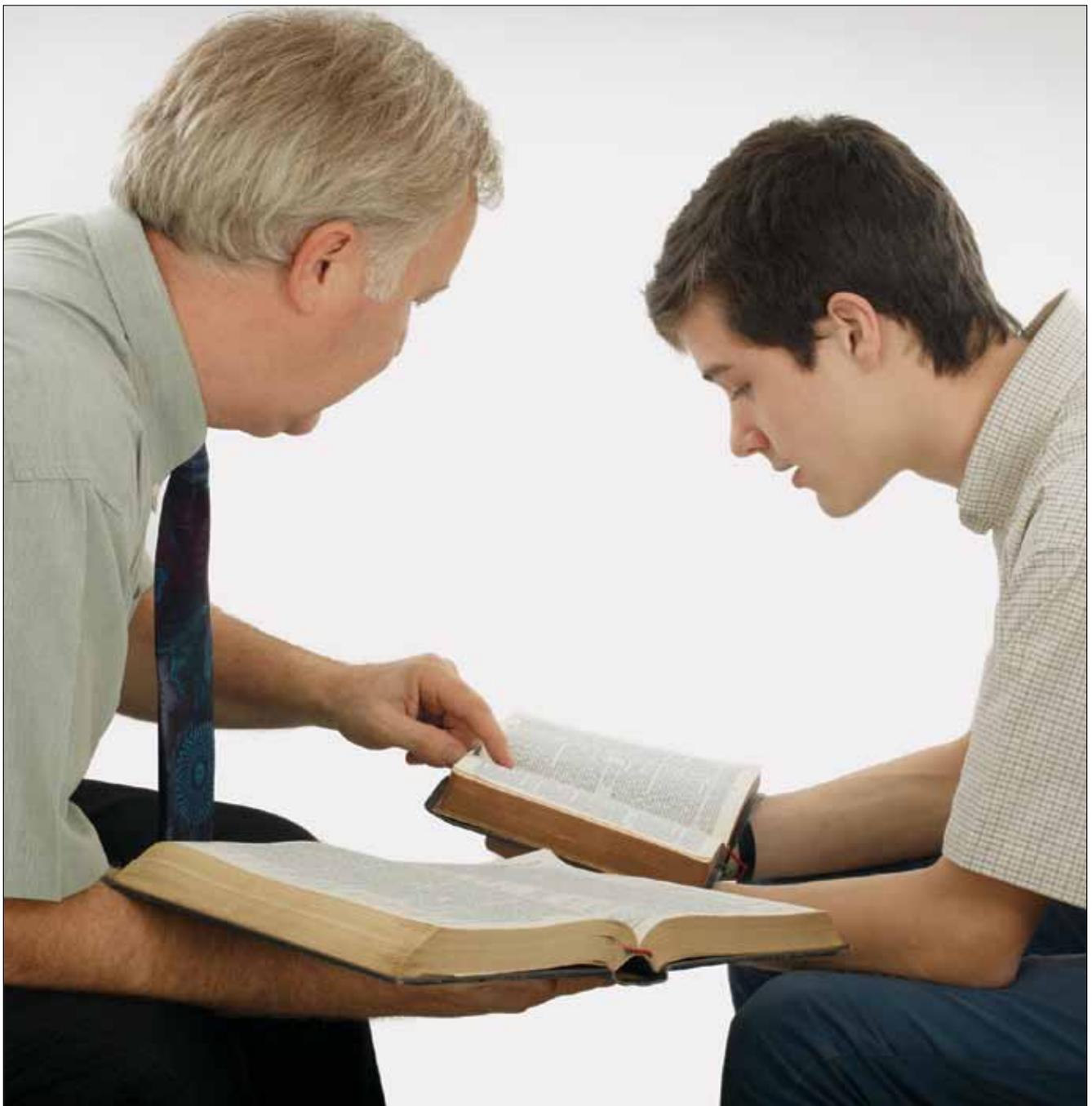


faith in  
**focus**

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Reformed Churches  
of New Zealand

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Appoint mature men

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## Editorial

Discussion about office-bearers is quite common in Reformed circles. Many books have been written, sermons preached, conversations had over coffee and many lectures by theological professors have been listened to by up-and-coming pastors etc.

At least once, or maybe twice a year, comes the call for nominations for an elder or deacon or both. Every communicant member in the RCNZ is expected to vote and to consider prayerfully the biblical qualifications for men who are under consideration for the respective offices.

It's not a popularity contest, nor is it a frivolous matter. The church is not just another community-based organisation like Lions and Rotary, etc. It is the Bride of Christ; and those men who would be officers in His church need to be chosen with the utmost care. After all, "our" churches are actually churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When considering elders and deacons there is a lot to keep in mind, given the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Mr Peter Moelker looks at deacons who learn on the fly. He asks - would you entrust your life to an untrained pilot or surgeon who has no training and is going to learn on the fly? Mr Andy van Ameyde and Mr Paul Davey give some very careful consideration to the elder's character and calling. Mr Richard Van-noort reviews Lawrence R. Eyres's book, *The Elders of the Church*. This book is a must for every church library and necessary for every member of the church to read.

Mrs Sally Davey gives some insight into some notable businessmen who also wrote hymns in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Mr Jack Sawyer give us the first instalment of "*The Glorious New Zealand Experiment*" which was one of many essays in the book *Confident of Better Things* by the OPC. I am sure you will enjoy reading his perspective on the history of the RCNZ.

Mr Barry James reports on his mission work in the very fertile "Pearl of Africa", Mbale, Uganda.

Mrs Harriet Haverland is back with us again this year producing the Gleanings section of the magazine.

Finally, on behalf of the Faith in Focus team, I would like to take the opportunity to wish you all a blessed new year and trust that the Lord will grant you all His continued grace.

## Erratum:

In the November 2011 issue (p. 10) a reference to an evening hymn of John Ellerton's entitled "Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear" was incorrect. This hymn was written by John Keble. The hymn should have been "Saviour, again, to Thy dear name we raise". Apologies from the author of the article.

Cover image: Crestock.com

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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 Dort, 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.

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# Appoint mature men (1)

## Why Deacons' who "learn on the fly" are bound to have a crash landing

**This article was originally a talk given at the Deacons Conference in early 2011 and has been abridged with permission of the author.**

**Peter Moelker**

You are in the operating theatre, requiring urgent by-pass surgery. You chat to the surgeon, and ask him where he went to medical school – and he answers, as he reaches for his scalpel, “well, , I’ve never had any training, I think it is best to “learn on the fly.” Would you sleep peacefully?

It’s time for that family trip which you have planned for for years. You’re flying over the Pacific Ocean, when the stewardess announces that the captain is opening up the cockpit for travellers to catch a glimpse of what really happens in an airplane and how the plane flies. As you’re looking around, you ask the pilot about the buttons on the control panel and what they are for, and are surprised to hear the response ... “oh those, I’m not really sure yet, but I’ll find out eventually, shall we press one and find out?” You are a little taken aback, but regaining your composure you ask if the pilot could share some things with your children about what it is that a pilot does. The pilot responds, “well, that is a good question, I don’t really know, but I’ve been told that I will learn on the fly. You better go back to your seats now, I see there is a red light flashing and I should probably find out what it means. Enjoy the flight!” Would you finish your flight with a sense of joy and peace and confidence in your pilot?

No! You would not. In fact, you laugh at the absolute foolishness of such an idea! A surgeon who learns on the fly! Never! A pilot who learns on the fly! Never! And yet, what if I told

you that we accept a situation in the church of Jesus Christ which is even more foolish than such a scenario?! 1 Timothy 4:7-8 says **“have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”** In other words, when it comes to training for fields of physical labour, that’s good. It has value and we understand the need for training, whether it’s a rugby match, football game, your career, whatever. You train. You practice. You learn. You prepare. But you know what? The Bible says, THAT training only has temporary value. The Rugby World Cup will come and go. Your career will come and go. But godliness has value for all things and is for this life and the next! And because

calling of a deacon. It is a high calling. Higher than a surgeon. Higher than a pilot. Why? Because being a deacon, like godliness, has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come!

Two things I want to do in this essay. First of all, I want to impress upon you the AWESOME PRIVILEGE OF THE CALLING TO BE A DEACON and secondly I want to impress upon you the BIBLICAL PORTRAIT OF THE CHARACTER OF A DEACON.

### **The awesome privilege of the calling to be a Deacon**

**1. To be a Deacon is a CALLING!**  
The Belgic Confession, Art.31 says this ...  
“We believe that the ministers of God’s Word, the elders, and the deacons, ought

“To be called to be a deacon, like a call to be a Christian disciple, begins with God!”

it endures forever, it requires all the more training, all the more practice, all the more learning, all the more dedication, all the more time. The things of God and godliness last forever and demand training, effort, blood, sweat, and tears. And yet, when it comes to the calling of a deacon, or the calling of an elder for that matter, I have heard more than once someone say, we don’t train, we simply learn on the fly! You would not give yourself to a pilot, to a surgeon who operated on such a philosophy, and make no mistake about it, no child of God will give themselves in trust to you as a deacon, if that is your view of the

to be chosen to their respective offices by a lawful election by the Church, with calling upon the name of the Lord, and in that order which the Word of God teaches. Therefore every one must take heed not to intrude himself by improper means, but is bound to wait till it shall please God to call him; that he may have testimony of his calling, and be certain and assured that it is of the Lord.” Here, we see, the calling of God to the office of deacon is a calling through the church, but it is a calling of God Himself.

To be called to be a deacon, like a call to be a Christian disciple, begins with God! In speaking to His disciples in John

15:16, Jesus makes clear that He is the One who calls us to discipleship. . **“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last.”** In Acts 6:3, seven men are chosen and then presented to the apostles who pray for them, lay their hands upon them, appointing them to this ministry. Though elected by the church, a deacon is called by God to this service.

This means two things of great importance for us when it comes to the office of deacon in our churches. First of all, no one appoints THEMSELVES a deacon. No one has a born natural right to be a deacon. No one is to “intrude”

himself into the office of deacon, or presume he should be, -- unless called by God, and to do so would be to rush ahead of God and presume upon God. We wait upon Him, recognizing that our calling may be elsewhere. On the other hand, if God calls you to be a deacon, you can be certain and assured that it is not the congregation’s will, not the session’s will, not simply the fate of the ballot, but you are a deacon because *it is of the Lord*. As Ephesians 1:11 tells us, the Lord **“works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will.”** You are not a deacon by accident. You are not a deacon by default, but in conformity with the purpose of His will. That means

that any deacon, or any elder for that matter, who says in his heart or says out loud at a session meeting – I can’t wait to end my term as elder or deacon, is really saying, I can’t wait to be done with this burdensome calling of God upon my life! I wish He hadn’t called me. I wish I could give up serving Christ. I don’t want to serve Him anymore. Such sentiments are a shameful reflection of our lack of understanding of the fact that to be a deacon is a CALLING from God. It is not something we pick up and throw down like a sack of tomatoes.

## 2. *To be a Deacon is a privilege!*

To see our calling as a deacon as a burden rather than as a privilege is to dishonour the God who calls us into the service of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 8:4 is helpful here as the apostle Paul describes the attitude of the folks in the Macedonian churches as they considered the needs of God’s people elsewhere: **“they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.”** They pleaded with Paul for the opportunity to give, to serve, to minister, to deacon. They sought this special opportunity! Kind of like people around New Zealand this year in anticipation of the Rugby World Cup. Volunteering to have something to do during the games just so they can be near the players, near the excitement, and people are eager, urgent, looking for the privilege. The opening verse of 1 Timothy 3:1 speaks specifically about elders, but can be applied to deacons as well ... **“Here is a trustworthy saying: if anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.”** The biblical picture of the office of elder, the ministry of the word, and the office of deacon, the ministry of service, is one for which men plead to have the opportunity to exercise! We are to have men that set their “heart” on service, and who “desire” this task. In other words, to be a deacon is a privilege we beg for, we have a heart for, and we desire! It is not simply a duty to be borne with for a few years until you can get out ... ..

And why is it a privilege? Colossians 3:22-24 helps us here. **“Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you, and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the**



**Lord Christ you are serving.”** It is the Lord Christ you are serving! Notice, the Bible doesn’t say “pretend it is ... ” or “imagine that it is ... ” It says, IT IS the Lord Christ you are serving. And this was to slaves in the Roman Empire! I know brothers, to be a deacon in our churches can have its challenges, but never will it be like slavery in the Roman empire. And if Christian slaves were called to understand the privilege of serving Christ in the Roman Empire, Christian deacons are called to understand the privilege of serving Christ today. Remember those words from Matthew 25:34-40 where Jesus speaks of the sheep and the goats? **“Whatever you did ... you did for me.”** You did for me! Jesus says. Visiting that widow – for Christ. Bringing that meal – for Christ. Encouraging that church member – for Christ. What a privilege!!!

