

# faith in focus

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of New Zealand

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“See! The winter is past;  
the rains are over and gone.  
Flowers appear on the earth;  
the season of singing has come,  
the cooing of doves is heard in our land.”

Song of Songs 2:11-12

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**Editorial**

We have begun a new year. A year which will have many challenges and changes. But a year where we may also grow more in the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. May it be to Him and our heavenly Father that the glory and honour goes!

As we go into this new year let's not be ashamed of the heritage we have. This world denigrates anything to the Christian faith. It quickly labels us so as to make us appear inadequate and certainly prehistoric. But let's take comfort from the past. Let the facts of what have happened before strengthen us to put it all in God's hands. Because what is happening now is not new. Societies have reached such selfish pits before. Times when God particularly gave them over to their sinful desires, as Romans 1:18-32 describes. And so this is such a time when living a simple biblical faith will shine out more and more the light of the gospel.

And, in particular, let's not be ashamed of our Calvinism. Let's not take the attitude that being Reformed with a small "r" is a satisfactory balance but let us be big "R" Reformed-Presbyterians. As much as our believing witness should be standing out in society so should our biblical stand be making us that much more different than the worldly direction many churches are going.

We are pleased that one of those areas we were seeking to fill within the pages of our magazine has been filled. Mrs Jolanda Nugteren has offered to take over the children's column ('Sonshine Korner'). We pray for her the Lord's blessing and guidance.

*"A man with God is always in the majority."*

**John Knox**

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not to be considered the official position of the Reformed Churches of NZ unless they expound the Biblical system of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, or reflect the successive Acts of Synod of the Reformed Churches of NZ. On the other hand, care is taken to ensure that articles and opinions do not directly contradict the official position of the Reformed Churches as contained in the above sources without attention being called to that fact.

# Back to Babel!

## *The same old story*

### *Sjirk Bajema*

It was quite a headline in the local newspaper last year: **"Woman who played God"**. It was the story of how Leslie Martin had taken it into her own hands to end the life of her mother. An action which has many supporters. For they think it should be the choice of individuals what they do with their lives.

In 'The New Zealand Herald' Martin was quoted, "I'm actually anti-abortion and pro-voluntary euthanasia because my personal belief is that once life is conceived, it belongs unto that life."

An interesting quote. But then you need to ask the question: Who is actually making the choice? With the attempted death of Joy Martin it was Lesley who made that choice. Because it became quite clear in the court case that neither of her siblings had been consulted in any part of that process. In fact,

in the newspaper and television interviews she is quite disparaging of her sister's ability, in particular, to constructively be involved in such a process. While she doesn't say it, it's quite clear she regards her sister as one of life's losers - one of those who just hasn't made anything of her life, someone who depended too much on the psychological and material resources of her mother. That comes from a woman, by the way, who has had a multiple number of relationships, is into her second marriage, and has two sons out of previous relationships, commenting on someone still with her husband and three children.

But don't let any of that get in your way! Being a modern made-for-media drama, it has all the emotions. Lesley Martin is photographed wiping away the tears off her face. She appeals to the anguish of many who have gone through a similar crisis in their lives. She was, she claimed, trapped

between legislation and love, like those thousands of others; the dying who want a painless end, and the friends and families desperate to help them. Meanwhile her sister is described as a chain smoking, whining woman, desperate to tell all-and-sundry her side of the story.

### **The heart of the struggle**

Martin's case goes far beyond her, though. It even goes further than those around this world who are promoting euthanasia. What we have here is heart of the struggle between man and God. A great struggle that goes back to the beginning of the Bible. Because there too we meet people who were playing God.

That's what the story of Babel is all about. In fact, this great battle of the ages is shown in the name 'Babel'.

Now, you might wonder about this. Because as Christians we are familiar with how the word has become used in our

# Woman who played God



*Leslie Martin*



language. When people talk about a ‘babble’ they mean a confusing speech. That’s what the word ‘babel’ has become a synonym for. It was at that place that God confused the one language into many languages. But what the word ‘babel’ meant for those people then was ‘gate of the gods’. It was made to be the way through which man himself would have access to god and indeed be able to be as god.

This story shows the extent to which mankind will go to try and show that he’s not really what he is after all.

### The same old story

This is the truth of what is in Ecclesiastes 1:9. There it says that there is nothing new under sun. So what mankind is going through now is what he has been through before.

It’s an important point to note. Because there is an idea about that the people who lived a long time ago were quite primitive. In a world full of evolutionary teaching people think of the technological advances that have happened and think that equates to people personally, too. That’s quite untrue! In fact, to study the lives and times of people from the past is to realise a depth of culture and knowledge which many people don’t have today. It’s also to realise that man’s nature is still exactly the same.

### Two misunderstandings

It is this misunderstanding about people from ancient history which has shown up in two key aspects of the ‘Tower of Babel’ story:

1. *The tower going all the way up to God*  
A common perception that many have about

‘The Tower of Babel’ is that here is a group of people demonstrating an innocent, scientifically-naive, primitive effort to reach the highest heavens. They point to verse 4, that statement about making a tower that reaches to the heavens and they say that just simply couldn’t have happened.

This thought was shared by many of the artists throughout church history. Take, for instance, the example from the medieval age shown with this article.

But what happens when the Hebrew wording is translated literally? We then have “a tower whose top [is] into heaven.” And this is exactly what ancient Mesopotamian *ziggurat temple-towers* were for! The top compartment represented heaven.

### 2. *All the people in the world joining in making this tower*

In the world-wide migration occurring after Genesis 9:1 this was a major movement towards the east under Nimrod, a grandson of Ham. But it was not the only movement. Major migration had also gone north and south-west from the final resting place of the ark, which was around Mt. Ararat.

### Why this story?

But answering these two questions could very well bring out another. And that question is this: Why then is this story brought out of all the possible stories from that time?

Chapter 10 of Genesis is essentially the table of the Nations. It outlines, as we see in this map, where Noah’s descendants went to. So we can see that the word of God to Noah in Genesis 9 verse 1 is being fulfilled. For mankind was being fruitful and increasing

in number and filling the earth.

There are two footnotes that occur in chapter 10 and 11. There are two passages which appear in amongst these family lines and which at first we may think are simply interesting interludes along the way. Just as a footnote may be used to specially focus on an example which supports what is in the text itself so we think that the stories concerning Nimrod in chapter 10 the verses 8 till 12 and Babel in chapter 11 the verses 1 till 9 are examples of what’s happening throughout mankind.

But I would like to put forward a different view. For while this is reflecting what’s happening within mankind it actually demonstrates what happens when mankind specifically goes against what God has commanded for them. What we see here, in an early form, is the spirit of the antichrist himself!

The first of these footnotes is Genesis 10, the verses 8 till 12. There we read what we is essentially the story of Nimrod.

### The kingdom of Nimrod

So what is significant about Nimrod? Well, he is said to have established cities and built a kingdom. But there is something else. For how does this passage describe Nimrod? Which adjective appears three times in two verses? It’s the word “mighty”. Why “mighty”? Is it a positive or negative attribute? The NIV seems to put it in a good way. It says “He was a mighty hunter before the LORD.” But looking a little deeper shows that in fact this attribute is used because his empire is an affront to God and man. The word “hunter” isn’t primarily speaking of his being someone who like hunting down animals but rather he’s a hunter of men. So the NIV is quite right to use the word “warrior” in verse 8. As Martin Luther comments, it was through Nimrod’s ability to fight and kill and rule ruthlessly that his kingdom of Euphrates valley city states was consolidated.

It is said of Nimrod’s kingdom, at the end of verse 12, that it “is the great city”. Now the word “city” is not new. It has appeared in Scripture before. It is this earlier passage which makes the description of what Nimrod was doing very clearly set against the LORD God. For that previous occasion is in Genesis 4 verse 17. There we read of when Cain built a city. It is there that the mention of a city, with its structure being a protection from a threatening environment, brings in the theme of kingship. Cain called his son, Enoch. This means “consecration”. But consecrated for what? It’s clear in that context it’s a passion to establish man’s own name on the earth.

### Going against God’s command

So Nimrod’s setting up of these chain of cities under his direct command is a clear

stand against God’s command to Noah to go and spread out across the earth. He is actually gathering in and entrenching his power in certain places. In some places it seems he’s even conquering other peoples.

Of all these places Babel seems to be the focus point. This is where he began. This is his capital. This is where he stamps down his claim to fame!

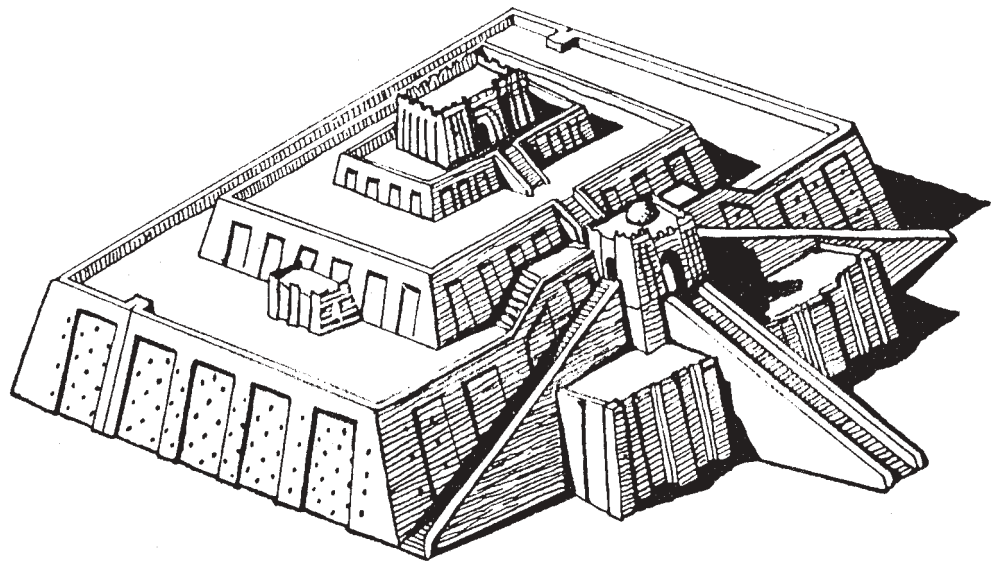
**The wider context**

This is the immediate context to the story about ‘The Tower of Babel’. And we have to add to this the wider background. This brings out the lineage Nimrod is descended from. For that is the line of Ham.

Now we have a further reason for believing that here is someone who has an axe to grind, because here we remember how God cursed Ham. His disgracing of his father Noah while he was naked resulted in the LORD’s curse against Ham’s oldest son, Canaan. By implication that is a mark against the whole family of Ham.

**The details in this story**

With this setting let’s now consider the details in the story of the ‘Tower of Babel’. Details which we’ll consider in two parts; two parts which are tied in with the two times that the word “come” appears in this story:



**1. When people make it for themselves**

The first part I shall place under the heading ‘When people make it for themselves.’ This covers the verses 1 till 4.

These verses begin by stating what was common across the face of the earth at that time. For verse 1 notes that there was one language and a common speech. They were the word Noah would have spoken.

But then let’s note what happens here...

**a) A discontented crowd**

While the previous footnote in chapter 10 was especially about Nimrod here we have the perspective from the people with him.

Verse 2 tells of how the people are “settling” there. So there is an underlying unhappiness with the way of the Lord. Thus we come to the first “come” in verse 3. For here this whole group is joined together in taking it up against God.



