

*On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost.  
It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime  
— a day known to the LORD.  
When evening comes, there will be light.*

*... On that day there will be one LORD,  
and his name the only name.*

Zechariah 14:6,7,9b



*To all our Readers:  
Best Wishes and the Lord's Blessing  
in the Year 2007.*

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**Clarion**  
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

## Editorial

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# I Saw One Like “A Son of Man”

As the new year approaches, one tends to take stock. For some, taking stock might involve a close look at one's financial portfolio. While there is always room for doing that, a deeper thinking person, particularly a deeper thinking Christian, will reflect on how the kingdom of Jesus Christ is advancing in the world. And how is that kingdom doing? Even a cursory glance at what is going on in our world will quickly show that there are some very powerful influences that are threatening Christ's kingdom.

Consider just a few things:

- North American culture has become increasingly individualistic, narcissistic, and hedonistic which basically comes down to this: truth is whatever you want it to be and make sure it serves your own interests. This spirit of our age is tremendously seductive for our children, young people, and adults as well.
- Our government opposition parties howl in rage anytime there is even a mention of raising the same-sex marriage or abortion debate. Moreover, when someone with a decidedly open Christian perspective speaks up on Parliament Hill, he or she is treated like something akin to a Holocaust denier.
- Recently the Quebec Ministry of Education informed unlicensed Christian evangelical schools that they must teach Darwin's theory of evolution and sex education or close their doors. Apparently the provincial curriculum was not being followed. Powerful forces in our country wish to impose their world view on Christian schools.
- On a bigger, global scale, Canada and the US are caught up in a war against terrorism in Muslim countries. But what about the threat of Islam as a whole? The fact is, the Muslim world has youth, an exploding population, and ambition. The West

has little of this and is becoming an increasingly morally bankrupt. The threat of Islam against Christianity is a global threat that we should not underestimate.

### We get the picture

We could go on with examples of threats against Christ's kingdom and church, but we get the picture. The advancement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ which draws in new citizens from every tribe, tongue, and nation under the sun as they are washed in the blood and Spirit of Christ seems to have run into a spiritual, cultural, ethnic, and global roadblock. We wonder about the effectiveness of our missionaries and organizations such as MERF and MAF throughout the world. What does 2007 hold in store for us and for the glory of our triune God?

### Nothing new

One of the first things we should consider is that our situation today is not unparalleled. We are reminded of a refrain in Ecclesiastes: "There is nothing new under the sun." We should also think of the comfort we find in the Book of Revelation. In the first chapter, we read about the revelation of Jesus Christ which shows "what must soon take place." Later in the chapter this is described as "what is now and what will take place later." In other words, after the victory of Jesus Christ, the world has entered its final stage – the end of times. The Book of Revelation describes what life is like in this final stage both for the seven churches at that time and the church of all ages and places. The book is a powerful testimony to what the life of Christians is like in 2006 and 2007.

At the time John received revelation on the Island of Patmos, the seven churches in Asia Minor were



starting to feel the effects of escalating persecution. It had to do with emperor worship and horrible threats against the Christians who refused to compromise their faith. Sadly many did compromise their faith and gave in to idolatry. Obviously, they had serious doubt whether Jesus Christ truly was victorious and in control over the world!

### A son of man

Because Christians were persecuted and started to doubt in Jesus Christ, John receives a vision of Jesus Christ in chapter 1 where Jesus Christ looks like “a son of man” but He is displayed in awesome glory and power. In other words, Jesus Christ is both man and God. He walks among the golden lampstands which shows He is the good shepherd who is well acquainted with the needs of his church. He also grasps in his right hand the seven stars which indicates that He addresses the needs of his church through the preaching of the gospel and the work of the office bearers. In other words, Jesus Christ is personally with his church and he addresses their needs very specifically and wonderfully.

Then John describes the image he sees of Jesus Christ. You can read this for yourself. As you read it and let all its parts sink into your consciousness and echo back and forth in your heart, then you have an awareness of Jesus Christ as our Lord and King who is all-powerful and all-glorious. No one can even come close to Him. Those things and those persons who threaten Him and his citizens will melt like wax before the fire.

### The first and the last

Jesus Christ speaks to John: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.” Like the expression, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” Jesus Christ shows that He has power and authority from beginning to end, through and through. He has even conquered death and now is alive forevermore. He holds the keys of death and Hades, meaning even death and the realm of the dead are in his possession and control. For someone who is martyred for his faith, Jesus Christ gives the assurance that He takes

the believer safely through the door of death to be with Him in heaven, and He also watches over the body to raise it up in glory at the last day of the world. Truly, in Jesus Christ we are more than conquerors.

### Comfort and jolt

We have pointed out that there are some very disturbing trends in our world which are decidedly immoral and antichristian. But in the face of that, we should have no doubt that without the will and the power of Jesus Christ, none of this could happen. He is in absolute control. And what is the apple of his eye? What is the focus of his attention? Why does Jesus Christ wield such power and glory? As King of kings, and Lord of lords, He is focussed on the gathering, defending and preserving of his church.

Understanding the power and the goal of Jesus Christ leads to a double message. First, and most obviously, this is meant to be a real comfort to believing and persevering Christians. But secondly, it is also meant to be a jolt for those who are compromising their faith. Those who do not trust in Jesus Christ and follow Him obediently are in danger of losing Jesus Christ and becoming an object of his wrath. The Book of Revelation gives both comfort and a jolt. It is all about Jesus Christ – seeing Him, believing in Him and giving glory to Him alone.

### 2007

As we enter the year of our Lord 2007, we know it will be a year of challenges. Some of us may be deeply affected by those challenges: lose a job, see friends forsake us, be drawn into court, or be segregated from certain parts of society. But we know this is all in the hands of Jesus Christ who is working everything for his glory and our salvation. We also understand that the challenges we experience will both make us stronger and will serve to reach others with the light that shines in darkness. The purpose of Jesus Christ is to gather in all the elect for whom He shed his blood. When that is done – and that can be soon – He will bring us all into an eternal glory where He will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and there will be no more mourning, death, pain, or sin. All glory be to God.





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Treasures, New and Old



**MATTHEW 13:52**

# God's Lovely Dwelling Place – Brought Close in Jesus

*“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.  
We have seen his glory!”*

John 1:14

During Christmas the church celebrates the most glorious event in human history: when God made his dwelling among us. This glorious presence of our incarnate Lord is what we sing about in Psalm 84, too: “How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty!” This psalm is really a Christmas song – one of the finest, to be sure!

In the Old Testament God's dwelling place was the tabernacle and later the temple. For the psalmist there was scarcely a longing as intense as the longing to go up to God's dwelling-place to be where God Himself was.

It is one thing to go up to God's dwelling place. It is quite another for God's dwelling place to be brought close to you. That's what happened when the Word became flesh. God brought his dwelling place close to us in the person of Jesus. Now He is the loveliest of all places to be – and He has come right to us in human flesh!

To most people, there was nothing all that special about Jesus. He was just another man.

But not to John and the other eye-witnesses of Christmas; “We have seen his glory!” they announced.

We are confronted here with an astonishing and holy mystery. Jesus appeared in the flesh, not to conceal, but to reveal, God's glory before the eyes of all! The Hellenistic Jews, to whom John wrote, would often call the temple the Shekinah, which means “glory.” That's what the tabernacle represented to God's people: the glory of the Lord.

So when John says that God has made his dwelling among us – literally that God has tabernacled among us – God's glory instantly came to mind. To think of God's dwelling place apart from his glory was inconceivable!

What is your response as you behold the Lord Jesus, God's dwelling place brought near? Will you join the choir of angels and shout “Glory to God in the highest!” Will you join all the other temple pilgrims who cry “Glory!” in the presence of King Jesus? Will you belt out that ancient Christmas song: “How

lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty!”

As believers cry “Glory!” over Jesus, others scratch their heads, even if they've heard his story. Where are the royal robes? We see a naked man on a crude cross! Where's the crown of gold? We only see one made of thorns! Where's the palace? We've heard He didn't even own a pillow!

When we read John's gospel such responses aren't surprising. For John tells us that Jesus revealed his glory in unexpected ways. He attended the poorly planned wedding of a poverty-stricken couple and there He revealed his glory by turning tepid water into choice wine. He went to the sick and healed them. He visited the helpless and delivered them. He went to the ignorant and taught them. He came to the hungry with food. He washed the feet of twelve men He knew would abandon Him and later even sent them out as his spokesmen.

Where is the glory? Precisely in all those things, John tells us in his gospel!



That was nowhere clearer than in his death on the cross. For John tells us something else that one would hardly expect, namely what Jesus said when the time had come for Him to die on the cross. "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified!" (John 12:23)

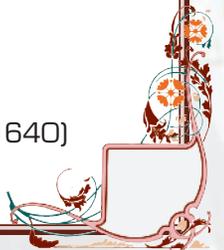
Christmas is all about the loveliness of God's glory, dwelling in Jesus. But only when Easter is kept on the horizon does this divine glory shine its brightest. When you have come to know the Christ-child as the Christ crucified – that is when you have beheld the glory of God! When you have come to know Jesus as the Lamb of God, pierced and scorned and slain as the victim who was punished for your sins and in your place – that is when you have seen his glory! When the Spirit of God brings you to your knees in humble repentance before the altar of the Lamb of God – that is when you will notice the glorious loveliness of God's house and discover it as the only place to be!

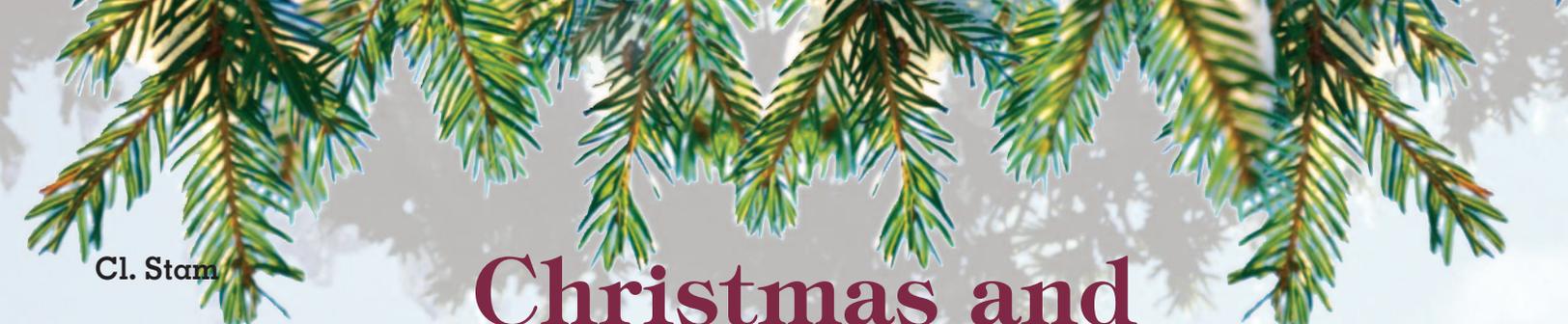


*Incarnatio est maximum Dei donum*

**Like as the fountain of all light created  
Doth pour out streams of brightness  
undefined  
Through all the conduits of transparent kind  
That heaven and air are both illuminated,  
And yet his light is not thereby abated:  
So God's eternal bounty ever shined  
The beams of being, moving, life, sense,  
mind,  
And to all things himself communicated.  
But see the violent diffusive pleasure  
Of goodness, that left not till God had  
spent  
Himself by giving us himself, his treasure,  
In making man a God omnipotent.  
How might this goodness draw our  
souls above,  
Which drew down God with such attractive  
love.**

William Alabaster (1567-1640)





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# Christmas and the Mosque

Every year as Christians we may celebrate Christmas and remember Christ's coming into this world according to the promises made to the fathers in the Old Testament. Christ came, as the angel said, to save us "from our sins" (Matt 1:23).

That is also why Jesus is called Immanuel, God with us.

Not long ago we had a Muslim phone in to our weekly radio broadcast, "What does the Bible Say?" When asked about certain things, he unequivocally stated that he was not a sinner and did not need a Messiah. There will be no Christmas celebration in the mosque.

## Christ and the mosque

Do Muslims not believe in Christ? They believe that He existed and that He was a great prophet. He never attained the greatness of Muhammad, but certainly was a man with some status. Yet Muslims will insist that He never died for our sins and certainly did not arise from the dead.

Muslims express great distaste at the idea that Jesus is God. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which is central to a proper understanding of the incarnation, is considered by Muslims to be a matter of crass polytheism, which needs to be fully eradicated.

An ever-returning thought in the Koran is that those are condemned who "ascribe partners to Allah." Muhammad even suggests that if the Trinity really existed, the three persons would long ago have started to fight among each other. The

Muslim view is simple: the Trinity cannot be a Unity. The Muslim world reflects the lack of unity.

There is no place for Christ in the mosque. Christians, like Jews, are often considered and presented as "dogs" and "apes." CNN commentator Glen Beck has concluded that for this reason Christians (and Jews) cannot co-exist with Muslims. "They're out to kill you; we've got to wake up," he warns. Some also allege that the mosque is a place where death and destruction are proclaimed as the way to the *Khalifa*, the world-wide dominion of Islam.

## Christians and the mosque

Because of immigration from Muslim countries, Canadians are more and more being confronted with Muslims as neighbours. While we are celebrating Christmas, any number of Muslims are highly critical of our celebration.

We need to understand that Islam is radical to the core. Muslim extremism is not exceptional but essential. This religion is *inherently* intolerant. Under Islam there is no place for freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, or freedom to associate. There appears to be no place in and around the mosque for true democracy.

I understand that many Muslims will object vehemently to my analysis of Islam. Still, I do believe that Muslims are victims of a false ideology and many victims are not even aware of the fact that they are being victimized. False religion is very deceptive. All too many Muslim leaders and mullahs

use their religion to disguise their hatred of all that is non-Muslim.

Some Christians may also object to my analysis. It's not politically correct. It's not biblically sound. It does not give evidence of love and compassion. You say? But if we are to be *helpful* to our Muslim neighbours, we must first of all be *honest* with them. *Islam* means submission and we are to submit first and only to Christ.

## Christmas and the mosque

Christmas is not only a matter of joyfully *receiving* the gospel but also a matter of *sharing* it with others. The reality of Christmas must move us to speak with those who attend the mosque. Do you dare?

From ancient times on, the Christian church has seen the need to focus especially on Muslims and Jews. In the prayer for all the needs of Christendom, we find this petition, ". . . we pray for mission among Jews, Moslems, and heathen, who live without hope and without Thee in the world. . ." (*Book of Praise*, p. 643).

Note that Muslims are *without hope and without God* in the world. Therefore Muslims need to hear the gospel of God's saving love and mercy in Jesus Christ and they need to hear it from us. Who else will tell them?

This Christmas, let us particularly remember the plight of Jews and Muslims throughout the world who, like us, have no hope apart from Christ. Let us *pray for* them. That will encourage us also to *speak with* them about the love that surpasses all understanding. 

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# High Notes in the History of the Hymns: “A Great and Mighty Wonder”

“A Great and Mighty Wonder” is one of countless hymns written to commemorate the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. It stands apart, however, for it is a rare Greek hymn adopted by the Western church. It was written by Germanus (c. 634-732), bishop and later patriarch of Constantinople. An active participant in the debates and conflicts of the Eastern Church, Germanus was drawn into the struggle over iconoclasm, which concerned the worship of images. Assuming the orthodox position of the church, Germanus defended the veneration of sacred images against Emperor Leo III. In 730 Leo issued an imperial decree prohibiting icons in the church and Germanus was forced to yield the patriarchy of Constantinople.

**A great and mighty wonder  
Upon the earth was done  
When Mary, virgin mother,  
Gave birth to God’s own Son.  
Repeat the song again:  
“To God on high the glory,  
And peace on earth to men!”**

Hymn 16:1



The hymn was composed by Germanus for the monthly liturgy, or *menaion*, of the Eastern Church. Even today the song is performed in the official liturgy for December of the Eastern Orthodox Church. It is inspired by several passages in the New Testament, including John 1:14: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father full of grace and truth.” The song combines this theological statement of the incarnation with the narrative of the birth of the Lord Jesus in Luke 2:8-20, especially verse 14: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.”

Several features in the original hymn have been lost in translation and adaptation. For example, the first sentence, which ends with the word “today,” conveys the relevance of singing the hymn on Christmas Eve: “A great and mighty wonder has been performed today!” Later in this stanza the link between past and present is made in the angels’ song of praise and the worshipers’: “Together with them we shout forth: ‘to God on high the glory.’” Another element, one which was important to Germanus, is the emphasis in the second line upon the virgin birth. The Greek text states literally, “The virgin gives birth and yet does not destroy her maidenhood.” Yet another doctrinal element in the first stanza is the close association of God the Son with God the Father: “The Word is made flesh, and yet it is not separated from the Father.” Consisting of two stanzas, the song ends with an expression of the eternal king-ship of Jesus Christ and moves in time from the present birth to everlasting Lordship: “And Christ does reign for evermore.”

## Hymn 16

**Text:** Germanus (c. 634-732)

**Arrangement:** Michael Praetorius  
(1571-1621)

**Translation:** John Mason Neale, 1862  
**Commonly Performed:** Christmas Eve

This hymn was translated freely by John Mason Neale, who included it in his *Hymns of the Eastern Church* (1862). As a "high church" Anglican Neale promoted an awareness of ancient and medieval Christian hymns; he took particular interest in the history of the Eastern Orthodox Church. It was Neale who turned the final phrase of the first stanza, "To God on high be glory / and peace on earth to men," into a refrain for each of six stanzas; thus the words would fit the tune. It is also by means of the repeated refrain that Neale sought to preserve the flavour of immediacy that marks the original hymn.

