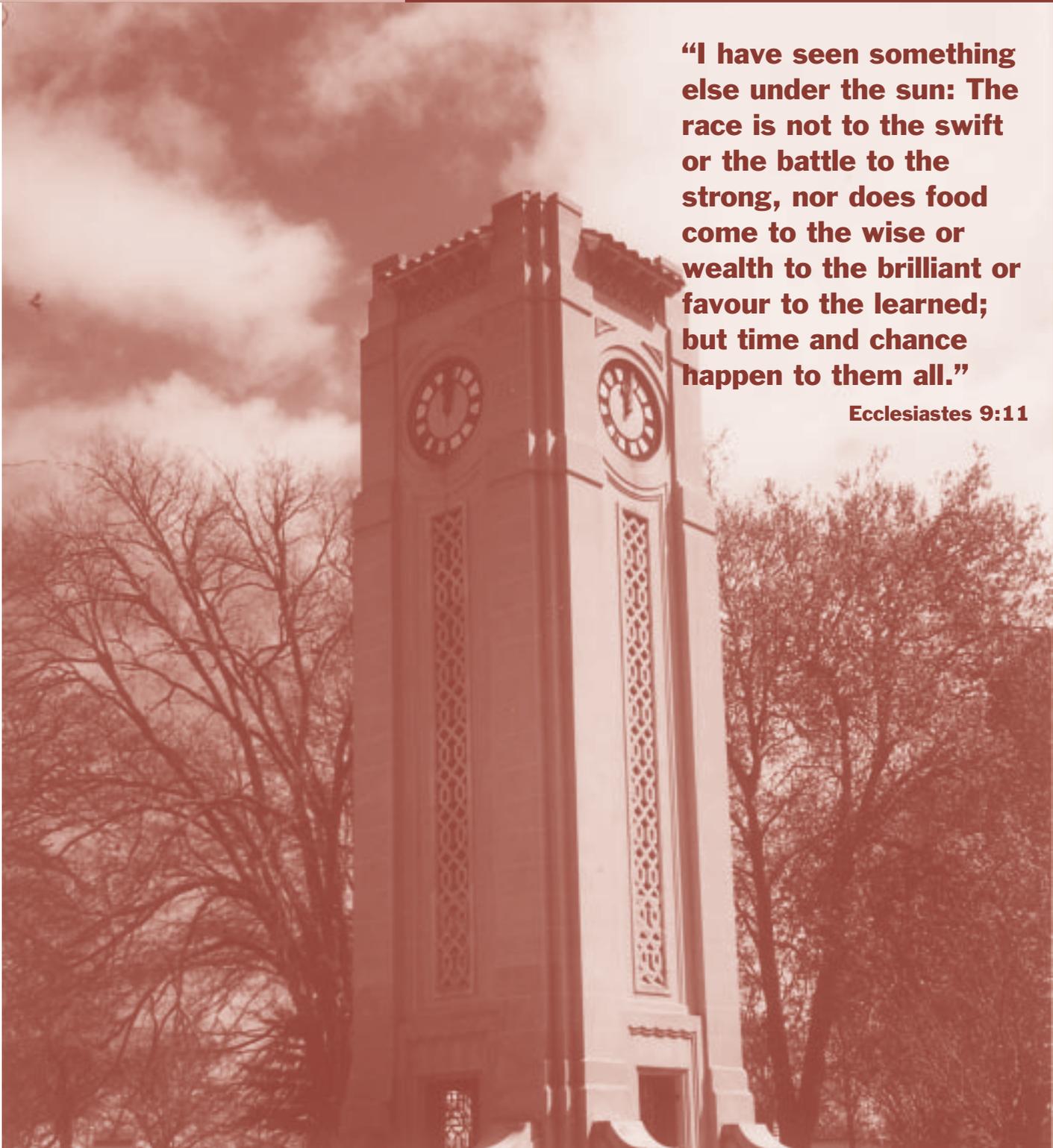


# faith in **focus**

Magazine of the  
Reformed Churches  
of New Zealand

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**“I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favour to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.”**

**Ecclesiastes 9:11**

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**Editorial**

Ever made a mistake? Of course I have, you answer. Everyone makes mistakes.

So, how are you affected by your mistakes? I mean, obviously you got something wrong. You may even have had to rectify a few things—whether with what you were working on or the people you brushed up against.

But mistakes can get you down. You might even have thought that when you made a particular mistake it showed you up badly. And perhaps it did.

There is another angle, though. Because you only make a mistake when you are actually doing something. Busy people make lots more mistakes than lazy people.

An elder told me that once. And it's a precious pearl! So think about that the next time you make a mistake. For if that mistake happened when you were trying to do the right thing in serving the Lord where you believe He wants you to be, then treat it like that: a mistake. It wasn't deliberate. And if someone has a go at you for it, impugning a wrong motive on your actions, then share with him that lovely jewel.

Mind you, also realise that some people seem to be out to get you anyway. David is quite frank about that in the psalms. And since they're the human emotions that we all share, let's also honestly lay it before the Lord. He knows what's on your heart. He's forgiven you. You've got a whole new start.

*Too many churchgoers are singing  
"Standing on the Promises"  
while they are just sitting on the premises.*

**Anon**

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

# Whose day is it?

## The case for attending public worship twice on the Lord's Day

**G. H. Milne**

There are many good practical reasons why we should attend the worship service twice on the Lord's Day. For one thing, God has equipped us with the ability to hear in order to speak to us. Thus Westminster divine Thomas Case (1598-1682) correctly asserts that *"we should take all opportunities of hearing, because God hath given us our hearing to that very purpose; He that made the eare, shall not he be heard?"*<sup>1</sup> Case adds that God does not merely impose a duty upon us to attend the preaching of the Word, but He does so for our benefit or advantage. This benefit includes the initial working of grace in our lives (Jas 1:18); the increasing of grace (Eph. 4:12); the bringing of comfort, joy and hope (Rom. 15:4); and the blessedness or happiness that comes to us from God's communication (Prov. 8:34).<sup>2</sup> If it is wise to seek your own happiness, then that is argument enough for a compulsory attendance at church twice on the Lord's Day.

It is, however, an indication of the malaise that infects the modern church that most professed Christians in our society attend only one worship service per week. Sometimes a second service is converted into a "youth service" or an opportunity to show a video, but these are not by any means biblical worship services. It seems that the norm is to increasingly spend only an hour or so in the morning worshiping the Lord and then spend the rest of the day in recreation. If you care to challenge those who only attend one service, the chances are that they will tell you that the Bible does not require two services. This is supposed to put an end of the conversation. But is it true that the Bible only requires us to attend one service on the Lord's Day? Have we discharged our duty having "gone to church" once? In this first part of the article we will consider that we must attend public worship services twice because God speaks to us there. In next month's article we will evaluate biblical and confessional support for the imperative to worship whenever called to do so by the session of the church.

### We must attend public worship, because God speaks to us there

When Paul urges Timothy to be instant in preaching in and out of season, he assumes that there will be hearers to hear that

preaching (2 Tim. 4:1-9). Just as Timothy must preach the Gospel, so too the congregation must attend the preaching of the Word of God. While it is true that much preaching happens outside the walls of the church as the Gospel is brought to unbelievers, preaching aimed at the salvation of sinners occurs within the context of the Sabbath worship services also. Strangers, covenant children, backsliders and hypocrites need to hear the gospel message as urgently as those who have never darkened the doorway of the church meeting (1Cor. 14:23). We can perhaps compare the New Testament temple worship where God speaks with the foreshadowing of the Old Testament. In Old Testament days, the Lord spoke from above the mercy seat to His people (Ex. 25:22) and the mercy seat was *in* the temple. God still speaks to His people in His temple.