## b) Use of new technology

Verse 3 notes that they made bricks and baked them thoroughly. So they used bricks instead of stone and tar instead of mortar. Interestingly, while they may have been impressed that they had found new building materials - materials which they could produce on the spot and make into a fine looking structure - they were actually materials that would not last as long and be as strong as stone and mortar. It's one of those times in human history where a supposedly great discovery has ended up taking us a step backwards.

Many of us will recall that in the late 1950's and early 1960's there was the wonder drug thalidomide. It was the drug to significantly reduce nausea in pregnant women. But we know what the end result was! Interestingly, it took a British journalist, Harold Evans, several years and an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights against the House of Lords before the truth was revealed about that!

## c) Self-made religion

Henry Morris comments that in his desire to build a great empire Nimrod realised that the people needed a religious motivation strong enough to overcome their knowledge that God had commanded them to scatter across the earth. This would explain why in verse 4 this tower is described as being in the heavens, because that's what it was dedicated to.

James Montgomery Boice believes this upper level had a representation of the heavens upon it. In other words, it has zodiac pictured there. So the inner walls would have been probably decorated with blue glazed tile, with the sun, the moon, and the five known planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn) lined up along the plane of the zodiac. In the centre of the room would be their 'god' seated upon a throne!

How can we know this? Well, Nebuchadnezzar later rebuilt such a tower in Babylon. A tower the Sumerians had called 'e-temen-an-ki', which translated is 'the building of the foundation-platform of heaven and earth. So historically it can be shown that there is a line of such ziggurat towers which goes back to this time. The ziggurat I

have shown, for example, is from the reign of Ur-Nammu, king of Ur in 2100 B.C..

## d) Their destination

Notice what David Atkinson says about what's happening at Babel: "When God, the Lord, disappears from the centre of community life, then the seeds of everything which breaks down relationships are sown. There is no unity of fellowship in human community endeavours, unless they are bound together around a centre outside of themselves. Human societies which organise themselves without reference to God, and build up power structures of their own in place of God, are always prey to the demonic."

So we have a situation with every potential for real breakdown. In fact, if it continues like this things will fall apart - and they'll fall apart in a terrible way.

## 2. Then God will make them wear it

We turn now to the second part of the story of Babel. This is God's response shown in the verses 5 till 9. Here we find the 2nd "come" in Genesis 11:7. This is where it is the LORD Himself speaking. While before it had been the people together using this word for "come" now God uses the word as He assembles His heavenly council and moves to confuse their language.

## a) Things in divine perspective

In verses 5 and 6 we see it from a different perspective. For here it's looking down upon it. And so we note that the LORD has to come **down** to it. That's important to remember, because when we move into verse 6 we can get to thinking that perhaps God is feeling threatened by what's going on.

That's not true at all. In fact, it's the opposite. What God does here is actually to save these people - from themselves. Verse 6 is the LORD recognising what they will do to themselves.

## b) Communication disrupted

God moves in a miraculous way here to have people do His will and so continue to receive His care. For what does the confusion of their language do? It scatters them! It shatters to pieces Nimrod's selfish dream of world-wide domination.

Here, though, we might wonder how their linguistic unity could provide the possibility and potential for immense iniquity? John Whitcomb says, "Perhaps we can find the answer by looking at the vast English-speaking world today. Almost instantly, demonic perversions and poisons can penetrate and permeate the minds of millions through the Internet, as well as via avalanches of morally hideous films, videos, books and magazines. Now, " he goes on, " what would happen to this Satanic sewerage

if the more than 300 million people who speak English suddenly discovered that their linguistic unity was shattered? The blow to Satan and sinful men would be staggering. God's intervention at Babel, dividing and separating people from each other, had a holy and loving purpose."

## Those who pray to God!

Babel showed the ultimate futility of man making a name for himself. It stands as a stark reminder of what happens whenever mankind makes a god out of who he is or what he does. That's why we often go 'Back to Babel'!

So Lesley Martin and those with her - the Philip Nietschke's and Jack Kevorkians of this world - are putting up the monuments to themselves. Their ego's are up there for everyone to see! Their disregard for God's law is blatant. Like those in Babel they think they are the enlightened ones whereas they are living a terrible lie. In fact, their whole presentation is a lie because there is a better way than murder - the way of lovingly caring for the dying with modern medication, equipment and human care.

And it's no surprise really, is it? Their father is the father of lies. Satan is at back of it all - he will continue to building his Babels until the truth finally wins in the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So while it may seem at times that Satan is winning the day that will only be for a day. The Lord Jesus Christ has won the greatest battle of them all. And so there is a great and coming day when judgment will come. As it came for those Babylonians when the LORD turned them into a blithering mess so it will be much, much worse for Satan and those with him on that Day. But until that day the Lord is also preserving. His rain is falling on the righteous and the unrighteous, as Jesus says in Matthew 5 verse 45. This is so that He proclaims the Gospel still.

The warning is not to play at God. Instead, we must be those who pray to God! In all you do work that those who seek their salvation in themselves may be humbled to see that it's only when they realise they don't have in themselves that they are saved.

*Adapted from an address to the Auckland Ladies Presbyterial of the Reformed Churches - 15th May 2004*

## EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST WANTED

If you would like to teach English in a yet to be established language school in China please contact Paul Goodenough Ph (09) 4731270 or email [paul.g@callplus.net.nz](mailto:paul.g@callplus.net.nz) Preferably you will have (any) degree and a CELTA or TESOL qualification. However, all enquiries are welcome.

# The New Zealand Psalter Hymnal

## A report from the Committee

### Berwyn Hoyt

It is not yet born, but the New Zealand Psalter Hymnal is certainly alive and kicking. The last you heard from us was a request for submissions. This time we can also report significant progress.

This Psalter Hymnal is a work in progress by a committee appointed by the 2002 Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. The committee's mandate is to:

1. Select poetic Psalm versions faithful to Scripture.
2. Select hymns in significant quantity for the various preferences in our churches.
3. Solicit contributions from a wide cross-section of our membership.

We are well on our way through part one of this mandate, and part 3 is also full steam ahead, with submissions piling in — but from only a few of you.

In its first year the committee made preliminary selections of Psalms 1-50, and has now moved beyond that point. We aim to select most of the Psalms before the 2005 Synod. We have begun to publish preliminary selections on the New Zealand Reformed Churches website, and will add more as we are able. Look up [hymnal.rcnz.org.nz](http://hymnal.rcnz.org.nz).

### Features

So, what's new about this proposed Psalter Hymnal? Here are a number of features that stand out in the **Psalms Section** to enhance our appreciation of the Psalms:

- Number the songs by **Psalm number**: 1, 1b, 2...
- Choose words which **follow Scripture** more closely, while maintaining the poetry.
- **Use up-to-date language** in most selections (unless the older one is well-loved).
- **Retain the good tunes** from our current hymnal and **replace** the poor ones.
- Choose one **main tune** that covers the whole Psalm, with a **summary psalm** or **alternate tune where appropriate**.
- Most of these changes help with memorising Scripture (more on this later).

In the **Hymns section** we plan to:

- **Retain** good and well-loved hymns and **replace** the poor hymns.
- **Add hymns** to make up a sizeable selection of good quality words and music, covering the breadth of Christian doctrine and experience.

- **Update** language where necessary for meaning.

### Scripture Memory

Our intention is that the new Psalter Hymnal will have a 'Scripture' section, including (especially) the Psalms. Look again at the above list of features of the Psalms section. Notice how each of these features will aid our memory of Scripture while we sing — 'on the fly,' as it were.

These features help to associate one specific tune with each Psalm, and the more accurate, and up-to-date language, with memorable tunes, will aid our memory of Scripture and the Psalms.

We will get this 'for free' as we sing these songs, but this can also become a valuable resource for purposefully teaching our children the Scriptures. For example, some Christian schools have used songs as a means of easy Scripture memorisation. This is commendable. On a personal note, I can testify to the value of this myself, as my own wife knows her Psalms this way. I can quote a snippet and she'll tell me what Psalm it is. I must say, her ability sure does come in handy when we need to find a verse to put in a card, or to comfort someone in need!

### It's in a Book

But what does it look like? Well, for starters, you will have a real product that you can hold in your hands, leaf through, and take home. The synod required that we aim to publish this as a book. This may seem perfectly normal to most of you, but having our hymnody in a single book has several advantages:

- It will have words *and* music — which is of great value for congregational singing, especially for our denomination where many people love to sing in parts.

- It lets us take our worship music home with us. No other form of presentation is as well suited for use in the home. Many of our families maintain singing traditions at home, which we hope the new book will encourage.

Our culture separates life into 'religion' and 'real life.' By contrast, biblical Christianity affects our whole life. Being able to easily bring the songs of God home from Church can help us worship God outside of Sunday services, and help us to:

*"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."*

(Colossians 3:16)

### Resources

There is a vast array of resources that we have been drawing on to compile this hymnal. We take an array of more than 10 different hymnals to each committee meeting, and that is only a selection of what we keep at home. In addition there are a number of online hymnals to which we refer to obtain the best possible tunes.

We have been mandated to use primarily the sources that are provisionally approved by our Synod. You will be familiar with these:

- The Psalter Hymnal (1987)
- The Psalter Hymnal (1957)
- The Book of Worship (1990)
- The Trinity Hymnal (1961)
- The Interim (Red) Hymnal (Spiral Bound).

In addition to these, some significant sources (so far only for the Psalms) are listed below:

- Sing Psalms - a very new (2004) and high quality Psalm production by the





Free Church of Scotland.

- The Complete Book of Psalms for Singing – by Rowland S. Ward of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.
- The Cyber Hymnal (a good source of tunes)
- Individual submissions and private sources.

#### Contributions

So far we have had submissions from only a few. However, these few have been very valuable. Some have suggested just one

song, while others have pointed us to a number of songs.

One **very easy** way for you to contribute is to help get the word around by telling your friends about our website at [hymnal.rcnz.org.nz](http://hymnal.rcnz.org.nz).

Besides personal submissions to the committee, below are some other significant ways you can contribute.

#### Contribute Statistics

A valuable contribution was submitted by one of our sessions which asked their church members to list songs they would like to keep from our current hymnbook and from other approved sources. They provided us with a summary of the responses. If you could organise such submissions from your own church it would be valuable.

We would like you to help us make this a denominational hymnbook. If you can provide us with lists of songs and popularities, that would be helpful. A form for reporting this information is available on our website (see below) together with an example of one congregation's plan of how to do this.

#### Contribute by Careful Selection

Another way to contribute would be to get together in a group with others to carefully select songs from a wider variety of sources than the ones we already sing.

Correspondence regarding submissions may be made by email to the committee secretary: [hoyt@contact.net.nz](mailto:hoyt@contact.net.nz).

Website <http://hymnal.rcnz.org.nz>

In order to keep you informed of our progress, and give you a forum where you can interact, we have put together a project website. Significant additional information is available there, including:

- **Music selected so far** (preliminary selections) — you can view and play it online!
- A **feedback** form.
- **Submission** forms and contacts.
- The full synodical **mandate** for the hymnal committee.
- The **committee's membership** and a contact.
- Any **other information** that becomes available.

Please take the time to browse the songs on our website. We will be updating them **regularly** as we progress through the project.

The web address is [hymnal.rcnz.org.nz](http://hymnal.rcnz.org.nz).

#### Conclusion

This New Zealand Psalter Hymnal is for the glory of God and the service of His people. Consequently, we would like you to be up to date and supportive of us by means of our website. It is also a project that is happening. The committee is at work flat tack, and things are progressing very quickly to produce a high quality, and accurate production with many very positive features. It will certainly not be a half-pie job.

So, all that remains is for you to get up-to-date, interact with the online material, become enthusiastic about the project, and continue to send those contributions in this direction!

