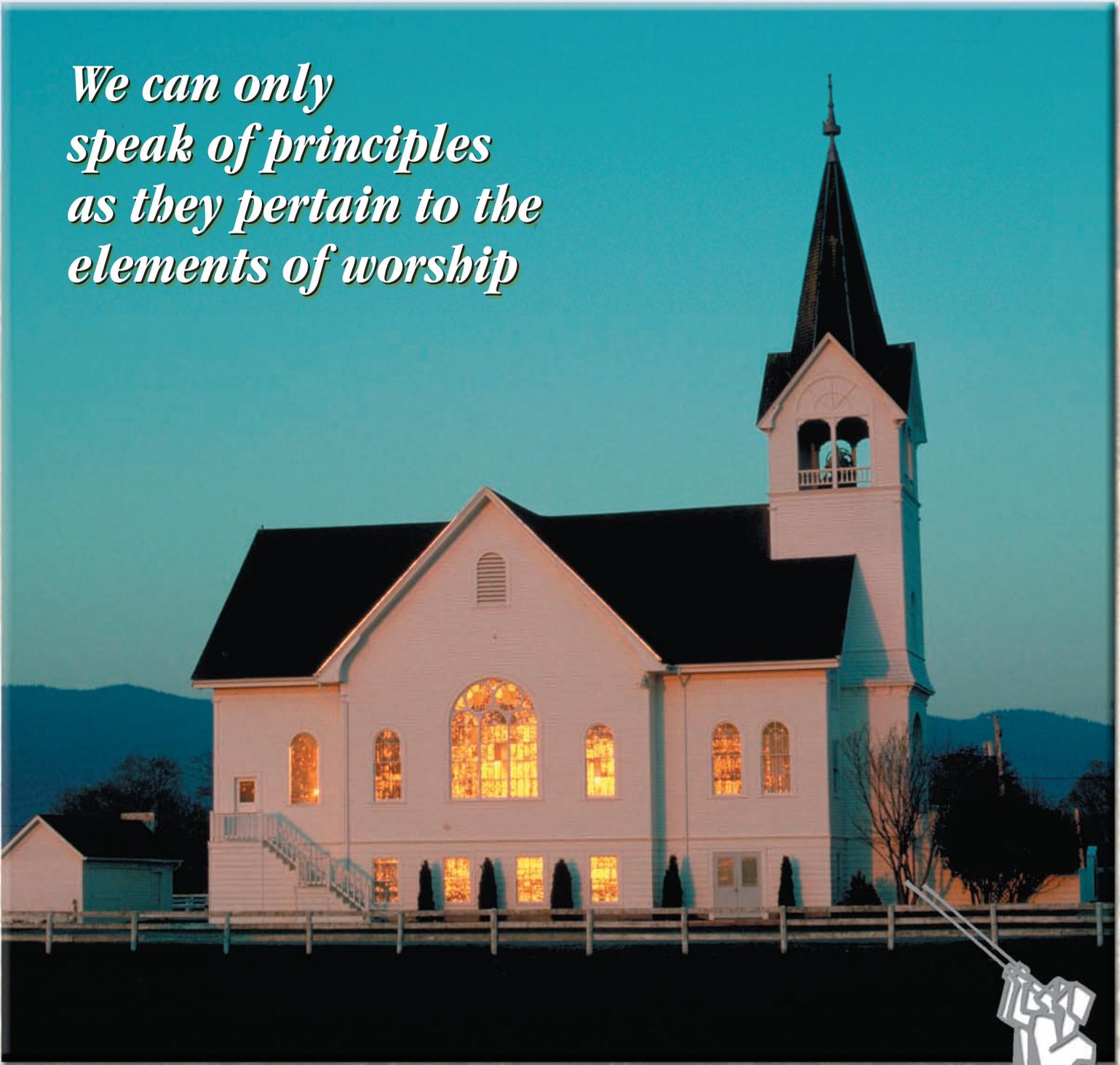


Clarion

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*We can only
speak of principles
as they pertain to the
elements of worship*



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- Are You a Servant?
- Church Music in Calvin's Tradition





Eric Kampen

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Principle or Preference?

The orders of worship found in the Book of Praise are descriptive, not prescriptive

Tucked away in between the confessions and the liturgical forms in the *Book of Praise*, one finds three pages with the heading, "Orders of Worship." Immediately under that title are the words, "The following are the orders of worship of common use." The following pages list two orders of worship, an "A" order and a "B" order. For simplicity, the basic difference comes down to where in the worship service one can expect the collection and the confession of faith, namely, at some point before (A) or after (B) the sermon.

Liturgical variety

A visit to any number of Canadian Reformed congregations, however, will give one reason to wonder if these pages should perhaps be removed from future editions of the *Book of Praise*. To be sure, churches might be grouped according to where they place the collections and the confession of faith, but after that, the variety seems endless. When one is a visitor in the pew, the variety may not be as noticeable, but it can be quite a challenge as a visiting minister. It requires considerable concentration to stay on track. In the one place a minister simply follows the elders, shakes the serving elder's hand, ascends the pulpit, and begins the worship service. He doesn't even have to ask the people to rise. The moment the minister is on the pulpit, the congregation rises to begin worship. A variation on the theme is that the minister may have to read some sort of call to worship and he has to prompt the people to rise. In another place, the minister has to follow the elders to the elders' bench. This can be to sing a pre-service song, or, to have an elder ascend the pulpit to extend a greeting to the congregation along with introducing the minister, or even both. In yet another place, the minister has to

give the greeting, make announcements of various sorts, and then ask the congregation to rise.

Once worship is under way, again there are a multitude of options. In some churches it is required that the summary is read after the Ten Words of the Covenant, while in other churches this is not done or it is left to the discretion of the minister. In some places, the congregation stands for the singing of the first and last song, while in another they stand for all songs. Yet another variation on this theme is that in some places the congregation stands for the song before the sermon, while in another they stand for the song after the sermon. Add to this the possibility of a congregation saying the votum at the start of the service, or, responding with "Amen" at certain points in the service. Beside this, congregations vary in the number of times they sing. The range is from four to six times within the worship service proper.

