Wednesday, November 10, 2004.
16. The personal question period was briefly made use of. The convening church of the next Regional Synod East will be asked to invite delegates from the United Reformed Churches, as well as from neighbouring churches with which the

CHURCH NEWS



Called by the church of Cloverdale, British Columbia:

Rev. T. VanRaalte

of Winnipeg (Redeemer), Manitoba.

Declined the call to London, Ontario and Rockway, Ontario:

Candidate David de Boer

Accepted the call to Dunnville, Ontario:

Candidate David de Boer

Declined the call to the Free Reformed Church of Albany, Australia:

Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer

of Aldergrove, British Columbia.

Worship Times for the Canadian Reformed Church at Fergus:

Morning services at
9:00 and 11:00 a.m.
Afternoon services at
1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Canadian Reformed Churches maintain ecclesiastical fellowship.

17. The chairman ruled that censure ad Article 34 CO was not needed, and thanked the brothers for the harmony and good cooperation.
18. The Acts were read and adopted, and the Press Release was read and approved for publication.
19. The chairman requested the brothers to sing Psalm 111:1, 2, 5, led in prayer of thanksgiving, and then declared Regional Synod East 2003 closed.

*J. DeGelder, vice-chairman
of Regional Synod East 2003* ✨



The Campfire! Ministry: Blessings and Benefits

Introduction

It is a testimony to the grace of God that Campfire! has now run for a total of seven years. The Lord has provided the people, as well as the means, and by his guiding hand Campfire! has moved ahead year by year, in faith and with a view to his glory and praise. With gratitude we observe that an element of permanence has emerged with respect to Campfire! As a result, it is fitting now to ask a number of questions. In what ways has the Lord allowed this ministry to be a blessing to our community? Why do we feel this ministry is important for our communities to be involved in?

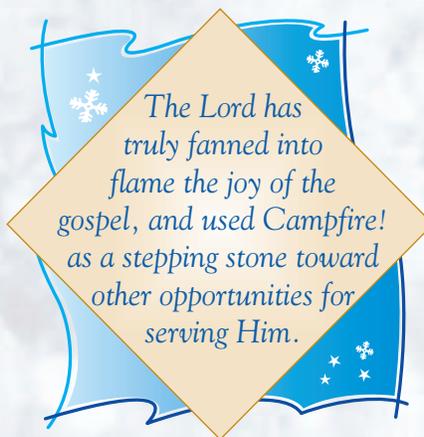
The spreading of the Gospel

One of the most apparent blessings is the enthusiasm with respect to the mission element of the camp. Since Campfire! is primarily mission-based, it encourages leaders to participate in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ to the campers. How exciting (and equally humbling) it is to tell a young child who knows nothing of the Lord about the great promises of the gospel! What joy it brings! To express our faith through the words of Scripture is an important part of our duty as members of Christ's church, and so in this manner Campfire! provides an excellent opportunity for all, young and old alike. Whether you are a 55-year-old chaplain or a 19-year-old counsellor, the call goes out just the same. In this sense, Campfire! has been a tremendous blessing to our community, and many have been excited about their participation.

The camp setting

There are several different aspects of Campfire!'s environment that create a unique setting in which this call to spread the gospel can take place in an effective and direct manner. At camp an intense atmosphere is built with a

single-minded focus of praising and glorifying God. Away from the demands and pressures of everyday life and routine, campers and counsellors alike are surrounded by God's beautiful creation. Activities such as chapel, devotions, and singing praises to God focus each individual. The message of the gospel is not only spoken, but is modeled in the context of the human relationships that are formed at Campfire! between counsellors, campers, staff, and other volunteers. Furthermore, camp is fun! Ask children or teenagers who have attended! The gospel is spread in an atmosphere of joy and happiness and although this is not fundamental as such, it does create a positive frame of mind in which to learn and grow in the Word of God.



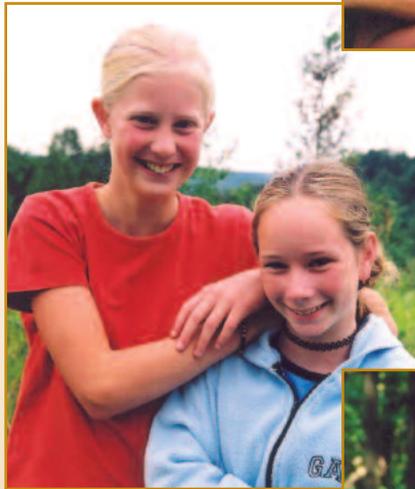
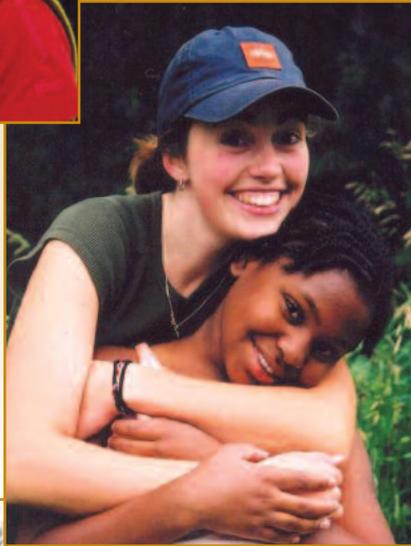
The joy in a strengthened communion of saints

Many of the blessings of Campfire! are evident in the relationships that are formed there. This becomes clear when we see how Campfire! is involved in the strengthening of the communion of saints. Campfire! is participatory by nature, and each week people come together with a shared focus of praising and serving the Lord. Relationships are forged (and also strengthened) between

people of differing ages, backgrounds, talents, weaknesses, and needs. In many ways it is a unique opportunity to come to a closer relationship with many of our brothers and sisters in the faith with whom we might not normally associate or even meet. Campfire! has witnessed many friendships made over the years, and I myself have benefited tremendously in this respect. So have many, many others. The communion of saints is strengthened through the development of Christian friendships that provide encouragement, accountability, and positive influence. The importance of these kinds of relationships cannot be underestimated.

The counsellor-camper relationship

At camp a special relationship is also formed between the counsellor and the individual campers with the purpose of creating positive mentorship. This is a special bond. I once had a camper named Alex remind me word-for-word of things I had said to him three years after I had been his counsellor! Campers and counsellors do everything together – eat, sleep, play, and more importantly pray, sing, and study the Bible. In this context the counsellors provide strong Christian leadership, and their care and guidance encourage campers to take up the service of the Lord in their daily lives. Seeing people whom you respect serving the Lord and *finding joy in that service* is refreshing for the campers and provides an example for them to emulate. This process works in reverse as well. I have heard many of our older volunteers (cooks, nurses, and chaplains) state time and time again in thankfulness and amazement how much they have learned and been encouraged from the witnessing and commitment of the younger counsellors and campers. It has brought tears to the eyes of some. I have seen it myself.