The tune of "A Great and Mighty Wonder" was harmonized by Michael Praetorius (1571-1621), a Lutheran musicologist and arranger of many hymns. Son of a Lutheran pastor, Praetorius became organist and chapel-master at Wolfenbüttel. He is known especially for composing choral music derived from Lutheran hymns. For this hymn he adapted a traditional carol melody that had appeared in print first in 1599 in Cologne; the name of the tune ("*Es ist ein' Ros' entsprungen*") is the first line of the German carol with which it was associated at the time. Sung around the world on Christmas day, this hymn continues to unite believers of all times and places in a common song of praise to God for the gift of his Son.



## Light of the Soul

"Lux alma Jesu mentium."

Light of the soul, O Saviour blest!  
Soon as thy presence fills the breast,  
Darkness and guilt are put to flight,  
And all is sweetness and delight.

Son of the Father! Lord most high!  
How glad is he who feels thee nigh!  
How sweet in heaven thy beam doth glow,  
Denied to eye of flesh below!

O Light of light celestial!  
O Charity ineffable!  
Come in thy hidden majesty;  
Fill us with love, fill us with thee!

To Jesus, from the proud concealed,  
But evermore to babes revealed,  
All glory with the Father be,  
And Holy Ghost, eternally!

Translated from  
the Latin by  
Edward Caswell



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# Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## – The Cost of Discipleship

### (Part 3 of 3)

Bonhoeffer's friend and biographer Eberhard Bethge, we saw last time, distinguishes three periods in Bonhoeffer's adult life, namely that of the theologian, the Christian, and "the man of his times." We have paid attention to the second period, which lasted through the 1930s. These are the years of the "orthodox" Bonhoeffer, the man whom many evangelicals considered as one of them.

Such was not the case with the Bonhoeffer of the third period, that of the 1940s. At this time, and especially during the prison years, Bonhoeffer introduced ideas – such as "this-worldliness," "religionless Christianity," and especially the "weakness and suffering of God" – that disturbed orthodox believers and were, in turn, used by liberal theologians to claim him as the father of their "progressive" and "death-of-God" movements.<sup>1</sup> For some decades their interpretation was widely accepted. Evangelicals distanced themselves from Bonhoeffer.

Since the 1980s and '90s, however, the situation has changed again. Studies have appeared showing the extent to which liberal theologians have misinterpreted and indeed exploited the Bonhoeffer of the later years.<sup>2</sup> These studies have gone a long way in restoring his image as a man who in word and

deed sought to be guided by God's Word. They have not, it is true, succeeded in presenting him as a Reformed theologian. The influences of his liberal training are more evident in these final years than they were in the second period. To avoid one-sidedness, it is therefore necessary to speak of the later writings. I am doing this, however, not only to give a more balanced picture of the man. As I hope to show, even in the controversial writings we find insights of enduring value.

#### Reclaiming the Old Testament

Among the differences with the earlier period is the stress Bonhoeffer places in these later years on the Christian's life in the world. This development is connected with his growing interest in the Old Testament. It is not so that in his early writings and teachings he ignored that part of the Bible. Ever since his conversion he had given much attention to the Book of Psalms, which he saw as the book of Christ and the prayer book of the church. At the Finkenwalde seminary his students were taught to pray the psalms, as he did himself in his private devotions. Nor was his concern only with the psalms; other books of the Old Testament had his attention as well in the earlier years.

His interest in the Old Testament increased, however, with time.<sup>3</sup> This was in part a result of the Nazi ideology, according to which the Old Testament as the book of the Jews was unworthy of the Christian's attention. The attack provided a strong impetus for Bonhoeffer and other theologians, including Karl Barth, to reclaim the Old Testament as book of the Christian church. We will look here at two aspects of Bonhoeffer's view of the Old Testament. In the first place there is his conviction that God is the one God of the entire Bible, of the Old Testament as much as the New. He is the Father of Jesus Christ, and the Old and New Testament together are the book of Christ. This means that the Old Testament has an authority that is binding on the interpretation of the New, just as the New Testament illumines the message of the Old. That confession was not initially based on exegesis but was a presupposition, a statement of faith, from which Bonhoeffer never departed, even when other theologians accused him of a "naïve biblicism."

#### Christian this-worldliness

His intensive reading of the Old Testament caused him in the second place to stress the importance of the present, earthly,



natural life. We live in the present, in what he called the *penultimate*, namely that which comes before the last things. From this position we anticipate the *ultimate*, that is the resurrection of the dead and the world to come. The ultimate claims our final allegiance. But this does not mean that we are to disregard the penultimate. On the contrary; the importance of the earthly life is a biblical given. In the Old Testament God's blessings often take the form of earthly goods and redemption in the Old Testament – from Egypt and from the Babylonian exile – is historical redemption, taking place on this side of death (111-113).

Bonhoeffer does not want us to spiritualize such teachings. Jesus Himself healed people of bodily infirmities and the Christian hope of resurrection speaks of life on an earth that, although purified and renewed, is nevertheless this present earth. The Christian hope of the resurrection does not allow for a renunciation of a world that God created and declared to be very good. The gospel is not just about the salvation of man; the universe itself will be redeemed. Biblical this-worldliness must therefore be seen, Bonhoeffer believes, as a condition of the Christian faith. The Christian hope of resurrection and the new earth can only be properly experienced by those who share the Old Testament love of the earth and believe in the renewal of God's entire creation. The resurrection hope "sends a man back to his life on earth in a wholly new way which is even more sharply defined than it is in the Old Testament" (112).

To clarify his idea of the relationship between the present world and the world to come, between penultimate and ultimate, Bonhoeffer liked to use the metaphor of polyphony in music. He writes on May 20, 1944:

God requires that we should love him eternally with our whole hearts, yet not so as to compromise or diminish our earthly affections, but as a kind of *cantus firmus* to which the other melodies of life provide the counterpoint. Earthly affection is one of these contrapuntal themes. . . . Where the ground bass is firm and clear, there is nothing to stop the counterpoint from being developed to the utmost of its limits (99f.).

### Religionless Christianity

His Old Testament studies not only influenced Bonhoeffer's view of Christian this-worldliness, they also played a part in his demand for a "religionless Christianity." His use of this term has caused questions among the orthodox and was explained by liberal theologians as referring to a Christianity without Christ and without the supernatural.

They could do so, however, only by ignoring much of the rest of his writings. Bonhoeffer defined the "religion" he rejected not as the essence, but as the enemy of biblical faith. For him the word refers in the first place to an overriding concern with the salvation of the individual soul. "Are we not really under the impression," he writes, "that there are more important things than bothering about such a matter? (Perhaps not more important than the matter itself, but more than

bothering about it)" (94). He also points out that a concern with the saving of one's soul is not known in the Old Testament. Righteousness and the Kingdom of God on this earth are central there. They are still central today. Moreover, as already mentioned, the gospel speaks of the redemption of not only the believer, but of all creation.

The word religion refers for Bonhoeffer also to a turning to God only in times of human weakness; it implies a seeking of him simply as a "God of the gaps" and as a crutch in times of suffering. Bonhoeffer makes clear, however, that God is not a *deus ex machina* – a means whereby, in Bethge's words, "we can be rescued from dangers, have our mysteries solved, and hear our questions answered." As he writes on April 30, 1944, he wants to speak of God "not on the borders of life but at its centre, not in weakness but in strength, not, therefore, in man's suffering and death but in his life and prosperity" (93). Similarly, Christ's office is not simply to fulfil our religious needs; he is Lord of our entire life.

In stating that God is not to be sought as a crutch in times of suffering, Bonhoeffer did not imply a disparagement of Christian prayer, nor did he deny that God is a present help in times of need. His entire life makes such a negative interpretation impossible. He himself prayed constantly and he thanked others for their intercessory prayer. He was convinced that God's promise to give strength and encouragement is sure, but that to receive these gifts the believer has to ask for them – "lest we rely on ourselves



and not on him alone." On August 10, 1944, a few weeks after the failure of the conspiracy, when he knew that a death sentence was a near-certainty, he wrote:

God does not give us everything we want, but he does fulfil all his promises, i.e. he still remains Lord of the earth and still preserves his Church, constantly renewing our faith and not laying on us more than we can bear, gladdening us with his nearness and help, hearing our prayers and leading us along the best and straightest road to himself. In this way, God creates in us praise for himself. (129)

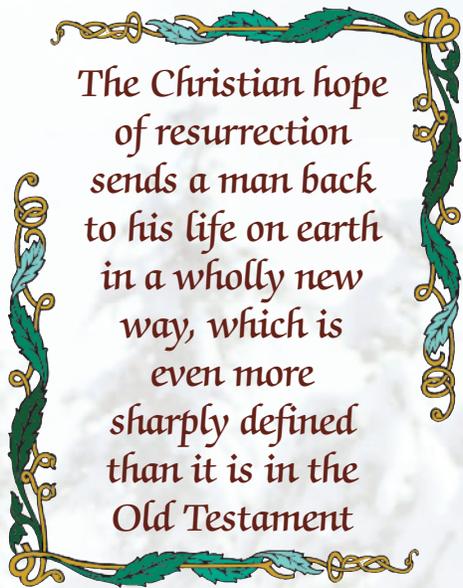
Shortly later, on August 21, he added: "One thing is certain: we must always live close to the presence of God, for that is newness of life; and then nothing is impossible for all things are possible with God" (130).

In short, for Bonhoeffer God is not "a stopgap for our fleshly thirst for miracles, but our helper, our 'rod and staff,' even in 'the valley of the shadow of death'" (Huntemann, p. 153).

Yet a third negative connotation that the word religion has for Bonhoeffer is the nurturing of a Christian fortress mentality, a tendency to build walls around the church in an effort to protect it against a hostile world. Bonhoeffer's experiences with the Confessing Church played a role here. Instead of opposing the anti-Christians policies of the Hitler regime and defending the oppressed, the church spoke up only when its own status and safety were at stake. But Christ, Bonhoeffer points out, is "the man for others" and the church must

follow his example. In this connection he issued a criticism of his book *The Cost of Discipleship*. Although he stood behind the general message of that book, he now felt that he should have given more attention to the believer's task with respect to the world.

Religionless Christianity, then, is for Bonhoeffer a Christianity wherein the believer lives out his faith in the midst of the world.



The Christian hope  
of resurrection  
sends a man back  
to his life on earth  
in a wholly new  
way, which is  
even more  
sharply defined  
than it is in the  
Old Testament

It speaks of a following of Christ by being there for others; it demands of the believer that he take up his cross, so that Christ's resurrection power may also become manifest; and it demands solidarity with a humanity lost in sin. It therefore implies a complete conversion – a dying of the old nature and a coming to life of the new. And it speaks of a discipleship that finds its strength not just in teaching and preaching, but also, and especially, in Christian deeds – "in praying for and doing right by our fellow men" (160).

### The "weakness of God"

More questionable than the foregoing is Bonhoeffer's speaking about a God who is weak and who suffers. He speaks like this, for example, in his prison letter of July 16, 1944, where he writes: "Man's religiosity makes him look in his distress to the power of God in the world; he uses God as a *Deus ex machina*. The Bible however directs him to the powerlessness and suffering of God; only a suffering God can help. . . . The God of the Bible. . . conquers power and space in the world by his weakness" (122).

As Reformed theologian B. Kamphuis remarks, it is at this point that the effects of Bonhoeffer's Bible-critical education come to the fore. For one thing, in speaking about God's suffering instead of Christ's, Bonhoeffer fails to do justice to the doctrine of the Trinity by ignoring the difference between Father and Son. Kamphuis sees here also the consequences of a view (which he says Bonhoeffer shared to some extent) according to which the origin of revelation is not to be sought in God, but ultimately in man, so that whatever can be said about Christ's being more than man must nevertheless be explained with reference to his humanity. "If in speaking of Christ's divinity we take our starting point in his weakness as man," he writes, "then this will influence the doctrine about God himself: God then appears in Christ in his powerlessness" (Kamphuis, "*Een andere Bonhoeffer?*", pp. 182-4).

There is, however, another element in Bonhoeffer's speaking



of the weakness of God. It also served to express his thoughts about the mysteries of divine providence. He knew that “the weakness of God is stronger than man” – his entire life gives evidence of that conviction. But he also knew of God’s apparent absence. His situation was similar to that of Old Testament believers who experienced times when evil flourished and the righteous were oppressed; when it seemed that God indeed allowed Himself to be pushed to the sidelines. And it was not only the psalmists who pondered this mystery. Old Testament prophets also spoke of a God who concealed his omnipotence in apparent powerlessness. These prophets addressed those who failed to recognize God in present events because these events “seemed to reveal the power of the Assyrian and Babylonian gods. Even there, however, the prophets saw the action of God who judges his people through the Assyrians, the rod of his anger (Isa. 10:5), and through Nebuchadnezzar, his servant (Jer. 27:6)” (Kuske, p. 151).

### Theology of the cross

Finally, Bonhoeffer’s speaking of God’s apparent powerlessness and absence must be understood in light of his conviction that the Christian life is not a life of worldly triumph. It is, instead, a life of following Christ the crucified and therefore of cross-bearing. Christ has indeed been given all power in heaven and on earth, but in our present world that power is still hidden. In a country like Hitler’s Germany, where worldly success was worshiped even by many

church members, the hidden-ness of Christ’s power needed to be proclaimed. Christians had to be reminded that the church of Christ was still a church under the cross and that this would continue until Christ’s return.

In this respect also, Bonhoeffer’s teaching continues to be relevant. Dr. Kamphuis (to turn to him once more) has related it to current discussions among Reformed and evangelical Christians about the gifts of the Spirit, power ministry, faith healing, and so on. He writes:

I think it is very important that in these discussions we give attention to Bonhoeffer’s speaking about Christ who stands at the centre as the crucified. Of course, there are all sorts of other topics of interest in the discussions: the question whether we may still expect special spiritual gifts. . . . questions about the relationship between Christ and the Spirit and between Word and Spirit. But I do not think that these constitute the real problems and give rise to the deepest disagreements. What I fear especially is a theology of glory, one which now already possesses and is able to demonstrate the victory of Christ. But where is then Christ’s cross? The crucified one is the resurrected and present, living Lord. But he is present among us only as the crucified. Only in this manner can I speak rightly of the great things which God does in his congregation. (Kamphuis, “*Christus in het midden*,” pp. 11f)

Here we come once more to the essence of Bonhoeffer’s teaching

from *The Cost of Discipleship* to the last of the prison letters: Christianity is not first of all a system of doctrine; it is about being “in Christ” the crucified and risen one and it therefore means that the disciple must die with Him in order that he may also be raised with Him. This theology of the cross relates to the Christian’s task with respect to the world, the task of proclaiming the message of salvation. It is not by miracles and displays of power, but by preaching the gospel of the cross that the church fulfills that task. Unless it does so, Bonhoeffer tells us, it will fail in its God-given mission with respect to a lost world.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Many of these ideas are to be found in Bonhoeffer’s *Letters and Papers from Prison*, edited by Eberhard Bethge. References to this book will be given in the text by page number(s) only.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the study by the Reformed German theologian Georg Huntemann, titled (in the English translation) *The Other Bonhoeffer: An Evangelical Reassessment of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 1993 (date of original German version: 1989). There are other Reformed theologians who have expressed sympathy with much of what Bonhoeffer wrote. Among them is Dr. B. Kamphuis, professor of systematic theology at the Theological University, Kampen, who gives, however, a more critical assessment of Bonhoeffer’s writings than does Huntemann.

<sup>3</sup> For Bonhoeffer’s interest in and interpretation of the Old Testament I have relied especially on Martin Kuske, *The Old Testament as the Book of Christ: An Appraisal of Bonhoeffer’s Interpretation*, 1976. 

Rev. R. Lankheet and  
Rev. G.Ph. van Popta

# Towards a Common Songbook (Part 13)

A conversation between Rev. Rand Lankheet and  
Rev. George van Popta about a new songbook



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## Looking forward

GvP: Brother Lankheet, we have concluded a series of articles on the common principles and guidelines our respective synods have given us to use for the production of a common songbook. We sometimes hear from our church members that this new songbook really is not needed or wanted. Some are concerned that a new songbook will be "pushed" upon the churches. How would you respond to that?

RL: I can understand the concern. Music goes deep to the heart. Christian music goes even deeper. So, when our songbooks are changed in some significant ways, we naturally worry about that. It seems to me that, in general, members of Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) accept the decisions of their synods more readily than do many members in the United Reformed Churches (URC). The first URC synod *provisionally* accepted the 1959 *Psalter Hymnal*. That is, they accepted it for the time being. Yet they saw the importance of someday having their own URC songbook, one that improved upon the *Psalter Hymnal*. The question is

whether local consistories will continue to strongly support the production of a new songbook, or whether they will not. And whether eventually the delegates of a future synod will support it. I'm hopeful that they will!

How is it, brother van Popta, among CanRC in this regard? Is there widespread fear of "losing" the *Book of Praise*?

GvP: Among many there is. Although there is some dissatisfaction with the *Book of Praise*, by far most of our people love it and appreciate it. Many would be very sad if the Anglo-Genevan Psalter were "broken" up in exchange for an eclectic Psalter made up of Psalms from different sources. As well there is some nervousness about significantly increasing the number of hymns in the songbook and whether this will be "foisted upon" the churches.

Maybe this goes to the deeper concern, among some, that the merger of our two federations is proceeding too quickly. That if we go slower, maybe, over time the idea of a new, common songbook will gain greater acceptance. What do you think?

