



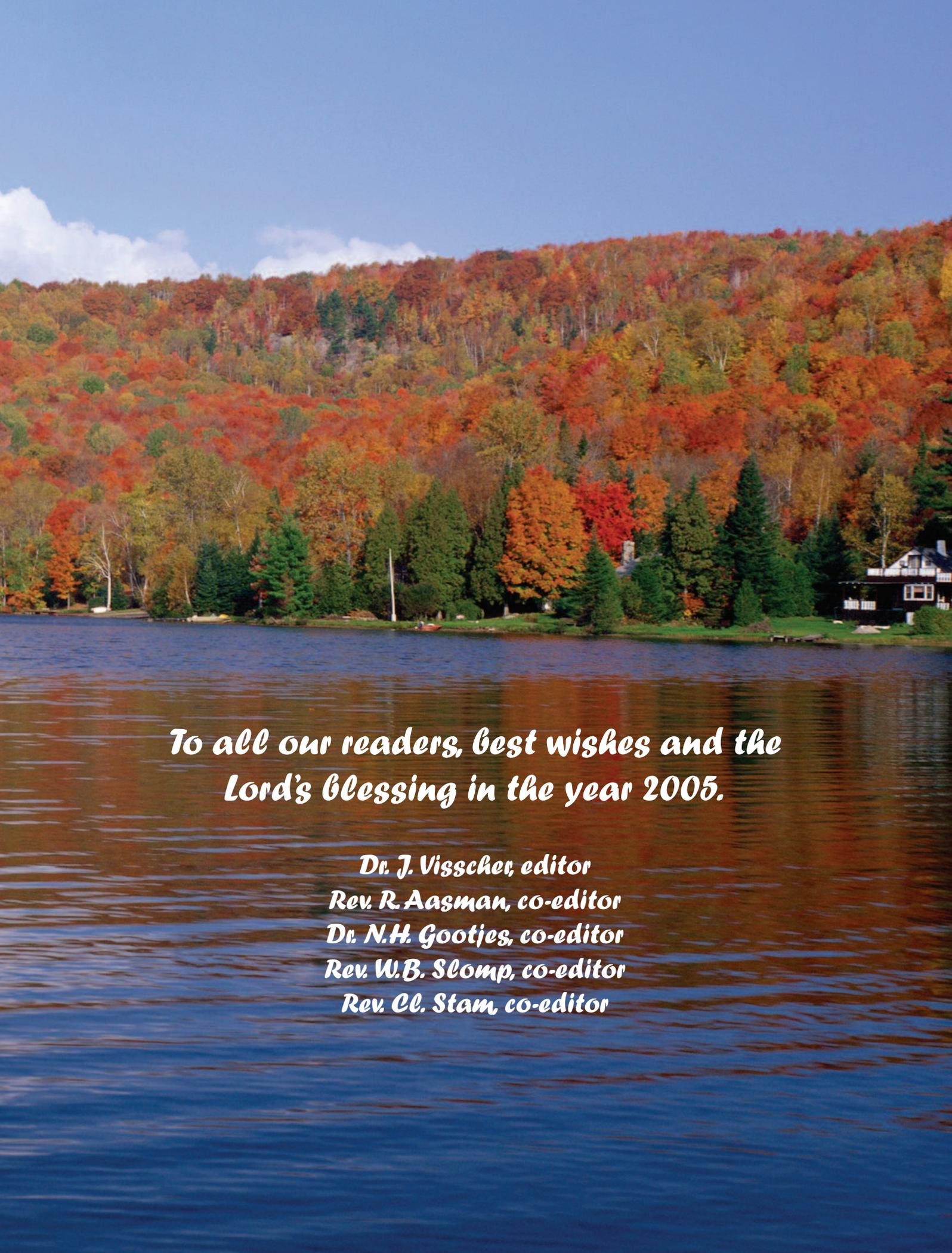
Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE



**Christ our Lord:
He is before all things,
and in Him all things
hold together.**

Colossians 1:17



*To all our readers, best wishes and the
Lord's blessing in the year 2005.*

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Shall We Sing?

If music and song in worship are there to praise God, then let it be done to the best of our ability.

Of all the different times of the year Christmas time is the one that we most associate with music and singing. The month of December appears on the calendar and many homes begin to echo with the sound of well-known carols. In the worship services attention is directed at the coming birth of the Saviour and fitting songs are selected. Choirs across the land dust off their sheet music and prepare for yet another annual performance of G.F. Handel's *The Messiah*. Why, even when you turn on the radio or visit the local mall, you can not escape the sounds of the season.

From all of this one might gain the impression that music and singing are doing well. But such is not really the case. Whereas once churches were filled with the sound of human voices, such sounds are growing ever fainter. In some case the members are hardly being asked to sing. In other instances it appears as if the members have lost the ability to sing. Their lips hardly move. Their mouths barely open. Their voices are not heard. Congregational singing is on the way out.

Does it matter?

Should all of this concern us? It is obvious that many churches are treating this as a natural development. This is all part of a new age, the age of the spectator worshipper. People go to the worship services to meet with God but also to be inspired by the preacher, entertained by the band and emotionally moved by the music. There is very little in the way of interaction and participation. It is more a case of sitting down and having it all come at you. You are there to receive it and to take it in.

Or are you there to do more? Is lesser musical involvement on the part of the people of God just a trend to be accepted? Or is it so that God demands and expects our congregational praise? Is this what worship should be like? Is the Lord pleased with muted lips, still lips or singing lips?

God loves music

When we turn to the Holy Scriptures, there are both underlying principles to grasp and obvious practices to observe. For one there is the obvious but often overlooked fact that God our Creator gave us the gift of music and formed us with voices that are made to sing. Also, there is the fact that

heaven is filled with the sound of music. Open the book of Revelation and you will come across one heavenly chorale after another. The place reverberates with song.

In addition, what is not often realized is that God Himself is a composer who wants His people to sing His compositions. Never heard of that? Turn to Deuteronomy 31:19, 22 and you can hear God say to Moses, "Now write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites. . . so Moses wrote this song that day and taught it to the Israelites."

And this is not all. What about all of those songs that God gave to Israel through David, Solomon, Ethan, Heman, and the sons of Korah? Of course, they are meant to be read, taught and applied, both personally and corporately, but they are also meant to be sung.

Indeed, many of them beg to be sung. "Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation" (Ps 95:1). "Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth" (Ps 96:1). "Zion hears and rejoices and the villages of Judah are glad" (Ps 97:8).

In addition, there are many passages that speak about what our lips are really made for. "His praise will always be on my lips" (Ps 34: 1). "I proclaim righteousness in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips, as you know, O LORD" (Ps 40: 9). "My lips will glorify you" (Ps 63:3).

Or what about those New Testament passages like Ephesians 5:19: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord. . ." or Colossians 3:16: "sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" ?

From these passages and more, it is obvious that God loves music and wants his people to make music to Him. He made us to speak and sing. He calls on his children to worship Him in music and song. A people who are silent in worship are a strange people indeed.

God loves choirs too

But does this mean that the congregation besides being a singing body should be the only singing body? This is a statement that can also be heard; however, one can question whether it is an accurate one.



A closer look at Psalms 134 and 136 conveys the impression that here we have to do with songs that were sung antiphonally. For example in Psalm 134 it is the people who sing to the priests in the words, "Praise the LORD, all you servants of the LORD who minister by night in the house of the LORD. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the LORD." Next, it is the priests who sing to the people, "May the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion." The same applies to Psalm 136 where the first part of each verse was most likely sung by the priestly choir and the congregation would respond each time with the identical antiphony "His love endures forever."

Much more can be said about priestly praise. It is a most interesting and instructive part of Old Testament worship. For the moment, however, we want to point to it to show that while congregational praise was common, it was not uniform. God did allow for different forms of musical expression.

In any case, the fundamental point is that in the worship of God's people there should be music and song. Why, even the New Testament church understood this for one of its characteristics was "praising God" (Acts 2:47).

The historic Christian church has always loved music

Little wonder that with this kind of background the early church was also noted for its musical ministry. Some of the ancient church fathers were at the same time noted composers. The Reformers by and large also had a great love for music and congregational singing.

I said "by and large" for there are exceptions among them, and it may be that the strangest one is Ulrich Zwingli. He went out of his way to suppress congregational singing and he did so based on the strangest of exegesis. He extended his interpretation of Matthew 6:6,7 about praying by yourself in your room in such a way that it ended up as teaching a ban on all congregational singing.

Having thus missed the boat on Matthew 6, he missed it on Colossians 3:16 as well. Listen to him explain: "Here Paul does not teach us mumbling and murmuring in the churches, but shows us the true song that is pleasing to God, that we sing the praise and glory of God not with our voices, like the Jewish singers, but with our hearts." (*Interpretation and Substantiation*, 350, 2) Zwingli believed and taught that the Christian church should engage in inner singing.

Thankfully, however, he stands out as the exception. Martin Luther, John Calvin, Martin Bucer and others all disagreed and insisted that music and song in worship needs to be re-claimed by the congregation. Unfortunately, the Middle Ages had caused the priestly choir to become dominant, but they reformed the church in such a way that the people were taught and encouraged to sing again.

The modern church is in a music crisis

And sing they did. One may well question the quality and orthodoxy of what the people later sung in worship. The influence of pietism which resulted in hymns filled with deep introspection and the impact of revivalism with its stress on the emotions are both to be deplored, however, there can be no doubt that the people were at the least still singing.

Today the same can not be said. As mentioned earlier, modern day North American Christendom prefers to watch what is happening up front. Generations accustomed to sitting spell-bound in front of the television and the movie screen now expect to sit just as spell-bound in church buildings. It is religion as entertainment that is winning the day. The pulpit has been replaced by the stage and the stage is there because the show must go on.

Some of the ancient church fathers were at the same time noted composers. The Reformers by and large also had a great love for music and congregational singing.

Is God pleased and honoured by all this? If our understanding of how music and song functioned in biblical times and revelation is correct, then He can not be. God wants to hear his people sing.

Are you singing?

And this means you too! In the Canadian Reformed Churches the stress on congregational singing remains, but there are also indicators that we could and should do better. Some churches all but ignore those who accompany the congregation and simply expect them to do their job. Some members hardly open their mouths when called upon to sing. Others are so at odds with what is being sung, namely the Psalms, the Hymns and the tunes, that they hardly make an effort. They have made the music of the church one of their issues.

Yet that is not how it should be. If music and song in worship are there to praise God, then let it be done to the best of our ability. Let the most skilled accompanists be found, trained and supported. Let the mouths and hearts of the people of God be opened wide. Let musical likes and dislikes not become a stumbling block to congregational praise.

For remember, our God is worthy of all the praise on earth and in heaven! He wants to hear us sing like the angels. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests." (Luke 2:14)





What's Inside?

This is our Christmas and Year End issue of *Clarion*. We have a number of fitting articles relating to these two significant events. Also Dr. J. Visscher writes in his editorial about congregational singing. This time of year is a occasion of much joy and singing. Hopefully our congregations are untied in heart and mouth during times of singing the psalms and hymns.

In this issue there are a number of special events being considered. New ministers arrive and some retire. Young people graduate from our schools. Women are having their retreats where they have good fellowship together and delve into the Word of God. We are appreciative of these things. We remember our brother Rev. Clarence Stam who has retired from the active ministry. Clearly he will remain active but at a reduced pace because of his illness.

This is a special issue for me since it is my last as managing editor. After about four and a half years of managing *Clarion*, it is time to give it to someone else. I have really enjoyed the work – especially working with the editors and publisher – but also with the many contributors to *Clarion*. It has been an exciting time. But it has also been time consuming and so this work comes to an end. I stay on as contributing editor and hand over the reigns of my work to my daughter Laura Veenendaal who has the title “copy manager.” I wish her well.

Dear readers, may the Lord grant you a blessed Christmas season and may He be your guide as you enter a new year. Greetings and best wishes from all of us at *Clarion* to you our beloved readers.

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Simeon's Christmas Joy

For my eyes have seen your salvation . . .

Luke 2:30

In the passage from which the Christmas meditation is drawn this year Simeon takes the baby Jesus in his arms, blesses God, and sings a prophetic song about his glorious redemption. We are not told a whole lot about Simeon. The Holy Spirit clearly wants to direct us to what he did and said, instead of who he is. Luke only tells us that he was "righteous and devout," and that he "was waiting for the consolation of Israel."

Of course, all of Israel was waiting for this. But the vast majority held their own conceptions of who the promised deliverer would be. According to the spirit of that age he would be a national hero, a man with authority and power, who would unite them against their Roman overlords and bring back "the golden era" of David and Solomon.

Simeon, however, is eagerly awaiting the consolation, or to render that another way, the "Comforter" of Israel. He is longing for the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in chapter 40, "Comfort, comfort my people . . . proclaim to her that her sin has been paid for." The Messiah he is looking for is one who will deliver them from their sin, who will cover their iniquity, who will bring reconciliation with God through atonement.

Simeon had received a special commission from God: He would not die until he had seen the promised Messiah.

Simeon goes to the temple. Not by chance. Not out of curiosity. But prompted by the Spirit of God. It is not that Simeon has a soft spot with God and therefore God will give him a peek at the Christ. This divinely ordained temple visit is not merely to satisfy Simeon's personal longing. That element is certainly there, but it goes far beyond that. Simeon has a task to perform. God had promised Simeon that he would see the Lord's Christ – the anointed of the Lord. He must observe Him with his own eyes. That means he must be a witness to the truth that God had sent the Redeemer.

Simeon was at the temple before Jesus was brought in by his parents. He is waiting in the outer court, the court of the women, for Mary would not have been permitted to go beyond that. God had only told him that he would see the Anointed of the Lord. Nothing more. There is no reason to believe that he knew he was going to see a baby. For all we know he may have been anticipating a full-grown man.

He waits patiently, and presently a young woman in simple garb, without any attendants, without any frills, enters with a child in her arms. At that moment the Holy Spirit says to him, "This is the one!" And Simeon wastes no time. He scoops the child in his arms, and looking at that baby, says, "Sovereign Lord, as you

have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation."

Simeon sees the Christ of God. That does not lead him to a state of contemplative silence. No, right there in the temple, in front of the priests and the other worshipers, he bears witness that their child is more than the temple, that the Promised One of God has arrived.

The comprehensiveness of this salvation may be shown by considering from what we are saved. From fear of death, as can be observed in the first part of Simeon's song. But there is so much more! We are saved from sin, from guilt and estrangement, from the power of sin, from ignorance of the truth, from bondage to evil, from fear of hell, from pressures of the world, and from a meaningless life.

Salvation is so rich. It includes peace with God, access to his throne of grace, assurance of our sonship, the hope of glory, endurance in suffering, the Spirit of the risen Christ as the first-fruit of our redemption, joy in God, love for one another, and everlasting life. In Christ, truly, we have the fullness of salvation.