Furthermore, one should never assume that it will be the same when one visits even one year later. Liturgical fine tuning may have taken place so that where people previously stood now they sit, and vice versa. If the minister forgets to ask, he may sit when the people stand, and stand when the people sit, or he may say it is time for the offering when it is not.

Principles?

To be sure, each congregation has the full right to do these things. The orders of worship found in the *Book of Praise* are descriptive, not prescriptive. There is no article in the Church Order dealing with liturgy. I am not advocating that we go in that direction either. Rather, the reason for raising this point is that matters of liturgy come up repeatedly and there is constant tweaking and adjusting. The way it goes in church life, we expect changes to be based on scriptural principles. When it comes to liturgy, there will be

many principled arguments to justify a proposed course of action. Councils can end up spending a great deal of time on these matters, perhaps even tying up a number of brothers and sisters in a study committee to come with recommendations.

At the end of the day, however, I would suggest that the argumentation is more a matter of preference rather than principle. If indeed there were principled reasons for doing everything exactly in this way or that, then we would expect far less variety.

This does not mean that there are no principles for worship. These principles, however, do not touch the exact order of worship but they pertain to the elements that belong to worship. In essence we have agreed on these four principles in Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism. There we confess that on the day of rest we should "attend the Church of God to hear God's Word, to use the sacraments, to call publicly upon the Lord, and to give Christian offerings to the poor." If we keep in mind that psalms and hymns are a form of public prayer, we see the basic elements of a worship service as consisting of the actions of God towards his people in preaching and sacraments and the actions of the worshipper toward God in prayers, singing, and offerings. In practice, not all these elements are always present. For example, we do not have the sacraments every worship service. This does not take away that these are the four elements of worship.

Preferences and their implications

When it comes to the way a congregation orders its worship, it is indeed free to do so as it deems fit. We should be honest, however, and admit that when it comes to the order of worship, we can only speak of principles as they pertain to the elements of worship. These will be consistent in churches throughout the world. The form, however, ends up being a matter of preference, shaped to a large degree by culture, circumstances, and disposition of the worshippers. We may be able to argue persuasively and win others over to our preferences, but all discussion would be helped if we recognized it as preference rather than principle.

Since preference plays such a large role, we also need to be careful in suggesting changes. We might have our preferences, but when it comes to worship, nothing is gained by constant changes. It is said that familiarity breeds contempt. When it comes to liturgy, however, familiarity serves the content of worship, namely, the spiritual dialogue between God and his people. Change for the sake of change or because of one's preference does not serve the peace of Jerusalem. Working for the peace of Jerusalem, now that is a principle!



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Are You a Servant?



MATTHEW 13:52

“...to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. . . .”

Ephesians 4:12

How important is it to you to serve others? After all, Christ has given office bearers to the church “to prepare God’s people for works of service.” The Greek term (*diakonia*) that Paul uses shows us that service is not restricted to what ministers, elders, and deacons do in the church. It is the task of all Christians. So here are some important questions: Are you serving? In what way is your “ministry” or “service” contributing to building up the body of Christ?

The Apostle Paul points out that “we have different gifts, according to the grace given us” (Rom 12:6). In 1 Corinthians 12:4-5 he touches on the same theme: “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.”

Jesus Christ is the one who gives us various gifts, using them to bind us together as members of one body. These gifts are not for self-glorification but for service. “Every gift is meant to circulate in *diakonia* (1 Pet 4:10) and in this way to demonstrate the bond with Christ.”¹

Your bond with Christ becomes visible in the way you interact with the members of the body of Christ, the church. Serving one another with the gifts that Christ gives within the church is an expression of Christian unity. As can be seen in Ephesians 4:1-16, it is part of our Christian calling.

Jesus Christ binds us together by the power of his Spirit. By that

same Spirit, He activates us, calling us to work together, building each other up in the service of God. The gifts Christ gives are not only to enable us to express our unity together. When they are used, they further our unity in the Lord. Let’s therefore use them for the benefit of others.

There are limits to what each can accomplish alone. We are not self-sufficient as members of the church of Jesus Christ. We have certain gifts but lack others. For this reason, rejoice in the variety of gifts within the body of Christ: gifts of leadership, but also other gifts given for the sake of ministry in the name of Jesus Christ! When we share what we have received, we become more effective in Christ’s service as one body.

Before we can become channels of God’s grace to others, God’s work of grace must first take place in our own lives. Otherwise our lives will be unfruitful. If we maintain our bond with Jesus Christ, the fruit of the Spirit will become visible. This involves prayerfully focussing on God’s Word. Without this, there will be no spiritual growth.

The Word not only strengthens our bond with Christ, it also affects our relationships with fellow Christians. In Colossians 3:16 Paul puts it this way: “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and

spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”

This kind of fellowship builds up the body of Christ. It is a form of ministry to each other. It includes mutual instruction and admonition for the sake of maintaining the bond with God and each other. It stimulates us all to further works of service.

Being members of the body of Christ has consequences for our relationships with others. As his followers, we must learn the meaning of self-sacrificial service motivated by love. This living proof of discipleship calls for reliance upon God instead of self-reliance.

Christian acts of service also require humility and an avoidance of favouritism. This does not mean there are no priorities as to whom to serve. Christian service should take place within the church first of all, as we minister to each other’s needs. However, this should not lead us to neglect our calling to “do good to all people” (Gal 6:10).

Can people observe our lifestyle and see that our faith makes a difference? Do we really live for God? How do we interact among each other? Let’s be known by our love, love expressed through service to others.

¹ C. Trimp, *Inleiding in de Ambtelijke Vakken* (Kampen: Copieerinrichting v.d. Berg, 1978), p. 56.





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Church Music in Calvin's Tradition (Part 2 of 3)

This is the expanded version of a speech that was given at the Convocation evening of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, September 11, 2009

Many Reformed people are surprised to hear that John Calvin was opposed to the use of musical instruments in worship services. We all know that the Psalms call on believers to praise the Lord with the accompaniment of lyres and harps and other musical instruments. So why would the Genevan Reformer be opposed to it?