RL: One thing our Joint Songbook Committee is doing in that regard is to recommend to our synods that a new songbook *not* be a "condition" for full federative merger. In other words, that we focus on the more important things, such as a common church order and the seminary issue, and if and when these things are agreed upon, that we then proceed to merger. Initially we could bring our two songbooks into the new federation. In the years following merger we could proceed with the common songbook. I think that way of moving forward might alleviate some "fear" about the whole process of merger. But retaining our two songbooks would have to be a temporary, provisional measure. We would have to remain committed to producing a new songbook someday. In fact, by continuing our work as a Joint Songbook Committee, if and when

the merger occurs the majority of the common songbook might already be in draft form.

I've heard it said, also, brother, that it seems like so many songs from the *Psalter Hymnal* will end up being removed and that there will be hardly any changes to the *Book of Praise*. Will you share some of the significant changes that are in store for the *Book of Praise*? Especially if it and the *Psalter Hymnal* are combined in some fashion in a new songbook?

GvP: The common songbook will look quite different from the present *Book of Praise*. For example, the Joint Songbook Committee has resolved that the songs of the common songbook should be in four part harmony. Possibly several stanzas will be printed between the two clefs. We will need to go to a bigger book (6 x 9 rather than 4 x 6?). The *Psalter* will no longer be exclusively Genevan. For example, there may well be a Psalm 1A and 1B, etc. There will be more hymns than the current sixty-five of the *Book of Praise*. As well, we need to come to agreement on the non-musical part of the songbook – translations of the confessions, liturgical forms, and prayers.

Many of these more difficult matters relate to "trust" and "love." If we as members of two federations don't come to love and trust each other more, well, the efforts made towards a new songbook will suffer. How do you see trust and brotherly love increasing between our two songbook committees? What does that have to say about developing this love and trust among us as different federations?



RL: We have been meeting together as Joint Songbook Committee twice per year for several years. There has been a beautiful growth of this trust and love. During the first two meetings we were a little wary of each other, but that wariness is completely gone. We have gelled as a committee. Why? Only because we have come to know each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. We can only hope that the United and Canadian Reformed congregations and members will come to know each other better and better. As we come to know each other, trust and love for one another will grow.

GvP: That has been our experience as well. The unanimity in which we do our work is marvellous. We know that it is based on the unity of the common faith we share in the Lord Jesus Christ. I think one of the

challenges we face is that many of the American URCs and the Canadian CanRCs do not really know each other, mostly because of distance. This is a challenge which we, by God's grace, will, in time, overcome.

Let me return to an earlier thought. Sometimes our people ask why we need a new songbook. Do you think that question derives from a "traditionalist mentality" among our members?

RL: Traditionalists, generally, want to keep things the way they are. They fear change. However, as we have analyzed the hymns in the *Psalter Hymnal*, we have found that many don't come from our Reformed tradition. Many are of Methodist and revivalist backgrounds. Some derive from the "Higher Life" movement. So, by defending the "tradition" of the blue *Psalter Hymnal*, in some cases, we are not necessarily defending the best of biblical



hymnody. As a songbook committee we are delighted when we find newer hymns, some written by Reformed pastors and members in the past few decades. Also, there are some “gaps” in the Psalter Hymnal, which we have written about in our articles, gaps, for example, about the church, the Holy Spirit, justification, and the new creation. These areas literally cry out for new songs. And not necessarily for songs written in the sixteenth century. Many are coming from the twentieth century.

GvP: We, too, have found gaps in the *Book of Praise*. As we did an inventory, we noticed, rather surprisingly, that we only had a few hymns on the topic of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. As well we concluded that our present hymn section should be strengthened by adding some hymns on the themes of the holy supper, baptism, marriage, the church, the resurrection of the dead, and life on the new earth. The Book of Praise Committee is recommending the inclusion of additional hymns in the *Book of Praise* mostly on these topics.

Ultimately what is needed, by all of us, committee members, office bearers, and members of both federations, is a great measure of God’s grace as we continue in this work towards a common songbook. We sometimes are filled with human fears and doubts. But, we all should have the desire to keep the best Biblical songs, to be willing to part with those that are doubtful, and add to our collection some of the great hymns of the past and the present. This takes commitment to principle

and a willingness to remove some of our personal feelings and opinions about some “favourite” songs. And it requires sanctification, that in this process of making a new songbook, we grow in the fruit of the Spirit – especially the fruit of love, peace, gentleness, and self-control.

RL: Apart from any thinking about producing a common songbook, the CanRC committee is working to produce a new edition of the *Book of Praise*. Likewise, the URC committee has a synodical mandate to produce a new URC songbook. So, regardless of whether a combined songbook is produced, both of our committees are still moving forward in our own work within our own federations. Yet, to make sure that our new federation songbooks are more similar to one another, rather than different, we think it is wise to look at each other’s song selections and give advice to each other on those selections. So, for example, maybe the hymns in the *Book of Praise* will eventually be increased from sixty-five hymns to 100 hymns. Ideally those new thirty-five hymns will be endorsed by the URC songbook committee. Likewise, if in the new URC songbook fifty new hymns end up replacing fifty hymns in the current *Psalter Hymnal*, ideally these, too, will be endorsed by the CanRC committee. Then, if and when we someday are mandated to publish one common songbook, we already will have much of our work done! This is thinking far ahead, but we should share with our readers that there are many creative ways to go about our work. Maybe this will

also help to allay some fears.

GvP: Brother, it’s been a great pleasure for me to collaborate with you on these articles. I look forward to continuing to work with you and the rest of your committee towards a common songbook. I know I speak for the whole Book of Praise Committee when I say that we really enjoy working with the URC Songbook Committee. We have been greatly blessed by the Christian friendship which has developed.

Why don’t you tell our readers what we have planned for this series of articles?

RL: At our last Joint Songbook Committee meeting we decided that we would publish them in pamphlet form. We will be sending a copy to each United and Canadian Reformed church with the invitation to multiply it for the membership. As well, we plan to post them on the Internet in PDF form so that people can read and download them.

And let me echo what you have said, brother, that it has been truly a joy to get to know you and the other members of your songbook committee. When we meet together as two committees, we not only have some hard work to do, but we also enjoy laughter and light-heartedness. And to write these articles with you, well . . .not any two pastors, or any two church members, could do that so easily! Our collaboration is a good illustration of how, by God’s grace, and with efforts towards love and trust, two can work together as one. And so may it be, someday, with our two federations.



**D. Moes**

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## *Knowing God: Knowing Jesus* Lesson 2: What did Jesus teach?

The first lesson about *Knowing Jesus* focussed on who Jesus is, what He taught and did, and what difference He makes. This second lesson focuses on what Jesus taught.

### The kingdom of God

After opening the lesson with devotions, begin by asking the participants to summarize in one sentence what they think Jesus' teaching was. Write them down on a whiteboard and come back to them later in the lesson. Then point out that according to Mark Jesus' teaching can be summarized as the good news of the kingdom of God. Go through the following points on the participants' handout and briefly explain what they mean.

- The Jewish people had been looking forward to the kingdom of God for hundreds of years. It would be a time when God would rule as king, a time of justice and peace when God's enemies would be overthrown and his people would be set free.
- In Jesus the kingdom had dawned (Luke 4:16-21)

- The kingdom was demonstrated in the actions of Jesus (Matt 11:2-6)
- The kingdom was inclusive not exclusive (Mark 2:13-17)
- The kingdom is hidden and growing (Matt 13:31-33)
- The kingdom demands a response (Matt 13:44-45)
- The values of the kingdom are different from those of the world (the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 – 7 and especially 5:3-13; 6:19-34; 7:21-27)
- The kingdom is both present in Jesus and coming in the future in all its fullness when Jesus returns (Matt 25:31-46)
- The kingdom is primarily about the rule of God in people's lives and in his world

After this teaching session, ask the participants what practical difference it should make to our lives that we are citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Also ask them if they can think of examples of Christians, either today or in history, whose faith has had a radical impact on their priorities and lifestyle. Be sure to not only focus on well-known people, but also those less well-known, perhaps even in one's own neighbourhood.

### The parables of the kingdom

Much of Jesus' teaching was given in the form of parables. Point out that originally these parables spoke specifically into Jesus' historical and religious context. They were part of Jesus' challenging of the status quo, of his proclamation of the dawning of the kingdom of God. However, the parables also speak to us. They tell us things about God and about our response to the kingdom.

Make two headings on a whiteboard: "About God" and "Our response." Under the first heading, show how the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15:1-7 emphasizes that God is a God of grace who takes the initiative in looking for and restoring the lost. Point out that the other two parables in this chapter make the same point. Then show how the extent of God's generosity is emphasized in the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1-16).

Under the second heading, show how the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14) emphasizes the need to recognize our own sinfulness if we are to enter the kingdom. Show



how this theme can also be found in the parable of the lost son. Make a connection to Jesus telling the people to repent and believe the good news because the kingdom of heaven was near (Mark 1:15). Show how the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) encourages us to use our God-given gifts, while the parable of the ten virgins (Matt 25:1-13) and the waiting servants (Luke 12:35-40) speak of the importance of keeping alert and watchful. Round off this section by showing how the parables of the hidden treasure and the fine pearl (Matt 13:44-45) remind us that God's kingdom is worth sacrificing everything for.

An interesting activity to reinforce what was just learned would be to consider having the participants write their own parable. Remind them that much of Jesus' teaching was built around ordinary events and experiences that people could relate to in order to show us God comes to them and wants to speak to us in our everyday lives. Thus, if Jesus were teaching today, He might use supermarkets, highways, and the Internet to illustrate this point.

### Signs of the kingdom

Jesus' actions reinforced his teaching. John's gospel calls his mighty deeds "signs" because they point beyond themselves to Jesus and his kingdom. You can illustrate this nicely by showing what Jesus says when John the Baptist sends

messengers to Jesus to ask whether He was indeed the Messiah who had come to inaugurate God's kingdom. Jesus answers this question by replying, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor" (Matt 11:4-5).

Point out that Jesus' miracles often involved those who were the outcasts of society. In this way, He was demonstrating to people the unconditional love of God and the scope of the kingdom as a place of welcome for all. Also point out that when Jesus called the twelve together, He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. A very interesting question to consider at this point is: in what ways is the church today called to demonstrate the kingdom?

### Putting it into practice

Mention that if we want to grow in appreciation of Jesus' teaching, we should learn as much about his teaching as possible. Encourage the members of the group to read through either the gospel of Luke or the gospel of John. Assign Luke 7:1-12:29 or John 6:1-12:20 for next time.

If you would like to view the outline of this lesson, go to [www.reformedevangelism.com](http://www.reformedevangelism.com) and follow the links. Next time, I plan to introduce "Why did Jesus die?" Thanks for reading.





## Press Review

J. Moesker

# “Good-for-You” Parenting

It's amazing what you find on a morning walk. My wife and I walk around the block a couple of times a day and on passing through the parking lot of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church last fall we found one of that church's bulletins. That bulletin contained an October 2006 insert published by Concordia Publishing House, the Lutheran publishing company located in Missouri, USA. As we walked home we read the bulletin and also the insert. We both found that the insert made a very good point about parenting. I pass on the contents for this Press Review.

Remember when you asked why you had to eat your vegetables? “Because they're good for you,” your parents said. Whether you liked it or not, you knew there was little chance of being excused. Do your children “eat their vegetables”? Or do you cater to their wants and desires, giving them only what they like?

Obviously, the concern here is not nutrition. Rather, the question is whether or not we are teaching our children to do certain things that are necessary for good health – physical, emotional, and spiritual. Consider family devotions. Do you expect your children to participate, or do you only consider whether they enjoy devotions? Can you afford to give up building the foundation of faith because your children express boredom or lack of interest? A wise pastor once said, “Of course, children do not like devotions. Who said they were supposed to?”

Where did we get the notion that children – or even adults – must enjoy anything and everything they do? We have been bombarded with the notion that if it's not fun, we shouldn't have to do it. But certain things are necessary for our health, regardless of how enjoyable they are.

We need to restore “good-for-you” parenting in our culture, families, and churches. Otherwise, our children will learn to do only what they want. And that will prove most unhealthy! How many kids want to brush their teeth? Do they, by nature, want to get a reasonable night's sleep? How many will attend church, Sunday School, Bible study, or youth activities if left up to them?

“Good-for-you” parenting does not have to be mean, vindictive, or harsh – just firm. One need not spend hours explaining the benefits to a child. Just lovingly insist they follow through. But recognize two things: your view is counter cultural, and there will be conflict. While others may seek pleasure, thrills, and excitement, Christian parents seek what is best for their children. Sometimes that does include excitement, but at other times it means just being consistent.

How do children learn to do what is good for them if parents fall prey to the “happiness myth” – the notion that everything revolves around one's personal happiness? Faith-filled parenting is counter

cultural. It teaches us to flee from the idolatry of worshipping happiness (1 Corinthians 10:14). Doing what is good for you is contrary to human nature! I do not want to take out the trash. I do not enjoy distasteful medicine. Church is boring! Rarely do healthy activities mesh with our sinful nature.

“Good-for-you” parenting seeks to retrain sinful nature. It is a struggle to teach children that some things are “necessary evils” that must be endured: medicine, vegetables, homework, and going to bed on time. Christian parents will stress the importance of consistent church attendance, helping one's neighbor, and participating in faith nourishing events. Avoid leaving the impression that these are inherently unpleasant. It is better to refer to them as “what our family does together.” You can show, especially by your attitude and actions, that these things are good “for all of us.”

If we can learn to balance our desire for our children to be happy with the more important desire for them to be healthy – physically, emotionally, and spiritually – our children will “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Ephesians 4: 15). Then, “good-for-you” parenting will lead to our Lord's commendation, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21).

Truly amazing what you find on an early-morning walk! What can I say to this except “Amen”? 



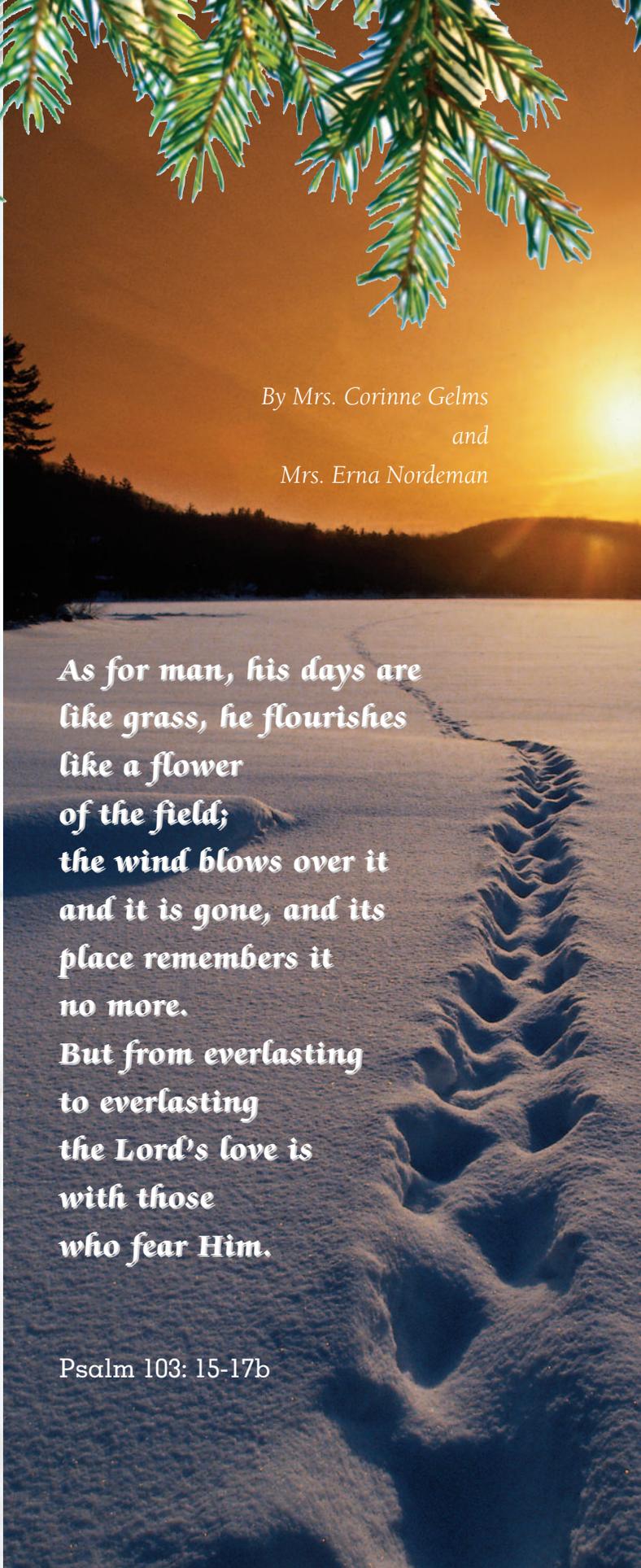
# Ray of Sunshine

As we begin this article, may we suggest that you all open your Bibles and read all of Psalm 103 as a reference. For in this entire psalm of David, an amazing picture is created to help us understand the grace of God.

We learn that his grace is as great as the heavens are high and sins are removed as far as east is from the west. God's compassion is as tender as a Father's love for a child who needs discipline. We are again taught in this psalm how great the breadth and length and height of God's love is for those who fear Him. We know this through God's grace revealed in Jesus Christ who has died for our sins. We with our human understanding will never totally understand God's great love, but we must through God's Word grasp the extent of his love for us. In Ephesians 3:17b-19 we see how God's love is total. Paul was praying for the Ephesians; "And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

After the beginning verses in Psalm 103, which have spoken of God's grace, the picture changes. Man is not only sinful and totally dependent on God, he is also weak. "His days are like grass." There may be much beauty in life and in creation, but it is short-lived, like a flower of the field. A person's life is soon gone and forgotten. Human life is not only sinful, but is also very fragile.