This salvation, which is experienced and enjoyed already now, originated in heaven. My eyes have seen *your* salvation. That means: God designed it. No human being had any input. It all stemmed from the Father's electing love and his



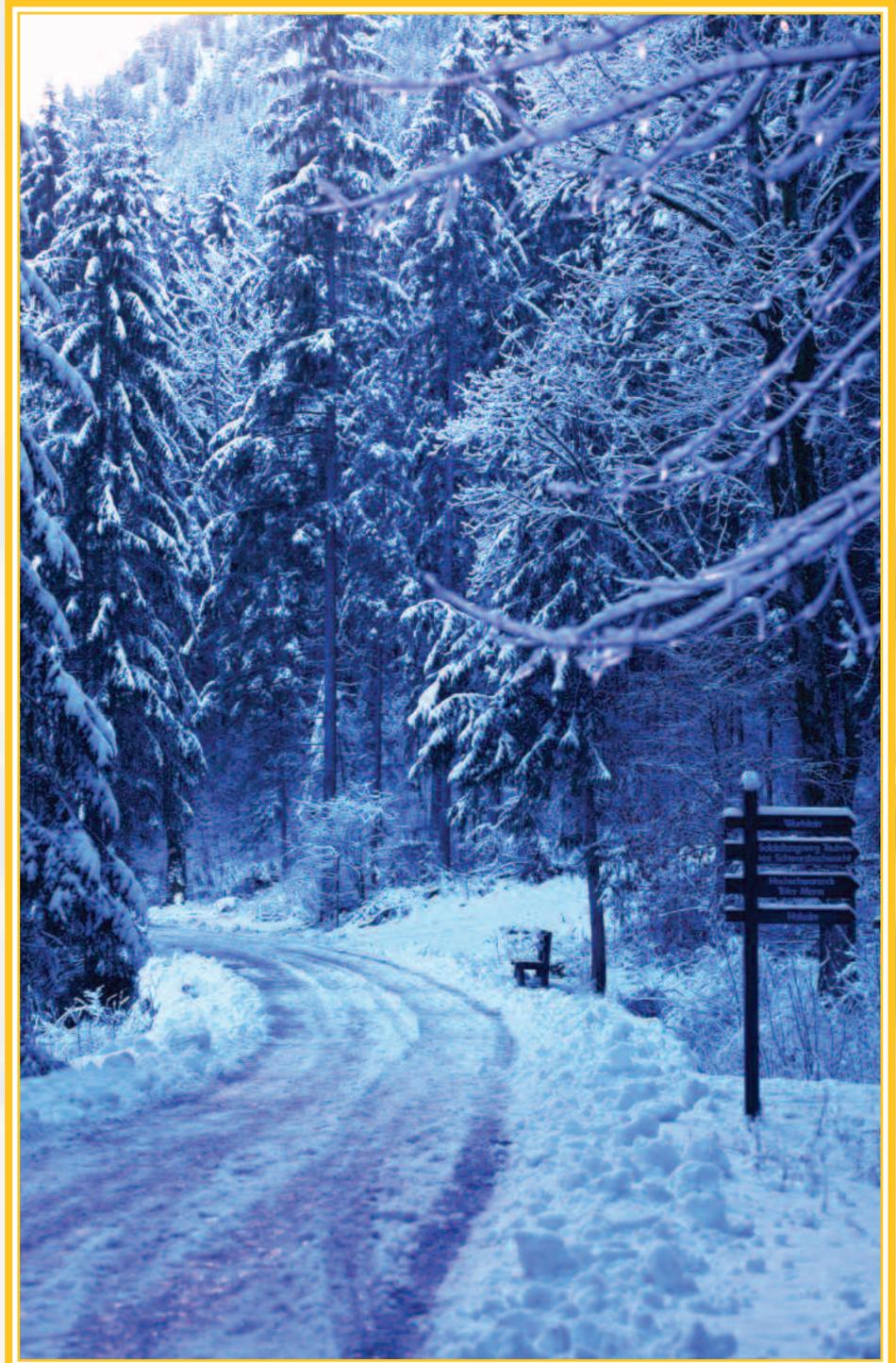
boundless grace. Nor was this precious Gift to be reserved only for Simeon. That the saving advent of Jesus is for all people is described more fully in verse 32. Christ is “a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

The realization of who Mary and Joseph’s child is, can only be gleaned from what God had revealed through the prophets. It is only in the light of Scripture that people will see Him as God’s salvation. That’s why Simeon’s hymn of praise draws so clearly and deliberately from the prophecy of Isaiah, and in particular from the sections dealing with “The Servant of the Lord.”

Jesus is “a light” from God. When the people heard that, they should have called to mind Isaiah 49: 6. There God declares about his Servant, the Redeemer of Israel, “I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”

Simeon saw a lot, and there was great depth to his joy. But he did not see the fulfillment of his prophetic praise in Christ’s earthly ministry. We have seen how Christ went from the manger to the cross, and from the cross to the throne. How much more should we not be his servants?

Christmas has meaning only if Christ means everything to you. Let your faith grasp Him who came to die for you. Let your heart cling to Him who lives and reigns for you in heaven. Let your hope be anchored upon Him who is coming for you upon the clouds of heaven. Then you will see Him face to face. Not in his humiliation as Simeon did. You will see Him in the fullness of his power and splendour, surrounded by angels, and accompanied by all the saints who have departed in peace.





Reversal and Paradox: A Christian Theme*

*“Again the darkness is past, again Light is made...
The people that sat in the darkness of ignorance
see the Great Light of full knowledge.
Old things are passed way, behold all things are become new.
The letter gives way, the Spirit comes to the front.
The shadows flee away, the Truth comes in upon them. . .
He that was without mother becomes without father.”¹*

Introduction

Close to the heart of the Christian faith are reversal and paradox. In God’s wisdom and grace He has worked a radical salvation for miserable mankind. He gives no superficial solution to sin and mankind’s estrangement from him, but one of dramatic and far-reaching change, such that what was can hardly be imagined in the blessing of what is. And this unimaginable power of change is worked by God in a manner that no human could fathom, in a way that even seems contradictory.

Plainly yet beautifully such gospel reversals and paradoxes may be stated: in Christ’s death is our life; where the old man once lived, now the new man lives; where slavery once held sway, now liberty reigns; because God became man, and the innocent made guilty, sin has given way to righteousness.

The foundation of folly

In the past, some theologians have become caught up in particularly paradox as key to the Christian faith, and have strayed into the uncertainties of existentialist philosophy. But our faith rests on more than simple word opposition – we who were dead now live

only because of the penalty Christ paid for us to the Father. But against the background of those teachings about our legal standing before God, we may marvel at this theme of paradox and reversal running through the Christian faith.

The gospel’s fundamental alteration Martin Luther loved to speak of, dubbing it “the joyful exchange.” This exchange is that Christ’s righteousness becomes our righteousness, our sin his sin. Indeed, sometimes this gospel might be framed as an exchange or “reversal” (Christ went from innocence to guilt, we from sinners to saints), or sometimes as a “paradox” (in Christ’s suffering is our comfort).

To ponder these most fundamental changes can serve to highlight the complete unexpected-ness of it. Humanly speaking, who could have dreamed of it in this way? This is the scandal of the gospel over which so many stumble, thinking it foolishness or a contradiction in terms. The reversal of our sinful reality, brought about by the offence of the cross, can only be the work of God; “The foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength” (1 Cor 1:25).

Remembering the reversal

We can find a meditation on this reversal in the Form for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper in the *Book of Praise*. In the section on the remembrance of Christ, we find a long paragraph about the suffering of Christ in our place. “From the beginning of his incarnation to the end of his life on earth, He bore for us the wrath of God, under which we should have perished eternally.”

And then the paradoxical sufferings of our Lord are described – somehow in the different elements of his pain is the richness of our gain. “He was *bound* that He might *free* us from our sins. He suffered countless *insults* that we might never be put to *shame*. He was innocently *condemned* to death that we might be *acquitted* at the judgment seat of God.”

The Form continues with a brief summary of the atonement, “By all this He has taken our *curse* upon himself that He might fill us with his *blessing*.” Finally, Christ’s anguished cry on the cross is used to highlight a climactic, blessed reversal, “Then He called out with a loud voice, ‘My God, my God, why have you *forsaken* me?’ that we might be *accepted* by God and nevermore be *forsaken* by Him.”²



Antilogy in the atonement

Other details of the Lord's life and death have been treated in this way, already early in church history. Cyrian, a third century church father from North Africa, wrote a treatise called *On Patience*. He starts with the reversal inherent in the Son's earthly life and task: "His *immortality* being in the meantime laid aside, He suffers himself to become *mortal*, so that the *guiltless* may be put to death for the salvation of the *guilty*." Then on Christ's time of suffering in the wilderness Cyprian observes this: "For forty days He *fasts*, by whom others are *feasted*. He is *hungry*, and suffers famine, that they who had been in hunger of the word and of grace may be *satisfied* with heavenly bread."

In the past, some theologians have become caught up in particularly paradox as key to the Christian faith, and have strayed into the uncertainties of existentialist philosophy.

Cyprian next arrives at the passion, and sees much merciful paradox – things that, to say them out loud, seem at once contradictory, yet are wonderfully true and real: "He was crowned with *thorns*, who crowns martyrs with eternal *flowers*. He was smitten on the face with *palms*, who gives the *true palms* to those who overcome. He was despoiled of his *earthly garment*, who clothes others in the *vesture of immortality*. He was fed with *gall*, who gave *heavenly food*. He was given to drink of *vinegar*, who appointed the *cup of salvation*." Then, in conclusion Cyprian marvels, "That *guiltless*, that just One – no, He who is *innocency* itself and justice itself – is counted among

transgressors, and truth is oppressed with false witnesses."³

Speaking on Jesus Christ, in the next century Gregory Nazianus would continue this theme, "[He is] King of all upon earth, but subject to the King above; earthly and heavenly; temporal and yet immortal. . . half-way between greatness and lowliness; in one person combining spirit and flesh."⁴

Such oppositions are also found in a few places in the Scriptures to describe Christ's atoning sacrifice and its impact for us. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we read, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Or think of 1 Peter 2:24, "by his *wounds* you have been *healed*," and 2 Corinthians 8:9, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was *rich*, yet for your sakes he became *poor*, so that you through his *poverty* might become *rich*."

Christian contradictions

If we begin with Christ and those things in his work that appear self-contradictory, then we might also look at paradoxes in the lives of Christ's followers. Indeed, the behaviour of Christians has always been striking to outside observers. A letter from the early period of the church, *The Epistle to Diognetus*, describes the conduct of believers as immediately contradictory.

"They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. . . They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. . . They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all.

"They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonoured, and yet in their very dishonour are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honour; they do good, yet

are punished as evil-doers. . . They are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred."⁵

If we begin with Christ and those things in his work that appear self-contradictory, then we might also look at paradoxes in the lives of Christ's followers.

A treatise (probably falsely) attributed to the philosopher Francis Bacon expands the idea of Christian paradox even further. In *The Characters of a Believing Christian in Paradoxes and Seeming Contradictions* the author covers many aspects of the Christian religion. He sees paradox and contradiction in the Christian's doctrine, in his ethics, in his attitude, in his home life, in his future – illogic everywhere he turns.

"[A Christian] believes three to be one, and one to be three. . . a virgin to be a mother of a son, and that very son of hers to be her maker. . . He believes the God of all grace to have been angry with one that has never offended him; and that God, who hates sin, to be reconciled to man though sinning continually, and never making, or being able to make him satisfaction. . . He believes himself to be precious in God's sight and yet loathes himself in his own. . . He loses his life and gains by it, and while he loses it, he saves it. . . The more he forsakes worldly things, the more he enjoys them. . . He is the best child, husband, brother, friend; yet hates father and mother, brother and sister. . . He is severe to his children because he loves them. . .

"He believes the angels to be more excellent creatures than himself, and yet accounts them his servants. . . He



believes his prayers are heard, even when they are denied, and gives thanks for that which he prays against... He cannot sin, yet he can do nothing without sin... He is a serpent and dove, a lamb and a lion, a reed and a cedar... He counts self-murder a heinous sin, yet is ever busied in crucifying the flesh, and in putting to death his earthly members... [At the last day] his Advocate, his Surety shall be his Judge, his mortal part shall become immortal...and a finite creature shall possess an infinite happiness.”⁶

Personal paradoxes

The apostle Paul did not systematically recount the Christian contradictions as others have, but especially from his second letter to the Corinthians we know he was well acquainted with such paradoxes. To Paul was given the work of preaching Christ, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light. This work was not without struggle. As Paul writes of his ministry in 2 Corinthians 6:9-10 he sees several paradoxes, things that are contradictory and seem nonsensical – yet he rejoices that in the heavenly perspective these experiences make perfect sense: “Known, yet regarded as *unknown*; *dying*, and yet we *live on*; *beaten*, and yet *not killed*; *sorrowful*, yet always *rejoicing*; *poor* yet making many *rich*; having *nothing*, and yet possessing *everything*.”

Paul has been forced to give his résumé of suffering to the Corinthians. He says how despite all his sincere work, the churches still favoured those who claimed higher position and greater gifts. Tortured, wasting away, having very little – and all this met by some with indifference, or with comparison to those apostles who appeared so much better. But somehow Paul bears up all this physical and mental pain, for it is borne for the sake of the gospel. Even in his losses is gain, in his torture is contentment.

So how can Paul and we today recount our struggles and always give that yet? Even in a Christian’s grieving and losing he can be “sorrowful, yet always

rejoicing... having nothing, and yet possessing everything.” It is because we know that in our lives before God, it is not about our strength, wisdom, or standing, but about the grace and power of God that dominates all. By our own effort, we could not reverse our sin to righteousness, nor turn evil to our good. We could not do it, but Christ has done it, bearing our curse for our blessing and enabling us to serve Him in the thankfulness He asks of us.

In the cross Christ answers our sorrowful prayers, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my *power* is made perfect in your *weakness*.” With Paul we may all say, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties” (2 Cor 12:9-10). Who could without contradiction boast or delight in such things? Only the Christian who acknowledges his own emptiness but his fullness in Christ, the Christian who has his inheritance already, and who awaits it in full.

Believing the gospel of the cross that appears foolish and contradictory, even paradoxical, we can go on with all our praying, serving, and struggling, for in Christ the Christian’s joyful paradox is always this, “When I am *weak*, then I am *strong*.”

** This article was written and submitted by Rev. R. Bredenhof while still a student at our Theological College.*

¹ From Oration 38, sec. I, “On the Theophany, or Birthday of Christ,” by Gregory Nazianus; *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), p. 345.

² *Book of Praise: Anglo-Genevan Psalter*. Rev. ed. (Winnipeg: Premier Printing, 1984), p. 597. In quotations throughout this article, emphasis is added by the present writer.

³ From Treatise 9, secs. 6-7; *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5 (1965), pp. 485-486.

Church News

Examined by Classis South of the Free Reformed Churches of Western Australia and declared eligible for ordination in Armadale on November 7:

Candidate Ian Wildeboer

Called by the Free Reformed Churches of Darling Downs and Launceston, Australia:

Rev. R.J. Eikelboom
of Calgary, Alberta.

Called and accepted the call by the church of Fergus (North), Ontario:

Candidate Walter Geurts

Accepted the call to Carman East, Manitoba:

Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer
of Aldergrove, British Columbia.

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

Candidate John Smith

Accepted the call to Yarrow, BC:
Rev. C. Bouwman
of the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott, Australia.

In his rhetoric Cyprian clearly uses some poetic license, but the basic Scriptural idea of the reversal of our condition through Christ’s suffering underlie his paradoxes.

⁴ From Oration 38, sec. I I; loc. cit., p. 348.

⁵ From ch. 5 of the Epistle; *Early Christian Fathers*. Cyril C. Richardson, tr. and ed. The Library of Christian Classics, vol. I (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), pp. 216-217.

⁶ *The Works of Lord Bacon*, vol. I (London: William Ball, 1838), pp. 341-343.



Women in the Line of Jesus

*Taken together, the four women in the line of
Jesus truly highlight God's grace.*

For many of us, the Gospel of Matthew begins with the words, "This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about." This immediately takes us to the familiar account of the way Joseph discovered Mary was pregnant, his plan to divorce her, the appearance of an angel to put his mind at ease, and the birth of our Lord. That we tend to treat Matthew's account of the life of our Lord as starting at this point will be evident not only every Christmas season when a Scripture reading is taken from this Gospel, but also when the meal time reading has brought a family to this point in Scripture again.