Continuing relationships

Furthermore, the work that begins at camp is not abandoned at the end of the week. Campfire! eagerly strives to continue in its relationship with children who are new to the faith through Streetlight Ministries. To this end we encourage our counsellors to consider volunteering in that ministry as a means of continuing to build the bond that was forged at camp. Many are eager, because the needs of the children are so obvious. To some counsellors, the children's departure at the end of the week can be heart wrenching. For many of these children, to forget about them after six days would simply mean that we are the last people to have come and gone in their lives without showing faithful commitment and unconditional love. The Lord has blessed these efforts over the years, for we have seen definite changes in children who return to us year after year.

Campfire! as a stepping stone

The Lord works powerfully in the hearts of his people over time and in many places, and we can witness his work at Campfire! as well. In camp's focused environment, people are encouraged in their walk with the Lord, and in that encouragement God is building real leadership in the youth of the church. I have seen many times the effect that joyful service can have on individuals; people can be deeply encouraged to go out and find other methods and avenues of serving God. Many who have served at Campfire! have sought active roles in leadership within their own study societies, at Streetlight Ministries, with Faithworks, local VBS programs, and even within their families. The Lord has truly fanned into flame the joy of the gospel, and used Campfire! as a stepping stone toward other opportunities for serving Him.

People who love serving the Lord are *passionate* about this service, and eager to share the news with others. There is excitement in serving God, and this is because it is precisely what we were created to do! It is *good* to praise the Lord, and it is *good* to serve Him while calling upon his Name in humility! We pray at camp throughout the summer that we may remain focused on this, but it is something that should be prayed for at all times and



for all of God's children. To serve God at a secluded site is one thing; to be faithful in service at home may be quite another.

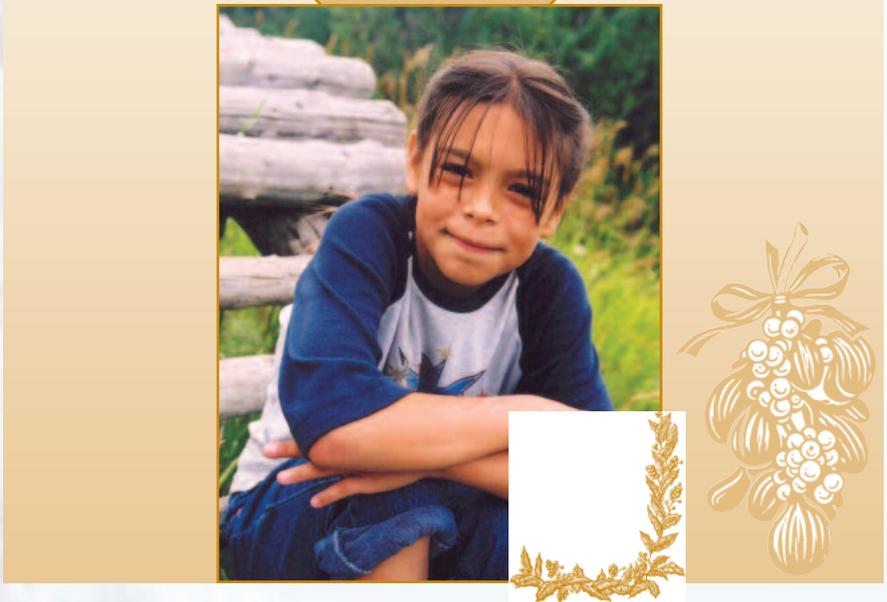
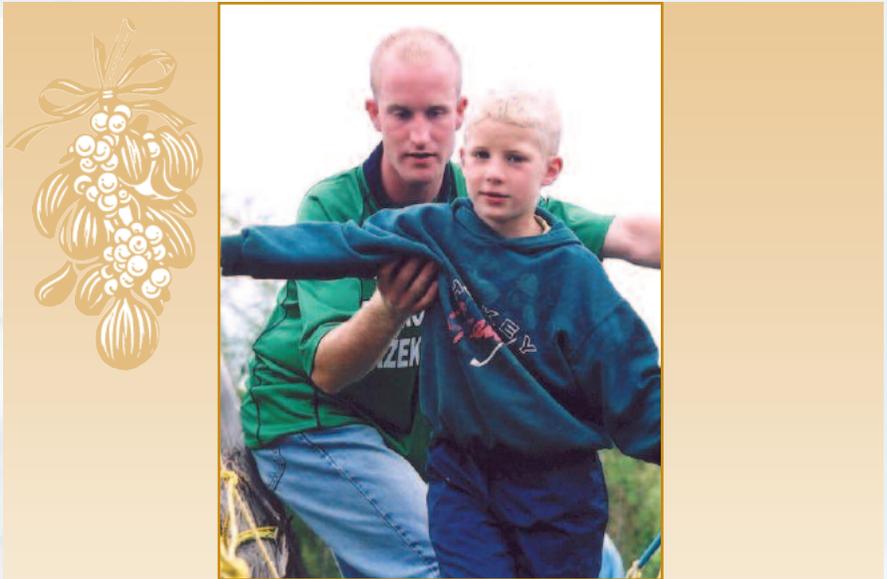
Conclusion

We recognize that in running Campfire!, our efforts represent a celebration of the goodness of God. It is through his grace and mercy that Campfire! has grown and has affected the lives of many in our circles and beyond. The challenge as the camp continues to mature is in staying intensely focused on serving the Lord in the proper manner. In this we have also greatly appreciated the constructive criticism offered by others. We are thankful as well for the many committees that are involved in the running of Campfire! and we pray that in all things God may be praised and glorified. We pray also that many may be encouraged to serve the Lord in this ministry, also those who have felt ambivalent or even opposed. There are so many opportunities!

It is difficult to put in words what is best seen and experienced, and so I will end with a picture. Imagine a group of eighty people sitting around a campfire on a summer evening. Each person, from the cooks and chaplains to the counsellors, campers, nurse and life-guard, are encouraged to walk up the fire, throw in a stick, and state what they have learned in their week at Campfire!. What would they say? What *do* they say, week after week, year after year? I have heard many different expressions of thankfulness over the years, and they demonstrate the love and power of our great God at work. To Him be the glory, forever and ever, at all times and in all places, including, by his grace, Campfire!



Hendrik Alkema is a second year student at our Theological College.