First of all, we should note that Calvin was not alone in his opposition to the use of instruments. This had been the prevailing attitude for the first thousand years of church history! The church fathers thought that the use of musical instruments was part of temple worship in the old covenant. Since temple worship has been abolished in the new covenant, they felt that the role of musical instruments has come to an end as well. The early Christian church followed the example of the synagogue where no musical instruments were used.

There was another factor involved as well: The church

fathers knew how music functioned in pagan worship as a vehicle for ecstatic behaviour, prophetic trance, and orgiastic dance.¹ They did not want to go there!

The church fathers were not just concerned about the use of musical instruments. They were concerned that even singing as such might become a distraction from worship. Augustine describes his struggle with the beauty of singing in his *Confessions* (Book 10, chapter 33). He testifies how sometimes the chanting of the melody moved him more than the content of the song and how he felt guilty about that.²

It should be no surprise that Calvin, who generally liked to follow the example of the church fathers, followed their cautious approach to the use of music as well. He was afraid that the use of music during worship would merely serve human pleasure and enjoyment and thus get in the way of true worship.

"Ludicrous" organs

In Calvin's case another aspect needs to be mentioned. He was alarmed by what he had seen in the Roman Catholic Church. He had witnessed how the preaching of the gospel was overshadowed and pushed aside by the

abundance of rituals and ceremonies. Whether Calvin has ever heard organs being played in church is difficult to say, but he does refer to the playing of organs in some of his writings. In a sermon on 1 Samuel 18:6 (the account of the women who came out to meet the victorious David with songs and music), Calvin criticized the Roman Catholic Church for its "ridiculous and foolish imitation" of ceremonies of the old covenant. The Roman Catholics thought that it would add to the festive character of worship "if they added organs and many other similar ludicrous things."³ In reaction to the deformation of worship which Calvin saw in the Roman Catholic Church, he designed an approach to worship that would allow the preaching of the gospel to receive full attention.

When we read such statements, we are inclined to ask what Calvin did with all those passages in the Old Testament where God's people are called upon to sing the Lord's praises with the accompaniment of harps and lyres and other musical instruments. After all, even the Psalm for the Sabbath day (Psalm 92) mentions the use of lyres and harps!

Calvin reflected on such passages and offered a theological explanation for his negative view of the use of musical instruments in worship. A typical example is found in his commentary on Psalm 33:2 ("Praise the Lord with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. Sing to him a new song; play skilfully, and shout for joy.") Calvin acknowledges that musical instruments were used in the temple worship and that they served to stimulate believers to vigorous praise of God. But he maintains that musical instruments should not be used in worship today, for two reasons.

First, Calvin argues that musical instruments belong to the shadows of the old covenant that have since been fulfilled in Christ:

We may not indiscriminately consider as applicable to ourselves, every thing which was formerly enjoined upon the Jews. I have no doubt that playing upon cymbals, touching the harp and the viol, and all that kind of music, which is so frequently mentioned in the Psalms, was a part of the education; that is to say, the puerile instruction of the law: I speak of the stated service of the temple.⁴

This passage illustrates that Calvin saw instrumental music as something that belonged to the old dispensation, the "immature" stage of the covenant. In his opinion the use of musical instruments is comparable to the burning of incense, the lighting of candles, and other shadows of the law. Such things ought to be abandoned by the Christian church.

Second, Calvin argues that instrumental music is not fitting for the sober kind of worship which is pleasing to God. In his commentary on Psalm 33 he writes that people are fond of "outward pomp" and the noise of

instruments, but that God is pleased by "simplicity." This is an important word. In Calvin's thinking simplicity goes together with "intelligibility." Whatever is done in worship must be simple and understandable so that the whole congregation may be edified. In this context Calvin refers to the warnings of the Apostle Paul against speaking in tongues (1 Cor 14). Why does Paul warn against speaking in tongues? Because nobody understands it and nobody is edified. Well then, doesn't the same apply to instrumental music? It may be beautiful but it does not have an intelligible message and hence it does not serve the edification of the congregation. In Calvin's opinion, then, to use musical instruments during the worship service is "not only unadvised zeal but wicked and perverse obstinacy."

Evaluating Calvin's approach

Let us briefly evaluate Calvin's rationale for the non-use of musical instruments. His first argument was that instrumental music has been abolished with the fulfillment of the old covenant in Christ. This argument raises the question in what sense instrumental music has been fulfilled. We confess that sacrifices and ceremonies and symbols of the law have ceased with the coming of Christ, and that all shadows have been fulfilled (BC, Art. 25). At the same time we believe that teaching and singing and other elements of old covenant worship have not been abolished but continue to play an important role in new covenant worship. Singing is even part of heavenly worship (see the Book of Revelation).

With respect to sacrifices, it is not difficult to understand why they needed to be abandoned. Sacrifices foreshadowed the ultimate sacrifice of Christ. Once

that ultimate sacrifice had been brought, the old covenant sacrifices were obsolete. But the singing of God's praises is something different. It was fitting in temple worship in Jerusalem and it continues to be fitting in the worship of the congregation of Christ (the temple of the Holy Spirit). If singing is appropriate in both covenants, why would instrumental accompaniment not be? This question remains unanswered.

What shall we say about Calvin's argument that instrumental music resembles speaking in tongues and should be avoided according to 1 Corinthians 14? Dr. Klaas Schilder commented: "It was too strange, this argument from the Scriptures."⁵ Indeed, it appears that categories have been mixed up here. Speaking in tongues was a kind of speaking that was unintelligible to the congregation and threatened to take the place of prophesying and preaching. The Apostle Paul mentioned that speaking in tongues might cause visiting unbelievers to draw the conclusion that the Christians in Corinth were out of their mind (1 Cor 12:23). Instrumental music is something totally different. It is intended to support and enhance the singing of God's praises. It does not take the place of "intelligible" speaking or praying, but rather supports it.