However, we have come to know God's covenant and his steadfast love. This love is from everlasting to everlasting. God has made a covenant with us his



By Mrs. Corinne Gelms  
and  
Mrs. Erna Nordeman

*As for man, his days are  
like grass, he flourishes  
like a flower  
of the field;  
the wind blows over it  
and it is gone, and its  
place remembers it  
no more.  
But from everlasting  
to everlasting  
the Lord's love is  
with those  
who fear Him.*

Psalm 103: 15-17b

people. It is in this relationship to the everlasting God that this covenant of grace makes life meaningful. Without living in God's covenant there is no meaning to life. This love heals and renews us daily to continue with our task while on earth. We must also constantly pray as Paul did for the Ephesians that we may be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit to live for Him.

The Lord is calling us today, just like He did at Mount Horeb in Deuteronomy 5: 2 so many years ago. He loves us and wants us to be obedient always. There must be faith and repentance in our lives so that God's love can be seen through us. The world might have lots to offer, but we are richer than they will ever be.

His great love for us is from everlasting to everlasting. The victory is ours in Jesus Christ because of his unsurpassing greatness and love for us his covenant people. May He continue to enrich your lives, so that you may persevere knowing God's love for you will always give you strength and peace. Praise be to God alone for this indescribable gift of grace!

*I'll thank Thee, O my God and Saviour,  
And praise Thee in my even-song.  
The sun may set, but Thy great favour  
Shalt Thou through darkest night  
prolong.  
Thy help and grace were ever near us;  
More than a father didst Thou care.  
Thou Fount of blessing, Thou  
dost hear us:  
Thy wondrous mercies  
I declare.*

Hymn  
63:1

### **Birthdays in January:**

- 2 LIZ KONING will be 46**  
9905 152nd Street, Edmonton, AB T5P 1X4
- 7 CHRISTINE BREUKELMAN will be 35**  
2225-19th Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4
- 17 HENRY DRIEGEN will be 51**  
#19-31450 Spur Ave., Abbotsford, BC V2T 5M3
- 17 GRACE HOMAN will be 51**  
Anchor Home  
361 Thirty Road S., RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
- 19 EDWIN SCHUTTE will be 23**  
844 Bowman Road, Abbotsford, BC V3G 1S9
- 19 JANINE SMID will be 37**  
510 2nd Street, RR 7, Strathroy, ON N7T 3H8
- 27 HANK ORSEL will be 76**  
Maple Villa, Room #217  
441 Maple Avenue, Burlington, ON L7S 1L8
- 30 TYLER HOEKSEMA will be 17**  
6755 Lorne Drive, Sardis, BC V2R 2G3

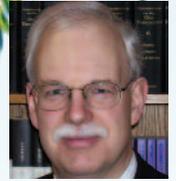
Wishing you all a very happy birthday. May our Heavenly Father bless you in this new year with good health and much happiness. May He be your Guide in all you do. Till next month,

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





E. Kampen



Rev. E. Kampen is minister of  
the Canadian Reformed  
Church at Orangeville, Ontario  
[eric.kampen@canrc.org](mailto:eric.kampen@canrc.org)

# What's New with "What's New"

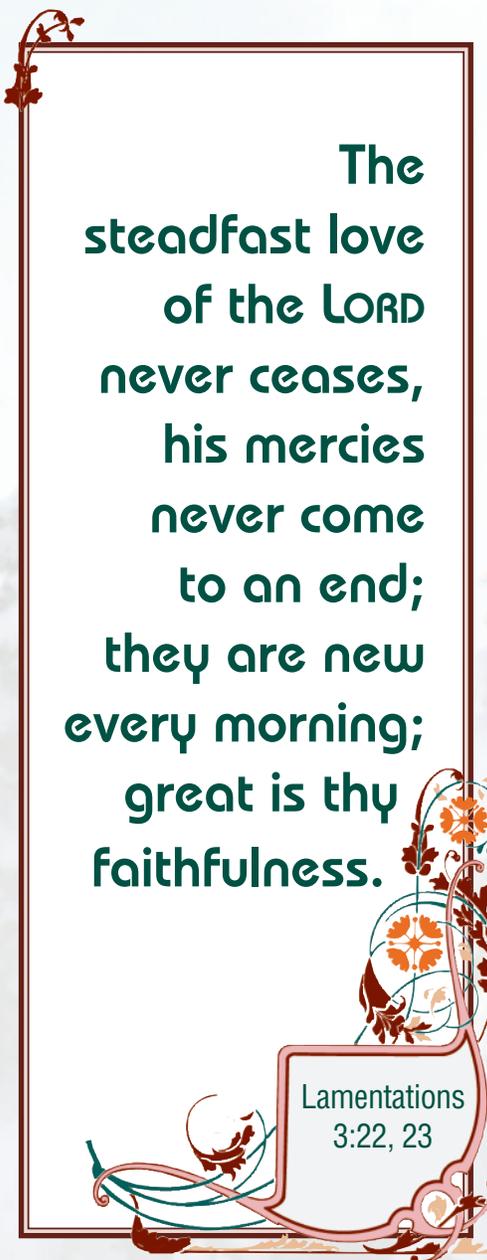
Over the decades of publication, the pages of *Clarion* have been graced with a column that shared newsworthy items from the churches. The older generation will remember the discussion-inviting "News Medleys" written by Rev. W.W.J. VanOene. That column was so uniquely his that when he retired from that task it also gained a new name, the "Hi-Liter." This ran from 1995 until 2003. At first, it was under the care of Rev. C. VanSpronsen. In 1999 he was succeeded by Rev. J. De Gelder. The year 2004 saw another change both in person in charge and in name. Under the heading, "What's New???", Rev. Cl. Stam put his own stamp on this column.

The time has come for another change, at least in terms of person responsible for the column. I have accepted the request to take over the task of reviewing the church bulletins from the Canadian Reformed Churches in Canada, as well as the sister churches in the USA and Australia. The purpose of this is to glean newsworthy items and share them with the readership of *Clarion*. In line with the past pattern of this column, there is also the opportunity to comment on these items, when it

may be appropriate, in a constructive manner.

For this column to be a regular feature, it is necessary to get the information from the local churches. The requests went out to local bulletin editors some months ago to send information to my address. In case a local bulletin editor was missed, you are invited to send copies of your congregational news. While printed copies are most welcome, electronic copies in an easy to access format (e.g., .doc or .PDF files) would be preferable. It speeds up the communication process and saves the local editors the additional task and expense of mailing out copies. The Lord willing, a "What's New?" column will appear in every third issue of *Clarion*.

If you are not already sending local bulletins, feel free to contribute to this column by sending them in whatever form works best to my address: Rev. E. Kampen, 55 'C' Line, RR 2, Orangeville, ON, L9W 2Y9. Fax: 519-941-3092; email: [eric.kampen@canrc.org](mailto:eric.kampen@canrc.org).



**The  
steadfast love  
of the LORD  
never ceases,  
his mercies  
never come  
to an end;  
they are new  
every morning;  
great is thy  
faithfulness.**

Lamentations  
3:22, 23



# Camp Yak'isda Bik'ah 2006

## In God's Trail

### Christian Outreach Board

"Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous" (Ps 15:1, 2a).

Who indeed may dwell in the sanctuary of the Lord? Can I, looking at my life, say I am blameless and righteous? This text, on its own, can cause us to tremble with fear. Left up to ourselves, not one of us would be able to live on the holy hill of the Lord.

Thankfully, we have been told the good news, the gospel of our Lord and Saviour. We have not been left to our own devices, rather God has claimed us as his own, He has sent his one and only Son to pay for our sins, so that we may indeed be considered blameless and righteous.

What a glorious truth! Oh that everyone may hear of this truth and believe! In the words of Paul, "He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:19, 20). God has given us an important task that we may not take lightly. It is my prayer that the gospel proclaimed at these camps may bear good fruit among the campers and also the volunteers.

*Your Fellow Ambassador,  
Denise Van Raalte*

### From the board

Once again, God has blessed Camp Yak'isda Bik'ah richly. This year we were able to run two camps: the youth camp which ran from Monday, July 10 to Sunday, July 17 and was attended by twenty-six

campers ages seven to twelve and eight day campers (ages four to seven); and the teen camp (July 24-27) which was attended by fourteen teens (ages thirteen to sixteen) and one infant son. The camps were a great success with no serious incidents and many opportunities to proclaim the gospel, both through formal Bible lessons, mealtime devotions, and "teachable moments."

We thank the willing and able volunteers who dedicated time to fill the positions of counsellors, cooks, and other support staff. We also cannot forget all the volunteers in the local congregations who helped make the camp a success: from the cooks, laundry washers, bus drivers, cookie bakers, firewood suppliers, and night supervisors to those who volunteered to take the campers tubing and the energetic young people who came in the evenings to play capture the flag or kick the can; to all of you, THANK YOU. It is our sincere prayer that these efforts at camp will bear good fruit in the lives of the campers and will open doors to proclaim the gospel to their families.

If you are interested in finding out more about the summer camps or the other work of the Christian Outreach Board, please contact us at Smithers Canadian Reformed Church, PO Box 2229, Smithers, BC, V0J 2N0. Alternatively you can contact Marianne Groen, Secretary (250-847-2648, [hmgroen@bulkley.net](mailto:hmgroen@bulkley.net)) or Paul Van Raalte, Chairman (250-847-1362, [denisevr@telus.net](mailto:denisevr@telus.net)).

### From the counsellors

Looking back over the four days of teen camp, it seems that four days is just not enough time. The

days, filled with devotions, swimming, football, survivor, crafts, singing and more swimming, just flew by. Through this camp, I really saw the power of our Lord at work in the lives of these teens. The moments where the campers looked so totally involved in the devotions, the questions that came up, the involving discussions about everyday choices proved to me what an amazing opportunity this camp is for the furthering of God's kingdom.

Here are some of the highlights of the camp for me. Swimming was always a good time. The rule was that nobody could push anybody else off the dock unless both people were wearing a life jacket, or if they asked first. It was because of this that as soon as new people arrived in the canoes onto the dock, they tried to rip their life jackets off as soon as possible to avoid being pushed off. But often they were too slow.

The hike was also an experience to note. The back road we were supposed to take was very hard to find because of the horrible instructions we were given. After finally finding the road to take, we had to walk

an extra hour and a half to get to the actual parking lot because we were driving in the camp bus. During the hike, we stopped many times to discuss if we should continue because of the lost time trying to find the trail. Baby Brian was shuffled through all the volunteers willing to carry the baby on their back for a period of time. Thankfully, everybody made it to the top to see the gorgeous view. After finally making it back to the bus, we were running very behind schedule. And to top it all off, the bus broke down so we had to wait at a rest area for some members of the Smithers church to come and pick us up with their vans. We ended up at camp four hours later than planned. That was quite an experience.

The horseback riding, the tubing, the frisbeeing, the beading, the canoeing, and everything else all added up to an unforgettable experience and I am already looking forward to next year. I thank God for such a wonderful experience and opportunity for mission.

*In Christ,  
Alika Dykstra*





This was our first opportunity to be counsellors together at a Christian outreach camp. The drive from the lower mainland was a wonderful way to spend our thirty-fifth wedding anniversary. When we arrived at the camp there was a beautiful fifth wheel placed for us in a picturesque surrounding. The camp we found was ideally situated and the sleeping facilities for the campers were rustic. The cookhouse was a great multipurpose building and the centre of the camp.

It was encouraging to us to see the amount of local church support for the camp. Our suppers and snacks were brought by the women of the Smithers church. We really appreciated Ted and the other young men who came in the evening to entertain and watch over teens till the wee hours of the morning, allowing us to get some shut eye.

The theme for the camp was "Decisions" and it seemed perfect for an outreach program. In life there are many decisions; friends, careers and most of all a decision to follow God's ways. We found the teens quite mature, or rather, world-wise and they readily understood and could relate to the topic.

The highlight for the campers was the activities, especially the hiking and horseback riding. These activities also were rolled into the theme and in the evening devotion gave us opportunity to discuss results and the positive outcomes of one's decisions.

Evenings were often spent in the water, in canoes, or on the dock and this too presented numerous chances to speak to the campers one on one. Campfires at night were wonderful, sing songs, making s'mores, popcorn popping, all the things a camp should be.

On reflection, John and I felt it great to present a fun-filled Christian camp to teens who often know no other way than what is abusive, drunk, and full of responsibilities for younger brothers and sisters that their parents often neglect.

Our part in the camp was small compared to that of the organizers and the commitment of the Smithers church to make a small impact on a group of well-deserving teens.

John and I found it heart-warming to hear that two young men were interested in and expressed a desire to be role models possibly as junior counsellors in the children's camp. We feel that offering a leadership role to some of the teens who have attended a number of the camps would be a positive development for the native community. The Lord works in many wondrous ways. Our path to the native camp was God's design and we are ever thankful for the opportunity to help, also as bus driver and nurse.

*John and Fannie Scholtens*

### About youth camp

I have learned more from them than they probably have from me, and I will never forget them.

*Erica Hofsink*





I love how the kids sing all day long, during lessons, at meals, on the bus and while swimming. Teaching the kids this week was a great experience and I will remember it always.

*Kim Welfing*

There were times when I wondered what I had gotten myself into. . . They made me laugh and cry. This week was full of surprises and new experiences. . . I learned to treasure the moments in Bible lessons with the kids when they would finally get something you were trying to teach them all week.

*Lisa Kieneker*

First of all, I have to say that my experience at youth camp was truly life changing. I never thought that I would fall in love with those kids as much as I did! The kids were so amazing, at times you would never expect it, at times when your lesson was going haywire and you were at the end of your rope, one kid would absolutely astound you with a question like "why was Jesus killed on the cross?" or "where did the devil come from?" and that would make that lesson feel like a huge success. One time in particular really stands out for me. It was when we all went to church on Sunday. Each counsellor was

paired with a couple of kids to watch during the two services and lunch. I was paired with William and George. "Oh boy," I thought, "get ready for a service full of giggling and 'Shh's.'" But much to my surprise, from the moment we sat down at our bench to our lunch with the DeVries family to standing up for the final song of the second service, the boys were little angels, they were so well behaved! The only time I had to pull out a "Shh" was when George fell asleep in the second service and then woke up in the middle of the sermon and very loudly exclaimed, "What's going on?" It was quite funny and of course got William giggling, it was pretty cute.

*Dawn Brienen*

This week has been one of my best experiences ever.

*Julie Keineker*

I had an amazing week ... I hope I can come back to camp next year.

*Vanessa Schutte*

### **George's Incident**

*The following incident (as dictated by George himself) occurred during our boating evening. Several volunteers bring their boats to the camps and the kids get to go tubing. It is a highlight of the week for many of the campers.*

As soon as the ride started to end, the driver finally noticed that I was bored. I asked him to go faster. He then went *really* fast! So fast, that I slipped to the back of the tube. My shorts unfortunately did not stay on me, or on the tube!

Alas, my shorts were at the bottom of the lake and I was in pain! So there I was, in the lake, minus my shorts in front of a boat full of girls. Suddenly nearly everyone in the boat was offering me their shorts! Rachel came to the rescue with her pretty pink shorts (seriously, they were pink and nice). I had to play superman for a while, holding onto "my" shorts with one hand and the rope with my other hand. All in all, a rather traumatizing but quite entertaining tube ride.

*George Naziel* 🌻

Irene Bultena

# Fergus Welcomes Rev. and Mrs. Agema and Family

August 6, 2006 dawned bright and sunny, beginning a day that was full of joy and thankfulness for the congregation of Fergus Maranatha. This is the day we would officially welcome our new pastor and teacher, Rev. Agema, and his family. After months of preparation, which included extensive renovations to the existing manse, we were all very happy to see this day finally arrive!

Rev. J. Van Woudenberg led the morning worship service, reading from John 9. The text for his sermon was found in John 10:1-9, with the theme "Christ proclaims Himself as the gate to his sheep; 1) the context of this proclamation, 2) the contents of this proclamation, and 3) the comfort in this proclamation." Rev. Van Woudenberg began by noting that both North and Maranatha congregations of Fergus now had their own ministers. Rev. Agema would now be given "access" to what goes on in this congregation, both in the consistory room, but also through visitation. Proper access to the sheep must be used, namely through Jesus Christ. He is the gate through which we must pass. Rev. Van Woudenberg also went on to explain that if a pastor does not approach the sheep through Christ, he is not preaching the Word of Christ and in the end will be left with no sheep. He

concluded his sermon with the comfort, also for Rev. Agema, that if he enters his new charge through the door, which is Jesus Christ, that he can also count on his work being blessed.

After singing Psalm 23: 1, 2, and 3 (a very fitting psalm for the sermon), Br. Tony VanTol read the form for installation, after which Rev. Agema was asked to sign the subscription form. Every office bearer who has served in our consistory since the church's institution has signed this book. After the covenant benediction several members from neighbouring congregations sent greetings, both personally and by way of letter.

In the afternoon service, Rev. Agema read two portions from Scripture, 1 Chronicles 9:22-34 and 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2. The text for his inaugural sermon was taken from Psalm 134, with the theme "The bond between congregation and office-bearers is a gift of the Lord. This bond involves: 1) the prayer of the congregation and 2) the blessing by the office-bearers." Rev. Agema noted that since today is the beginning of working together as minister and congregation, we would get to know each other through the open Word of God. But there is always the question in the back of one's mind, "how will it go?" We must remember that the bond we have is a gift from God and that it is not





just through the preaching of beautiful sermons that we will all benefit, but through the prayers and encouragement of the whole congregations that the bond can be blessed by the Lord. We need that blessing, in which we may proceed together in the love of our risen Lord.