### 3. *To be a Deacon is awesome!*

There are not many passages of Scripture that deal specifically with the qualifications for deacon, so you would think that we would know them backwards and forwards and that they would inform our understanding and practice of the diaconal ministry. One verse, though, that sometimes is overlooked in many conversations of the diaconate is a crucial verse in 1 Timothy 3:10 which says of the deacon ... **“They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.”** The word “testing” there means “to evaluate, to put to the test, to examine, to scrutinize.” Now, when we find a “must” in the Bible, I think you would agree that we need to give it full weight and consideration, and that is why, of course, we never ordain a man to the office of deacon in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand until he has first been **tested** as to his qualifications and gifts for the office and only after such a period of testing, do we actually ordain a man to such an office. OR DO WE?

Now the Bible doesn’t say how long, or in what form, a man should be tested, but listen to what John Calvin says at this point on this verse ... “and this proving process is not for a single hour but consists of a long period of trial. In a word, the appointment of deacons should not be a rash and random choice of any who come to hand, but men who have commended themselves by their past manner of life should be selected, so that as a result of full inquiry they are found to be suitable.”<sup>1</sup>

Why a period of testing? The same

reason you do not ordain a minister who happens to be male and available, but has never studied what it means to be a minister, how to preach and teach the Bible, or minister to God’s people. A man who desires to be a minister must train, be tested, and we don’t just ordain any man with a pulse. Unthinkable you say! Just as unthinkable for a deacon, according to Scripture.

Sometimes, you would get the impression from some churches that the main qualification to be a deacon, or elder, is a willingness to raise your hand. If you are male, alive, and not over the

worship in awe of God, we serve in awe of God, we “deacon” in awe of God.

As verse 13 of 1 Timothy 3 says, **“Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.”** Serving well as a deacon leads to great assurance of faith! What a calling!

The story is told that when during World War II the Netherlands were occupied by Germans, the deacons of the Reformed Church assumed the care for the politically persecuted, supplying food and providing secret refuge. Realizing what was happening, the Germans

“The deacon is not a spiritual amateur. He is not a spiritual wimp. Sometimes you are given the impression that the elder is supposed to be the spiritual one and the deacon is the practical one ....”

age of 95, you’re in, if you’ll take it ... please?! Brothers, that is a shameful indictment of our view of SERVICE in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not the man who must decide, “am I willing to serve Jesus Christ as a deacon?” ... It is Jesus Christ who must decide, “is this man qualified to serve in my army!”

**He calls men to serve Him whose hearts burn with love and passion for Him.** Jesus Christ does not beg men to enlist as servants of the King, He calls them by His sovereign grace, equips them by His Word and Spirit, and gives them a heart that is willing! The calling of a Deacon is AWESOME because it is God who equips us for service. That is an AWESOME calling and one that we dare not take lightly, speak of lightly, prepare for lightly!

Service of God demands the same attitude as the worship of God. Hebrews 12:28 **“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire!”** We

decreed that the elective office of deacon should be eliminated. No more deacons! said the Germans. The Reformed Synod on 17 July, 1941 resolved this: “Whoever touches the diaconate interferes with what Christ has ordained as the task of the church ... whoever lays hands on diakonia lays hands on worship!” The Germans apparently backed down.<sup>2</sup>

Would you stand up to the Nazi regime to uphold your office!?! If John Key said give it up today! Would you head for the door, back in the car, go home, and say thank you, it’s over?! Or is it too AWESOME for you to consider giving up?! Is it that important to you? It will be, if you understand the AWESOME PRIVILEGE OF THE CALLING TO BE A DEACON.

### **The biblical portrait of the character of a Deacon**

#### 1. *To Serve as a Deacon demands a certain character!*

Now, it’s interesting to me, that whereas our church order has an article on the

ruling elder and the deacon, both articles deal with the “TASK” of the office-bearer, but not the character. “The task of the deacons is; to diligently collect alms and other contributions of charity, to faithfully and diligently distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require after mutual counsel, to visit and comfort the distressed, to encourage the congregation to show Christian mercy to those in need at home and abroad, to render an account to the session.” Now that is all about what the Deacon DOES, but not about who the deacon IS. Article 3 of the church order does mention the “biblical requirements for office-bearers” but does not go on to define them.

one who applies the knowledge of God in an obedient life.

And when we turn to the classic passage in 1 Timothy 3 which lays out the qualifications of the deacon, again we find that the main emphasis is not on what a deacon DOES, but who a deacon IS! Note especially 1 Timothy 3:9, “keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.” The word “deep truths” there means “mystery.” It is the same sense that is conveyed by the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:7,8,10. The “mystery” is revealed by the Holy Spirit of God to His people. It is the deep things of God, the deep truths of the Christian faith that the Holy Spirit

Talking out of both sides of your mouth. Saying one thing at the session meeting and another thing when you’re visiting widow Vanderhoving-schaffstrabroek. It is especially important, the Bible says, that a deacon’s speech be trustworthy, true, free of deception, that he may have a clear conscience.

According to the form for the ordination of deacons ... “the deacons should set an example of **godliness** in their personal life, in their home life, and in their relations with their fellow-men. Thus conducting themselves as worthy **representatives of Christ’s loving care**, and faithfully ministering in His name to those who are the beloved of God.” Clearly the main qualification of a deacon is that he be God’s man not a numbers man!

“Our definition of a deacon must first of all come from God’s Word, not from the culture, not from our history, not from our tradition even, but the Word of God.”

When we turn to Scripture, we find that the overwhelming qualifications of a deacon are a matter of who a deacon IS – his character.

Take Acts 6 for example.

What is the qualification for deacon in this passage? Well, of course, a deacon has to be young ... a deacon has to be good with numbers ... a deacon has to be good at walking up and down the aisle and be nimble in passing a plate or offering bag, and all those other kinds of things ... NO NO NO! Men who are “FULL OF THE SPIRIT and WISDOM”(Acts 6:3). Stephen, “A MAN FULL OF FAITH and of the HOLY SPIRIT”(Acts 6:5). The deacon is not a spiritual amateur. He is not a spiritual wimp. Sometimes you are given the impression that the elder is supposed to be the spiritual one and the deacon is the practical one ... NO NO NO. Faith filled. Spirit filled. Wisdom filled. Rock Solid Trust in Jesus Christ (Faith filled). Spirit-filled, which means of course, someone who has the fruit of the Spirit hanging all over Him – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Not knowledge filled, wisdom filled –

reveals through His Word. It is the truth of God. The deep things. A deacon holds to the deep things of God. The Deacon is not a spiritual dwarf, but a spiritual powerhouse! The Deacon is not compared to the elder here as a novice in spiritual things compared to one mature in the faith. The deacon doesn’t swim in the kiddie pool and the elders in the deep end. On the contrary ... a deacon is to keep hold of the “deep truths” of the faith! And he does so with a clear conscience.

This means that a deacon not only subscribes to the four forms of unity but has read them. Not only has he read them, but he believes them with a clear conscience. Not only does he truly believe them, but He “keeps hold” of them, lives by them. He is not a hypocrite.

Now, interestingly enough, if you compare the list of qualifications of an elder and deacon in this passage, there is a difference, or an emphasis shall we say, with regard to the deacon. It is pointed out in verse 8 that a deacon must be “sincere” – it actually means “not double-tongued.” Imagine that! Gruesome.

## 2. To Serve as a Deacon demands a faithful portrait!

We see in the very establishment of the New Testament office of Deacon, even though there are deep roots in the Old Testament, we see the very heart of a deacon’s task is SERVANTHOOD. To display to the world, that the church of Jesus Christ, in imitation of its Saviour and Lord, has come not to be served, but to serve. In Acts 6:2 the apostles do not want to neglect the ministry of the Word “in order to wait on tables.” The word to “wait on” comes from the same root word which is translated to “serve” – diakonia. The diaconate is a “waiting on” others ministry – it is, at its heart, all about being a SERVANT.

Now immediately, you are asking yourself the question, why should I get all excited and fired up about a life which and calling which is dedicated to SERVICE? Mark 10:42-45 is, of course, the classic passage which deals with any deacons who may be suffering with a superiority complex in the church. **This is the passage that demonstrates the utter antithesis between the principles of the world and the principles of the Kingdom of God.** This is the passage that clarifies, for every deacon, your role in the church and in the Kingdom of God and defines for you what your ministry ought to portray to your brothers and sisters in the church and to the world we are called to serve. As Jesus says in Mark 10:44, “**whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.**” Notice: the biblical portrait of a deacon is not one who lords it over the people of God and abuses their office and authority by seeing God’s people as MY servants, but rather the biblical portrait is a man who

understands that I am here to serve them. And notice that greatness means being a servant "of all!" All kinds of men? All men – as in every man? In either case, servant without distinction.

Why is that so hard? **Because it is difficult to serve, when instead of being appreciated you are criticised.**"

It's difficult to serve because it demands time, organising, meetings, visits, reports, time away from family. And to be a servant **of all?! Even the worst of people?**

And the portrait that is held up to us? That of the Saviour! **"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant"** (Phil.2:6,7). Deacons are to be faithful portraits (or "likenesses") of THE DEACON – the Lord Jesus.

The portrait of the deacon is not one of grasping, but of letting go. Not a portrait of a ruler, but a server. Not a portrait of a master, but a portrait of THE SERVANT!

According to our form for the ordination of deacons ... this is your task "the work of the deacons consists in the faithful and diligent ingathering of the offerings which God's people in gratitude make to their Lord, in the prevention of poverty, in the **humble and cheerful** distribution of gifts according to the need, and in the relief of the distressed both with kindly deeds and words of consolation and cheer from Scripture."

The deacon's role is characterised by humility, mercy and kindness, in imitation of our Master. The Master who said **"For**

**everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted"** (Luke 14:11). To serve as a deacon demands a faithful portrait.

### 3. *To Serve as a Deacon demands a return to the Bible!*

We believe grand things about the Bible!

In the Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch.1, pgh.10, this is what we believe ... "The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture."

What is a Deacon? What kind of man ought he to be? What kind of ministry is he to perform? Ever and again, we must return to Scripture for the answer to that question. Do our congregations know the answers to those questions? Are they aware, for instance, that one of the most important qualifications of a deacon is that he be full of the Holy Spirit? Full of wisdom? Are they aware that he must keep hold of the deep truths of the Faith? Do **you** know that is who you are called to be?

Our definition of deacon must first of all come from God's Word, not from the culture, not from our history, not from our tradition even, but the Word of God. And when we go to the Bible, we find the **AWESOME PRIVILEGE OF THE CALLING TO BE A DEACON** and the **BIBLICAL PORTRAIT OF THE CHARACTER OF A DEACON**. And when we test ourselves against these biblical truths, we pray to God that we would

grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ that we might fulfil such a high and holy calling, and when we find ourselves coming up short, we seek forgiveness, perhaps repent of our low views of service in Christ's church, pray for a renewed sense of calling, a revival of the work of the Spirit, and look for our faithful God to use us as **SERVANTS OF THE KING**, that others might see **JESUS' love, Jesus' mercy, Jesus' grace, Jesus' serving heart, through us ... to HIS GLORY and HIS HONOUR. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."**

1 Peter 4:10-11

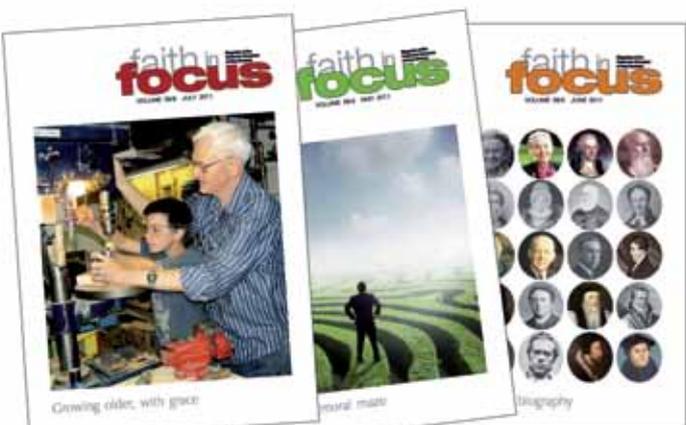
### Notes

- 1 John Calvin as quoted in the very helpful study on the *"The Biblical Qualifications for Elders and Deacons"* by Archibald Alexander Allison. Published by the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. p. 43. 1998.
- 2 As told by Frederick Herzog in the book *Service of Christ* and quoted by George C. Fuller in the book *"Resources for Deacons: Love Expressed Through Mercy Ministries,"* by Timothy J. Keller. p. 11. Published by Christian Education and Publications of the Presbyterian Church in America. 1985.