In summary, Calvin's theological arguments against the use of musical instruments do not convince. It sounds like he was trying to find arguments because he was afraid of what might happen if we start using musical instruments in worship. This concern as such, however, needs to be appreciated! We may not agree with Calvin's rigorous measures, but we should appreciate his concern that music is so powerful

that it can do damage. After all, it is true that music has the power not just to enhance and support worship but also to distract from worship. Who has not had the experience that the organist's or pianist's playing was so dominant, hectic, frivolous, or even beautiful, that we forgot about what we were singing and focused on the musical accompaniment?

In reflecting on Calvin's approach to instrumental music we should take into account that he worked within a specific historical context. Over the last 450 years there has been an enormous development in terms of musical instruments and accompaniment. We know that good musical accompaniment can do much to stimulate lively and vigorous congregational singing. This is an experience which Calvin never had and which may partly explain his reluctance to allow musical instruments in worship. Calvin may have heard organs being played but he had never heard the organ being used to accompany congregational singing. I would speculate that Calvin, had he been able to experience how a musical instrument can enhance congregational singing, would have taken another approach to our subject.

Further observations

Reflecting further on the use or non-use of musical instruments in worship, it appears that two aspects need to be taken into account. On the one hand, we have the abundance of calls in the Old Testament to praise the Lord with the accompaniment of musical instruments. This needs to carry weight in our reflection on Christian worship. On the other hand, it is true that there is no

injunction in the New Testament to use musical instruments. There are explicit calls to sing the Lord's praises during worship (Eph 5, Col 3) but no exhortations to use musical instruments (although musical instruments continue to be mentioned in Revelation). Perhaps there was a practical concern here: it would have been difficult to expect every house congregation to use musical instruments.

How to reconcile these perspectives? I suggest that two principles may be drawn from the biblical evidence. First, congregational singing is essential in Christian worship. Second, the use of musical instruments is allowed, perhaps even recommended, but not essential.

Those of us who have travelled to other countries and visited churches in other parts of the world may have experienced how congregations can sing powerfully without the accompaniment of musical instruments. Listen to the four-part singing of African congregations and you would not want them to introduce musical instruments to their worship tradition. Their singing is beautiful the way it is.

At the same time musical instruments can be a real enhancement to communal singing. It is helpful to note the liturgical developments in the old covenant in this respect. The Lord allowed room for liturgical development. Moses did not institute singing and musical instruments for the worship in and around the tabernacle. Centuries later king David organized a significant expansion of temple worship by introducing choir singing and musical instrument and it was pleasing to the Lord. Could something analogous not be

Church News

Declined the calls to Denver, CO, and Grand Rapids, MI, USA:

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of Winnipeg (Redeemer),
Manitoba

Accepted the call to Surrey,
British Columbia:

Rev. T.G. Van Raalte
of Winnipeg (Redeemer),
Manitoba

assumed for the development of worship in the Christian church? The use of musical instruments was not ordained by the apostles. But would the Lord not allow the enhancement of worship music and be pleased with it, just like it happened in the old covenant?

In the next article we will draw conclusions and applications from what we have discussed so far.

¹ James McKinnon, article "Musik und Religion: Alte Kirche und Mittelalter," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Vol. 23 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994), 453.

² Saint Augustine, *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. Oxford World's Classics paperback 1992, p. 208

³ Translated from Ioannis Calvini *opera quae supersunt omnia*, Vol. 30, p. 259. Dutch translation of this passage available in H. Hasper, *Calvijs beginsel voor den zang in den eredienst*. Vol. 1. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff), 407.

⁴ John Calvin, *Commentary on the book of Psalms*. Transl. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 537-538.

⁵ "Het was ook waarlijk al te vreemd, zulk een beroep op de Schrift." K. Schilder, "Orgelspel," article originally published in 1925. Reprinted in *Om Woord en Kerk*. Vol. 2 (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1949), 93.

True Path to God: Sending out the Gospel in Punjabi

On Friday, September 11, 2009 members representing various Reformed churches in the Fraser Valley met in Surrey Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church to further develop ways of bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to our Punjabi speaking neighbours (mostly Sikh, but also Muslim). A steering committee consisting of members of the Free Reformed churches called this meeting with a well-planned agenda:

1. To have Rev. Kuldip Gangar inform listeners "How to Reach Sikhs with the Gospel"
2. To share the resources which have already been developed
3. To plan how to move forward in this work.

Rev. Eric Moerdyk of the Free Reformed Church of Abbotsford served as moderator for the evening. He read Psalm 67, a psalm which opens with a rendition of the Aaronic blessing, and then prayed that God's ways and salvation will be known among the nations, who in response will be glad and sing for joy. After a brief welcome and introduction Rev. Gangar (pastor of the Free Reformed Church of Bellevue, Washington) took the floor.

Indifference or fear?

Rev. Gangar began by wondering aloud whether we are indifferent toward our neighbours.

If we are, it will make it more difficult for them to believe. Why would they be interested in something if we're not excited about sharing it with them? Or are we perhaps being Universalists by our silence? Maybe our silence suggests, "It doesn't really matter what you believe; there are many ways to God. You go your way and I'll go mine." But we can't shirk our responsibility so easily. If we believe in Jesus Christ as our Saviour, then we are the light of the world and salt of the earth. We are to be instrumental in our neighbour's learning to praise our Father in heaven.

Perhaps we're afraid of persecution and generally respond in two ways. We become worldly, so that it becomes difficult for anyone to distinguish us from non-Christians. Or we withdraw, and become tribal. We mix only with similar people, become a tightly knit community who remain hungry for the gospel ourselves but aren't willing to share. We keep the gospel caged within walls of our church. That's less threatening. Rev. Gangar pointed out that persecution for being Christian is largely unavoidable. The Apostle Paul suggests that we should be encouraged when we suffer. It is a sign that we'll be saved (Phil 1:27-

29). So share the faith which is your life!

Preparing ourselves to share

Before we begin to share the gospel with others, we need to have a good look at ourselves. (Here Rev. Gangar interjected that he had no intention of "slamming" the Reformed faith and practice. He loves the Reformed church community, but he encouraged us to look in the mirror and be honest.)