Furthermore, it is in the gathered worship

of the people or temple of God that God speaks to build up His people to a mature faith, for that is where the Lord opens the Scriptures for our edification. It cannot be denied by any true believer that these Scriptures are to remain the only rule of our faith and life—the way of salvation and duty is found in Scripture alone. The great Apostle Paul made this quite clear for us in his second letter to his protégée Timothy:

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:14-17).



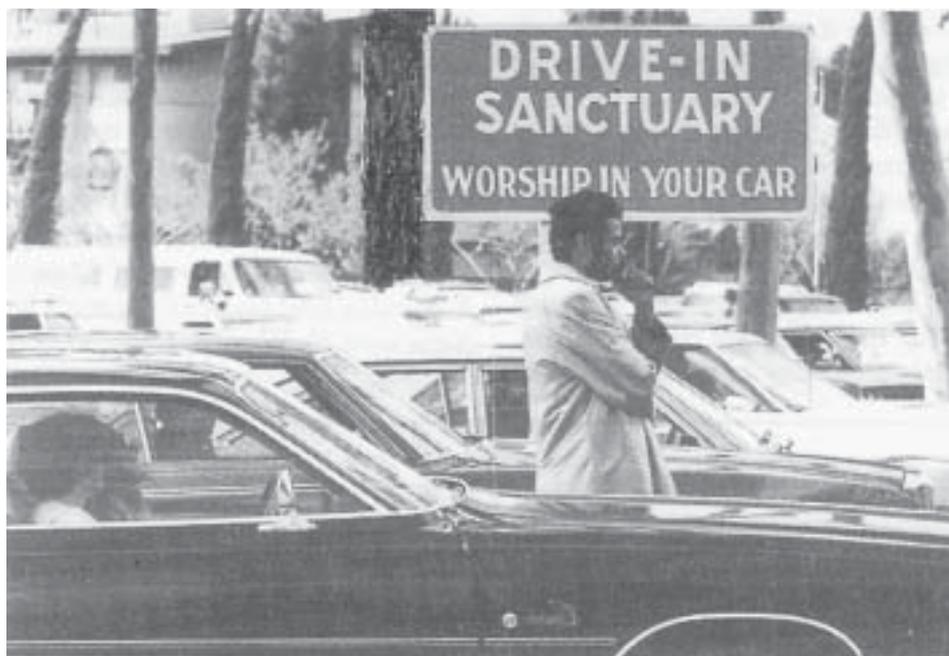
*Drumtochy read widely - Soutar was soaked in Carlyle, and Margaret Howe knew her "In Memoriam" by heart - but our intellectual life centred on the weekly sermon. Men thought about the Sabbath as they followed the plough in our caller air, and braced themselves for an effort at the giving out of the text. The hearer had his snuff and selected his attitude, and from that moment to the close he never moved nor took his eyes off the preacher.*

*There was a tradition that one of the Disruption Fathers had preached in the Free Kirk for one hour and fifty minutes on the bulwarks of Zion, and had left the impression that he was only playing around the outskirts of his subject. No preacher with anything to say could complain of Drumtochy, for he got a patient, honest, critical hearing from beginning to end.*

*If a preacher were slightly equipped, the audience may have been trying. Well-*

*meaning evangelists who came with what they called "a simple gospel address", and were accustomed to have their warmer passages punctuated with rounds of spiritual applause in the shape of smiles and nods, lost heart in the face of that judicial front, and afterwards described Drumtochy in the religious papers as "dead". It was as well that these good men walked in a vain show, for, as a matter of fact, their hearers were painfully alive.*

*(pp200-201 in the novel, 'Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush', by Ian Maclaren, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1898)*



### Several key aspects

Paul underscores several important matters in this advice to Timothy. Firstly it is initially the Old Testament that Paul says is able to make one wise unto salvation, and it is a wisdom that points to Christ as the way of salvation through faith. Therefore, it behoves the Christian to study the Old Testament. Secondly, it is the entire Scripture that must be studied, because *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness”*. To limit your Bible knowledge and study to just some parts of the Scriptures or to mainly focus on the New Testament is contrary to God’s wisdom, because *“all Scripture”* is profitable for the believer. Equally it is all Scripture which makes the man of God adequate and therefore mature; so that he may live a life pleasing to God. Any Christian who does not desire to seek God’s will in all Scripture is plainly telling God that His advice through Paul to Timothy was erroneous. However, there is another false premise that many bring to the Scriptures at this point, for there are those who would conclude that they can study *“all Scripture”* on their own and they do not really need to go to Church twice on Sunday to hear the preaching of the Word of God.

Such an attitude shows an arrogant disregard for the purposes and provision of God. In the fourth chapter of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, the great inspired apostle describes how Christ ascended into heaven and then distributed gifts to the Church for the very purpose of building up the Church and maturing its members. These gifts were especially church officers who had a preaching function:

*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as*

*evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ (Eph. 4 11-12).*

Today we only have pastors and teachers, the former extraordinary offices and officers now being ceased, but the importance of the teaching office has not been diminished in any way. The preacher brings the nourishment of the Word of God to the congregation of the Lord’s people. To seek to undermine or devalue the importance of the preaching office is, therefore, the height of arrogance. In the words of the great French Reformer, John Calvin:

*Wherefore, let us not on our part decline obediently to embrace the doctrine of salvation, delivered by his command and mouth; because, although the power of God is not confined to external means, he has, however, confined us to his ordinary method of teaching, which method, when fanatics refuse to observe, they entangle themselves in many fatal snares.*

### Not doing this is destroying the church

Such is the importance of what God has ordained as the means of teaching His Church that a person who seeks to undermine God’s government really plans the destruction of the Church:

*Whoever, therefore, studies to abolish this order and kind of government of which we speak, or disparages it as of minor importance, plots the devastation, or rather the ruin and destruction, of the Church.*

In Calvin’s view, therefore, to undermine

the significance of the preaching office is to plot the destruction of the church itself. If God would condescend to speak to us in the preaching of the Word twice on the Lord’s Day, then surely that is a great blessing and to suggest that one of those opportunities to hear that Word is superfluous comes awfully close to plotting the demise of the Church. Surely the Church needs that preached Word to survive and prosper.

### The pattern established by Christ

The great preaching model was, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ who began His ministry by preaching (Matthew 4:17), and when He commissioned His disciples, and the then future New Testament church, he instructed them:

*‘Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’ (Matt. 28:19).*

Not surprisingly, in line with the pattern established by Christ, the apostle Paul links salvation to preaching in Romans 10:13-17.

*‘WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED’*. How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, *‘HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!’* However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, *‘LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?’* So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Preaching brings the *“word of Christ”*. The Lord Jesus Christ has ordained teaching by appointed office-bearers as the means of the salvation of His elect through *His* Word. Preachers, as the apostle puts it (1 Cor. 4:1), are *“the stewards of God”*. Thus, it is an unwise person indeed who would neglect attendance at the place which God Himself has decreed from heaven will be the location where His living voice is to be heard in a manner intended to save and mature His people. For the Christian whose goal is eternal life, to fail to attend the preaching of the Word is like a swimmer intent on entering Olympic competition who never climbs into a swimming pool, for initial conversion does not constitute the whole of salvation.