*Mr Peter Moelker is the Minister of the Word and Sacraments in the Reformed Church of Avondale.*

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See page 2 for details

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# Appoint mature men (2)

## Elders: Their character and calling

### Andy van Ameyde and Paul Davey

Many of our congregations, most years, will call men to the office of elder. Most of us use mechanisms which go something like:

- 1 The Session asks the congregation for nominations.
- 2 The Session normally decides on two nominees for each officebearer position to be filled, after considering their qualifications to serve.
- 3 The man with a simple majority of votes is called. In most cases he will accept the call and is duly ordained or installed.

While the process looks simple there is much more to it than may be the case in electing the local bowling club committee, for example. These are men who are “called” (as opposed to “elected”) to oversee the preparation of the Bride of Christ ... and so their character and their calling (or work) will have a profound impact on the beauty and holiness of the Bride.

Over the years we have noticed that questions about who ought to be an elder and what his responsibilities are have often been answered too simply, answered incorrectly or left unanswered

altogether. The answers are often clearer in the actions churches take than in what they say. Even though we don't have all the answers ourselves, we decided to try to make some observations that we hope are helpful. Answers to these questions are vital to the health of our Reformed Churches; in fact to any church of the Lord Jesus. He has created the office and given elders the task of feeding, caring for and loving His people in their leadership of them.

We have entitled this article about the eldership: “Their character” and “Their calling”. If we get the “character” part right then the “calling” or “work” part is likely to fall readily into place. Therefore in this article we will focus on the “character ” question.

### The character of elders

**1: Elders need to be wise.** Most of us are very familiar with the qualifications for office listed in the pastoral epistles of 1 Timothy and Titus. If, however, we asked church members to sum up what a qualified office bearer looks like in just one sentence, we think many would say “give us a man with godly wisdom”, and maybe remind themselves of the very request for wisdom made by Solomon. Perhaps they'd go to the book of James

and quote Chap 1 verse 5 where we read: “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to him”.

And so the simple recipe could be naively applied ... find a man with the listed qualifications and then pray for wisdom for him and it will be given ... so simple, or is it? We wonder.

James 1:5 is to be read in the context of the preceding 3 verses. With this perspective we find that wisdom is being asked for in trials and the testing of faith. It is these very types of situations that develop godly wisdom and these “sanctifying mercies” come with time. So, maturity, completeness and wisdom are born out of life's experiences, which ordinarily come with years of life experience and trial. We usually don't see them in youths. Hence the name “elder”, and not the name “younger”. Thus, always, elders ought to be “older” in terms of wisdom and biblical common sense. They are to be wiser than serpents (and innocent as doves). They will not take everything at surface, face-value but rather apply experience in life and in the Scriptures. They won't give “canned” or “rote” answers from their elders' manual in order to say something sensible. A good definition of Wisdom is given in the NIV Reformational Study Bible and is found in the footnote to James 1:5.

“Wisdom is understood to include: knowledge, insight, prudence, shrewdness, wariness, learning, guidance, competence, resourcefulness, planning and even heroic strength.”

**2: Elders will be knowledgeable:** Following closely behind the need for wisdom a man must also be knowledgeable (Prov 9:10; 11:9; 13:16; 15:2; 28:2, Titus 1:1). This must be biblical, theological knowledge. Whilst it is true that a ruling elder may not require the

“A ruling elder ... requires a substantial knowledge of the Bible with enough depth to teach its truths, “smell” error, diagnose spiritual problems ...”

same breadth and depth of knowledge as the minister who is going to preach on a full-time basis, he still requires a substantial working knowledge of the Bible with enough depth to teach its truths, “smell” error, diagnose spiritual problems in the flock and prescribe their cures; as well as to make his co-equal contributions in the elders’ court to the plural oversight of congregational worship and of the preaching and teaching ministry within his congregation. Thus, through reading and study and attendance at appropriate conferences, the elder is to have an ongoing education for the Lord as his effectiveness in his calling is honed.

A knowledge of human nature, behaviour and need is also essential. We need to take care that sin is not excused or covered over by a “newly discovered” medical condition or diagnosis.

**3: Elders ought to be winsome** (so far as it depends on you live at peace with all men), even though they will often be asked to make “tough” decisions (rebuke, correct). They are to be upright, sober, wise, temperate, humble and good communicators of the truth (see the Pastoral epistles, Prov 17:27). Their home and family life, and their work life, is to be in order and an example for others to follow.

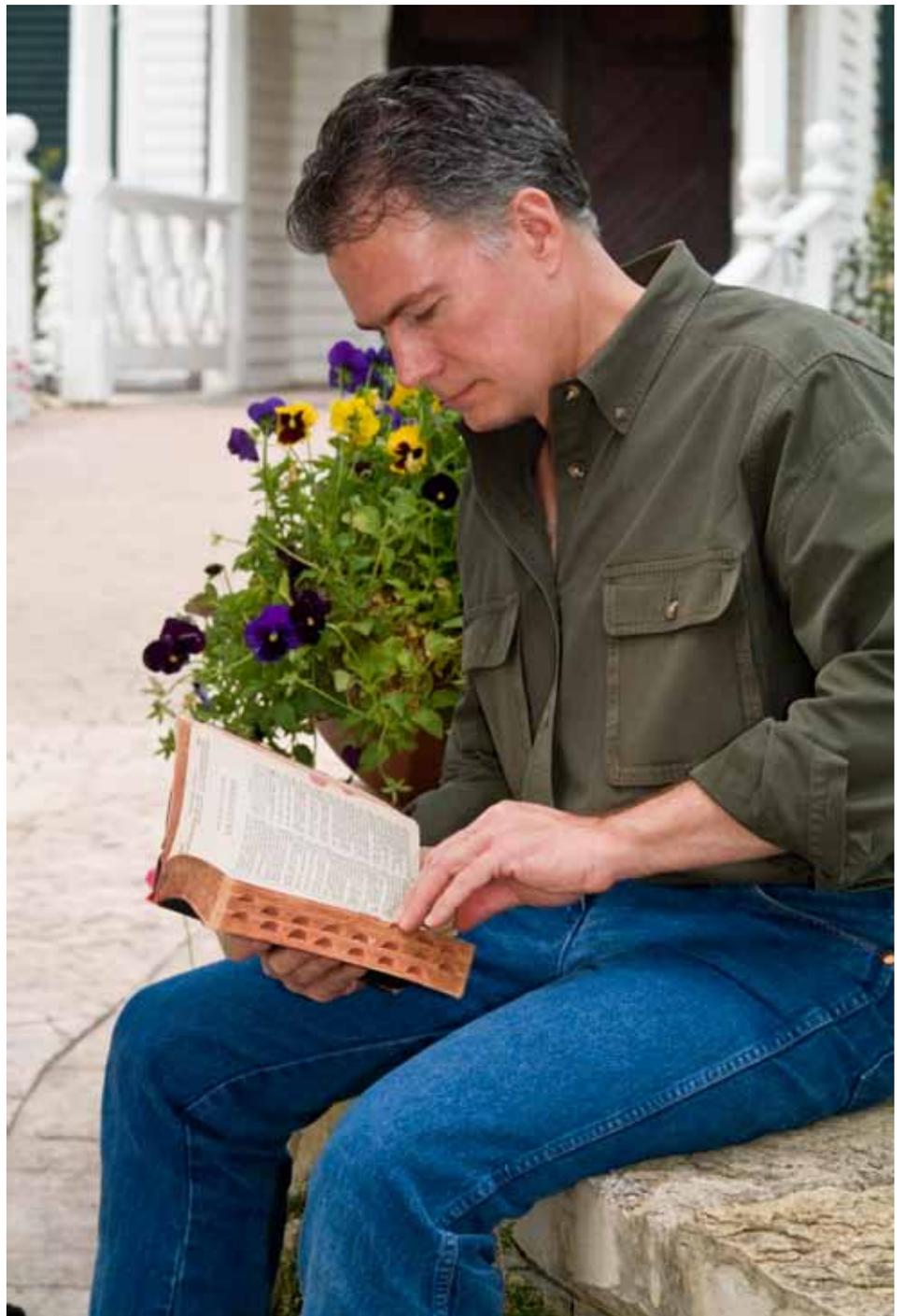
**4: Elders will have a sense of the gravity and enormity of the task.** They will know that serving “successfully” is impossible without the Spirit of God (unless the Lord builds the house those who do so labour in vain) being with him. They will operate in the fear of the Lord; their fears of men will be dealt with and they will seek no favour from the same. (Jeremiah 1:17)

**5: Elders will be able to plan succession in an orderly fashion:** Elders need to be aware of a number of unhelpful drivers when calling for nominations for new elders. Two that we are particularly concerned about are: “we need new blood” and “the eldership is an old-boys’ club”. Notwithstanding that there may, sadly, at times be some truth in the latter accusation, these motives for bringing new elders into the elders’ court are not right. We do not “need” new men in the eldership unless God gives us qualified men available to serve. If the elders’ court is perceived as an old boys’ club, we don’t deal with that in a godly way by diluting the current membership with “new blood”. If old boys’ clubs exist then

they will likely be characterised by self-indulgence, self-interest, and a lack of care and wisdom. The offending *old boys* need to be dealt with according to their sin and some may have to be removed. We need to remember, the elders serve in a court, not a board, executive committee or management team. As such they are to apply the law of Him who is above. So, their style ought not to be stodgy, deadening and dour, though the substance regarding love for God, obedience to Him, and devotion to His worship in age-old principle ought to be unchanging. Unwise elders can get this quite wrong especially when driven by

the prospect of a two year break from service or the like.

**6: Not all godly men need to be called:** Not every upright-living, God-honouring, wise man, who loves the church, and has his family in good order, is called by God to be an elder. His personal circumstances may be that he is unsuitable (due to work or family demands, for example). He mightn’t have some of the gifts – for example he might not be able to communicate that well – and that doesn’t reflect badly on him at all. The kingdom job for him is a different one; he is not the lesser for it. Further, with time, effort and grace, some



“Qualification is not defined by showing potential. We oughtn’t ordain on the basis that the candidate “will grow into the office” or “he’ll get there”. Neither should being ordained be the equivalent of joining the Koru Club; becoming an elder does not mean “I’ve made it!” It is not fair to the man or the church.”

of the requisite gifts may be cultivated to the point where a call comes. If unqualified men are ordained then the church will reap the consequences and the men themselves will too. (Ezek 34). If **the eldership** decides that there is a “need” for an extra elder, and regardless of the gifts and graces in “available” men, appoints one, that is not an act of faith. Maybe God has not provided qualified men at this stage as a test of our faith, or to teach us to pray and ask Him to provide? Maybe the men who are serving now have to work a bit harder? Maybe God is impressing on us the need to disciple and train men who will be qualified to serve well?

**7: Acting with propriety:** We are keen to add one last point on the matter of propriety, conflict of interest, declaration of interests and acting impartially. In our denomination, which is small (and there are, providentially, so many close familial relationships between people), the temptation to breach these principles is more intense. Biblical principles that address these matters, e.g. “Let another praise thee, and not thine own lips” (Prov. 27: 2), are important to observe. Thus, we see the impropriety of promoting those close to us to office; for positions of perceived prominence, influence, honour or power. Those close to us, in this context, are an extension of

ourselves. Fathers to children and their spouses, children to parents, uncles, nephews all come within this orb. The more distant the relationship the less improper any “good word”, nomination or the like becomes. There is no “one rule covers all”, but we can say that the degree to which this principle has been ignored in our circles means that to “get on track” we should err on the side of care rather than laxity and also take note of where not heeding such practice has led to serious consequences. A good example is Eli and the promotion of his sons (1 Samuel 1, 2).

**8: The calling of the unqualified:** Over the years we’ve also seen some practical consequences of the churches ordaining unqualified men. One of the more important is that we say to the whole church, and to the men ordained – “qualification doesn’t matter.” It doesn’t matter that Mr X can’t fulfil his calling properly! – really?! Qualification is not defined by showing potential. We oughtn’t ordain on the basis that the candidate “will grow into the office” or “he’ll get there”. Neither should being ordained be the equivalent of joining the Koru Club; becoming an elder does not mean “I’ve made it!” It is not fair to the man or the church. The unqualified man is not capable of providing the oversight of the flock and worship, wise counsel,

biblical instruction and discipleship required of him. Sometimes it is because of a lack of qualification for the office that we see men majoring on minors, even trying to suppress the efforts of those working to serve properly (e.g. out of subconscious fear of exposure of their weakness, ignorance as to what is right or fear of having to face the music where they become unpopular). Weak, unqualified men are often more concerned about style than substance; and will often waffle to cover up their lack of wisdom and knowledge. And, because they are ordained they don’t see any need to get past that; they’ve made it! Others become authoritarian rulers. This is a sign of weakness, too. However the lack of qualification manifests itself, young men are given a wrong model of the office to aspire to. The office is degraded and the office-bearers do not enjoy the respect they need more to win than demand.