There are about twenty million Sikhs world-wide. Outside of northern India, the Lower Fraser Valley has the highest concentration of Sikhs in the world. Surrey has the most and Abbotsford has the largest Sikh temple in Canada, just up the hill behind the Abbotsford Free Reformed Church. We have a huge opportunity right on our doorstep. Rev. Gangar elaborated on several important themes we should consider in preparing to invite and receive non-Christians of various backgrounds to our worship services.

1. We should never give any indication that people are different (less worthy) because of skin colour. We all belong to the human race and we all trace our history back to the same parents, Adam and Eve.

2. We should not present ourselves as a Dutch church, but as a Christian church. The phrase, "If you're not Dutch, you aren't much," sounds like a joke in our ears, but perhaps not in others'. It may cause them to feel they don't belong.

3. Reformed is not an ethnic designation. It's not just about Schilder and Bavinck. A person can become Reformed simply by knowing God's Word well. Much division among the Reformed churches can be traced to focusing on historical issues rather than at the Bible, the content of God's Word. Those who may not know Dutch Reformed church history are not second-class Reformed Christians.

4. We should be open to questions about our customs and traditions and not become defensive. If tradition stands in the way of truth, tradition must go. Rev. Gangar gave a couple of examples to clarify his point.

He mentioned Matthew Henry's commentary on James 2, where Christians are instructed not to show favouritism to the wealthy in the worship meetings. Henry emphatically denounces such favouritism, yet in his application he acquiesces to the common practice of his day, saying that it would be fine to designate seating in the church according to status and rank.

He also mentioned an amusing story of cooking a pot roast according to tradition. It was at a multi-generational celebratory dinner. The mother, in preparing the meat for the roasting pan, sliced a chunk from each end, and laid them on top of the roast. "Why are you doing that?" her daughter asked. "That's the way

Grandma always did it." The daughter went to ask Grandma the same question. Grandma responded, "That's the way my Mom always did it." Intrigued, the daughter went to Great-grandma and repeated the question. "My roasting pan was too small so I did that to make it fit," Great-grandma replied. A tradition that could stand to be revised, yes?

So, Rev. Gangar continued, when a newcomer to a Reformed church service wonders why elders must sit up front, we should not take offence at the question, but be prepared to give a reason for this. And we may have to reconsider if it is edifying for the congregation when an elder or deacon has to leave his wife in the pew to manage five or six children on her own.

If our tradition has good value, keep it; if it is a hindrance, be willing to set it aside.

5. Rev. Gangar also encouraged us to be thoughtful about appropriate dress for the worship service. Modesty for women is highly valued by other religions. This does not require veils or floor length garments, but our dress should be modest and not worldly or provocative.

Understanding our guests

Next Rev. Gangar moved to the basics of the Sikh faith. It began in the late 1400s with Guru Nanak. He was not satisfied with the formalism of either Hindu or Muslim faith as practiced in Northern India. He also disliked the caste system, which was based mainly on skin colour, but also occupation. He developed a religion which some call monotheistic, but is not really.

Sikhs – like most Eastern religions – believe that God is not separate from us. An analogy may help us to understand. Think of creation as a fish in the ocean. The ocean is god. As long as the fish remains in the ocean it can live. As soon as it leaves it dies. It is an impersonal relationship and the goal of this faith is to become one with god, to be absorbed into god.

A Sikh believer gave Rev. Gangar this analogy. In a forest you see trees. From up high you see only the forest. The aim is to see only the forest. When Rev. Gangar asked him, "How you would know you have been absorbed into such a state," he replied, "You don't." It's hard for us to understand such an almost fatalistic religion. Man is not considered inherently sinful, but is prone to wrong actions. Where you end up is based on karma – your good deeds versus your bad. You may need to go through thousands of reincarnations (transmigrations of the soul) in order to achieve the goal of absorption into god-ness. Salvation is not really salvation to eternal life, but simply an escape or liberation from the attachments of this world. And it is seldom permanent or eternal. Your good karma may run out and you start the cycle again.

There were ten gurus and the last one decreed that he was the last human guru and that from that time on the holy book called Guru Granth Sahib would serve as guru. Each gurdwara (temple) has an exact copy of the Guru Granth Sahib. It is reverently situated on a raised platform (pulpit) at the front of the worship hall. Leaders read daily from its 1,430 pages of Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu holy writings. It treated as divine and carefully covered when not being used.

Sikhs are given an additional name when they are baptized. (This happened initially during the time of horrific persecution of Sikhs by Muslims.) All men take the name Singh, which means lion; all girls the name Kaur which means princess. Their surname is used only when they get married. E.g. Rev. Gangar refers to himself as Rev. Singh when he relates to Punjabi-speaking people, since that is their custom. (He notes that he actually loves that name as a Christian since he is now a warrior for the Lion of Judah.) In addition to their new name, Sikhs have five other distinct items that identify them. The kachera, which are short pants to indicate they are ready for battle at a moment's notice and also a symbol of modesty; the kesh: uncut hair (Rev. G. noted there is no agreement on the meaning of the long hair); the kangha: a wooden comb denoting cleanliness and necessary for grooming the long hair; the kara: a steel bracelet denoting eternity; and the kirpan, a ceremonial sword for defence of the faith and of the weak.

The gurdwara is a hospitable place. You can always get a meal from the kitchen. The goal of Guru Nanak and all devout Sikhs since is to overcome the divisions between different religions and different castes. All followers of the gurus should eat together. And even if you are not a believer, Sikhs will provide any visitor with a generous meal.

Sharing the gospel

Rev. Gangar rounded out his presentation with some brief pointers on sharing the gospel with Sikhs. In real estate the slogan is "location, location, location." With Punjabi speaking folk the slogan would be "hospitality, hospitality, hospitality." Befriend your neighbours and invite them over to share a meal. "If you take one step

toward them, they will take two in your direction." Take the time to learn their culture, and even – perhaps – learn to enjoy their food. You can always ask them to make it less spicy for your sake.

