

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

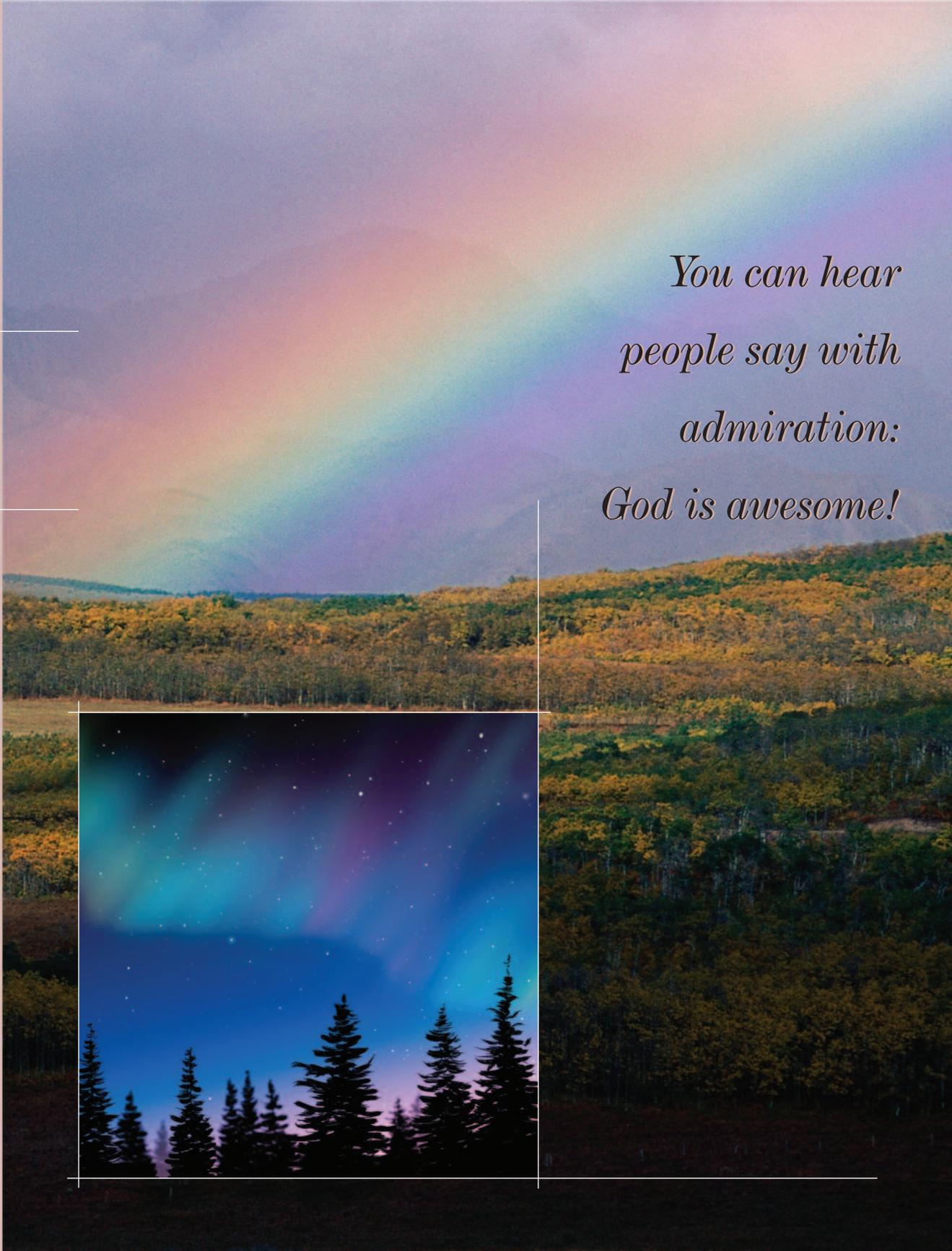
Volume 53, No. 1 • January 2, 2004

God is
Awesome

How We Can
Have Christ's
Joy In Us

Declared
Righteous and
Made Holy

*You can hear
people say with
admiration:
God is awesome!*





N.H. Gootjes

Dr. N.H. Gootjes is professor of Dogmatology at the Theological College on the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario. nhgootjes@canrc.org

God is Awesome

A clear understanding of the fact that God is awesome will work as a compass to direct our lives to Him.

We have entered into a new year. Under the government of God, this world has added another year to its existence, and we were allowed to live through another year to serve Him. It is good to take a moment to consider the fact that God made all this, and that He made all of our life and work possible. The admiration for God is often expressed by saying that God is awesome. Looking carefully at this expression and understanding it properly can help us to see our life and work in the coming year in the proper perspective.

The word “awesome” is quite old; it used to mean something like awe-inspiring. However, rather suddenly it has gained popularity. When people see or hear something that is striking, they exclaim: Awesome! I do not remember it was used as an exclamation before, but now the word frequently comes up in conversations. An old word is used in a new way.

And it is not only used for events in this world, it is now also applied to God. You can hear people say with admiration: God is awesome! This exclamation wants to express that God is exceptional and surprising. It wants to convey a feeling of wonder and excitement about God, but it is not clear what exactly is expressed by it. We need to look in Scripture to find out in what sense it can be used for God.

Just as the exclamation “awesome!” is new, stating that God is awesome is also a new development. In the old King James Version of the Bible, the word does not occur at all. In the RSV translation, the word is used, but not in connection with God. It is mentioned only once, in Genesis 28:17, when Jacob had received a dream in which he saw God, and God’s angels going up and down between the earth and God. Then he exclaimed: “How awesome is this place.” He is not speaking about God, but about the place where God had revealed himself in a vision.

It is in the NIV that the word becomes more prominent, for the word is used thirty-four times. Of these texts, more than ten use it for God himself, and the other texts refer to God’s works. The frequent use of this word in the NIV is probably the reason why the expression that God is awesome has suddenly gained popularity. It is an important word determining our attitude to God. As we want to live close to our awesome God in the coming year, this is a good reason to look more carefully at the meaning of this.

Some biblical examples

God is called “awesome” right after the people of Israel had crossed the Red Sea. On that occasion, the army of the Egyptians which had pursued them had been washed away. Moses composed a song in commemoration of God’s salvation, in which he said about God: “Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders” (Exod 15:11). We can easily understand that the Israelites stood in awe when they looked back at the Red Sea. For God had shown his majesty over nature. First, He had stopped the waters from flowing, allowing his people cross the sea, and then He let the water resume its course. This is an event that even today we cannot fathom. God is so great that He is able to let the water stand up like a brick wall, showing how awesome He is.

There is more to this event, for God used this same wall of water to come down on the pursuing Egyptian army, and to wash them away. This, too, is awesome, but it can make us feel small and insecure. That God is awesome does not only mean that He is great, it includes that He is great in his destructing power. He used this power to protect his people, and to fulfill his old promises to his people Israel. Looking back on this powerful saving event for his people, Moses said that God is awesome.

The same word comes up when the people are at the border of Canaan, and the conquest of the promised land is discussed. Moses encourages the people of Israel not to be terrified of the inhabitants of Canaan, “for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God” (Deut 7:22). He goes on to provide further explanation of what “awesome” means: God will drive out the nations from Canaan when the Israelites enter the country God has promised them. He will throw them into great confusion till they are destroyed. God will give these kings into the power of his people Israel. As a result, no one will be able to resist the Israelites. Rather, God’s people will destroy these nations (Deut 7:22-24). God is awesome, and He shows that in making his own nation of Israel stronger than all the peoples living in Canaan.

There is yet another aspect of the fact that God is awesome. The God who is awesome, can turn against his own people. Daniel mentioned this in the prayer he sent up to God

when Israel was in captivity in Babylon. He calls God “the great and awesome God” who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands (Dan 9:4). But that is not the case for Israel, for they are in captivity because they have not listened to the prophets who spoke in the name of God. God is not only awesome when He saves his people, He is equally awesome when He punishes his people. And they had experienced that themselves when they had lost their country and were deported all the way to Babylon. They had sinned against God, and as a result they have been scattered over the nations (Dan 9:7, 8).

God is awesome, not only when He helps his people and gives them blessings, but also when He sees his people act against his will. God caused a great, international migration of the nations to punish them. No means are too forceful for God when He wants his people to feel that they are doing wrong.

Inside . . .

This is the first issue of Clarion for the year of our Lord, 2004. Dr. N.H. Gootjes writes in his editorial that as we contemplate a new year from the hand of God, we see Him as an awesome God. He is awesome in his grace and blessing, but also in his wrath on those who do not fear Him. We are called to acknowledge his Name in our lives and to cling to Him with all our heart, soul and mind.