Yet, while it is understandable that we treat the Gospel of Matthew as beginning with the birth account of our Lord from Mary, it is not the beginning. The Gospel begins with the words, "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham." Before the actual account of our Lord's birth, Matthew gives a list of names divided into three groups of fourteen.

This is most significant. For one thing, it places the birth of our Saviour in the context of God's covenant promises to Abraham. The birth of Jesus was not a new, unexpected development, but something long in the works. Furthermore, not only does this genealogy show our God faithful to his covenant, it also reinforces that this covenant rests in the sovereign grace of

God. God's sovereign grace stands in contrast to any works of man. We see that especially when we come across the names of four women who stand in the line of our Lord Jesus near the end of the first group of fourteen and at the beginning of the second group.

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There, in the midst of all the names of men in the line of Jesus we come across Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Uriah's wife, all "mothers" of the Lord Jesus. It is possible to find the names of other women in our Lord's line. For example, we learn that the mother of Rehoboam was Naamah, an Ammonite (1 Kgs 14:21). Under the guidance of the Spirit, Matthew, however, mentions only these four.

From the Scriptures we know that each of these women has a story around her. We might even say they are women with a certain reputation. A review of each of these women in the line of our Lord Jesus will impress upon us that his birth came about as the fruit of God's sovereign grace working through history.

Tamar

The first woman we come across is Tamar. Her story is found in Genesis 38. It is a masterful account as in one chapter the author describes events that must have occurred over a period of twenty to twenty-five years. We read of Judah's exploits after Joseph had been sold into Egypt. In effect, Judah left the family and teamed up with a Canaanite businessman and he married a Canaanite woman. Tamar enters the picture as she becomes the wife of Judah's oldest son, Er, and then is given to Judah's second son Onan when Er dies because the LORD was displeased with him. Onan also brought the wrath of God upon himself because of his unfaithful attitude and dies. Tamar was made to wait for the much younger third son, Shelah, whom Judah was reluctant to give because he feared Shelah might die too.

From the account, we do not get much of a picture of Tamar's character. All we can see is how after waiting patiently she took the situation in her own hands when Judah's wife Shua had died and Judah had not yet given her his youngest son, Shelah, though he was old enough. She disguised herself as a shrine prostitute and waited along the road where she knew Judah would pass by.

We certainly do not get too noble an impression of Judah when we read about the way he readily sought some



carnal pleasure with the disguised Tamar. He did not even seem to care what the woman looked like. Furthermore, we see him work with a double standard in that he was very indignant upon discovering Tamar was pregnant. It was only because Tamar had taken safety precautions in the way of getting pledges from Judah that she was able to spare her own life by producing these pledges at the right time.

The end of the story was that Tamar gave birth to twins, Perez and Zerah. It is most remarkable that even though Judah still had his son Shelah, it is Perez, one of the twins to whom Tamar gave birth, who ends up being the one through whom the line from Abraham to our Lord Jesus is traced.

When we look at this story in its totality, there is no evidence of anyone acting out of faith. Judah had not shown the same concern as Abraham when he sent his servant to his family in Haran to find a wife for Isaac. Judah had gone to the world. With respect to Tamar, we have no indication that she acted out of faith. All we can tell for sure is that she acted out of self-interest. There was nothing that merited praise. If anything, it is a story that would bring forth shame. The line from Abraham to our Lord Jesus contains people whose motivations and actions seem to have nothing to do with the LORD's promises. Nevertheless, the LORD gave this woman a place in the line of Jesus.

Rahab

The next woman in the line of our Lord Jesus is Rahab. When we reflect on the story of Rahab, then again we are filled with wonder that she would be a woman in the line of Jesus our Lord. She is clearly identified as a prostitute (See

also Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25). Furthermore, not only was she a woman with an unwholesome past, there was also the fact she was a Canaanite. With respect to the Canaanites, Moses had firmly impressed upon the people of Israel that the LORD did not want them to mix with the people of the land. They were to destroy the Canaanites and other peoples of the land, making no treaty, showing no mercy, and not intermarrying (Deut 7:1-7).

The line from Abraham to our Lord Jesus contains people whose motivations and actions seem to have nothing to do with the LORD's promises.

Even though Rahab had against her that she was a prostitute and a Canaanite, Scripture does testify to her faith. It was evident in the way she spoke to the spies and helped them. It is also acknowledged when she is mentioned in Hebrews 11. Yet, the marvel of it all is that, not only was she spared, she was granted a place in the line of the Lord Jesus. In his grace, the LORD rehabilitated a womb polluted by prostitution, a womb of a woman who belonged to a people that had been put under the ban.

Ruth

Immediately after Rahab, we read of Ruth. Of the women in the line of Jesus, this is the one we might think of as worthy of being there. When we read the book by her name, we come away with the impression that she was truly a

very nice, godly woman. Her love for the LORD, her care for her mother-in-law, and her concern to do things right, stand out as shining examples of virtue and uprightness.

There is one thing, however, that is against her and that makes also Ruth a remarkable mother of our Lord. She was a Moabite. With respect to the Moabites, we read in Deut. 23:3, 4, "No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation. For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor...to pronounce a curse on you." In the case of Ruth, it was only the third or fourth generation since Israel entered the Promised Land. Furthermore, when it says that they were not to be admitted even unto the tenth generation that, in effect, indicated they were banned forever. It is thus remarkable that the LORD made her a woman in the line of our Lord Jesus.

At the same time, there is another aspect that merits attention. The book of Ruth tells us of the concern to preserve the family line of Elimelech. Boaz stepped in as the kinsman-redeemer to restore the property to Naomi. When Ruth gave birth to a child, Naomi considered it as her own. Yet, while the story of Ruth appeared to be all about the line of Elimelech, the genealogy in Matthew does not mention him at all. Rather, the genealogy in Matthew follows that same surprising conclusion as the book of Ruth when Obed is shown to be a link in the line from Perez to David.

The story of Ruth thus has two surprises of grace. First, there is the fact that the LORD took this girl from a cursed people and put her in the line of



our Lord. Second, he took the child to which she gave birth, that legally would stand in the line of Elimelech, and he put it in the line of Boaz, that is, in the Messianic line.

The wife of Uriah

The fourth woman in the line of Jesus is the wife of Uriah. It is remarkable that she is not mentioned by her own name, Bathsheba, but that of her original husband. We can notice the same thing in the book of Kings when mention is made of David, how he loved and served the LORD except for one glaring sin. That sin is described not in terms of Bathsheba but with reference to Uriah the Hittite (1 Kgs 15:5). That highlights the sordid character of the whole affair, touching on not only the adultery but also the cover-up by having Uriah killed.

It is most remarkable that of all the wives David had, the LORD chose a child born from the woman that David had obtained in a devious way. If we did not know of David's subsequent family history, we might think the LORD sanctioned David's action. We know David paid a heavy price for his sin. The child born from the adulterous relationship died and his family life was filled with untold misery from that time on. Yet, the LORD chose the next child born from Bathsheba, namely, Solomon. Because the LORD loved that child he even gave it the name Jedidiah, meaning, "beloved of the LORD" (1 Kgs 12:25).

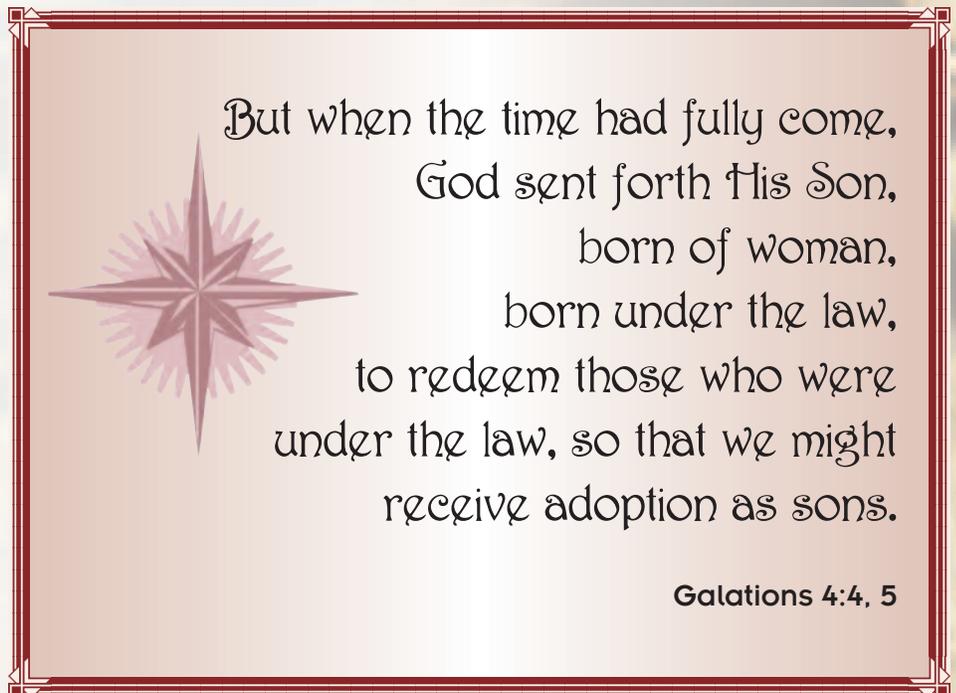
The story of the wife of Uriah brings to mind the darkest part of David's life. In the most important role of David's life, namely, to bring forth the next child in the line of promise, there was nothing for David to take pride in.

A gospel of grace

Taken together, the four women in the line of Jesus truly highlight God's grace. Each had something in her life that would give every reason to consider her an unworthy candidate to stand in the line of the Saviour. They were all a far cry from the virgin Mary, the final woman in the line of Jesus. While we know that Mary too was sinful, she comes across as a young woman of faith and integrity. Her womb was kept pure as no man had known her when she conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. The consideration of the women in the line of Jesus indicates most vividly that our Saviour came at the end of a long line of sinners. Not one received a place in that line because of personal righteousness. It was all by the grace of God. At times, the LORD seemed to take the worst and He sanctified them, to highlight that salvation

is truly by grace. It reinforces what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 about the way the LORD will work with the weak and with the despised of the world, so that no one can boast.

We should note that our Lord Jesus Christ was not ashamed to come from that line of sinners. He did not hide his ancestry. In fact, the Spirit has seen to it that they are mentioned right up front. He was not ashamed to call sinners his brothers and sisters. That gives us reason every Christmas again to marvel not only at the miracle of the incarnation, but also at how He came from a line of sinful people. He came from sinners, for sinners. The women in the line of Jesus impress upon us that God includes people in his plan not because of merit but out of grace. For those who know themselves to be sinners, all this is good news we cannot hear often enough.



But when the time had fully come,
God sent forth His Son,
born of woman,
born under the law,
to redeem those who were
under the law, so that we might
receive adoption as sons.

Galatians 4:4, 5





In Him All Things Hold Together

Looking around the world, one would think that there is no one in charge. War in Iraq, unrest in Ukraine, terrorism throughout the world: it all seems to be like a terrible mess . . . chaos.

If we look closer to home, we find that things are not much better. Quarrels in the workplace, disagreements among family members, and strife among church members: what misery!

Focussing on oneself, we see the same struggles: unholy activities, unbridled tongues, un-Christian thoughts. We are incapable of the perfection God requires of us.

As you observe the wicked ways of man and the misery that follows, be assured that there is one in charge, and that is our Lord Jesus Christ, the firstborn over all creation, in whom all things hold together. For the world exists, consists, and subsists in Him. Matthew Henry states it succinctly: "The whole creation is kept together by the power of the Son of God and made to consist in its proper frame."

What a comfort it is to know that God, our heavenly Father, is working all things out for the good of his people, those who place their trust in Him and serve Him with undivided heart in the midst of this chaotic world. Let us praise Him unceasingly for directing us to the heavenly Jerusalem where peace shall reign forever.

Thank you, everyone!

Under this controlling and guiding hand of God, who uses his people on many fronts and in many ways for the advancement of his kingdom, there is also a team of dedicated workers who provide you with your Clarion magazine on a regular basis. This is the place to thank the team.

Dr. J. Visscher and Rev. R. Aasman have worked closely together to assemble the material for each issue.

Thank you very much for the uninterrupted flow of articles. Rev. Aasman will no longer serve us as managing editor, but, no, he is not leaving our team, just taking on a somewhat lighter load as coeditor. It has been a pleasure, Rev. Aasman, to work together, with nary a problem. Thank you.

To our aid comes Mrs. Laura Veenendaal, who is closely connected to Rev. Aasman (she's his daughter). Mrs. Veenendaal will be our copy manager, and we look forward to working with her. Welcome to our team.

Dr. N.H. Gootjes is leaving us after serving for a long time as one of our coeditors. We have appreciated his work and wisdom very much. Thank you for your contributions. Rev. W. Slomp and Rev. Cl. Stam round out our editorial staff and we are grateful for their work as well.

And what would we do without our regular contributors! Dr. R. Faber, Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff, Rev. P. G. Feenstra, Dr. D. Moes, Mr. A. Kingma, Mr. K. Sikkema, Mrs. Corinne Gelms, Mrs. Erna Nordeman, and Aunt Betty do our readers a great service with their articles. Thank you to you all.

To all of you who provide us with meditations, reports, press releases, and other interesting submissions, we express our appreciation as well. Last, but not least, you, our subscribers and advertisers, receive our heartfelt thanks for your continued support.

While we may not always see or fully understand how and for what purpose the Lord Jesus Christ uses us in his service, we may be assured that in Him all things hold together for his greater glory.

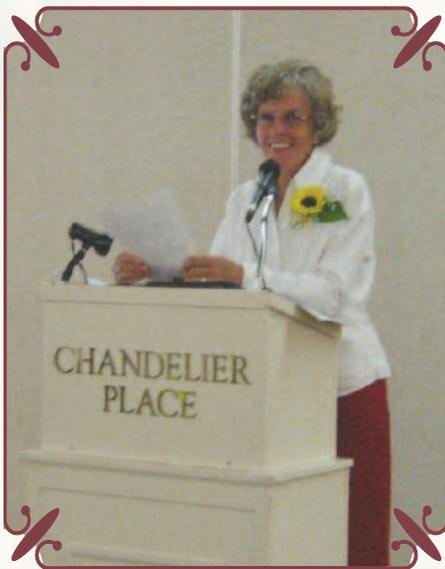
Greetings

We greet you all and wish you the Lord's blessings as you celebrate his birth and serve Him in the year ahead.

W. Gortemaker



Forty-Fourth Women's Annual League Day



Mrs. Vanderven

So often life seems to run away on us and time speeds on without waiting for us to catch our breath. Many of our plans and good intentions are pushed aside for lack of time. However, one day in the year we may pause from our work to come together as women and focus on what is the most important: a greater knowledge of our Creator and his Holy Word!

Once again the League of Canadian Reformed Women's Societies in Ontario was able to host its annual League Day, with close to 350 women in attendance. We met together in Stoney Creek at the beautiful facilities of the Chandelier Place, welcomed by the hosting congregation of Burlington-Waterdown. Our new League President Mrs. Adriana

Vanderven capably led us throughout the day. After a brief period of socializing we opened the morning session by singing together Psalm 111:1,2, in prayer, and by reading from Scripture Mark 9:1-8.