When you share Scripture with them, remember to treat your Bible with respect. Rev. Gangar related how he caused a significant setback in bringing the gospel to a group of Sikhs by placing his Bible on the floor while he was removing his coat. Those gathered were dismayed that he would show such disrespect and wondered if anything from that book could be worth listening to.

When you share the gospel, be prepared for challenging questions. Rev. Gangar related a few. "Why did God need to forgive sin when He is not accountable to anyone? After all, He is God!" "If God is already almighty and all glorious, what difference does it make if people glorify his name?" And be prepared for questions about the Trinity. It is particularly difficult for adherents of Eastern religions to grasp. Their gods are impersonal beings, so the idea of personal God, and then one-in-three-persons is mind-boggling. Don't be afraid to admit that you don't know an answer. Be ready to study and come back to them with further explanations. Also, remember that the questioners are genuinely seeking answers, and not trying to argue against the Christian faith. They simply want to know more.

Resources available

After an interesting and broad-ranging question and answer session, Tim Patzer and Jack Van Der Zwaan displayed and explained the various resources that are currently available:

- Signs in Punjabi advertising the weekly radio broadcast on KARI

- True Path to God website: www.truepathtogod.com
- Sermon Audio: www.sermonaudio.com
- Basic Christianity: CDs with 18 messages in Punjabi
- Tracts in Punjabi: The Prodigal Son and The Sower
- 1,000 Punjabi Bibles are on order
- Thousands of business cards with information on the broadcasts
- Thousands of response cards that can be sent in
- Thousands of small plastic bags that can be packed with the above items for distribution.

The two brothers informed us that all the materials would be available for perusal and for taking to our home churches for distribution in our neighbourhood.

How do we go forward?

Rev. Moerdyk hoped that the information learned this evening would make its way to local congregations and consistories. Individuals are welcome to indicate their support, but it would be good if churches would get involved in a more official capacity. The steering committee would like additional members, at least one from every Reformed church in the area, in order to co-ordinate local outreach. He also noted that Pastor Gangar is available to speak in Punjabi at outreach events.

Rev. Dick Moes closed the evening with a prayer based on Psalm 67. A time of refreshments, lively fellowship, and information-sharing followed. We left for home greatly enriched. May this evening bear rich fruit for the gospel of Jesus Christ among our Punjabi-speaking neighbours!

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Canticles

This canticle was set to the tune of Psalm 68 of the Genevan Psalter. Revelation's announcement of the fall of Babylon is very similar to some of the themes of Psalm 68. The tune suggested itself.

Parts of the Book of Revelation are not for the faint of heart. Revelation 18 and 19 are not for the faint of heart. Neither, admittedly, is this new hymn. May God also be praised in the destruction of his enemies.

Babylon and the Bride

Revelation 18:1-8; 19:1-9

Genevan 68

1543/Geneva, 1551

1. Fallen is Babylon the Great;
she has been handed down her fate
by God the Lord Almighty.
Within her evil spirits roam,
she has become the demons' home –
a haunt for all that's filthy.
In her lives everything that's foul,
the unclean beasts that screech and howl,
and all the drunken nations.
She gave herself to kings of earth;
the merchants revelled in her mirth,
and in her vile seductions.
2. A voice from heaven, loud and clear:
"Come out from her, My people, dear;
do not share in her trouble.
Her sins are piled to heaven's height;
she will face God in all His might;
He will repay her double.
God has remembered all her crimes,
He is aware of all the times
His bride she persecuted.
She thought herself a queen so great
who goes about in royal state.
She will be devastated."
3. The church in heaven shouts and sings;
throughout the universe it rings:
"We praise You, Hallelujah!
All strength belongs to God alone
as judgments issue from His throne.
O praise the Lord, Hosanna!
He caused our enemy to fall
but saved His servants great and small;
we have been vindicated.
Our blood He did not disregard
but gave the world its just reward.
His bride He liberated.
4. "Hallelujah! O praise the King
for He is Lord of everything;
He is our God Almighty.
Let us be glad and with one voice
sing forth our songs; let us rejoice
and praise our Saviour rightly."
The wedding of the Lamb has come,
the bride is ready for His home;
she wears her clean white linen.
How blest are those called to the feast,
the great and small, and very least.
To God all praise be given!



Farewell to the Vandeburgts

Farewell

It's not easy saying goodbye when you have a deep relationship with someone. This is true of friendship between individuals and it's also true in a bond between a minister and his family and a congregation. And yet, after a seven year relationship, that is exactly what we had to do.

Our pastor here at Trinity Canadian Reformed Church in Glanbrook, Rev. Doug Vandeburgt, had accepted a call to Burlington/Waterdown. And reluctantly for all, it was time to say goodbye. We could do this first informally with a Saturday afternoon get-together and barbeque.

We began with a brief gathering in the church auditorium led by Arie denHollander. He reminisced about the seven years we had enjoyed under the capable leadership of our Rev. Vandeburgt. He spoke about



our thankfulness that as new congregation we had received our first minister. We were blessed with faithful preaching each Sunday again. Our young people were blessed with dedicated and enjoyable catechism teaching. Countless visits were made in the congregation. Comfort was brought when comfort was needed. Admonition was given when admonition was required. Consistory and Council meetings were held under the capable leadership of our pastor. As congregation we were exhorted and encouraged to continue to be busy with God's Word, continually keeping the flame alive. As a young and newly formed congregation, Trinity has known no other pastor. We had grown spiritually and physically with our young pastor and his family. Thanks was also expressed to Karen for the many talents she had used in the congregation whether it was in visiting, giving leadership in Coffee Break, Women's Society, Vacation Bible School, or other activities.

The more formal part of the afternoon was closed fittingly with a large number of children and some moms singing "So Long - Farewell, *Auf Wiedersehen* Good bye." This song was a small ode the congregation sang to our Pastor Doug, wife Karen, and children, Leah, Joel, Seth, Levi, and Eden, highlighted with a special verse for each of them.