**9: Concluding comments:** We acknowledge that some have stated that we, the co-authors of the article, have set the bar too high. We are open to discuss this further but we think the bar ought to be set high for the bride of Christ and that with so much at stake too high is better than too low.

Are elders to be perfect, then? That of course is impossible, for they too are Romans 7 men this side of the grave. But the tenor, and overwhelming trend in their lives, should mirror the Head of the Church’s requirement for their character and calling.

*Mr Andy van Ameyde is an elder and Mr Paul Davey a member of the Reformed Church of Dovedale.*

## Do you have a story to tell?

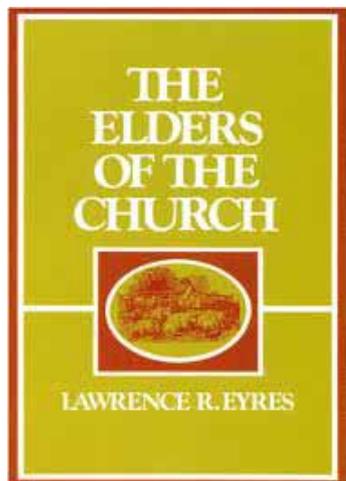
Did you immigrate to New Zealand in the 1950’s? Have you got a story to tell about why you came to NZ and what you found, and the life you experienced? Then why don’t you let the rest of the readers hear about your story. I am sure that there are many anecdotes, humorous or serious, which would be interesting for the readership. I look forward to hearing from you. Just remember to try to keep your story to about 1400 words.

## Book in focus

### ***The Elders of the Church***

by Lawrence R. Eyres, P& R Publishing, 1980

Reviewed by Richard Vannoort,  
Dovedale RC



A compact book of 69 pages (12 chapters), this gem is packed with useful information for church elders and men considering the eldership, as well as congregational members who have the important responsibility of assessing men suitable for nomination to the office of elder.

In the introduction, Eyres states his conviction that the correct biblical position is that of two ordained offices in the church – elder and deacon, and that the church is to be governed by a plurality of elders. While the eldership is one office, 1 Timothy 5:17 does enunciate a difference within that office between those who rule well (all elders) and those who not only rule well but also ‘labour in the Word and doctrine’ (pastors).

In the first chapter, entitled that elders are ‘Made by God, not men’, Eyres uses Acts 20:28 to defend this proposition. Using Ephesians 4:7-11, the Apostle Paul tells us that Christ has purchased gifts for His church by His atoning death on the cross. On His ascension to heaven, he poured out those gifts upon His church. A distinction is made between the *gift* of the Holy Spirit given to all believers, and the many and varied *gifts* he gives to men in His church for the purposes of ruling, teaching and perfecting the saints.

Given God alone makes elders, Eyres points out that this has three important implications. Firstly, great

care must be exercised when choosing elders. Secondly, congregations must not determine in advance how many elders they will have, for the church will certainly pay for its folly when men are chosen to meet that number who turn out to be scripturally unqualified. And we can be certain that God *will* send such men as needed in due time. Thirdly and finally, if God makes elders, it is equally unwarranted to pass by the obviously God-made man for the unqualified man to this high office. This is a warning to all who may vote on popularity, social position or personal preference. But if God has evidently laid his hand on a less educated man, the nobody of limited income, let the church be sure to ordain such men too. To do otherwise is to give affront to the Head of the church!

In the second chapter, ‘Selected by the church’, Eyres reminds us that while God qualifies men with spiritual gifts to be elders, it is still the church itself that must do the choosing. It must learn to recognize those men so qualified and then proceed to set them apart to the holy office of elder. A very large share of the blame for misrule in our churches can be charged to the failure of congregations to select only God’s chosen men. Eyres points out how the apostle Paul entreats believers to “know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them (1 Thess 5:12, 13). The church must not only choose its leaders, it must do so wisely. It must have a true knowledge of the character and gifts of every man she would put in the place of rule. Part of the problem is also that so few men aspire to the office of elder, as 1 Tim 3:1 encourages, and they thus fail to prepare themselves accordingly. This is a suitable challenge to all biblically qualified men in Christ’s church.

‘Laboring in their calling’ is chapter 3. It points out that the work of the elders is not just sitting together as the court of the Lord, ruling for him, but as Christ’s undershepherds they must minister to the saints, seek the wandering sheep, and daily lift up the flock in prayer. In the fulfillment of their holy calling, they hold the keys to the health of the congregations under their rule. They exercise the keys of the kingdom (Matt 16:19, 18:18) for binding and loosing.

That biblical submission is due to elders is highlighted in chapter 4, but submission cannot be expected except where the congregation has wisely exercised its choice as to whom its elders should be.

Chapter 5, 6 and 7 examine the scriptural qualifications for eldership (1 Tim 3:2-7 & Titus 1:7-9), one by one, in good detail with biblical exegesis. An elder must be a man, and only men. He must have the positive qualifications required for rule, namely be blameless, husband of one wife, be vigilant, sober and of good behaviour, and given to hospitality. Of the general negative qualifications, he must not be given to wine, not a stubborn arrogant man, and not lusting after wealth. The two other qualifications are that he must not be a novice, and must have a good report. All of these above qualifications can best be summed up that he must be a stable, mature Christian. In addition, an elder must also exhibit two special qualifications: – be apt to teach and able to rule. Without these two gifts, the man is unqualified as an elder. They cannot be divided – the elder rules by teaching and he teaches by ruling. Eyres also explains the apostle Paul’s reasons for urging caution in the choice of elders, the dangers of poor eldership inflicting great damage outside the church, and the danger of the snare for the unworthy man should he be chosen.

No man can safely be ordained to the office of elder who does not possess *all* the biblically stated qualifications for that office. So these chapters serve to provide useful explanation both for the prospective elder to examine himself, and also for the congregation to make wise and biblically sound choices.

Having set down the biblical principles governing eldership, the remaining chapters cover more practical areas. Chapter 8, ‘Seeking the office and the man’, highlights the importance of men aspiring to the office and training themselves accordingly, as well as the church encouraging and training biblically qualified men, and teaching the congregation to exercise discernment in their search for candidates.

Chapter 9, ‘Screening procedures’, acknowledges that we rely on our Sovereign Lord’s provision, but it also provides some very useful check-lists for congregational members for screening a prospective elder regarding his church

life, family life and world affairs.

A training period, suggestions for training and testing the elder-elect, are discussed in chapter 10. 'Toward functioning elders', chapter 11, discusses the undershepherd's labour, especially in regards to teaching, ruling and prayer.

Chapter 12 focuses on divisions of labour within the one office. In God's providence, there is diversity even among the elder's labour: some have more free time and strength away from their worldly toils than others, some have greater family responsibilities, some have a stronger physique than others, and some retire with more vigour and good health for church work than others. Even with this diversity in labour, elders have common tasks: teaching, ruling, praying, spiritual oversight. Eyre encourages the use of district groups within the church, so that each elder has spiritual oversight

of individuals and families therein. Within the common functions of eldership, there are also areas of specialisation into which an elder may enter if he has special gifts and abilities:- some may be better at *teaching classes* such as catechism (they should all of course be able to teach one on one using God's Word), some may be more gifted as *personal counsellors*, some may have more God-given gifts for *organisation*, others for *leading worship* in the pastor's absence, others may be giants of *prayer*.

It may be useful to point out that this book is not written to provide practical examples and detailed guidance for situations that serving elders may face – such as refuting worldly issues like feminism, materialism, or for pastoring families in crisis, or seniors or those with differing addictions, visiting members, disciplining etc. Such a book will be found elsewhere.

I found Eyre's book an edifying read. It explains the importance of the office of elder in the government of Christ's church. It also explains that elders are made by God, not men, and underlines the responsibility and need for Christ's church to choose men wisely, based on biblical qualifications, not worldly or personal preferences. Explanations of the biblical qualifications for eldership and screening check-lists will prove most useful for professing members and prospective elders. Godly men also need to aspire to and train/be trained for the office. This book is worthy of recommendation, especially for those who desire to be elders, and for all communicant members of the church to better equip them to select biblically qualified men to the office of elder. Its great aim is that in all and through all, God's church may be ruled wisely and His name may be glorified.

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## Feminine focus

Sally Davey

# Hymns from the High Street

The commercial world is not the place one imagines hymns being written. Lofty thoughts and money-making would seem to be strange companions; and we more quickly apply adjectives like pragmatic, profit-maximising and action-driven to those engrossed in the world of business than we would credit them with being spiritually-minded. Nevertheless, the following stanzas were written by men who spent their lives in the marketplace:

*Spirit of our God descending,  
Fill our hearts with heavenly joy,  
Love with every passion blending,  
Pleasure that can never cloy;  
Thus provided, pardoned, guided,  
Nothing can our peace destroy.*  
(James Edmestone, architect).

*Alleluia, sing to Jesus,  
His the sceptre, his the throne;  
Alleluia, his the triumph,  
His the victory alone;  
Hark, the songs of peaceful Zion  
Thunder like a mighty flood;*

*Jesus, out of every nation  
Hath redeemed us by his blood.*  
(William Chatterton Dix, insurance  
company manager)

*As with gladness men of old  
Did the guiding star behold,  
As with joy they hailed its light,  
Leading onward, beaming bright;  
So, most gracious Lord, may we  
Evermore be led to Thee.*  
(William Chatterton Dix, insurance  
company manager)

*I lift my heart to Thee,  
Saviour Divine;  
For Thou art all to me,  
And I am Thine.  
Is there on earth a closer bond  
than this,—  
That my Beloved's mine, and I  
am His?*  
(Charles Mudie, lending library  
entrepreneur)

These are the words of Christian busi-

nessmen; successful in their own line of work, yet also capable of expressing biblical truth in poetic form. These men demonstrate, perhaps more even than the clergymen and politicians we have observed, that anyone – perhaps even you and me – may write hymns.

### James Edmestone

The first of our businessman-hymn writers was James Edmestone (1791-1867), a London architect. His work placed him at the heart of the busy, bustling and fast-developing world that was England's biggest nineteenth-century city. Edmestone's maternal grandfather was the Rev. Samuel Brewer, the pastor of an independent congregation in Stepney, just east of London, for fifty years. James was to live in the same general neighbourhood all his life. It was a semi-rural region of villages which, after the arrival of the railway mid-century, was developing into suburbs of terraced houses. James was a lifelong parishioner in the Anglican church of St Barnabas



James Edmestone

in Homerton, where he served as a church warden.

He was articled to an architect and surveyor in 1807, aged 15, and began in his own office in 1816, when he was 24 years old. There is not much record of his early work, but he did have a pupil who was later to become very famous as the leader of the so-called “Gothic revival” in architecture – producing the type of design so popular in the mid-late nineteenth century, and which so shaped our city, Christchurch (inspiring the design of our cathedral). This pupil, Sir George Gilbert Scott, was most famous for the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park, a lavish monument in memory of Prince Albert, Queen Victoria’s husband. Interestingly, Edmestone was recommended to Scott’s father as a suitable tutor by a travelling



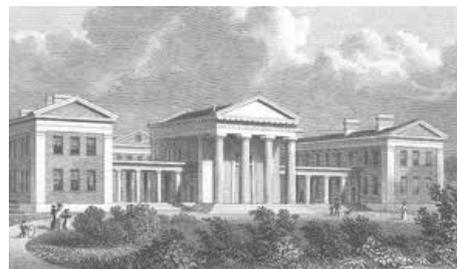
St Paul’s, Onslow Square.

agent to the Bible Society, an evangelical body founded by Wilberforce and his friends at the turn of the century – suggesting that Edmestone just may have had evangelical leanings or connections.

He undertook a great deal of work with famous London builder and developer, Charles James Freake, who was responsible for much of the building of Eaton Square and Onslow Square in the heart of the fashionable West End of London. Edmestone designed the church of St Paul’s in Onslow Square, consecrated in 1860. He continued working as an architect right up to his death at the age of 75, in 1867. His son, also James, was an architect in his office with him.

But as an active church member, Edmestone had other passions in addition to architecture. He was a very regular visitor at the London Orphan Asylum, presumably the one at Hackney, which was within a kilometre of his church, and within walking distance of his home. From his twenties he took a great interest in the welfare of these young orphans. Orphanages were works of mercy frequently associated with evangelical Christians in the nineteenth century. Being a “visitor” normally meant being involved in the administration of such an institution. Also interested in the education of the young and poorer, Edmestone served as secretary of the parish schools of Homerton.