Since we are starting a new volume of Clarion, this is also an appropriate time to start a new series of articles. The Children’s Catechism is being translated from a Dutch book written by Mrs. J. Wiskerke van Dooren. It is a study guide to the Heidelberg Catechism designed for children.

Our relationship with the Free Reformed Churches receives attention in this issue as J. deGlint gives a summary of an evening where several ministers of the FRC and CanRC speak at an open meeting in British Columbia. Speaking of ministers, the ministers of western Canada had a conference recently. It is evident from some of the attached photos that our brothers know how to study, eat and have fun. Good times!

Rev. J.G.R. Kroeze addresses some of the forces which are at work regarding changes in liturgy. Changes in themselves are not necessarily wrong, but the reasons for change need to be examined.

We have some of our regular columns: Ray of Sunshine, Education Matters and Treasures New and Old. We also have two press releases, a letter to the editor, and another submission by our brother W. Helder with a new rhyming of a psalm; this time it is Psalm 51.

RA

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Visscher

Managing Editor: R. Aasman

Coeditors: N.H. Gootjes, W.B. Slomp, Cl. Stam

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION

26 Inverness Crescent, St. Albert, AB T8N 5J3

Fax: (780) 418-1506 E-Mail: raasman@canrc.org

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.

One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

Email: clarion@premierprinting.ca

SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR 2004

	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada*	\$42.00*	\$69.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$44.50	\$57.50
International	\$69.00	\$103.00



*Including 7% GST – No. 890967359RT

Advertisements: \$13.50 per column inch

Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$19.00 per column inch

We reserve the right to refuse ads.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Publication Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

Cancellation Agreement

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.

Agreement No. 1377531; PAP Registration No. 9907; ISSN 0383-0438

Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

Useful Link: www.canrc.org

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – God is Awesome — N.H. Gootjes	1
Psalm 51 — W. Helder	4
Treasures New and Old – How We Can Have Christ’s Joy In Us — J. Moesker	5
A Question of Form — J.G.R. Kroeze	6
Ray of Sunshine — C. Gelms and E. Nordeman	8
Declared Righteous and Made Holy — J. deGlint	9
Letter to the Editor	11
Children’s Catechism — J. Wiskerke van Dooren	12
Western Ministerial Conference 2003 — T.G. Van Raalte	13
Education Matters — K. Sikkema	15
Press Releases – Regional Synod West, Classis Pacific East	17, 18
Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty	19

He can be “hard as nails” when He causes punishment in order to bring his people back to his ways. In Psalm 145:6, David speaks of God’s awesome works. The list of these awesome works ends with:

The Lord watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy (20).

The new year

We are at the beginning of a new year. It is a great blessing that we are allowed to enter another year in the world made by God. He continues the life of the world He has created, and He gives us more time. God’s work in this world is marvelous and must be praised. We are grateful that we may receive so many great benefits He has made available to us.

On entering the new year we should have a clear understanding who God is. When we say that God is awesome, we should not have a fuzzy idea of a teddy bear God. He has made it completely clear what his awesomeness means. It tells us that He is overwhelmingly great in his work. And that shows in everything He does. He is awesome in protecting his people, even when they are a small minority in a big country. However, that same awesomeness of God can turn against us, when we persevere in turning away from Him and going our own way. He is awesome in his punishment when he needs to.

A clear understanding of the fact that God is awesome will work as a compass to direct our lives to Him.



Psalm 51

1. O gracious God, be merciful to me,
And in Your love, Your infinite compassion,
Blot out my sins, remove all my transgressions.
O God, have mercy, listen to my plea!
From every taint of evil wash me clean,
And from my guilt and misery relieve me.
For I am deeply conscious of my sin,
And all day long my misdeeds haunt and grieve me.
2. LORD, You have I offended, You alone.
In mercy hear my sorrowful confession.
How evil in Your sight is my transgression!
You rightfully condemn what I have done;
Just is, O God, the sentence I received.
I have from birth been guilty, ever sinning;
In my iniquity was I conceived,
Tainted with sin right from my life’s beginning.
3. You teach me, LORD, the wisdom I must know,
For You want truth to dwell and rule within me.
Purge me with hyssop. Wash and fully clean me
Till I am whiter than the whitest snow.
Let me hear shouts of happiness and joy,
And let the bones You crushed leap up in dances.
From my transgressions turn Your face away.
Blot out my guilt, erase all my offences.
4. Create in me a pure, clean heart, I pray,
And put a steadfast spirit deep within me;
Give me new life to strengthen and sustain me.
LORD, from Your presence cast me not away.
Show me Your mercy. Do not take from me
Your Holy Spirit. Let me, O my Saviour,
Again the joy of Your salvation see,
And make me willing to obey You ever.
5. Then to transgressors I will teach Your ways,
And sinners will return to seek Your favour.
LORD, from the guilt of bloodshed me deliver;
Then shall my tongue Your saving justice praise.
I will aloud Your righteousness proclaim;
You are, O God, the God of my salvation.
LORD, open then my lips to praise Your name
And let me sing my songs of jubilation.
6. LORD, You do not in sacrifice delight,
Or else I would with offerings try to please You.
How could I ever with my gifts appease You?
Burnt offerings find no favour in Your sight.
One gift alone is pleasing in God’s eyes:
The contrite heart of one who has repented.
A broken spirit You will not despise
When humbly as a sacrifice presented.
7. In Your good pleasure, bless Jerusalem;
Cause her to thrive, and shield her with Your power.
Build Zion’s walls, O God. Uphold her towers;
Safeguard her citadels and strengthen them.
In sacrifices You will then delight,
In bullocks rightly offered on Your altar;
Burnt offerings will be pleasing in Your sight.
Your steadfast love will never fail or fatter.

Melody: Strasbourg, 1539 / Geneva, 1551

William Helder, 2003

How We Can Have Christ's Joy In Us



MATTHEW 13:52

Rev. J. Moesker is minister of the
Canadian Reformed Church
at Vernon, BC.
jmoesker@canrc.org

“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” John 15:11

Apparently the Lord Jesus spoke the words about his joy and the disciples' joy as He was walking with them towards the Garden of Gethsemane. He was, in other words, walking towards his arrest and his crucifixion. That very night He would be betrayed, arrested, condemned, and crucified. He knew that hellish terror and agony awaited Him as He spoke these words of John 15 about joy. He was to be the man of sorrows prophesied about in Isaiah 53.

If you think about that context, it's remarkable that in our text this man of sorrows concerns Himself with the joy of his disciples at that time. He had every reason, you'd think, only to be busy with the sorrow and the sufferings that awaited Him. Yet He was thinking of the joy of his people. That proves how much He has our joy at heart!

The Lord Jesus says, “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you. . . .” What exactly is this joy He wants us to have? We first need to consider what our Lord's joy is. Then we'll see how we can be joyful too.

In verse 10, just before our text, Jesus said, “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.” God is joy and living close to God is joy. Jesus' joy consisted of remaining in his Father's love, being close to his Father. And being close to his Father meant keeping his Father's commandments. Jesus loved his Father in heaven, and that love was expressed in doing what his Father commanded, even if that meant He would have to become the man of sorrows who had to give Himself to death on the cross. Jesus' joy was, in fact, doing his Father's will as it had been revealed in the Word, in the law and the prophets.

Well, He wants to see that joy in his disciples too. That's why He says in our text, “. . . that my joy may be in you. . . .” What that means then is that the Lord Jesus wants his joy in being close to his Father by doing his will to be our joy too.

Obedying God's commandments is never really a chore or a bore for those who are united with Christ who gave Himself for them. No, not at all. To obey God's commandments brings joy. And the more you live according to God's commands, the deeper and greater that joy becomes.

There's only one way to experience real, deep, heartfelt joy, and that's in the way of love for God expressed in obedience

to his commands. To refuse to obey God's commands in any area of your life means to refuse the joy Christ had, the joy He obtained for us by his cross. I'm sure you've experienced that, haven't you? When we consciously rebel against God's commandments, we lose our joy. When we refuse to do God's will, our hearts become dark and empty.