After the service all those present enjoyed coffee and cake. However, this was not the end of our festivities! Tables and chairs were set up, both inside and out, after which many sat down to enjoy the delicious food. The beautiful weather helped to contribute to a very good time. Games were played and all enjoyed good fellowship.

Since we weren't quite done yet. . . we once again gathered at 7:30 p.m. in the church auditorium. This was the "official" welcome evening. Br. VanTol opened the evening with a word of welcome, reading Psalm 118 and leading us in prayer. We all sang the "Welcome Song", made up to the tune of "Something to sing about - this land of ours."

On behalf of the Tuesday evening Women's Society, Joyce Tenhage and Jeannette Bos asked "Twenty Questions." For example, "If you had worked on the manse, please stand up. . ." Well, needless to say, by the number of people that stood up, many contributed much free labour to the renovations.

After this Mrs. Joanne VanTol presented the Agemas with a picture photo album of all the families and members of our congregation.

Mr. Bert VanderBeek, with the assistance of several children posing as members of the Men's Society "Confessor", decided to test Rev. Agema's knowledge of our congregation and whether or not Rev. Agema had "studied" enough before he came. Well, apparently he was a little smarter than we all thought, for he got five out of seven questions right, and even came very close to guessing how many of the non-communicant members were boys and how many were girls! The end result of his knowledge was a "WELCOME" in letters from the men's society.

Mr. P. Vandermeulen welcomed the Agemas on behalf of the seniors. He expressed the wish that the bond, which started back with the Reformation, may continue here also under the blessing of the Lord. The seniors sang three versus of Psalm 122 in Dutch.

Mr. Jake Riemersma presented a map of Fergus with the names of the members and corresponding numbers with their residences on the map. He hoped this would help Rev. Agema not to get lost too quickly.

Rev. Agema's next challenge was being given information about the various council members, after

which he had to hold up the appropriate corresponding name. Mr. Bert Niezen and Mr. Tony VanTol did the testing and once again Rev. Agema proved that he was quite capable!! He obviously knows us better than we think already.

Rev. and Mrs. Agema and family were then presented with a beautiful table and chairs set for their deck on behalf of the congregation. The whole congregation was thanked by council for all the work done in preparation for the Agema's arrival.

Rev. Agema was asked to close the evening in prayer, but before this was done, he spoke a few words of appreciation to everyone, noting that he hoped things would go better than on our initial meeting. . . when all we had was snow, snow, snow!! He thanked everyone for all the many tokens of welcome and for the love of the congregation not only in the "tearing down" of old walls (referring to the manse), but also in the "building up." He also asked us not to be too "offended" if a wrong name was put to a wrong face; however, judging by his expert knowledge this evening, we don't anticipate this being too much of a problem!!

All in all, we are thankful to our Heavenly Father for again providing our congregation with a minister of the Word and ask for the Lord's blessing over the work done by Rev. Agema, so that indeed we may be sheep led by a faithful shepherd, looking forward to that day when we will enter through into the eternal Sabbath. To God be all praise and glory. 



B. Bouwman

# Commencement 2006

## Guido de Brès Christian High School, Hamilton, Ontario

By early Saturday morning, September 30, the normally austere school gymnasium had been transformed into a cozy reception hall under the creative direction of Ms. C. VanEerden, with baskets of seasonal flowers and grasses contributing to the harvest theme. All was ready to welcome the graduating class of 2006, their families, friends, and staff members. Our Principal, Mr. J. G. VanDooren, opened the day with Bible reading, prayer, and a word of welcome. The graduates, all dressed to the nines, mingled and reminisced with banter, giggles, and guffaws. Parents beamed and cameras flashed. The tables were laden with an array of delectable finger foods. Everything was perfect: great food, good friends. . . .

Then the room quieted as all in attendance turned towards the stage. Deanna Oosterhoff stepped to the microphone to present a

heartfelt musical tribute, "Somewhere Down the Road" by Amy Grant, in memory of her cousin Jordan Hutchinson, a friend and classmate who is sadly missed, even more so on an occasion such as this one. As the luncheon continued, the din grew louder once again, signalling excitement and anticipation of the day's main event: the afternoon's graduation ceremony at Hamilton Place.

With over a thousand in attendance, the Great Hall was nearly full. All who were able stood to recognize and honour the graduating class of 2006 as they entered the auditorium, accompanied by Mr. T. Nijenhuis performing his original composition, Guido Graduation 2006 Processional, on piano. The Chairman of the Board, Mr. N. VandenOever, opened the assembly with the reading of a suitable passage from Scripture,

Colossians 1:9-14, and prayer. On behalf of the Board he congratulated the graduates, urging them to go forward with complete confidence in God's indispensable blessings. May their eyes be ever on the Lord!

Secondly, Mr. VanDooren addressed the graduates, reminding them that they have spent approximately 3500 hours in classrooms during their four years of high school, a fact that most of them would rather forget! During those hours, not only was a lot of information taught, and probably forgotten by now, but also a lot of lessons were caught, which will hopefully not be forgotten. Mr. VanDooren outlined seven absolute truths about life which underlie all instruction given at Guido de Brès, truths which the graduates need to take with them into their future studies and workplaces. Following the Principal's comments, the





# Ontario Secondary School Diplomas

David Aasman	Benjamin Heemskerck	Spencer Nichol	Ralph Terpstra
Monica Agema	Lawren Helder	Jesse Nieuwenhuis	Antonia Torenvliet
Jessica Bartels	Darryl Hoeksema	Danielle Nordeman	Justin VanAndel
Lauren Beintema	Natasha Hoeksema	Laura Olij	Kyle VanAndel
Derek Bethlehem	Kaitlin Hordyk	Brandon Oosterhoff	Michelle VanAndel
Shawna Bethlehem	Madeline Hordyk	Deanna Oosterhoff	Nicholas VanAndel
Michael Bosma	Matthew Hordyk	Christopher Stermeier	Rachel Vandebos
Michael Charles Bosscher	Joel Huizing	Craig Ouwersloot	Todd VanderBruggen
Michael Peter Bosscher	Michael Hutten	Jeffrey Poort	Talia Vandersluis
Mark Bremer	Robert Jager	Adina Post	Rosalie VanderVegte
James Buist	Erica Jagt	Kyle Post	Alexa VanderVelde
Peter Buitenwerf	Nicole Jagt	Rose-Marie Ravensbergen	Hannele VanderVelde
Kayley Dantuma	Aren Jansema	Kurtis Riesebosch	James VanderVelde
Nathan DeJong	Samantha Jongsema	Joshua Rozema	Miriam Vanderwoerd
Shannel DeJonge	Larissa Kasper	Rebecca Scholtens	Dennis VanDyk
Lindsey Dekker	Laura Kieft	Kristen Schoon	Steven VanHengstum
Amanda Feenstra	Jacob Kingma	Laura Schoon	Catrina VanIperen
David Feenstra	William Knegt	Elizabeth Schutten	Heidi VanLuik
Loretta Feenstra	David Linde	Lisa Schutten	Garnet van Popta
Jeannette Gracey	Joel Linde	Shivonne Sipkema	Jordan VanTol
Maria Gracey	Anton Lodder	Jonathan Skinner	Rebekah Venema
Jaronl Gritter	Sharon Ludwig	Sara Smeding	Benjamin Vis
James Groenwold	Jamie Malda	Tamara Smouter	Andrew Watson
Hilda Gunnink	Jonathan Muis	Gregory Spriensma	Shaun Winkel
David Havenaar	Lennard Muis	Brianne Tamminga	Michelle Witten



Guido orchestra performed *Glory to the Lamb* by Twila Paris.

Next, Rev. C.J. VanderVelde addressed the graduates on the topic "Scaffolding," based on Colossians 2: 6 and 7: "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness." In Christ are hidden all treasures; therefore any knowledge outside of Christ is empty. As we are rooted in Him, we draw our strength from Him alone, and not from the materialism idolized by the world. We are a work in progress, under construction, being built by our Saviour Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit. Christ uses the means of parents, church, school, even enlisting our own individual gifts and talents, to build us up in Him. We remain in this scaffolding all the days of our life on this earth. This knowledge should strengthen our faith day by day and fill us with thankfulness for his steadfast love and providential care.

Following the main address, one hundred graduates came forward to receive their Ontario

Secondary School Diplomas; truly a moving and remarkable sight!

Another vocal selection, *I Would Light a Candle*, was presented by Sarah Boot, Kaitlin Buitenwerf, Melody Heemskerk, Ruth Kelly, Emily Venema, Courtney Wieske, and the Guido orchestra, with guest pianist Michelle DeBoer and under the capable direction of Mr. Nijenhuis.

Several special awards were presented to deserving members of the graduating class. Following these presentations, Deanna Oosterhoff sang *I Will Be Your Friend* by Michael W. Smith, accompanied by Jon Kingma on piano. Deanna received a well-deserved standing ovation from her classmates.

Finally, on behalf of the graduating class, Jeff Poort presented his valedictory address. He recalled the joy of being on top in Grade 12, a status quickly lost when entering the next stage of life. Upon leaving Guido, one takes along good memories, great friends, and a lot of learning about books and life. One of the hardest lessons learned in Grade 12 was that death can reach down and touch each of us personally. The

Grade 12 class was shocked and saddened by the untimely death of friend and classmate Jordan, but through this experience they grew as a class, grew in faith, fellowship, and thankfulness. Jeff acknowledged all who helped the graduates during the course of their four years at Guido. High school was one giant step in God's plan for each one of them.

Mr. H. Schutten, parent of one of the graduates, closed this memorable program with prayer of praise and thanksgiving and petition for God's continued indispensable blessings on the Class of 2006 and on Guido de Brès Christian High School. The audience rose for the singing of our national anthem, followed by the recessional, *Piano Concerto in A-Minor* by Edvard Grieg, performed by Mr. Nijenhuis.

Guido de Brès staff members who planned the day's events are to be commended for their efforts, both individually and as a team. Some participated in an obvious manner, but many more worked hard behind the scenes to ensure a well-coordinated program. Graduation 2006 will be remembered as a day full of good memories, lots of laughter, and some tears; but most of all, with a spirit of thankfulness. Both the reception and formal ceremony demonstrated clearly the truth of Scripture expressed in our school motto: the fact that we do possess in the fullest measure "Everything in Christ." To Him be all praise and glory!





# From the Publisher

## The Verdict

*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.* John 3:19

Christmastime ought to be a joyous time, shouldn't it? After all, aren't we celebrating the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ? His coming into the world is described as the Light appearing in the darkness. For children of the truth, that is good news! For them this season is indeed a time of joyous remembrance and deep gratitude for the light of the Saviour.

The words of John 3:19 are, however, also a sober reality check. The just Judge has spoken the verdict. Condemnation awaits those who seek darkness rather than light. That is not what people in society at large like to hear at this festive time. Their multiple-coloured lights bear into the frosty night sky; parties, food, and drink propel cheeriness into a state of non-remembrance. Many will see light turn into darkness. Such are the evil deeds of men in this upside-down world, just as the prophet Isaiah prophesied long ago (Isaiah 5:20).

Surely, we who live by the truth ought not to boast, as if we were so bright. By nature we, too, deserve the verdict. But thanks be to the God of light who illumines us by His Spirit and makes clear before us the path we must follow. Let your light shine in the darkness, at Christmastime and throughout the year ahead.

## Our Appreciation

Shedding light on passages of Holy Scripture and on events of the day is the work of our editors. To them we are grateful for doing so with regularity and punctuality. First our chief editor, Dr. J. Visscher, who spends a considerable amount of time reading and editing the submissions to *Clarion*. Dr. Visscher is ably assisted by Mrs. Laura Veenendaal who diligently prepares the material for publication.

Thank you so much for your work and for the good cooperation during the past year.

Our team of coeditors ensures that the workload is distributed. Thank you for your regular contributions, Rev. R. Aasman, Rev. W. Slomp, Rev. Cl. Stam, and Dr. C. Van Dam.

From time to time there is a change in the ranks. Rev. W. Slomp wished to be released from his work for *Clarion*. Thank you, Rev. Slomp, for your assistance in the years on the team.

We welcome Rev. E. Kampen as a new coeditor and as writer of the "What's New" column, beginning in the new year.

And then there is the list of regular contributors: Drs. D. Moes, Rev. J. Moesker, Dr. R. Faber, Mr. A. Kingma, Mr. K. Sikkema, Mrs. C. Gelms, and Mrs. E. Nordeman. We thank you all for continuing to serve the readers with food for thought.

Our appreciation also goes to the many writers who help us by submitting interesting articles for the benefit of our readers.

Above all we thank you, our subscribers, for reading and supporting *Clarion*. We are aware of the inroads new communication methods are making into your lives and are therefore thankful that you are thinking of us.

A significant part of *Clarion* is the advertisers who make it possible to present a better magazine. We are much obliged.

## Greetings

The year of our Lord 2006 is almost complete. We will celebrate the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ who suffered and died for us on the cross and who now sits at the right hand of God, from where He will come to judge the living and the dead. We will declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light.

From us to you all: greetings!

May God bless you richly in the year to come.

*W. Gortemaker*

Danielle Ravensbergen

# The Forty-fifth Annual League Day

"...to live is Christ and to die is gain." *Philippians 1:21*

On October 18, 2006, 375 women from all over Ontario and some from as far as The Netherlands and Washington gathered together for a day of study and fellowship. We were welcomed by the ladies from the hosting congregations of Orangeville and Grand Valley as we entered the beautifully decorated hall. In one corner was a historical display representing a 1926 women's society in The Netherlands, including an essay written in Dutch and old black and white photos. Colourful potted mums graced the tables and the stage was a picture of harvest bounty.

Our president Sr. Adriana Vanderven welcomed everyone present and we began by singing Psalm 25:5, 7, 8, praying to God for a blessing over our day, and opening Scripture to Revelation 21:1-8.

## Forty-fifth league day

Since it was the forty-fifth annual League Day, all women born after the first League Day of 1961 were asked to stand; after this, more interestingly, the women who were present at the first League Day were asked to stand up! Our president read a letter from The Netherlands wishing us a fruitful day in study of God's Word. It was also announced that the InterLeague Publication Board had



*Bertha Groen with the President of the League Adriana Vanderven*

a table set up with numerous study books available for purchase. The annual League Day collection was allocated to the Middle East Reformed Fellowship this year.

## Grief and grieving

After the singing of the League Song, our morning speaker, Rev. Eric Kampen, newly installed minister of the congregation of Orangeville, was welcomed. To introduce his speech "Grief and Grieving in a Scriptural Light," we read from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11.

What gives believers occasion for grief and grieving? Scripture uses many words for grief: sorrow, mourning, sadness. One of the first times grief is mentioned is in Genesis 6:5, 6, for when the Lord saw the wickedness of man, his heart was filled with pain. Sin is often a source of grief, whether it is sin which hurts others (a foolish son brings grief to his parents), or grief over personal sin (David's

words in Psalm 51). Romans 7:24 gives us a clear picture of Paul's struggle and grief over the persistence of sin despite the desire to do what is good. In the catechism we speak of the dying of the old nature as grieving with heartfelt sorrow that we have offended God with our sin. Of course, we also grieve over the loss of a loved one. Abraham mourned the death of Sarah; Mary and Martha grieved at Lazarus grave. But the most prominent source of grief is when God's people have the sense that the heavy hand of God is upon them. "My soul is in anguish. . . worn out from groaning; my eyes weak with sorrow" (Ps 6). There are so many examples where the psalmist lacked a sense of the peace of God, feeling as though the God of peace had left him. God's people also experienced grief when Jerusalem was in ruins, when the Gentiles had invaded their land, and when the walls of Jerusalem lay in shambles. Also today the state of the church and the world can cause much grief. When it is our highest joy to see the glory of God's kingdom and to pray "your kingdom come," then it brings us great sorrow to see our God profaned more and more.

How then should believers see grief? First of all, it is inevitable in a fallen world. There are so many situations in our life in this broken world that cause sorrow – it is not always a direct result of a sin. And



although God is not to be blamed for sin and situations that cause grief, he does *allow* them as our heavenly Father who loves us and has shown this love to us in the gift of his Son. As we read in Lamentations, "Although he brings grief, he shows compassion. For he does not willingly bring grief upon his people." God uses this to bring his people to repentance. However, not every occasion of grief is made to cause repentance from sin. God also disciplines us as his children, since He is our Father: Paul experienced this affliction in the "thorn" in his flesh, yet God did not take it away because it taught Paul that God's grace was sufficient for him. Affliction is painful, but serves the goal of our sanctification.

### Dealing with grief

What does Scripture teach us about how believers should deal with grief? Sorrow leads to repentance when we become sorrowful as God intended, as we read in 2 Corinthians 7:9, 10, "Godly sorrow leads to repentance that leads to salvation." We may not remain in this sorrow, but must cling to Christ and find relief in Him. It has happened especially in the past that some believers would take their sins so seriously, being too heavy in lingering over their sins, that they would not trust that God forgave but waited rather for some indication that God had indeed forgiven them. Today, however, do we maybe shrug our sin off too easily? Do we indeed grieve with heartfelt sorrow that we have offended God with our sin?