## World in focus

### Bible clubs upheld in three States

Liberty Counsel President Mathew Staver reported that after-school Bible Clubs for elementary age students have won major victories in Michigan, Ohio, and Connecticut. The US Supreme Court has upheld the right of Christian clubs to use public facilities without discrimination. Staver said he expects more and more schools to "capitulate," because federal court precedent is beginning to go in favor of such clubs. Law suits help schools "see the light."

+ Liberty Counsel, PO Box 540774, Orlando, FL 32854 (407) 875-2100

### Brian O'Connor released

International Christian Concern has been informed that Indian Christian, Brian O'Connor, has been released by Saudi officials. O'Connor had been jailed and charged with selling

alcohol, possession of Bibles, and pornography. This is typical in cases of religious persecution in Saudi Arabia, where they do not wish to bring attention to their zero-tolerance policy towards other religions.

"Brian's release highlights the power of advocacy and we thank all the individuals that made calls on his behalf to the Saudi embassy and to members of Congress."

+ International Christian Concern, 2020 Pennsylvania Ave. NW #941 Washington, DC 20006  
+ Dan Wooding, ASSIST News Service, PO Box 2126, Garden Grove, CA 92842-2126 [danjuma1@aol.com](mailto:danjuma1@aol.com)

### Judge rules in favour of Terri Schindler-Schiavo's family

A Florida probate judge has ruled that Terri Schindler-Schiavo's feeding tube cannot be removed until her parents, Robert and Mary Schindler, have exhausted all avenues open to them in their quest for a new trial to

determine whether the 40-year-old, brain-disabled woman would want to be starved to death or be allowed to live.

Judge George Greer rejected a motion by attorney George Felos on behalf of Terri's estranged husband and legal guardian, Michael Schiavo, who was seeking permission to remove Terri's feeding tube following a favorable ruling by the Florida Supreme Court. In a three-page order Greer revoked the stay he issued 22 October that was scheduled to expire at midnight, 6 December. In his new ruling, he dismissed Schiavo's second request and extended the stay indefinitely.

+ George W. Greer, 315 Court St., Rm. 484, Clearwater, FL 33756 (727) 464-3933

### Fear of euthanasia

An official Dutch report in 2001 showed that about 1,000 people were killed by doctors without their explicit request. Dr Nigel Sykes,



Medical Director of St Christopher's Hospice London, stated that only 3.5 percent of people dying from cancer are in favor of euthanasia. Even in the Netherlands, where euthanasia has been legal since 1984, over 90 percent of people living in nursing homes are opposed to euthanasia.

They know from experience and observation that once euthanasia is legalised, even in very carefully defined circumstances, it is impossible to regulate. In a Dutch poll of elderly people, 60 percent were afraid that their lives would be terminated against their will. So great is the fear that some Dutch patients have even taken to crossing the border to go to German hospitals where euthanasia is illegal.

A recent poll of British doctors showed that 76 percent would refuse to perform euthanasia.

+ Charlotte Vincent, Public Policy Analyst, Lawyers' Christian Fellowship, UK  
+ Mark Mullins, Regional Chairman (London), Lawyers' Christian Fellowship, 1 Harcourt Buildings, Temple, London EC4Y 9DA

### Moral values most important issue in casting votes

In nationwide exit polls, one of five voters said moral values were the most important issue in casting their votes. Those "values" voters went for President Bush over Senator John Kerry, 79 percent to 18 percent. Bush won among frequent church-goers, and polled even with Kerry among people who attend once a month or less. Bush drew 60 percent of weekly attenders, compared to Kerry's 39 percent, while Kerry led Bush among non-church-goers, 64 percent to 34 percent.

Bush drew 75 percent of white evangelicals, 58 percent of Protestants and 24 percent of Jews. Kerry had 41 percent of Protestants and 76 percent of Jews. The exit polls, conducted by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International for major media organizations, did not include Muslim voters.

+ Edison Media Research, 6 West Cliff St., Somerville, NJ 08876 (908) 707-4707  
+ Mitofsky International, 1776 Broadway, Suite 1708, New York, NY 10019 (212) 980-3031

### Evidence supports the Biblical record

"Let the debate continue, but let the evidence be admitted. Ever since scientific archaeology started a century and half ago, the consistent pattern has been this: the hard evidence from the ground has borne out the Biblical record again and again—and again. The Bible has nothing to fear from the spade," writes Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Second Vice-President Dr Paul Maier in the *Christian Research Journal* 27.3 (2004). Maier's article titled "Archaeology - Biblical Ally or Adversary?" was reprinted in the Summer, 2004 Bible and Spade, published by the Associates For Biblical Research.

Maier responds to "Biblical minimalists" who see little or no correlation between archaeological and Biblical evidence, and thus no reliable history in the Old Testament.

+ Associates for Biblical Research, PO Box 144, Akron, OH 17501

### Georgia evolution case heads to Court

A sticker in a suburban Atlanta science textbook says: "This textbook contains material on evolution. Evolution is a theory, not a fact, regarding the origin of living things. This material should be approached with an open mind, studied carefully and critically considered." This is being challenged in court as an unlawful promotion of religion.

The lawsuit which was filed by six parents and the Georgia chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union is expected to last four days.

Cobb County school officials adopted the disclaimer after science textbooks it adopted in 2002 were criticised by some parents for presenting evolution as fact. More than 2,000 people signed a petition opposing the biology texts because they did not discuss alternative theories, including Creationism. The US Supreme Court ruled in 1987 that Creationism was a religious belief that could not be taught in public schools along with evolution.

+ The American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia, 70 Fairlie St., Suite 340, Atlanta, GA 30303 (404) 523-5398

### Rev. Rinaldy Damanik walks free

The Rev. Rinaldy Damanik, an Indonesian peace worker who was imprisoned on what many believe were trumped-up charges, will be reunited with his family a year ahead of his scheduled release. Damanik was a prominent figure in peace efforts on the island of Sulawesi in Indonesia, where violence between Muslim and Christian communities has been prevalent since the late 1990s.

+ Ecumenical News International, PO Box 2100, Geneva 2, Switzerland

### Chinese Protestant leader arrested in crackdown

Cai Zhuohua, minister to six unofficial congregations, was arrested as part of a renewed crackdown on religious activities outside the Communist Party.

The China Aid Association relies on an independent network of Christians in China and overseas for information about developments in the underground church. The Association said Mr. Cai's case drew attention from authorities after the discovery of 200,000 Bibles and other Christian literature in a warehouse under his control, the origins of which were unknown.

China's government allows worship only in the Communist-controlled Protestant Church, which claims more than 10 million followers.  
+ China Aid Association, PO Box 8513, Midland, TX 79708 (432) 689-6985

### Wiccan priestess studies at Presbyterian seminary

Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, has admitted "to a non-degree" status a student who describes herself as a Wiccan priestess.

John Carroll, dean of the faculty, said the student is one of about 25 non-degree students in the seminary.

Wicca is a pagan religion that combines a number of elements, including earth worship, diversity, radical feminism, shamanism, and Druidry.

+ Union Theological Seminary, 3401 Brook Rd., Richmond, VA 23227 (804) 355-0671

### Presbyterian staff members fired

Kathy Lueckert, the deputy executive associate director of the General Assembly Council (GAC), the church's mission program agency, and the Rev Peter Sulyok, coordinator of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP), have been fired by Executive Director of the General Assembly Council, John Detterick.

Lueckert supervised Sulyok and both were members of an ACSWP fact-finding delegation to the Middle East last month that included a televised meeting with Hezbollah, an organization that is on the US government's watch list of terrorist groups.

+ Presbyterian Church (USA), 100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202, (888) 728-7228

### Westminster Anniversary and Conference celebration

On 17-18 Jan. 2005, Westminster Seminary (California) will celebrate 25 years of training men and women. The conference will include guest speakers Dr Sinclair Ferguson, Dr Derek Thomas, Dr W. Robert Godfrey, and Dr Michael Horton. The celebration will conclude with a banquet on the evening of the 18th. WSC's Board of Trustees will be meeting during this week.

+ Westminster Seminary California, 1725 Bear Valley Parkway, Escondido, CA 92027.

### Muslim guardian still fighting for custody

Abdullah al-Muhtadi, the Muslim guardian fighting for custody of Christian widow Siham Qandah's two minor children, appeared before Jordan's Islamic courts on 9 November. Abdullah al-Muhtadi presented receipts to the judge proving that he had paid out US\$16,500 in lawyers' fees during his legal battle to take custody of his sister's two children.

These documents will be examined and the next hearing on the case is set for 23 November.

Qandah's problem began after her Christian husband died in 1994, while a soldier in the UN Peacekeeping Forces in Kosovo. When she went to claim her children's

orphan benefits, an Islamic court produced an unsigned "conversion" certificate, claiming he had secretly converted to Islam three years earlier. So even though the children were baptised Christians, Islamic law declared them Muslims whose financial affairs must be handled by a Muslim guardian.  
 + *Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0314*

**Nazarene's sue city for use of public schools**

A conservative law group has filed a federal lawsuit against the city of Peabody in Massachusetts on behalf of the Living Hope Church of the Nazarene. The lawsuit was filed on Friday 19 Nov. in US District Court and claims it was unconstitutional for Peabody to deny a request by the Living Hope Church of the Nazarene to rent a school to hold Sunday services.

The US Supreme Court ruled three years ago, that religious groups that contribute to the "general welfare" of the community must be granted access to schools if other community groups are given similar access.

Larry O'Keefe, a lawyer for the city, said that the city currently allows a handful of community groups to rent its public schools,

and has allowed religious groups, including a local synagogue, to use its facilities.

The church is a ministry of the Beverly Church of the Nazarene, both of which are affiliated with the national Nazarene church.  
 + *Beverly Church of the Nazarene, 556 Cabot St., Beverly, MA 01915 (978) 927-9979*

**Pagan rituals rile Episcopalians**

The "Eucharist," subtitled "A Celebration of the Divine Feminine," was posted 8 October on the denomination's Office of Women's Ministries page at [www.dfms.org](http://www.dfms.org). The rite was attributed to the Rev. Glyn Lorraine Ruppe Melnyk, the pastor of St Francis-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church in Malvern, Pennsylvania. She and her husband, Bill Melnyk, rector of St. James Episcopal Church in Downingtown, Pennsylvania, posted several ceremonies which invoked pagan gods and goddesses, on [www.tuathadebrighid.org](http://www.tuathadebrighid.org).

The Rev Margaret Rose, director of the denomination's Women's Ministries office, said the divorce and women's eucharist rites were not approved Episcopal liturgies, but were listed only "to spark dialogue, study and conversation and ponderings around women and our liturgical tradition."

+ *St. Francis in the Fields Episcopal Church, 689 Sugartown Rd., Malvern, PA 19355 (610) 647-0130*

**ACLU's anti-Boy Scout agenda**

Traditional Values Coalition Chairman Rev. Louis P. Sheldon said that "The Anti-Christian Liberties Union (ACLU) has succeeded in forcing the Pentagon to issue a warning to military bases round the world to avoid sponsoring Boy Scout troops." The reason for this is that the Scouts require a belief in God for membership. The ACLU also wants to punish the Boy Scouts for its policy of excluding homosexuals from membership or leadership positions.

+ *Traditional Values Coalition, 139 C. St., SE, Washington, DC 20003*

**Presbyterian Church of Australia leaves the Reformed Ecumenical Council**

In its September 2004 General Assembly the Presbyterian Church of Australia (PCA) voted to withdraw from the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) and to join the World Reformed Fellowship (a conservative Reformed-Presbyterian ecumenical body founded in Orlando, Florida USA in 2000). The REC is the body which the RCNZ left in 1989 because of the continued membership of the GKN (now part of the Protestant Church of the Netherlands). The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia continue to be members of the REC.