Isn't this why we sometimes have so little joy and so little assurance of faith? We want the joy. And a comedy movie might make you laugh, but that's not real joy. You can't buy real joy at a ticket booth. We often try to get joy and assurance in wrong ways, artificially. But there's only one way to find the joy of Christ and his salvation and to come to the assurance of faith. That is by way of obedience to God's Word. The more effort you exert to live in love according to God's commandments, the more joy and assurance of faith you find too. And on the other hand the less concern with living a godly life, the less real joy and assurance of faith too. If you slander, if you steal, if you commit adultery, if you hate as a Christian, you give away your joy.

Christ wants joyful followers. In fact, He says in our text, He wants our joy to be complete. Our joy is still so often weak and of short duration yet. That's because our love for Christ and our obedience to God's will is still so imperfect.

If we seek our joy in the way Christ directs in the text, then we'll find joy that is deep and lasting, joy that remains even when we have sorrows or disappointments to deal with in life. Remember, Jesus was on his way to Gethsemane when He spoke the words about joy. He would state there that He was sorrowful, even to death. But that sorrow didn't take away his perfect joy. No, his joy was doing his Father's will, even if it meant that He would be nailed to a cross.

The same with our joy when we keep God's commandments. We might be filled with grief because of pain or loss. Yet at the same time we'll have joy in our hearts too. Joy in the relationship with God in Christ. Joy that came with following Christ in love and obedience. Let's strive for that real joy. Let's make it so that others are jealous of the joy we receive when we make every effort to do God's will. At the same time we'll grow in the assurance that we're on the way to the complete and eternal joy.

A Question of Form

Rev. J.G.R. Kroeze is minister of
the Free Reformed Church of
Legana, Australia

*If you understand that God is holy you will not
come thinking you are acceptable in yourself.*

This was a topic I dealt with in a congregational meeting, and which I have been requested to expand on in an article for the *Una Sancta*.¹ You could ask: Why was this question raised, and why would someone request that it be expanded into an article? What relevance does it have for church matters? We have been told time and time again over the years that form is not important. That is the position taken in society at large and also in church matters. Form is simply the shape in which things are done. The shape is not of great importance. Content is important. That is the received “wisdom” from the past decades.

When we sit back and analyse this “wisdom” it begins to seem less true. Everything needs to be presented, and the better the presentation the more effective the contents. An essay without structure does not communicate. The contents may be fantastic, but if they are not logically presented they fail to convince. A poem without form fails. All the various techniques used are useless if they do not add up in a cumulative way to create an effect. All art relies on form. That is why modern art ultimately is incomprehensible, because it tries to escape the constraints of form.

Behaviour also has form. If one acts in a certain way it is construed as polite, gracious or rude. Society has rules of behaviour, and where these rules begin to break down society breaks down. Over the last decades we have seen respect for authority, women,

the aged and each other disappear. Rudeness, crudeness and filth have increased dramatically. Society is at odds with itself and breaking down. The social engineers are trying to create a caring and loving society, but the task is hopeless. There is no form to put it in. They are the product of a society which threw off as many restrictions as they could. They wanted to be free and they don't want to lose this licence to live how they want. However, that means they can't restructure society, because structure is form, and form limits freedom. They will allow a level of form, which is established in law, but there are things that can't be legislated, and that is where social form should govern.

Worship

We have the same problem in the church. For years now the old forms have been being eroded away, not only in our churches, but world wide. We can observe that with the relaxation of the dress code at the worship service. People used to come in their Sunday best, but now jeans, t-shirts and sandals are good enough to appear before God in. The argument is that God looks at the heart and not at the clothes.

People used to come to church and sit quietly preparing themselves spiritually to hear God's word and sing his praise. Now people try to make the service more human and friendly. The reason given is that the service has to be attractive to man as well.

People used to pray on their knees before God showing that they were people who lived by the grace of God in their posture. Each time they kneeled the position reinforced the understanding that produced it. Now people pray any old how and use any words that come to mind and speak to God as if He was their cobbler down the street. Many more examples could be given, but these are enough to make the point that our form has changed and in many cases broken down.

Perhaps some of the changes that have taken place in our churches were necessary to get rid of things which were no longer intelligible to today's culture. Perhaps others were part of the adjustment of Dutch culture to the Australian culture. However, many of the changes in the worship of God have had a negative effect on that worship. Worship without form loses its moorings, because form is ultimately an expression of the theology underlying the worship. The form we give to our worship is determined by our understanding of God and his Word. Form reinforces content as content determines form.

Firstly let us look at the personal sphere. If you know yourself as a creature you will humble yourself before your Creator. If you understand that God is holy you will not come thinking you are acceptable in yourself. You will draw near to God knowing that you can only do so through the mediation of Jesus Christ your Lord, because you are a

sinner. If you know yourself as one of the Lord's people you will draw near to God as your heavenly Father and thank Him for his grace.

I consider it inevitable that changes will come in Reformed worship because the culture in which we are living is changing.

In the ecclesiastical sphere we will try to give the service the form that best reflects what happens in the covenantal assembly of God and his people. In the service God comes to his people, so we prepare ourselves to receive Him and we express that in the votum. He comes in his grace and that is expressed in the salutation. We sing our joy and then submit ourselves to the ten commandments. We go to Him in prayer where we humble ourselves before him and ask Him for his grace and to bless the preaching. We then listen to an exposition of God's word according to the Reformed doctrine. This is the central element of the service. God instructs us, corrects us, encourages us and reprimands us.

Principles

All this is done on the basis of several principles: only Scripture will be used as the norm of our faith. Worship will reflect the usual order of the offerings; first the sin sacrifice was offered, then the whole burnt offering followed in which the Israelite reconsecrated himself to God and finally the peace offering was brought for communion with God had been re-established. All this we find in our Lord Jesus Christ. Then follow the other

principles: Salvation is by grace alone and not through merit or works.

Salvation is received through faith and no other way. God's people are his and He is theirs by covenant. He elects his own, and they only will come to Him in faith, for mankind is totally depraved, and unless God softens the hardened heart no man would believe. These basic principles determine how the Reformed congregation meets with its Lord. It does so in humbleness, thankfulness, knowing the undeserved grace she has received. The Reformed nature of the church does come out in the form and in the content.

Churches, which have a different theology, show that in the form and content of their service. A charismatic church believes the Spirit baptizes and gives the gift of tongues and healing today as well. They will, therefore, have to make allowances in their worship for the Holy Spirit baptizing one of their members while they are worshipping. Their service is actually geared towards producing these occurrences. Therefore their worship tends towards preaching which drives people to an emotional climax. They will use choirs and bands, singing and swaying, music and lighting to bring about this state of affairs. Their theology forms their worship.

The same can be said of any type of Arminian church. Their theology must make them focus on bringing people to accept Christ. They must persuade, and they must believe that the person has the possibility in himself to accept Christ as his Lord. The convert then does not need to feel so humble, but can justifiably feel a little proud of himself. He has used the grace offered to him properly. He has repented and turned to the Lord. He must also feel insecure because he knows how many have accepted Christ before him and fallen away. He may fall as well, and who knows if he will return to God. The message these churches generally preach is that of a kind, sweet Jesus, and so the

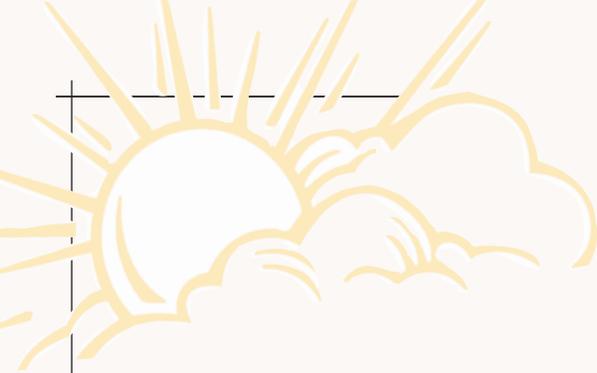
fear is allayed. The spirit of this service will be quite different to that of a Reformed service. Although the differences are not as visible in a normal (non charismatic) Arminian church, the form and the content will come together to produce one coherent message. The form works subliminally to reinforce the message.

That is why the breakdown of form in Reformed circles is so worrying. The lack of form we are beginning to see is the beginning of disorder and deformation. No form reflects a theology of disrespect and disinterest. What survives of the church will ultimately impose new form. If the new form is cobbled together from what is seen in other churches, then elements of the theology of those forms will be imported along with them. That is inescapable.

Rudeness, crudeness and filth have increased dramatically.

Therefore, we must be very careful not to allow the form of worship to degenerate. I consider it inevitable that changes will come in Reformed worship because the culture in which we are living is changing. However, those changes may only be new expressions of the same basic scriptural and Reformed principles which we all know. They may not be importations from other churches of different theology. Let us be careful about the form of both our personal and ecclesiastical worship. It sends a powerful subliminal message to all worshippers including our own youth. In this way also, deformation can be resisted.