In the time of Paul, the Thessalonians grieved that those who had died would not be on the

earth when the Lord Jesus returned. Paul does not tell them not to grieve, but teaches them how they must grieve: don't do it as the rest of mankind, but grieve in the hope of new life! Death puts an end to sin and is an entrance to eternal life. Death is not the end of the world, but is a steppingstone on the way to the new world. This does not mean we may not grieve. But it should not be with the world's emotionalism, seeing a funeral as a "celebration of life"



rather than being taught, encouraged, and strengthened by the Word of God. We are to remember that death is still the final enemy! Then we celebrate the life that is to come, the final resurrection. Even in illness we confess that "to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

At times we may not know why we are missing a sense of God's peace. Then we can plead with the Lord to "restore to us the joy of our salvation." Sometimes we have brought it upon ourselves and there is no sense of peace because we do not pray to the Lord. If there is unconfessed sin, then we need to repent. We may also have grief over the state of the church and

may feel depressed because of the public mockery of the gospel and the waning influence of God's Word in this world. That God's will is ignored and his kingdom mocked should bring us our greatest grief. Only once the heavenly Jerusalem comes down to earth will the old order of things pass away, only then will there be no more tears. The highest hope of every believer should be the coming of God's kingdom in all its fullness. Then we will be filled with unending joy!

We sang from Psalm 42:1, 6, 7. After round-table discussion and a general discussion, Rev. Kampen was heartily thanked for his encouraging words. We enjoyed a time of refreshment and fellowship during the lunch hour, after which the hosting societies entertained us with a lively game.

### Living in the joy of faith

In order to prepare for the afternoon session, we sang from Psalm 68:1, 2 and read from Scripture Philippians 1:18b-26; 4:4-13. Sr. Bertha Groen spoke to us on "Living in the Joy of Faith," a topic which harmonized beautifully with the morning speech.

The very words "living in" express that the joy of faith becomes part of who we are. It is evident in what we say and how we act and is present in whatever circumstance. This joy flows through us only as a result of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5). Where our culture is self-centered and seeks joy in itself, we rely on God for true joy. It is comforting to know that even when we are discouraged or sad we can still live in this joy, because it stems from



faith and knowledge. Indeed, true faith is a sure knowledge and a firm confidence (HC, QA 21), worked in us by the Holy Spirit. It is knowing God intimately from his Word that gives us joy. We are to be people filled with the gift of joy by the Holy Spirit, regardless of the circumstances, because we know God and his grace and plan of salvation.

We learn much about joy when we read Philippians. The joy or rejoicing mentioned especially in Philippians 4 should be seen in the context of the entire book. Paul teaches us about his assurance in the work God is doing in him, that it does not rest on him, weak and sinful man (Rom 7). Then our joy is not a matter of feelings, but of knowledge, for we know that all that we have accomplished, God has done for us (Isa 26:12).

From the beginning, before the creation of the world, God chose us to be holy and blameless in his sight. He always works within the context of this plan, his covenant, his promise fulfilled in Christ. Yet Christ's work does not end at the cross, or even at his ascension. The Holy Spirit lives in us to help us, so that "He who began a good work in

us will carry it on to completion" (Phil 1:6). Then we also learn that everything we undertake in our own strength ends up in failure (Eccl 12:13).

Knowing that it is only in Christ that we can do all things, we daily seek God's Word, given us so that we can come to a greater knowledge of Him. We receive it thankfully, welcome it into our daily life, and make it part of us. We believe it and trust in God. The reading of God's word in turn incites us to prayer, responding in thankfulness to Him by the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph 3:20). It is also through suffering, the refining of our faith (1 Pet 1:7-9), that we gain a heavenly perspective on life and are once again brought to our knees. Then we are reminded of our dependence on God and seek Him to find joy again (Psalm 121, "I lift up my eyes to the hills. . .").

### What happens when. . . ?

What happens to our life, our living, when the Spirit works in us? Relationships change because the fruit of the Spirit reigns in our hearts (John 4:20, "If anyone says he loves God yet hates his brother, he is a liar"). Our very desires change,

affecting our finances, priorities, and daily concerns. We become more focussed on the needs of others. And then we also want to be surrounded by like-minded people, the communion of the saints; God brings together people who share a deep love for the Saviour, whose eyes are fixed on his coming rather than on each other's differences. Then we serve and sacrifice for the benefit of others, seeking first the kingdom of God.

We also learn our joy from the preaching of the Word, which strengthens our faith. We are warned to recognize false teachings which rob us of our joy. Preaching teaches us the attitude of Christ, whose life was of sacrifice to his Father. In the world joy is sought in worldly pleasures. True joy and salvation are found only at the foot of the cross, and further rooted in the outlook we have of eternal life with Christ, when we will no longer suffer, when we will receive a glorious body. This gives us perspective, to know that all things come to us not by chance but by his fatherly hand. Then we may confess: "I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength."

Sr. Bertha Groen was thanked for her speech and we sang from Psalm 97:1, 5, 6. After a brief discussion we closed the day. Our president announced that next year the Annual League Day will be hosted by the congregation at Flamborough. We sang from Hymn 53:1, 2 and closed in prayer. We thank God for the rich opportunity we have to spend a whole day in the study of his Word, within the fellowship of true believers. May this day also incite us to be fruitful and joyful in his service!



# Graduation and Character Education

*Rev. P.G. Feenstra is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Owen Sound, Ontario*  
[pfeenstra@canrc.org](mailto:pfeenstra@canrc.org)

*Commencement address for the graduation activities at Covenant Teachers College last May*

It is a great honour for me to stand before you this evening – on this special moment in your life! Yes, the moment has at last arrived! All that hard work of completing assignments is behind you. In a few months time you will be scattered across the country, taking on the challenges of your new positions as Reformed teachers! Not all of you have made the choice to enter the teaching profession at the present time. However, as you know better than I do: your years at Covenant were not a waste of time. What you have learned will benefit you wherever the Lord leads and directs your path.

Teachers occupy a special place of responsibility, whether they are lecturing at a college, working at the high school level, or beginning to acquaint children with the joy of learning at an elementary school. As Reformed community we can easily take for granted the role teachers play in the lives of our children. We benefit in so many ways from the faithful and selfless labours of our dedicated teachers. Let us not cease to give thanks to the Lord for his goodness.

## Teaching children – a blessing

Teaching children in the setting of our Reformed schools is a tremendous blessing! During the course of the year there will be times when the pressures of the work will threaten to drag you down. That is when you will need to get on your knees and thank the Lord for the privilege of being a teacher. By teaching the various subjects you give the children wings, allowing them to soar like an eagle – observing the beauty of God's creation; enabling them to read the Scriptures and find solace and comfort in the gospel of Christ.

The Teachers College has provided you with tools in different areas of study. You have learned various methods of pedagogy and have also come to see that the foundation of Reformed education is the doctrine of the covenant. The children you will teach are special. They share with you a mark that distinguishes them from others – they bear the mark of God's redeeming love and faithfulness! Whether you stand in front of a class of little children who are eager to do what the teacher tells them, or if you stand with fear and trepidation before a rowdy bunch of teens that challenge and

exasperate you – all these children have received the promise of forgiveness of their sins and the daily renewal of their life.

These children are also part of a battle. They are soldiers in training. Yes, in the classroom you will experience the antithesis the Lord has placed between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. You as brand new teachers will begin to teach within the context of an age-old struggle. Together with your future students you are on the battlefield fighting three sworn enemies – the devil, the world and your own sinful flesh. In that battle you are to help the students hold high the banner that acknowledges Christ to be king of every area of life!

In a Reformed school setting teachers and students confess to belong to Christ! Everything is subject to his government and that, ladies and gentlemen, must soak through the seams of your lesson planning. The foundation of your instruction is the wisdom of the Lord found in Scripture. To be effective in teaching, you need to be drenched with the Word of God. For even though you are graduating from Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College you remain in school.



Teachers and students are in the same school – the school of the Holy Spirit as pupils of Christ.

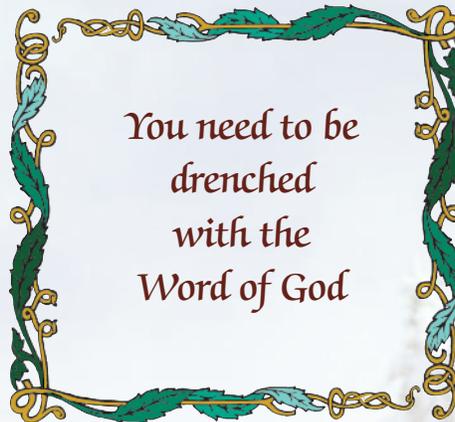
Reformed education is far more than teaching the children to know the stories of the Bible and to have a good understanding of church history. The Lord Jesus Christ has opened the way for us to have communion and fellowship with the Father and with each other. That means the classroom is a place of learning, not only through the subject material that is taught, but also in our interaction with the students. You will be in contact with the students, other staff members, and with the parents.

### Character education

On this graduation evening, as you are about to embark on a teaching career, I wish to whet your appetite to an aspect of Reformed education that you as future teachers ought to develop further – integral to covenant education is character education. Character education is in the way you talk, the behaviour you model, the conduct you tolerate, the deeds you encourage, the expectations you transmit. Simply put, character education is everything you do that influences the character of the children you teach. But to put it in a more focussed way,

Character education is the deliberate effort to help people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values. When we think about the kind of character we want for our children, it's clear that we want them to be able to judge what is

right, to care deeply about what is right, and do what is right—even in the face of pressure from without and temptation from within. (*How to Do Character Education?* by David H. Elkind and Freddy Sweet)



What was read this evening from 2 Peter 1 reminds us that good character virtue is basic to the Christian life – and thus also to Reformed education. What takes place in the school is a microcosm of what we should expect within the church in general. Peter writes,

For this reason, make every effort to add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You can almost hear in these words

a kind of surging forward,

As you have obtained faith in Christ and stand in it, apply yourself diligently to advance character and virtue; and as you stand in that do not be satisfied but press on to increase your knowledge of God's will. Nevertheless, do not be satisfied with that but cultivate self-control and patience. Let devoutness and love to God flourish.

In other words, "Move forward! Press On! Advance the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ!" (John Piper) Faith is to bear fruit – fruit of the Spirit. Putting what Peter writes into the school setting: advance, move forward so that you be kept from being ineffective in your lesson planning, in the daily routines of the classroom, in your interaction with the students and their parents. Look to furnish your faith with virtue and character.

### We have our textbook

The blessing of Reformed education is that we have a textbook that lays out beautifully the ground rules for life in the covenant and for character education. We do not establish the nature of life with God; we do not have to decide on what core values or character traits every Christian should exemplify and develop. The Bible is very specific about how every child of God is to put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, patience. The character education that comes from the Lord and from his Holy Word calls us to show compassion, to be forgiving,

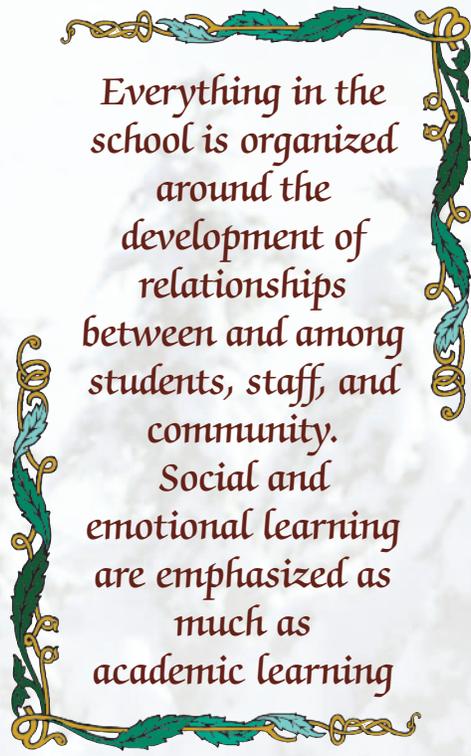


to show respect, and to be courageous, content, loyal, honest, truthful, thoughtful, enthusiastic, and joyful. The Word of God also provides us with a good and necessary dose of realism – it will be a life-long struggle to develop good character because by nature we are unkind, unforgiving, selfish, proud, complaining, disrespectful manipulative, hateful, and dishonest.

Effective character education is not adding a program or set of programs to a school. Rather, it is integrated into every aspect of school life, including discipline, playground duty, and sports. Everything in the school is organized around the development of relationships between and among students, staff, and community. Social and emotional learning are emphasized as much as academic learning. Cooperation among students is emphasized over competition. Virtues and values such as respect, responsibility, honesty, and integrity are part of everyday lessons in and out of the classroom.

Reformed schools are Christian schools where all involved are to confess Christ and present themselves as a living sacrifice of praise. This means that everybody in the school is to be controlled by the love of Christ; by the grace He showed in giving his life for sinners. Every person in the school – students, teachers, volunteers, administration, board members – is therefore to treat everyone else with kindness, honour, and respect.

Throughout the year there should be times that you as teaching staff allow the students an opportunity to speak directly to the subject of character education. For example, what does it mean to show kindness, patience, gentleness, love, and joy both within and outside the classroom? Where can improvements be made?



*Everything in the school is organized around the development of relationships between and among students, staff, and community. Social and emotional learning are emphasized as much as academic learning*

Cooperation – working together – is vital to the well-being of covenant education. Team-learning affords opportunities for learning generosity, patience, goodness, kindness. In creating lesson plans, you as a teacher should have in the back of your mind the opportunities the lesson

gives to teach character. Good character is to be taught, modelled, and reinforced in whatever way possible.

Within the public school setting character education is becoming increasingly popular. The reasons for this are quite different from what I have presented to you this evening. Some schools have implemented character education as a reactive measure; to develop a united front against bullying, vandalism, drug use, and other inappropriate behaviour. Some forms of character education have their roots in native spirituality. Although we reject the underlying premises of character education as developed by the public school, let this be a stimulant to re-examine our own practices. Through character education we are provided with a means to evaluate our goals and assess our progress as schools – to what extent are we functioning as a Christian community? Are both teachers and students furnished with love, joy, peace, goodness, patience, gentleness, kindness, faithfulness, and self-control?

### **Life in the covenant**

The wonderful thing about life in the covenant is that all that we are called to do has its basis and foundation in what has been done for us. When the Apostle Peter calls us to excellence of character he prefaces that by “for this very reason.” He has spoken of God’s divine power to give us all things. Since the Lord God has given power for godliness and virtue, we



are to strive for these things. We strive for virtue and excellence of character because God has already laboured for us and is at work in us. I press on to make the virtues laid out for me in Scripture my own and I want my students to make these things their own because Christ Jesus has made me his own (Phil 3:12).

Paul speaks the same language when he says in Romans 5, Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance (approved) character, and (approved) character hope. Graduates, whether you enter into the teaching profession or move on to do something else, furnish your life with those character traits that exemplify the life you have in Christ. May what you have learned during the time you spent at Covenant Teachers' College be a springboard for growing in a greater appreciation for God's work with his people. May you also all look forward to the final

commencement ceremonies that will take place, when your Teacher, Jesus Christ, returns. Then we will enter post-temporal education – a time when those character traits which have stood the test of time will enable us live in a perfect community of covenant love.

*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](mailto:obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us)*



**Children's Camp held August 16, 17, 18. All children are from the Houston Canadian Reformed Church in British Columbia.**



# Book Review

reviewed by R. Aasman

*His Word Before Yours*, Egbert Brink. (Armadale, WA:

Pro Ecclesia Publishers, 2006).  
Additional Information:  
Hardcover, 232 pages,  
approximately \$25.00 CDN

Rev. Egbert Brink wrote this book in The Netherlands as a result of material gathered during the teaching of pre-confession classes. Indeed it immediately offers advice to those contemplating making profession of faith and who might be struggling with certain questions and issues. For instance, a young person might wonder whether it is really necessary to make profession of faith. There might be issues such as knowing when one is ready to make such a public profession, or, how a commitment may be made when one doesn't know what the future holds. This section of the book will be a great blessing to parents and children who are discussing what it means for a young person to make profession of faith. The author has a nice, colloquial style which easily engages the reader to ask and to answer important questions.

The rest of the book covers a wide spectrum of Reformed doctrine which reminds the reader of the contents of the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and also the Canons of Dort. Consistent throughout the book is a reverence for the Scriptures and for the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Also the questions about making profession of faith point not to the strength which lies

in us but to the grace, the power, and the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The book is well structured. Each chapter has scriptural cross references in the margin and ends with a series of Scripture passages for further study and some thought-provoking questions. This makes it an excellent study guide for young people as well as older people who can use a refresher on Reformed doctrine.

Some chapters in the book are very clear and helpful. For instance, the chapters that deal with the providence of God, election and reprobation, the covenant, and the marks of the church are most helpful. The author also presents us with a short history of the Reformed churches which is a must read – particularly when we consider how church history is not being consistently taught in our time. However, there are also sections which are weak. For instance, the chapter on the Trinity has some helpful explanation but can also be quite confusing at times. The chapter on the image of God does not adequately explain what the image of God means. I also take issue with this chapter when the author suggests that you cannot say the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was meant to test man. One only needs to read other commentaries such as *Promise and Deliverance* by S. G. De Graaf to see that this tree was meant to test man in order to show that of his own free will he wanted to obey God. Therefore, while the book has many good points, it also needs to be read carefully and critically. If my

teenagers were to read the book, I would want to discuss certain parts of it very carefully with them.

This book has been translated from the Dutch into English. It may be that something has been lost in the translation and leads to confusion. But one of my concerns with the book is its poor editing. The book suffers from poor grammar and syntax; punctuation is abused; capitalization is applied to reflexive pronouns and adjectives of God; italics and highlights are used in inexplicable ways; use of words can be very awkward. I mention this only to warn the reader that the book can get tiresome and awkward because of this. There are also two major diagrams in the book. The first is complicated and difficult to work with. The second diagram deals with the history of mankind but fails to explain it is a millennial viewpoint of history. An unsuspecting reader might think it teaches a Reformed viewpoint – complete with rapture and more than one return of Jesus Christ. It is clear that this book could really use a rewriting and a reediting.