+ *The Presbyterian Banner, November, 2004*

**Divided Taiwanese Presbyterians repent and unite**

On 14 Nov. the Kaohsiung and Longevity Mountain Presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) met for a mass festival of repentance and reunion. Over 10,000 members of the two presbyteries attended the event held on the campus of National Kaohsiung University.

The event was prepared by a joint committee and featured a sermon preached by PCT General Secretary William J.K.Lo.

A division occurred in 1972 which was caused by friction between leading clergy of what was then a single presbytery. Disagreements on policies regarding planting of new churches, the election of presbytery officers, and other aspects of mission life led to an intractable situation. On the 4th of July, 1972 the Longevity Mountain Presbytery was formed by official transfer of these congregations out of Kaosiung. Both presbyteries continued to be part of the PCT.

The event celebrated the unity of spirit and purpose in the hope that administrative issues preventing complete union can soon be worked through.


+ *The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 3, Lane 269, Roosevelt Rd., Sec. 3, Taipei, 106 TAIWAN*

# IN TOUCH

**S**ubscriptions to the IN TOUCH magazine are available. This is an opportunity for those interested who do not have access to or have joined a Cadet and Calvinette Club (Cadets and Calvinettes will continue to be supplied through their clubs). The costs is \$15 per year for four issues.

This is a Reformed Churches of New Zealand children's magazine especially written for 8 - 15 year olds.

It is filled with stories, photographs, puzzles, Bibles studies, Cadet & Calvinette Club news, competitions, poetry, crafts, cooking and Camp News.



If you would like to receive IN TOUCH please forward your \$NZ15 (or \$AU15), with your details, to the **National Board Secretary N.Z.C.C.C. & C., 7 Winchester Avenue, Pinehaven, Upper Hutt.** (Make cheques out to N.Z.C.C.C. & C.)

## Home mission in focus

# Reflections on Nelson's situation

**Ralph Adams**

People looking at our congregation may see our painfully few members. Empty places in our pews represent former members who have left us, to go on to other things...some to eternal glory, some to other churches, and some to no church at all. What catches the eye is perhaps a remnant of a former vibrant community. What we see now in place of that former community are our few resources...and the realisation that we can't do much in the way of great things. In the words of Harry Reeder we could well be "a dying church." (*Harry L. Reeder III in an essay Revitalizing a Dying Church in The Pastor-Evangelist, ed. by Roger S. Greenway, P&R 1987*).

Well, some of the things Reeder lists in his "prevailing dynamics in a dying church" are evident in our situation, but then so too are several of his "principled dynamics of a living church." So what do we make of our situation? Are we to think of ourselves as a congregation without much future?

And to that we have to say, "Never!"...not so long as Scripture encourages us to see a future in Jesus Christ and what He says about His church. Jesus has said, "...I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." (Mt. 16:18)

May we claim that Christ means this about our congregation? Of course we can...until He tells us or shows us differently...for "the Word of our God stands forever." (Isa. 40:8) We ought to act as though God is in control of our lives, and that He will work out His purposes even in our situation.

We are in His hands, like the dog mentioned in a local newspaper column: 'Lost: one dog, with short brown hair, much of it missing due to scrapes and scratches; blind in one eye; only three legs; a bit wobbly; goes by the name of 'Lucky.' (anonymous)

In a man-centred age we cannot afford to lose sight of Whose business it is to build the church. Didn't Paul remind the Corinthians: "God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong....so that no one may boast before Him." And if this is so, why should we stop expecting God to

continue to use our small and weak congregation in the building of His church. Hence our vision ought to be of an important future for our congregation.

### What can we do in Nelson?

Naturally we have questions about how we can move from a vision of no future, to one of an important future in the Lord. If Jesus Christ is the builder of churches...what can mere men and women...boys and girls...be expected to do...to bring about this exciting future? In fact, do we in the Reformed Church of Nelson have to do anything at all?

Nelson has never been short of well-intentioned advice as to how we might turn the vision around. After all, so-called experts on Church Growth visit Nelson every other week, or so it seems. And every second Christian can point us to Rick Warren's purpose-driven church model, or to the Alpha course, or to the contemporary worship scene, and ask us why we aren't following such successful trends. In the face of such pressure we have to remind ourselves, often, that first and foremost we are a Reformed community, that exists not for our own gratification but for the glory of God. Our worship as a covenant community is not really open to negotiation.

But that doesn't mean we should ignore the advice of at least one expert on the subject. Jesus often spoke in parables about the growth of God's kingdom. And while 'God's kingdom' and 'Christ's church' are not exactly the same thing, they are connected. So in the parable of the sower and the seed mentioned only in Mark's gospel, we find a clue as to what we in the

Reformed Church of Nelson must do.

**Mark 4:26-29:** 'He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."'

Christian Schwarz says, "This parable clearly shows what we can and should do, and what we cannot do." Ideally, we should first prepare the ground...and without question, we must go on to "sow and harvest..." and we "may sleep" and get up. "What [we] cannot do"...ever...is "bring forth the fruit." (*Christian A. Schwarz, Natural Church Development, ChurchSmart Resources, p.12*) Compare Paul's explanation in 1 Corinthians 3: "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." (1 Cor.3:6)

Both Jesus and Paul are pointing out that an important aspect of our place in the kingdom of God...just as in the natural world...is that we are fellow-workers with God in building His kingdom. And while the results of our work depend hugely on God, nevertheless we have our parts to play. We should expect that God can and will do amazing things with the 'seed' that we sow, provided that we carry out what Jesus implies is our responsibility. This is a threefold responsibility:

- a) Preparing the ground;
- b) Sowing the seed;
- c) Harvesting the crop.



The front of the Nelson church



A scene at Nelson's famous 'Flea Market'

### Preparing the ground

Jesus said, "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) And again in John 20, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (Jn 20:21)

Especially relevant to each one of us, Peter says in his first letter, "you are a chosen people...belonging to God, [so] that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Pet. 2:9) So evangelism is inherent to the overall mission of the church. It's what each individual believer is called to do.

But evangelism is more than just giving some money to our Overseas Mission Board. It is more than just popping a pamphlet into a letter box. These things have a part to play in spreading the gospel, but before we can tell others about Jesus Christ, we will have had to do some preparation ourselves. I want to call this 'preparing the ground.'

It stands to reason, if we're to witness to people in our community, we've got to have something to witness with. If we believe the Bible, and allow it to mould our outlook on life, we have plenty to witness with. God's word is alive and cuts to peoples' hearts. People need to hear God's word applied to their personal circumstances. It alone has the power to convert unbelievers, and to build believers up. So if our attitudes are firmly grounded in a Biblical faith, we are in the best of possible positions to witness to others.

But before we can effectively share the Gospel with anyone, we have to own it for ourselves. We have to know in our own hearts that Christ has given us the words of eternal life.

Charles Spurgeon had this to say, "surely,

**if you have been saved from the damning power of sin by Christ, you will want to be telling [others] that there is a 'balm in Gilead...'** Perhaps you can't preach... But you can talk to a neighbour. You can speak with your children." (sermon)

This is not about the technical details of various Biblical doctrines, as such. Of course we have to know some doctrines... but we've heard this stuff since kindergarten... so we should already know enough. What we must own for ourselves is the simple JOY of knowing that Jesus is 'my Saviour.'

This is about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. You can't introduce anyone to a Jesus whom you've never met. So before you can effectively share your faith with anyone, you have to own a personal relationship with Jesus. It has to come out in your daily life...so that it affects how you relate with your wife or husband and your kids...how you leave home in the morning...how you walk on the street...how you greet people during your day...how you do your work. The question is, can you go out into the world each day, and demonstrate by your attitude that you enjoy having Christ with you?

This is the first and most important aspect of "preparing the ground."

### Sowing the seed

You don't need to be a Billy Graham to tell someone about Jesus Christ. Francis of Assisi was born into a wealthy merchant family. He renounced his wealth and went on to found the Franciscan order of preaching friars. Most notably, Francis chose to 'preach' with his hands and feet, which is a good way to communicate the love of Jesus to others.

Any of us can do this, but so too can anyone tell the stories of Jesus' life. Why not learn some of these stories by heart...maybe some parables...then when the opportunity comes you can tell your friends what Jesus did or said about *their* situation. The blind man in John 9...he wasn't any great theologian...he simply told folks what Jesus did for him. And Andrew didn't have a lot to say, but when he met Jesus, he ran to his brother Simon and said, "You've got to come and see this guy!"

In Acts 9, Dorcas "was always doing good and helping the poor" (Acts 9:36), so much so that when she died, all the widows were crying and showing Peter the clothes she had made for them. God raised her from the dead through Peter and she was the cause of many people believing in the Lord.

Perhaps we can't raise the dead, but we can do the simple things these folks did. We can help our neighbours...we can invite people to church...or to a Bible study group...or we can introduce them to someone who can speak to them about the Christian faith. By whatever means we are able to do it, 'sowing the seed' simply means 'spreading the word' of Jesus.

The foregoing is essentially addressed to individuals. On a corporate level we in Nelson have initiated an activity dedicated to 'spreading the word' among primary school aged children. Our **Friday Friendly** after-school activity targets primary children at a nearby school, and has enjoyed some success since its inception. A number of attendees have gone on to become members of our Cadets/Calvinettes Club. But while this is so, our attempts to reach the parents of these children has not been successful at all. The same can be said of our rather spasmodic attempts to break through to people in our neighbourhood.

In thinking of this, it is comforting to remember what God says about His word going out into the world: "**My word is like the snow and the rain that come down from the sky to water the earth. They make crops grow and provide seed for planting and food to eat. In the same way, the word I speak will not fail to do what I plan for it; it will do everything I send it to do.**" (para. Isa 55:10-11)

### Harvesting the crop

In the minds of many people these days, evangelism "smacks of wanting to change the way another person is." (*Michael Green, Evangelism Through the Local Church, p.3*) And society holds that for us to think someone needs to be changed in some way is an insult to that other person. In our so-called age of 'tolerance,' this sort of motivation is unacceptable. No doubt it's one of the reasons why most of us shy away from evangelising our neighbours or our friends.

And it's also why so many of us have guilty consciences because of our lack.

But we can't let societal opinion stop us from sowing the seed that may lift some person from an eternity in hell. Researchers say the spiritual hunger out there is as great today as it ever was. People are searching high and low for God. But their search is futile unless they come to God through Jesus Christ.

We have to speak about Jesus. *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12) And this is true whether a person is a Jew or a Buddhist or a Hindu or a Muslim or a new age convert. If they want to be right with God, if they want to enjoy His presence in their lives...and His glory in eternity...then they had better come to him through faith in His Son.

For this reason, Jesus said to his disciples, *"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."* (Mt 9:37-38) How are we to

reap the plentiful harvest?

Chuck Swindoll tells of a young man who once described going astray from God **"like he was at sea in deep water, deep trouble, and all his friends were on the shoreline hurling biblical accusations at him about justice, penalty and wrong...but there was one Christian brother who actually swam out to get me and would not let me go. I fought him, but he pushed aside my fighting, grasped me, put a life jacket around me, and took me to shore. By the grace of God, he was the reason I was restored. He would not let me go"** (Swindoll p.195).

Why does Swindoll say this? One wise man has said, "You can...almost truly...only evangelise friends." And if you're not exactly friends, it does help to be on a first-name basis. We can invite friends into our homes for dinner. Our children invite friends over to play. We do this without a second thought. Inviting people to church should be just as natural.