Edmestone is best known, however, for another great interest – his hymn-writing. In the course of his life he wrote some two thousand; which makes him one of the more prolific hymn-writers of his time. He was publishing poetry as early as his twenties; in 1821 his first volume of 50 hymns was produced. The next year he published a collection of 50 hymns on missionary subjects, and a collection of 100 Sunday School hymns. Through the next few decades he continued to write both poetry and short stories; and in 1844 produced a book of hymns “for the Chamber of Sickness”. Two years later came a collection of hymns and



London Orphan Asylum, Hackney.

poems for private devotion; and in 1848 another volume of *Sacred Poetry*.

Perhaps his best-known hymn today is “Lead us, Heavenly Father, lead us”. This hymn was part of his first published collection (1821); and was thus written when he was in his twenties. It was entitled, in this collection, “Hymn, Written for the Children of the London Orphan Asylum”. Perhaps he had in mind that the children would sing it at their daily devotions? Today, we often sing it (appropriately) at weddings; but if one pictures it as a hymn for needy children, growing up in the care of Christians trying to instruct them in the gospel for a life of faith and usefulness, it clearly matches its original purpose.

It is a very nicely-constructed hymn. Each of the three verses addresses a different Person of the Trinity; while behind the whole hymn lies the theme of our complete dependence on God for every necessity, both spiritual and temporal. The first verse asks God the Father to protect and guide us in the storms of life; recognising that we have no help but him, but rejoicing that, having him, we have everything. The second verse addresses our Saviour, asking him to forgive us our sins; since he knows all our weakness, having trod this earth before us, and knows its trials and loneliness. In the third verse Edmestone asks for the Spirit’s presence in our hearts; to fill us with love, joy, and true pleasure, of which we shall never tire. Summing up the whole, the last two lines underscore the blessings: “Thus provided, pardon’d, guided, Nothing can our peace destroy.”

### William Chatterton Dix

William Chatterton Dix, the son of John Dix, a Bristol surgeon and the biographer of poet Thomas Chatterton, spent most of his working life as the manager of a maritime insurance company in Glasgow. Born in 1837, he was educated at the Bristol Grammar School. Probably his father (who had, after all, named him after the subject of his biography) encouraged him in a love of poetry. Certainly, he had talent as a poet. But it was to religious poetry that he turned his gifts.

His first published collection, *Hymns of Love and Joy*, came out in 1861, when he was 24. His second, *Altar Songs, Verses on the Holy Eucharist*, appeared in 1867, when he was 30. This was shortly after he had suffered a near-fatal illness which confined him to his bed for months, and resulted in severe depression. But, as is so often the case



William Chatterton Dix

with Christians, this low point led to soul-searching and from it came many of his hymns.

Two of Dix's hymns best-known today come from this period. The first of these, "As with gladness men of old", is an Epiphany hymn – celebrating the coming of the wise men to Jesus (observed in the Anglican calendar on January 5th). Dix, being Anglican, was aware of the way the collects (prayers) of the *Prayer Book* make transitions drawing those praying from earthly considerations to spiritual ones. He does the same in this hymn. Each of the first three verses gracefully invites the singer to act "As..." the wise men did, and "So..." to follow them in spiritual devotion. Dix clearly understands the great themes of the Bible. His fourth verse speaks of the atonement, and asks that Jesus would bring our "ransomed souls" home at last to heaven, where we shall need no star to guide us, and where no cloud will hide God's glory from us. The fifth and final verse brings the motif of the star to a climax: in heaven, in contrast to the wise men's need for a guiding illumination, the saints will need no created light. God, instead, will be their sun, and there will be no night. There, we can sing praise to our King forever.

The second hymn, "Alleluia, sing to Jesus", was written to supply a perceived lack of hymns on the Eucharist (Lord's Supper). It is full of majestic imagery conveying the great themes of Christ's redeeming sacrifice, his presence with us, and his intercession for us. It speaks of Christ as our bread of life, as our great High Priest, and as our King reigning in heaven. It is a very powerful hymn poetically, full of lofty and skilfully-drawn images. Among these I

admire are: "robed in flesh, our great High Priest"; "Though the cloud from sight received him ... shall our hearts forget His promise, 'I am with you evermore?'" and "Where the songs of all the sinless sweep across the crystal sea". To sing this hymn is to be vividly reminded of the great pictures of salvation in Scripture. Ralph Vaughan Williams set it to the magnificent tune "Hyfrdol", which carries the words so well that it has become the usual setting for them.<sup>1</sup>

### Charles Mudie

Our third businessman is Charles Edward Mudie, founder of the famous nineteenth-century lending library bearing his name. Mudie was born in 1818 in Chelsea, the son of a Scottish newspaper agent, bookseller, stationer and lending librarian. After an education that took him up to the level of university entrance he simply followed on with his father's business, setting up on his own in Upper King Street in 1840, at the age of 22. Quite quickly, book-lending became the major part of his business; though he also dabbled in publishing, producing the first editions of works of two major American poets, James Russell Lowell and Ralph Waldo Emerson. He married a clergyman's daughter in 1847, and they went on to have eight children.

Mudie's career as a library entrepreneur began at an opportune time: the three-volume novel as a standard publishing format had made its appearance; and his policy of offering unlimited borrowing of fiction and prose works at low subscription rates (one guinea per year) made his business a major supplier of reading material. As yet the middle class reading public could not afford to buy large numbers of books;

but the appetite for reading was there. Secondly, it was the age of the novel: there were many novelists, including women writers, in an age when it was becoming acceptable to entertain as well as edify.

During the 1850s his business became so successful that he moved to new premises in New Oxford Street, and opened branches in Birmingham, Manchester and other regional centres. He had over 25,000 subscribers and between 1853 and 1862 added over 960,000 volumes to his stock. He played a major part in supporting the three-volume novel format, which was good for writers and publishers. He even supplied overseas readers, shipping trunks of books to the colonies.

However, in 1861, overexpansion, overspending on the New Oxford St branch and competition from other lending libraries led to near-bankruptcy. The crisis was averted by a stock-market float as a limited-liability company. Mudie retained half the shares, but offered the other half to his rescuers, a consortium of publishers. By 1864 he had returned to solvency and by the 1870s his firm was once more preeminent – so much so that authors and publishers became aggrieved at the effect on book sales of the high moral stance he took in choosing books for the library.

Was this moral stance due to religious conviction? It is hard to tell, as not much has been recorded about his views. As we have noted, he married a clergyman's daughter. He was actively involved in public life, serving on a number of (presumably philanthropic) committees. He also served for three years as a member of the London school board for the Westminster district. But the best evidence is that he published a book of devotional verses, several of which have been taken up as hymns.

Possibly best-known of these is "I lift my heart to Thee", No.668 in the Standard Edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. I have already quoted the first stanza at the beginning of this article. Here are the last three, which could hardly have been written by a doubter or unbeliever:

*To Thee, Thou bleeding Lamb,  
I all things owe –  
All that I have, and am,  
And all I know,  
All that I have is now no longer  
mine,*



Charles Mudie

*And I am not mine own; Lord, I am  
Thine.*

*How can I, Lord, withhold  
Life's brightest hour  
From Thee; or gather'd gold,  
Or any pow'r?  
Why should I keep one precious  
thing from Thee;  
When Thou hast giv'n Thine own  
dear self for me?*

*I pray Thee, Saviour, keep  
Me in Thy love,  
Until death's holy sleep  
Shall me remove  
To that fair realm where, sin and  
sorrow o'er,  
Thou and Thine own are one for  
evermore.*

These verses were published in 1872, after the business crisis was over and Mudie's had returned to a solid footing. Charles Mudie's consecration of all that he has and is and knows to God; his desire to withhold nothing – not “gathered gold or any power” are the words of a businessman thankful for God's saving hand in his circumstances. But even this is not the final note: he looks forward to a day when, in “that fair realm” sin and sorrow are no more. This was a fitting hymn for a businessman conscious of God's grace, and personally devoted to the Saviour rather than to his successful company.

### Conclusion

What might we learn from the lives and hymns of these three businessmen? First,

that any Christian with literary talents may write hymns. You do not have to be a professional poet or musician to write a good hymn. You certainly need some poetic skill and a love for poetry; but plenty of reading in this genre will no doubt help fit you for it.

The second thing one notices is the deep personal conviction all three men revealed. Their hymns were not superficial or trite versifications of the usual Christian clichés. Mudie's hymn, in particular, sounds like the contemplation of a godly businessman who regards all his possessions and abilities as God's to use as he wills. Certainly, he had learned, like Job, that everything is God's to give or to take away.

Imagine, for a moment, that you are a banker or an insurance broker. Out of office hours you are devoted to the life of your church: you serve as an elder; you are genuinely passionate about God-honouring, reverent worship; you visit lonely widowers and lead regular Bible study groups. You read as much good theology as you can manage. You pray and study the Scriptures faithfully. You have something in common with William Chatterton Dix – and perhaps, if you put your mind to it, you too could write hymns that arise from your experience of serving Christ.

Maybe you are an engineer, with a flair for aesthetics. You love to work on buildings that are functional, but also beautiful and give glory to God. Away from your office you serve as a deacon and have a particular affection for needy

children from broken homes. In many ways, your home is a home to them and you are something of a father figure for them. Such a man was James Edmeston; and he wrote hymns to teach them about God's care for his dependent children. Could you?

Or perhaps you own your own business. One way and another, you've experienced some pretty testing times over the years. Once or twice you had sleepless nights, wondering whether you'd stay afloat; but you kept close to Christ in earnest prayer; and the Lord showed his faithfulness in wonderful ways when you most needed it. Looking back, you can truly say you learned to loosen your grip on the things of this world. Now you are freer to trust him, and to serve him more committedly with the possessions he has given you. Why not, as Mudie did, turn the glorious truths that became so real to you into devotional poetry – for singing?

Every age should have its hymn-writers who give expression to God's truths in poetic form. Our age has been lacking in men and women who are both theologically mature and poetically capable. Let's work hard at developing those capacities, so that the generations to come can sing hymns that speak of what Christ has taught us.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that *Psalter Hymnal* 366 has it set to “Lowell”!

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## Letters to the editor

Dear Sir,

Thank you for another excellent issue – for the new articles on the Belgic Confession, the always excellent “Feminine Focus” – and for the reviews given on some of my favourite books.

Allow me to make a few comments on some of the articles.

Belgic Confession. Although Guido de Bres was indeed as far as we know the only Reformed author of a Confession (the Belgic) to be martyred, some of the Christians on the wrong side of the International Synod of Dordt (1618-1619) and of the subsequent Canons of Dordt, suffered similar fates.

The Mennonites (followers of Menno Simons, 1496-1559), the Amish and other Wederdopers (Rebaptizers), were persecuted, burned at the stake, thrown and drowned in rivers, etc., etc. and many had to flee abroad, even as far as to the U.S.A.

Feminine Focus – as I have asked before – should be renamed – so that it might also be read by young and not so young male readers – one of our Wellington young male members told me “I never read *Faith in Focus*”, (let alone “Feminine Focus”!), which is rather sad. Besides, Sally Davey's brilliant articles and her stories on Hymn writers are

always very good, useful and beneficial reading and not specifically women's special-interest subjects.

Statesman's Study. With reference to the “Statesman's Study”: the first mentioned hymn-author Sir Robert Grant was unknown to me, so was his Hymn “Saviour, when in dust to Thee” – which I could not find it in any of the 15 hymnbooks in my possession.

However, after being enlightened by Sally, of course, shamefacedly I admit that this hymn indeed is in both *Hymns Ancient and Modern* and in *Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised*, respectively #251 and #86. Earlier I had missed

it as the printing is very small, which is probably a lame excuse, but there it is!

One more comment on Sir Robert Grant's hymn "Saviour, when in dust to Thee". May I be so bold to suggest should be sung to the tune MISERERE by H.W. Monk (1823-1889), which is a fine melody and fits the text much better than ABERYSTWYTH by Joseph Parry (1841-1903), this over-familiar, light and easy tune does not suit the text, it has also been used for quite a few other hymns as well.!

Sir John Bowring's "In the cross of Christ I glory" is indeed a fine hymn and I agree it should be better sung to Stainer's tune OXFORD than to the tune written by the American Ithamar Conkey, which he called RATHBUN, (named after the only soprano who turned up for the Sunday morning rehearsal) and unfortunately RATHBUN is indeed a sort of jumping-along tune. How sad indeed that the much better and far more suitable tune OXFORD (Common Praise #8) does not appear in any of our Hymnbooks (so far), whereas the less solid tune RATHBUN is found twice in both our Blue Psalter Hymnal and Grey Psalter Hymnal.

