



Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 56, No. 2 • January 19, 2007

*Christ Died
For Us*

*Lord's Supper:
An Attitude of
Service*

*College Corner
Fall 2006*



Christians and Muslims: Across the Divide



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Christians and Muslims: Across the Divide

The differences between these religions are profound and divisive

As our country continues to absorb more and more adherents of the Islamic faith, mosques and minarets are becoming part of the landscape. How do we as Christians relate to this new reality? Some conservative Christians have suggested that we must assume that Muslims and Christians worship the same God. Such a position, it is argued, will help Christians bridge the gap between them and their Muslim neighbours. But the gap between Muslim and Christian is a yawning chasm. To be sure there are outward similarities between Islam and Christianity, such as believing in one God who is Creator, knowing that Jesus was sent by God and was a great prophet, and expecting a day of judgement. However, the differences between these religions are profound and divisive. Although Islam comes in different forms, the basic teachings are clear. We do need to have a basic understanding of our fellow citizens who follow the teachings of Muhammad. Only in this way will we be able to see somewhat through the veil that shrouds much of Islam and appreciate their need for the gospel.

The great divide

There is much that divides the Muslim and Christian faiths. They are indeed two completely different religions. To mention some of the more obvious points, consider the following.

Christians accept the Bible as the authoritative and trustworthy Word of God. Muslims accept the Qur'an as authoritative and they accuse Jews and Christians of falsifying the Bible where the Bible differs from the Qur'an.

The summary of Islamic faith is: "There is no God but Allah; Muhammad is his prophet." These two parts of their confession belong together. In Islam, it is Muhammad who speaks for God. However, according to the Bible, "in these last days God has spoken to us

by his Son" (Heb 1:2). It is very clear from the Qur'an that Muhammad's God, Allah, is not the same as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is indeed in the doctrine of God where the greatest differences are found between Islam and the biblical faith.

According to the Qur'an, Allah (the Arabic word for God) is all-powerful and does whatever he wishes; he is also merciful and forgiving. But love is rarely mentioned as a characteristic. For a Muslim it is incomprehensible that God is love (1 John 4:8) and that "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Dr. William M. Miller, a Presbyterian missionary in Iran from 1919-1962, tells the story that a Muslim teacher once came to him at night to talk about the Christian religion. When the Muslim agreed that love is a very important quality in life, Dr. Miller read to him 1 John 4:7-12 where the word love occurs twenty-seven times. However, although the Qur'an is considered more perfect than the Bible, the Muslim teacher had difficulty finding any reference to love in it. He could only refer to a few verses which stated that Allah loves those who love him and that he does not love the unbelievers (Sura 3:31-32).¹ There is nothing remotely resembling the biblical truth that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). This is impossible for the God whom the Muslims worship. Muslims also cannot call God their heavenly Father. It is blasphemous for them. God is distant and basically unknowable. He has made his will known in the Qur'an, but he has not revealed himself.

Muslims also deny the divinity of Jesus Christ and consider the doctrine of the trinity to be blasphemous (Sura 5:73).² For the Muslim, Jesus is just an apostle of God (Sura 4:171) who only seemed to have been crucified (Sura 4:157).



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

Subscriptions: clarionadmin@premierpublishing.ca

Advertisements: clarionads@premierpublishing.ca

Website: www.premierpublishing.ca

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Subscription Rates for 2007	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada*	\$47.00*	\$ 77.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds  	\$57.00	\$ 72.00
International	\$84.00	\$123.00

*Including 6% GST – No. 890967359RT

Advertisements: \$14.00 per column inch

Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$20.00 per column inch

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

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There is no need of a saviour in Muslim theology, for they do not recognize original sin or the depravity of man. Sin is simply a personal misdeed which you can do away with by good works (Sura 11:114). So what is needed are teachers who show the right way. That is why prophets were sent to God's people to instruct and guide them in the right way so that good works can be done. Muhammad is considered the last and greatest prophet and the best good work is to die in a jihad (Sura 3:157), a holy war waged for Allah. For such paradise with all its pleasures is assured (Suras 18:107; 55-56). Since the loving grace of God is unknown to Muslims, they must earn their salvation. Recognizing their unworthiness, Muslims therefore try to do as many good works as possible. They recite extra prayers, donate to charity, and make pilgrimages. But you never know for sure where you will end up, in paradise or hell. God's will is arbitrary. There is no assurance of salvation.

It is also of interest to note that whereas Christians can address God in their native language, Muslims must pray their five obligatory prayers in Arabic. By way of exception, new Muslims who are not from an Arabic background can recite the prayers in their own language while they are learning the Arabic version.

Last but not least, it can be mentioned that Muslims have the mandate to impose their religion on others with military force if need be. The Qur'an commands: "Fight against them until there is no dissension, and the religion is for Allah" (Sura 2:193). There is no such command to be found in the Bible. The consequences are telling. Christianity is often not tolerated in conservative Muslim nations and the church is persecuted.

Reaching out in humbleness

The Muslim religion is a faith that leads to eternal death, for it is a road without the Saviour. Muslims live under man-made laws which give them no assurance of salvation. We may use the opportunities that God gives us to share with our Muslim neighbour the gospel of salvation in Christ. This can be done especially by showing them something of the love of God. Conveying the message of salvation effectively to a Muslim is without a doubt a most difficult task and this editorial is not the place to elaborate on this. The sidebar with this editorial gives some helpful literature.

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A point that needs to be stressed is that whatever the opportunities the Lord may give for us to confess our faith to the Muslim, we must do it with great humility. We have been saved of mere grace alone. There is no ground for boasting. Furthermore, the Muslim sees the so-called Christian west degenerating into a moral chaos. He can ask himself: why should I become a Christian? As Christians we indeed have no reason to be proud over against the Muslim. The moral decline of the West which has a rich Christian heritage is an affront to the gospel that in the past has had such a salutary effect on our culture and history.

The need for humility is further underlined if one realizes that historically the church shares in the blame for the rise of Islam. Rev. Bassam M. Madany who was the Arabic Broadcast minister of the Back to God Hour from mid-1958 to mid-1994, has noted³ that just prior to Muhammad's time the church had lost its missionary zeal and vision. The Arabs who lived within the shadow of the church in Syria and Palestine were not, generally speaking, familiar with the authentic gospel. The Bible had not even been translated into Arabic. This is very tragic, for when Muhammad himself wanted to help his people and was searching for the truth, he had no Bible to consult, for there was none in his language. What he learned he heard from hearsay and other unreliable sources. The result was a religion without a Saviour but built in part on twisted knowledge of the Old and New Testaments.