Philip met Jesus, and he wanted to share his experience with Nathanael. He didn't try

to convert him. He didn't wave a scroll in his face extolling the virtues of Reformed theology. He simply invited Phillip, "Come and see for yourself."

This is like when we find a new restaurant and enjoy a meal there. The service is good, the food is excellent, and the price is right. So we tell our friends, "You've got to try this new restaurant. It's really great." We do the same thing with a movie we might see... we tell our friends, "You've got to go and see it." If you joined a local football club wouldn't you tell your friends: "Hey, I've joined the footy club. They're a great bunch of guys. Why don't you come with me next week."

If you consider coming to church every Sunday important, and you derive pleasure and joy from the fellowship... why should you shy away from inviting others to come: "Hey, I go to a really great church. The people are nice... and you should come and try it out."

Only in this way will WE see something of the crop being harvested.

## Laying a firm foundation

It all started with a weekend of training with Janice Reid. A group of seven or eight people came together for practical workshops with Janice on producing Christian radio programmes. We were all pretty uncertain as to what radio broadcasting would involve, and just how, if at all, each of us might be useful in such an undertaking.

By the end of the weekend we were convinced that it looked like a pretty big task, but with Janice's help we made plans for how our programmes could be put together, and what they would include. And now our radio programme has been going for well over a year. Let me tell you a bit about what we do.

### Foundations

After tossing around several ideas, we chose this as the name for our programme: we wanted to tell people about the Truth, which is the foundation for all of life. *Foundations* is broadcast once a week. It's a fifteen-minute programme, which centres on a message of Bible teaching. Our pastor, Jim Klazinga, writes and records the messages. The topics covered in the Heidelberg Catechism provide the framework for the messages, even though Jim doesn't refer specifically to the catechism in his talks.

We have one person, Esther Smith, who hosts the programmes, providing an introduction to the programme each week

and linking the various parts of the programme together. Besides the Bible message, the programme usually includes a song. This might be some contemporary Christian music, or it might be a secular song, but it's chosen to tie in with Jim's message. On occasion we've been more adventurous, and interviewed people on a topic related to Jim's message.

We've also had a couple of totally different programmes: for example, we interviewed a member of the TEAR Fund board, and we interviewed Dr. Pipa when he came to New Zealand for the Reformation Conference last October.

With a team of six or eight people trying to get a handle on what they were doing, the first few weeks of our broadcasts were fairly chaotic! (Not the broadcast itself, mind you, but the preparing of it.) Mini-discs and CDs were flying around from person to person, and never seemed to be at the studio at the time when they were most needed. We pre-record all our programmes, which means that those involved don't all have to be at the studio at the same time. Pre-recording also helped the nerves of beginning broadcasters. The recording and putting together of the programme is greatly assisted by the computer software at the studio. Our technician Ben Post can do all kinds of magic to erase mistakes, make alterations, etc. So now things are pretty streamlined and programmes can be put together quickly and well.

Would you like to start a programme on your community radio station?

Your area will have a community station,



as there are 11 of these stations around the country. They are government-subsidised, and so broadcasting charges are a pittance compared to commercial radio.

One reason for writing this article is to let all of you readers know that our programmes are recorded on CD. Perhaps you, or your church, has thought about broadcasting on your community radio station, but you aren't sure you have the resources or skills to get this going. Our programmes are available for re-broadcast (at a small cost, charged by the radio station). Or, if you want to put together your own programme but would like messages to use, we have full transcripts of all of Jim's messages. If you'd like to find out more about these possibilities, please contact us! You can write to me at [lianahavelaar@free.net.nz](mailto:lianahavelaar@free.net.nz), or at 62 Sapphire Street, Casebrook, Christchurch.

*Liana Havelaar,*  
For the Foundations team,  
Reformed Church of Christchurch.

## Mission in focus

Janice Reid

In 2004, Craig van Echten from Foxton congregation went to Papua New Guinea. He spent two weeks there helping the Hagoorts, and doing construction work for the Mapang Missionary home and the Reformed Church that meets at 9 Mile, in Port Moresby. Here is the first of two reports that Craig has sent to Missions in Focus.

# The Harvest is plentiful

During my two week stay in PNG, I was witness to five new people from different families attend the 9 mile church. Only one had gone to church before and they all have continued to attend, what a blessing! In a Reformed Church in NZ it might take a whole year or more to see five new faces come through the door who have not shifted from another church.

It was only two years ago that Anton Meister and Derek Cressy submitted a report to the 2002 Synod explaining the opportunities for the RCNZ to be involved in PNG. Since then the Lord has blessed the work of the RCNZ in that there are now two missionaries serving in PNG representing RCNZ: Wally and Jeanette Hagoort.

We have been blessed in the way that Hagoorts are successfully running the Mapang Missionary Home, which provides them with food and accommodation. This arrangement enables our churches to have missionaries on the ground at a minimal cost. Half of the Hagoorts, time is required to run the Missionary Home, but this is mainly done by Jeanette, which leaves Wally free to serve the needs of the Reformed Churches of PNG.

The RCPNG continues to flourish. Currently, Wally's time is spent setting up a new church in Vanagi. The first service started on the 15th of August. I attended Sunday school there one morning to find that about forty children attended! There are further opportunities that currently exist in PNG for the establishment of new churches, but these still need to be explored.

There has been good progress in the work with which we are involved in PNG. Along with Stephen, t Hart and the Hagoorts there are now two more missionaries to help "reap the harvest". Wayne and Cheronne van de Heide have arrived from Australia and are living in Port Moresby. They have a teaching background and they will be instrumental in helping Stephen train leaders within the church and helping educate its members.

It won't be long and the church manse, funded in a large part by RCNZ, will be finished for the 9 Mile church. The manse has been built in a new area away from where the church meets: the church building is currently situated within a village. Since PNG is still very tribal, it means people from other villages do not attend the 9 Mile church which is made up of mainly refugees from Irian Jaya (now called Papua). That is why the RCPNG decided to purchase some land in a neutral area so that people from different tribes would not feel intimidated and would feel safe to attend. This is where the manse has

nearly been completed and is where the future church of 9 mile will be built (D.V.).

*Craig van Echten*

## MIF prayer notes

Rev Stephen and Dorinda 't Hart continue to head up the work of the Reformed Ministries Team in Papua New Guinea. Pray for safety in travel, for good health, and for much wisdom as decisions are made that will determine the strategy for outreach and the means of helping the Reformed Churches of Papua New Guinea. Pray for spiritual and numerical growth of members of the congregations. Pray for Wayne and Cheronne VanderHeide, recently arrived from Western Australia, who will have a teaching ministry amongst congregation members and church leaders. Pray for Walter and Jeannette Hagoort, who continue to be a Reformed light to the wider missionary community through their involvement at the Mapang Missionary Home. Pray also for their work with 9 Mile church, and with the establishment of the fledgling but growing congregation at Vanagi.

Rev. Barry and Mrs. Anne James are serving with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Uganda (OPCU) at their small seminary. Please pray for good health, for wisdom in developing course materials, and for strength to cope with the stress of having half of their house (and most of their privacy) given over to students who come to study.

Janice Reid is in Cambodia, working on training materials for radio announcers who work in small Christian stations in developing nations. She is continuing to work on the two courses developed last year, and expects that she will teach them several times again this year. Pray for good health, for creativity and diligence in her work, and fortitude during the many power-cuts which come without warning and make it difficult to concentrate in the heat.

Our short-term missionaries are also in need of our prayers. Hayden Bosgra in Ecuador is busy with his English programme and other outreach activities. Jared Berends and Heidi Posthuma are both teaching English in sensitive countries. Pray that each of them would grow ever closer to the Lord, would enjoy good health (it's VERY cold where Jared and Heidi are right now!), and would develop good relationships that allow them to explain Gospel truth to people in a clear and meaningful way.



## A feminine focus

# *The feminine virtue of gentleness*

Sally Davey

Gentleness is one of my favourite virtues; it encompasses so many wonderful qualities. The woman who is truly gentle is not only admired; she is genuinely loved. It is for this reason that gentleness was often called “amiability” (loveable-ness) by nineteenth century people. Think of Mr Darcy in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. At the end of the novel, he has asked Mr Bennet for Elizabeth’s hand in marriage. Mr Bennet, incredulous, says to his daughter, “We all know him to be a proud, unpleasant sort of man...” but Elizabeth, who now knows him to be an exceedingly good and generous man, replies, “Indeed he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable.” I don’t think she had a better adjective to describe the man she loves and respects. However, amiability—or gentleness—was a quality the nineteenth century writers especially loved to portray in women. And they drew some enchanting pictures. Think of Jane Bennet, Elizabeth’s sister, or Agnes Wickfield, David Copperfield’s second wife. They are definitely gentle women. These two characters seem to embody all the calm sweetness and soft selflessness that made nineteenth century readers admire and love them. Women like these were depicted as a kind of ideal—one that we seem to have lost somewhere. If you haven’t read either *Pride and Prejudice* or Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield* lately you might like to have a look, taking special note of the way feminine character is drawn, and what ideals are clearly set out. This will help you gain a clearer picture of feminine gentleness.

### A biblical quality

But of course, gentleness doesn’t just belong to the nineteenth century. It is a very basic biblical quality; and one we should explore.. First of all, it is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). It comes after kindness, goodness and faithfulness—and is second-to-last before self-control. This word is often translated as “meekness”—and it is as meekness that we usually remember it best, because this is how the King James Version has rendered it in two famous New Testament passages! The first of these passages is found in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus teaches that “blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

What is this meekness, this gentleness? As a fruit of the Spirit, William Hendricksen (in his commentary on Galatians) identifies it as the opposite of vehemence, violence and outbursts of anger. This is significant. Because it comes from a love of others rather than of self, gentleness is characterised by a consistent habit of putting the interests of others before one’s own. It gives, rather than grabs or demands. Selfishness expects others to acknowledge, praise, and give—and when it is thwarted it produces anger, rage and violence. Don Carson, writing on the beatitudes, calls meekness “a controlled desire to see others’ interests advance ahead of one’s own...” He also quotes Martyn Lloyd Jones, who has observed that “the man who is truly meek is the one who is amazed that God and man can think of him as well as they do and treat him as well as they do.” Many people have commented that the only truly meek person was the Lord Jesus, who “*though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant... He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death*” (Philippians 2:6-8).

### The truly gentle person

The second famous New Testament passage on meekness is Matthew 11:28-9. In one of His most memorable, compassionate statements, Jesus said, “*Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*” (Matthew 11:28-9) Why is Jesus so able to give us rest, peace, refreshment, encouragement, and new hope when we struggle? Because He is gentle and humble. Have you ever wondered why some people are so approachable and helpful in time of need? Why they are such good friends, and why they are the ones we automatically turn to when we are in trouble? These are the people who are less preoccupied with themselves, and have more time and energy to give to others. As someone once said, they are the people who seem to come into the room saying, “There you are!,” not “Here I am!”

### Not a modern quality

Despite the fact that we all love a gentle

person when we come across her, gentleness is one of the last qualities the age we live in seems to encourage. On every front we are urged to think for ourselves, speak up for ourselves and behave in such a way as to leave no one in doubt of our significance. We are to assert ourselves, promote ourselves, develop ourselves and make sure we get what we want out of life. It is all, we are told, up to us. Well—almost. Other people are supposed to treat us well, to help us feel good about ourselves. People considered to suffer from low “self-esteem” are told to love themselves more and treat themselves better—but apparently other people are to blame as well. It is assumed that part of the sufferers’ problem is that other people haven’t met their needs for affection, affirmation, and so on. Well, all this sounds like it is: selfishness. Our trouble is that we love ourselves too much—not too little!