¹ *This article was first published in Una Sancta in Australia*



Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

“Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands.” Psalm 119:73

We have come to the beginning of another year of our Lord. Many expressions of “Happy New Year” have been sent along to loved ones and friends. Everything feels like a new beginning when a new year begins. For some of us we have New Year’s resolutions that we say we are strongly going to adhere to. For others it takes a lot more to become motivated.

In this Ray of Sunshine we would like to focus on a different kind of New Year’s resolution, if we can call it that. In Psalm 119:73, the writer says, “Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands.” The author was an Israelite strongly devoted to God and his Word. He sees the Word as the Word of life, and that there is no life without God. Many psalms in the Bible speak about God’s mighty acts of creation; but in Psalm 119, the focus is in obeying the Word of God and following his decrees.

Two aspects of God’s Word are brought out. First, God’s directives for life, and second, God’s promises. The one calls for obedience, the other for having faith in God. The author’s strong devotion to the Lord should also be what lives in our hearts. It is very difficult in a society that no longer loves God to constantly remind ourselves that we have to follow God’s commands. We can easily be hard on ourselves in trying to be committed to things that we think are important. Yet, our first commitment should be to love God and obey his commandments. It is a command to love our God with all our heart, soul and mind.

We show our love for Him by striving to obey his commandments. The author says, “Give me what I need to perfect the work you began when you formed me.”

Our God made each and every one of us. When we were still in our mother’s womb, God had a plan for us. He made us not so we can go our own way, but instead to serve and glorify our Creator. We can pray to God to help us to have understanding and obey his commands. On our own we cannot serve Him as He requires, but we have his Word and Spirit to guide and help us.

By obeying his commandments we show our true thankfulness to God. The Psalmist says that we are “blessed if our ways are blameless and we walk according to the law of God.” In a world so full of sin, we may take comfort in knowing the Word of God. Also in this new year many temptations may also come our way. The devil continually tries in so many ways

to get us to break God’s commandments. We do not need to fear for God is near to all those who trust in Him. His faithfulness to us is always sure even if we at times fall away.

Let us continue to fight the good fight of faith till Christ returns. This is another year of our Lord in which we may serve Him. Let us use each day to follow in his footsteps and use his Word and commandments to guide our life. We do not know what this year will bring, but our loving God and Father will take care of us.

“Your Word O Lord is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations” (Ps 119: 89, 90). Let this be our guide and comfort us also in this New Year, 2004!

*Teach me, O LORD, the way set out by Thee,
And I will keep Thy statutes to the finish.
Bless me with insight so that constantly
I may with all my heart Thy precepts cherish.
Reveal the path of Thy decrees to me,
For Thy commandments joy and pleasure furnish.*

Psalm 119: 13

Birthdays in February:

12 CONNY VANAMERONGEN will be 39

Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road S, RR 2, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2
e-mail: cvanam@sympatico.ca

18 CORA SCHOONHOVEN will be 53

180 Valleysmede Road, Richmond Hill, ON L4B 3J4

Congratulations to both of you Conny and Cora on your birthdays. We hope that you will have an enjoyable day together with your family and friends. May He grant you both all what you stand in need of in this New Year. Till next month,

Mrs. C. Gelms and Mrs. E. Nordeman
548 Kemp Road East, RR2 Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2
Phone: 905-563-0380

P.S. Just a friendly reminder to please let us know of any address changes. Also if there is anyone who would like to be added to our birthday column, please give us a call or send us a note. Thanks!



Declared Righteous and Made Holy

The Common Ground of the Canadian and Free Reformed Churches¹

The sermons must bring out the historic progression from redemption foreshadowed to redemption accomplished.

There seems to be progress on the road toward fraternal fellowship between the Free Reformed and the Canadian Reformed Churches. It was only a little more than two years ago that the previous public meeting was held in the Canadian Reformed church building in Abbotsford, and already another opportunity of meeting together was offered to the brothers and sisters of both federations. Heeding the invitation to “Learn Together from God’s Word,” well over one hundred interested people gathered on the evening of May 21, 2003, this time in the building of the Free Reformed Church in Abbotsford.

Right at the onset of the meeting the Canadian Reformed attendants received a taste of Free Reformed food, as all present joined in singing Psalm 85 from the Free Reformed Psalter. The familiar words were sung to their lesser-known melody under the guidance of the Reverend W. J. Wullschleger, the Free Reformed pastor of Langley, as he provided the organ accompaniment. It was a meaningful start to the meeting, not only for the shared singing from one Psalter, but also for the unified confession that righteousness and peace have met through God’s steadfast love

and faithfulness. The singing was the foretaste for the main course of the get-together: justification and sanctification are inseparable.

Opening

Rev. L. W. Bilkes, the pastor of the Free Reformed Church in whose building the meeting took place, was the appointed chair for the evening. In his opening words he gave expression to our gratitude for the work of the Lord Jesus. Our Saviour offered his blood in order to present his bride blameless, without spot. The speeches for the evening were prepared for Canadian and Free Reformed believers who share their joy over this salvation and look forward to their perfection as the Lamb’s bride.

Rev. J. W. Wullschleger, who had already made his introduction from the organ bench, now ascended the pulpit. On him had fallen the task to report on the work of the respective committees for contact between the two federations. There are conflicting frustrations: some find the progress too fast, others not fast enough. The common foundation between the Free Reformed and Canadian Reformed churches is clear. Both acknowledge the infallibility and authority of God’s Word,

both adhere to the Three Forms of Unity, and both have bound themselves to the same Church Order. Yet, their historical development took different routes, which led to different approaches and emphases. Though these differences are considered minimal by some, they must be openly discussed.

One of the differences deals with the way the congregation is viewed, which has implications for the preaching. Is the sermon directed to the believers as members of the covenant, or must it also extend an appeal to come to faith? Another difference lies in the approach to the text as it is proclaimed to the congregation. The Free Reformed preaching can be described as experiential – the message of the text is applied to the life of the believers with the call to repent from sinful ways and appropriate salvation. The Canadian Reformed churches, on the other hand, stress the historic-redemptive message of the Word of God – the sermons must bring out the historic progression from redemption foreshadowed to redemption accomplished. Through the exchange of taped sermons the members of the contact committees have familiarized themselves with each other’s approach.



Bill Slomp, Lawrence Bilkes, Richard Aasman, Kuldip Gangar, Pieter VanWoudenberg, Wim Wullschleger and Hans Overduin.

Announcements of withdrawal

As at the meeting of two years ago, Rev. Wullschleger mentioned the traffic between the two federations. When a member of a Canadian Reformed Church would join a Free Reformed church, it was announced that he had withdrawn himself from the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such announcements were painful to the members of the Free Reformed church. Though this issue was now resolved, it continues to be puzzling. Acknowledging that also the Free Reformed churches are the church of our Lord Jesus Christ would assume a spiritual unity where federative unity is not in place. It seems that such approach would promote the Kuyperian view of pluriformity.

In his concluding words Rev. Wullschleger drew an imaginary line from the present status of complete federative separation to complete union. To his view it is difficult to say at which point on this line we have arrived. The process of getting to know each other is still underway, and it cannot be said with certainty how the path will go. The contact at synodical level can continue, since both federations take the Words of our Lord Jesus very seriously.

Two speeches

The rest of the evening was devoted to two speeches. The Rev. Wullschleger already hinted at the difference in emphasis between the sermons in the respective federations. The Free Reformed preaching places in the centre the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, whereas the Canadian Reformed sermons emphasize the work of justification which was accomplished by our Lord Jesus. Though this statement contains the danger of generalization, it offers an approach to define and possibly overcome the differences. For that reason the Rev. R. Aasman of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church in Edmonton prepared a speech on justification, while the Rev. K. Gangar of the Free Reformed Church of Seattle formulated his thoughts on sanctification.

It was indicated during the meeting that both speeches might be published in the respective church magazines. For that reason a very short summary will suffice.