As we have already noted, the Apostle James has a pertinent instruction for us:

*In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. This you know, my*

*beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger (James 1:18-19).*

James gives a stern and unambiguous command to his readers, and therefore to us. Here is a plain example in the Scriptures where the Holy Spirit requires us to attend the preaching of the Word of God. There is a consensus among sane commentators that it is the Word preached that we are to be "quick to hear".<sup>(3)</sup> Westminster divine Thomas Case's sermon on this text (supported by 2 Tim. 4) avers that it supports an argument to attend preaching on the mornings of other days of the week as well as the Lord's Day:

*It is the Ministers duty to be ready to preach in season & out of season [2. Tim. 4:1-2]; that is, on ordinary and extraordinary seasons of preaching the Gospel, on the Lord's day, and on our days, & therefore surely it is the peoples duty to hear in season and out of season. That Command which enjoyns preaching, doth of necessity imply hearing also...If the Preacher be in his place, and you not in yours, it will be but an uncomfortable account for you in the day of Christ [Case's emphasis].<sup>(4)</sup>*

### **Definitely compulsory attendance on Sunday!**

Whatever you think of the requirement to attend on other days of the week, Case is on firm ground when He uses the command of the Scripture text to press for compulsory attendance at the preaching services of the Lord's Day.

In support of the vital nature of gospel proclamation, John Stott, in his important book on preaching, *Between Two Worlds*, stresses that in Old Testament times "God consistently hinged the welfare of his people on their listening to his voice, believing his promises and obeying his commands".<sup>(5)</sup> Stott emphasises that the same is true for New Testament times: "[I]t is only by humble and obedient listening to his voice that the Church can grow into maturity, serve the world and glorify its Lord".<sup>(6)</sup>

The gathering together to hear this Word of God preached has always been a vital part of church life from Old Testament times. Moses instructed the priests to gather the people and *recount* the Law to them (Deut. 31:9-13); the priests were also to *explain* the law to the congregation (Neh. 8:1-8). The record of Acts 20:7 illustrates how early Christian worship on the first day of the week involved communion and preaching. Thus Paul's instruction to Timothy is to give himself to preaching and teaching and the public reading of the Scriptures (1 Tim. 4:14). This is hardly an adjunct to

his ministry but the very heart of it.

The all-encompassing need to gather for worship in the place where God speaks is sewn into the very fabric of the early church; so that the writer to the Hebrews warns Christians not to stop assembling together. In context this "gathering together" is at least in part for the hearing of the Word of God:

*Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10: 23-31).*

Often when verse 25 is appealed to, the context is ignored, but the wider context includes at least these ideas: To not gather together is to lead to "willful sin" (v. 26); it is to make likely a "despising of the Law" (v. 28); it is associated with "trampling the blood of Christ underfoot" and it may contribute to one "falling into the hands of the living God" (v. 31). The willful sin, therefore, is likely apostasy including failure to attend the public worship of the church and failure to afford practical help to one's brethren in Christ. The "gathering together" should not, therefore, be limited to the purpose of mutual edification, but is intended to take place in order to receive the teaching of the pastoral preaching ministry so that this common strengthening of one another can occur. The simple principle is that if we are to nourish others, we too must first receive food ourselves.

This is such a serious matter that we need to ask whether attending one service on Sunday is really living according to the spirit of true Christian commitment? The whole tenor of the teaching of the writer to the Hebrews, at this point, is aimed at the heart

of the non-attender. If the attitude is that "I only need to attend once to satisfy my obligations to others and to receive all I need from the Lord", a loud statement is being made. Such a person, for one thing, is really telling the session of elders and those committed Christians who gather twice for worship that they are doing something unnecessary. Equally, he is telling the Pastor that his many hours in the study in preparation for bringing the Word of God to the Lord's people were really quite superfluous. Furthermore, such an attitude betrays an obvious contempt for God Himself, who ordained the preaching of the Word as the means of grace.

### **There's no choice here!**

Too often discussions and essays that deal with the importance of the second service on the Lord's Day present the options as good ideas to be considered and evaluated as if the individual Christian has a choice in the matter. This approach downplays the terrible danger the non-attender is really in and inadvertently undermines the divine imperative that shouts at us from Scripture that we must, out of honour to our God, attend all services of the church where He promises to be present.

After all, it is the common confession of the church that God is present with His gathered people. Our Lord asserts in Matt. 18: 20: "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst". Even if you take this for any gathering or in the context of church discipline, it must still surely apply to the



gathered worship of the church on the Lord's Day. Calvin concludes from this verse:

*For whoever either disregards the holy assemblies, or separates himself from brethren, and takes little interest in the cultivation of unity, by this alone makes it evident that he sets no value on the presence of Christ.*

God promised to be present with His people in the Old Testament; surely nothing has changed in the New in this regard:

*'You shall make an altar of earth for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you' (Ex 20:24).*

That Christ is present with His New Testament church is affirmed by John's record in the book of Revelation: "and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash" (Rev. 1:13). Matthew Henry comments on this verse:

*He saw a representation of the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of the golden candlesticks; for he has promised to be with his churches always to the end of the world, filling them with light, and life, and love, for he is the very animating informing soul of the church.*

### When absence is an insult!

Christ is present with His church and surely we must be with Him whenever He manifests Himself on the Lord's Day in the assembly of His people! Were the Prime Minister to ask Labour Party members to attend a function where she intended to explain the party policy for the next election, she would be affronted if the member declined to attend. How much greater an insult it is to fail to come into the presence of God when He promises to speak to you concerning your eternal wellbeing!!

Moreover, our attendance or non-attendance at worship is a reflection of our heart attitude towards the object of God's great love. He loved the Church so much that He gave His only begotten Son to die for her (Jn. 3:16), as Paul reiterates to the Ephesians: "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25). If we truly love Christ will we not also love the body with the same love, and therefore seek to spend as much time as is possible with the bride of Christ? Related to this is the whole notion of body life. If the body manifests itself most properly in worship, how can that worship be complete if members of the body are absent from the Sabbath meetings (Rom. 12:4-8)? The requirement to worship the Lord twice also undercuts the practice of having Sunday school for children at the same time as Sabbath worship, a custom that also takes adult teachers away from the service. It is often thought that children get nothing out of the sermon because it is too

complicated for them, and yet when we see people at worship in the Old and New Testament we see them worshipping and hearing as adults and children together. God's wisdom is to be preferred to human theories.

In next month's article we will evaluate biblical and confessional support for the imperative to worship whenever called to do so by the session of the church.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Case, *The Morning-Exercise* (London: Robert Gibbs, 1655), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Case, *The Morning-Exercise*, 7-9.

<sup>3</sup> Modern commentator, James Adamson, NICT: "The hearing of which James refers to is the 'Word' of v. 18 preached or catechised".

**Albert Barnes New Testament notes:** "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak. That is, primarily, to hear God; to listen to the instructions of that truth by which we have been begotten, and brought into so near relation to him".

**John Gill's commentary:** "let every man be swift to hear; not anything; not idle and unprofitable talk, or filthy and corrupt communication; but wholesome advice, good instructions, and the gracious experiences of the saints, and, above all, the word of God; to the hearing of which men should fly, as doves to their windows; should make haste, and be early in their attendance on it, as well, as constant; and receive it with all readiness, and with a sort of greediness of mind, that their souls may be profited, and God may be glorified".

**Matthew Poole's commentary:** "Ver. 19. Let every man be swift to hear; prompt and ready to hear God speaking in the word of truth, before mentioned".