By Tim Wildeboer

Guido de Bres Christian High School

Hamilton, Ontario

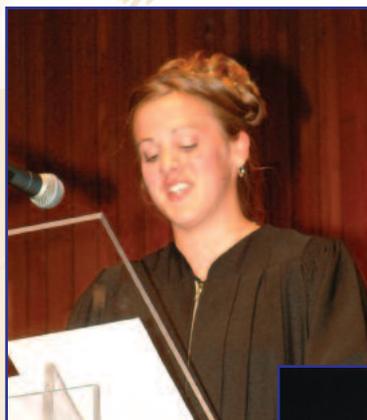
Commencement 2003

For the class of 2003, it was a time of celebration when, after four years of study at Guido de Brès Christian High School, they completed a race full of challenges and successes. On October 18, 2003, ninety-four students saw their accomplishments crowned with the presentation of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

Festivities began in the Guido gym with a luncheon reception. This was an opportunity for former classmates to mingle, to catch up on the events of the past summer, and to compare plans for the future. Many graduands and their families took advantage of the opportunity to have pictures taken so that they would have a memento of this special day.

Following the reception, all made their way to Hamilton Place for the official graduation ceremony. There the members of the graduating class made their grand entrance as pianist Sarah van Popta, the accompanist for the afternoon, played the processional and a large crowd of excited friends and relatives stood up to welcome them.

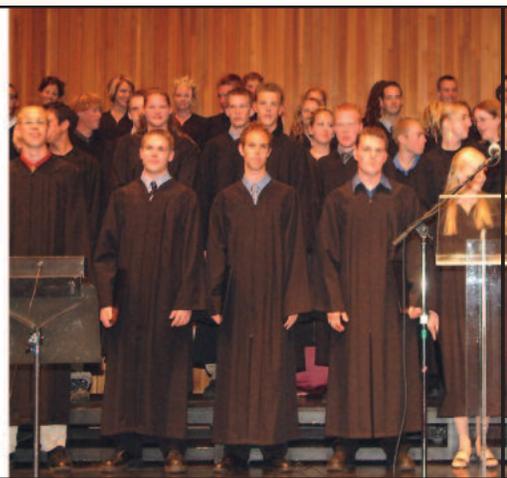
The assembly was opened by Mr. Leo Kampen, Chairman of the Board. He encouraged the graduands to let their light shine, for, whether it is bright or a less intense, each light has its own equally important purpose. Mr. Kampen also encouraged the graduating class and all those in attendance to reflect the brilliance of the Light of the world, Jesus Christ, the great "Morning Star." We enjoyed a solo when Mr. Kampen sang "This Little Light of Mine" as conclusion to his talk.



This year's valedictorian was Amanda Van Halteren.



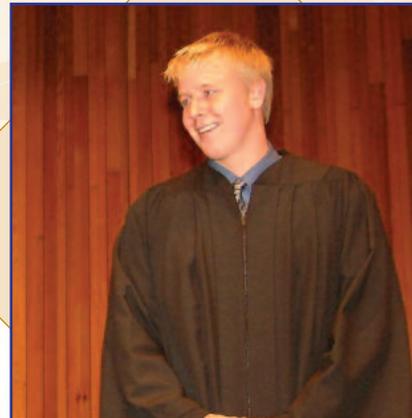
Andrea Torenvliet sang farewell to her fellow grads.



The Principal, Mr. Hans VanDooren, welcomed the graduates and guests to this wonderful celebration and focused our attention on 2 Timothy 4:7, where Paul says that he has “finished the race.” He congratulated the graduands on also finishing a race. Just as Hamilton witnessed the best of the world competing in a road race very recently, we celebrate the best Guido has to offer and give special recognition to those who worked extra hard to attain excellence and to involve themselves in extra-curricular activities. Mr. VanDooren also encouraged the graduands to continue to use their gifts as they commence a new adventure.

After a fine flute and piano duet by Lori and Deanna Oosterhoff, two talented students currently attending Guido, the Rev. Doug Vandeburgt gave a keynote address entitled “Your Guide Beyond Guido.” He challenged the graduands with the question, “Who will be your guide?” and encouraged them by explaining that the journey they go on may not be the one they had intended to take, but with God as their Guide, their plans will succeed.

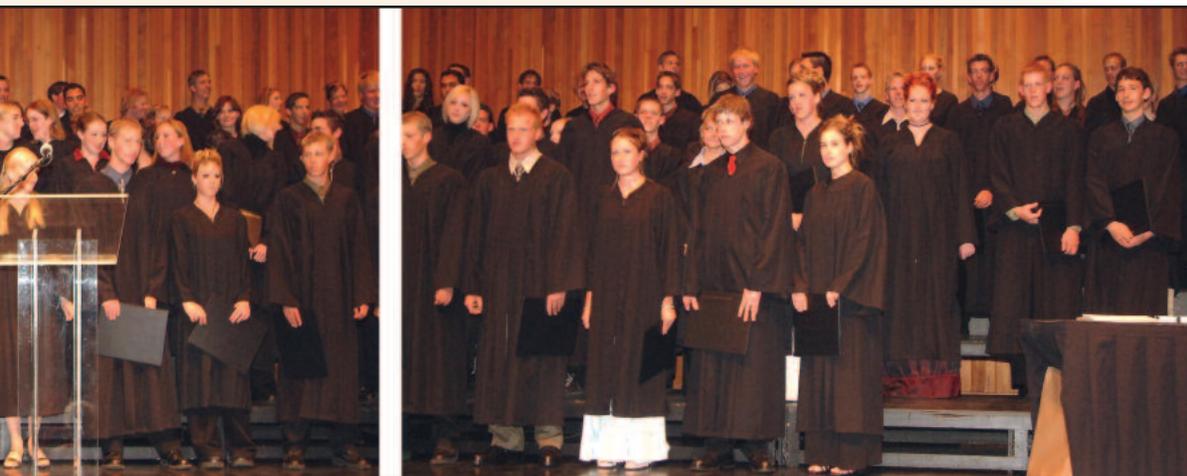
After Rev. Vandeburgt’s speech, the graduands, all wearing their black gowns, were individually invited to receive their diplomas and to be congratulated on their achievement. They were all warmly applauded by enthusiastic friends and family. In keeping with a school tradition, entertainment was next provided by two of the graduating students. Accompanied by Jonathan Kingma, Bernice Ravensbergen sang “Seekers of Your Heart.” This appropriately introduced the presentation of various scholarships and awards to students who had achieved excellence in their studies or were involved in a wide range of extracurricular activities. In recognition of their outstanding scholastic achievement, Michael DeBoer, Michael Kottelenberg, and Deanne Van Tol received the Harry Aasman and George DeBoer Memorial Scholarships. Having earned the highest academic average, Michael Kottelenberg was also the recipient of the Governor General’s Bronze Medal. The Student-of-the-Year Award was presented to Nathan Kok for his exceptional contribution to school life in general. Other student awards included the Guido de Brès Proficiency Scholarships, the



The prestigious Student-of-the-Year Award was given to Nathan Kok.