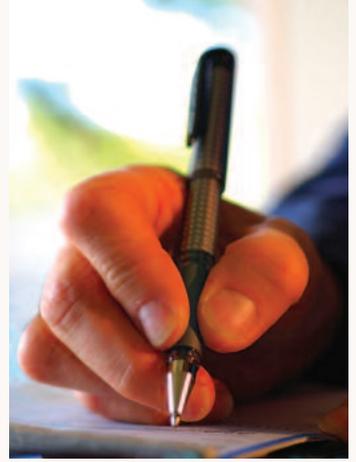
Solemnly and emphatically the Rev. R. Aasman pointed out that justification and sanctification can be distinguished, but not separated. Justification is pivotal for leading a holy life. In the letter to the Romans Paul declares the heart of the gospel: the good news of justification by

faith in Christ alone. Yet, justification is linked to leading a holy life as redeemed people. The Old and New Testament shed a comprehensive light on the essence of justification. It is a judicial term to indicate that the believers are declared righteous. They are now in a right relationship with the law. Who will still bring a charge against God's elect? (Again, the letter to the Romans, chapter 8 verse 33.) The Lord Jesus kept the law for us (active obedience) and he bore the full wrath for the transgression (passive obedience).

Rev. Aasman also mentioned that in the discussions between the contact committees the daily request for forgiveness was discussed. Though believers are declared righteous, they continue to struggle with the reality of sin. Jesus has prepared atonement for his people, but at the same time they appropriate this gift by faith. Rev. Aasman concluded by showing how sanctification flows out of justification, as love and thanksgiving follow the pronouncement of being righteous.

Rev. K. Gangar highlighted the fraternal bond between the federations when he said that he had listened with pleasure to his brother. He strengthened this bond by reiterating that, yes, justification and sanctification can be distinguished, but are not separated. Sanctification is prepared for those whose sins are removed, as the apostle Peter indicates in his first letter (chapter 1 verse 15), "So be holy, as I am holy."

With his typical warmth and exuberance the Rev. Gangar described three stages or forms of sanctification. The first one refers to the sanctification as described in the New Testament. Our position toward sin has changed. We have died with Christ and are raised with him to newness of life. In the second place he mentioned the progressive nature of sanctification. We learn more and more to mortify our old nature and



Letter to the Editor

to put on righteousness. In the third place he showed that our sanctification will be completed when we are promoted to glory. At that point we are freed from sin.

The importance of leading a holy life was stressed. God demands us to be holy. We are judged according to our works, though our works do not justify us. The apostle James explains how faith is shown in works (James 2:14 - 26). Only those who are changed by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit, are able to grow in grace and knowledge. With the psalmist the believers continue to pray, "Grant me a new heart. Wash me clean."

There was no opportunity to have a discussion about these extensive speeches. This was disappointing for the attendants, since they had hoped to explore the common ground by discussing the differences in outlook and experience.

Where now?

After we left, the question lingered. There is no doubt that we are travelling on the same road, but how far apart are we? Do we both want to travel together, or are we more comfortable with our own rhythm? Admittedly, there might be some mistrust about each other's direction. But that is where the communion of saints starts functioning. United we can keep each other in balance between the extremes. And united we are, in the blood of our Saviour. Through this blood we are justified, and by it we are made holy. But even if the reality of living in a sinful world keeps us on separate trails, we must extend the encouraging hand of brotherhood to each other as we look for opportunities to travel together.

¹ Report of a Public Meeting of the Committees for Contact between these churches, held in Abbotsford, BC

Letter to the Editor:

It is because of differences of opinion most people write to *Clarion*. An open forum like *Clarion* is a good place to discuss differences. As in Calgary, so it is elsewhere – people are not "afraid" of issues; issues are discussed freely, and we also know beforehand that we will disagree on some issues. That is not exclusive to Calgary. Nothing's getting shoved under the rug.

Some church leaders publicly promote the idea that non-support of "our own" schools means one can not be an office bearer in the Canadian Reformed Churches. Rev. Eikelboom compares non-supporters to "apostate" Israel in Ezekiel's time. He refers to Ezekiel 3 (please take the time to read it). When arguments like these are made against non-supporters, then concern over extra-scriptural binding is not really groundless. As was said last time, *left unchecked*, there are plenty of grounds for concern.

In his reply, Rev. Eikelboom says, "...Because God is almighty, of course God does not need anything. And yet God is pleased to use people to execute his plans, and therefore we say: we need ministers, we need missionaries and we also need men and women to teach at our schools." Who can disagree with that? But: that is a far cry from saying, "The reality is that the churches need school teachers as desperately as they need ministers. If we don't get the school teachers we need, our churches have no future." And "remember, if we have no schools left, we will have no churches left either."

That God might well use these schools amongst a host of other things to further his church, no one can argue. To say they are fundamental to the well being of Christ's church is going way too far. It's imposing "our own schools" (man) on Christ and his bride – the church – for its very existence!!

That really is not saying much for the Lord of the church and saying way too much for the man in the school. And that is not meant to be an "impressive sounding argument" but rather a simple plain fact that anyone can see. And we also have the added advantage of understanding each other – that's not exclusive to Calgary either. It's understood completely that some people regard non-supporters (some very solid Christians) as second rate (not worthy of office) and evil and wicked (compared to idol worshipping and child sacrificing apostates). To "respect" those ideas, however, becomes very difficult, for obvious reasons.

If Rev. Eikelboom wishes to maintain his (theory?) on school/church and their place in our membership, I have to disagree. Is his support for Canadian Reformed Schools going too far? Is it a "passion gone amok"? Let the reader decide.

Sincerely,
Glenn Tams, Taber, Alberta

P.S. To the reader

My contention in these letters is against certain points of view on school/church issues. It is not meant at all to undermine the benefits of "our own" schools. They have plenty of benefits. GT

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.

J. Wiskerke van Dooren¹

Lord's Day 1

The very beginning of the Catechism is all about comfort.



You were not happy. Your favourite baseball bat broke. Or you jumped in the pool on a hot summer day with your watch. After that your watch did not work any more. So you went to your parents to tell them about it.

Your dad said: "Your birthday is coming up. We can give you a new bat on your birthday." Or your mother said about the drowned watch: "Too bad about that watch. But don't you worry, there are more watches. We'll find you another watch. But next time be more careful."

You are no longer unhappy, because your parents comforted you. You are happy again and you give them a hug.

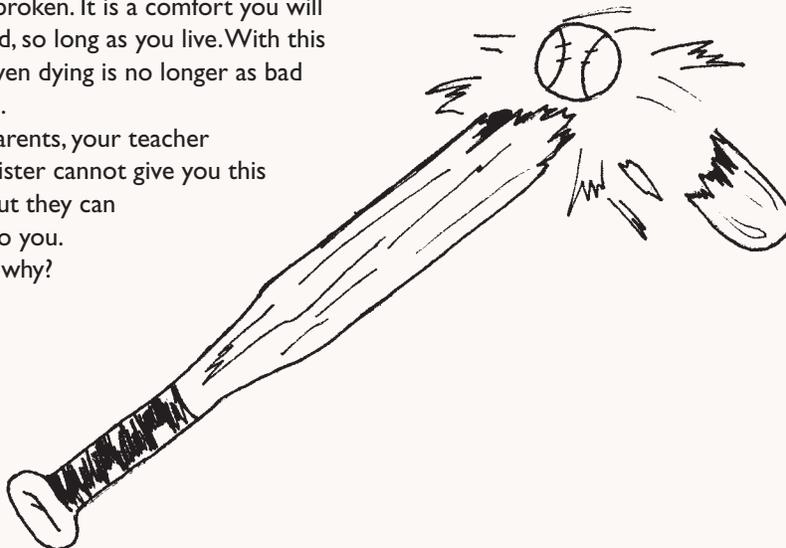
The very beginning of the Catechism is all about comfort. But not for something your parents can do, like when things get broken. It is a comfort you will always need, so long as you live. With this comfort, even dying is no longer as bad as it seems.

Your parents, your teacher or the minister cannot give you this comfort. But they can explain it to you. You know why?

They know about this comfort, because they need it themselves.

God's enemy, the devil, wants to be the boss of our hearts. And he often succeeds in drawing us away from God. He likes it when we listen to him, rather than listening to God. He likes it when we are disobedient to God, and sin against Him.

When we commit sins, we cannot shrug it off by saying: Too bad. When we commit sins, we do feel unhappy. A new baseball bat or a new watch will not take away that feeling of unhappiness. But there is a comfort which is almost too good to be true. Jesus Christ has suffered the punishment we deserve. That is why He hung on the cross. He did that to take away your sins.



That is an incredible present! You hardly dare to believe it. But it is true, for the Bible tells us so. Because Jesus Christ paid for your sins, you may belong to Him. You belong to Jesus Christ.

If you got an animal on your birthday, a puppy or a guinea pig, you can say: It belongs to me – completely. You can say about yourself: I belong to Jesus Christ – completely. Whatever happens to me, he will take care of me. He cares for me much more than I would ever care for an animal. He will never forget me.