<sup>4</sup> Case, *The Morning-Exercise*, 15.

<sup>5</sup> John Stott, *The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century: Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 113.

<sup>6</sup> Stott, *The Art of Preaching*, 114.

## World in focus

### Has Noah's Ark been spotted?

Scientists, archaeologists and forensic experts are planning to climb Mt. Ararat in Turkey this summer in search of evidence that will prove they have discovered Noah's Ark.

Satellite photos taken last year give Daniel P. McGivern confidence he has discovered the Biblical icon.

"These new photos unequivocally show a man made object," McGivern told reporters at the National Press Club in Washington.

"I am convinced that the excavation of the object and the results of test run on any collected samples will prove that it is Noah's Ark, said McGivern, president of Shamrock - The Trinity Corporation of Honolulu, Hawaii. + Jim and Dorothy Huff jhtrld@digisys.net

### Bhutanese house churches raided

Three house churches in southern Bhutan were visited by police on 11 April following

their Easter Sunday services. Arrests were not made, but church members were warned to stop meeting together, and three pastors and one elder were asked to report daily to the local police station. Police told the believers that their meetings were viewed as "terrorist activities" by the Bhutanese government.

+ Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250 (494) 862-0314

### Dr. Peter Jones' appearances on national TV!

Dr. Peter Jones, adjunct professor of NT at Westminster West, will be appearing on national TV and radio stations this week. His book, *Cracking Da Vinci's Code: You've Read the Fiction, Now Read the Facts*, has garnered national attention.

### Nigeria: Christians die in Kano

The consequences of Christian minorities being scapegoated for political gain through

the playing of ethnic and religio-nationalist politics is well-known. The situation in the Plateau state of central Nigeria where 200 to 600 Muslims were killed by "Christian" militiamen in Yelwa on 1-2 May is the same as that, except in reverse.

On 11 May, in the northern state of Kano, a Muslim demonstration to protest the Yelwa deaths ended in rioting, with at least 11 Christians dead and two churches burned. On 12 May the death toll rose to about 30 with 50 injured and property destruction. Thousands of Christians have fled the city. + ASSIST News Service, PO Box 2126, Garden Grove, CA 92842-2126

### Charleston, Mississippi church leaves PCUSA to join PCA

First Presbyterian Church in Charleston, Mississippi has voted 75-1 to leave the Presbyterian Church (USA) and affiliate with the Presbyterian Church in America.

This is the fourth PCUSA church to leave the denomination because of disagreements with the decisions and statements of denominational leaders and the higher governing bodies.

+ *Presbyterian Church in America, Office of the Stated Clerk, 1700 North Brown Rd., Suite 105, Lawrenceville, GA 30043-8122 (678) 825-1000*

## PCN chooses first officers

In March, a few weeks before its formal 1 May beginning, the Protestant Church of The Netherlands (PCN) acquired its first officers. Each of the three churches that will form the new denomination held their final synods, finishing their business and reflecting on their past. The joint triosynod also met for the final time, finishing off the last transitional matters.

The following day, the PCN synod elected Jan-Gerd Heetderks as its first moderator.

About 50 congregations of the Netherlands Reformed Church (NHK) filed suit in a Dutch court claiming the right not to join the new denomination. Including those who went to court, 64 congregations have now given official notice that they will not join the new church.

The PCN will have more than 2,200 congregations. The abstaining congregations represent about 3 percent of the total.

+ *REC News Exchange, The Reformed Ecumenical Council, 2050 Breton Rd. Ste 102, Grand Rapids, MI 49546*

## Indonesian Pastor to receive urgent medical treatment

Rev. Rinaldy Damanik, a pastor who many believe was framed on false charges of "illegal weapons possession," has finally received permission to travel to Jakarta for urgent medical treatment. Damanik has been in and out of the hospital since mid-April with a severe kidney condition. Doctors believe he needs urgent surgery— however, facilities for this are only available in Jakarta. Members of Damanik's support team submitted the necessary documents to the Department of Justice and Human Rights on 27 Apr., asking for a letter of permission for the transfer from Maesa prison to a hospital in Jakarta. Permission was finally granted on 3 May, but doctors fear the delay in medical treatment may affect Damanik's chances of complete recovery.

+ *Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250*

## Church recommended to cut missionary work

According to published reports, the state of the finances of the Church of Scotland is giving such cause for concern that the General Assembly, meeting later in May, will be encouraged to agree to a budget cut of £800,000, with overseas missionary work the main area of cut-backs. Although members are contributing more per head than they did, the total number of members has been in steady

decline. As with many commercial companies, the fall in the stock market has also seen the Church's pension fund move from a surplus of £8 million at the end of 2000 to a current deficit of £56 million.

+ *The Church of Scotland, 121 George St., Edinburgh EH2 4YN Scotland*

## Presbyterians reverse ruling on same-sex marriage

Reversing a ruling by a lower court, a church court ruled that a Presbyterian minister, Rev. Stephen Van Kuiken, did not violate church law by marrying same-sex couples.

The permanent judicial commission of the Presbyterian Church (USA) synod that oversees churches in Ohio and Michigan ruled 6-4 that the denomination's constitution does not prohibit ministers from marrying same-sex couples.

Van Kuiken was pastor of the Mount Auburn Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, when he was removed as pastor. He was the first Presbyterian minister to be tried on accusations of marrying homosexuals.

+ *PCUSA, 100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202 Business (888) 728-7228 x5504 pcusanews.pcusa.org*

## Millions trimmed from PCUSA budget

Plans that trim US\$4.6 million from the 2005-2006 mission budget and eliminates 37 national staff positions have been finalised.

These permanent budget cuts were put into place to balance the 2005 and 2006 mission budgets at US\$114.4 million.

The Congregational Ministries Division will sustain cuts of US\$1.33 million and 10 positions; the National Ministries Division, US\$1.16 million and 13 positions; the Worldwide Ministries Division, US\$980,000, Mission Support Services, US\$473,000 and six positions; and the office of the executive director, US\$670,000 and eight positions.

+ *PCUSA, 100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202 Business (888) 728-7228 x5504 pcusanews.pcusa.org*

## Prayer requests privacy rights

Due to a growing concern about privacy rights, the First United Methodist Church in Rockwall, Texas, must fill out a prayer request form that was designed by an attorney. If the request is for anyone other than themselves, the person mentioned must give written approval. These forms were brought about after privacy complaints prompted the suspension of printing prayer requests in the church's newsletter.

+ *First United Methodist Church of Rockwall, Texas, 1200 East Yellowjacket Lane, Rockwall, TX (972) 771-5500*

## First openly homosexual bishop "weds"

Otis Charles, the Retired Episcopal Bishop of Utah who currently serves as Assisting Bishop

of the Episcopal Diocese of California, "married" his homosexual partner, Felepe Sanchez Paris, in a two hour, 45 minute ceremony conducted at St. Gregory's of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco on 24 April. Four clergy participated in the service. Charles, 78, who served as President of Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, after retiring as Bishop of Utah, was previously married (to a female) for 42 years; he announced that he was a homosexual in 1992. Paris, 62, is a retired professor and political organiser with four ex-wives and four children.

+ *Episcopal Correspondent, Rev. Mr. Charles A. Collins, Jr.*

## Teaching Islam in school okayed by Court

A federal judge has upheld the constitutionality of an intensive three-week course in California public schools that teaches students how to follow Islam. US District Judge Phylliss Hamilton has ruled that Excelsior Elementary School in Byron, California, is not acting unconstitutionally when it requires students to choose a Muslim name, read from the Koran (the holy book of Islam), pray to Allah, and simulate worship Activities related to the Five Pillars of Islam. The Thomas More Law Center sued the school on behalf of several Christian students and their parents. Thomas More's chief counsel Richard Thompson said he was astounded by the ruling.