Some announcements were made before we began with the speeches. Mrs. Vanderven thanked our out-going League Vice-President Elaine Spriensma for all her work and welcomed Mrs. Mary DeBoer as the newest Board member. Our attention was drawn to a table set up with a variety of cards made by the ladies in Brazil for sale for the benefit of their school. There was also an ILPB table set up with Reformed literature for sale. A box of cards for women in special circumstances throughout Ontario was sent around to all the tables, to be filled with signatures which showed our care and concern for them. We also received letters of congratulation from the *Gereformeerde Bijbel Studie Bond* in The Netherlands and from Western Australia thanking us for the invitation to League Day and wishing us a fruitful day filled with fellowship. Roll call was held, showing a great attendance from most of the congregations in Ontario, along with special guests both from the States and from Winnipeg.

Rev. J. Huijgen

After the traditional singing of our League Song, we were introduced to Rev. J. Huijgen, who dedicated his entire day to us for speeches and discussion. In order to prepare for the speech "Christ as revealed in the Old Testament" we



Rev. Huijgen

read together from Luke 24:13-35 and sang Psalm 25:2,4. As Rev. Huijgen presented his speech, we explored with him through Scripture how Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament is our window into understanding the Old Testament. The Lord Jesus was constantly busy with the familiar words of the Old Testament, quoting them to the Jews as proof to the Jews who searched the Scriptures themselves yet did not discover that these very words bore witness to the Christ they denied.

Rev. Huijgen took us through numerous New and Old Testament texts, illustrating not only how many of Christ's works reflect similar events which also happened in the Old Testament, but also how our Lord Jesus acted as a prophet of God the Father. All the words spoken by Jesus Christ were the words of God, of the patriarchs and prophets, which were recognized by the people; even the Pharisees and Scribes would have recognized them reluctantly. Indeed, all things were written for our instruction, "things into which angels long to look." God's will concerning our redemption were right there already in the Old Testament. In our discussion we concluded that although not literally all the words spoken by the Lord Jesus were identical to the Old Testament



words, in content they were the same. We also discussed the clean/unclean rituals of the Old Testament in light of Christ, who once and for all removed the uncleanness of sin from among God's people. Another topic of interest was that of Scripture criticism; we could conclude that the uniqueness of the truth of Scripture has been challenged since the beginning. This is because God is speaking his truth, and man always wants to follow the inclinations of his own heart and make his own truth. To conclude our morning session we sang Hymn 20:1,4,6 and held a collection for the Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College, which amounted to \$1524.97. Rev. Huijgen opened with us for lunch, which was prepared by the hard-working ladies of the Burlington-Waterdown congregation. We resumed the afternoon session with the singing of our national anthem, opening in prayer and thanksgiving for lunch. The hosting society entertained us with a humorous game. We sang from Hymn 40:1 and read to prepare for the afternoon session from Scripture 1 Pet. 1:3-21.

Christ in the New Testament

In the afternoon we were able to focus more intently on our topic "Christ as revealed in the New Testament." It is so difficult to find enough time to dig deeply into the riches of God's Word; as



the three panellists presented their speeches, we became increasingly aware of how much we have yet to learn! Sr. Marianne Jagt presented the first panel speech on "Christ our Righteousness." She took us through the book of Romans, teaching us of our sin, and of our salvation in Christ as undeserved grace. We were reminded that mankind is lost, and can be saved only through God's intervention. We must live a life of righteousness so that Christ can be glorified through us. We sang our words of thankfulness from Hymn 24:1 "He is our one Redeemer!" Mrs. Mary DeBoer then presented to us "The Son is the Radiance of God's Glory as Prophet, Priest and King" as we find it in the book of Hebrews.

She gave us a beautiful overview of God's relationship with man as it began

at creation, detailing for us man's royal tasks of prophet, priest and king. As we become more aware of our inability to fulfill these tasks, we are comforted with the knowledge that Christ fulfilled what Adam could not do; in one being we see these three offices together again, but perfectly fulfilled. Only through Christ the perfect priest, prophet, king and his sacrifice can we be restored to the image of God. Our response to these words was found in Hymn 33:1,3: "Christ has the greatest honour gained!"

Finally, Mrs. Ann Ludwig spoke about "Christ's Self-Revelation to the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos." Who is the Christ in the book of Revelation? He is the alpha and the omega, the Son of Man, the Living One, Son of God, the True and faithful witness, the great AMEN; He is a witness of the Father to all who have seen or known him, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the root of David, the Lamb of God, our Great Shepherd, the anointed one, the Bright Morning Star. He has opened the way to the Father. "It is all done! Lo, by my power is paradise restored." Hymn 55:3 We also sang from Hymn 32:1, 2, 3: "Jesus, Thee shall all adore!" and closed in prayer. It was with gratitude that we could close another League Day, having been enriched by our study of God's Word and having renewed friendships and acquaintances once again! Our next League Day will be hosted, the Lord willing, by the congregations of Elora and Fergus in October, 2005.



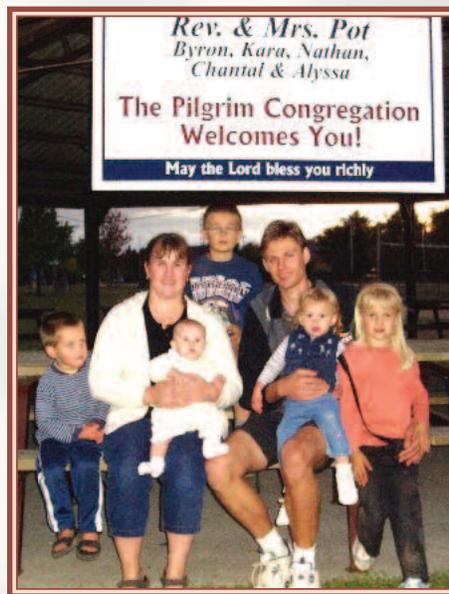
London Welcomes the Pot Family

Sunday morning, September 20, dawned bright and unseasonably warm. The church building filled to capacity with an expectant air of anticipation. This was finally the day which had been eagerly anticipated for almost two years by the congregation at London.

Rev. J. Slaa, of the neighbouring Church at Kerwood, led the morning service. His theme for the sermon was "How beautiful it is, that God sends messengers of salvation to the church!" The three points were:

1. The One who sends messengers
2. The good news which the messengers bring
3. The people to whom the messengers are sent.

Rev. Slaa began by explaining that in biblical times, wartime communication was maintained by foot soldiers, runners between the war front and those at home. The one waiting for the dispatches could determine the type of news it was, whether good or bad, by the approach of the runner. Even though the feet of the runners were not always pleasant in themselves, the feet that brought the gospel to Zion were none the less beautiful. That is because the message brought from God to his people is beautiful and true; salvation comes from God alone, and whoever calls on the Name of the Lord alone will be saved. Rev. R. Pot is God's messenger to the London congregation. He must preach Christ crucified, the fullness of the gospel to covenant obedience and faithfulness.



The messenger encourages God's people and reminds them that He has won the war. What reason for joy and celebration!

After the sermon, Rev. Slaa installed Rev. Pot by reading the form, and after an affirmative answer, Rev. Pot publicly signed the Form of Subscription.

Congratulations

After the conclusion of the service, many words of congratulations were spoken and received. Rev. Royall of the neighbouring URC spoke on behalf of his council and congregation. Rev. Slaa spoke on behalf of Classis, his council and his congregation. Various other letters were read, including one from our former pastor, Rev. J. Ludwig. A social hour was then enjoyed to meet and congratulate Rev. Pot and his wife.

Inaugural sermon

In the afternoon service, Rev. R. Pot preached on the theme: "To magnify His power, He puts his treasure in common container." The two points were:

1. The container
2. The powerful content of the container.

Rev. Pot declared that just as London will have expectations, so Corinth had expectations of Paul. Corinth was beleaguered by many false teachers who brought fraudulent messages. They would attack Paul's credibility, his message. The congregation felt Paul should defend himself; however, instead Paul said, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." Clay containers become trash to be thrown out when broken. Paul likens ministers of God's Word to cheap breakable vessels, pointing to his own weak bodily presence. Paul points out that he is least of all saints, a wretched man. His decriers state that because he is weak, his message ought to be ignored. But, Paul answers, the content of this common vessel is imperishable. It is the gospel, the treasure of Christ crucified! The gospel comforts those who are bowed under the burden of sin. Those in Corinth, former drunkards, thieves, murderers, how were they changed when they repented? They exchanged the gutters of the city for church pews. Not by the power of Paul's personality, but by the power of the gospel. Christ





uses a variety of vessels to hold his treasure, including humble clay pots, with no pedigree of fine achievements, no lifetime warranty. But on the treasure of the gospel, God puts his lifetime warranty, the warranty of re-creation in its hearers. God uses weak man, so that the power of his gospel would be the power of God, not man. The congregation can expect much from Christ, through the perishable nature of his minister.

Welcome evening

On the following Friday evening, the Pot family and the congregation enjoyed an evening of fellowship and fun. Wes McConnell acted as Master of Ceremonies for the evening. The small choir called Pilgrim Singers offered up several selections, as did the children of Covenant Christian school. The entire congregation introduced themselves to the ministerial family by way of poetry, narrative and gifts. It was proven that all members of the congregation were connected to one another, either by marriage or blood or imagination. The Women's Society entertained with a humorous skit, and even Queen Elizabeth visited. The Bible Study Society examined



Rev. Pot and his wife on their knowledge of the book of Acts. It was no surprise when Mrs. Pot, by far, had more correct answers than her husband. Br. Pete Engbers, as representative of the Men's Society spoke a few words, as did the Chairman of Covenant Christian School, Br. John Boeringa. Lastly, Br. Frank Oostdyk spoke on behalf of council, and presented the ministerial couple with gifts. It was an enjoyable evening, long to be remembered.

Church picnic

The following day, Saturday, September 25, the congregation and ministerial family enjoyed a church picnic. Games and sports were enthusiastically shared, and a delicious pig roast and pot-luck supper was enjoyed by all. It was a pleasurable and heartening few days for the congregation, as we embark on this new period of time in the life of the congregation and the Pot family.





Angela de Haan

Stepping Stones Summer Camp: Let's Go!



Service Opportunity Groups

Nowadays, summer camps are all the rave. From sports camps to art camps, parents are on the ball early in the year to pick the best camp for their child(ren). Summer camp can be a wonderful experience. Making new friends, becoming more independent, learning new things and strengthening your skills and God-given talents are all a big part of this.

Stepping Stones Summer Bible Camp is not just *another* one of these camps. It is a place where children and young people gather to become closer to God. You may not even notice it until you leave camp. You become so immersed in praising and worshipping God for that one-week, it is an indescribable feeling! "I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise

will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together" (Ps 34:1-3).

Stepping Stones Summer Bible Camp is based in the beautiful Fraser Valley in B.C. and runs under the supervision of the Langley Canadian Reformed Church. Campfire! Ontario also offered us much support and advice in the beginning for which we are very thankful. Without this guidance Stepping Stones would not be where it is today.

Stepping Stones is organized by a large group of volunteers. Each week at camp there is a full-time nurse, a variety of cooks, counsellors, a chaplain, and staff. There are many behind the scenes people that organize all the meals,

transportation, financing, etc. These wonderful volunteers are the backbone of this large effort. Without volunteers, we would be unable to function.

Camp facilities always a concern

In the Fraser Valley, there is a shortage of camp facilities during the summer. For this reason there is no guarantee that we will be able to run Stepping Stones the following summer and are always searching for a place to have camp. However, the Lord answered our prayers and Stepping Stones held its very first camp one-week in July of 2003 at a camp facility in Aldergrove. With a lot of prayer, many volunteers and countless blessings we have run four weeks of camp to date, the last of which was held at a beautiful facility on Vancouver Island. "Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies" (Ps 36:5).

You meet lots of wonderful new friends at camp. It happens to most of us that you get an opportunity to create a new friendship with someone you may have never met otherwise. God's ways are unbounded! A special bond is created with all those at camp and in this way it is so evident to witness the communion of saints. From the camper who spots you one Sunday at his church and seeks you out to say, "Good morning, Queen Bee" to the nurses and cooks with whom you can enjoy a cup of coffee to the counsellors who get together for a BBQs at the chaplain's house. What a



wonderful way to build each other up in the communion of saints!“He has shown you, O man, what is good.And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6:8).

Life-changing experiences

On registration day this past July, Q-Ball, one of our chaplains, says hi to the kids, some of whom he recognizes from last year. He speaks with the parents, and shares in some of the experiences of last year. One mother in particular relates that her son was never the same after last year’s camp. “He was,” she tells him, “always very quiet about matters of faith. However, after camp last year he would walk with me through the shopping mall singing, ‘I am in the Lord’s army.’ He could not wait to go again this year.” For some kids this is their first “Christian” camp experience. For five days they will eat, sleep, play and pray together.

One hour every day is devoted to chapel. The theme of the week is emphasized during morning devotions with the staff and counsellors, highlighted during morning chapel and personalized in intimate group discussions between campers and counsellors. Bible passages



are found through “sword drills,” read by the campers and illustrated with examples. Memory work is rehearsed during the day and rewarded with colourful stickers, pencils and bookmarks. “Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Eph 6:17).

The days are chock full of activities; never a dull moment. From wacky hair day to feed-a-friend breakfast, to talent night, the days are fun from beginning to end. Yet there is still time for reflection and solitude. Around the campfire at night more songs can be heard, accompanied by guitars, and alternated with stories.

“Jesus Can!”

The following is a true story, and only one of many. There was a camper who was not brought up with a religious background and was just starting to learn about God. She had attended camp all week and although she listened intently she was a little hesitant to speak up. On the fourth day of camp, we went to Crescent Beach. This little camper found a perfect spot on the beach and spent the better part of the morning digging whole-heartedly for clams. When Q-Ball saw that the tide was coming in, he told her that she should back up and find a new spot to dig as nothing could stop the tide from coming in. She looked up at him and said, “Jesus can.” Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (Matt 19:14).

In speaking with some of the counsellors, I was truly touched by the effect camp had on them. Their eyes light up with the stories and memories they have. By working with the campers and helping them learn more about God, it opens up a part of them that for some never existed before. By listening to the campers talk about camp; how much they love it, how they can’t wait to be a counsellor someday is music to our ears. They sincerely look forward to chapel every morning and love singing praises to God. Everywhere the bus would go, beautiful music would always follow.



Camp Counselors

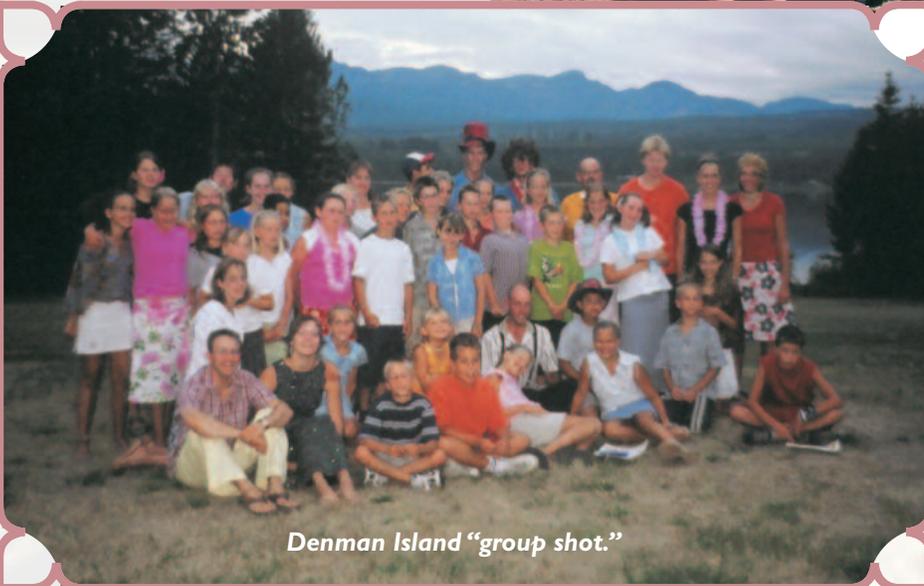




Balloon Volleyball

Not just another camp

As you can see, Stepping Stones is not just another camp. We all love God and wish to serve Him in everything we do. We love this camp because everything we do reflects Him. We feel so blessed to help young children learn more about God and when you listen to them and see their child-like faith come pouring out so easily we long for that... we need that. "To this you were called, because



Denman Island "group shot."

Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Pet 2:21).

Stepping Stones is a camp for children, but it is more: it is a place where both campers and staff grow in faith and together take another step toward understanding the meaning of God's love expressed through a child-like faith.

"I will seek You in the morning and I will learn to walk in Your ways. And step by step You'll lead me and I will follow You all of my days" – Rich Mullins.



Visit to the RCUS 258th Synod (May 10-13, 2004) at Manitowoc, Wisconsin

After a long drive (15 hours), I arrived in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. A worship service began after a brief introduction to some of the brothers and sisters. This service was led by the Rev. S.G. Symns and Rev. R. Pollema. The title was "Lest We Forget" and explained Joshua 23:1-16 and 24:28-31. Many brothers and sisters of the local congregation joined in this, as well as at other times. The congregation was also very much involved with providing food and lodging. Some of the delegates including myself ended up in a motel. This did restrict the contacts somewhat.

Opening

On Tuesday morning at eight o'clock sharp, the meeting started. The first point was the election of the moderamen. The following were elected: Rev. Pollema as chairman, Rev. Treick as stated clerk, Rev. J. Sawtelle as vice chairman and Elder T. Griess as treasurer.

At 10 a clock each morning, a devotional was held with singing, Bible reading, and an address on the following Scripture passages: Ephesians 4:17-32; I Chronicles 13:1-14; Matthew 5: 27-28. Each time, the needs of the congregations as well as those of the Americans in military service were brought before the Lord. Two delegates who are deaf were also present. They were helped by two interpreters all the time! There is at least one congregation in the RCUS composed of members who

are deaf. Part of Tuesday afternoon was used to give various churches the opportunity to bring greetings.

Colleges and seminaries

Various colleges and seminaries also made presentations. These included Dordt College, Hope College, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Heidelberg Theological Seminary, and Mid-America Reformed Seminary. Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia has been removed from the list of approved seminaries. After many addresses, I also had the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

As for the training of ministers, a majority and a minority report were presented. My impression is that the RCUS is slowly moving towards having its own seminary. There was some discussion about potential problems in connection with oversight of the teaching staff. Having a denominational seminary can be an advantage, but it can also present problems if certain professors get off track. So far, Heidelberg Theological Seminary has already received a positive evaluation by the Permanent Christian Education Committee of Synod (see pages 22-23 of the 2003 Abstract) and continues to occupy a favoured position because of





the prominent role that Rev. Grossman plays in it. There is an awareness that the RCUS lets others “pull the wagon” financially when supporting a seminary. The total amount of contributions to the various seminaries at this time is \$8.50 (USD) per communicant member. I mentioned the costs of our Theological College and also indicated the unifying effect that having one’s own seminary can have. It would have been good to see our Theological College represented at this occasion. Perhaps this can be done in the future by one of the professors or otherwise in writing.

The RCUS now use the *Trinity Hymnal*. Some expressed the desire for looking into developing their own hymnal. Given the size of this church federation this would be a very daunting task. I gave the Rev. Dale Stuart, that convener of this committee, a copy of our *Book of Praise*.

Norman Shepherd

A very lengthy report was presented on the teachings of Rev. Norman

Shepherd, whose teachings concerning justification were firmly rejected as contradicting our Reformed confessions.

Christian education

The members of the RCUS have not established their own Christian schools. To ensure that the youth of

the churches receive Christian instruction, an elaborate Sunday School curriculum has been developed, using the volumes of *Promise and Deliverance* by S.G. De Graaf as the core. This curriculum has been designed for various grade levels from kindergarten to grade 8 and consists of a total of 988 lessons. It is still being fine-tuned. The first year of the curriculum is already available on CD-ROM. The second year might not be available until the fall of 2004.

There was a lively discussion of about the care for retired ministers. Maybe we can send some of our materials about superannuation to them.

All in all, I think we may conclude that the contacts are good and beneficial. I did not miss the Manitoba snow at all! After a long drive, with the Lord’s protection, I arrived back home on Friday.





CHILDREN'S CATECHISM

J. Wiskerke Van Dooren



Mrs. J. Wiskerke van Dooren published a Children's Catechism in Dutch. This has been translated with her permission.

Lord's Day 25

When you were a baby, you could not believe yet. Nor when you were a toddler in the playpen. When were you old enough to believe? When you were three, or on your fifth birthday? Did you ever think about when you began to believe?

Faith has been growing in you. That began when you as a little child started looking around. You began to understand more about the world around you. Your father and mother began to tell you about the Lord. They taught you to pray. They wanted you to be obedient.

One day, they took you to church. At first, you did not really understand what

was going on. But going to church was not useless. You did realize that people are in church to hear the good news about God.

You also noticed that father and mother were listening respectfully, and that they were really involved. You, too, were part of it. When the minister prayed, you folded your hands. You did understand some things. And at home you could talk about it.

That was how your faith grew. But it did not happen by itself. The power of God came with the words and stories from the Bible you heard. You can also say that was the Holy Spirit. Do you

remember the Spirit from a previous Lord's Day? That was the way you became a believing child of God. But to continue to believe you have to do something, too.

Remember the desk lamp? The plug of the lamp must be connected to the socket to give light. In the same way, we must be connected with God. We do that by listening to his Word, the Bible. Then we can count on the power of God's Spirit. You can look it up. That is explained in Lord's Day 20.

It's true, not all people in church heard about the Saviour when they were young. There are also people who heard God's Word at a later age, and so came to faith.

The Bible is the one of the greatest gifts we ever received. It's a present from heaven. It speaks about the good news. With our ears we listen to this good news.

But God gave us two more things to help us understand his Word even better. We use not only our ears, but also our eyes. We can with our eyes see two holy things. We call them sacraments. That is a difficult word, but I am sure you heard it before. They are the sacrament of baptism, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.



Correction: The Children's Catechism article that was published in Volume 53 No 22 should have read Lord's Day 22 not Lord's Day 21. Our apologies.



Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Credo Christian School

Tuesday, September 4, 1979 was the day I turned eight years old. At the time, this must have been a pretty significant occasion in my life and I'm sure that I awoke that day with great excitement. But as I reflect on that milestone, I find that I am unable to recall any of the details that usually make such a day exciting. Did I have a birthday party for all my friends? Did I get any birthday presents, and if so, what were they? Did my mom bake me a cake and was I able to blow out all the candles? No matter how hard I try, no matter how long I reflect I just can't seem to come up with the details of that day.

None of them, that is, except one. For not only was September 4, 1979 my birthday, it was also the first day of a new school year. Normally the first day back to school is a bittersweet experience for



students. There is excitement over being reunited with friends you've seen little of for two months, but there is also disappointment because the carefree days of summer are gone.

Opening

But this first day back was something different. For on September 4, 1979 the doors of Credo Christian School would open for the first time to welcome students from the Brampton and Toronto congregations. As such there was the added excitement of a new bus ride, meeting classmates for the first time and experiencing brand new teachers. All these have combined to create memories not easily forgotten.

Fast-forward twenty-five years to September 7, 2004. Once again, Credo Christian School opened its doors, this time to welcome a new group of students including my oldest son who would be starting his full-time formal education in Grade 1. Much has changed in the ensuing twenty-five years. Teachers have come and gone; a sizable addition has been built; computers have been introduced. But through all the changes

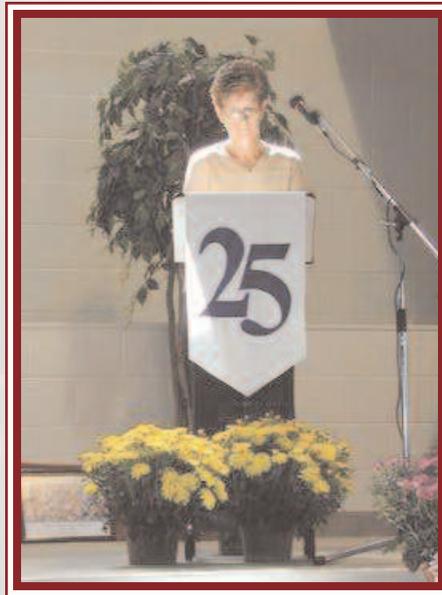


one thing has remained consistent: our heavenly Father. It was by his grace that faithful parents felt the need, twenty-five years ago, to establish a school where his name would be central in all the subjects taught. And it is through his faithfulness that the school may continue to operate with the same focus today.

Twenty-five years

On Saturday, September 18, the Brampton and Toronto congregations, together with former students, teachers and supporters gathered to officially celebrate and commemorate twenty-five years of God's goodness and mercy. This day was eagerly anticipated as witnessed by the large, enthusiastic crowds that turned out. The school was beautifully decorated with many pictures that chronicled the people and events associated with Credo Christian School for the past twenty-five years. Those in attendance savoured the opportunity to reminisce with former schoolmates about their time spent at Credo, while those who participated in the establishment of the school reflected on the circumstances that initiated the desire to have a school of our own.

After enjoying a cup of coffee, the crowds assembled in the gymnasium so that together we could remember God's faithfulness and sing praise to his Name. Mr. Leo Kampen, a member of the inaugural Education Committee, capably led this part of the program. In his opening, Mr. Kampen read from Psalm 145. He pointed out that this Psalm was read at the opening of the school in 1979 and at that time focus was taken from the words of verse 4ff: "One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works." On the occasion of the opening, these words were especially



fitting because they gave direction and purpose to the establishment of the school. These words continue to have meaning today but after twenty-five years we may also echo the Psalmist when he says in verse 13: 'The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.' The Lord, in his faithfulness, has held Credo in his hand so that his works could be commended to me and to my son so that together we may speak of the glorious splendour of his majesty. How truly blessed we are indeed!

Speakers

Through the course of the program a number of speakers were invited to share their thoughts on their involvement in the school. We heard from Mr. Hank Kampen who was the first chairman of the Board and from Mr. Mark Schutten who is the current chairman. We heard from Mr. Frank Ludwig who was the first principal of Credo and from Ms. Betty Maat who is the current principal. Each offered their thoughts and recollections from their own perspective, but a theme was consistent through each speaker: How abundantly we have been blessed with the opportunity to have our children educated from the perspective of God's Word. Each spoke with thankfulness of the commitment and involvement of the school community that has allowed the school to operate over the past twenty-five years. And each spoke words of encouragement that we would continue to see the importance of Christian education and that we would continue to hold fast to the blessing that has been so graciously granted to us.

Through the course of the program we were also able to experience first





hand the fruits of the labour that has gone on at Credo. For many years music has been an integral part of the curriculum. A handful of dedicated volunteers have lent their talents and abilities so that the students could more fully appreciate the opportunity to praise God through music. How beautiful it was to see both current and former students join together on stage and pick up instruments that they learned to play while at Credo.

Closing

As the formal part of the day's festivities drew to an end, Dr. Van Dam was called upon to close with a word of prayer. Dr. Van Dam was pastor of the Church at Brampton during the establishment of the school and served as the first chairman of the Education Committee until his departure to Surrey, B.C. in May of 1979. What stuck out in Dr. Van Dam's mind from those days was the genuine excitement and enthusiasm that lived in the community, especially when the required teachers had been hired. Dr. Van Dam went on to say that if the same enthusiasm could live on today, then no matter what the challenges may be, the future of the school would remain bright.

In many places in this world, God's children would dearly love the opportunity to have their children attend a school that is centred on God's Word. We may be thankful that in this country we may yet enjoy this privilege. As an expression of this thankfulness, those in attendance gathered around the flagpole outside the school and sang our national anthem as Brent Baartman, a special needs student who has been a tremendous blessing to the school community, raised the flag. May God continue to keep our land glorious and free!

Good food

No celebration is complete without good food, and this one was no different. A barbeque lunch was served outdoors on this glorious fall day, which gave everyone the opportunity to continue socializing, perhaps renewing acquaintances that had long been severed. Looking back, we may be thankful for a well-organized and beautiful celebration. The Anniversary Committee should be commended for a job well done. More importantly however, we may look back with thankfulness for God's faithfulness through the generations. God has blessed us with both the desire to have our children instructed from a Reformed perspective as well as the financial ability to operate such a school. May we never take these opportunities for granted but rather bring Him the thanks day by day.





What's New?¹

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It has been some time now since we last published an instalment in the column "What's New?" This was not because of lack of material, but simply that I was so busy with other projects that my *Clarion* commitments fell by the wayside. Did you miss me or my musings?

In the meantime, I have officially retired. On May 26 I preached my last sermon as active minister of the Cornerstone church at Hamilton. After thirty-two hectic years of ministry but only at age 56 I had to pack it in. My MS simply did not leave me with enough mobility and energy to carry the load of the ministry. I still hope to engage in various ministerial tasks (such as preaching now and then, a few catechism classes here and there, and writing some articles on occasion) but essentially I am done. I am grateful for the grace given by the Lord to do this work as a life's calling and for the support given by the churches, especially the Church at Hamilton. And now we make the best of what remains on a day to day basis. One specialist told me that managing MS is a 24-hour job.

Other ministers have also retired or are close to doing so. This means that the number of vacancies in the churches has grown and will grow, and that young men are still badly needed to prepare themselves for the ministry of the Word. I need not comment on the last-held College Evening and convocation (a special report was published on that), but I may underline the need for students for the ministry. It is a wonderful work and a great challenge.

Bird's eye view

Actually the subtitle above this section is untrue. I am not a bird and so I cannot really give a bird's eye view. A man of the cloth is not a man of the feather. But you will understand that this is a figure of speech, like a ... metaphor. In this section I want to take flight over the churches and give a general picture. We go from west to east, because that's how the weather pattern in Canada is mostly determined.

How green was my valley

The Fraser Valley in B.C. continues to be a hotbed of Reformed activity. The churches there publish all the stuff in one bulletin. Maybe there are some local versions, too, but I haven't gotten my hands on "the big one." So I cannot tell you much about what's going on there. It's a humbling experience.

Candidate I. Wildeboer declined the call extended to him by the Church at Langley. He is going to Papua, instead, for mission work in Lae by way of Armadale, Australia. This is quite a challenge for a young family. To illustrate this, let me quote from what Rev. den Hollander wrote in the Toronto bulletin about mission work in Papua (where Rev. S. 't Hart works).

"Foreign mission gleanings" by Rev. W. den Hollander
Since their return to PNG, the Rev. 't Hart has been busy settling back in, leading worship services, and doing a lot of talking and advising, both with his new missionary colleague and various church members. In their

absence much has happened, positive and negative events.

The congregation at Port Moresby is stable and has pulled together much over the past months. There is a Pre-Confession class of 4 young people presently, well-trained and looking forward to making public profession of faith.

Unfortunately, things did not go too well in Ekoro during their absence. Due to some difficulties that have arisen around the marriage of a couple of which the one partner belonged to a different tribe than the other, troubles have affected both the village and the congregation. The situation as such could have been a test case to try the spiritual progress of the members of the congregation; sadly enough some failed this test. Some of the members did not exercise the fruits of the Spirit. Attempts to come to reconciliation had been delayed till the missionary's return. As for the worship services, br. Aboni acquitted himself well as leader during the Rev. 't Hart's absence.