*His Word Before Yours* fills a certain niche for those who are preparing for profession of faith. It is well structured and covers a wide range of doctrine which is helpful for all ages. But it has its flaws as mentioned above. If you are a discerning reader and can put up with the style of the book, and at the same time you long to read something new about the doctrines of the Scriptures, then this book may be a blessing to you.





# Press Releases

## Press Release of the Board of Governors' meeting held at the Theological College in Hamilton on September 7, 2006

Rev. J. Moesker opened the meeting with the reading of Psalm 49. He welcomed the members of the Board, who were all present. A special welcome was extended to the principal, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, who also attends the board meetings. In his opening remarks the chairman reflected on the passing on to heavenly glory of Prof. H.M. Ohmann earlier this year and expressed his thankfulness to the Lord for the blessing Prof. Ohmann has been for the College.

After the Board reappointed Rev. Moesker as chairman, Rev. G. Nederveen as vice-chairman, and Rev. R. Schouten as secretary, the minutes of the previous meeting and the agenda for today's meeting were adopted. Br. W. Oostdyk remains the treasurer.

The Board dealt with the following correspondence:

1. A letter from Dr. C. Van Dam advising that he was not able to make satisfactory arrangements for a sabbatical. The Board acceded to his request for some sabbatical time in the future should circumstances warrant it.
2. A letter from the Senate proposing that the College be renamed "Timothy Reformed Seminary" with the subtitle "Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches." The Senate felt that such a new name would help for the promotion of the College. The Board had a number of questions concerning this

proposal such as: Is it legally possible for the College to change its name under the terms of the original College Act? Does this proposed name change reflect a change of direction for the College in the direction of promoting itself beyond the Canadian Reformed Churches? Are there alternatives to the name "Timothy" which some feel is not a notable name for a theological seminary? The name "Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary" was suggested as an alternative. The matter was referred back to the Senate for its consideration and for a possible future proposal.

3. A letter from Dr. A.J. de Visser requesting permission for him to invite a specialist in public speaking to give a series of three workshops during the fall semester of 2006. This was done two years ago to great benefit of the students. The board granted this request.

The Board dealt with the following reports:

- 1.a) The Finance and Property Committee submitted its twenty-fourth annual report as well as the financial statements for the year ending December 31, 2005. The budget for 2007 was approved as presented. There was no increase in assessment. The Committee also presented nominations for replacing two brothers who have nearly completed their term of service. The Board approved of their recommendations. The twenty-fourth annual report and the names of the

brothers considered for governors will be forwarded to General Synod 2007 for approval.

- b) The Finance and Property Committee proposed a response to one of the churches regarding a perceived inequality between the remuneration for retired professors and the remuneration of retired Canadian Reformed ministers in the same economic zone as the College. The research of the Committee showed that the pension benefits for retired professors are generally in line with the pension benefits of retired ministers in the area of the College.
2. The Convocation Committee reported on its preparations for the September 8, 2006 College Evening. The main speaker will be Prof. G. H. Visscher, whose speech will be entitled "How should the pulpit address the pew? Some lessons from Paul." Two students will receive the Master of Divinity degree: Mr. Hendrik Alkema and Mr. Richard Horlings. The Diploma for Missiology will be received by Rev. Ian Wildeboer. The Diploma for Theological Studies will be received by Ms. Maple Zeng and Mr. Andrew Vanderheide.
3. Rev. Nederveen and Rev. G.Ph. van Popta reported on visits to the lectures on October 18 and 28, 2005 and Rev. Moesker and Rev. W. B. Slomp reported on visits to the lectures on February 14-15, 2006. The reports noted with thankfulness that the work done at the College is done with



love and respect for God, his Word, and the confessions of the church. The instruction given is scholarly, solidly biblical, and distinctly Reformed and lays a good basis for being able to teach and preach the glorious deeds of God. The governors encourage the professors to be creative in using variety in teaching methods by using technological aids where appropriate.

4. The Senate reported that all courses for 2005-2006 were completed in accordance with the adopted curriculum.
5. The principal's report was accepted as presented and will be read at the Convocation on September 8, 2006.
6. Dr. de Visser reported that he visited the churches in Alberta and British Columbia in June, 2006. He was able to give eleven presentations on topics ranging from the work of the Theological College to "Reformed Evangelism" and "The teaching ministry of the church."
7. The librarian submitted a comprehensive report concerning the state of the library of the College. The report indicated that all aspects of the library are functioning well. The library is being managed in a professional manner by our librarian, Ms. Margaret Van der Velde.
8. Conference reports:
  - a) The librarian reported on her attendance at the annual conference of the Association of Christian Librarians held on the campus of Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, Indiana.

She benefited from the workshops and from interacting with other professionals in her field.

- b) Dr. de Visser reported on his participation in the "Calvin Symposium on Worship" held in January, 2006, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The conference allowed him to get a good impression of developments, trends, views, debates, and important books in the field of Homiletics and Liturgics.
9. The registrar's report indicated that six new students have been admitted to the M. Div. program for September, 2006. During the 2006-2007 year, there will be four second year students, three third year students, and three fourth year students in the M. Div. program. In addition, two students are enrolled in the Diploma of Theology program.
10. The Faber-Holwerda Bursary Fund Committee disbursed a total of \$1,000 to several students in the past academic year. The Selles Book Prize was not awarded in the past year.
11. The Governance Committee was able to finish consolidating all the current by-laws of the College into one operating by-law. The Board approved the new By-law Number 12 and will submit it to Synod 2007 for final approval. The Board also decided to reappoint Ms. Van der Velde for another three year term to the committee and the secretary will send a letter of appreciation to Rev. D.G.J. Agema for the work he has done on the Governance Committee.

12. Dr. de Visser filed his first report as the Pastoral Training Program (PTP) Coordinator. He informed the Board that the PTP is working well at every level. The responses from the students and the mentors are positive, especially in regard to the three-month internship.
13. Rev. van Popta and Rev. J. VanWoudenberg were appointed to visit the lectures in the fall of 2006 and Rev. Moesker and Rev. Schouten in the spring of 2007.
14. Governors from the Academic Committee reported on their interviews with six prospective students. They are: Ryan Kampen from Toronto, Ontario; Anthony Roukema from Langley, B.C.; Tim Sikkema from Smithville, Ontario; Jason Vandeburgt from Chilliwack, B.C.; Sean Wagenaar from Darling Downs, Australia; and Arend Witten from Albany, Australia. With gratitude, the Board could conclude that all six students could be admitted to the first year of the M. Div. program.
15. The Ad hoc Committee for Permanent Principalship came to the Board seeking clarification of its mandate. The Board agreed to refine the mandate as follows: "To enhance the productivity and effectiveness of the College by examining such issues as a possible fifth professor, the office of principal, the possible offering of a Master of Theology program, and the promotion of the College by means of academic publications from the professors." The Board also



agreed to change the name of the committee to "Ad hoc Committee for Academic Enhancement."

All these reports were received with gratitude to the Lord for granting faculty, staff, and students the health to do their work and for allowing the College to operate efficiently and without financial worries.

The following proposal was adopted by the Board and will be recommended to Synod 2007 for approval:

1. The PTP should be kept separate from the College curriculum
2. The PTP should be made mandatory for all students aspiring to the ministry among the Canadian and American Reformed Churches
3. Funding for the student interns is the responsibility of the churches and not the College.

Final points: the secretary will prepare the Report to General Synod and circulate it for approval to the other governors before sending it on to Synod. The vice-chairman will prepare the Press Release. The meeting was closed prayer and thanksgiving.

*For the Board of Governors,  
G. Nederveen, vice-chairman*

### **Press Release of Classis Ontario West, September 27, 2006, held at Trinity Church in Binbrook, Ontario**

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. Douglas Vandeburgt called the meeting to order and welcomed all the delegates. He extended a special welcome to Rev. Paul Aasman, soon to be missionary

of Ancaster church. He requested the delegates to sing Hymn 64:1, 2 and read Romans 10:1-15.

Rev. Vandeburgt mentioned the following memorabilia: Cornerstone church of Hamilton is still vacant. Rev. Henry Versteeg is back from Papua. Rev. John Ludwig has received a call to Willoughby Heights church at Langley, B.C. Rev. Aasman has accepted Ancaster's call to serve as home missionary. Both the Rev. Aasman and Ancaster church are congratulated.

The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. Grand Rapids was not able to be represented at Classis. Classis was declared constituted. Rev. Vandeburgt served as chairman, Rev. Versteeg as clerk, and Rev. George van Popta as vice-chairman.

The agenda was adopted.

Question Period *ad* Church Order Article 44 was held. All the churches affirmed that the ministry of the office bearers is being continued and that the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. Two churches asked for and received advice.

Classis approved the call accepted by the Rev. Aasman to serve as missionary for the church at Ancaster. Rev. Aasman will be installed on Friday evening, October 6, 7:30 p.m., *Deo Volente*. An invitation was extended to all the congregations. Classis delegated Brother Peter Ostermeier of Binbrook to represent Classis at the installation service. Rev. Aasman signed the Classis Form of Subscription. The chairman welcomed him into the classis. After we sang Psalm 134:1, 3, we broke for a coffee.

Ancaster church, the administrating church for the fund

for needy churches, proposed some cosmetic changes to the classical regulations re: the fund. Classis adopted the proposed changes. Ancaster church also submitted a report and recommendation. Classis set the assessment at \$25.00 pcm for 2007. Ebenezer church at Chatham, the administrating church for the fund for needy students, submitted a report and recommendation. Classis set the assessment for 2007 at \$12.50 pcm for 2007. Brother Brian Vanderhout, treasurer for the classis, submitted a report and recommendation. The assessment was set at \$4.00 pcm for 2007.

The convening church for the next classis, December 13, 2006, is Grand Rapids. Suggested officers for the next classis are Rev. Richard Pot, chairman; Rev. Ludwig, clerk; Rev. Versteeg, vice-chairman. The place is to be announced.

Delegates to Regional Synod East, November 8, 2006, to be held at Rehoboth church in Burlington, Ontario and convened by the church at Burlington – Waterdown: Elders John G. Heyink and Art Witten; alternates John Vanderwoude (1st) and Ralph Haan (2nd). Ministers J. G. Slaa and G. Ph. van Popta; alternates H. Versteeg (1st) and J. E. Ludwig (2nd).

An opportunity was given for personal question period. The chairman deemed that there was no need for anyone to be censured.

The acts were adopted and the press release was approved. After we sang Hymn 64:3, 4 and the chairman closed the meeting with prayer and thanksgiving.

*G. Ph. van Popta  
Vice-Chairman, e.t.*



J. Visscher



*Dr. J. Visscher is co-pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley, British Columbia*  
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# Year-End Review 2006

Another year is almost over and a new year is about to dawn. Time is passing on. Not aimlessly or listlessly. Not without rhyme or reason. No, we believe that the Lord reigns and rules. He has a plan and a purpose. Step by step He is bringing us closer to that day when the universe will resound with a loud command, when the trumpet will sound, when the dead will be raised and when the King of glory will descend. Oh, what a wondrous day it will be!

In the meantime, however, we work and pray and wait and watch. That is what we did in 2006 and that is what we should be prepared to do in 2007. Using our talents and abilities, we do our daily tasks. Dependent on God, we bow our heads, fold our hands, and ask for strength for every new day and whatever heartaches and hurdles it brings. And all the while we wait expectantly and patiently for the appearing of our blessed Lord and Saviour. Yes, we wait, and we watch. We watch the signs of the times.

## Watching the signs

There were lots of them again in 2006. Lawlessness and violence consumed so many parts of the world. We think of Iraq, Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank. And then there was Afghanistan and the Sudan. Suicide bombings, military strikes, rockets and riots, blood flows, mothers cry, fathers and sons pledge revenge, and nations groan.

But then so does all of creation. Something else has invaded our world in addition to violence and it is called unpredictable and unusual weather. Places that are supposed to be warm turned cold, areas that are normally dry became wet. Forest fires burned more fiercely than ever. Drought lasted longer than anyone can remember. Why, even the polar icecap is

melting at an unprecedented rate. What is happening to our world?

Is God punishing mankind for its arrogance and sin? Yes. Is God letting us feel the consequences of our hate and of our neglected stewardship? Surely. Is God washing his hands of us and of our world? Certainly not! Divine punishment and discipline are assuredly at work, but so is his faithfulness. He will not abandon the work of his hands or of his Son.

As a result, the best way to approach a new year is still the way of Lord's Day 10 of our Heidelberg Catechism and that means with a dual dose of patience and thankfulness. When the going on this planet get tough, we sigh and commit ourselves anew to our Father in heaven. When the days are bright, we laugh and savour the moments and praise the Lord knowing that there will be many more of them, someday, even without interruption.

Still, before we get ready for a new year, it is good as members of the Canadian Reformed Churches to stop for a moment and to reflect on the year that was. Once again there was no lack of activity.

## Churches and ministers

Nothing stands still in the world and nothing stands still in the church either. 2006 saw churches celebrate anniversaries, welcome new ministers, wave goodbye to old ones, erect new buildings, and launch new ventures.

## Looking eastward

In the eastern part of the country Orangeville greeted the arrival of the Rev. E. Kampen and his family. It might be said that a former son came back to pastor, as both he and his wife, Kim, were raised in

the area. Not so far away the church at Fergus also welcomed a new pastor in the person of the Rev. D.G.J. Agema. With the help of the Lord, it managed to pry him away from Attercliffe. Closer to Lake Ontario, another church also received a new pastor and teacher as the Rev. M.H. Van Luik took up his work in the church at Brampton.

Not to be forgotten in these comings and goings was the departure of the Rev. P. Aasman from the church at Grand Valley. He did so in order to take on a whole new challenge, namely the work of Streetlight Ministries.

In spite of all of this activity not all of the churches in Ontario were beneficiaries. The church at Lincoln called and called but remained vacant. The church at Attercliffe became vacant with the departure of the Rev. Agema and that became a whole new experience for the brothers and sisters there. The church at Hamilton decided to take a different approach to its vacancy. Seeing the continued growth of the congregation and how intimidating that might be to any one minister, they decided to aim for two in the hope that first one might come and then another.

### Looking westward

Moving west, we come to Manitoba, where things were also in flux. One of the Winnipeg churches (Redeemer) was so generous as to give its minister a few years off to study, so the Rev. T.G. Van Raalte and his family headed to Grand Rapids. Meanwhile, the other church (Grace) was concerned about the health and well-being of its pastor, the Rev. K. Jonker. To the south in the town of Carman there are two Canadian Reformed churches and one of them, the church at Carman West, erected a fine new house of worship.

It would be nice to say that we stopped next in Saskatchewan and visited with this or that church; however, none of our churches call it home and the challenge of planting new churches there still beckons.

So it is that we move on and come to the booming province of Alberta. In the far south the church at Taber keeps on working and looking for a new pastor but has yet to be rewarded. The church at Calgary, on



the other hand, saw its vacancy come to an end at the beginning of the year when the Rev. H. Kalkman accepted its call. Meanwhile, the northern part of the province saw no changes as churches and ministers went forward in the service of the Lord.

We come next to the province of British Columbia. After working for seventeen years in Chilliwack, the Rev. Van Luik departed and Chilliwack became a vacant church. Nevertheless, it did not take this church long to attract a new minister as the call extended to Rev. R. Ijbema of Voorburg, The Netherlands, was accepted. At this moment the date of his arrival remains unknown as the mysterious wheels of the Department of Immigration grind on.

Not too far away lies the town of Abbotsford and there too a long standing minister (eleven years and six months) decided that the Lord was calling him elsewhere. The Rev. R. A. Schouten said "yes" to the neighbouring church at Aldergrove and the church at Abbotsford began to prepare for a new phase in its life. Close by the church at Langley (Willoughby Heights) had already entered that phase with the departure of the Rev. Kampen (still another long serving pastor of fourteen years) and had made a number of attempts to fill its vacancy but without success.

Barely a hop and skip away, the church at Surrey (Maranatha) saw the work of its most experienced missionary in Brazil, the Rev. E. Venema, come to a close. Due to the fragile health of his wife, our brother decided that it would be best if his family repatriated to The Netherlands. He has since accepted a call to the church at Tilburg and we wish him God's speed and thank him for his years of faithful service.



Moving on to the northern part of BC, one is greeted with both bad and good news. The Rev. C. Macleod, who had some months earlier come from Scotland, decided that he could not work fruitfully as a missionary among the native people. With regret he was released and hopes to return to Scotland at the end of this year and receive a new call there. We wish him and his family well. Nearby in the church at Houston, however, there was joy as Candidate H. Alkema became Rev. H. Alkema. Once again this church receives the opportunity to do what it has done so well in the past, which is shape and mould another rookie pastor.

Staying in the Bulkley Valley for a moment, it should also be reported that the church at Smithers planned to occupy its newly bought and extensively renovated building by the time that you are reading this. After being repeatedly frustrated in its attempts to find a new church home, it finally succeeded. No doubt a report along with some pictures will appear on these pages before long.

Speaking of buildings, the church at Lynden, Washington, also had building plans; however, the quotes that came in were higher than expected and led it to put things on hold, at least for now.

### Have pastor, will travel

Perhaps as we review the events of 2006 a comment should also be made about the fact that more and more of our pastors, as well as professors, are travelling. Of course, the fact that the professors travel is almost taken for granted. For years they have been coming to the churches in the West on a rotating annual basis to represent the College and give it a human face. For some time too Rev. H. Versteeg has been going to Indonesia. We read about this on a regular basis in *Mission News*.