That makes you happy. And you want to show your thankfulness to Christ and to other people. It is true, at times our thankfulness does not show, even when we pray about it. But it also happens that our thankfulness shows in what we do, through his Holy Spirit.

¹The author of the Children's Catechism is Mrs. J. Wiskerke van Dooren. She is a sister to Rev. G. van Dooren who for many years served the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church in Burlington, Ontario. From an early age she wanted to become a schoolteacher. Her wish was fulfilled and she taught school for a number of years. She was married to Rev. J.R. Wiskerke, who ministered in several congregations but died just before his forty-fifth birthday. Mrs. Wiskerke has always been much involved with the children of her class, and with her own children. Last year, she published the Children's Catechism in Dutch. We are thankful for her permission to publish a slightly adapted version in Clarion.



Western Ministerial Conference 2003

*Rev. T.G. Van Raalte is minister
of the Redeemer Canadian
Reformed Church at Winnipeg,
Manitoba.
tvanraalte@canrc.org*

*It hardly needs to be said that events such as this
conference are important in the life of the
ministers.*

Ever wanted to see eighteen ministers in one place? You missed your chance, unless you were in Yarrow, British Columbia on November 19 and 20 for the Western Ministerial Conference. The weather was cool but the atmosphere was warm, filled with fellowship, study, and prayer.

It hardly needs to be said that events such as this conference are important in the life of the ministers. It's an opportunity we don't easily let pass us by. We tested our conclusions on each other, got advice, encouraged each other, and just talked like friends would. And, yes, when you get eighteen ministers together, they do tend to let their hair down (I take no responsibility for any candid photos that may appear with this write-up)!

Presentations

Peter Holtvlüwer, minister of Aldergrove, started the presentations with some thoughtful theses about the use of instruments in the worship services. Not only did he provide a good survey of Scripture but he also presented historical data about singing without instruments in the early church and at the time of the Reformation. This evoked a good discussion about a musical instrument in the worship service supporting the singing, rather than having an independent role.

Eric Kampen, minister of Willoughby Heights, presented a summary of his



Rev. M. VanderWel and Rev. W.J. VanOene

Master's thesis. In his presentation he showed how the Secession of 1834 in the Dutch churches could be connected to the wider cultural movements of the day (the Réveil).

Ministers all use computers, and many different programs can help with Scripture study. A representative of Logos Software showcased their powerful software and offered the ministers a special deal.

Ladies Too ...

I think that all ministers who are married count the ministrations of their wife to be indispensable. Her support and advice has surely been a blessing to every church he has served! With our wives we were all welcomed to a catered dinner on the Wednesday evening. Understandably, they couldn't all be there, but many from the Fraser Valley were in attendance.



Two B.C. ministers



Refreshments

to all situations where the pastoral relationship of a minister and congregation breaks down.

Finally, Kees Van Spronsen, minister of Maranatha (Surrey), presented the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's manual on church planting. It was evident that we can learn from the OPC's zeal in this area. Each church federation has different strengths.

Reflections

This year left us lots of space on the program for informal fellowship. We enjoyed strolling through town, which was quite necessary given all the delicious snacks and meals. Devotions were held around mealtime and at the beginning and end of each day. I hope our next conference gives even more attention to devotions.

We thank Peter Holtvlüwer and Clarence Vandervelde for organizing this conference. We also thank the Yarrow church for their hospitality at the church building and in their homes. May this conference serve the good of the churches. We look forward to the next one.

More Presentations

On Thursday, Bert Tiggelaar, minister of Barrhead, spoke about dealing with grief. He came with lots of study, and especially with lots of experience. His perspective challenged us to accept grieving as a very necessary reaction to loss, and to help congregation members work through their grief.

James Visscher, minister of Langley, had been mulling over article 11 of the Church Order for some time already. He shared his thoughts with us in a presentation. We wondered whether the wording of the article really does justice

The Church at Chatham invites all to attend a
Prayer Service
 for the convening of General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches

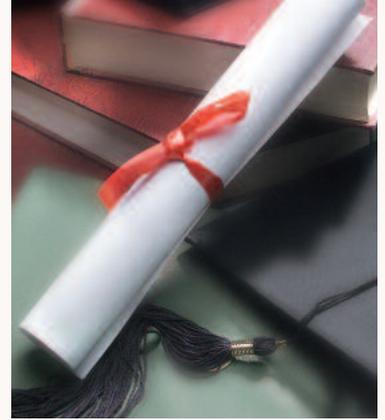
DATE: **February 9, 2004**

TIME: **8:00 p.m.**

PLACE: **Eben-Ezer Canadian Reformed Church**
 483 McNaughton Avenue East, Chatham, ON N7L 2H2

Rev. Cl. Stam officiating

K. Sikkema



Tackling a Crisis

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

... across the country there appears to be an ongoing erosion of support for and membership in school societies.

Last spring proved to be especially challenging for schools to fill both anticipated and unexpected vacancies. Across the country, several teachers and principals chose to leave the system, and it appears that many vacancies could not be filled by new recruits. In *Clarion*, the number of ads calling for teachers even during the summer was higher than in past years. The unusually high number of new students at Covenant Teachers College in Hamilton does not immediately address the need. The ongoing decline in enrolment in several of our schools does not free up enough teachers, either. Some have warned that there is an impending staffing crisis in our schools.

From decline to crisis

One wonders what the impact of this shortage is on the quality of education our schools can offer this year. Several schools have had to adopt more or less far-reaching “make-do” approaches: “not ideal, but justifiable,” or “the best possible, given the circumstances.” Some people may find themselves called to positions of leadership for which they do not feel ready or prepared; it may mean that the position must be left vacant and that the school remain somewhat rudderless. It may mean that some teachers receive or take on assignments beyond what should be expected, or that do not match well with their own strengths or their board’s preferences. Other teachers may feel more secure in their positions than they should be. We

should not despair, however, for it is good to have our own schools, and we trust that God cares. Yet, it is also our communal responsibility to seek a solution to this problem, and to encourage and help one another on the good path of Reformed education. It is on the point of communal responsibility that we have a problem.

Not only do we have a teacher shortage, but across the country there appears to be an ongoing erosion of support for and membership in school societies. Being the recipient of school magazines on a monthly basis, I can read that various school societies are struggling with this larger problem. One school treasurer probably spoke for them all, when he wrote,

What would make an enormous difference to help operate our school in a more comfortable manner is, if and when there would be an influx of members, young and old, from the congregations that would give their undivided support, morally and financially to the school that the Lord blessed us with for the education of the young members of his church. The fact that we have our own institution of learning is not an automatic privilege, it takes undivided commitment, time and effort from everyone within the communion of saints, and then you will receive blessings and gifts given to us by grace through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Are you going to continue and say: “No thank-you” to God for something

that we and our children can’t do without? (...) To think of a balanced budget at this time, is almost like a pipe dream, for the realities and uncertainties of membership decline, as well as student numbers, makes it impossible at this point to come up with anything concrete financially.

Erosion of teacher-availability, enrolment, membership, and community support impacts on the schools. For one thing, it strains enthusiasm, and for those who continue to be committed, it may increase the load to the point where it becomes a burden that is difficult to carry because not all hands are on deck. The message could become that it is better not to tackle this burden of Reformed education because it is a heavy one, and morale spirals even further downward. The balance shifts from looking-out-for-each-other to taking-care-of-one’s-own-interests, and the fundamental principle of our common responsibility for each other in the communion of saints is in jeopardy. The schools were conceived as a communal effort, but the declining support from the community affects both their quality and the basis on which they can be maintained. We are not just facing a staffing issue here.

As organizations go, in general, the longer it takes to address a problem that generates decline, the more difficult it is to correct. Decline often coincides with stress, conflict, and turnover (increasing the challenge to deal adequately with the problem). Sometimes, decline may not immediately get noticed, or the problem

may be perceived as insignificant, and a solution as unjustifiably costly or disruptive. Management literature also points out that leaders could aggravate the problem by isolating themselves from the organization's grass-roots, or by passing decisions that make turnaround more difficult. A crisis looms when stakeholders begin to withdraw their commitment from the organization, or to join "the competition." The base of human as well as financial resources is diminishing, and the organization needs "to undergo major revitalization or suffer certain failure."¹ I relate this bit of organization theory not to point fingers (although each reader may be able to illustrate the point with local examples), but to help ourselves see where we are at, and to shoulder and support the task of educating the next generation together once again.