Well after all the talk, we headed outside for some good food and fellowship. A delicious barbeque had been prepared and together we enjoyed each other's company on our own eight acre church backyard.

Final Sunday

The sad finality of this leaving, however, was inevitable. On Sunday, August 2, in the presence of many guests, Rev. Vandeburgt preached his final two sermons at Trinity. Our pastor used the occasion of his final sermons to do what he has continued to do each Sunday for the seven years we could sit under his preaching. He used the setting of 2 Corinthians to not only complete the series he had begun some weeks previously, but to complete his time of preaching here in Glanbrook. While in the morning service, he spoke about how the



Lord seeks to build up his church – in Corinth, in Glanbrook, in all places where faithful preaching takes place, the afternoon service was devoted to an examination of the final four verses of the final book of Paul’s second letter to these Corinthians.

In a very encouraging manner, our pastor showed how “through his servant’s farewell, the triune God builds up his church.” True to form, such an introduction, a bit unexpectedly, gave us the encouragement to continue in our

personal and communal life of faith – he and his family to a new flock in Burlington-Waterdown, and we continuing in Glanbrook, accepting the reality of loss, but also readjustment to a new shepherd.

Read those words in the last four verses of 2 Corinthians 13! You’ll be struck by the many references to both leaving and (staying) maintaining. And that’s what our pastor reminded us to do. We were directed to expressions such as “Finally,” “good-bye,” “aim

for perfection,” “listen to my appeal,” “be of one mind,” and “live in peace.” What more can a departing apostle say in his encouragement to a young church? And what more could a departing and well-loved pastor say to his relatively-young congregation of Glanbrook? Our fledgling congregation knew only one minister in its young history. Like the church in Corinth, we struggled at times with issues and relationships, but were weekly encouraged by our pastor and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit to maintain fellowship and unity with each other. For this is how God builds his church, both then and now.

Since this farewell, we’ve all moved on. The Lord continues to use our former pastor in his service. We will not forget the seven blessed and wonderful years we spent together.



Otto Bouwman

Schools: Richly Blessed



Mr. Otto Bouwman is principal of Cornerstone Christian School in Lynden, Washington
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Very recently, a meeting of all school principals was held in Crieff, ON. All principals of Canadian Reformed schools were there, as well as a few others. General reports and specific discussions with various participants made it abundantly clear that our federation of schools is a growing body with continued needs and opportunities. But conference discussions gave me again an occasion to pause and reflect, count federational blessings, and become aware of the continued challenges facing our system of schools.

As far as blessings are concerned as they relate to our schools, it's fascinating to hear about how many schools have recently faced significant growth in terms of physical space and how some are just in the process of addressing that very challenge. Though it's true that currently there is lots of talk of recession – especially in my American home country – one would never know it, seeing how our schools have been expanding during the last number of years.

Buildings

Seven years ago the Lynden community built a beautiful brand new school and three years ago doubled its size by adding several more classrooms, a beautiful kitchen, and a magnificent full size

gymnasium. As I go through the list of schools in our system, I discover our school community is by no means the exception. Consider:

- **Calgary:** after much fundraising, the Tyndale community witnessed the addition of a few new classrooms last year. No sooner did they complete that project than the hopes of adding more grades to their school imply continued expansion during the next few years.
- **Coaldale:** they have, during the last few years, made their school much more physically appealing by adding beautiful administration space as well as several new classrooms to their facility.
- **Edmonton:** this school society is in the midst of a significant addition to their school right now. They are adding several classrooms, industrial arts space, a band room, and improved staff and library space. There are over 21,000 square feet of additional space in the addition.
- **Fergus:** they've been able to add portables during the past few years and have been long aware of the acute need for additional space. That's been a sufficient catalyst for the "Guelph initiative" to gain sufficient traction to purchase their own building in Guelph and properly prepare it, DV, for an official

September 2010 opening date.

- It's great to hear about an additional school in our system! Additionally, discussions continue about whether or not to keep the elementary and high school wings in the same facility. Even with Guelph's own school, additional space in Fergus will be needed.
- **Hamilton:** almost four years ago, they purchased an amply adequate building and then completed renovations. They are now already aware that they need to begin making plans for another expansion because of increased enrollment.
 - **Langley:** Credo Christian High School is in the middle of an expansion project right now, as they add more Industrial Arts space and do some other renovations in that general part of the school.
 - **London:** London last year moved into a newly renovated beautiful building that more than adequately meets their needs. Their school community is delighted for the spacious premises.
 - **Neerlandia:** a beautiful new gym and a few other areas recently gave this school a wonderfully fresh feel.
 - **Orangeville/Grand Valley in Laurel:** about two years ago a major addition was begun. By the time it was completed, the

school had a brand new gymnasium as well as a kitchen and computer lab.

- Smithville: several years ago the Smithville school society approved the plan to give their school a beautiful face lift and added a wonderful gymnasium, a kitchen, six classrooms, and office facilities to their building.
- Smithers: Ebenezer has just completed an expansion including extra classrooms and foyer space. They also have plans for another addition in the foreseeable future.
- Winnipeg: is exploring opportunities of how to maximize space available from next door.

This quick review of building space reveals that, wonderfully, schools in our system are enjoying a very deep level of support from their communities. Thousands of people have demonstrated their support for covenantal education by opening their wallets in a significant way. Despite economic hardship, and despite huge ongoing financial sacrifices that are necessary for the daily operation of our schools, especially in jurisdictions without government support, school communities are able to find the necessary capital for completing major additions.

God has evidently blessed our communities with not only the financial wherewithal to give teachers and students beautiful facilities in which to work, but has also blessed our communities with individuals willing to give. He has given parents, grandparents, and others in the supporting community an appreciation of the importance of Christian education. That's a perspective that needs to be shared with everyone. In the face of financial hardship, many a treasurer feels a bit discouraged that more people are not demonstrating the support for

Christian education as they should. Sometimes, though, it's helpful to just concentrate on the half (or three-quarters) of the glass that's full. When we see the beautiful buildings we've been given, we should just pause and reflect on God's goodness to us. Let's never stop praising God for the gifts that He has given!