The principal of Guido de Brès Christian High School, Mr. Hans VanDooren, welcomed the graduands and guests.





Ontario Secondary School Diplomas

Christa Agema	Kristin Muis
Roger Bartels	Joshua Nieuwenhuis
William Bethlehem	Michael Oosterhoff
Rachel Boeringa	Rachel Ouwersloot
Eleanor Boot	Brandon Piper
Melissa Bos	Edward Poort
Candace Bouwman	Richard Poort
Lindsay Bowes	Bernice Ravensbergen
Justin Broekema	Jordan Reinink
Robin Dantuma	Neal Sandink
Karen de Boer	Alissa Schulenberg
Michael DeBoer	Colin Schutten
Scott Deboer	Candace Schuurman
Aaron DeBoersap	Harold Sikkema
Mark den Hollander	Adam Stieva
Valerie Diek	Keith Sutherland
Stephanie Donker	Rachel Tamminga
Eric Driegen	Kyle Tenhage
Anna Dykema	Bryan Thompson
Lydia Faber	Andrea Torenvliet
Bryan Feenstra	Katherine Torenvliet
Jason Feenstra	Stephanie Torenvliet
Scott Feenstra	Andrew Van Andel
Benjamin Gelderman	Anthony VanDam
Joanne Gracey	Christi Vandenbos
Corrine Heemskerk	Jeremy VanderBruggen
Norman Hoeksema	Robert VanderBruggen
Nadine Hopman	Kimberly Vanderhorst
Mark Hordyk	Deanna VanderVelde
Timothy Hordyk	Melissa VanderVelde
Vanessa Hordyk	Diane Vanderwoude
Peter Horsman	Joshua Vanderwoude
Ingrid Huizing	Steven Vanderwoude
Jonathan Jagt	Elisabeth VanEs
Lindsey Jansen Van Doorn	Amanda Van Halteren
Jeffrey Kamstra	Peter VanIperen
Rosalie Kelly	Brian VanLuik
Heidi Kingma	Jonathan Van Schepen
Jonathan Kingma	Henry VanSpronsen
Nathan Kok	Deanne Van Tol
Michael Kottelenberg	Ryan VanVeen
Christopher Kroes	Krysta Veenstra
David Linde	Steven Vis
Justine Lodder	William Visser
Tamsen Lodder	Amanda Werkman
Darryl Lof	Landon Wieske
Stephanie Meijaard	Amanda Zwaagstra



Ms. C. VanEerden presented the Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Awards to Michael Kottelenberg and Rachel Ouwersloot.



*Rev. Doug Vandeburgt, minister of the church at Glanbrook, addressed the graduating class with a message entitled, *Your Guide Beyond Guido*.*

Ontario Scholar Certificates, the Guido de Brès Participation Awards, and the Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Awards. This series of presentations concluded with a moving solo, "When It's All Been Said and Done," by Andrea Torenvliet, one of the many gifted graduates.

The valedictorian address was given by Amanda Van Halteren, who enlightened us with the inside scoop on the graduating class. They went through some tough times together, but together they also built lasting relationships and enjoyed many worthwhile experiences. When some had to deal with serious illness or other setbacks, the LORD provided comfort and answered prayers. On behalf of the class, she furthermore thanked friends and family as well as the entire community for their generous support and expressed appreciation to the staff and to all others who guided and assisted them during their four years at Guido. Challenging them to put into practice what they had been taught, she reminded the graduates to continue to glorify God in all things and to enjoy Him forever.

A hearty farewell to the graduating class of 2003. Special thanks to all those who made this day possible, and all honour and praise to our heavenly Father. May He continue to bless his children.



Grand Opening of the Cornerstone Christian School Building

September 26, 2003 marked a date that many folks had been eagerly anticipating. On that evening, the board and membership of Cornerstone Christian School held a dedication ceremony to celebrate the new school building we'd been blessed with right behind our church building in beautiful Lynden, WA.

On that Friday evening, the crowd of parents, students, staff members, visitors (many from local Canadian Reformed Churches and schools), school board members, etc. streamed into the church with excitement and anticipation filling the air.

At 7:30, just when it seemed the church would burst, Mr. Marty Van Driel (the M.C. for the evening), opened the ceremony with reading and prayer. He then extended a hearty welcome to all, and we sang from Psalm 19 verses 1 and 4.

Following this, the chairman of the school board, Mr. Henry Klos spoke on behalf of the board. He chronicled the beginning of our school society, and how particularly several of the older members of the Lynden congregation had envisioned an American Reformed School in Lynden. Mr. Klos also spoke about how the school board itself had started in 1994, and that, though there had been different faces in those positions over the years, the vision had not changed; there was commitment in the Lynden school society to start a school of our own. Mr. Klos also marvelled at how we could see the Lord's blessing so abundantly in the establishment of our school!

Then, the principal of Cornerstone, Mr. Otto Bouwman came forward to give his perspective on things. He began with what initially appeared to be a primer in American history, describing a painting that had been donated to the school and that was now hanging in

the entry. The picture was of George Washington kneeling in prayer beside his horse, just prior to the Battle at Valley Forge. The principal noted how remarkable it was that we might live in a nation founded on Christian convictions, and the freedom we'd been afforded. Mr. Bouwman also noted that, in a moment of weakness, he'd agreed to speak for *not more* than forty minutes, and that though he could go on for hours, he'd have to cut the history lesson short. The astute observer might have heard a scarcely audible sigh of relief from Mr. Bouwman's 8th and 9th grade students.

Following the principal's address, the chairman of the building committee, Mr. Tim Faber thanked the many volunteers who had helped with the labour required to build the school building, and acknowledged the Lord's blessing which had been so evident in the building of the school. This volunteer labour, Mr. Faber pointed out, was certainly more than what was required to pour the cement, to pound the nails, and to paint the walls. There

was a whole army of other "support workers," who worked diligently to prepare lunches and coffee for the hungry labourers, to orchestrate things so that the labourers had something to labour on, and just to "rally the troops" so that there was a sufficient supply of eager volunteers when work needed to be done. Mr. Faber made sure to count them in!

One of those working diligently behind the scenes to ensure that there was a steady supply of eager workers was Mr. Henk Berends. He undertook the significant task of phoning people to volunteer for another day at the school. He did so unfailingly, and with such a cheerful and friendly approach, that it was difficult for anyone to say no. Further, both Mr. and Mrs. Berends contributed to the enjoyable atmosphere of the worksite with their "regular as clockwork" delivery of coffee and donuts for the hungry and thirsty workers! Many people were heard to say that few sights were more eagerly anticipated than the





10:00 and 2:00 arrival at the “Berends coffee truck!”