Opportunities

Apart from favourable situations that our daily work and walk of life may bring, there are also other possibilities today to help the Muslims hear the glorious gospel in their own language. I think especially of the work of the Middle East Reformed

Fellowship which deserves our full support (see sidebar.) The God-given opportunities that this organization receives to spread the good news in the Muslim world are incredible. May this work and all true proclamation of God's Word to those under the domination of Islam be blessed. Indeed, as the "Prayer for all the Needs of Christendom" teaches us, let us continue to pray, also during worship services, "for the mission among . . . Muslims" (*Book of Praise*, 643) that many will come to a true faith in the only Name by which sinners must be saved (Acts 4:12). And let us not forget the Muslim in our own society whom the Lord may literally put on our doorstep.

¹ William M. Miller, *A Christian's Response to Islam* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977) 72-73.

² E.M. Caner and C.F. Caner, *Unveiling Islam* (Grand Rapids: Kregel 2003), 244.

³ For what follows, see Bassam M. Madany, *The Bible and Islam: Sharing God's Word with a Muslim* (Palos Heights: Back To God Hour, 1992) 76-79.

Some helpful books on Christianity and Islam:

Caner, Ergun Mehmet and Emir Fethi Caner, *Unveiling Islam*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002).

Chapman, Colin, *Cross and Crescent: Responding to the Challenge of Islam*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003).

Madany M., Bassam, *The Bible and Islam: Sharing God's Word with a Muslim*, (Palos Heights: Back to God Hour, 1992). Also available at <http://www.levant.info/BAI0.html>

Miller, William M, *A Christian's Response to Islam*, (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976).

Riddell, Peter G. and Peter Cotterell, *Islam in Context: Past, Present, and Future*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003).

On the internet, also see the Reformed site: <http://www.rim.org/muslim/islam.htm>

The Middle East Reformed Fellowship
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MATTHEW 13:52

Christ Died For Us

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were sinners, Christ died for us.”

Romans 5:8

“Christ died for us,” says Paul in our text. This is how God demonstrates his love for us. We may wonder how death is a demonstration of God’s love.

Consider first what is meant by the term “us.” The reference, we understand, is to Paul himself plus the saints of Rome to whom he writes his letter. In other words, plain people like you and me. But what kind of folk are we? Are the people for whom Christ died actually respectable, deserving folk?

No, says the Apostle. In the verses around our text, Paul is not at all flattering about the nature of the human race. In verse 6 people are described as being “powerless;” we are not able to help ourselves. At the end of the same verse Paul describes himself and the rest of mankind as inherently “ungodly.” With that term the Apostle recalls what he has written earlier about the nature of the human race: “There is no one righteous, not even one; . . . no one who seeks God . . . no one who does good, not even one. . . . There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom 3:10-18).

That, says Paul, is the human race: ungodly. Yet even that isn’t all. In verse 8 Paul also describes people as sinners. Those are the people who consistently miss the target, who invariably “fall short of

the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). That, says Paul, is man: powerless, ungodly, and sinful.

And still there’s more. We are “enemies” of God (verse 10). We are enemies, not just in that we are always doing things that attack God and offend Him. Rather, being enemies of God means that we are corrupted to the core of our being to such an extent that we are inclined to all evil. The result is that by our very character we are repugnant to God. We wear Satan’s colours, as it were, and God sees that; we incur his wrath even before we do anything.

Here, then, is the marvel of Paul’s words: for the likes of us has Christ died! “Christ died for us.” Died for whom? Christ died for the powerless and the ungodly, for the sinners and his enemies!

The marvel is even greater when we consider who this Christ might be. Christ is called “his [God’s] Son” (verse 10). This Son, say the Scriptures elsewhere, was his own Son, his only Son. The Father had begotten Him before all eternity; yes, from all eternity He had been with the Father and the Spirit in heavenly glory. This only dear Son God sent to earth, and in so doing God gave, gave of Himself and gave Himself. That, John records in his gospel, is love. For it is self-giving. “God so loved. . . that

He gave his only Son. . .” (John 3:16; cf 1 John 4:9,10).

But God not only gave his Son, He sent Jesus to earth. The incarnation in Bethlehem was but the beginning of God’s self-giving. After He had “made Himself nothing” and taken on Himself “the nature of a servant,” Christ “humbled Himself” and became “obedient to death – even death on a cross” (Phil 2:7,8). On Calvary, Christ gave Himself to the uttermost. On Calvary was the torture of the crucifixion, the horror of sin-bearing and God-forsakenness. Yet Christ did not shrink back from hanging on the cross.

And why? Why, dear reader? For the benefit of the “us” of our text! He did not crumple in the face of hellish agony, He did not flinch when his Father poured out on Him God’s awe-full wrath against man’s sins, and He even gave Himself to death – why? – in order to benefit unworthy sinners! So says the Apostle: “Christ died for us.”

How amazing! And how delightful!! Sinners we are, and don’t we know it; our conscience rightly keeps accusing us that we’ve transgressed God’s good commands again. But this is God’s love: “Christ died for us.” So, we live, today and forever!

How wonderful the love of this God!

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Lord's Supper: An Attitude of Service

Familiarity can breed contempt – and the inability to hear what words actually say. The Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper has within it a sizeable quote from 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 (see sidebar), words we hear repeatedly in our church services. But I suspect that we have become somewhat deaf to what those words actually say.

Why do I come to that conclusion? It seems to me that in so many of our conversations regarding the Lord's Supper, the focus of discussion is on questions such as: who may attend, should we receive the elements at a table or in the pew, how many cups we ought to use, what's in the cup(s), and other such like questions. Legitimate as those questions may be, I learn from 1 Corinthians 11 that they can have a place only – *only* – after we have humbly embraced an attitude of service-to-the-other. Without such an attitude of *service*, any discussion about the cup or the pew or the guest is premature and will invariably be misdirected – and therefore lead to unnecessary heat. You see, Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 11 of the *Lord's Supper* and so sets forth the *Lord's attitude of service* when He instituted his Supper.