In Beregoro, too, the work continued well; and here it was with great enthusiasm. The congregation completed their church building by putting some walls around it. The younger leader, Jaran (he's about 31), has been very good for the group and the people have a lot of respect for him. When the Rev. 't Hart resumed his preaching in Beregoro, some 70 people were in attendance, most of these being regulars! Upon return





our missionary also resumed the contact with the leaders of the village of Itikinumu. They agreed that in the first week of September he should have a weeklong study course in which to instruct them in a number of things (doctrine, preaching, and what is a church). During the month of August the Doe Medical Post has been completed.

Meanwhile, discussions and negotiations are underway (with the village and the local government) to build a medical aid post (or clinic) in the village of Kailakinumu, which is between Ekoru and Beregoro. This project will be funded by a generous gift from a brother in Canada, supplemented with funds from New Zealand. Once the Aid Post is completed it will be handed over to the community. The Koiari Local Level Government is responsible to ensure that the government fulfils its part in providing personnel and medicines.

In general news, it is noteworthy that the road conditions have been improved thanks to some repair work. As a result, the 't Harts can get to Port Moresby up to 25 minutes faster than they could previously. As far as the missionary team is concerned, the situation sure has changed with the VanderHeides and

the Hagoorts in the field. They'll have regular meetings to review, coordinate, and divide the work. The VanderHeides "have been doing a superb job of settling in." They are taking the time in study and language/culture acquisition that they will hopefully reap dividends from for years to come. Finally, the upcoming furlough of the 't Hart family will be from February 1, 2005 – August 1, 2005. Their journey will go via Australia (Dorinda's parents have a 40th Anniversary, the Lord willing), New Zealand, and then to Toronto, where they hope to arrive on March 11th, DeoVolente. All the work and all their plans are made indeed under the condition of James: "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." May the Lord prosper their work!"

We wish the Wildeboer family all that is needed as they prepare for their departure to and entry in the mission field.

Rev. C.J. VanderVelde has left Yarrow. In a moment we'll see where he went. Rev. C. van Spronsen left Surrey for blissful retirement in Vernon, and has been replaced by Rev. J. VanVliet. Meanwhile Cloverdale has moved its church building to the other side of the church property. Everything went smoothly.

Back in the USA

Things are quiet south of the border in the USA. I wonder if email crosses the border unabated. After all, we do have free trade with the US and GST is paid only in Canada. The Americans are not eager to share their bulletins, though, with their Canadian counterparts.

Lynden, Washington, is still on the map. But we haven't seen Rev. J.E. Ludwig of Grand Rapids in a coon's age. It has to do with a "green card," or something like it. Being an American citizen, Rev. K.A. Kok is free to travel as he wishes. Well, almost everywhere.

Where the buffalo roam

We are now traveling across Canada, in an eastward direction. The Prairies' newest congregation already has a minister. Soon Candidate R. Bredenhof will make his debut in St. Albert. We wish him well.

This just in. Rev. J. Louwse accepted the call extended to him by Neerlandia. I think it was a *second* call. It seems that second calls are more often extended these days. Some ministers even receive two or more second calls at one time.

I know that the jury is still out with respect to second calls. But the very fact already that classis has to be involved before a second call can be extended indicates that a second call has more weight than a first call. Any call can be declined, I hear, but why bother extending a second one to the same minister in the same vacancy if he has not agreed to accept it? Otherwise it is like a form of harassment. When I was a young minister, everyone knew that a second call would be accepted. But things change with the times.

¹ This submission is split over two issues because of its length.





Farewell, Rev. Stam!



Rev. and Mrs. Stam

On Saturday and Sunday, September 25-26, the Cornerstone congregation in Hamilton said “thank-you and fare-thee-well” to her pastor, the Rev. Clarence Stam. After thirty-two years of loving commitment to the ministry of Word and sacrament, the last sixteen of which in Hamilton, the Rev. Stam now begins a new chapter of his life: retirement. The LORD has richly blessed the churches in Canada through the preaching, writing, and leadership of our dear pastor, as many who spoke at the farewell and final sermon noted. Our celebration was tinged with sadness, though, as the failing health of the Rev. Stam is the reason for the early retirement. We pray that the LORD will yet enable our brother to preach and publish as He grants health and strength.

The festivities on Saturday afternoon were what the master of ceremonies called “a celebratory and memorable event.” The words of Ephesians 2:1-10 were the basis of the celebration: God, because of his great love for us, has made us alive with Christ and has shown us the incomparable riches of his grace, which are ours through faith – a gift of God. As

the Rev. Stam himself never tired of reminding congregations over thirty-two years of ministry, we are God’s workmanship, saved by grace alone, so that no one can boast. The tension between honouring a retiring minister on the one hand and not boasting in human ability on the other is resolved in praising our God from whom all blessings flow.

Art Witten

Dr. Art Witten, as former chairman of the council, highlighted phrases from Psalm 122, the text of the Rev. Stam’s inaugural sermon in Hamilton in October 1988. The preaching and teaching over the years have been characterized by an eagerness to preach about the joy of



Co-worker in Council and Consistory, Br. Art Witten bade farewell on behalf of the many brothers who had served in office with Rev. Stam.



Brother Henk Plug spoke with gratitude of the work Rev. Stam had done for years as Chairman of the Board of Mission.

being in the house of the LORD. The preaching of the Rev. Stam, for all the insightful phrases, references to contemporary music, and memorable expressions, is first and foremost based on a careful exegesis of the text of Scripture. Both from the pulpit in the auditorium and from the chair in the council room, the Rev. Stam sought the peace, unity and well-being of Jerusalem. With an ecumenical approach that was biblical, the Rev. Stam had a vision for mission, evangelism, and church development: tireless commitment to the work in Brazil, support of Campfire!, and encouragement of the congregation of Glanbrook. The LORD conferred many blessings on us through our pastor’s desire to seek the well-being of the house of the LORD our God.

Henk Plug

Speaking on behalf of the Board of Mission, Br. Henk Plug recounted the labours of the Rev. Stam for the Reformed witness in Brazil. The brothers and sisters in Maceio have a warm



appreciation of “Pastor Clarence,” whose commitment to them was demonstrated in his determination to learn Portuguese – the Rev. Stam’s lectures were delivered in a mixture of Portuguese, English and gestures! With an eye for the details as well as for the mandate as a whole, the Rev. Stam was instrumental in furthering the cause of Christ in Brazil. “I resolved to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2).

Former students

A number of former catechism students reflected on the Rev. Stam’s passion for teaching, and for his generous use of chalk to illustrate his point. Despite learning the hard way that the “review” actually meant “10-page exam,” the students were deeply grateful for the gifts of this exceptional teacher and for his solid instruction in the faith.

Residents of Ebenezer Villa

A presentation was also made by several residents of Ebenezer Villa, represented by Sr. Feenstra, who spoke with thanks about the Rev. Stam’s visits, whether to congratulate on a birthday or to encourage during sickness. The regular Bible study with the residents was also mentioned with thanksgiving. The sisters noted their appreciation for Mrs. Stam’s visits when her husband was hindered from coming due to illness. The residents of Ebenezer Villa promise to pray for strength and courage for the Rev. Stam to bear the cross of illness.

Pictures

The gathering was then entertained with a pictorial reminiscence going back more than thirty-five years. With appropriate (and inappropriate!)



Family came from far and wide to celebrate with the Stams on this special day.

commentary provided by Br. Tom Zietsma, the congregation could see the Rev. Stam in formal and informal settings, in ecclesiastical and familial contexts. We saw repeatedly the trademark “Stam” grin and twinkle in the eye!

The preaching

Before presenting the Rev. and Mrs. Stam with a parting gift, Br. Bruce Morris spoke about the faithfulness of the Rev. Stam’s preaching. Elders would frequently hear on home visits just how much the members of the congregation benefited from the sermons. The preaching consistently was directed to young and old alike, inclusive of everyone – including the preacher himself. The congregation has been well-fed these past sixteen years! The churches as a whole received much in meetings of classis, regional synod and general synod over the years of active service. The Rev. Stam’s work on the Board of Governors of the Theological College was yet another way in which the Lord blessed the churches through our pastor.

The retiree

When the Retiree himself was given the floor, he spoke with gratitude about

the privilege and responsibility of preaching. The pastor’s wife pays a high price for her husband’s vocation, and the Rev. Stam made special mention of the contribution of Margaret to the work of Christ in the congregation. Through periods of difficulty in the Stam family, the Lord was gracious to use the communion of saints to strengthen and support the Stams. The Rev. Stam noted the generosity of the congregation, also during the past year, when the multiple sclerosis made it increasingly difficult for him to function fully as minister. He also encouraged the congregation to keep the careful preaching of the Word of God at the centre of life. For the Rev. and Mrs. Stam, this is not a farewell to the congregation, for they intend to remain in Hamilton and continue to make this congregation their home.

The afternoon was concluded with singing Hymn 65, a hymn of thanksgiving to the triune God for all the wondrous things He has done in the past and has promised for the future. Dr. J. Faber closed with thanksgiving prayer for the faithful ministry of our pastor and for the needs of the Stam family.





Guido de Brès Christian High School Commencement 2004

On October 2, 2004, while leaving Hamilton Place after this year's commencement, grads and guests alike were greeted by a beautiful, clear, and crisp early autumn day. If the weather could serve as an indication of the futures of the 2004 Guido de Brès graduates, then their futures indeed look bright.

Not that the day started so luminously. The morning preparations and luncheon, though inside, took place while the outdoors offered a less than auspicious atmosphere – a chilly breeze and a slight drizzle. Of course, the weather was not going to make the graduates blue. Indeed, there seemed to be a certain excitement and anticipation in the air. While in the Guido gym, grads had the chance to meet up with peers and teachers they had perhaps not seen since June. In the midst of all this conversing and reminiscing, final arrangements for the graduation ceremony were discussed. And under a grey midday sky, the graduates made their way to Hamilton Place, where they would complete their last assignment: receiving their diplomas (and posing for a lot of pictures).

The venue was bustling with people and energy that afternoon. The audience put forth this energy by singing from Psalm 89, in which God's



The informal luncheon prior to the graduation ceremonies allowed the graduands an opportunity to socialize with classmates, teachers and parents.

faithfulness and unchanging covenant promises are extolled.

Following this, the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Leo Kampen, opened the assembly with prayer and the reading of a few words from Ephesians 5, where God calls us (and indeed the graduates) to live wisely as “children of light” (Eph 5: 8-16).

Mr. J. G. VanDooren, Principal of Guido de Brès, looked ahead with a message inspired by the words of the prophet Isaiah, challenging the students to “spread their wings.” While pointing to the importance of commencement for

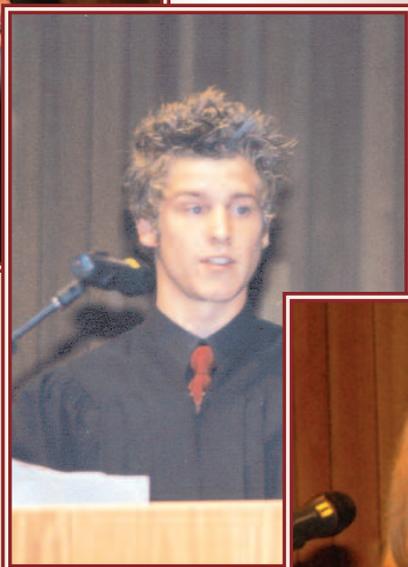
graduates as a step into the little-known world of independent adulthood, Mr. VanDooren also stressed the importance of acknowledging God as their only strength and salvation.

After a sprightly rendition of a selection from Friedrich Seitz's Concerto No. 5, as performed by pianist Jon Kingma and violinist Jodi Feenstra, Dr. Christine Van Halen-Faber, Principal of Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College, spoke to the graduates. Her theme, “Priestly Princes and Princesses,” highlighted the





Nicoline Vandervelde, herself one of the graduates, bade farewell to her classmates with the song, "Travel on, Dear Friends."



Scott Aasman had the honour of addressing the graduating class as valedictorian.



Dr. Christine Van Halen-Faber, principal of the Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College addressed the graduating class.

Nicoline Vandervelde and Jennifer Roodzant, accompanied by Deanna Oosterhoff and Dina Kok, respectively.

Scott Aasman spoke on behalf of the graduates. His valedictorian address emphasized the diversity and unity of the Class of 2004. Further, it gave recognition to the efforts of parents and teachers in the spiritual and intellectual growth of each graduate. On a personal note, Scott thanked the graduates for their fellowship and inspiration. In closing, he expressed gratitude to God for the enduring care and grace He provides for them.

Mr. Peter Smid, recently retired from Guido de Brès, led in closing prayer. The singing of Psalm 146:1,3 thereupon suitably concluded a memorable afternoon: "Praise the LORD who reigns forever! . . . He forever faith shall keep."

graduates' task to live as prophets, priests, and kings in service to God. With the "royal training" they have received, graduates ought to declare God's gospel with their lives. Dr. Van Halen-Faber concluded that this commencement was a time for graduates to put on a new robe – not a graduation gown, but a cloak of royalty and service.

The diplomas

The graduates – all ninety-seven of them – then received their Ontario Secondary School Diplomas or Certificates. As a group on stage, the Class of 2004 formed an impressive sight.

Following the handing out of diplomas, there was the presentation of awards. Vocal solos were performed by



Mr. J.G. VanDooren, along with the chairman of the board, Mr. Leo Kampen, and school secretary, Mrs. Jane Hordyk, presented diplomas to the 97 students of the Class of 2004.





Dick Moes



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Part 2: How Christians Grow – Belonging to the Church

Growing in the Christian faith not only entails learning to pray and reading the Bible. It also involves knowing that one ought to belong to the church and what belonging to a church means. This lesson is meant to introduce this topic.

One's involvement with the church

Begin the lesson by having the people share in small groups what their own involvement is or was with the church. Have them focus on their first impressions, what they found helpful, what surprised them, what they found unhelpful, and what they would say to a person who says, "You don't have to go to church to be a Christian." This is a very useful exercise for it allows people to share with each other things that are important on their journey of faith, things they don't like or don't understand. Once the groups have had ample time to discuss, draw them together again so that they can summarize their discussions with the whole group. You may want to write the different answers to the final question on a white board or flipchart.

How important is it to belong to a church?

This part of the lesson allows you to do some good teaching on why being a Christian and not belonging to the

church is an oxymoron. You cannot belong to Christ, the Head of the church, and not his body. Furthermore, when you are a Christian you not only have a special relationship with God through Jesus Christ; you also have a special relationship with other Christians. This relationship must be a living and growing relationship. This growing is best done in the context of the church. Move the groups back into small group discussions and have them read Acts 2:42-47 together. Then have them discuss the following two questions: (1) What would be attractive to you about belonging to such a church? and (2) In what ways is your church like the one described in Acts 2?

Pictures of the church

The concept of the church is not always an easy one to grasp even for those who have been Christians for many years. Focus on the fact that you do not just belong to the church, but that you *are* the church. Do some teaching on the following four relationships the church stands in. First, the church in relationship with God. The church consists of those who are called out by God into a new community. Second, the church in relation to herself. Christians are called to love one another. As the body of Christ, they are joined to one another like the parts of a body and

work together with their different gifts for the common good. Third, the church in relation to the world. Christians are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Fourth, the church in relation to time. Christians are on a journey together as pilgrims traveling to their eternal home. Since this journey is beset with danger and difficulty, they need God's grace and each other. Follow this teaching session with a time for questions and responses.