What is new and newsworthy is that of late more pastors, both active and retired, are travelling. In this connection Rev. J. de Gelder went to Cyprus to attend board meetings of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF). Rev. C. VanSpronsen took the plane to South Africa to give instruction to theological

students and a return visit is planned for next year. Rev. W. den Hollander was invited to Korea and taught there for several weeks. Rev. B. J. Berends left for Korea and by now he should be busy helping out in Australia. Rev. F. Dong, Dr. C. van Dam and the undersigned went to another country in the area and hope to return there some time soon.

All in all, it was said tongue-in-cheek some years ago, "Join the ministry, see the world." Well, there may have been more prophetic power in those words than we realized.

### Ecumenical relations

Somewhat connected to what has just been stated above is the matter of ecumenical relations. For the fact remains that in order to foster good relationships with sister churches in different places, face-to-face meeting are necessary. To that end 2006 saw two members of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad, Br. H. Hoogstra and Br. H. J. Leyenhorst, travel to Australia and New Zealand. In the former place they attended the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches and in the latter place they met with representatives of The Reformed Churches. In both places they also visited a number of local churches and received an impression of church life. No doubt you can find more information on their travels in their upcoming report to General Synod Smithers.

Other committees also had members who did some travelling but in most cases their meetings were closer to home. In that connection one can surely think of the three sub-committees who met regularly with their United Reformed counterparts. As you can read elsewhere, the sub-committees on a common songbook and the new church order made good progress. The last committee even managed to finish its mandate. The same, however, can not be said of the third sub-committee dealing with theological training. It hit a roadblock on the matter of a federational seminary and the URC committee plans to go to the next General Synod of the URCNA and ask for clarification on its mandate.

## The Theological College

Speaking of seminaries, in a quiet residential area on what is commonly known as Hamilton Mountain, one can find the site of our Theological College. This past year saw the graduation of a three of the students. Mr. Alkema and Mr. R. Horlings received the degree of Master of Divinity. Since then Mr. Alkema accepted the call to the church at Houston and has been ordained as its seventh minister. Mr. Horlings is currently doing a ministerial internship in Edmonton. Miss Maple Zeng, who graduated from the diploma course, is assisting the Rev. Dong and spending the bulk of her time working on the Chinese Reformed website.

As always graduation leaves some empty places; however, they were quickly filled with the arrival of six new students and one returning student. The result is that at present the College has its highest enrolment ever.

This past year saw faculty members lecturing, writing, speaking, preaching, and even teaching in far off places. Prof. A. J. de Visser went to Grand Rapids for a conference on worship. Prof. C. van Dam went to the Far East to teach. Prof. G. H. Visscher finished off a good part of his thesis work and spoke at Reformation evenings in the area.

With regard to the staff, Miss M. VanderVelde continued to provide valuable assistance to students and faculty alike. She also took charge of putting the College's library holdings online. Miss C. Mechelse took care of much of the daily operational details. Some of them appear to be hazardous as she fell off a stage preparing the convocation evening and injured herself.

Not to be forgotten in connection with the College was the fact that Prof. J. Geertsema and his wife continue to make good use of their retirement. Sr. J. Faber is settled in her new home near the Hamilton church. Prof J. DeJong, his wife Margaret, and their children continued to receive a lot of support in prayer and deed as they were daily confronted with the illness of their husband and father. May the Lord continue to sustain them.



From the Press Release of the Board of Governors I gleaned that a new name was suggested for the College. Our readers will know that this is something that I have supported for some time being convinced that the present name is far too general and generic. It may function well in Europe; however, it does not do so in North America. Still, I have to say that I too was not too taken with the suggested name of "Timothy." How about something like "Augustine Theological Seminary"? In that way we both honour the greatest of all ancient Church Fathers and highlight the catholic character of our College. If you have any other suggestions, please send them to the College.

### Foreign mission

Previously mention was made of the departure of Rev. Venema from the mission field in Brazil. This leaves the Revs. A. de Graaf and K. A. Wieske as the only missionaries there. Distance, however, prevents them from working closely together.

2006 saw Rev. Wieske and his family go on furlough and visit the churches across Western Canada. By now they should back in Recife and busy with more than just a few projects.

Some distance to the south, the churches at São José and Maragogi received new Brazilian pastors and the mission work continued. In the latter place there is a large and flourishing Christian school called Escola Biblica Crista under the able leadership of Br. Moisés Lins dos Santos.



Going even further south, we come to Maceió. There Rev. de Graaf is working hard and the beginnings of a Reformed church are in evidence. Also the new Christian school there is having quite an impact and is serving as a good vehicle for making the church and the gospel known.

Meanwhile, living in retirement in Bristol, Tennessee, the Rev. R.F. Boersema and his wife Lucille keep themselves busy doing the Lord's work and caring for loved ones. In particular Rev. Boersema continues to head up and develop a full-orbed online theological education for students in Brazil and elsewhere.

On the other side of the world in Papua New Guinea, the Rev. S. 't Hart and mission worker Mr. W. VanderHeide have much to do as they lead existing churches, plant new ones, organize leadership training, and do a hundred and one other things. Rev. 't Hart, by the way is an Australian working for a Canadian church (the church at Toronto) and on the other side of PNG is a Canadian, the Rev. I. Wildeboer, who is working for an Australian church (the church at Armadale). From all accounts received, the work there is progressing.

Further to the west the church at Smithville continues to support the mission work being done on the island of West Timor by Rev. Y. Dethan.

Another missionary venture that is going well and being overwhelmed with opportunities is the Urban Mission work of the churches at Cloverdale and Langley, headed up by Rev. Dong. Originally it was decided that this work should have three goals: one, to establish an indigenous Chinese church in the greater Vancouver area; two, to set-up a website to reach the Chinese people living in China and around the world; three, to train leaders either inside or outside of China and so bring the gospel to China itself. At present all three goals are being worked on simultaneously and moving ahead; however, it is the last one that is beating down the doors as believers in China request more and more assistance. Plans are underway to meet this demand as much as possible but it will take the prayers and efforts of many.

## Home mission

Since we are dealing with Urban Mission, it should be reported that the Chinese Reformed Church in Surrey (un-instituted) continues to grow. A group of able brothers form the Provisional Council. They receive training from Rev. Dong and assist him in a variety of ways.

Something has already been said about the setback experienced by the Native Mission work in the Bulkley Valley. At this time it is not known what the plans are for the future, although there has been some talk about keeping this work going as a local work staffed by members of the congregation. No doubt further information will be received soon.

In Hamilton, Ontario, Streetlight Ministries finally received in Rev. Aasman a new missionary to work along side Br. R. Bultje, the long-time mission worker. It is hoped that this new development and growth in manpower will further stimulate the work and allow for new challenges to be met.

In Toronto the work of Rev. J. Barros continued his efforts among the Portuguese population of that city. The church at Toronto has partnered with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in order to support this work.

Our local church in Owen Sound continued to lead the charge when it comes to contacting and assisting the Reformed Churches in Quebec. Close ties have been forged over the years, especially with the church in St. George de Beauce and its minister, the Rev. P. Bedard.





### Mission aid

As a rule the work of mission and mission aid often go hand in hand. We see that happening in Brazil, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Africa. Mission Aid Surrey continued to support the Christian school in Marigogi. The same applied to the churches in the East who give their support to the school in Maceio. In Papua New Guinea Mr. VanderHeide supervised the efforts of mission aid. In West Timor the Children of Light is doing what it can to support Christian education.

The Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund was also active in collecting funds as well as in disbursing it to needy causes (orphanages, disaster relief, re-development projects) around the world. Often they are faced with the challenge of getting the most for their money. Limited as they are in manpower and resources, they try to spend the donated money in as wise and efficient a manner as possible.

Although not directly affiliated with our churches, World-Wide Christian Schools was active in building Christian schools in various parts of the world, as well as in teacher training. It does not support operational costs but will help out in building projects. Currently Paul and Leslie Bartels are working in the Dominican Republic. Nathan and Kim Boersema are working in Nicaragua. Both give guidance and direction to teams that come there to build and renovate schools.

Another non-affiliated organization receiving support was Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF). As always Clarence and Jeanette Toegeretz were hard at work in Indonesia. Hugo and Erica Fuenekes received the necessary funding and have headed out once again to work for MAF as well.

### Summer camps

Both in the East and in the West summer camps for children have become a regular outreach feature. This past summer saw Campfire once again operating on all cylinders as it welcomed hoards of children and a great many counsellors and support workers. Apparently the new facilities near Markdale are meeting the challenge.

In BC the summer of 2006 saw the new facilities in DeRoche being used for the first time. It took a mountain of work and some last minute lobbying with BC Hydro, but Camp Stepping Stones managed to become operational. It is hoped that in the coming years the work will expand and see more weeks of camp, as well as family camping and conferences. Already the bookings numbers are increasing and the word is spreading that there is this beautiful camp in the mountains overlooking the Fraser Valley.

### Local initiatives

No matter where one looked in our local churches, the year 2006 saw evangelistic activity of one type or another. Vacation Bible School, Coffee Break, Story Hour, Gems and Cadets, Saturday Bible Camps, prison ministry, radio broadcasting, Bible courses, literature distribution, and music evenings, all of these and more efforts were common.

### Radio programs

Perhaps more regional than local, radio broadcasts were also used as an outreach tool. The Voice of the Church continued to be heard in different parts of the land. At the same time a popular radio program from south of the border called "The White Horse Inn" made inroads nationally as well. In Ontario the program "What Does the Bible Say?" was on the air every Sunday. Needless to say, this required a lot of work and commitment on the part of both speakers and supporting cast.



## Christian education

Although not exactly ecclesiastical, another matter that received a lot of attention over the last twelve months was Christian education. The members of almost every Canadian Reformed Church support a local elementary school and often a high school as well. In every case this requires commitment on the part of the parents and it is good to see parents stepping up to the plate paying the bills, volunteering their time, and offering their prayers. At the same time kudos are in order to so many able teachers and principals, as well as boards and support staff, for their time, dedication, and expertise. On the whole they are doing a marvelous job.

In Hamilton, Ontario, a new school was acquired in a hurry. The old Timothy School was bursting at the seams and something needed to be done, so when an opportunity came along to purchase a former large public school, the wheels were put in motion. A bid was placed and won, a drive was organized, renovations were planned and completed, and suddenly the new and expanded premises were there. It is good to see that when the opportunity arises there is vision, zeal, dedication, and so many helping hands.

Elsewhere in Langley, BC, consideration is being given to expanding Credo High with a new larger gym and better shop facilities. Whether the plans receive the green light will be up to the membership.

## Senior homes and special needs

I suppose that if Christian education is non-ecclesiastical, the same applies to senior homes and special needs homes. Still, these too are features in many of our church communities.

With respect to seniors' residences, we have Elim Village in Surrey, which is becoming an increasingly popular place to put down old roots. In Langley, Manoah Manor recently underwent a renovation and an expansion of its Intermediate Care wing. In Edmonton, any number of our seniors live in the Emmanuel Home. In Carman, a small home called

Greenview Villa supplies some of the needs of the elderly. In Brampton, one will find the massive Trinity Towers complex that houses hundreds of seniors from differing Reformed backgrounds and provides all levels of care. In Burlington, there is both Maranatha Home and Mount Nemo Home. In Hamilton, there is Ebenezer Villa and next door in Grimsby there is Shalom Manor. All in all, it is good to see that our elderly members are not being neglected when it comes to proper housing and good care.

Much of the same can be said about our handicapped members. Anchor Home in Ontario operates a number of group homes in the Burlington and Niagara areas. Rehoboth is active in Alberta. Bethesda continued to do its work in BC.

## In Conclusion

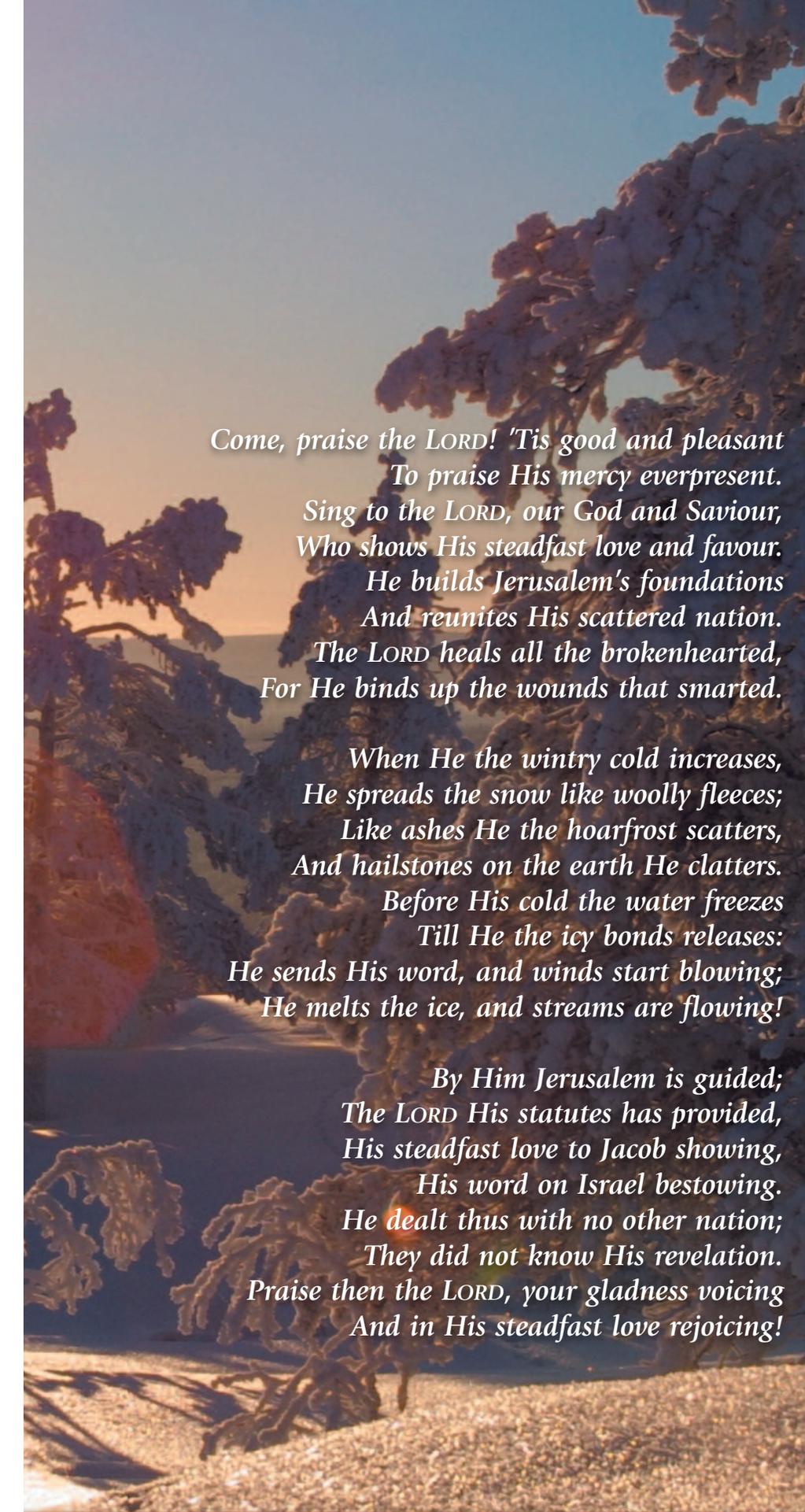
From the above it is obvious that 2006 was another busy year. No doubt the next twelve months will usher in much of the same. Churches will build and renovate. New churches will, hopefully, be instituted too. Ministers will come and go. Theological students will study, graduate, and find a place in the churches. Mission work will confront us with new opportunities. Schools, relief organizations, care homes, and special need places, all of these and more, will undergo change and be called on to deal with new challenges.

Now, that is what we predict and even expect will happen. But if this is our total outlook, we are aiming far too low. A much better and higher vision is needed, one in which we hope that 2007 will see the return of our Lord and the consummation of all things.

Remember those two qualities of patience and thankfulness that I mentioned at the beginning of this review. Well, let us add one more quality to the mix, namely expectation. We all need to live year by year filled with the anticipation that one day the signs of the time will give way to a whole new time, a time of true life and perfect fellowship with our Triune God in the midst of a new creation. Maranatha! "Come, Lord Jesus!"

With that in mind, I wish you a blessed 2007!





*Come, praise the LORD! 'Tis good and pleasant  
To praise His mercy everpresent.  
Sing to the LORD, our God and Saviour,  
Who shows His steadfast love and favour.  
He builds Jerusalem's foundations  
And reunites His scattered nation.  
The LORD heals all the brokenhearted,  
For He binds up the wounds that smarted.*

*When He the wintry cold increases,  
He spreads the snow like woolly fleeces;  
Like ashes He the hoarfrost scatters,  
And hailstones on the earth He clatters.  
Before His cold the water freezes  
Till He the icy bonds releases:  
He sends His word, and winds start blowing;  
He melts the ice, and streams are flowing!*

*By Him Jerusalem is guided;  
The LORD His statutes has provided,  
His steadfast love to Jacob showing,  
His word on Israel bestowing.  
He dealt thus with no other nation;  
They did not know His revelation.  
Praise then the LORD, your gladness voicing  
And in His steadfast love rejoicing!*

Psalm 147:1,5,6  
Book of Praise

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*Clarion*

# Season's Greetings

*ALGGJID52  
2006/2*

*Year-End 2006*

*From all of us at  
Premier Printing Ltd.*