The circumstance triggering Paul's instruction

"When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat,"

wrote the Apostle Paul sharply (v 20). His point is clear: not every Lord's Supper is actually a Lord's Supper.

How is that possible? Paul explains in verse 21: "For," he says, "as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else." The situation appears to have been as follows. The members of the church of Corinth lived, we understand, spread out all over town. When they came together, they regularly enjoyed a meal together – and in the course of the meal also celebrated what we today know as the "Lord's Supper." But they did not wait for each other. Those who arrived early opened up their bread baskets as soon as they arrived,

What makes a Lord's Supper a Lord's Supper?

so that they were gorged by the time the last of the congregation turned up. Those who arrived early were in all likelihood the freemen (and hence the more well-to-do and those who set their own clocks), while those who entered later were slaves at the mercy of slave owners (and hence persons who had little and could not come and go at will). Paul describes the result: "One remains hungry, another gets drunk" (v 21). There's division in the congregation of Jesus Christ.

So when the members of the congregation – some stuffed, some starved – pushed their tables together to eat "the Lord's Supper," Paul is emphatic: you're not eating the *Lord's Supper*. What makes a Lord's Supper a Lord's Supper?

The content forming Paul's instruction

The term "Lord's Supper" automatically sends our thoughts to the table we see in front of the church every two or three months. Paul, however, does not ask his readers to think of a particular table – where there's bread cut just so and a cup containing a certain kind of drink, and a formula that is spoken and actions that are done – but Paul wants his readers to think of *attitude*.

That's why Paul reminds the Corinthians of what he'd told them when he did his mission work in their midst some years ago. "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you" (v 23). What had Paul received from the Lord and passed on to the Corinthians? This: "The Lord Jesus, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me'" (v 24f).

Jesus was being *betrayed* and He knew it! Yet He did not pass on to his disciples a sense of self-pity or of being full of Himself. Rather, though He knew one of those twelve was in the process of handing Him over to the chief priests, another would soon deny Him three times, and all the disciples would shortly flee, He calmly sat down with them to eat the Passover Lamb. In the course of a meal with such unworthy participants, He took some of the unleavened bread from the table and distributed a piece to each disciple present, with these explanatory words: this bread represents My body, "which is for you." Jesus was telling them, "I give My body, I lay down My life, for your benefit!" Similarly, after the Passover meal was eaten, He took a cup standing on the Passover table and explained, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood" – and told all of the disciples to drink it. He would shed it so that his sacrifice could form the basis of a new relation between these sin-filled disciples and the Lord God.

Self-emptying to serve

What, then, was Jesus' point in instituting the Lord's Supper, in giving his disciples the bread and the cup? Was it that the disciples have to learn a ritual that must be done just so? This was not Jesus' point. According to the Apostle Paul, Jesus added to both the words about the bread and the cup the command to "do this in remembrance of Me." The disciples are to copy Jesus' attitude. They are to *remember* the Lord, remember what He did on that night, how He gave his body and blood in order to pay for their sins and reconcile these unworthy sinners to God. They're to remember his attitude of giving, of self-emptying for the benefit of another. As Jesus also

said: "I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27). Paul writes, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). The Lord's people, including the Christians of Corinth, must adopt an attitude that produces an atmosphere where one puts self last and where seeking to serve the other is put first.

No meal can truly be the Lord's Supper if service does not determine your actions

This, in fact, is something the first Christians after Pentecost understood well. Through the working of the Holy Spirit 3000 persons came to believe that there was forgiveness for their sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. In their gratitude for Christ's self-emptying work they in turn emptied themselves, got rid of their selfishness. I read in Acts 2 that "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (v 42). Yet they were not divided among themselves, were not so many camps where the rich congregated by themselves over here and the poor by themselves over there or those who were strict and straight gathered in this room and those who were (perceived to be) free and slack gathered in yonder room. Rather, all the believers were together and had everything in common. The rich and the poor, the slaves and the free, the Jews and the Hellenists, the strict and the slack, the ones with body odour and the ones without, were all *together*. And they showed their togetherness in their actions; they sold "their possessions and goods"

and "they gave to anyone as he had need" (v 45). Moreover, "they broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts" (v 46). Here was interest in and care for the other without regard to self – just as the Lord had displayed in his last supper. Here the fruits of the Spirit of Jesus Christ were manifestly present.

How different was the behaviour amongst the Christians of Corinth! That's why the Apostle tells them that "when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat." It's not the Lord's Supper because the *attitude of self-denial* that characterized Jesus' activities during his last supper were so obviously absent from the supper of the Corinthians.

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. (1 Corinthians 11:23-29)

Self-examination

Consequences follow and the first is obviously that the Corinthians must repent. Paul says that "whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord." Actually, the Greek does not have the words "sinning against;" the Greek simply says that one is "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." Those who first crucified Jesus were "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," for they murdered an innocent man. The Jews demanded Jesus' death because they saw Him as a threat to themselves. They were busy thinking about themselves. The Christians of Corinth can be guilty of the same sin of crucifying the Lord by eating and drinking in the name of Christ while their heads and their hearts are void of serving another, are instead full of serving themselves. That's the point of the phrase "in an unworthy manner." The Corinthians ate and drank "unworthily" because their attitude contained nothing of the *attitude* of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Corinthians need to "examine" themselves before they eat the bread and drink of the cup (v 28). They need to consider what sort of attitude produces a conduct whereby it's acceptable to gorge oneself while another receives nothing. And they need to repent not just of their self-centred conduct, but of the attitude that generates this self-centred conduct. They need to know that the attitude that drives them leads to God's judgment. In fact, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul tells them there is a direct connection between the sicknesses and deaths now happening in Corinth and the self-centered conduct within the communion of saints. The Lord God is pressing his hand of judgment upon those

saints of Corinth so that they might repent – lest they end up crushed under the heavy hand of God's judgment on the Day of Judgment (v 30-32). In the situation as it was in Corinth, true self-examination involved staring down their selfishness and repenting of it for Jesus' sake – and being determined instead to empty self in order to serve the other, as Jesus did.

Respect

As consequence of such repentance, an improved approach to each other would follow. In verse 33 Paul says: "So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other." If you're too hungry to wait, eat at home before you come together. Respect the other, be sensitive to his circumstances, and deny yourself for the good of the other. No meal can truly be the *Lord's Supper* if service does not determine your actions.