Your own church

At this time, share with the group the story, priorities and vision of your local church. This part of the lesson was a watershed moment for our local church. We had had a young couple attending for a number of sessions. We mentioned that part of the history of our church was that we once belonged to the Christian Reformed Church but had left this church for various reasons, including the issue of women in office. This was a painful shock to the husband's wife, for when she was younger, she had always wanted the same privilege as altar boys in the Roman Catholic Church. Now she was courting a church that would not allow her to fulfill the same tasks as males. The couple did attend one more session, but then no longer returned.



Belonging to the church

There are four different ways you can belong to the church: (1) the universal church, (2) the church federation, (3) the local congregation and (4) the small group. Illustrate these four different ways of belonging to the church with the use of concentric circles. Explain what a church federation is and why your local church belongs to one. Give some insight into the activities of your local church. Also introduce the idea of the benefits of meeting together in small groups, especially if your congregation is fairly big.

Joining the church

Make clear that when one joins a church, one needs to be baptized. Point out that baptism is a sacrament and explain what a sacrament is. Introduce the members to the practice in your local church concerning baptism and public profession of faith. Remind the group that not all churches practise infant baptism, but that some only baptize upon full profession of an adult faith. Since you will have reached the end of the evening by this time, save any questions on this issue for another time.

If you would like to view the outline for this lesson, go to www.reformedevangelism.com and follow the links. We have added three articles by Dr. J. Faber on the church. They are “The Boundaries of the Church,” “The Doctrine of the Church in the Reformed Confessions,” and “The Catholic Character of the Church” to our Emmaus Library. Next time, we hope to introduce “Celebrating the Lord’s Supper.”



Ray of Sunshine



“Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it”

(Romans 12:10,11).

In this last article for 2004, we will continue with the humbling words of the Beatitudes. Our focus will be on Matthew 5:9, where it says, “blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.” There is a sure link with this Beatitude of peacemakers and that of being meek. With each there is a waiting for God to grant us fullness, which He alone can give. Let us now look at what this Beatitude is teaching us.

Why are peacemakers blessed? They are blessed because they are so unlike everyone else. The peacemakers are blessed because they are the people who stand out as being different from the rest of the world, and they are different because they are children of God.

We may also ask the question, why is there so much trouble and difficulty to keep peace in the world? Why are there continually wars and unhappiness and turmoil amongst people? According to this Beatitude, there is only one answer to these questions – sin.

Nothing else; it is just sin. We must always go to the source of the problem which Scripture clearly points out to us: it is the heart of man. It is “out of the heart” that evil thoughts, murders, adultery, jealousy and envy from which all these other things proceed. Are you surprised that there are wars and rumours of wars? You should not be if you are a Christian; indeed we can see it as a confirmation of what Christ has foretold us through the Scriptures.

So who then can be called a peacemaker? It is only the man with a pure heart who can be a peacemaker. As we seen in the previous Beatitude, in order to have a pure heart, the heart had to be cleansed of all its filth and other horrible things. For when we have seen ourselves as poor in spirit, and have mourned because of the blackness of our heart, and when we have truly seen ourselves and hungered and thirsted for righteousness, we will also not stand up for our own rights and privileges. We must not look at everything and see how it will affect us. No,

rather a peacemaker is one whose central concern is the glory of God and will spend his life trying to minister to that glory. A peacemaker knows that God made man perfect, and that the world was meant to be Paradise, so when he sees individual and international disputes and arguing, he will see something that is taking away from the glory of God.

How then do we put this all into practice? First and foremost, it means that you learn not always to speak. If we could all control our tongues more, there would be less tension in this world. We ought to think before we speak. Thinking which must be done in the light of the gospel. Wherever we go, and whatever we do we should always endeavour to bring peace. We can do this when we totally forget about ourselves, and are able to love others.

We cannot bring about peace when we stand on our own dignity. We are to be renewed after the image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The promise attached with being a peacemaker is that we “will be called sons of God.” Called means “owned.” Thus it means that the peacemaker is a child of God and that he is like his Father. It is because God is a God of peace that He sent his Son, and therefore provided a way of salvation for us. He gave Himself that you and I might be at peace with God, that we might have peace within and that we might have peace with one another. He humbled Himself even to the death on the cross. Why? He was not thinking of Himself at all. Let this mind be in us all, which is also in Christ Jesus. Our God has been so gracious to us; and has thus made us to be a reflection of the Prince of Peace, and truly children of the God of Peace. May you all have a blessed holiday season as you reflect on the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ. May the God of Peace be your focus throughout this season and in the New Year that is soon approaching the Lord willing. May the God of Peace be with you all!





*For unto us a Child is born,
To us a Son is given,
And on His shoulders He shall bear
All power in earth and heaven.
The Wonderful, the Counsellor,
The Mighty God is He;
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace
His holy Name shall be.*

Hymn 15:3

Birthdays in January:

- 2 LIZ KONING will be 44**
9905 152nd Street, Edmonton, AB T5P 1X4
- 7 CHRISTINE BREUKELMAN will turn 43**
2225-19th Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4
- 17 HENRY DRIEGEN will be 49**
#19-31450 Spur Avenue, Abbotsford, BC V2T 5M3

- 17 GRACE HOMAN will turn 49**
Anchor Home
361, Thirty Road South, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0
- 19 JANINE SMID will be 35**
510 Second Street, RR 7, Strathroy, ON N7G 3H8
- 27 HANK ORSEL will be 74**
2424 Woodward, Apt. 10, Burlington, ON L7R 4E3
- 30 TYLER HOEKSEMA will turn 16**
6755 Lorne Drive, Sardis, BC V2R 2G3

Congratulations to you all who are celebrating a birthday this month. May our heavenly Father continue to bless you in this new year. We hope that you have an enjoyable day together with your family and friends. Till next time,

Mrs. C. Gelms and Mrs. E. Nordeman
548 Kemp Road East
RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
Phone: 905-563-0380





Year-End Review 2004

We have arrived at the end of the year 2004 and we stand on the threshold of a whole new year. No doubt many comments will be made about the swift passage of time. Some will try to identify the highlights of the year gone by, whether personal, national or international. Others will not bother. They can not wait to step over into a new year because the past one has been so disagreeable. In short, there is no lack of response to the passage of time. They vary from reflection to relief.

Yet in the process something may be forgotten, namely the fact that time should be for us more than a passing fancy. It should be a teaching process. In Psalm 90 Moses the man of God prays “teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Has 2004 made you wiser? Is it your aim to turn 2005 into a time to get wisdom? Surely, Moses would support you in this pursuit.

All together then there are eleven vacancies, or you can say that 20% of the churches in the federation are searching for a pastor and teacher. The demand continues to exceed the supply.

And so would the Lord Himself. What a joy it would be to him if his people everywhere would use the passage of time not just as the butt of a thousand nostalgic comments, but as an incentive to become wiser and more discerning. May that also be your aim as readers, both as members of the Canadian Reformed Churches and as members of other faithful churches of our Lord around the world.

The Canadian (American) Reformed Churches

During 2004 the Canadian Reformed Churches grew by the addition of one church to a total of 53 churches. Such is the good news. The problem is, however, that it is hard to say which church was added. What happened is that the Church at Fergus, Ontario, split into Fergus-North and Fergus-South. So which one is the newest church in the federation, I do not know, but still, welcome!

As one church is added to the number another one is considering its future. The Fellowship Church of Burlington (often called Burlington-South) finds itself questioning its continued existence. There have been plans for some time to build a new building; however, the latest news is that a majority in the congregation no longer support this direction. What this means for the future of this congregation we do not know, but we do wish its leaders and members much wisdom from above.

In the meantime the number of vacant churches or churches looking for additional ministerial help has changed very little. The churches of Dunnville, Grassie, London, St. Albert, Surrey, and Rockway all saw their vacancies come to an end. At the same time the churches of Hamilton, Langley, Lincoln, Orangeville, Yarrow, all saw their names added to the vacancy list. Soon the same will happen to the churches of Neerlandia and Fergus, as the former will receive a minister and the latter will become vacant. Also, it should be noted that strictly speaking the church at Langley is not vacant but there is a vacancy because this church has decided to call a second minister.

In addition to the list of new vacant churches, there is also an older list which includes the churches of Burlington-Fellowship, Cloverdale, Carman-East, Coaldale. All together then there are eleven vacancies, or you can say that 20% of the churches in the federation are searching for a pastor and teacher. The demand continues to exceed the supply.

Church buildings

This past year also saw changes being made or planned to any number of church buildings across the land. The Church of Cloverdale hopes to move back into its building by the end of this year after a very extensive renovation. Indeed, very little of the old building remains except for the old “sanctuary” and that too has been literally turned around and re-modeled. A meeting hall, classrooms, council room, library, nursery, and large foyer have all been added. All in all, it is virtually a beautiful new building and the members there can be proud of their efforts. Hopefully some pictures will appear in a future issue of this magazine.

For a time the Church at Smithers was also contemplating a drastic overhaul of its building; however, the latest news is that



plans are underway to sell the old building and to build a whole new structure not too far away. We wish Smithers well.

In the Providence Church of Edmonton some changes are also being made to the building. Much of it has to do with installing a pipe organ in the front of the church.

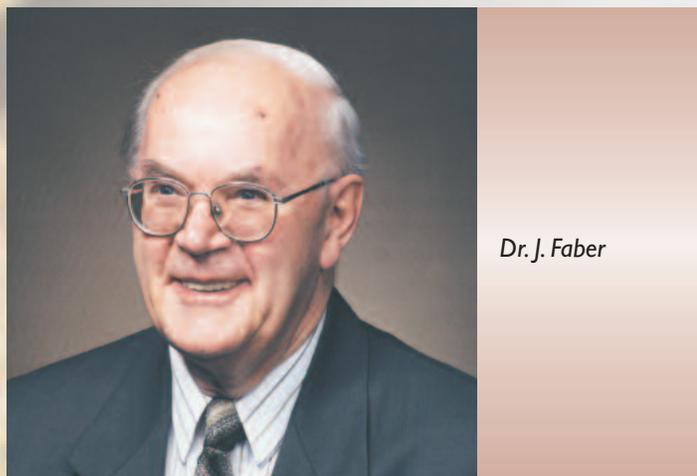
In Ontario the Church of Toronto (or is it now Richmond Hill?) is in the process of building a new place of worship. I am not aware of how far along they are, but I do know what the new building will look like, and you can too. Just visit their very attractive website and click on the appropriate buttons. If the architectural plans are executed as presented it should prove to be a beautiful and functional place.

This past year also saw the completion of Hamilton's extensive renovations with the result that the congregation is able to enjoy a more spacious and updated building.

Ministers and professors

Among the ministerial and professorial ranks this past year, there were a considerable number of developments, both sad and gratifying. At the beginning of the year General Synod Chatham was called on to perform the sad duty of instructing the Board of Governors to appoint a replacement for Prof. Dr. J. de Jong. After serving so ably in both the churches and the College for many years, the health of Dr. de Jong deteriorated to the point where he was no longer able to continue his work. We wish him, his wife and children every comfort and strength from above as they struggle with the ravages of a most serious illness.

Much of the same kind of wish and prayer can also be extended to the Rev. Cl. Stam, the minister of the Church of Hamilton. He was diagnosed with an aggressive form of MS and had hoped to continue his ministry on a reduced scale; however,



Dr. J. Faber

this proved to be impossible with the result that Rev. Stam requested to be released from active service. This request was granted. In the meantime, he hopes to continue to write and to preach occasionally in Hamilton as long as the Lord allows. May our God be gracious, holding back disease and granting our brother more years of service.

Ever since his arrival in Canada in the 1960s, Dr. J. Faber played a pivotal role in the history of both the church of Hamilton and the federation at large.

Staying with the Church of Hamilton of which Dr. de Jong is a member and Rev. Stam is now the emeritus pastor, there is one more sadness to report and that is the passing on of a Hamilton member, namely Dr. J. Faber. Ever since his arrival in Canada in the 1960s, Dr. J. Faber played a pivotal role in the history of both the church of Hamilton and the federation at large. For twenty-one year he served as Professor of Dogmatology and Principal of the Theological College, and he did so endowed with much learning, abundant skills and deep commitment. As the first student to receive his complete theological training in Hamilton and later on as a frequent governor, I can attest in so many ways to the formative and abiding impact that Dr. Faber had on the life and well-being of the College. May sr. Faber and her family be comforted in the knowledge that their husband, father and grand-father has been richly used by the Lord and has now entered into the joy of his Master.

The year 2004 also saw the normal flow of ministerial events and activities. Rev. R. Pot accepted a call to London and left the Church of Orangeville. Rev. J. Louwse will soon be moving from Fergus to Neerlandia. Rev. J. VanVliet moved from Lincoln in the east to Surrey in the west. Rev. C. VanderVelde did the reverse as he moved from the west (Yarrow) to the east (Rockway). Candidate S.C. van Dam enjoyed a double celebration as he was ordained as the new minister of the Church of Grassie and married, all in the same year. Candidate D. DeBoer also began what will hopefully be many years of ministerial service and he did so in the Church of Dunnville. Later in the year Candidate R. Bredenhof was ordained as the first minister of the Church of St. Albert. As well, Candidate I. Wildeboer traveled down under to be examined and ordained



as the missionary of the Free Reformed Church of Armadale, Western Australia.

As this is being written, there is one more candidate who is the throes of decision-making and that is br. J. Smith. He has to decide whether He is needed most in Albany, Cloverdale or Lincoln. May the Lord grant him wisdom.

In addition to ministerial calls, there are also ministerial sabbaticals. Rev. J. de Gelder of Flamborough completed the second half of his six month rest. Word is out that the Revs. R. Aasman, G. van Popta and M. Van Luik may soon be enjoying the same invigorating experience after many years of pastoral labour.

On the academic side, congratulations are due to the Rev. E. Kampen of Willoughby Heights. He was awarded a Master of Theology degree by Regent College in Vancouver. His thesis was titled "The Secession from the Netherlands Reformed Church in 1834: An Integral Part of the Dutch *Reveil*." Hopefully, a way will be found to make this valuable work available to a larger audience.

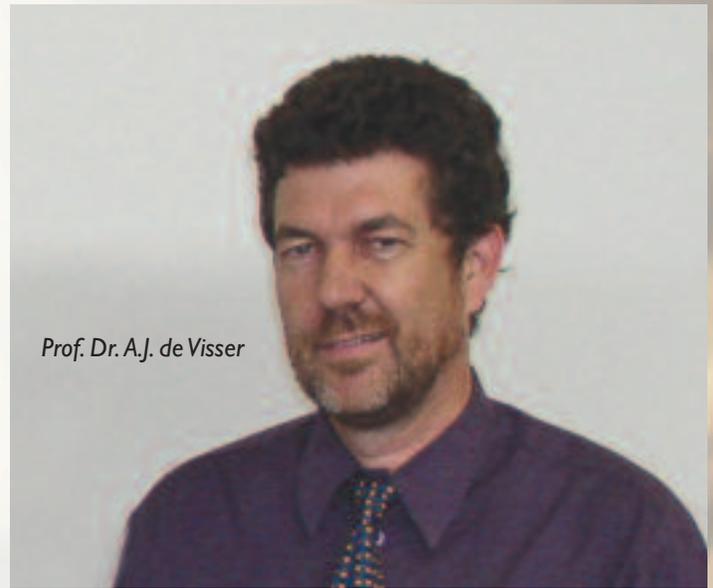
The retired ranks

In the past this review concentrated on ministers in active service, this time we also want to make mention of our retired ministers and their wives, as well as of ministerial widowers and ministerial widows. Among ministerial and professorial widows we are still pleased to have with us: sr. J. Faber, sr. P. Kingma, sr. H. Scholten, sr. J. Van Popta, and sr. J.D. Wielenga. As for widowed emeritus ministers, we may mention: Rev. M. van Beveren, and Rev. M. Vanderwel. Finally, as for emeritus ministers and professors, along with their wives, we may mention: Prof. and Mrs. J. de Jong, Rev. and Mrs. C. Bosch, Rev. and Mrs. D. DeJong,

This past year was highlighted with the appointment and installation of the Rev. Dr. A.J. de Visser as Professor of Diaconiology and Ecclesiology.