Coming back once more to the "Statesman's Study", Sir Philip Pusey, another politician, wrote the beautiful Hymn "Lord of our life, and God of our Salvation", a paraphrase/translation of a German hymn by M.A. von Loewenstern (1644) "Christe, du Beistand deiner Kreuzgemeine" (Christ, Thou help of the soldiers of the Cross). This hymn most unfortunately is also not found either in our Psalter Hymnals, nor in the Book of Worship, nor in the New Trinity Hymnal.

However, it is listed in the old Trinity Hymnal (#473), and is of course found in Hymns Ancient & Modern #214 (to tune CLOISTERS), and in Hymns Ancient & Modern Revised #253 (to two tunes, 1/ CLOISTERS (by Sir Joseph Barnby -1838-1896)) and 2/ ISTE CONFESSOR (old French church melody), it is also found in the 1929 Scott Psalms & Hymns #216 to CLOISTERS (by Barnby) and to HERZLIEBSTER JESU (Cruger (1598-1662)). We do hope sincerely that it will appear in our new "Sing to the Lord" Psalter Hymnal, expected out next year.

As to Mrs Davey's comment that Christian statesmen are rare in our days, indeed, they are, however one of the Green "candidates" is Anglican and the former Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Jan van Balkenende (and his family), is a confessing Christian, member of the G.K.N., and all the sons

of Queen Beatrix followed Catechism classes by Rev. terLinden.

Finally, as to the Meditation and the other articles by the Bros M. and D. Flinn and P.N. Archbald – reading those I was strongly reminded of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century stories written from behind the Iron Curtain, a selection of eleven essays published in 1974 under the title *From Under The Rubble* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn (and others) highlighting the problems facing the modern utterly secular world, not only then but also now, both in Russia and in the West. These essays make very interesting reading indeed, amazingly they are not dated yet at all. Yours truly,  
A. Snoek.

Dear Sir

Many of us are very limited in making balanced, critical comment. Thus, for the most part, we refrain. I'm going to try. Please remember that I am not an office bearer in our churches, and apart from a few informal conversations with officebearers before the Synod, had zero contribution to make.

As I write, I already visualise the balloons going up: "Can't you take a joke?" and "Can't we have a bit of fun?"

Well, we've been exposed to a fair bit of gooey, positive comment on the most recent synod of our churches – most concentrated on style rather than substance. But now another straw has come close to breaking this camel's back.

The upper of your two pictures in *Faith in Focus* p7 Vol. 38/10 November 2011, shows a scoreboard reading Dovedale 0, Synod 8. Messrs van Ameyde and Holtslag, the Reformed Church of Dovedale's two most experienced delegates, are men striving for unity, even sometimes, to a fault. Whilst I don't agree with all the overtures our session prepared, I am convinced that each was earnestly prepared with the good of our churches in view. For someone to take the situation lightly enough to show a score pitting the Reformed Church of Dovedale against the Synod, which is the court of last appeal in our churches, is as unjust as it is wrong. It is unfit for a synod.

In the cold, hard light of day that hindsight ought bring, publishing such is the flag of poor journalism. (I actually think juvenile, distasteful and off-target, might be more accurate.) Our church courts ought to be (in the biblical sense) sen-

sible, sober, God-fearing, just, good and true. Thus we should be able to honour both the manner of the courts' deliberations and the results thereof. That a session would bring overtures to a synod does not necessarily, as your journalist suggests, indicate a desire to have inordinate influence. My understanding is that the Dovedale session wants the churches to chart a true path, and is seeking to contribute to the framework for that path of godliness we ought to take together. Your reporter's ill-considered, heartless put-down in the picture and the text of p7, is as low as it is unjust, unhelpful, diaspora-inducing and superior; even misusing irrelevant statistics.

Yours, etc

Paul Davey (member, Reformed Church of Dovedale)  
7 November 2011

PS You may have more than just a bit of fun in its proper place; I'll leave it to others to judge whether or not I can take a joke (Prov 27:2 "Let another praise thee, and not thine own lips")

Dear editor,

My name is Paulin Bédard. I am a minister of the Word and sacraments in the Eglise réformée du Québec, a small group of French Reformed churches in Canada. (Our churches are affiliated with NAPARC). I am the editor of the magazine "Lumière sur mon sentier" ("Light on My Path") that our congregation publishes for the members of our churches and friends (four issues per year). Since we don't have many French contributors, most of the articles are translations from English Reformed and Presbyterian magazines.

I come to you to request permission to translate Rev. Barry James' article "Retirement: really...?", from *Faith in Focus*, Vol. 38/6, July 2011. Would it be possible to also have permission to translate other articles from your magazine? The article would also appear on our web site (<http://beauce.erq.qc.ca>). Thank you for considering this request. May the Lord bless all your endeavors.

Paulin Bédard  
660, 159e Rue  
St-Georges, Québec  
Canada, G5Y 5W5

# The glorious New Zealand experiment

## Part 1

This is the first excerpt from an essay by Mr Jack Sawyer which appeared in the book *Confident of Better Things: Essays Commemorating Seventy-five Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*.

### Jack Sawyer

In his 1992 speech before the delegates of the Twentieth Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ), Rev. Anton DeJager, the fraternal observer from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, (*Vrijgemaakte*), asserted that the RCNZ “are a living test case in this worldwide encounter, as all over the world we find the Reformed and Presbyterian churches coming together after so many centuries.” “The Reformed Churches of New Zealand”, he said, “are right in the midst of this ecclesiastical reality.”<sup>1</sup>

But how could such a small church on the far side of the world, of less than twenty congregations and three thousand souls be described as “a living test case” in the midst of a modern day coming together of Presbyterian and Reformed churches? No doubt it had something to do with what the Rev. G.I. Williamson described in 1977 as “the glorious New Zealand experiment” of the “deliberate blending of the streams of Presbyterian and Reformed.” Williamson remarked that for him the RCNZ “is still the most exciting denomination in the Reformed world and that I am happier than ever” to have been a part of this groundbreaking ecumenical event that had produced in his view, “concrete reinforced by steel.”<sup>2</sup>

1 By 1992, the RCNZ had been in existence for almost forty years and had garnered international attention. At this Synod were delegates of the Free Church of Scotland and the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, co-founders, with others, of the then new *International Conference of Reformed Churches*. By 2009 the RCNZ, themselves, were hosting the ICRC in Christchurch. See Acts of Synod Reformed Churches of New Zealand 1992, Appendix F.

2 D.G. Vanderpyl, *Trust and Obey, A Forty Year History of the Reformed Churches of New*

Zealand, 1953-1993 (Silverstream, N.Z.: National Publications Committee of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, 1994), 470. Also See RCNZ Acts of Synod 1977, Article 120. Williamson, who was chairman of the Synod said, “We are the only church in the world that has both the Continental and the Scottish or Presbyterian confessions.” He added that the RCNZ “set their faces like a flint to accomplish this blending.” This task involved not only the Confessions but also polity, liturgy, and discipline. Vanderpyl, 465n.

3 A noted Canadian historian Henri-Raymond Casgrain once wrote, “let us make haste to write down the stories and traditions of the people; before they are forgotten.” The story of the RCNZ and the OPC, is one that deserves to be written down, and remembered, for here is the living, ecumenical test case, which continues to demonstrate that the Presbyterian and Reformed traditions can live together in one body.

### A Common Genesis

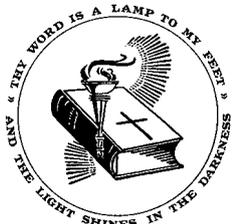
In 1929 Princeton Seminary was reorganized by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church USA. Bible denying

modernism was incorporated into the board of trustees and faculty. Led by Prof. J. Gresham Machen, Westminster Theological Seminary was founded to carry on the witness of the Reformed Faith to the American Continent and the world. In 1935 Prof. Machen was deposed from the ministry of the PCUSA for his refusal to obey unscriptural demands by the hierarchy of the church. This hierarchy insisted on support for an agenda of unbelief then being proclaimed at home and on the mission field. In 1936, during the height of the Great Depression, 5000 souls, out of a church of millions, separated themselves, along with those ministers and elders who had been deposed along with Machen. In 1936, in order to return to the Word of the Lord and establish a truly Presbyterian Church, a brave little group convened in Philadelphia as the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America. Later being sued by the PCUSA over the use of the name PCA, our fathers, having less than a thousand dollars in the bank with which to contend a lawsuit, surrendered the name PCA, and would subsequently become the OPC in 1939. Not only was the name lost, but also almost every congregation lost its property as well. But what was the loss of a name and earthly goods, compared to Machen’s exultant testimony that “at last we were members of a true Presbyterian Church?”

Some fifteen years later, down under in New Zealand, courageous young migrants were constrained to chart a similar course. After World War II, Holland lay prostrate and ruined. Years of Nazi tyranny had so brutally impoverished the land that many looked to migrate abroad. Thus they sailed away to distant lands: Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. The New Zealand government’s immigration policy at the time required, for the most part, that the migrant be under 30 years of age, have a working class skill, and be unmarried. So these youth (a number of them engaged to be married) of Holland, often with virtually “the shirt on their back and ten pounds in their pocket” arrived after long voyages in

New Zealand, there to undertake the pursuit of a new and better life.

They found work in abundance, they were hard working people, and they eagerly began to build their homes and to start their families. But something absolutely fundamental was missing. For these young Calvinists had also brought their faith with them, and as they learned the English language they realized they



were hearing an uncertain sound from the pulpit. Before embarking down under, having sought advice from their pastors in Europe, they had joined the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, thinking it likely to be the option most similar to the Reformed churches from which they had come. But sadly by this time the PCNZ was in a state of decline and deviations from basic scriptural doctrines were common, including the teaching of universalism, the denial of hell, the repudiation of predestination, total depravity, and the rejection of the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of the Bible.<sup>4</sup> Ministers were free to preach against the clear affirmations of the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

So the young migrants, while finding abundant work, gracious Kiwi hospitality, tea and sweet ladies even to darn their socks, were stunned when the Grand Master of the Lodge led processions into the services and read the lesson, teaching another way of salvation other than that of faith in Christ Jesus. They were

perplexed when ministers made equivalent the dying of gallant New Zealand soldiers for their country to the substitutionary atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, thereby guaranteeing their entry to heaven. What to do?

In 1952, the Rev. J.W. Deenick was called by the Dutch Protestant Community to help them assess what they should do.<sup>5</sup> Tirelessly travelling the country dis-

tricts, the major population centers, conducting worship services, visiting in households, and studying the ecclesiastical landscape of New Zealand, Deenick came to the firm conclusion that a new church was absolutely necessary. In 1953, Reformed Churches were established in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Hamilton, and Palmerston North. Solemn protocols were drawn up, such as this one by the new congregation in Wellington:

*We the undersigned...believers of positive Reformed confession, deeply regretting the fact that we are not able to associate ourselves with one of the New Zealand Churches, partly because in some of them modernism can unfold itself without hindrance, partly because in the more evangelical churches such deviations from the confession of the Reformation are found, that we cannot join them with all our heart, have therefore decided to the*

*honour of God's name and in view of the salvation of ourselves and our children to proceed herewith to establish our own church ...<sup>6</sup>*

Acutely aware of its need for help in the struggle to uphold the integrity of the Reformed faith and looking for support and encouragement, the first General Assembly of the OPC in 1936 delegated Cornelius Van Til to travel to the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church and lay the cause of the OPC before this body. The CRC in return responded positively, which would lead to a long, deep, and meaningful relation between the two churches.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, in 1953, the first synods (there were two that year, much like the first two OPC General Assemblies) of the RCNZ, perhaps even more acutely aware of their cultural, theological, ecclesiastical, and geographical isolation, authorized its deputies to send a letter of introduction directly to the CRC, and also all member churches of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. This latter proviso would prove to be the avenue by which the first approach to the General Assembly of the OPC was made, introducing the RCNZ and seeking fraternal aid.<sup>8</sup> The OPC responded "with feelings of gratitude to God for the stand which the Reformed Churches of New Zealand have taken for the glorious heritage of the Reformed Faith." The Twenty-First General Assembly further communicated that it was a pleasure to inform the RCNZ that their letter had been passed on to its Committee on Correspondence with Churches Abroad with the mandate to explore a deeper relationship with the RCNZ.

*Mr Jack Sawyer is the pastor of Pineville Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Louisiana, USA.*

4 In 1901 the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand had adopted a *Declaratory Act* which allowed "diversity of opinion in such points of the Confession as do not enter into the substance of the Reformed Faith, and full authority to determine what points fall within this description is retained for the church." The sad result of this act, only the thin edge of the wedge, reached its nadir in the mid 1960s, when Prof. Lloyd Geering, a lecturer at the Presbyterian Theological College in Dunedin, was exonerated of heresy by the General Assembly even though he denied every article of the Apostles Creed. Geering was infamous for affirming "the bones of Jesus of Nazareth rotted in the soil of Palestine." An interesting historical footnote is the presence of GI Williamson as a reporter for *Faith in Focus*, the RCNZ magazine, at this trial. One might suggest Geering was the down under version of Harry Emerson Fosdick.