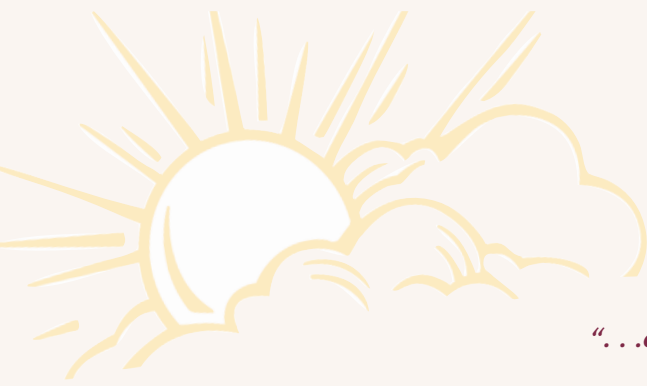
Today

What lesson follows for us? The Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper quotes the middle part of 1 Corinthians 11 and draws out at length what self-examination is all about. It tells us that before we can come to the table we need to consider our sins and accursedness and so humble ourselves before God. It tells us to search our hearts for whether we actually believe the gospel of Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary for sinners. It also tells us to examine our conscience, whether we truly want to show true thankfulness to God with our entire lives. Those three points – they're actually the three parts of the Catechism; Sin & Misery, Deliverance and Gratitude – are indeed what the Scriptures require of us. At the same time we need to be aware that Paul's actual instruction about examining oneself arose in a particular set of circumstances. Those

circumstances revolved around self-centredness verses the attitude of the Lord Jesus Christ whereby He emptied Himself to serve the unworthy. Without that sense of serving the other one does not eat the Lord's Supper – despite what one claims to do. Let each of us examine *oneself* so that we treasure, both in attitude and in action, a mindset fitting for the *Lord's Supper*: that we empty ourselves to serve another.

Over the years several of our churches have gone through times of difficulty because of disagreements surrounding the *how* of celebrating the Lord's Supper. In such congregations there may still be scars, with brothers and sisters feeling alienated from one another. Other congregations may feel some pressure to conform to changes they've seen elsewhere. In both situations, to greater or lesser degree, there is talk about the manner of celebrating the supper of the Lord. That is why we all need to know from the start that it is not the presence of a table that makes the *Lord's Supper*. It's not the presence of a communal cup or the content of the cup. Certainly there are arguments for doing it this way or that way. But the ritual, the outward form, is secondary to the fundamental point, and that fundamental point is the *attitude*. Where there is division, where there is not sensitivity for the other, where there is no self-emptying to respect the scar a brother has, where there is no bending to serve the other, *there* one does not celebrate the *Lord's Supper* – even if the Form is read just so, the table is set just right, and the congregation comes forward just so. The Apostle's point, in the words that are so familiar to us, is that we need to follow the example of Christ (1 Cor 11:1).





Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

“...and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.”

Exodus 19:4b

The beginning of a new year is by now well underway. The business of the holiday season is behind us as well. Many times when a new year begins, we reflect on all God’s mercies on the past year. For some of us, it has been a good year, for others it may have been very difficult. Quite often we strive to make a “fresh start” and new beginning for ourselves.

In light of God’s Word revealed to us, let us consider the words of our Lord to his people Israel as He makes a new beginning with them on Mount Sinai. The Lord outlines how much He had done for them by using the image of a flying eagle. He carried them on eagles’ wings and nourished and protected them as his own special treasure. It shows us the unfailing power and strength of the Lord and his deep love and affection for his people.

Today also, the Lord does not leave us to ourselves. We were delivered so that we might serve the Lord and so be a special people to Him through the generations. He has given us the Ten Commandments as well as his Word to keep us his people in the place where He has brought them. He puts us on eagles’ wings so that we might freely live and work under his protection. The Bible speaks to us many times about being protected under his wings. We can find examples of this in Psalm 17:8, Psalm 91:4, and Ruth 2:12. In all these verses it speaks of God’s loving care for those who cling to Him. It is God’s protective power over his people that gives us comfort. In a world full of growing uncertainty and increased sinfulness we can rejoice under his protection. We do not know what the future holds for us on this earth, but we know we will have a glorious future in heaven. We can live in the joy of faith knowing we are his and He promises never to leave us. Just as a bird protects its young under wing and does not leave them, so our God is always with us.

When we hope in the Lord alone, He will renew our strength daily, as Isaiah 40:31 says, “They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not grow faint.”

The image of the eagle finds its fulfillment in Christ and his work. By his death and resurrection we have been delivered from the bondage of sin. He has carried us upon eagles’ wings and brought us to the Father. The road that Israel was unable to walk has been made open for us. We are able to walk on it today through the Spirit given to us. We may go through each year with the power of the Spirit, with the lifting, guiding, and leading hand of the Lord.

Being in the new covenant makes us very rich for we have also been carried on eagles’ wings. Yes, we have two wings; the Word and the Spirit, the Testimony and its fulfillment in Golgotha. In Christ, the Lord has brought us to Himself.

Today the church has great comfort. Through all the hardships we know we are on a steady course. We soar on eagles’ wings, finding safe shelter under the refuge of his wings. He takes us through the years and being taken up by Him we know we will be provided for. With His Word and Spirit to guide us we will surely arrive and see his glory!

*Those dwelling in the hiding place
Of God Most High shall tarry
Beneath the shadows of His grace;
His goodness will not vary.
My Fortress when I am be-set,
My Rock—I trust Him ever,
For He will from the fowler’s net
His faithful ones deliver.*

*He’ll save you from the pestilence,
His wings as shelter lending.
His pinions are your sure defence,
His truth a shield unbending.
At night you will not fear the gloom,
Nor, during day, the arrow,
Nor havoc that may spread at noon,
Nor nights of plagues and sorrow.*

Psalm 91:1, 2

Birthdays in February:

- 12 **CONNIE VANAMERONGEN** will be 42
361 Thirty Road, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
Email: cvanam@sympatico.ca
- 18 **CORA SCHOONHOVEN** will be 36
24 James Speight, Markham, ON L3P 3G4

Congratulations to you both Conny and Cora on your birthdays. May God bless you in this new year with good health and much happiness. Hope you have an enjoyable day, together with your families and friends. Till next month,

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



College Corner Fall 2006

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

The first semester of the Theological College is drawing to an end. Only a few weeks and the course work should be finished. Hebrew and Greek have been studied to allow the students to be able to have direct access to God's Word as written down in Scripture. In addition, a multitude of other subjects are discussed in order to be able to understand and apply God's Word. We as teachers are grateful for the opportunity to teach our students so that they eventually will be able to preach in such a way that the congregations can grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. That love is the focal point of theology and the more we know of God and his work, the more we are thankful.