+ *Thomas More Law Center, 3475 Plymouth Rd., Suite 100, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2550 (734) 827-2001*

## Another traditional Sabbath stronghold breached

Despite protests from traditionalists on the island of Raasay, the ferry company Caledonian MacBrayne, which provides ferry services to twenty-two islands and four peninsulas on the West of Scotland, is to start a Sunday service to the island which is separated from the island of Skye by a two-mile stretch of water. Supporters of the CalMac ferry starting a regular Sunday service point to the fact that there is a private ferry which is always available for hire to get round the previous embargo. CalMac does not run a Sunday service to Eigg, Muck, Rum and Canna on a Sunday, but that is more for commercial reasons, as the islands are sparsely populated. In 1965, there were protests when the first Sunday service started to Skye—there is now a bridge linking the island to the mainland.

+ *Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd., The Ferry Terminal, Gourock PA19 1QP*

## Salvation Army sued for religious intolerance

Staffers of the Salvation Army in New York state filed suit against the government-funded organisation on 24 Feb., alleging that it has

preached religious and sexual intolerance to its employees.

The lawsuit filed by the New York chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union said the Salvation Army required employees to identify their church affiliation, promise to preach the Gospel, and permit their religious leaders to reveal private information to the Salvation Army. Donna Lieberman, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, said the Salvation Army may have a right to promote its religion but cannot do so with government money. The organisation receives US\$89 million in government funding, much of which is used for childcare.

+ American Civil Liberties Union, 125 Broad St., 18th Floor, New York, NY 10004

### Lutheran World Federation office bombed in Nepal

Officials for the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) have expressed shock following a bomb explosion at one of its offices in western Nepal. LWF acting general secretary, Rev. Sven Oppegaard, said that the incident was only "a small snapshot of the worsening security situation in Nepal" and that this attack will "hinder aid program[s] in the impoverished mountain kingdom." Oppegaard also reported that the two men who planted the bomb were killed in the explosion and

another nongovernmental agency had been bombed in a separate incident that same week. Because of the danger, the staff of the LWF in the western districts of Nepal has been called back to the central region of the country. Oppegaard expressed concern for the welfare of the people who live in the remote communities of the Himalayan nation who are dependent on the services that LWF provides them. A local Maoist leader was quoted in Nepal newspapers as claiming responsibility for the attack, saying that the office was attacked because "LWF was funded by America."

However, Oppegaard stressed that "LWF is an international church organisation active in humanitarian work, and its program in Nepal is supported by a wide range of partners around the world."

+ Lutheran World Federation, 150, route de Ferney, PO Box 2100, CH-1211 Geneva 2 Switzerland

### Bible verse to remain on fire truck

A Biblical verse painted on Marion, Indiana's, new fire engine will remain there despite concerns that it promotes religion on a taxpayer-funded vehicle, the city's mayor says.

Mayor Wayne Seybold said he chose to allow the verse to remain because the inscription does not say it comes from the

Bible, and makes no reference to God. The fire engine's side contains part of the 23rd Psalm: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

Fire Chief Steve Gorrell said he and fire-fighters chose the verse because it is "how the fire-fighters feel at two in the morning when they go into a structure fire."

Seybold said he received numerous calls, e-mails and letters in support of keeping the verse.

+ Indianapolis Star, <http://www.starnews.com>.

### Mrs. Henry Coray dies

The widow of Henry Coray passed away on Monday 3 May, 2004. She was 98, as was Henry when he passed away in 2002. There will be a memorial service soon in Santa Barbara, California, where the Corays lived for many years. With her passing, there is now one fewer person still living who knew J.G. Machen personally.

+ Richard Zuelch, RE, Beverly OPC, Los Angeles [richardzuelch@earthlink.net](mailto:richardzuelch@earthlink.net)

### Midwest Presbytery welcomes Indiana congregation

The Midwest Presbytery received Warsaw, Indiana, Evangelical Presbyterian Church (formerly First Presbyterian Church) from the Wabash Valley Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (USA) on 14 May, 2004. This 638-member congregation voted to request dismissal in September 2003.

+ Presbytery of the Midwest, Moderator: Alan Strange, Clerk: Rodney T. King, 507 E. Mission Rd., Green Bay, WI 54301

### Utah targets ban on polygamy

When the US Supreme Court ruled against a Texas law that forbade private homosexual activities, Justice Antonin Scalia predicted the decision would spell the end to laws against a list of other taboos, including polygamy.

The ruling, Scalia said, effectively decrees the end of all morals legislation and would likely require laws against fornication, bigamy, adultery, adult incest, bestiality and obscenity to be subsequently declared unconstitutional.

A Utah civil rights attorney has now asked US District Judge Ted Stewart to pick up where Scalia left off and strike down the state's century-old ban on polygamy.

+ United States District Court, District of Utah, 350 South Main St., Room 150, Salt Lake City, UT 84101 (801) 524-6100

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# Faith and the arts

## Challenges confronting Christians

### Don Capill

In the last 40 years, a social, cultural and religious revolution has taken place in the West and caught Christians off-guard, unable to understand or explain what has happened and why. And while change continues at a rate unsurpassed in history, the Christian consensus has been lost. Few Christians seem concerned—most have been taken captive to postmodernism's non-stop diet of change, anti-intellectualism, commercialisation and glitz. Most find themselves living for entertainment and personal ease in an image-driven, soul-shrinking time bubble, without any real reference to the past or interest in the future.

Cultural change on a scale of this magnitude, challenges us on many fronts. We shall look at four:

- The challenge confronting consumers
- The challenge confronting the Church
- The challenge to raise the level of discernment and debate among Christians
- Challenges confronting Christian artists

### The challenge confronting consumers

As we have already seen, works of art have a strange power to touch and affect people's lives as they directly and indirectly urge us to see and experience the world through the eyes and experiences of their makers. When, for centuries, works of art were largely the works of people of high principles and often godliness, this was laudable. Today, given the degree of secularism, self-worship and angst, it is a concern, and especially now that modern artists have at their beck and call high-tech reproduction and instant communication, and an entertainment appeal that embraces sport, fashion, Rock, etc.. Now add to that commercialisation.

A U.N. Development Report in 1998 stated that the growth in global advertising expenditure 'now outpaces the growth of the world economy by one-third'.<sup>1</sup> What is being advertised above all else? The imagery of Coca Cola, Nike, Disney, Starbucks, Tommy Hilfiger, McDonalds, etc. where profit is the motive, and the creation of a world of hallucinations the means. These multinational companies are selling a way of life, an attitude, a set of values, a look, an idea. Nike is selling a feeling of success. IBM isn't selling computers, but business 'solutions'. Swatch isn't selling just watches, but the idea of time. Tommy Hilfiger is selling style: the company doesn't own a single manufacturing business. It owns nothing and

sells a name—a name that will make its owners feel good.

And the multinationals are promoted by celebrities like Michael Jordan, Elizabeth Hurley, Jonah Lomu, etc. Unsurprising, then, the fact that global corporate sponsorship increased over 300 % in the 90s, and now stands at over \$20 billion US.<sup>2</sup>

Commerce has taken captive the arts and continues to do so through their image appeal. They cause the consumer to salivate for a mesmerising world of desire. The end result is that the consumer is taken captive to trivia and sex, and the mind shrinks accordingly.