5 Bill Deenick was a tireless worker in those days, traveling the country on a push bike with a small motor, an amazing feat given the terrain. His ministry was a great encouragement to the Dutch community, many of whom were only in their twenties. "*Het Dominee*" Deenick was a graduate of the Theological Seminary at Kampen, a student of Prof. Klaas Schilder and most certainly embodied the best, theologically and ecclesiastically, of the old Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN/Synodalen). Important for our story, Deenick, mastering English, was a student of the wider Reformed world, and well aware of the OPC, Westminster Seminary, and its faculty. It would be Deenick who not only would help steer the fledgling migrants to start their own Reformed Churches, but also be one to encourage their early synods to issue persistent calls to the OPC to establish sister church relations and then come over and help.

6 Vanderpyl, 249. These protocols were courageous acts. To attempt to grasp this fact, one must try to envision poor, twenty-plus-year-olds laying their all on the line to start a church; no minister, no building, no budget, no parents, or older folk to lean on. And no support from the New Zealand churches to start another denomination. Yes this was a great act of faith, and these young people, like our OPC forbears, are the stuff of heroes.

7 John R. Muether, *Cornelius Van Til: Reformed Apologist and Churchman* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 2008), 77-78.

8 RCNZ Acts of Synod, 1953(second synod), Article 10; and RCNZ Acts of Synod, 1954, Appendix 4. The letter is preserved in the Correspondence to the 21st General Assembly of the OPC.

## Focus on home

Harriet Haverland

# Gleanings from our bulletins...

### QUOTABLE "QUOTES"

"If worship does not change us it has not been worship." *John MacArthur*

"Christ is the great central fact in the world's history. To Him everything looks forward or backward. All the lines of history converge upon him." *C.H. Spurgeon*

"I can safely say, on the authority of all that is revealed in the Word of God, that any man or woman on this earth who is bored and turned off by worship is not ready for heaven." *A.W. Tozer*

"The kingdom of God is not a democracy. When the Lord speaks ... He utters His law unilaterally. He does not rule by referendum." *R.C. Sproul*

### BIRTHS

**Cooper, Jenna** – a daughter born to Graham and Julie – 11 November (Avondale).

**De Vries, Blake Arie** – a son born to Jason and Malien – 22 November (Silverstream)

**Eldershaw, Heath Alexander** – a son born to Simon and Melanie – November (Silverstream)

**Flinn, Calvin Emmanuel** a son born to Jackson and Frieda – 10 November (North Shore)

**Short, Owen** – a son born to Michael and Belinda – December (Hamilton)

**Borger, Andrew John** – a son born to Bert and Rebecca – 17 November (North Shore)

**Vaatstra, Eloise Johanna** – a daughter born to William and Emma – 2nd December (Wanganui)

### PROFESSIONS OF FAITH

**Avondale:** Elijah Alexander, Kevin Bos, Nathan Moelker, Molly Ploeg

**Bishopdale:** Nikita Huls, Tony and Rebecca Kessler

**Bucklands Beach:** Yao Li Ying (Gina), Grace Lee, Wang Li-Jun (June), Cameron Munro, Zhao Bo (Maria) reaffirmed her faith.

**Dovedale:** Reuben van Ameyde, Josh Klaazinga

**Pukekohe:** Nicola Posthuma

**Silverstream:** Kathryn Kleinjan, Laura Knol, Danielle van der Zwaag, Jared den Harder, Jared Kleinjan, Blair Posthuma

**Wainuiomata:** Ben De Vries, Sophie and Hayden Van Maastricht

**Wanganui:** Julie Bayat

### WEDDINGS

5 November – Zachary Dykstra and Nicole O'Leary married in Foxton

12 November – Reuben Saathof and El-Mien Bezuidenhout married in Hastings

19 November – Paul Robinson and Mary Stephenson married in Hamilton

26 November – Mitchell Bearman and Breony van der Wel married in Hamilton

26 November – Thomas Bosma and Catherine Mead married in Christchurch

17 December – Matt Lawrence and Lucretia Dijkstra married in Christchurch

### DEATHS

**Faber, Tom:** Our prayers are with Margaret Faber and family members who were bereaved of a husband and father, grandfather and brother with Tom Faber's passing away. While the loss of a loved one is always painful, we do not grieve as those without hope knowing also that Tom's hope was in the Lord – 18 November (Wanganui)

**Hunter, Lynn** died peacefully and with the certain hope of going home to heaven. We are sad that we have only known her for a comparatively short time, but rejoice that last December we could hear her reaffirm her faith, and we are thankful for the joy and comfort she has found in Christ, especially during her struggle with cancer. Please pray that the Lord may comfort her husband Frank and his children and grandchildren. (1 November – Pukekohe)

**VanderBurg, Abraham:** We would like to pass on our thanks and gratitude for all the prayers, love and concerns and all the practical helps that the family

received during Abraham's brief illness and passing away. God bless you all. Antonia, Jake and Jeanette, Ann and Barry, Peter, Maureen and Neil, Martin and 11 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren. (November – Nelson)

### FROM THE PASTOR

#### Bishopdale – Rev. Robert van Wichen

Another year has begun, and with it a new beginning of sorts – an opportunity to make a fresh start. Let us resolve in the coming year to wholeheartedly love and live for God, and make plans accordingly. We would do well to remember Jesus' words: "Do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

### MINISTERS AND CHURCH WORKERS

**Rev. Nathan Ketchen's** colloquium doctum (learned discussion) was sustained so he was installed as a minister in Palmerston North alongside Rev. Michael Flinn on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach invites you to a Dessert Evening in support of **Marcus Mulder**. In 2012, Marcus will be our first youth worker at Macleans College in partnership with the Young Life NZ Trust. We would enjoy spending the evening with you to share about what this means and how you can help.

We rejoice that **Craig van Echten's** final examination last weekend was sustained. Craig began work in Australind (Perth) at the beginning of December, 2011 and was ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacraments on 29 January.

### WEBSITES

**Oamaru:** Just a reminder about our church web site where you will find the latest bulletin, a calendar of church events, audio recordings of sermons the pastor has preached and links to some other useful sites. If you or a friend or relative want to listen to past sermons or look at an old bulletin, just go to: <http://oamaru.rcnz.org.nz>.

**RCNZ Website:** Rev Andrew Nugteren has been the webmaster for the Reformed Churches of NZ for the last decade and has done a fine and efficient job of keeping it up-to-date. This past week he has retired from this position and handed over the task to Shane van Dyk. If you have not looked at our denominational website recently go to [www.rcnz.org.nz](http://www.rcnz.org.nz).

## MISSIONS

**Jair and Laretta Duinkerke** will speak about their work on the mission field in some of the Reformed Churches. They serve in Honiara in the Solomon Islands.

**Heidi Posthuma** has returned to New Zealand on 21 November. God in His

providence has deemed that she will not be able to start teaching this semester at the Teachers' College, in the 'closed country' that she teaches in as planned as the college does not think it's worth starting her classes this late in the term. They are very keen for her to come next semester beginning on 1 March. She has waited out in Canada for three months to get this sorted and Heidi is sure that God knows the reason for this even though it doesn't seem evident at the moment. Lord willing she will begin her 7<sup>th</sup> year of service in the coming year.

Missionary **Janice Reid** will be speaking in the RCNZ churches about her work in the mission field. She will provide us with an update of her work. Janice

Reid serves with HCJB in the Asia Pacific region. She will give us a glimpse of how it all started, and how the ministry has grown since the Asia-Pacific office opened in 2002. Join us to learn more, and to hear how you can pray that radio would reach out effectively to the millions in Asia who do not know that Jesus is the only way to life.

**Susan Larsen** will speak about her work at the Bethesda Disability centre in the Solomon Islands. She is speaking at a number of churches throughout New Zealand.

## DENOMINATIONAL

The minutes of the recent synod meeting are now complete. These are available on the RCNZ website ([www.rcnz.org.nz](http://www.rcnz.org.nz)).

**RCNZ Care Services Trust** is interested in getting together people who because of intellectual or mental disabilities have difficulty caring for themselves along with those who care for them. We are thinking about planning a weekend away to get to know each other and to discuss future plans together.

## EVANGELISM

**Dovedale:** It's our fourth year telling people about Jesus at the Canterbury A. & P. Show. This time we aim to engage show attendees through a 'virtual sheep shearing' contest followed by conversation on how people are like sheep – we've all gone astray. We aim to engage attendees and challenge them to consider their need for a Saviour in Jesus, the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep.

**Wellington:** Rev. Goris and some helpers are handing out pamphlets at the local market whilst Peter sells oranges. We are there to spread the Gospel and to make the community aware that we exist as a Church. We are there also to make some money for our building program, by selling fruit. While we attract people to our table they also are informed about our existence and shown literature we have for them.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

**Buckland's Beach:** Reach+Our Space Update – During this year, we were able to spend time talking about many different aspects of the gospel with young people from the local schools on Friday afternoons. This last term we have really seen around 4-7 young people coming to the Gospel chats regularly. They have



It is with thankfulness to our gracious God that we will be able to celebrate D.V. the

## 60th Wedding Anniversary of

## PIETER and ELIZABETH(Bep) WIERENGA

Married in Bierum,  
Groningen on 11 February  
1952

With all our love

Gerda and Vaughan  
Brandon & Keren

John

Bill and Jackie  
Jonathan & Ingrid, Rebecca & Richie,  
Rachel & Russell, Peter

Rob and Rita  
Annalise & Sam, Daniel, Benjamin

Jeanette and Martin  
Joshua, Danae & Luke, Sarah, Michael, Thomas

And their great granddaughters

**297 The Parade, Island Bay, Wellington**

*Het is beter tot den Here  
toevlucht te nemen  
dan op den mens te  
vertrouwen  
Psalm 118:8*

shown a very real desire to learn, and it is such a blessing to see the Lord planting and watering seeds in them. Please keep these young people in your prayers!

## CLASSES & COURSES

**Dovedale:** The catechism classes will combine to hear a guest speaker. Rev. James de Costabadie of St. John's Latimer Square will speak about Anglicanism in New Zealand and the challenges the Anglican Church faces today. The occasion for this is that in the church history class we have come to the modern day and Christianity in New Zealand.

**Hastings:** A short series of four Bible studies to be taken by Pastor Waldron will aim to cover different aspects of the public profession of faith and answer questions including the following:

- The Source and Content of True Faith
- How can we know that the Bible is true and accurate?
- Are there other sources of true knowledge?
- Why don't unbelievers accept the Bible as the Word of God?
- What is the relationship between the Bible and the historic creeds and confessions?
- The Nature of True Faith
- What are the parts of true faith?
- What is the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer?
- What is the importance of repentance and trust in the Christian life?
- The Service of True Faith
- What does it mean to love God?
- How does the Christian serve God?
- In what type of warfare is the Christian engaged?
- The Bond of Truth/Faith
- How is the church governed?
- What does it mean to submit to the government of the church?
- What is the purpose of church discipline?

## FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

**Dovedale:** The cadets hope to hold a garage sale / car wash / cake stall / BBQ in mid-February 2012. The funds raised will be sent to help the SU'U National Secondary School which is under the South Sea Evangelical Church education office in the Solomon Islands. We would like any goods you have for the garage sale.

**Hastings:** Fundraiser for Rhema: We are planning to hold a 'bring and buy' with a difference. We would like women to bring new crafts, or preserves or jam or

other food suitable to be given as gifts.

**Oamaru:** The youth group held a sausage sizzle on a quiet and cold day but we did raise approximately \$250.00. The money will be sent directly to Tear Fund for the famine in East Africa. Thank you to everyone who helped out on the day and also to those who made donations of bread, sausages, sauce etc. – it was very much appreciated.

**Silverstream:** Once again we would like to say a huge thank you to all of you who have helped delivering telephone directories again this year. It's a huge job but an excellent fundraiser for our Christian Schools. Thank you also to our two "BBQ Gentlemen" who did a great job providing us all with delicious sausages!

**Wainuiomata:** The BBQ at the Warehouse in Petone has been booked for the whole day as part of our fundraising to pay off the building fund debt on the church.

## ACTIVITIES

**Bucklands Beach:** We will be having another English Day Out for the LABS folk and people in the congregation. It will be a chance for members who do not get to meet the people in the LABS classes to spend Saturday with them and help them practice their English.

**Bucklands Beach:** The ladies will be having a retreat day on Saturday. The day promises to be something very special – both spiritually and physically.