This year, our first year class is larger than usual. They have come to us from several directions. Some of them were already living here in Ontario, such as Ryan Kampen who came from Richmond Hill and Tim Sikkema from Smithville. Others, however, came from much farther away. Tony Roukema and his family used to live in Langley, B.C. and Jason Vandeburgt in Chilliwack, B.C. Arend Witten and Sean Wagenaar came to us all the way from Australia. It is a pleasure to teach this widely varied group of students.

In addition it can be reported with gladness that Rev. Patric Wic



Dr. C. Venema

from Sudan was able to return to Canada to continue his studies. After having studied here for two years, he had to stay in his home country because of his family situation. Now, he could resume the theological studies. We are grateful that this opportunity materialized and that he is again in our midst.

Francine Van Woudenberg returned to the College in order to attend a selected number of courses. She requested to be allowed to follow Greek and Hebrew classes for credit. That is

an unusual request, but since she has the required prerequisites, her request could be granted.

In the meantime, everyone from near and far has settled in. There is no doubt that for several of our students it is a sacrifice to be so far from where they grew up and where their relatives are. May they keep their goal in mind and go on in the strength the Lord will provide.

In addition to the regular lectures, from time to time a special lecture can be organized. Such an opportunity arose when



Dr. C. Venema, professor at Mid America Theological Seminary, was in Ontario. Being invited to address the college community, Dr. Venema decided to deal with paedocommunion, the view that even young children should be admitted to the Lord's Supper. This is an issue that continues to be discussed in the churches on this continent. The question is not easily decided, for according to the Old Testament the sacrament of the Passover was celebrated with the children not only being present at the meal, but even allowed to eat and drink during that festive meal.

Dr. Venema approached the issue from a wide perspective, dealing with several aspects. Having discussed several possible solutions, he concluded that the character of the Lord's Supper is different from that of Passover. In view of this, children should not be admitted to the Lord's Supper until they are able to understand the gifts of grace God provides in this sacrament. We benefited from his extensive discussion of a question which regularly comes up.

Afterwards, we used the opportunity to discuss with Dr. Venema how to deal with the place and opportunities for seminaries in the ecclesiastical situation on this continent. We were thankful for

this opportunity to be able to frankly discuss issues we are all involved in. The situation in Canada is different from that of the United States, but we all agreed on the need to strive for high quality theological training. In the end, that will benefit the churches.

In September, the librarian introduced a new service by placing the catalogue of the library on the Internet. This allows everyone to check the catalogue from home or elsewhere before making a trip to the library. You can find an introductory page, including several links, at <http://www.canrc.org/college/introlibrary.html>. In addition to some general library information, you will find two links to different catalogues or databases, under the section "Online Catalogues." The first one is the catalogue for the library itself and the second one is a link to a separate database or index, known as the Reformed

Periodical Index. This is a compilation of data created by others and, since 2000, by the librarian at the Theological College. It provides an index to articles and sermons in such magazines as *Clarion*, *Lux Mundi*, *Preach the Word*, and *Reformed Perspective*. The intent is to also include articles from *Diakonia* and *Koinoinia*, starting with the upcoming volumes. As time permits, magazines will be indexed retrospectively, with the first priority being the completion of the small gap in coverage of *Reformed Perspective*. Although the presentation of the index data is not always ideal, and the data created prior to 2000 was originally created to be used in a much different format, the index is still of benefit to users. There will likely be some changes in regards to the location and appearance of this site, but future changes will be made public.



Keith Sikkema

Mr. Keith Sikkema is principal of Dufferin Area Christian School in Orangeville, Ontario
ksikkema@istop.com

Parents, School, and Community in Plymouth (Part 1 of 2)



In previous submissions about parents, school, and community, we noted that Scripture identifies, demands, and maintains the primary task of the parents in the education of their children. Family integrity is essential for this to happen. Although Christians are living more dispersed than the Old Testament Israelites did, they should still form a supportive community which acknowledges that the children belong to God's covenant and congregation. As in the Old and New Testaments, this community is jointly responsible for the children's well-being and development. The church community, which was comprised of all Israelites in the Old Testament, retains an important teaching role.

This two-part article explores education among the English Pilgrims of "Plymouth Plantation" in the 1600s. The first installment gives primarily a review of the circumstances Pilgrim families found themselves in. The second installment completes that review with regards to schooling and draws parallels to our situation today. The interest in the Pilgrims has more to it than a legendary fascination. After all, they spent time in The Netherlands; they held Calvinist convictions and desired to serve God according to his Word; and they attempted to establish a

godly community in the New World. They were perhaps more Congregationalist than Reformed and they had their struggles with Anabaptist thinking, but they also suffered to find the same freedom of conscience our fathers struggled to achieve and overcame internal strife and scandal. Their story parallels in some ways the one of the Dutch Seceders who came to Michigan over 200 years later. It illustrates that, given a (very) different set of circumstances, education and the application of scriptural principles about child rearing take on a different but not necessarily wrong form.

Pilgrims are often lumped together with New England Puritans. A case can be made to support this, but a clear distinction exists in that the Puritans sought reformation of the Church of England from within, in line with Calvin's model in Geneva. They pushed for a Presbyterian form of church government, rather than the Anglican Episcopalian form. The Puritans settled the Massachusetts Bay Colony, starting in 1629. The Pilgrims also wanted a Calvinist reformation, but, giving up as hopeless the ideal of seeking to reform the (false) Church of England from within, they separated themselves from it and became known as Separatists. They also believed that each

congregation is a complete church and should govern itself, earning them the labels of congregationalism and independentism. After a sojourn of about twelve years in The Netherlands, some of them settled in Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620.