### The challenge confronting the Church

An art student once commented, 'My College doesn't understand my faith and my church doesn't understand my art. Where do I fit as a whole person?'<sup>3</sup>

In the 1960s, Dorothy Sayers remarked, 'In such things as politics, finance, sociology, and so on, there really is a philosophy and a Christian tradition... But oddly enough, we have no Christian aesthetic—no Christian philosophy of the Arts. The Church has never made up her mind about the Arts, and it is

hardly too much to say that she has never tried. She has, of course, from time to time, puritanically denounced the Arts as irreligious and mischievous, or tried to exploit the Arts as a means to the teaching of religion and morals... And, of course, there have been plenty of writers on aesthetics who happened to be Christians, but they seldom made any consistent attempt to relate their aesthetic to the central Christian dogmas.'<sup>4</sup>

'It is an irony of church life that those who give themselves most ardently to what they see as fulfilling the Great Commission - leafleting, street preaching, Bible study, intercession - are usually those who end up with having the least point of contact with their non-Christian neighbours. In a recent survey (quoted in 1997) non-Christians assessed Christians as, among other things, 'more boring, more isolated, more unfashionable, having fewer interests, less involved in the real world, less happy'. And then we suggest they come and join us!'<sup>5</sup>

Part of the problem is that Christians are often too simplistic in their sharing of the gospel and too simplistic in their understanding of today's culture. Charles Colson has written, 'It is not enough to focus



*exclusively on the spiritual, on Bible studies and evangelistic campaigns, while turning a blind eye to the distinctive tensions of contemporary life.. Turning our backs on the culture is a betrayal of our Biblical mandate and our own heritage because it denies God's sovereignty over all of life.'*<sup>6</sup>

For us all, whether we be artist or consumer, a proper stewardship of talent and time is laid upon us. In a parable that Jesus relates about the use of money (talents) and time,<sup>7</sup> the departing nobleman instructed his servants to occupy themselves till he returns. The nobleman is Christ Himself. He has placed us in appointed positions where we, each one, should be living in the light of His return, able to give a good account of the stewardship of time and talents bestowed upon us. 'God has given us richly all things to enjoy'.<sup>8</sup> Whatever we do, therefore, whether in the name of work or leisure, all is to be done for the glory of God. 'God has given us richly all things to enjoy'. Every



dimension of the artistic enterprise—creativity, excellence of technique, artistic content, originality, wholesome enjoyment—becomes a way of glorifying God. And such a goal saves Christians from making the things of art into an idol.

### **The challenge to raise the level of discernment and debate among Christians**

How do Christians stand in the battle for the mind? Not well, it must be admitted. The arts do not teach truth as such, but one of their values lies in their being a catalyst to thought. 'The arts, for all their beauty and delightfulness and value as entertainment, are not intended as the occasion for us to take a holiday of the mind.'<sup>9</sup> Rather they are an occasion to 'test the spirits to see if they are of God'—to rigorously scrutinize and discern. If this flies in the face of postmodernism's political correctness, and disdain of judgment, so be it!

We are to be aware of how the arts work on us. Literature carries most clearly the

artist's perspectives on life, because words allow for the greatest scope and clarity of communication. Music carries the least intellectual meaning, and the visual arts fall somewhere between the two. But the power of television, film and video, brings a mix which grabs and rivets ones attention, mind-boggling but mind-shrinking at the same time. As one film director commented, 'You have to hit your audience *before* they think.' Another ploy is the constant shortening of shots. The mind is left breathless trying to follow the action, with no time to discern.

Works of art connect us with life when they model life, but they can also disconnect us from real life. Film and television increasingly lead us to live in their 'virtual reality,' and we become dream-like characters (like Peter Sellars' Chancy Gardner in *Being There*), instead of people of character and substance. "Repeatedly it has been shown," Wolterstorff points out, "that, under certain conditions, where person A observes person B preferring some action, that serves to develop in A the *ability* (and the *tendency*) to perform that same action."<sup>10</sup>

It is imperative, therefore, that Christians learn to be more discerning. If we still need further convincing, let us take to heart the importance of what Simone Weil once observed: In life "nothing is so beautiful, continually fresh and surprising, so full of sweet and perpetual ecstasy, as the good: no desert is so dreary, monotonous and boring as evil. But with fantasy it's the other way round. Fictional good is boring and flat, while fictional evil is varied, intriguing, attractive and full of fun."

Meaningful ethical debates of our day no longer generally arise from church settings. They arise from chatter over coffee cups, out of what passes for news, and from the latest must-see telly programmes so highly commended by worldly critics; and the challenge is for each believer to learn how to become a mini-Christian-apologist, taking up the issues as they arise from secular settings and entertainment.

"Christians are responsible for the furniture of their minds," Ryken reminds us. "What they take into themselves is not morally neutral. It is like food that they digest and that becomes part of them. Some food is poisonous to the system. So are some forms of art, literature, music (and film)... In the long run, we are the sum of our indulgences..."

"How does art (especially literature) embody an immoral perspective toward its subject matter? Essentially it does so by offering an immoral attitude for the audience's approval: making immoral acts attractive; leaving goodness bereft of its proper beauty; generating sympathy for immoral characters and actions; belittling

characters whose actions and attitudes are moral; omitting models of morally good behaviour; treating immoral acts in a comic tone; prompting a reader to refrain from moral judgment; portraying immoral acts as something people have no choice in rejecting."<sup>11</sup>

Things to consider with respect to discerning works of art

1. If contact with a specific work of art is likely to have a negative effect on your Christian beliefs, values and behaviour, leave it alone.
2. Beware of exposing yourself to emotional experiences that are contrary to sanctification, and indulge the pleasures of the flesh and private world.
3. If you do not find enjoyment in any particular art, don't bother with it. Be yourself, but be open to learning.
4. Is an art work *technically* good or inferior? If you don't know, begin to find out.
5. Is an art work communicating truth or falsehood? The ideal is truth, technically well expressed. The tragedy with much Christian culture is that it is often shallow or sentimental, and badly expressed artistically.

The on-going challenge is to develop your mind, enlarge your experiences and empathy for others, delight in the good and multiply the good of your neighbour, and honour God.

### **Challenges confronting Christian artists**

Here let me be brash enough to address artists, and offer a few thoughts, for what they're worth.

Be realistic about assessing your talent. As in the Parable of the Talents,<sup>12</sup> there are very different giftings but whatever the gift, great or small, the responsibility to use it is laid on the recipient. That parable should not be read in isolation from two others, however: the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard<sup>13</sup> and the Parable of the Pounds.<sup>14</sup> These balance other considerations with talents, those of time and opportunity. Just as our talents vary, so do opportunities to develop and use them, and these tie in with the time one is free to spend. To fail to see the relationship between these three will cause endless frustration.

It is not really sufficient to just have a general desire to practise art, though this will yield its pleasures and delights when pursued even in a limited way. Just to dabble in the realms of creativity can be refreshing and enjoyable, but for the serious artist, desire must be backed by other things, such as mastery of technique. This involves learning, observing, practising, persevering, perfecting. Pursue your own search through trial and error, and experimentation coupled with patience. Learn to be your own judge and jury—and don't be soft on yourself. Don't

be afraid to write off much of what you do. You set the standard of what you will launch into the public arena. Poorer craftsmen rush for recognition: the really good never do. Seek to steadily improve and mature. Appreciate something of the history that lies behind your pursuit. Hunger and thirst to know and learn more.