**Christchurch:** Church Camp – Praise the Lord and give thanks to the Lord for our Church Camp!! Give thanks to the Lord for Rob and Andy Vosslander for their organising it; for all the teams that served in the kitchen, organising activities, and all who helped! We praise the Lord for the good weather that allowed us to enjoy the outdoors in games and activities. And, most importantly, may the Lord bless the teaching we received to our hearts and minds that we might serve Him more effectively!

**Hastings:** Women's SPA – Hospitality: What is hospitality and how can I do that? What do you do when unexpected guests turn up and stay for a meal? What can you serve a large family or group that won't break the bank? What can I serve that is quick and economic? Please bring along recipes and helpful hints that you have that may be helpful to others. We intend to collect the recipes and hints and print/email them to the women in the church.

**Hastings:** Playgroup – Calling all Mums .... Are you a mum with pre-school aged kids/baby/s at home? Do you want to have some adult-conversation while your baby/kids are having fun with other ones? Let's try get together and see if this idea works.

**Silverstream/Wainuiomata** combined Youth club event will be held at the Upper Hutt Roller-skating Club. We will also have a coffee and dessert evening to follow.

## Short Report Wellington Presbytery November 2011 at Palmerston North

The Wellington Presbytery met on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2011 at the Reformed Church of Palmerston North. The moderator was the Rev. Michael Flinn.

The biggest part of this Presbytery Meeting was taken up by two items: 1) the *Colloquium Doctum* of the Rev. Nathan Ketchen and 2) the pastoral counsel given to all sessions in the Wellington Presbytery by the Pastoral Committee appointed by the 2011 Synod.

The examiners for the *Colloquium Doctum* of Mr Ketchen were: the Rev. Paul Archbald, who examined Mr Ketchen on current theological controversies, and on soundness of doctrine (20min); the Rev. Peter Kloosterman, who tested Mr Ketchen on his knowledge and understanding of the RCNZ Church Order (10 min); the Rev. Leo de Vos on Mr Ketchen's previous work in Christian ministry, on his sanctity of life and on his reasons for seeking ministry in the RCNZ (10 min); the Rev. Andrew Nugteren who examined Mr Ketchen on the confessions of our Church and on general areas of interest (10 min).

Mr Ketchen answered well and in a humble, yet joyful, spirit to questions that were frank and to the point. The examination was not without its fair share of healthy humour, from both examiners and examinee.

Apart from answering all the questions correctly, what stood out from this learned discussion was Mr Ketchen's passion for missions and outreach – especially in light of the fact that he himself was not raised in a Christian family, yet, by God's grace, came to faith in his mid-

teens. Also, Mr Ketchen's love for (and appreciation of) his wife and family was very heart-warming.

After a short deliberation, the Presbytery decided unanimously to sustain Mr Ketchen's *Colloquium Doctum* and thanked the Lord that He has again provided for the needs of His Church.

Regarding the Pastoral Counsel: the Synodical Pastoral Committee addressed all parties within the Wellington Presbytery. The four counsellors, the Reverends Tim Rott, Peter Moelker, Andre Holtslag, and Elder Fred Braam first updated the Presbytery on their work since the Synod. Then, by reading several Scripture passages on reconciliation, they prayerfully reminded the Presbytery of the emphasis our Lord puts on Christian unity. The committee then pointed out perceived weaknesses which have been the means by which each party is believed to have grieved the other. The committee asked each party – as a first step to reconciliation – to humbly acknowledge to one another their own weaknesses.

After lunch, the Palmerston North delegates, in kindness of heart, acknowledged weaknesses on their part, but the rest of the delegates, having expressed their desire and goodwill towards reconciliation, requested to first be allowed time to discuss the pastoral committee's

observations and exhortations with their own sessions.

The rest of the Presbytery meeting was taken up by three items under general business: 1) the Youth Liaison Report – Mr Leo de Vos reported that he, with permission from his Session, had accepted the position of youth liaison officer. 2) The Overseas Mission Board Liaison Report – Dr Paul Archbald to conduct, together with an elder, a visit with Mr Albert Couperus whom the Palmerston North session had endorsed for ministerial studies.

The Moderator closed in prayer and the meeting concluded at 3 pm.

**Pieter van Huyssteen**

## Short Report Auckland Presbytery, November 2011

The Auckland Presbytery met on 25th November and enjoyed a lengthy meeting with a robust agenda. A report was given describing the presbytery-wide Men's Study Day, held recently in Pukekohe with guest speaker, Dr. Peter Reynolds. The event was a great success

as we were challenged to be wise men rooted in Christ, who is our wisdom. The session of Bucklands Beach was asked to consider organising the Men's Study Day for 2012. A prayer of thanksgiving was offered for the Lord's blessing on the Reformed Church of Pukekohe, as vicar Erik Stolte, with wife Georgina and family continue their ministry with and to the congregation; while the building project is also moving forward. A prayer of thanks was also offered for the work of the Lord in the Reformed Church of Avondale as the congregation rejoices in the opportunity for community outreach through the Christian kindergarten. Several positive church visitation reports were presented' for which we give thanks to God.

Advice was sought from the Presbytery regarding two matters that have arisen within one of the congregations regarding the discipline of those who have sought to resign their membership. A significant discussion was also held regarding questions posed by the Reformed Church of the North Shore and the Reformed Church of Hukanui regarding procedural matters relating to the special meeting of the Presbytery held on 19th August. The next meeting is scheduled for 17th February, 2012. Reporter:

**Rev. Peter Moelker**

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## Missions in focus

# "MBALE – 103.7 FM"!!

This is the frequency of the BBC transmission here in Mbale, Uganda, and it is good to be kept in touch with the outside world via these broadcasts ... provided, of course, that the electricity supply is not cut off to this local transmitter!

However, Anne and I are once again – in the Lord's Providence, by appointment of the OPC in the USA, and from the calling of the Silverstream Reformed Church – finding ourselves 'beaming in' from this N' Eastern area of the very fertile 'Pearl of Africa'. The 'rainy season' is just about over, but the frequent downpours during this last month (November) have ensured that, amidst the oncoming swirls of red dust, there is still a luxurious vista of greenery all about us.

We arrived back here in mid-August (as to 'frequency', for the eighth visit!) to take up much the same work that we have been engaged in on past occasions. The resident missionaries – the Proctors and the Wingards – had left in June, and there was no one with any former experience available to 'man' the Mbale station of OPUM – the Orthodox Presbyterian Ugandan Mission.

Our present 'home' is the former Proctor compound – which we know as the 'Guest House' – and a guest house it has indeed been: Anne has hosted one OPC pastor, and two retired OPC couples, since we arrived ... the first guest arriving in here on the same day as we ourselves did! Apart from this ex-

acting work, she has taken up again the leadership of the two weekly ladies' Bible studies – one here on the compound, and the other out at a village pastor's house some 30 minutes away.

My own 'job description' has also varied somewhat from those of former times. Apart from assisting with the lecturing at KTC (Knox Theological College), preaching here in Mbale and in village churches on the Lord's Day ... and even taking part in some local Christian radio programs ... there has been the responsibility of administration and general 'diaconal' work (for there is no resident missionary deacon in Mbale).

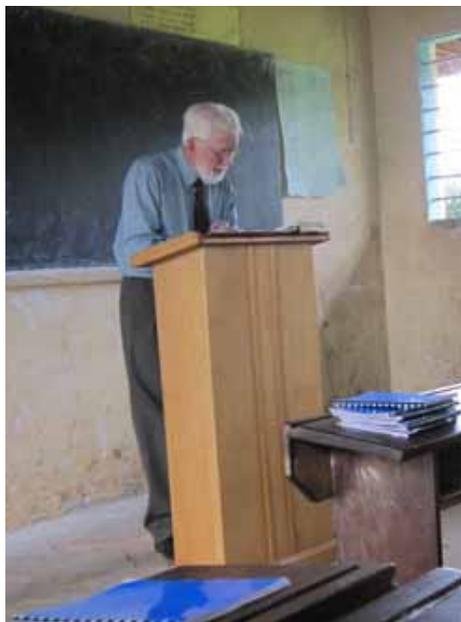
One of the duties that I definitely have not relished is a good bit of driving on invariably atrocious roads – with the term 'road' actually dignifying these stretches of potholed tar and dirt! This chore has been necessitated by visiting

OPC lecturers (having been appointed to 'fill in' here before we were asked to come) needing to go out to the College, and make trips down into town, with absolutely no experience of negotiating the hazard of driving in Uganda! We are so thankful to the Lord that He has kept Anne and I – and our guests

– safe amidst this challenge: it is truly an answer to constant prayer, and we would much appreciate you to keep on praying for us in this respect ... and in others (of course).

In a way, you might say that we are

both essentially here to 'hold the fort'. It is a cause of thanksgiving to the Lord that we have been well enough to do so, and that there is the prospect of a permanent appointment from July/August next year. The Tuininga family (a home-



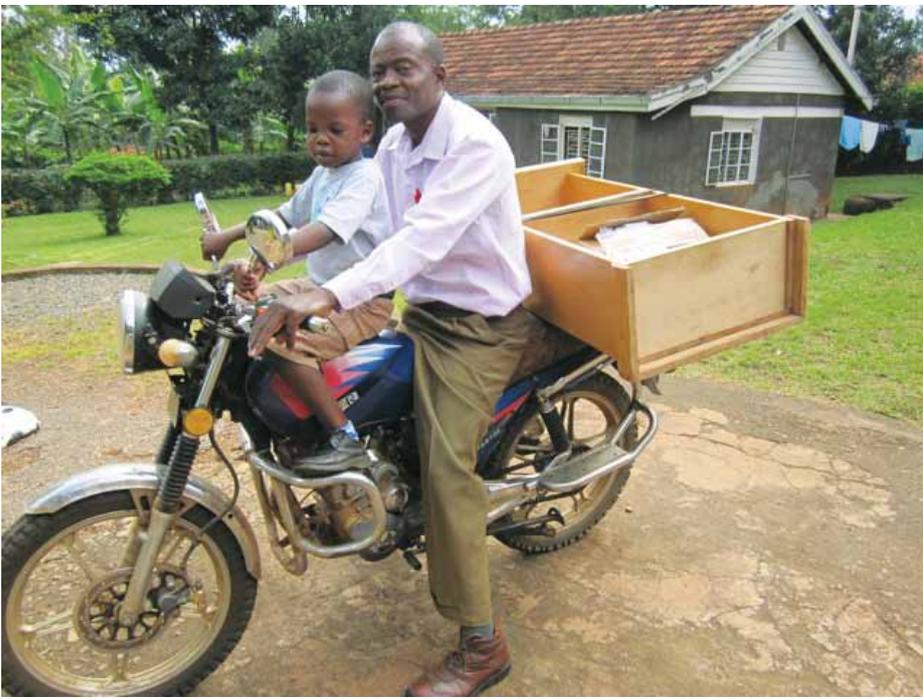
Barry reading from the Scriptures in Mbale.



Kama Church



Mbale church – the children are away at Sunday School.



schooling one, with eight children) have accepted a call from the OPC to serve here on a 'full-time' basis, and are at present winding up their pastoral obligations in a USA United Reformed Churches congregation.

While we rejoice in this move, there is still the need for another missionary couple (or family) to serve here, and for the appointment of a missionary deacon. The work in Mbale is really only in its 'infancy' stages.

Before we close off, an amusing incident from the service that I (Barry) conducted here in Mbale last Lord's Day ...

At the close of formal worship – which, with the 'Sunday School' lesson, and afterwards the service-proper (with sermon), is quite long – there is always a time of welcoming visitors, and of general announcements. One of the young men had brought a friend along, and I asked him to introduce this fellow: he began to do so, but when I asked if the friend would like to bring a greeting, I was told "he can't – he is asleep!".

Sure enough, there he was, his head resting on folded arms along the school desk: the reasons may have been varied, but no doubt the strain of listening to the preacher seeking (in the English language) to explain a rather difficult section of Scripture, had taken its toll.

He was left to his slumbers!!

It has been a privilege, once again, to represent our RCNZ on the 'mission field', and we trust that the brethren would also view it in this light – seeing us as their 'extended arms' to reach out to a pagan culture with the wonderful gospel of salvation (only!) in Christ!

With our greetings in the Lord,

**Barry and Anne James**

*Mr Barry James is Minister Emeritus and has served in congregations in Australia and New Zealand. Both He and Mrs James are members in the CRCA in Rivett, Canberra, Australia.*

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*Pictures from top left*

*Pastor Charles, Have pulpit, will travel. This is how he transports the pulpit when we are off to the Village, his son Brian in front*

*Anne teaching at Kakoli Bible study.*

*Baptism of Eric Mukwasi's baby. He was in Kama ministering, Elder Gershum stood in.*