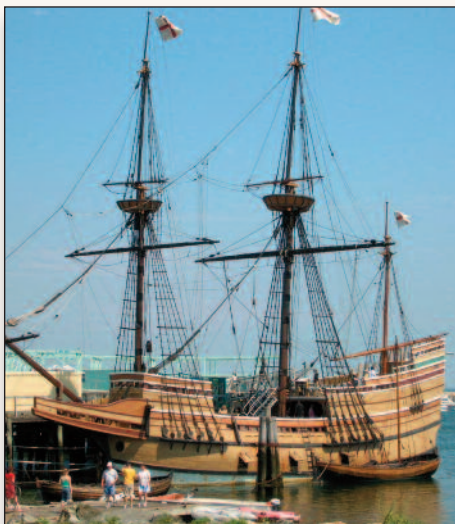
Separatists

Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603) had stifled the progress of the reformation in England and Puritan, as well as Separatist, reformers had high hopes that her Scottish-raised heir, James I, would do better. Disappointingly, however, at the 1604 Hampton Court Conference, he rejected the plea of some 800 vicars for a reformation of the church according to the Scottish Presbyterian model. Asserting his "divine right as king" and scorning subjection to the discipline of the church, he held that a "Scottish Presbytery as well agreeth with a Monarchy as God and the Devill." Within a year, as formal Head of the Church of England, he deposed 300 clergymen for disobeying him in church matters. Among those affected were Separatists from rural Scrooby, some 250 km north of London.

Led by their educated elder William Brewster and others, the Scrooby Separatists, who saw

themselves as saints, now chose to shake off the Anglican "yoake of antichristian bondage, and as ye Lord's free people joynd themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in ye fellowship of ye gospell, to walke in all his wayes. . . whatsoever it would cost them, the Lord assisting them" (G. F. Willison, *Saints and Strangers*, pp. 48-49).

By 1607, Separatists were ridiculed, slandered, stalked, assaulted, fined, and imprisoned for their claim to freedom of religion. Without the required emigration permits, the perils of grasping this freedom were significant. It implied leaving home, friends, and family members in stealth on ships with unscrupulous captains, getting caught or betrayed, and trying again. They were tossed around in storms, only to become refugees in Dutch cities like Amsterdam and Leyden, with a strange language and culture and no skills for available jobs. Several of Scrooby's impoverished saints formed the core group of Mayflower Pilgrims, who settled Plymouth Plantation in 1620.



Pilgrims

Plymouth Plantation faced many challenges. First there was the difficult journey and the arrival late in the fall of 1620. Then there was the continual poverty, exacerbated by ongoing demands of sponsors, outrageous interest-rates, and crop-failures. Mere survival kept everyone occupied – sometimes even at the cost of fellow Pilgrims. The relationship with the native peoples was also less comfortable than legend presents it and, for a time, they would even bring their muskets to church for fear of attacks. While such challenges burdened them for decades, many Pilgrims faced them in faith.

John Demos (*A Little Commonwealth*, pp. 12-13) notes that the church played a central role in Plymouth: Nearly every house had a Bible; the meetinghouse was centrally located; Sundays were days of rest, worship, and meditation. Even the laws and courts of the colony required church attendance, suppression of heresy, Christian days of humbling and thanksgiving, and marital faithfulness and tranquility. Despite good laws and intentions, however, Plymouth was not without vice or dispute. Both the "old comers" saints (Separatists) and strangers (who helped fill the Mayflower to capacity) and the "new comers" (who followed after the first three shiploads of settlers), were sinners.

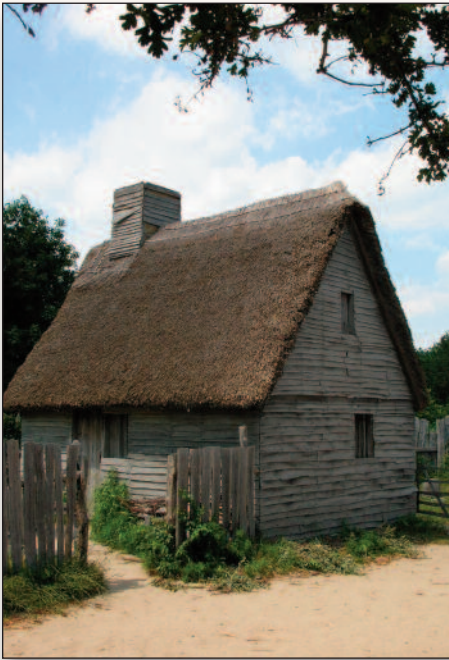
Children

There were no facilities to give birth in hospitals. Plymouth's children were more likely born in an inner-room at home, if there was



one, and baptism took place as soon as an ordained minister was available. As a rule, babies would be breast-fed until they were about a year old. Statistical information suggests that one in about five mothers, or one for every thirty children, died in connection with childbirth. Infant mortality was high, too. Nonetheless, children constituted as much as fifty-five percent of the Plymouth population. (Today, in Canadian Reformed Churches, about forty-three percent of the members are non-communicant.) Until they were six or seven, both boys and girls appear to have worn a uniform type of robe; after, children were expected to become and dress more like miniature adults. At that age, they would also begin to take responsibility for increasingly complex tasks, with boys helping their dads and girls their moms.

Children were raised, as a rule, within a nuclear family averaging about six persons. In a typical household, the father was the head, while his wife was held mutually responsible for the family's affairs. In addition, there was an average of about eight or nine siblings (some of whom would have left the house or died before the youngest was born); an occasional indentured, fostered,



Photos – Margaret Petersen

apprenticed, or even convicted servant; and perhaps a single aunt or aged grandparent. After the loss of a spouse, widow(er)s usually remarried within a year, sometimes amalgamating two families. An orphan could become the charge of a brother-in-law, friends, or even relatives in distant England; but at age fourteen, orphans were considered sufficiently mature to choose their own guardians. On the other hand, it was often not until they were twenty-one or got married (whichever came first) that they could make decisions about any inheritance they might have received. On occasion, parents left children to be raised by others because they felt or were deemed inadequate to do so themselves.

Discipline

John Robinson, the Pilgrims' pastor in The Netherlands, never joined them. Yet, he left his mark by his writings, which stressed disciplining the children:

There is in all children. . . a stubbornness and stoutness of

mind arising from natural pride, which must, in the first place, be broken and beaten down; that so the foundation of their education being laid in humility and tractableness, other virtues may, in their time, be built thereon. . . Children should not know. . . that they have a will in their own. . . ; neither should these words be heard from them, save by way of consent, "I will" or "I will not" (Demos, p. 134).