As the official “rallyer of the troops,” Mr. Berends was asked to give a few words. He began with the official tally of volunteer hours worked at the school – more than 4500!! He thanked the volunteers and mentioned in particular the name Faber, adding that there likely was not a time during the construction of the building that someone with the last name of Faber was *not* present at the school! Then, he presented to the chairman of the board a plaque for mounting at the entry of the school that reminded people about the labour that had gone into building the school.

The M.C. then welcomed the Superintendent of the Lynden Christian Schools (a large Christian school in Lynden with more than 1,000 students), Mr. Gary Kamps to the podium. Lynden Christian is known across the state as a dominant force in high school football, so the M.C. was sure to point out that Cornerstone was a few years away from taking on Lynden Christian’s football team, but that he was sure with our Canadian heritage, that the Cornerstone Hockey team would be able to take the Lynden Christian Hockey team, no problem. Mr. Kamps did not take the bait, but welcomed Cornerstone to Lynden, and generously offered whatever help he and the L.C. community could give. During the two years leading up to our start, Mr. Kamps had been most generous with his time and help regarding our questions about administering and establishing a Christian school in the State.

Mr. Walter Togeretz also spoke a few words on behalf of the board of John Calvin Christian School in Yarrow, B.C. where many of the Cornerstone students had been students prior to the beginning of Cornerstone. He presented a lovely carved wood plaque for the entry of the school that had the Lord’s Prayer beautifully carved into it.

The principal of John Calvin, Mr. Peter Torenvliet also spoke, expressing his appreciation for the contributions that had been made by the Lynden community over the years at John Calvin Christian School, and he expressed his support for this endeavour.

Next, Janice Berends, who could regularly be seen on the site with a video camera in hand, showed a most entertaining and enjoyable video chronicling the various stages of the construction of the school, and the faces of those involved. From the stripping of the forms, to the standing up of walls, from the pouring of concrete to the hanging of wall paper, from the seeding of the grass to the sheeting of the roof, Janice had wonderful footage of it all. Whether the weather was good or bad, it didn’t matter ... we could see volunteers in full action. With hammers swinging, heavy equipment moving, and coffee being guzzled; we saw it all! Also, there were interviews with students, outlining just how impressed they were with their new facility. All in all, a wonderful “multi media extravaganza,” Janice! Way to go.

The evening was closed in prayer by Brother Bob Lodder, and all attendees were invited to tour the new facilities of the school (which had been proudly prepared and decorated for this event by the staff and students), and to enjoy coffee and “gebakjes” in the multi-purpose room.

We are thankful to our gracious Father in heaven who has blessed our school community so richly. Praise be to Him!

Cason VanDriel is secretary of the Cornerstone Christian School Board.



Peregrine Survey



In these dark winter months, the apostle John brings an encouraging and refreshing message: he testifies that the light has shone in the darkness, even though the darkness has not understood it (John 1:5). A few pages further on, Jesus explains to Nicodemus that this is not just a matter of *misunderstanding*, but of *rejection* that leads to condemnation: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil (John 3:19). The graduating classes of 2003 may well have forgotten some of the details of the encouragements and exhortations sent in their direction at the formal event to mark that milestone in their lives, but their symbolic value is not lost on those who continue to labour for Reformed education. After all, the Light that has come into the world also shines on this education. Thus, as one principal summarizes what he said at the graduation, it has value before and after Christmas as well:

The Word of God reveals the roadblocks of false values and the potholes of unbiblical philosophies.

Unless the Word of God guides the way, we will go in all sorts of misdirections. The Word guides us around the roadblocks Satan puts up in front of us and the potholes in which he tries to trap us; and in the direction we should take when we reach crossroads of uncertainty or indecision. The Word also enlightens our path, helping us to find the right way

and avoid getting lost, falling off the roadway, or running into some unforeseen object along the way. The Word of God reveals the roadblocks of false values and the potholes of unbiblical philosophies.

On October 18, Guido de Brès Christian High School held its commencement for the Class of 2003. Rev. D. Vandeburgt, reflecting on Psalm 48, indicated that the school is a place where our children learn to confess that "This God is our God." The chairman's comments and his surprise solo about the students' task to now let their light shine in the world were also reflected in the valedictory address, when the valedictorian suggested that the strength of the school would show in how well it prepared students to let their light shine in a world of growing darkness: "It is our task to put into practice what we've been taught, and to continue to know our God and glorify him forever."

Neerlandia's principal ponders why students ought to do their best in all school subjects:

Students often argue that a particular course has no value because they are only: a) going to get married and have children, b) work at the CO-OP, or c) become farmers, truck drivers or whatever (as if these jobs do not require any intellect). Parents and staff need to encourage students to do their *best*, to strive for excellence in all their actions for the honour and glory of God, because it is *God who grants wisdom and understanding!* Who are we to ignore or minimize the gifts God has given us? Do we know the future God has in mind? Do you know the circumstances of your future; married, single, maybe widowed, etc.? Some students feel they know and have their life mapped out without considering the Lord. The Lord has a purpose for us: we are called to be prophet, priest and king in our home and so-

ciety. We are called to be leaders in the church and in society and therefore need to be as prepared as possible to face this task. We need to be equipped to understand God's will and to work to promote the coming of his Kingdom.

It is by God's grace that in our increasingly secular and apostate country we have freedom to maintain Reformed schools which help train students for their current and future responsibilities as living members of the church.

It is well for us to remember that we rely on God, not on man, and that He gave us a communion of saints in which we may share the gifts and benefits He gives us.

A report from the Fraser Institute (<http://www.fraserinstitute.ca>) presents an index that scores and ranks the provinces on educational freedoms as represented in their policies governing home schooling, independent (private) schools, and charter schools. "Some provinces, through funding and regulation, support many different educational choices for parents, while others make it nearly impossible for parents to educate their children anywhere but their local public school," says Claudia R. Hepburn, co-author of the report. It concludes, among others, that education tends to be better in provinces that have greater freedom of education. Alberta "won" the index with a 60% educational freedom score. Meanwhile, Ontario has elected a new Liberal government which has vowed to limit the educational freedom by abolishing the barely implemented

Equity in Education Tax Credit. If some governments do not see much value in maintaining or supporting freedom, choice, and equity in education, it is well for us to remember that we rely on God, not on man, and that He gave us a communion of saints in which we may share the gifts and benefits He gives us.

John Calvin School in Smithville has started its fundraising campaign "Foundations for Generations," and intends to wrap it up around the time you read this. It aims to raise two thirds of the required \$1.7 million before it begins to add six permanent classrooms and a gym to the existing building. The addition will give the building a new, southerly orientation, and potentially reduce the difficulties some experience in navigating their way through the school.