Rev. and Mrs. Cl. Stam, Rev. and Mrs. J. Mulder, Rev. and Mrs. W.W.J. Van Oene, Rev. and Mrs. J. Van Rietschoten, Rev. and Mrs. G. Wieske.

Many of the just mentioned may be retired but this does not mean that they are doing nothing. Preaching, catechism classes, visitation, research, writing and organizing church activities



Prof. Dr. A.J. de Visser

continue to have the attention of many of them. Brothers and sisters, we commend you for your continued involvement in the life of our churches.

The Theological College in Hamilton

This past year was highlighted with the appointment and installation of the Rev. Dr. A.J. de Visser as Professor of Diaconiology and Ecclesiology. Dr. de Visser formerly served as a missionary in South Africa. There he was instrumental in church planting among the native population; as well he was active in teaching and preparing black students for the ministry of the gospel. As a result of his African experience, Dr. de Visser brings to the College an added dimension as a man keenly aware of foreign missions and cross-cultural issues. We wish him the Lord's blessings as he takes on a very considerable teaching load in Hamilton.

Thankfully, Dr. de Visser will receive some temporary assistance as he adjusts to his two large departments. The Rev. J. de Gelder will assist him by teaching church polity. Perhaps a way can be found to make that arrangement permanent, as well as to supplement it with additional help.

Elsewhere, we have made mention of the retirement of Prof. Dr. J. de Jong and the death of Dr. J. Faber. The contributions and involvement of both men in the life of the College will be greatly missed.

Congratulations are extended to Prof. G.H. Visscher who celebrated twenty-five years of service in the churches and at the College. We wish him every blessing for the years to come as he acquaints his students with the riches of the New Testament.

Four students graduated from the College in 2004. Mr. R. Bredenhof has since become the new minister of the church of St. Albert. Mr. A. Gootjes has enrolled in graduate studies in Grand Rapids where he hopes to pursue a doctorate in



theology studying under Dr. Richard Muller and others. Mr. P. Njuka has returned to Indonesia in order to minister and teach in his native land. Mr. I. Wildeboer has become a missionary of our sister churches in Australia and is preparing to take up his labours in Lae, Papua New Guinea.

Foreign Mission Work

There are three parts of the world that the Canadian Reformed Churches are involved in when it comes to mission work, and they are Brazil, Indonesia and Papua.

In Brazil Rev. B. de Graaf continues to work in Maceió. Rev. K. Wieske labours in Recife. Rev. E. Venema is busy in São José and the surrounding region. While most of their time is spent on leadership matters and preaching, teaching both aspiring church members as well as theology students also forms a core part of their work. The aim is to teach the members of the Brazilian churches to become self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating.

In Papua New Guinea, the Rev. S. 't Hart continues to preach and plant churches, as well as assist in the growth and development of existing groups of believers. Thankfully he is receiving some help in this work and he is looking forward to more assistance in the future.

In Indonesia, the Rev. Y. Dethan is hard at work on the island of West Timor. He is doing this work with the support of the church of Smithville. The fact that Timor exists in an area where Islamic fundamentalism is growing increases the challenge as well as the danger in this work.



Foreign mission relief work

Mission Aid Brazil, with its headquarters in Cloverdale, B.C., continues to be involved in Brazil. It is supporting a thriving Christian school in the Maragogi-São José area. There is also some involvement in special projects for the local people.

The year 2004 also witnessed an international Mission Aid Conference. Representatives from many different organizations in Canada and The Netherlands came to Langley, B.C., to update one another, to listen to speeches and to seek advice. From the comments heard it appears that the gathering was a beneficial one.

Increasingly the Canadian Reformed Churches are not only looking to do mission in far away foreign places. They are also looking at home and next door.

In West Timor the Anak-Anak Terang Children of Light organization out of Edmonton, Alberta, is also giving support in the area of Christian education.

Further to the east in the province of Papua, Indonesia, br. Clarence Togerez continues to work for the Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) transporting people and supplies to remote areas.

On a much wider scale, there is also the work of the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund which is active in many different parts of the world. Whether it be orphanages in Africa or Haiti, aids prevention work in Africa, famine relief in Asia. Much the same sort of work is also being done through Manna, an Alberta relief organization.

It should also be noted that the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF), headquartered in Cyprus and supported by many Canadian Reformed Churches is also busy dispensing aid in Africa and the Middle East.

The World Bible League has set up a program called "Kits for Kids" and a number of churches are active participants. These kits consist of Bibles, clothing, school supplies and other personal items that can be put to good use by school age children in poorer parts of the world.

Home mission work

Increasingly the Canadian Reformed Churches are not only looking to do mission in far away foreign places. They are also looking at home and next door. The first example of this is the Native Mission Work that is being done by the Rev. W.



Bredenhof at Fort Babine, B.C. among the native Indian population. This past year saw the first fruits of this work and more and more contacts and opportunities are being created by the Holy Spirit. The plan is to work towards the formation of a core group and then eventually, the Lord willing, to establish an indigenous church.

The same aim also occupies the mind of the Rev. F. Dong as he works further south around Vancouver among recently arrived immigrants from mainland China. A core group is presently in formation. In addition, the coming months will see more baptisms and professions of faith add to the membership of what is called the Chinese Reformed Church (ChRC). At present it remains an unorganized church but it is hoped that once office bearers are ordained, it can become a new and novel church in the federation.

Thanks to the assistance of the Free Reformed Church at Kelmscott, Western Australia, a website has been established in both Chinese and English. In its first month alone, without any advertising or outside help, it scored over 6,000 hits. The aim is to use the internet to penetrate mainland China with the Reformed faith

In downtown Hamilton, Ontario, there is also a busy evangelism project called Streetlight Ministries. It is operated under the auspices of the Churches of Ancaster and Burlington-Fellowship. It continues to have a full-time worker in the person of Mr. R. Bultje. Sunday evening worship, Bible studies, counselling and related work keep our brother very busy. Plans are underway to call a minister in due time and so to move this work along even further.

Our church members have worked hard to see to it that there is a fine network of Christian day schools from one end of the country to the other.

Mention should also be made of the Church at Owen Sound which is supporting the Reformed Church in Quebec congregation of St. George de Beauce and its minister the Rev. P. Bedard. In this way concrete expression is being given to the urgings of the last number of Canadian Reformed synods which have all gone out of their way to encourage our churches to support the growth of the Reformed faith in Quebec.

Opportunities to spread the faith have also arisen in Toronto. There the Bethel Church of Toronto has entered into a unique partnership with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Together they support the Rev. J. Barros as he spreads the gospel among the Portuguese community in Canada's largest city.



Summer camps

In both B.C. and Ontario summer camps were a hit again in 2004. Campfire! in Ontario operated throughout the summer months and took in hundreds of children, both from the churches and the community. All of this was made possible through the work of a few paid workers and the assistance of many, many volunteers.

Campfire! has also been busy during the year raising money in order that it can build on its property in the Owen Sound area. Apparently this was supposed to be the last time that it made use of the rented Boys Scouts property in the Orangeville area.

In B.C. Camp Stepping Stones was held for two weeks since that is all of the time that camp space could be rented. Still, those two weeks in separate places in Aldergrove and on Denman Island were greeted with enthusiasm. While the facilities at the former site are hard to beat, the natural setting at the latter place was beyond compare.

Still, here too there is a need for a place of its own and in that connection a group of business people in the Fraser Valley have placed a down payment on a most suitable piece of property overlooking the Fraser Valley that could serve as an ideal site for both youth and family camping, as well as a retreat and conference centre. Efforts are now underway to set up an appropriate charitable organization, to raise more money and to begin work on proper site planning.

Other evangelistic efforts

During 2004 the Voice of the Church continued its weekly radio broadcasts in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario. Various ministers prepare the speeches on different topics and then they are read by a capable reader, recorded and sent out for broadcasting. Unfortunately, the feedback is minimal





Rev. Cl. Stam



Rev. G. vanPohta

and this has raised some questions about the effectiveness of the radio as an evangelism medium.

Still, this has not stopped the Revs. Cl. Stam and G. van Pohta. Together they host a weekly radio program called "What Does the Bible Say?" that is heard in the Burlington-Hamilton area.

Another organization involved in outreach is the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce. It continues to publish the *Evangel* magazine, develop the Emmaus Bible Course, sponsor a website and distribute other materials that can be used to spread the gospel.

Special needs

Almost all of our churches have members in their midst with special needs. Some of them live on their own, others are at home and still others reside in special homes. In Ontario Anchor Home continues to expand. A new group home was set-up in Dunnville in order that more help can be given both to members in the Canadian and United Reformed churches. Both Rehoboth in Alberta and Bethesda in B.C. are busy doing the same.

Senior homes, as well as care homes, also continued to fill a great need in the church community. Greenview Villa, Ebenezer, Emmanuel, Elim, Maranatha, Manoah, Mount Nemo, Shalom, Trinity Towers, and other places all make it possible for our senior members to live out their years surrounded by the Christian care and attention that they need and deserve.

Christian education

Our church members have worked hard to see to it that there is a fine network of Christian day schools from one end of the country to the other. Most of these schools enjoy good support, both financial and otherwise. Still, here and there differences of opinion exist with the result that some parents send their children to an interdenominational Christian school, while other parents opt to home school their children.

It should also be mentioned that in a province like Ontario Christian schooling is made more difficult because of the refusal of the government to extend funding. A previous provincial government in Ontario had decided to establish a system of tax breaks; however, the latest government quickly abandoned such an approach. The result is that school fees in Ontario remain very high and onerous.

Needless to say this has also put added pressure on schools in that part of the country; however, it has not undermined them. Thanks to the sacrifices of many parents, the dedication of numerous teachers, as well as the able work of plenty of board members, Christian schools continue to do their part in moulding and equipping young lives.

What schools do for students, the Covenant Teachers' College in Hamilton is trying to do for teachers. For the first time it has a full complement of instructors working under the capable direction of the Principal Dr. C. van Halen. In the meantime it continues to pursue ways in which it can become a government accredited institution whose degrees are recognized across the country.

Concluding

It is time to come to an end. This review has been lengthy and could easily have been even longer. The activities that go on in our federation just keep on growing in number. And we can be thankful for that. At the same time it would also not hurt for us to do a periodic re-evaluation of every cause or organization among us to see whether or not it still serves a purpose. In the meantime worthy church and kingdom causes should continue to receive our prayerful and financial support, as well as our personal involvement, if that is possible.

Let us as members of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ give thanks to God the Father for all of his blessings in 2004 and let us look to his Spirit to supply our every need in 2005. May our Triune God be merciful to us and bless us!





Fun Festival 2004



Abbotsford Canadian Reformed "Gems"

Maria, Chantel, Vanessa VandeBurgt (left)

Erin Boeve, Shaney VanderLinde (below)

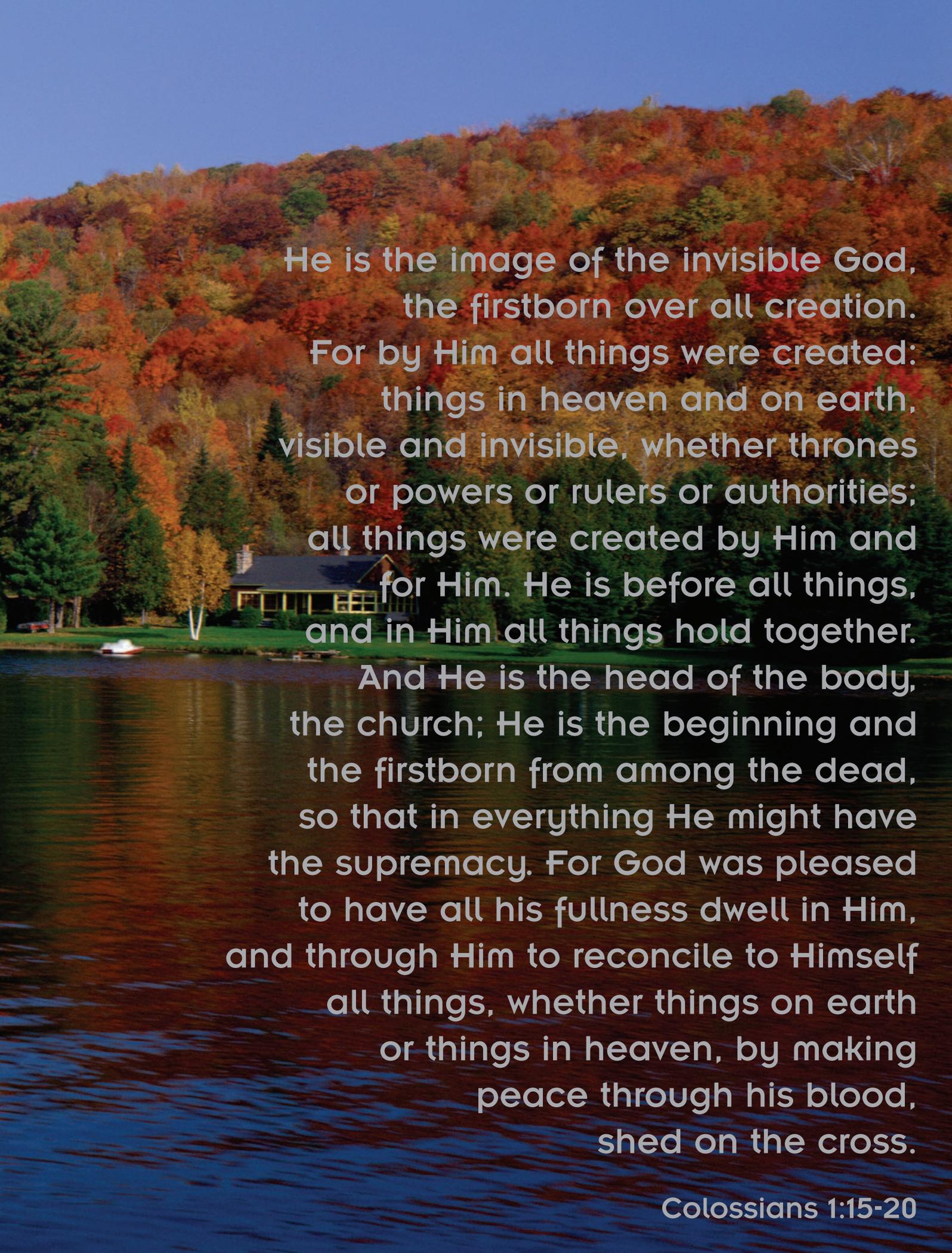


Abbotsford Canadian Reformed "Cadets"

Building birdhouses: Hilmer Jagersma, Christopher Schitte,
Kurtis Schouten, Cameron Togeretz, Kevin Kobes (above)

"Cadets, attention!" (right)





He is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn over all creation.
For by Him all things were created:
things in heaven and on earth,
visible and invisible, whether thrones
or powers or rulers or authorities;
all things were created by Him and
for Him. He is before all things,
and in Him all things hold together.
And He is the head of the body,
the church; He is the beginning and
the firstborn from among the dead,
so that in everything He might have
the supremacy. For God was pleased
to have all his fullness dwell in Him,
and through Him to reconcile to Himself
all things, whether things on earth
or things in heaven, by making
peace through his blood,
shed on the cross.

Colossians 1:15-20

*Season's
Greetings*

From all of us at

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