Suppression of anger appears to have received much attention in Plymouth. Rev. Robinson saw no good, and only evil in anger, as it made man into a "hideous monster, his eyes burning, his lips fumbling, his face pale, his teeth gnashing, his mouth foaming, and other parts of his body trembling, and shaking" (Demos, p. 137).

Plymouth's Pilgrims sought to discipline their children in keeping with Scripture. They expected children to maintain respect for their parents, even after leaving the house. Reminiscent of Deuteronomy 21:18, for instance, the law of the colony stated that,

If any Childe or Children above sixteen years old, and of competent Understanding, shall Curse or Smite their Natural Father or Mother; he or they shall be put to Death, unless it can be sufficiently testified that the Parents have been Unchristianly negligent in the Education of such Children, or so provoked them by extreme and cruel Correction, that they have been forced thereunto, to preserve themselves from Death or Maiming (Demos, p. 100).

It was the parents' task to discipline their children, but the (Christian!) government could step in (with fines or even removing children) if things went awry. Disinheriting was a common disciplinary measure.

The parents' educational role consisted of teaching their children (along with live-in foster-children, apprentices, etc.) to be able to read the Scriptures; to understand the capital laws of the colony and the main grounds and principles of the Christian religion; and to train them in an honest and lawful calling, labour, or employment profitable for themselves or the country (Demos, pp. 104-105). In addition to discipline, parents were also obligated to provide physical, health, and educational care for their children. Not in the least because of the untimely death of parents, the delivery of education varied widely. If children became orphaned and there was no will, the court would give a double share of any inheritance to the oldest son – quite in line with biblical practice.

In a subsequent article we will consider schooling in Plymouth and highlight some similarities and differences between their situation and our situation.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Otto Bouwman obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us

Reviewed by Renae Witten

**Claude Goudimel,
*The Genevan Psalms in
Harmony***

Theresa E. Janssen,
(Inheritance Publications:
Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada, 2005).
Additional Information: 373 pages.

Organists, choral societies, and other musicians will be pleased with the high standard and quality harmonizations contained in the recent publication of the *Genevan Psalms in Harmony* by Claude Goudimel. Although this is not the first publication of the *Genevan Psalms* in four part harmony, this book is a new development in that it comes in a clear, easy to read, hard cover format, complete with two harmonizations for each Psalm – one with the melody in the soprano and one with the melody in the tenor. Further, the text of the Psalms is included in the music – making it a valuable source for choirs.

Having taken in the publisher's intent and paged through this book in some detail, a number of things came to my attention regarding the decisions the editors have made.

First, I was delighted with the editors' decision to include an alternative harmonization of each of the Psalms with the melody in the tenor part. This is a well grounded musical practice and immediately opens the Psalms to a variety of settings and performances. At the same time it gives the organist more freedom in the decisions he can make regarding the accompaniment, with both settings being suitable for accompanying congregational singing.

The decision to include the text of the Psalms in the music makes *The Genevan Psalms in Harmony*

readily accessible to anyone who loves to sing. This volume is a worthwhile publication for choirs, school groups, youth sing-alongs, and families.

I was interested to see that the Psalms are not always set in the original key as they appear in the *Book of Praise*. Further to this, where a melody is used for more than one Psalm, as in Psalm 36 and Psalm 68, the Psalm appears in a different key in each setting. Psalm 36 appears in C Major, while Psalm 68 appears in E flat Major, although the harmonization is the same. No explanation for these changes is given in the foreword.

If a Psalm is transposed down a number of intervals to make it easier for the congregation to sing, or if it is to return to an original setting of the Psalm by Goudimel, then I commend this change. I would be wary of an unnecessary change that results in a more difficult setting for the organist,

unless the reason is one of the above. For example: in *The Genevan Psalms in Harmony*, Psalm 63 appears with a key signature of five flats, as opposed to the more approachable key signature of one sharp in the *Book of Praise*.

Psalm 51 contains a misprint in the text with verses 2, 3, and 4 being the text of Psalm 69:2, 3, and 4, before returning to the text of Psalm 51 in verses 5-7.

Despite these minor differences, the editors can be pleased with their work in bringing this volume to print. I happily embrace this volume and am sure many organists, choirs, and families will find great delight in performing from this book. May God be praised through some fine performances of these Psalm settings! I am pleased to have been introduced to this volume and am confident that it may become widely used among our churches.



Press Release of the Combined Meeting of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* and the *Psalter Hymnal* Committee of the URCNA, October 25 - 27, 2006, in Jenison, Michigan

The Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* of the Canadian Reformed Churches and the *Psalter Hymnal* Committee of the United Reformed Churches in North America met in joint session beginning Wednesday evening, October 25, through Friday morning, October 27, at the Bethel URC church building in Jenison, Michigan. Rev. Douwe Agema, Mrs. Daphne Jasperse, Rev. Ed Knott, Rev. Rand Lankheet, Mr. Chris Nobels, Rev. Derrick VanderMeulen, Dr. Christine van Halen-Faber, Rev. George van Popta, and Rev. Dick Wynia were present. Dr. Niek Gootjes was not able to attend, due to his teaching duties at the Theological College.

According to our custom, since the *Psalter Hymnal* Committee served as hosts for this meeting, Rev. Knott served as chairman and Rev. Wynia served as secretary. Rev. Knott opened our meetings with a brief meditation on Psalm 148 and led us in prayer.

After reviewing the minutes of our last joint meeting in Ancaster in April 2006, the respective committees reported on the assignments we had been given in previous meetings. These assignments consisted mainly of reviewing a number of hymns with which we had some concerns, but, which we also thought might be improved with word or tune changes. Concerns with words include such things as archaic language, individualism, or

sentimentalism; concerns with tunes include a poor match between the tune and the words, or too high a setting for congregational singing. The committees researched the hymns and made recommendations, either to make improvements, or, not to include the hymn in the "Gross List."

The committees also reported on other assignments, including: research done into the question, "May we sing songs addressed to the Holy Spirit?"; arrangements made for experts in songbook publishing to speak to us about preparations for going to print and copyright issues and for a hymn writer to speak to us about issues related to poetry in psalmody and hymnody; and contact made with a musical expert who is willing to serve as a resource for the committee, particularly when we have questions about harmonizations.