A number of conferences have been drawing attention lately. From

September 17-19, 2003, the principals of most Canadian Reformed schools spent a few days at a National Principals' Conference in Gimli, Manitoba. On October 23 and 24, 2003, John Calvin School in Smithville hosted a convention of the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association, where over 150 Reformed teachers from Ontario and Michigan considered, among others, implications of John E. Hull's article in the *Christian Scholar's Review* (Winter, 2003), "Aiming for Christian Education, Settling for Christians Educating: The Christian School's Replication of a Public School Paradigm." Finally, a committee is organizing an International Conference of Reformed Education for May 10-12, 2004, in The Netherlands. The conference will deal with concepts and characteristics of Reformed education, and speakers hail from The Netherlands, Australia, Korea, Canada, South

Africa, and the USA. It is our intention to report on each of these conferences more fully in this column.

The light shines in the darkness. Our schools are meant to help parents in their task of bringing up the next generation, assisting them in having their "lights" shine in the darkening world around us. May we all reflect the joy and comfort of the salvation we have in the Light of the World, and remain focussed on the task of gratitude our faithful God sets before us.

The Education Matters column is supported by the CRTA-East. Reader responses or articles can be sent to abkingma@kwic.com or to Clarion. ✨

Mr. Keith Sikkema is a grade 8 teacher and vice-principal at John Calvin School in Smithville, Ontario. ksikkema@juno.com

Brief Book Notes

By C. Van Dam

New Resources for Bible Study

The Inter-League Publication Board has once again served the study of Scripture by publishing new outlines that can be profitably used in the winter study season. They are as follows:

D.G.J. Agema, 1 & 2 Timothy: A Study Guide 67 pages, no price given.

Rev. Agema, minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Attercliffe, Ontario, has produced a study guide which consists entirely of a brief outline of each chapter, followed by questions and suggestions for further study. The intent behind this approach is to stimulate the study of this part of God's Word and so assist in the reading of commentaries and the writing of an essay. The format of a very short outline encourages a holistic reading of the chapter so that one is not lost in detail. In his preface to this book, Rev. Agema gives suggestions as to

how his book can best be used. The questions are well directed and would certainly be useful for focussing a discussion on what is important in these letters to Timothy.

C.G. Bos, Believe and Confess Volume 1 2002; 145 pages, no price given.

These outlines on Articles 1- 19 of the Belgic Confession by the late Rev. Bos (1909-1988) have been translated from the Dutch original. After an orientation and introduction to confessions in general and to the Belgic Confession in particular, the author discusses each article in some detail. This commentary is followed by a list of topics for discussion. It is very good to become more familiar with our confessions and this study aid can serve the societies and personal study very well.

A.N. Hendriks, The Lord and Giver of Life: Scripture Studies on the Holy Spirit and His Work 2002, 104 pages, no price given.

Dr. Hendriks, emeritus minister in our Dutch sister churches, wrote these studies because he sensed a lack of knowledge concerning the work of the Holy Spirit among church members. We may now benefit from his work in this English translation. Each outline deals with a specific passage from Scripture which highlights a particular aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit and keeps the discussion rooted in the Word of God. Individuals and societies who work through this publication will be greatly enriched in their knowledge of the work of God, the Holy Spirit.

The above titles can be obtained from ILPB, Box 783, London, Ontario N6A 4Y8 ✨

Women's League Day

Chatham, Ontario, October 22, 2003

"That your soul may live" Isaiah 55:3

The road that leads to Chatham is one seldom travelled by many of the women who ventured to the annual League Day on the beautiful fall day of October 22. For most of us the day began much earlier than usual! However, it was a bright and eager gathering and the time was well used for fellowship and reunion!

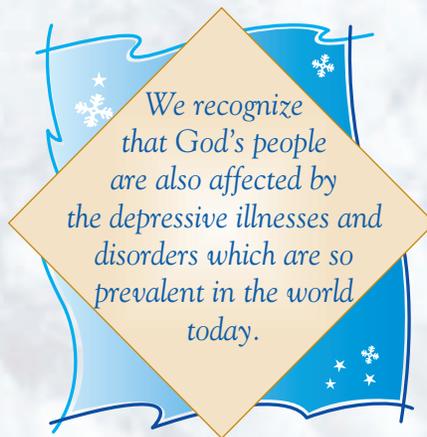
The president of the League of Ontario Women's Societies, Mrs. Martha DeGelder, opened the League Day by welcoming all present. We sang together from Psalm 34:1, 2 and read from Scripture Isaiah 55. We opened in prayer.

The theme for this year's league day is "That your soul may live." Our soul, or our life, has been given us by God and He promises in Isaiah 55 to sustain us throughout our lives. Whatever happens does not come by chance but is directed by God's hand. The two topics of this League Day tie in to this theme, namely "Offering Compassion in Dealing with Depression" and "Living in the Joy of Faith."

We began with the announcement of the voting results from the delegates meeting held Tuesday evening: Mrs. Adriana Vanderven is elected the new League president and Mrs. Bea Lof is appointed to the *Horizon* publication board as recording secretary. Since there were no nominations, the position of copy editor for *Horizon* was assigned to Mrs. Jennifer Vanderveen. There is an ILPB table set up for the sale of study books and the opportunity to subscribe to *Horizon* is made available. Throughout the day there is also the opportunity for all women to sign cards for our sisters in special circumstances.

Letters of greeting and congratulation from our sister churches in Australia and The Netherlands are read. After this, roll call is held. All of On-

tario is well-represented. There are also women from Grand Rapids and Blue Bell, as well as one from as far as Edmonton. The total count of all present is estimated to be around 270 women and our one faithful male participant! After the singing of the League Song, we prepared for the morning speech by reading Job 3:1-19 and James 5:7-11. In response to the Word of God we sang the words of Psalm 42:1,2,3. Our president introduced the speaker, Mrs. Judy Heyink, who presented our morning topic "Offering Compassion in Dealing with Depression."



Offering compassion in dealing with depression

Our speaker began by emphasizing that the sensitive subject of depression requires much thought and study. We recognize that God's people are also affected by the depressive illnesses and disorders which are so prevalent in the world today. Our faith in God does not exempt us from these things. And although Scripture does not speak directly to this, it is evident from the book of Job that here is a man who is calling out for help and comfort from

his God from the depths of his being! We learn that throughout the suffering of Job, God does not leave him or forsake him. Many of the Psalms, also, speak to us from the depths of David's suffering and misery.

Depression has prolonged and unrelenting effects on the entire life of the one who is suffering. Since it cannot always be medically diagnosed, it is hard to convince those suffering and their families or friends that treatment is necessary. For those who are depressed, even worship and prayer may become impossible, and a spiritual life may decline.

Not all depression is a clinical condition. In our everyday spiritual life, we are often overcome by guilt and sorrow over our sins or about sinful personal choices. Here we search the Scriptures for the reassurance of God's grace and mercy to repentant sinners. We seek his help in reminding us that his grace is sufficient for our weaknesses.