People

At the turn of the millennium, a directory of our schools identified twenty-five day schools in our system of Canadian and American Reformed Schools. There were 220 teachers listed in these schools and these teachers serviced 3,787 students. Today that number has increased significantly. If we add up just the teachers and students in our system, we discover that now there are 4,034 students spread over twenty-six schools, with 270 teachers. Obviously, our schools have been growing in numbers.

That too is a blessing. It's as it should be: being fruitful and multiplying reflects obedience to God's command. From a system perspective, growth is happening, and that is a beautiful reality. Again, that's a reason for much gratitude.

These numbers have certain implications that we ought also to be aware of. First of all, there is, from a system perspective, plenty of opportunity for young people to enter the teaching profession. Growth implies opportunities for people to move into the system. A new school in Guelph is coming and that means more staff will be needed. If Ottawa's aspirations to open another day school become reality, then again more staff will be needed. Appropriately as well, over the whole system, the average number of students in today's classrooms is slightly lower than it was a decade ago. That trend will likely continue, so again, there will be room for more teachers in our

system. Teenagers and college students: the teaching profession is a wonderful opportunity for service in God's kingdom. There are ongoing needs as well as opportunities for good teachers in our system of schools. Consider receiving an education that would prepare you for the front of the classroom.

One of the topics addressed at the recent principals' conference was the impending retirement of various principals. During the next five to eight years, our system will say farewell to almost one third of the current principals, who have demonstrated capable and lengthy leadership. Retirement implies that others will need to step forward and provide the leadership that is needed for the well-being of our schools. Young people and young teachers: consider if God has given you gifts of leadership. Develop those gifts. Real leaders are almost always in short supply. There are already and will be increasing opportunities to apply for positions of leadership in our schools. Deliberately prepare yourself to take on one of these positions. Being able to serve as a leader is a wonderful service opportunity!

Summary

Yes, in various communities resources are stretched. In many individual families, resources are very stretched. But when we reflect on the blessings we as a system have so abundantly been receiving during the past number of years, then all we can really do is rejoice in God's blessings to us, and inspire those around us to join us in giving thanks.

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.





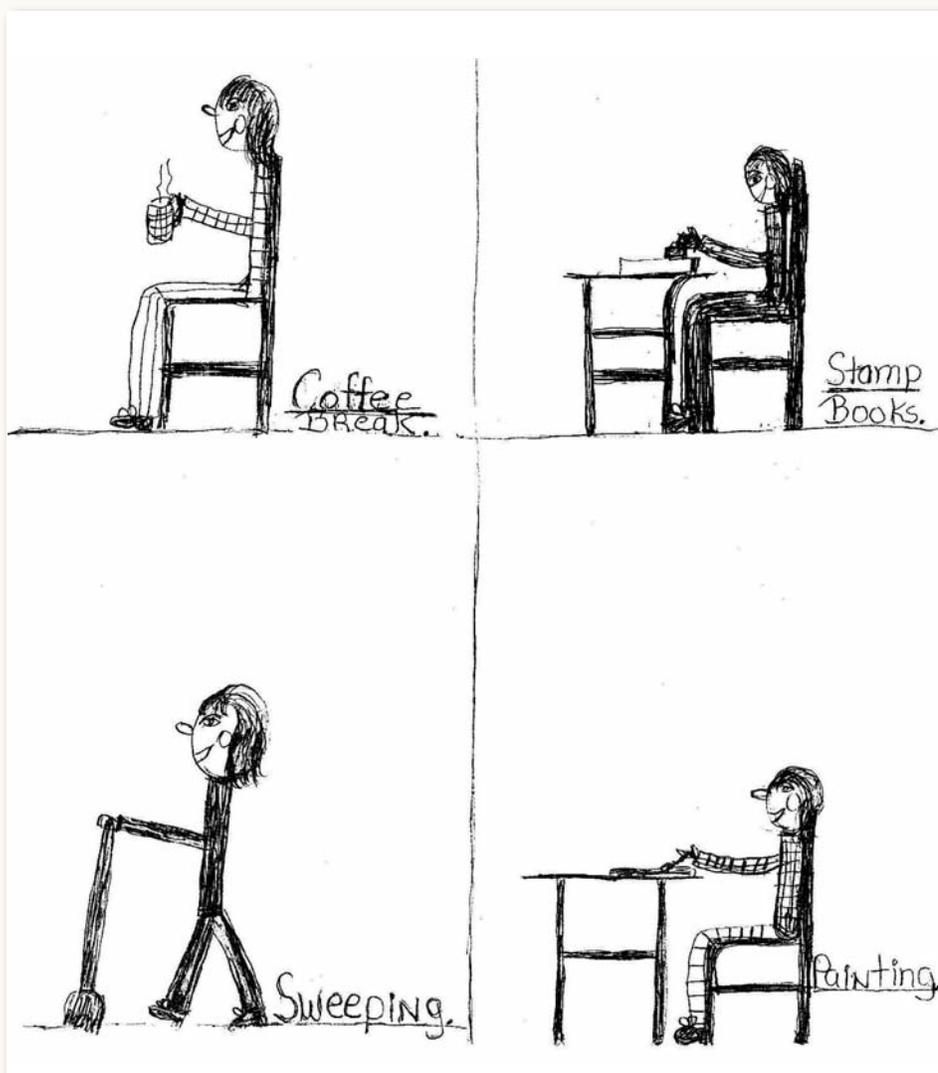
Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Patricia Gelms

We would like to thank-you, Mary Vandeburgt, for your artistic contribution for our Ray of Sunshine. We can see by your drawing that you enjoy various activities in your

community. We sure hope that you are settling into your new surroundings and that you come to love it as much as when you lived in the Vanderwoude's basement.

We would also like to wish James and Julie Kamminga a very happy birthday! We wish you the Lord's blessing for your "new" year. May our great Lord give you all that you need as you live each day for his glory.



BIRTHDAYS IN DECEMBER:

10 **JAMES KAMMINGA** will be 25
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16 **JULIE KAMMINGA** will be 21
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