Rev. Lankheet and Rev. van Popta have almost completed the series of articles familiarizing the churches with the Principles and Guidelines which were adopted by our respective synods in 2004; these articles have been published in *Christian Renewal* and *Clarion*. We decided that when the series is completed, we will put them together in booklet form and distribute them to the consistories and make the articles as well as the Principles and Guidelines available on a website.

Mr. Nobels and Rev. Wynia will write to Dr. C. van Dam and Rev. M. VanderHart, professors of Old Testament at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches and at Mid-America Reformed Seminary respectively, for advice about the appropriate way to translate and handle the Name "Yahweh" in the song book. We reviewed and approved the

Common Report that we will be presenting to our synods in 2007.

On Thursday morning, the committee enjoyed an informative presentation made by Joyce Berger and Lynn Setsma of CRC Publications on the subjects of music editing and the copyright process. Committee members asked a variety of questions and we found it very helpful to be alerted to some of the aspects of the process that lies ahead when song selection is completed.

Following brief reports on the activities of the two committees since our last combined meeting in April 2006, the committee turned once again to a review of hymns that were found in our list of tentative song selections. The hymns we reviewed during this meeting had been taken from the "new" *Trinity Hymnal*, a production of Great Commissions Publications used by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America. We considered a total of eighty-seven hymns. Once again, many were referred for further study to the respective committees, to see whether changes could be made, to make the hymns more suitable for inclusion in our new song book. The committees will review these hymns and prepare recommendations for our next combined meeting.

Apart from evaluating hymns in the light of our principles and guidelines, the committee must also give consideration to which category a particular hymn might fit into, such as, Christ's birth, death, resurrection, atonement, etc. When the song book is completed, we will review our selections to make sure that there is a good balance and proportion among the various categories. We want to make sure that we include the best hymns possible. We also want to

be alert to those areas in which we need more good hymns. In addition to searching existing hymnals and considering submissions from the churches, the committee will also consider commissioning hymns to be written, to meet the need.

When it was time to bring our meetings to a close Friday at noon, after agreeing to meet, D.V., in April 2007 in Ancaster, committee members expressed their thanks to the Lord and to one another for the able leadership of Rev. Knott, for the gracious hospitality of the Bethel URC, and for the good spirit which once again prevailed in the meeting. Rev. VanderMeulen led us in closing prayer.

The committees welcome the questions and suggestions of the churches and of individuals, regarding anything you have read here, or in the articles produced by Rev. Lankheet and Rev. van Popta, or any other concern that you might have. It is the constant prayer of the committee that the Lord may bless our work so that his Name is glorified and the churches are built up, the Lord willing, through the use of a new song book in worship. You may contact Rev. Dick Wynia at ccchurch@bellnet.ca, or, PO Box 959, Wyoming, Ontario, or, Mr. Chris Nobels, at cjnobels@aei.ca, or c/o Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* c/o Theological College, 110 West 27th Street, Hamilton, Ontario, L9C 5A1.

*For the committees,
Rev. Dick Wynia*

Press Release of Regional Synod West, November 14, 2006, in the Surrey Maranatha Church building

Opening

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. J. Van Vliet called the meeting to order. Proverbs 1:1-7 was read and Psalm 111:1, 5 sung,

after which he led in prayer. The credentials were examined. All the classical regions were represented. Synod was declared constituted, with Rev. J. Visscher serving as chairman, Rev. A. J. Pol as vice-chairman, and Rev. C. Bouwman as clerk. Rev. Visscher welcomed the delegates and thanked the convening church for its efforts in organizing this regional synod. The agenda was adopted after some additions.

Correspondence

An appeal against a decision of Classis Pacific East, December 8, 2005 was declared admissible on the grounds that it responds to a decision of Classis Pacific East. It was dealt with in closed session. The appeal was denied.

A letter was received from the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church at Winnipeg with the Revised Regulations for Regional Synod West. The Regulations were approved with amendments. Paper and digital copies of the Revised Regulations will be passed on to the churches.

An overture was received from the church at Smithers through Classis Pacific West October 10-11, 2005, regarding the Lord's Supper for shut-ins. The overture was passed on to General Synod along with observations and considerations from Classis and Regional Synod.

There were no instructions to be dealt with by Regional Synod.

Reports

The Treasurer's report was received with gratitude. The church of Taber reported that it had audited the books of the treasurer and found them in order.

Appointments

The following delegates were appointed to attend General Synod. Elders: H. Berends,

P. De Boer, Jacob Kuik, B. Meerstra, A. Poppe, A. Van Leeuwen; alternates: G. Geurts, W. Nobel, B. Vane, W. Van Assen, in that order. Ministers: R. Aasman, P. Holtvlüwer, J. Louwerse, R.A. Schouten, J. Visscher, B. Wielenga; alternates: A.J. Pol, C. Bouwman, J. Moesker, D. Poppe, in that order. Loss of wage claims for delegates to General Synod: remunerations remain at a maximum of \$200.00 per day up to \$1,000 per week. Kilometer reimbursements were set at \$0.40 per km.

Br. Moedt was reappointed as treasurer. The Canadian Reformed Church of Taber was reappointed to audit the books.

Deputies ad Art. 48 C.O. Classis Pacific West: J. Visscher; alternates: J. Van Vliet, T. Lodder, in that order. Classis Pacific East: R.A. Schouten; alternates C. Bouwman, J. Moesker, in that order. Classis Alberta: R. Aasman; alternates, E.J. Tiggelaar, W.B. Slomp, in that order. Classis Manitoba: A.J. Pol; alternates D. M. Boersema, P.H. Holtvlüwer, in that order.

The following nominations were made for the Board of Governors: C. Bouwman; substitutes: J. Visscher, R. Aasman, in that order. Regional Synod also renominated W. B. Slomp and R.A. Schouten.

Closing

Next Regional Synod is scheduled for November 6, 2007, to be convened by the Canadian Reformed Church of Carman East, in Carman, Manitoba. Question period was held. Censure ad Art. 34 C.O. was not needed. The Acts of Regional Synod were adopted and the Press Release approved. In closing Hymn 40:1, 5 was sung and Rev. Visscher led in prayer.

For Regional Synod West, November 14, 2006

*Rev. A. J. Pol
(vice-chairman at that time)*