What are some ways this thinking presents itself? We could begin with the way we bring girls up. The philosophy today seems to go something like this: encourage your girls to be confident, motivated achievers. Have a look at the advertisements for girls’ schools. They usually emphasize academic excellence. Great! But you also find statements like “we will encourage her to set personal goals, strive to succeed and thus attain her true potential.” Or, “girls are encouraged to develop within themselves the skills and confidence to pursue their individual goals, the courage to try new things and the curiosity to explore their individual abilities.” Or, we want to ensure girls “are keen to come to school, that they are keen to learn and extend themselves, and that they feel secure enough to do so. We place great emphasis on preparing girls for the world of opportunities that await them.” All this, of course, rests on the presumption that your girl is great, and we will help her realize that. I am often amazed that such thinking ever produces anything other than arrogant, boastful, thoroughly selfish young women. This philosophy certainly does not prepare them for disappointment, setbacks, or loving, lasting, committed relationships in which they will put the other first. It may produce highly successful businesswomen, capable of achieving numerous goals in a well-organized way. But it will not produce gentle women, humble of heart, capable of loving,

servicing, being patient, forbearing, and persevering with the failings of others. Girls, what do you want to be like in twenty years' time?

### It's a career direction

The profession we choose may also have a great effect on the kind of people we become. If gentleness is our aim, then perhaps we should choose a type of work that enables us to be gentle to the full. I do genuinely wonder about women slaughtermen, fighter pilots, prime ministers and managing directors. While it is possible to be a feminine woman in many professions (and I'm well aware that two of Britain's best monarchs and one of her best prime ministers have been feminine women), any job that involves violence, or taking command (in a life-determining way) over the lives of others, would seem to make the cultivation of gentleness a very difficult thing. Funnily enough, this is not a new problem. (In fact, we women have been at it—the desire to dominate—since the beginning). Eve began the power struggle between husbands and wives that has been with us ever since. In the “olden days” (up to about thirty years ago) girls were encouraged to join the “helping” professions—to go teaching, nursing, or become secretaries. Many thought a woman could be truly gentle and sweetly submissive in such roles—as was fitting for women men would really want to marry. However, as my father wryly noted once, these are the very occupations in which you often spend much of your time telling other people what to do. Teachers have to tell their pupils to sit down, be quiet, and concentrate on their lessons. Nurses have to order (at times) very cantankerous patients to do all manner of uncomfortable things they would much rather not. Who, married to either a teacher or a nurse, has not felt like a pupil or a patient at times at home? I guess my point is that whatever our calling in life, we need to take care that we do not allow the demands of that role to rob us of a gentle, humble character. If it threatens to, then we need to think carefully what we need to do about it. (Of course the same principle applies to men, though there is a sense in which they are called to exercise authority more directly.)

### In ourselves personally

Well, having made some observations about the wider world of work, I think it is appropriate to turn our attention to our personal behaviour—thoughts, words and actions. The truly gentle woman is an unselfish woman: self is not at the centre of her heart's desires and inclinations. She loves other people, and her thoughts are directed to ways of doing them good. She is not inclined to dwell on the faults of others:

their irritating habits and manners, or the ways they have wounded or offended her. She is definitely not inclined to plan ways of “getting even.” She would prefer to draw them back, lovingly, into friendly relations. She is not one to give offence easily, but neither is she quick to take offence. What characterises her thoughts of others? She thinks along Philippians 4:8 lines—dwelling on whatever, in others, is true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise.

If a woman's thoughts are gentle, her speech will be as well. She will be trying with all her power to build up rather than tear down. This naturally rules out malicious gossip. But there are many other ways in which our speech needs to be gentle. Self protrudes itself into our speech when we become annoyed, and decide (albeit unconsciously) to exert our will over other people. We interrupt them, raise our voice, and keep going, louder and louder if necessary, until we have cowed them into submissive silence. Maybe I've become a little over-conscious lately, but I find myself noticing how often other people do this. We're all familiar with aggressive, upstart interviewers who interrupt their subject, talk over them and really deny them the opportunity of explaining themselves. But we women, Christians and all, do it too. When we raise our voices and demand (without, of course, saying so) that others stop speaking, we are exposing our selfish wills in a very ugly way. It is selfish and rude to prevent another person finishing what they were going to say. It shows that we're not sufficiently interested in what they have to say—and are definitely more interested in having them hear us. No matter how brilliant the thought that popped into your head when they were speaking, there is no excuse for rudely interrupting with it! (It indicates, after all, that you weren't listening to them). By contrast, have you ever noticed how the most attractive people usually listen to others as if all their attention were focused on what they are saying? They are being gentle.

### It's heard

Gentle women are quiet and humble in their speech. Do you tend to hear one woman's voice overpowering everyone else's at a coffee morning, or some other gathering? You are probably not hearing a gentle woman. People who are loud often want to dominate others; again, their self is protruding. My mother remembers, very long ago in her local country church, one lady who tended to dominate the hymn singing by her loud, insistent voice. She set the timing, and the organ and all the rest of the congregation followed. One Sunday morning another strong-willed woman happened to be visiting and there ensued a battle between the two

to set the tempo of the singing. If it had not been somewhat humorous, it would have been sad. Definitely, it was embarrassing to witness such a battle of two strong wills. Gentleness is never bossy, and we should take care not to push others around to get our way—whether it is in our homes, at work, or over the way things are organised in our churches.

### It's seen

Gentleness is also part of our witness to Christ. When we cultivate gentleness we are learning to be like Christ, and this is one way we bring His sweetness and loveliness to the lost around us. The Apostle Peter tells of the ways a believing wife may be used to win an unbelieving husband to Christ. These include being submissive, pure and respectful, so that such a wife's conduct may point him to the Lord without even a word being spoken. Peter also contrasts the wearing of expensive, elaborate clothing with—so much better—the possession of a gentle, quiet spirit. How endearing, and how lovely, is the woman who is gentle and quiet! She is modest and unassuming, and always lets others take the limelight. Even better, her character is “very precious” in God's sight. I love that passage in 1 Peter (3:1-4). But even so, I am mindful of a brief comment Susan Hunt made about it when she was here in 2002. We tend to think, she said, that gentleness and quietness of character primarily involve soft speech. But sometimes, she added, a shy exterior (which looks like that of a gentle person) may simply be hiding a boiling spirit underneath. How are our hearts? Are they as quiet as our exteriors? Do we fume underneath? Are we truly gentle, through and through?

### It's shown

But in case you are wondering, gentleness does not involve being a drippy doormat. Gentle Christian women have been among the most courageous soldiers of the cross. True followers of Christ, imitators of His meekness and lowliness, are women of conviction as well. And they will be faithful in taking up His cause, even though it costs them much in terms of friendship with the world, popularity, and the praise of others. In fact, giving up of self takes more courage, and more character, than allowing self to rule. Jesus' giving up of self was a deliberate, conscious action. For the joy that was set before Him, He went to the cross and endured all its shame. Dare we be different from our gentle Master?



# Children in focus

# Sonshine Korner



Welcome to the NEW "Sonshine Korner", a page that's just for you. My name is Mrs Jolanda, and I hope you'll join me every month as together we learn about God and how He wants us to live for Him.

The Bible tells us that we become NEW when Jesus is our Saviour. So.....

What's NEW when we know Jesus?

**We become a NEW Creature:**

The Bible says: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Corinthians 5:17

Saying you are a Christian means that you have chosen to follow Jesus and let Him be boss of your life. Jesus wants us to make some changes; we may need to change the friends we have, the way we talk or the way we spend our time. If we are NEW Creatures in Christ, we will listen to Him and do what He says.

**We have a NEW Beginning:**

The Bible says: "His great love is new every morning. Lord, how faithful you are!" Lamentations 3:23

Each morning when we wake up, we can know that God's love never changes and each new morning, He gives us a New Beginning.

**We need to have a NEW Attitude:**

The Bible says: "So, I say, live by the Spirit. Then you will not do what your sinful nature wants you to do." Galatians 5:16

God wants us to change our bad attitudes for better ones. We need to remember that God wants us to act like Jesus, so we need to ask ourselves "What Would Jesus Do?", what would His attitude be?

**We are given a NEW Direction:**

The Bible says: "Teach me your way. O Lord, and I will walk in your truth;" Psalm 86:11

The NEW Direction we must follow is the plan God has for our lives. He wants us to use our talents to serve Him and other people.

**We are given NEW Life:**

The Bible says: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." John14:6

We receive a NEW Life when Jesus lives in our hearts. He will forgive us our sins and show us how to live. Jesus is our greatest gift and God wants us to share Him with others, so we need to tell them about Jesus and the New Life that only He can give.

**God's Gift to us:**

Unscramble the tiles and discover the Bible verse (clue: It starts with the word 'For')

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# Silver threads among the gold

**Hans Voschezang**

Many years ago my Math teacher, a dignified silver-haired man close to retirement, told us a story I'll never forget. He told us, "When my children were little I took them by the hand to safeguard them from harm when we crossed the road, and taught them about the dangers of the traffic. I recently visited my son, who lives in London. He picked me up at Heathrow Airport, and as we walked to

for the better. The younger generation show no respect at all.

## **A loss of respect for those older**

Mr. Jackson is a retired principal, and one day he decided to visit his old school to find out how much had changed. And as he walked into the school's hallway he came across a lady who asked him "what he wanted." He explained what he came for, so she directed him to the principal's office.

people to talk. His office was always open for someone to drop in. As he was leaving, the noon bell rang and the children (or should I say students) ran out of their classrooms nearly bowling him over, shouting all sorts of rude remarks at him in their haste to get out of the door.

In his days as teacher the children would step aside, take their little caps off and say, "Good morning, Mr. Jackson." The children showed respect and admiration for their



the parking area he held me by the hand and warned me to watch out for the traffic. "That", he said, "is a definite sign that I'm getting older."

I've fond memories of this wise old man. He not only taught us Math but he also passed on to us, the younger generation, his own life's experiences and the lessons we could learn from it. We respected him. He could rule the classroom with his eyes. There was discipline: we didn't dare to misbehave. But times have changed and not

Upon meeting this principal they shook hands, and straight away the principal "told him" that he should have made an appointment so that he would have had some time to spend with him. They talked a little but it was obvious this principal was too much in a hurry to have any discussion at all. It was awful!

He came away thinking what had become of "his school" and how much had changed. He too had been teacher and principal for over 30 years, but he had always time for

teachers and for the elderly in general. He went home bitterly disappointed.

The youngsters of today are no longer taught how to behave: there is no respect or discipline. They have to discover by themselves how to respond to multiple choices in society, presented to them by way of individual development. There are no longer role models for them to look up to. In today's family, often the father is not present. The TV has taken over as the primary means of entertaining the children. Children are

educated at school according to a Government-prescribed curriculum. They learn on computers, they interact with other schools by video link. There is no interaction between other groups of children. Parents don't have the time anymore to watch the kids. They send them to daycare centers and after school, to after-school care. Children learn that the elderly have no place in their lives.

### A loss of place for those older

In the meantime, the old people are kept away from families. Age is looked upon as an incurable disease. They are viewed as a burden to family and society. Often the elderly are dumped in an institution, so that the rest of the family can get on with their life.

But like it or not, the youngsters of today will get old one day, unless they die young.

So, how do you deal with the problem of growing old?

You may be trying not to think about it. After all you were not taught at school how to deal with old people, Maybe you are even avoiding old people as much as you can. But you cannot avoid mirrors.