Clinical depression, on the other hand, is a physical illness. It can have a variety of causes, and manifests itself in many different ways. We should take note of extreme changes in behaviour and attitude of loved ones, being aware that this is often evidence of a diagnosable mental disorder. There are many treatments available today which can stabilize the chemical imbalances causing the depression or mood swings. In some cases a lifetime of medication, or anti-depressants, are necessary. Christian counselling is becoming more widely available, and the ministers in our churches are available to encourage those who are depressed. We also as sisters in Christ should show compassion and should be willing to attempt to understand an illness which is so often misunderstood. True comfort for a suffering sister

Mrs. Judy Heyink, the morning speaker.



Mrs. Martha DeGelder, president of the League of Women's Societies.

stems from a patient listening heart and an open Bible. Our God does not abandon us, and provides us with all we need in every circumstance.

In our discussion following the speech, we learned that we are not qualified in ourselves to diagnose depression. Even the book of Job does not clearly point to a depressed man. It is also emphasized that listening is so much more important than speaking. What we can do to be compassionate is to be aware of each others needs and interpret cries for help. Through the discussion it became evident that we have only skimmed the surface of this topic, and that there are many issues and concerns which are close to our hearts such as depression as it relates to teenagers, anorexia, the occult, to name a few. Hopefully everyone will go home to study and learn more on this topic! Together we sang the reassuring and comforting words of Psalm 121:1, 2, 4.

Before concluding the morning session, a collection was taken for the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund. Everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch prepared by the dedicated women of the Chatham congregation. Our afternoon session was reconvened with prayer and the singing of the national anthem, after which the hosting society led by Mrs. Diane Bergsma entertained us all with a glimpse into Chatham's leading fashion sense!

Mrs. DeGelder led us in the reading of Zephaniah 3:14-17 to prepare for the afternoon session entitled "Living in the Joy of Faith – Reflecting the Image of God in Christ." We sang together from Psalm 95:1,2 and were introduced to

our speaker Rev. H. Versteeg, who was found willing to address us on this topic.

Living in the joy of faith

How do we view our God? Do we serve God out of fear? Or do we view Him as loving, compassionate? Do we live life with little self-control because we believe God is infinite in love and mercy, forgiving? Hopefully we reckon with his grace and justice at the same time. But do we think of God as one who takes pleasure? Yes, even a God who sings! Zephaniah teaches us that God rejoices in us and takes delight in us! He has joy. In Psalm 147 we read that "the Lord delights in those who fear Him." He takes pleasure in the work of his Hands, and He delights in his saving work.



God also instilled joy in man's heart when He created him. We may ask "why did God create?" Out of boredom or loneliness? No, there is no lack or wants in God. He is sufficient in

Himself, the Trinity, three distinct persons in one who are so united that they support each other in every way. There is no loneliness with God. When God created all things, heavens and earth, He created them for pleasure, for glory and praise to his Name. We also in our homes must take pleasure in our work, in making things beautiful, in our hobbies. These things give us cause to sing praise to God! We learn from the first chapter of the Bible that God stepped back and had a good look at what He had made, and it was very good. Man has also been given the ability to have joy, reasons for joy, and ways to express joy.

Adam in Paradise had joy in the Lord, in his creation, and in the wife God gave to Him. As Adam did his work, he must have sung in joy for all that God gave him! But suddenly, there was no more singing. There was no more joy in heaven, no more joy in Paradise. There was disloyalty and rebellion, disobedience. Yet God would restore joy to the earth by sending his Son. In the curse and punishment to man in Paradise, God still promised a Redeemer, and gave hope again. Knowledge of this hope would allow man to live again in the joy of faith, looking forward to the complete fulfillment of these promises in the new heaven. The more we believe and trust, the more we have joy because we know that God is true to his Word.

There are both earthly and heavenly things which give us joy. Yet only the things that focus on the life to come can give us everlasting joy. In Christ, God begins to restore this perfect joy to our lives, teaching us and renewing us by his Spirit. So again we may exercise dominion, self-control; the more we live in obedience to God, by his grace, the more we begin to live in the eternal joy that the Lord gave to us in the beginning. The degree of our joy is directly related to the depth of our faith, that is, the more we know of our salvation and the promises of God, the more joyful we are! This doesn't mean that we always experience it. Formalism or the burdens of this life which take over our focus often dim the joy. Also, the expression of joy and emotions differ from person to person, often determined culturally or personally. This is why we should be careful not to judge too much outwardly. And yet, the Spirit gives fruits in our lives which should be visible to those around us. There are those who emphasize strict adherence

to doctrine, living the outward form without the inward life of the Spirit. True understanding of doctrine should multiply our joy, and we should learn to express this outwardly.

Yet how, despite bitter struggles in life, can we still sing? True faith is a sure knowledge and a firm confidence: God has already confirmed his promise to us in the death of his Son and in the outpouring of his Spirit, and we wait in trust that all God's promises will be fulfilled. The miseries and burdens of life may cause doubts for a time, and we often wallow in self-pity rather than reach for the joy God has given to us. God has no use for grumpy people. We should forget ourselves and go to the Lord in prayer. If we want to live in joy, then we have to have a stable self-image, to know where we stand before God. God will not give us burdens beyond our strength! We have only to pray, and ask for comfort and strength in the Scriptures, and He will give it to us. Jesus Christ also exhorted his listeners to have rest, to cast their burdens on Him. Christ has taken the yoke on Himself; therefore our sufferings are not unto death, but unto life! He purifies us, and moves us to rely more on Him. Then we are reminded again of the wonderful promises and gifts God has given us.

We will rest in the shadow of the Almighty if we read his Word and attend his house when He calls us. By his Spirit, whose comfort we seek, we may say "My refuge, my God in whom I trust." Think about what God has done for you in Christ, and then the God of peace will be with you. For all who trust and believe in the Lord, He has taken away the punishment. We may rejoice and sing in the knowledge of what God has done for us. Despite our "down days" we know where to find our comfort and our strength. Each day again we should say "This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it!" Let God delight in seeing his people living in the joy of their faith. "Sing, O daughters of Zion; sing, and rejoice with all your heart."

We sang a joyful song of response in Psalm 138:3,4. In our discussion we learned that we should not let the circumstances of our life but God determine our joy. How do we express this joy? "Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks." Singing especially engages our deeper emotions, and it is a joyful way to live. Yet why are so many Dutch people leaving our churches and finding more joy in other

denominations? It is often in the nature of the religion, that there is the danger to become horizontal, seeking our joy among the expressiveness of the believers rather than remembering that joy should start in the Lord. It is the rich heritage of the Reformed faith which gives us much joy. So many people search for joy, and cannot find it. The true, deep joy in our hearts takes time to develop and also takes time to come out.