Turnaround

That is the point of this rather gloomy picture at the beginning of a new school year, when many shoulder the task at hand with renewed vigour and enthusiasm? Typically, a turnaround requires a clearly articulated and motivating vision, well-defined values, and a willingness to accomplish the change through people and organizational redesign. I believe that because the Lord calls us to shoulder the task of bringing up the next generation, and because He gives our communities the blessings to do so, He will also make it possible for us together to do it. In past issues of *Clarion*, Rev. Eikelboom and Rev. Slomp have shared valuable insights on what that call entails.² If our communities accept that call, and if we help one another to do so as our common responsibility, we can expect our schools to thrive under God's blessing, and the next generation to benefit in many ways. Then we will see what Neerlandia's principal observed:

Overall, we give thanks to our heavenly Father for the teaching and learning that could take place at Covenant Canadian Reformed School this past year. Once again He has crowned our year with blessings too numerous to count. We pray that he

will cause those blessings to continue again next year. We should continue to recognize the school as a blessing and continue to utilize the blessings He has given. The blessing of an education that is firmly rooted in God's Word is a very precious gift. The kind of education that a child receives has an impact on them for the rest of their lives.

The same is reflected in Lynden's chairman's notes: "Everything accomplished thus far was due to the strength and wisdom that has been given to us as gifts from the Lord. It is our hope that we continue to use these gifts for his purpose."

Similarly, the call to a community-wide effort is underlined by another chairman:

As board we regularly receive disappointing news in the form of members resigning as soon as their last child leaves. . . , or families who do not wish to become members after they are married, receive their first child, or have children at an age that pre-support would normally start. As covenantal school, the support of single members, families without children in school, and those who choose to home school is very important. This support comes in many ways: Your prayer first and foremost, supportive and encouraging speech, volunteering and participating in activities, and also by financial support. This support helps everyone, and conversely withdrawing your support makes it harder on everyone. Please consider these things prayerfully.

In conclusion

Our schools are the fruit of a commitment made as communities and as parents to embrace the covenantal task of bringing up the next generation in the fear of the Lord. In the covenant, these communities comprise the whole local church, not just those members who would directly and immediately benefit from the schools' services³, even if direct control is given to the parents. As increasing numbers of members in our communities no longer seem to see their responsibility in this regard, and our

school societies are increasingly faced with symptoms of organizational decline and even crisis, let us be prepared to ask of them and each other, "What are you doing for the education of my children?" and, "what can I do for the education of your children?" If the answer is, "Nothing," or, "None of your business," we may have some explaining to do. But, for the sake of a vibrant communion of saints, and for the honour of God, let's not just let it go.

Let us expect leadership from our ministers and consistories to reinvigorate and to re-articulate the meaning of the communion of saints in all respects – including its relevance for the schools. Let us consider how we can perhaps make our schools more meaningful for diverse demands and expectations. Let us actively consider how the gifts the Lord has given each of us can be used for the benefit of the whole body of Christ (and not just in the school, but in the whole spectrum of life). Let us also be patient with one another's weaknesses, and pray for the Lord's mercy, especially when we are heavily burdened. May the Lord hear our prayers, and bless our efforts. May He bless Reformed education as evidenced around us. May his Name be praised.

1. Robey, Daniel, and Sales, Carol A. (1994). *Designing Organizations*. Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin, pp. 348 ff.

2. Eikelboom, R.J. The Importance of Education: Just the Parents' Business? 1 and 2. *Clarion* 52(6) pp. 144-145, and 52(13) pp. 313-315. Slomp, W.B. Education and the Soul of the Child: Defining the Role of the Home, the Church and the School in the Upbringing of the Child 1 and 2. *Clarion* 52(12) pp. 281-283, and 52(13) pp. 305-307.

3. This is recognized by implication in a book published this spring by the Federation of Independent Schools in British Columbia: *Justice Achieved: The Political Struggle of Independent Schools in British Columbia*. I quote via the June 1, 2003 *Credo Chronicle* (Credo Christian High School): "The Dutch (in general, ks) . . . were concerned about the increasing absence of religious values and morals in the public school system. They looked to schools to educate their children in accordance with their own values, beliefs, and customs, including a thorough knowledge of the Bible and a Calvinist, Christian worldview."

Press Release of Regional Synod West, held on November 18, 2003 at Yarrow, BC

On behalf of the convening church, the Church of Yarrow, B.C., Rev. C. J. VanderVelde opened the meeting. He requested all to sing Psalm 95 : 1, 3, read Ephesians 4:1-16 and led in prayer to ask the Lord for his blessing. He extended a welcome to all.

The credentials were examined and all *primi* delegates were present except for one who was replaced by his alternate.

Classis Pacific East: The Revs. C.J. VanderVelde and J. Moesker; the elders C. Leyenhorst and P.VanWoudenberg.

Classis Pacific West: The Revs. C. Van Spronsen and J. Visscher; the elders H. Moes and J. Vanderstoep.

Classis Alberta: The Revs. R. Aasman and W. B. Slomp; the elders C. DeLeeuw and J. Bosch (Alternate).

Classis Manitoba: The Revs. A.J. Pol and T.G. VanRaalte; the elders J. Kuik and P. Veenendaal.

Election of officers takes place. Elected as chairman: Rev. J. Visscher, vice-chairman – Rev. C. Van Spronsen; clerk – Rev. T.G. Van Raalte. Regional Synod is constituted. Chairman thanks the chairman and ladies of the Church at Yarrow for preparing this meeting and providing us in all our needs. After a few additions the agenda is adopted.

Correspondence: Five appeals were received. A general discussion is held on appeals a and b, dealing with the same matter, after having decided that both appeals were considered admissible.

The Church of Aldergrove appeals a decision of Classis Pacific East of Sept. 26, 2002, (art 14) re: the use of grape juice at the Lord's Supper table. Classis declared that "as a norm wine should be used" while the Consistory of Aldergrove decided that in their circumstances there ought to be a wholesale exception out of pastoral concern for the members.

A brother and sister of this same church appeals the fact that the Church of Aldergrove did not implement the decision of the mentioned Classis while it gave notice that it would be appealed.

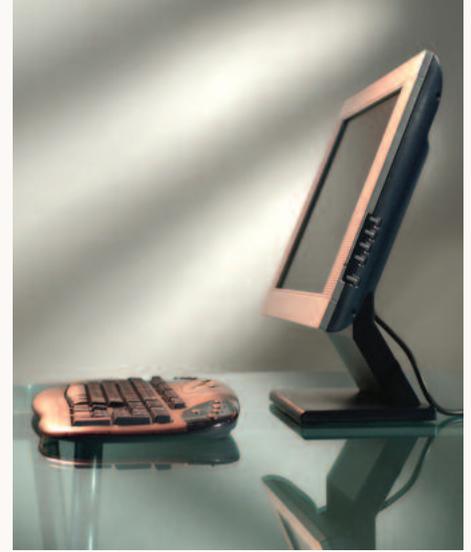
A brother and sister of the Church of Chilliwack submitted three appeals, all dealing with decisions of Classis Pacific East concerning the manner of celebrating the Holy Supper in that Church.

Four committees were appointed to deal with the appeals and come with recommendations to the plenary session.

The Church at Aldergrove appealed the decision of Classis Pacific East of September 26, 2002 (art 14) and felt wronged by the fact that it misapplied the decision of General Synod Neerlandia 2001, art 70 by making wine compulsory in the celebration of the Lord's Supper without regard for local circumstances. Regional Synod judged that the Church of Aldergrove was wronged by Classis. It is to be left in the freedom of the churches to decide whether circumstances warrant an individual or wholesale exception by using grape juice as an acceptable substitute for wine.

A brother and sister appealed the fact that a decision of Classis was not implemented by a local congregation while it was being appealed by its Consistory. Regional Synod judged that it is right to maintain a certain practice while it is being appealed to a major assembly.

Several appeals were dealt with concerning procedures around the celebration of the Holy Supper. Questions relating to the use of the word "norm" with regards to using wine, whether eating and drinking in unison enhances the unity etc. were dealt with at previous Classes and appealed. Regional Synod judged that practical matters which do not take away from the essence of the Lord's Supper celebration ought to be left in the freedom of the local Consistories.



Reports: The Immanuel Church of Edmonton reports on the archives of Regional Synod. They are found to be in good order.