And one day you too will notice, when you look in the mirror, that your hairline is getting thinner and you will start pulling one or two hairs. Than you will notice a wrinkle or two. Your shoulders will start to stoop, and your joints start to creak and ache. Then the reality will sink in that you too are not so young anymore. The senior in the mirror shows you that you can't avoid old people anymore—you are one! You are now part of a society in which the elderly are not held in high regard.

But the Bible says to respect and honour the elderly: "*Rise up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God*". (Lev.19 vs 32)

"*Grey hair is a crown of splendor*." (Prov. 16 vs 31)

Nowadays grey hair is often seen as a sign of being out of touch.

In particular in the industry, older and experienced people are taken for granted. After many years of faithful service they trained up the younger ones and then find themselves relegated to the side lines. When the opportunity comes for management to "rejuvenate" the workforce, the older people are made redundant. How do you handle things like that, when you lose your job that way and find yourself growing older, starting to feel more and more alone? The Bible says: "*Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say: "I find no pleasure in them"*" (Eccl.12 vs 1)

### A loss of faith for those older

If you don't trust God's goodness when you are young and life is good, it will become harder to trust Him when you are old. Without

trust in your Creator you may reach old age but you will be very alone, living in the past. So, remember your Creator in the days of your youth.

A relationship with God will transform your life and will carry you through even the worst problems of old age. To **know** the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Friend, is **never** to be alone.

Life and beyond will have **meaning**. Jesus is the **best** Friend you could ever have.

If you have not reached retirement age yet—don't miss out on what the elderly people can pass on to you, the younger generation! The seniors in our midst really care about you, and want you to know what it means to live in close relationship with Jesus Christ.

If you really want to be blessed, then visit the elderly. Talk with them and listen to them. They have a wealth of knowledge and a lifetime of experience that is deeply rooted in their faith in Jesus Christ.

Remember how Timothy learned from the Apostle Paul, an old man teaching the young. What would have happened to Timothy without Paul's guidance? The church might have been hurt or even destroyed, as far as Timothy was concerned. The elderly should not be viewed as the squeaky wheel that needs the grease: they ought to be viewed as the gears that get things moving!

It has often been said by the elderly when

they are asked to be involved, "We have to make room for the younger generation." But making room for the younger generation doesn't mean checking out altogether! The elderly people still have a lot to offer in the church.

"*Remember your Creator in the days of your youth*" and you can be sure He will remember you when you're not so young anymore. Trust Him who is always faithful, no matter what age you are. God says: "*Listen to Me...you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and grey hair I am He, I am He who will sustain you...*" (Isaiah 46 vs 3 – 4)

On my desk calendar the other day I spotted a "saying of the day" at the bottom of the page. This saying sums it up beautifully; it's a fitting tribute to the elderly. It goes like this:

"**Our dignity is not in what we do, but what we understand**". The author is unknown, but it must have been a wise person. Listen to the elderly among us. You will be surprised what they can tell you.

(For further reading: Psalm 71 and 92; Grey hair and prayer by David Feddes <http://www.backtogod.net>; Ripe ol' age by Jack de Vries <http://www.crcna.org>; The Bible and the treatment of the elderly <http://www.bible.ca>)

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Piety isn't only a feminine virtue

Sir,—

Your November 2004 issue, mainly on the theme of marriage, the family and the proper roles for parents of both sexes, was an excellent and timely one with several good articles; but I don't agree with how one's heading was worded, since piety isn't only a feminine virtue.

With us humans, it's generally agreed that "the female of the species is more religious than the male," as a rule of thumb, mainly because females are more ruled by emotion and sentiment than males are, and less prone to gross and violent behaviour. However, they are no more likely to be born-again Christians than males are, not to mention that females in turn are more addicted to some failings than are males.

I both agree and disagree with the great Doctor Samuel Johnson's opinion of piety in the two sexes: He had said that women are less wicked than men, to which his biographer James Boswell had subjoined that women are more pious. Johnson, contradictory as usual, said, "No, hang it, they are **not** more pious! A really wicked fellow is the most pious when he take to it. He'll beat you all of piety."

Possibly he knew about John Newton's conversion. Anyway, what he said was true in itself; but it is also true that women **in general** are more pious than men - exceptions don't disprove a general rule. For all that, piety is a virtue common to both sexes, even if more often found in the female sex!

H. Westfold  
Hataitai, Wellington

## Focus on home

# Gleanings from our bulletins...

**Andrew Reinders**

## Avondale

Congregational Barn Dance evening this Saturday 20 November 7pm: Tickets are still on sale today through Ann Hunt, Nikki Hunt, Marja Bos or Sharon Jefferies. Please bring a plate for supper. Door Sales will be available on the night so come on down in your western outfit. Please remember to wear non-marking shoes.

## Bishopdale

Pastoral: Robert & Laurel van Wichen added Estelle to their family on Monday 25 October. She weighed in at 11 lb 3 Oz (5 kg) Robert starts his exams in 7 days time. Please pray for him.

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord in Bishopdale. For reasons that we have outlined in detail to the Session, we have decided before the Lord that we should stay in Canberra at this time. We want to say a very hearty "Thank you!" to all who have sent us greetings and letters over the last few weeks, and also for your very warm hospitality and friendliness during our time amongst you. We have made this decision NOT because we feel we wouldn't fit into the Bishopdale congregation. Quite the opposite, we felt very much at home amongst you and felt a real affinity with you. But for church and family reasons we cannot come at this time. We want to commend you to the Lord's gracious purposes, and we will uphold you and your Session in prayer. We believe that this decision means that the Lord has something much better in store for you in the future. With warm Christian greetings, John and Sallee de Hoog.

Seminar: **The privileged Planet: How our place in the cosmos is designed for discovery.** Drs Jay Richards and Guillermo Gonzalez will present scientific evidence to show how the earth is uniquely designed, not only to support life, but also to give us the best view of the universe. Come for an evening that will strengthen you, your friends

and family's belief in an intelligent and amazing Designer! Where and When: Grace Vineyard Church, 150 Ferry Road.

## Bucklands Beach

Social Event Miranda Hot Pools. Swim And BBQ/Braai Saturday 13th November from 4.00pm (Dinner will be at 6.00pm) Come along for a time of fun and fellowship in the sun and warm water. Please bring: BBQ Meat for your own family, Drinks, Cutlery and Crockery, A Salad and Dessert to Share, Your togs. Cost: \$8.00 for Adults, \$5.00 for Children.

Today has been designated 'Cadet and Gem Sunday'. The service will focus especially on the children, young people and counsellors who are involved in this ministry. There will be active participation by the club members - including also something of a 'first' in that young people will be accompanying the singing with a newly established music group! May it be the beginning of more to come. The theme for the service is 'Living in, with and for Jesus' - taken from the motto and pledge the children honour as members of the club.

Session notes. Golden Offering: The 'Golden Offering' - an annual offering in which the congregation is asked to make a special contribution towards the upkeep of the church - in this case a contribution to the building fund (the outstanding loans). This offering has been a part of the tradition of our fellowship here at Bucklands Beach for many years. While the offering is usually taken in September, it has been agreed that this year's offering will be held on Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> November in connection with the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Let us make this a special thanksgiving offering for God's goodness and bounty.

## Christchurch

This week's radio programme will be the seventh in a series of eight messages dealing with the lies presented in the best-selling novel, *The DaVinci Code*. This week's message will consider how the Bible is the Word of God. The *DaVinci Code* presents ideas that oppose this important truth. 'Foundations' is broadcast every Thursday evening at 7:30 pm, on Plains FM, 96.9. Please pray that this series of messages may proclaim the truth, in contrast to the lies and blasphemies contained in this popular work of fiction, which sadly continues to be a best-seller.

## Dovedale

Christianity Explored: In the early part of next year, Lord willing, we will be running a Christianity Explored course here at Shands Road. This is a ten-week course that aims to introduce people to Jesus Christ from Mark's gospel and this time our pastor will be leading it. As the book of Mark is read, taught and discussed, participants explore three questions that cut right to the heart of Christianity: "Who is Jesus? Why did he come? And what does Jesus demand of those who follow him." This is the first time that we are running this course, and we are very much looking forward to it. How can you help? Well, first, we covet your prayers. Please pray that the course would be well attended, and that the Lord would use this in people's lives. Second, we ask you to be thinking about who might benefit from this course. Do you have a friend or neighbour that you would like to invite along? More details will follow about when/where and what else is involved in the course, so please stay tuned to future bulletins.

Ladies Evening. Friday 26<sup>th</sup> November 7.15pm Ladies keep this evening free, come along and have a time of fellowship and fun. Meet at Cashmere Presbyterian church Corner of Dyers Pass Road at 7.15pm Wear comfortable clothes and shoes. Water bottles good idea too. Thanks Helen v d Meulen

## Foxton

Paul and Hilda Van Echten would like to invite the congregation to the wedding of Kim and Chris on Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> October, 3.00 pm at the Union Church, Foxton. Coffee and nibbles will be served after the service.

## Hastings

We rejoice with Rick and Alisha in the birth of a son on Thursday evening. Both mother and baby are doing well after a very quick delivery. We can rejoice in the Lord's answer to prayer for a safe delivery and a healthy baby.

Birth Announcement. The congregation has received a birth announcement of their new baby from Dan and Bonnie van Seventer. You will find it posted on the church notice board. Congratulations to Oma and Opa (now there in person) and all the aunts and uncles and cousins here in New Zealand.

## Hukanui

F.L.A.M.E. Reformed Youth: **6 DAYS TO GO...** Thaaat's riiiiight, the inaugural Great Raft Race is nearly upon us. So grab those >>lifejackets<<, find a gold coin and head to Hukanui at 9am next Saturday for the mother of all raft races. 'Course, the rafts will only be as good as you make them. Materials will be provided. The word from the grapevine is that youth from other places are amped and ready to take us by storm. COME ON F.L.A.M.E.!!! Let's show 'em what we're made of! Expect to be done'n'dry by 4pm if

you've remembered a towel. We'll be leaving the Grafton St. boat ramp after lunch.

## Mangere

Foodbank. Next Sunday, to coincide with our celebration of the Lord's Supper, we will also have the opportunity to donate to the Foodbank. Food donated here is passed on to the Salvation Army.

Pastoral. This past Thursday the Lord took to Himself our Br Harry Bloemendal. He is

now truly at peace. The everlasting comfort of the Gospel is his now in the most complete way, in the presence of his God. Now our thoughts are very much with Fem, the children and the wider family. We pray that the Lord would very much be their strength and guide, helping them in this time of adjustment ahead.

## Masterton

Pastoral Notes: We have been doubly blessed this past week with two covenant

## Another Geelong profile

Hello! My name is Neil van der Wel and this is my wife Jo and my daughters Bethany and Hannah (respectively 15\_ months and 1 day old in the photo).

I hail originally from Hamilton, New Zealand, and studied at the Reformed Theological College from 1997 till 2001, where I received a Bachelor of Theology and a Bachelor of Divinity. It was while in Geelong that I met Jo, who was also studying at the RTC. We married in 2002 and are now members of the Christian Reformed Church of Geelong, where I have also served as an elder for the last year or so. We're glad to be part of a faithful, loving church community.

After finishing my studies, I worked fulltime for two years in a local chicken processing factory. This provided a welcome break from formal studies and enabled me to consider whether God was calling me to preach and minister to his people. After some time I have come to a settled conviction in this and we're moving in that direction. I am seeking ordination as a minister of the Word and Sacraments.