We related the topic of this afternoon to the morning session, wondering how we can help those who can't find joy since they can't pray because of their depression. This is a different level of lack of joy. We all go through down times and need to remind ourselves of the right focus, of the promises and gifts from God. If those down times are overwhelming, help may be sought in helping the suffering member out of these depths. We also discussed the earthly joys of work, marriage, children, and the many good gifts which God gives us in this life. It is so important that we express our joy in all these things! Then we can also be open with each other and share both ups and downs.

The discussion was closed and it was announced that the collection for CRWRF yielded \$1340.00. The next League Day October 2004 will be held Burlington-Waterdown. All sisters are

reminded that the *Horizon* magazine published by the League is constantly asking for articles and essays to be published, and all are encouraged to contribute. It is a tool for the women to keep in touch with each other.

Mrs. DeGelder thanked the Chatham ladies, the speakers, and the accompanist for the effort which was put into making this a memorable League Day. Mrs. Elaine Spriensma also expressed thanks on behalf of all the women for the work Mrs. Martha DeGelder has done for the League these past six years. Mrs. DeGelder wished Mrs. Adriana Vanderven strength and the Lord's blessing in her new task as she takes over the presidency.

We sang from Psalm 92:1,2 and Rev. Versteeg closed with us in prayer. Mrs. DeGelder wished us all a safe trip home. Once again we may conclude that we have all been reminded of our riches in Christ and our responsibility to one another as members of his body, the church! May the Lord comfort those who suffer from depression, and may we all be strengthened and encouraged to continue with joy in our task and calling. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.." (Heb 12:2)



"Fashion show." Chatham ladies providing some entertainment.



Group shot: Chatham ladies



Better to the Editor

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address. They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length. Please include address and phone number.

Paul and PowerPoint

We discovered in our travels that churches paid a lot of attention to the presentation of the Gospel. An usher would hand you the weekly bulletin with a printed liturgy and a one page outline which will assist you during the preaching and to take home for further discussion. On both sides of the pulpit there was a built-in video screen where Scripture is displayed, the psalm or hymn during singing, the Bible text for the sermon, and various highlights during the preaching. This is all in front of you on the screen and at the right time. It remained with you for days.

Let us observe the enormous technical advances around us which can be used to enhance the weekly instruction in our churches, and compare this with the progress made during the past 100 years or so. What has changed? In most cases only our facilities. Centrally heated in the winter and air-conditioned in the summer. Nice oak (padded) pews, a good pipe organ to sing with and a state-of-the-art sound system with audio and video recording equipment to benefit the linked seniors apartments and shut-ins.

How are we progressing in our own Sunday services? This is the highlight of the day where the congregation comes together to have their batteries charged for the week to come. The presentation of the Word of God. Years ago a minister even objected to a microphone placed in our 5000+ square feet church auditorium because his (much smaller) church did not have one.

When we see visitors in church and talk to them after the service, they always promise us politely that they will come again, but that hardly ever happens. The bulletin they took home with them did not have an outline of the sermon they just heard. In some cases not even a liturgy with the Scripture

passages mentioned. No sermon theme and points were mentioned. They came to a public worship service, and left almost empty.

What about our own people? They are deprived of this as well. If they did not get it when it was said, they never will.

In the early years, our Theological College did not even have a course in public speaking. The faculty felt that they would learn that in the pulpit. What good is it to have a beautiful car with a poorly running engine?

Our homes are full of the latest electronic gadgets with sound and video equipment, Pentium 4 computers, high-speed Internet, video games for the kids, etc. and yet, we live in the middle ages with the presentation of the Gospel.

An elderly retired minister once told me that a blackboard and a large map of Israel would have been very

helpful during his preaching. But it was not a custom then.

If the apostle Paul would be here today, I am sure he would use PowerPoint to present the Gospel. For him, the best would not have been enough.

Are we ready for improvement?

Arie J. Hordyk
Burlington, Ontario

Editorial Comment:

Aside from raising the rather debatable point as to whether or not PowerPoint presentations belong in the worship services, it should be mentioned that any number of our churches publish liturgy sheets every Sunday complete with text and sermon themes, sometimes even with points. In addition, our Theological College has had a course in public speaking now for almost twenty years.

J. Visscher, Editor

Dear Brothers and Sisters.

On the occasion of our 60th Wedding Anniversary and the 60th anniversary of my ordination as a Minister of the Word we have received so many cards, letters, flowers, phone calls, e-mails with congratulatory messages from all over Canada, the United States, Australia and the Netherlands that we know only one way in which to reach you all with our heartfelt "Thank You!" That is via our *Clarion*.

The LORD be praised for His undeserved mercies, for the older one becomes the more one realises that it is all of mere grace. Thus all praise and thanks be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We also thank in particular the Church at Fergus that delegated the Rev. and Mrs. Louwse to convey their congratulations in person and took it upon itself to take care of a commemorative album.

It has been a privilege for us together to serve the LORD in His churches and we thank Him not only for the *promise* that our labour is not vain in the Lord, but also for the experience of the *fulfilment* of this promise in what we were allowed to hear out of the mouth and from the messages of many of you.

With love.
Rev. and Mrs. VanOene

A photograph of two young children, a girl and a boy, standing on a sandy beach at sunset. They are seen from behind, looking out at the ocean. The girl is on the left, and the boy is on the right. They are both wearing light-colored, short-sleeved shirts. The ocean waves are breaking in the distance, and the sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. The children's reflections are visible in the wet sand.

*He took a little child
and had him stand
among them.*

*Taking him in his
arms, he said to them,
“Whoever welcomes
one of these little
children in my name
welcomes me;
and whoever welcomes
me does not welcome
me but the one who
sent me.”*

Mark 9:36

*O LORD, our Lord, Thou God of our salvation,
How glorious is Thy Name in all creation!
Thou who hast set Thy majesty on high
Beyond the skies for man to glorify,*

*Out of the mouth of infants praise is sounded,
And so a mighty bulwark Thou hast founded.
Thus breakest Thou the adversary's force
And thwartest Thou the evildoer's course.*

*When I behold the skies Thou hast created,
The moon and stars which Thou hast generated,
O what is man that Thou wilt think of him,
The son of man that Thou dost care for him?*

*Yet, little less than God — so hast Thou made him,
And Thou with glorious honour hast arrayed him,
That over Thy creation he might reign;
Thou hast assigned all things as man's domain.*

*Thou hast appointed him as lord and master
Of bird and beast in forest, field, and pasture;
He also rules the creatures of the sea.
O LORD, how great is Thy Name's majesty.*

Psalm 8, Book of Praise



*Greetings
of the
Season*

*from
all of us at*

*Premier
Printing Ltd.*