Deputies ad art 48 CO report on their activities. They gave concurring advice to the retirement of Rev. C. Van Spronsen at Classis Pacific West of Sept. 30, 2003, to be effective as of April 30, 2004. They also reported on the Classis Alberta of Oct. 21, 22, 2003 they attended as deputies. Deputies gave concurring advice that Rev. J. L. van Popta be released as of Art 11 CO. Sadness was expressed as to this tragic development in the congregation of Coaldale, Alberta. Prayer was offered for the congregation of Coaldale and its former minister and family.

Appointments:

Deputies of Regional Synod ad art 48 CO:

Alberta: Rev. R. Aasman (Alt.: Rev. E. J. Tiggelaar); Manitoba – Rev. K. Jonker (Alt.: Rev. A. Pol); Classis Pacific East – Rev. R. Schouten (Alt.: Rev. M. H. VanLuik); Classis Pacific West: Rev. J. Visscher (alt.: Rev. E. Kampen).

Treasurer: Br. H. Lubbers of Coaldale, Alberta.

Nominations for the Board of Governors of the Theological College:

Rev. R. Aasman's term will expire in 2004. Regional Synod nominates Rev. W. B. Slomp to take his place. Renominated are the Revs. J. Moesker and R. A. Schouten. As substitutes: The Revs. E. J. Tiggelaar, E. Kampen and C. VanderVelde, in that order.

Delegates for General Synod, Chatham, Feb. 2004:

The Ministers: The Revs. K. Jonker, J. Moesker, W. B. Slomp and C. Van Spronsen.

Church News

Alternates: The Revs. J. Visscher, C. VanderVelde, R. Eikelboom and R. Schouten, in that order.

The Elders: Jacob Kuik, W. Pleiter, J. Vanderstoep and P. VanWoudenberg.

Alternates: C. Baarda, H. DeLeeuw, P. Van Spronsen and J. Bareman, in that order.

Remuneration Review for General Synod Delegates:

It appears that remuneration for General Synod Delegates was not reviewed since 1994. Synod decides loss-of-wage claims to be a maximum of \$200.00 per day, to a maximum of \$1,000 per week. Driving expense reimbursement is set at \$0.32 per km.

Arrangements for the next Regional Synod: convening church: The Church at Calgary, Alberta. Date: Oct. 19, 2004.

Question Period was held.

Censure ad Art 34 CO was not needed.

Acts are read and adopted. Press Release is read and approved.

Closing: the chairman, the Rev. J. Visscher speaks some fitting closing words, requests the singing of Hymn 40:1, 5 and leads in thanksgiving prayer, after which he closes the meeting.

*C. Van Spronsen,
vice-chairman, e.t.*

Press Release of Classis Pacific East in Lynden, WA on Dec. 4, 2003.

The chairman of the convening church requested the delegates to sing Psalm 87:1, 2 and read the same Psalm from Holy Scripture. He then led in prayer for God's blessing on this assembly. Rev. B. Wielenga welcomed the brothers and expressed gratitude that the Lord has allowed the churches in classis to continue to worship in peace. He noted that all churches have ministers of the Word, seeing that Rev. R. Schouten declined the call he received from the church at St. Albert, Alberta, and Rev. P. Holtvlüwer declined the call he received from the Free Reformed Church of Albany, Australia. The delegates of the Church of Chilliwack reported that the credentials were in order. All churches were properly represented, with one

alternate delegate present from the Church of Aldergrove.

Classis was declared constituted and the following officers were appointed: chairman – Rev. B. Wielenga; vice-chairman – Rev. J. Moesker; clerk – Rev. M. VanLuik. The agenda was adopted.

The Form of Subscription for Classis Pacific East was read and duly signed by Rev. Moesker of Vernon.

A letter from Classis Pacific West September 30, 2003 was received. Classis Pacific West agreed to the proposal of Classis Pacific East that at present Classis Pacific East takes responsibility for contact with the Western Classis of the Reformed Church in the United States and Classis Pacific West for contact with Classis Western Canada of United Reformed Churches of North America. This positive response to the request of the previous Classis East was taken note of.

Question period according to Article 44 of the Church Order was held. The Church at Chilliwack requested advice concerning two matters of discipline and one pastoral matter. In closed session Classis gave the advice to proceed with church discipline and the pastoral matter was discussed.

The Church of Lynden requested advice concerning a matter of church discipline. Advice was given in closed session to proceed with discipline.

The Church of Vernon was appointed convening church for next classis. The date, time and place were established as March 25 (alt. date, June 18), 2004 at 9:00 a.m. in Vernon, B.C. The following officers were appointed for the next classis: chairman – Rev. J. Moesker; vice-chairman – Rev. M. VanLuik; clerk – Rev. P. Holtvlüwer.

Personal question period was made use of. The chairman expressed thankfulness that censure according to Article 34 Church Order was not necessary. The Acts were adopted and the press release approved. Psalm 87:3, 4, 5 was sung. The chairman led in prayer and classis was declared closed.

*J. Moesker,
vice-chairman e.t.*

Regional Synods have delegated the following elders and ministers to Synod Chatham 2004:

From Regional Synod East:

Elders: brs. J. Jonker, F. Kampen, H. VanderWel, and J. Van Woudenberg.

Ministers: Revs. D.G.J. Agema, J. DeGelder, W. den Hollander, and J. VanVliet.

Alternates in the following order:

Elders: brs. J.W. Temple, W. Horsman, T. Linde, and B. VanderWoude.

Ministers: Rev. J. Louwerse, J. Huijgen, P.G. Feenstra, and J. Ludwig.

From Regional Synod West:

Elders: brs. Jacob Kuik, W. Pleiter, J. Vanderstoep, and P. VanWoudenberg, Sr.

Ministers: Rev. K. Jonker, J. Moesker, W.B. Slomp, and C. VanSpronsen.

Alternates in the following order:

Elders: brs. C. Baarda, J.F. deLeeuw, P. VanSpronsen, and J. Bareman.

Ministers: Rev. J. Visscher, C.J. VanderVelde, R.J. Eikelboom, and R.A. Schouten.

Declined the call to Cloverdale, British Columbia:

Rev. T.G. Van Raalte

of Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Examined by Classis Niagara on December 17, 2003, and declared eligible for ordination:

Candidate S. Carl Van Dam

The ordination will take place January 4, 2004, D.V., in the worship service of Covenant Canadian Reformed Church (Grassie).

Eligible for call:

Candidate Walter Geurts

3417 Rockwood Drive
Burlington, ON L7N 3H6
905-631-8433

wgeurts@cogeco.ca

Our Little Magazine



Hello everyone. I would like to wish you and your family a happy new year. May the Lord guide you during the coming year. Did you do anything special during the Christmas holidays? Was there any snow where you live so you could go tobogganing or sledding or so you could build snow forts or snowmen. Send me a letter and let me know what you did during the holidays.

Love, Aunt Betty

From the Mailbox:

Hello **Michael Deboer**. Thanks for your letter. It must be lots of fun living on a farm with all the different animals that you have. You must have been excited to win first and fifth place showing your uncle's calf.

Hello **Samantha Linde**. I'm glad you enjoyed the puzzle. Maybe you can make one up and send it to me to put in the *Clarion*. You sure have to get up early for school. It's a good thing that you're used to it.

Puzzles

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

Every Bible city and town in this list begins with the letter A.
Can you find all 30 in the word search?

- | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|------------|----------|
| ABDON | ADAMI | ANAB | ARVAD |
| ABEL-MEHOLAH | ADAR | ANA HARATH | ASHDOD |
| ACCAD | ADMAH | ANTIOCH | ASHKELON |
| ACCHO | ADRAMYTTIUM | APHEK | ATAROTH |
| ACHOR | ADULLAM | APOLLONIA | AVITH |
| ACHZIB | AIJALON | ARAD | AZEKAH |
| ADADAH | AIN | ARIMATHEA | ADAMAH |
| ALEXANDRIA | ARPAD | | |

PEN PAL WANTED

Michael Deboer would like to have a pen pal. He is 9 years old and is in grade four. He enjoys helping on the farm, biking, swimming and playing soccer and baseball.

His address is:
6311 Silver Street, RR #2
St. Anns, ON L0R 1Y0

Obey

It's not always easy to do what we're told to do. As Christians, we can ask God to help us obey.

Unscramble these words. Each word has something to do with obedience.

- Who should we obey?
OGD
_____ RTAPENS
- Who (or what) obeys God?
TEANUR
_____ MDSEON
- Where does obedience come from?
RATEH
- Who helps us obey?
YOHL PITRSI
- Four Bible people who obeyed God:
HONA
BAMAR
VADID
LUPA