While I had opportunity, I decided to undertake further theological studies in preparation for the ministry. So at the beginning of 2004, while still working two days a week, I commenced a Master of Theology program through Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in South Carolina, USA. My studies are in the Psalms — with my thesis topic (still to be finalised) specifically looking at how the Psalms were, and are, intended to be used. The intention is to take two years to complete the program, then to begin a vicariate at the beginning of



*Neil and Jo van der Wel and daughters Bethany and Hannah*

2006. Alongside this I've audited a couple of preaching courses at the RTC, which gives good interaction and is rather refining. I also preach fairly regularly, in our church and in other local churches.

We're glad to have this opportunity to introduce ourselves to you. Please

continue to pray for all the current students, ministerial and others. Also, do not neglect to beseech the Lord to raise up many more men to proclaim his Word and lead his people. *"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few"* (Matthew 9:37).

children born to Jason and Sandra Elliott. Both Elizabeth Kate and Jonathan Samuel are healthy and Sandra is recovering well in hospital. Praise God for the increase He has granted to us.

## North Shore

Neighbourhood Carol Singing. Our usual Christmas Carol Sing is planned for Friday evening, December 17<sup>th</sup>, and if it is raining on Friday, then Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup>. Please mark this date on your calendars.

## Palmerston North

Kittens Free to a Covenant Home. Susannah Wesley, the Smith's cat has recently given birth to three kittens: Coca-Cola (Black), Ash (Dark Grey) and Dallas at 3am (Light Grey). These kittens represent the fourth generation of cats birthed into Reformed households. These are covenant kittens. Those of you with a multigenerational perspective will want to take advantage of the pristine ancestry represented in these cute bundles of fur. The heritage of these kittens can be tracked back to the Dykstras. Robin and Christine, then of Scotts Rd, had a cat which begat another cat which was acquired by the Waldrons, then of Williams Road. That cat begat Susannah Wesley which was acquired by the Smiths of Tawa St. And Susannah Wesley has given birth to the three kittens which are available to good Reformed homes: free! The kittens will be available for collection on 2 November 2004 or after when they reach the age of six weeks. They are available for viewing anytime prior to that date.

## Wainuiomata

Case for Kids Video Series. The Case for Kids video series is beginning on November 7 at the home of Leo and Carol. We are planning to have coffee and refreshments at 7:30 and to begin showing the videos at 8:00 pm sharp. If you would like to attend, please sign the sheet on the notice board or e-mail us. This is not because we like bureaucracy, but because we have to know how many discussion books to photocopy. We are looking forward to an edifying time! Pastor LdV

Invitation to Paint Ceramics. An invitation is extended to all the ladies, together with the Calvinettes, for a craft evening painting ceramics. This will be held on Thursday, 4 November at the Wainui Christian College. A lady from "The Swish Dish" is coming to show us how it is done. If you are interested in joining us, please let Caroline know by Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> October so she can confirm numbers. The cost will be \$15 per person and \$10 per calvinette.

## Wellington

**Leadership Training Seminar.** This Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> October, DV, we have a special training seminar for office bearers-to-be and past or current office-bearers. We start at 9.30am with a general session, including practical discussion, and specialise after lunch on elders and deacons matters. We conclude our programme about 3.30pm. We need some willing hands to prepare lunch and a cuppa.

**From The Session: Church Survey.** During the month of **November** all our members, guests and visitors over the age of 18yrs. will have an opportunity to tell us what should be done with our present church-building & manse. You will receive, together with the survey, a detailed report with a lot of information about our buildings, what needs to be done, how much it will cost etc. This should be of help to you in completing the survey. Please **read this report first** before you start with the survey. The survey will be completely **anonymous** and should take about 10-15 minutes of your time. It is very important to us that every member/guest/visitor **individually** completes the survey and that **all questions** are answered seriously. You can return and deposit the completed survey in a specially marked box, which will be placed in the church-foyer. Distribution of the survey will start this week. For further information contact Dick Spoelstra.

## AUCKLAND PRESBYTERY REPORT

The Auckland Presbytery convened on **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2004** at the Reformed Church of Pukekohe. Rev Sjik Bajema opened the meeting with a reading of Scripture and prayer. Rev Reinier Noppers was appointed as the moderator of the meeting.

The main item on the agenda was the issue of modern tongue speaking that has been on the presbytery agenda for almost three years. Presbytery discussed proposals brought by the North Shore that appealed earlier decisions of the Presbytery. After an extended time of open discussion the presbytery adopted the following statements:

1. The Presbytery concurs with the committee's concern that the Rev van Garderen based his sermon on an unconvincing understanding of tongue speaking as unintelligible utterances (as adopted at the Presbytery meeting 30<sup>th</sup> July 2004).

2. The presbytery does not agree that the modern phenomena of tongue speaking which claims to be the communication of special revelation is the Biblical gift of

tongues.

3. The presbytery wishes to make clear that each session agrees not to teach the modern day practice of tongue speaking and actively discourages any such practice among its members.

4. Presbytery now regards this matter as sufficiently dealt with.

In its consideration of this matter presbytery took into account the 1977 Synodical Report on Pentecostalism. While that report did not constitute a doctrinal pronouncement, or result in one, nevertheless we agree with its conclusion which states: "We can only conclude, therefore, in our assessment of the modern-day Pentecostal phenomena, that their claims to possess the gifts of miracles, healing and prophecy and tongue-speaking are false."

Rev John Haverland informed the meeting that the Pukekohe session had agreed to allow him to lead the evening devotions at the Family Camp at the end of the year as the minister from the Auckland Presbytery.

As the remaining items on the agenda were not urgent it was agreed to hold these over to the next meeting to be held on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

The meeting was closed in prayer at 10.40 pm.

## CHRISTCHURCH PRESBYTERY REPORT - 20TH NOVEMBER 2004

The Moderator Rev Michael Flinn opened the meeting with a devotion from Psalm 141 including an exhortation to guard ones speech (vs. 3), especially as pastors and elders; be mature enough to accept a constructive rebuke (vs. 5a) and zealous enough for the Lord's name to desire and pray for the demise of evil doers (vs. 5b). Michael then led with prayer after which we sang PH 292.

Rev Dick Wynja, interim pastor of Bishopdale Reformed church was welcomed to the meeting as a non voting delegate. Credentials were checked, all delegates then stood to signify agreement with the subordinate standards of our denomination.

This year's annual Church Visitation reports for all five congregations had been completed, circulated and accepted by Presbytery. The Elder delegate from the Reformed Church of Bishopdale reported on various items of interest gleaned from recent Christian Reformed Churches of Australia Classis reports. These included the successful preliminary examinations of Rev.

Laventhran Shunmugam (formerly a pastor in South Africa) by Classis NSW and Vicar Jim DeWitte by Classis Gippsland. Both men were declared available for call. It was also noted that Nigel Cunningham currently serving the Christian Reformed Church of Tuggeranong (Canberra) was also still available for call.

Appreciation was expressed for the International Council of Reformed Churches six monthly newsletter. It was suggested that it be given wider circulation in the congregations..

Christchurch delegates reported on progress of the National Youth Camp to be held at Teapot Valley campsite near Nelson. Bookings have been strong and well over 200 campers are anticipated. Presbytery considered a request from the National Youth Camp Committee for funds to help cover camp costs. Presbytery agreed to assist with the sum of \$2,000.

Other business included a request for advice relating to chapter 27 para. 4 in the Westminster Confession of faith concerning the administration of the sacraments particularly the question "who may administer the sacraments", only a minister of the Word lawfully ordained (WCF) or ordinarily a minister of the Word? (RCNZ Church order) The advice given was that there is no practical contradiction between WCF 27/4 and CO art. 57 since under extraordinary circumstances a ruling elder might have to administer the sacraments where the minister suddenly fell ill (cf. Church Order Commentary of the RCNZ) or in a home mission situation. Another matter concerning the WCF doctrine on the Christian Sabbath was deferred until the next meeting.

Rev Jim Klazinga closed the meeting with prayer.

**Hans Vaatstra**

## WELLINGTON PRESBYTERY REPORT – 6TH NOVEMBER, 2004

The Presbytery met on Saturday morning in Wellington, at the Wellington church building. Wellington presbytery normally meets on Friday evening and Saturday morning. However, due to the small agenda, the sessions elected to meet on Saturday only. The meeting was chaired by Rev. Jan Lion-Cachet, who called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and asked the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal selection 184 and then read John 14:22-31 and John 16:5-15, expounding briefly on these passages of scripture concerning the promise and work

of the Holy Spirit. Rev. Lion Cachet led in prayer before welcoming all the delegates and visitors.

The CO Article 47 questions were answered by Foxton, Palmerston North and Wellington delegates, and each church also reported on blessings experienced by their congregations. There was a time of prayer for each of the churches answering the questions.

Masterton thanked the Presbytery for assisting them with pulpit supply and informed the Presbytery that Rev. Raymond Sikkema (a retired minister from the URC) would be in Masterton from December 2004 to February 2005, God willing, and that no pulpit supply would be required during this period. Discussion followed on the need for a colloquium doctum to be conducted. Presbytery decided to conduct an informal colloquium doctum with Rev. Sikkema.

Foxton Session had been requested by the previous Presbytery meeting to formulate an amendment to the Wellington Presbytery standing rules to formalise procedures for preliminary colloquia docta for ministers from non-sister churches. They moved that the proposed amendment to the Standing Rules of Wellington Presbytery Art VII be accepted. There was discussion on the content of the amendment: however, after a time it was decided that Presbytery take no action on this amendment to the Standing Rules.

Foxton session had overtured Presbytery to present to Synod 2005 a scheme substituting for the present one of calling ministers from non-sister churches. Rev. Zuidema introduced the overture to Presbytery. After discussion it was decided

that we take no action on this overture.

The OMB requested that Rev. Stephen 't Hart visit the March 2005 Presbytery meeting in Hastings to speak about his work in Papua New Guinea. Rev. Hoyt moved that this portion of the meeting be open to the Hastings congregation. The motion was carried and it was suggested that this address to Presbytery be held during the Friday evening session.

Rev. Hoyt introduced Br Don Wallace (current moderator of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand) to the meeting, who spoke to us about his knowledge and experience in Sudan. He and Rev. Ian McIver had recently been to Kenya and the Sudan, to explore the possibility of mission work there, especially the setting up of a small training college in the Southern Sudan, in association with the Presbyterian Church of the Sudan. Don spoke to the Presbytery of this, and the needs in the Sudan, and Northern Kenya. He mentioned the possibility of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand co-operating in this work.

Anthony de Vries later addressed Presbytery about concerns that he and others have about the unrighteous legislation that is being promoted by our present Government, especially in regards to the Civil Union Bill. He encouraged the delegates to take action, and has prepared and printed a leaflet for distribution to households.

The Presbytery ended in good time after lunch.

**Chris Kavanagh, reporter for Faith in Focus.**

*Reprints of articles in  
Faith in Focus can be  
obtained by contacting  
the Editor*

## Auckland Men's Training Day

On Saturday the 30th of October 2004 the Pukekohe Reformed Church hosted a Presbytery Training Day, entitled "Revitalising the Church" and led by Andrew Young, the Principal of Grace Theological College. Andrew took us through 'The Need of the Hour' (looking at spiritual maturity and functional effectiveness), 'In Search of Leaders' (about the difference between this world's leadership model and God's), and 'Revitalising the Church' (seeing what scripture said about a faithful church and those in it). Andrew gave many examples from his own ministry in what was a packed presentation. There was time set aside for discussion groups after the first two topics and a general discussion at the end of the day.

We warmly thanked Andrew for his time and work he put into this and are also thankful to the Pukekohe brethren for capably providing for us.