The best will have a real sense of 'calling', and know it, in contrast to a lot who will *think* they have it. One proof of the genuine thing is perseverance—stickability, through decades. It won't really matter much if you never get much recognition or make any money from your interest. Such things will not stop you creating. Your mind will be continually switched on, and your desire to create will not depart if this is God's calling upon your life.

If you don't want to be a mere copier, you've got to find your own way of expressing the truth and passion within you. You've got to *feel deeply* and try to find your own particular style and niche. I think of someone like the American artist, Andrew Wyeth. His father was a well-known artist before him, and taught him, but Andrew became much more than an echo of his father. He worked much in isolation, and was never bored with his own company. He loved nature, and especially the landscapes of a couple of particular districts. He *loved* much whatever he painted. He revisited the same landscapes, and repainted many times characters that he admired. He was often mocked for this, but he ignored the criticisms. "*I can't get any great feeling without a very strong connection with a place,*" he said. "*Really, I think one's art goes only as far and as deep as your love goes.*"

With respect to portraits, "*A lot of portraits all look alike—the artist's conception of what a girl looks like—same eyes—details without passion. It's awful. The artists—their personalities—are so strong in front of their paintings, you never get to their objects—which should exist with a life of their own. They are actually saying, to hell with the object. But I feel that the subjects I paint are far bigger than I am—I mean, to feel that I'm the creator, I'd have to be a half-wit. The finest compliment I ever had came from an art critic at a show of my work in Buffalo. I told him I didn't want to get in his way, and he said, 'Don't worry about that Mr Wyeth. You're no competition for your work.'*"

Wyeth made an astute comment about high prices paid for art, which I like, for he generally wasn't interested in money. He only wanted his works of art in the hands of people who really loved them, as he did. But he has said, "*There's one good thing about high prices—it makes people feel that art is important. America is so money-conscious. I mean, if I had Christina's World here, (one of his most famous paintings) and told*

*people there's a tempera that's worth thousands of dollars, oh, how they'd really look—and maybe get something out of it. But when I first painted it, people walked right by it.*"

If you've any real talent, strive for the best. Wyeth was always after that, which is why he was only satisfied enough with about two temperas and twenty watercolours a year to let them go to the public. You've got to *feel deeply*—be moved within—and express that. Meditate much on your subject—meditate alone. Value silence and aloneness—and use them for reflection. Reflect, meditate, rearrange things in your mind. Let your imagination run. Open up your emotions. Give yourself time. Don't allow yourself to be cluttered with the unnecessary. If you have a creative spirit and a burning urge to express it, give yourself the space you need to do that. This is where the support of others comes in. They can help you get the space you need and see that you're not interrupted. The silent supporters make a unique contribution which the artist never takes for granted and without which his works would be much the poorer. (One may wonder if Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* would ever have been published had it not been for the warm private encouragement and singular support of C.S. Lewis.)

You will meet people who are not the slightest bit interested in your work but, on the other hand, there will be some who wished they knew more about art and "where you're coming from." You have no obligation to the former but you will do well to try to help the latter, where you can.

Beware lest a social life destroys your

creative life and, if you're married, this is a cost for your partner to bear and share. Spare much time with God and His Word. Meditate on what He wants you to be as a person as well as an artist. Primarily, He calls you to *be*. What we are and what we do must be at one, if we are to please God, and the measure of this is the measure of our integrity.

Let me end with some words from Nicholas Wolterstorff:

*"In the Christian view, man's uniqueness among his fellow earthlings lies in his vocation and destiny, and his glory lies in carrying out that vocation. Man's obedience is his glory! In such glory all can share. It is open to all to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with one's God. It is this glory of obedience that the artist is called to share."*<sup>15</sup>

*Don Capill has served as a High School teacher and as a lecturer in Christian Education at the Reformed Theological College. He is a member of the Reformed Church of Bishopdale.*

<sup>1</sup> 25. Naomi Klein, *No Logo*, Flamingo, 2000

<sup>2</sup> 26. Ibid

<sup>3</sup> 27. Brand & Solway, *Art & Soul*

<sup>4</sup> 28. Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*

<sup>5</sup> 29. Brand & Solway, *Art & Soul*, p.72

<sup>6</sup> 30. Charles Colson, *How Now shall we Live?*

<sup>7</sup> 31. Luke 19:11-27

<sup>8</sup> 32. I Timothy 6:17

<sup>9</sup> 33. Leland Ryken, *Culture in Christian Perspective*

<sup>10</sup> 34. *Art in Action*

<sup>11</sup> 35. *Culture in Christian Perspective* p. 248

<sup>12</sup> 36. Matthew 25: 14-30

<sup>13</sup> 37. Luke 20: 9-18

<sup>14</sup> 38. Luke 19: 12-27

<sup>15</sup> 39. *Art in Action*

## The saints of ancient British history

### St Ninian

#### Patricia van Laar

Ninian, living c. 360 - c. 432A.D., and the much-misunderstood Patrick, born about 25 years later, were both Romano/Britons, i.e. Britons of the time of the Roman occupation. Both belong to the beginning of a new period of Christian expansion. The Dictionary of Christian Biography cites Ninian as the "*first and greatest of the ancient British missionaries.*" Whether or not you agree with this assessment of his greatness, he was certainly the first known to us. We know little about him personally. Therefore, much of this

article concerns tradition, with much unsaid. Any facts behind the tradition belongs to wider research than can be undertaken here.

#### The scant records of the life of St Ninian

Even with digging, there is just the surface of Ninian's life to scratch. Most of what we know about him comes from the writing of the Venerable Bede in his *Historia Ecclesiastica Britannica*, recorded about 730A.D., some three hundred years after Nynia's death. (Bede used the British form of his name). So what is contained in Bede



is not first-hand knowledge, but the tradition coming from the monastery of Whithorn at the time of Bede. No writing has survived prior to this. All that is written since, it is said, is a “*variation on a theme by Bede.*”

However, the 12<sup>th</sup>-century abbot, Ailred of Rievaulx, claimed to have in his possession an earlier life of Ninian, written in a barbarian language, by which he means either non-Latin or bad Latin. He gives us two personal notes. Ailred declares that Ninian was thought to have been born at Strathclyde, Scotland, in the region of the Solway River. His father, a chieftain, was a Christian, so Ninian was baptised as a child. Ailred also tells us that Ninian had a companion on his journeys named Plebia. Little more seems to be known about his background.

Having learnt all he could at home, Ninian is said to have set out on his journeys at the age of twenty-three, travelling for six months to Rome, no easy trip in those days—a thousand and more miles on foot. Though probably given letters of introduction to Christians at various places en route, there were considerable dangers to face from man and beast. His object at Rome was to be taught further in his faith. (The worst of the distinctive doctrines of the Roman Church were then still well into the future, although even at this time we can trace the beginnings of some of them.) The story is that Pope Damasus (366 - 384), who was impressed with the studious and earnest young man from the outskirts of the empire, entrusted him into the care of St Jerome (translator of the Vulgate, the Latin translation of the Bible). Jerome in the latter part of his life was in Bethlehem, and a letter from there speaks of students from all over the world, including “*the Briton.*” Was this Briton Ninian? What is certain is that after the death of Damasus, Ninian was consecrated Bishop of the Southern Picts by Pope Siricus in 394.

### The first White House

More seems to be known of the sites associated with Ninian than of his own self. While returning home through Gaul he stayed with St Martin of Tours, and this resulted in the influence of Tours on the physical centre of his activities. Back home, Ninian founded the house of Candida Casa (White House) [USA cannot claim the first!] at Whithorn in Wigtownshire. Masons from Tours travelled to Britain, and built Ninian’s church in stone, in what for Britain was an ‘unaccustomed’ way. Martin died in 397 while it was being built, so it was named in honour of and dedicated to St Martin of Tours.

Until 1949 there was a dispute exactly which Whithorn was the site of Ninian’s church—a seaside village on the coast named the Isle of Whithorn, or the town Whithorn three miles inland. Then archaeological excavations settled the question and revealed also just what was probably the unusual difference in Ninian’s church building, and why it became the “White House,” from which the name of ‘Whithorn’ comes. (Old English *hwit aern*).



The ruins at the seaside village were discovered after excavation, to be no later than the twelfth century, whereas at the town, the earliest parts of the foundations of the church were far more ancient. They were of crude, unmortared stonework, typical of Celtic buildings built at that time in Wales and Devon. The dark grey slate and shale hardly deserved the name ‘white house.’ However, on the outer face of the wall were patches of whitish mortar. This suggests Ninian’s church was whitened in a method used later in North Wales, so that “*the countryside (of Wales) glittered with lime-washed churches like the firmament of the stars.*” To the Britons of Ninian’s time it was a completely new style, introduced by the masons of Tours.

Another site closely associated with the above two was Ninian’s Cave, where archaeology has revealed, hidden under sand and silt, many crosses (Celtic and Latin) carved on the rock face. Three miles from the coastal village, this may reasonably be accepted as possibly Ninian’s place of retreat, while the village is considered his landing place by sea, and the town as the site of his monastery.

### Ninian’s sphere of influence

According to Bede, Ninian preached Christianity to the Picts of all southern Scotland as far north as the Grampians. (See the map published in the May issue.) Bede tells that the Southern Picts, south of the Grampian Hills, left the error of idolatry for the true faith, ‘*through Ninian, a most revered bishop and holy man of the nation of the British, who had been regularly instructed in the faith and in the mysteries of the truth at Rome.*’ Tuduvallis, the local ruler, was allegedly converted by the preaching of Ninian.

But his influence was not limited, as Bede seems to imply, to the regions from Solway to the Grampians, but rather northward to Aberdeenshire, Inverness, Sutherland and the Northern Islands—not the area of his personal presence, but the sphere of converts who looked back to him as their ‘apostle,’ as some called him—people taught by his itinerant monks.

Bede’s mistake was probably due to the fact that the map available to him was a map produced by Ptolyme, which shows Scotland twisted round in an east-west direction towards the Continent, instead of continuing south to north (on ‘top’ of England). The north and south of Scotland are shown in roughly an east-west position. [To visualise this, imagine our North Island being straddled over the South Island in an east-west position, Wellington in the south-west, Hastings/Napier in the south, Gisborne south-east. New Plymouth would then seem to be North of the Desert Road.] This made it appear as

if Ninian's followers' activities were only south of the Grampians. Bede's mistake, though not his fault!

This means that the area Bede referred to would in actual fact be the eastern area of Scotland, reaching right up north to the Orkney Islands above north east Scotland, a much wider range than Bede gives him credit for. His influence reached east to Hadrian's Wall, north to Aberdeenshire, Inverness and Sutherland, and to the northern Isles. This conforms to place names associated with Ninian in Scottish geography.

#### The names confirm the influence of St Ninian

The evidence of St Ninian is in these place names, and the names of churches dedicated to him. Many are still found on the East Coast right up to the north. They indicate, not necessarily his own personal presence in those places, but a wide area of those who looked to Ninian as "their apostle," over such a region as gives cause to the estimation of him as the first and greatest of the ancient British missionaries.

Some recently-found remains also go back to his time—archaeological discoveries of ancient Christian relics, not always treated respectfully! One cross was used for years as a graveyard gatepost, another mortared with other rubble into a pillar at the entrance to a house. One historian comments, "So little did our grandfathers care for Christian antiquities!" Still, they hold interest for us. The oldest of these go back at least towards, if not as far back as, Ninian's time. Two bear the XR monogram (*chi rho*—the first and second Greek letters of CHRIST). One of



these also has the Greek alpha and omega sign above it.

#### Update by Bede!

Bede continued his record in 730 AD, "The place where he (Ninian) is buried is now held by the English, in the province of the Bernicians, commonly called the White House (Candida Casa) because he built the church in a manner unaccustomed to the

Britons." This church and centre played an important part in the future of the church and history of Scotland.

Such is the tradition of Ninian. So much attributed to him, so little known of him. It may be that he would be glad of this. At least he escaped much of the magic which surrounds poor St Patrick.

The glory of his life belongs to the God he served.

## A feminine focus

# "Rescue the Perishing..."

## The Life and Songs of Fanny Crosby

### Sally Davey

Fanny Crosby is one of the best-known women hymn writers of the nineteenth century. She is interesting for two reasons, the first of which is her unusual life. Fanny was blind, and meeting this challenge shaped her life, her faith and her life's work. The second reason is that her particular form of songwriting is part of a long tradition of revival music in America. Knowledge of Fanny's songs and their context helps us

learn some very useful things about the history of revival songs, and where that tradition has led us today.

#### Her early blindness

Fanny Crosby was born in 1820 in the countryside of New York State. When she was only 6 weeks old her mother noticed that her eyes were sore and red-rimmed, and that she cried a good deal and tried to rub them with her little fists. She consulted an apothecary (precursors to our modern

chemists). He gave her poultices, which was a tragic mistake—their effect was to remove her sight permanently. A second sadness was that Mr Crosby died when his baby daughter was only one year old, so Fanny's mother had the responsibility of caring for her blind child alone. But it seems that Fanny was a happy and content little girl even so: she would sit with her mother in the countryside, and ask her to describe the things she could not see. Mrs Crosby would draw word-pictures for her, and in this way

Fanny developed a love of nature and a way of describing things in words.

When she was 5 her mother took her to New York City to see a doctor who told her Fanny would never be able to see. But as she grew older, she began to write poetry about the Lord Jesus, and the way we must see Him with eyes of faith. She had a believing grandmother, who described the birds and the stars, and also read her the Bible. She stored in her mind long portions of Scripture—even as a child she was able to repeat most of the New Testament, the Pentateuch, Ruth, many of the Psalms and parts of the Prophets.

But she yearned to go to school and learn like other children. Then someone told her mother about a school for the blind which had been established in New York. Poor Mrs Crosby struggled with the idea of letting her 15-year-old daughter go and live away from home. But Fanny was adamant; she so wanted an education. She went, and thrived on the literature, history, philosophy and science she learned at the school. She was also able, while there, to learn the piano and organ; and the works of Longfellow and the English poets inspired her own gift of writing poetry. The headmaster of the school, however, wanted her to give up her poetry, regarding it as a frivolous thing to spend time on. Ironically, at this point a visiting phrenologist examined Fanny (phrenology was a practice popular in those days, “reading” people’s abilities by the bumps and lumps on their heads. It even had the respectability of a science). He pronounced Fanny a born poetess; and as a consequence, she no longer had to plead to be allowed to write her verses.

### Her conversion

Fanny continued on at the School for the Blind, teaching when she had finished her studies. She was actually well into her adult years when she was converted. Apparently one night she had a dream in which Theodore Camp, a young teacher at the school, was dying; and he asked Fanny, “Will you meet me in heaven?” She dreamed she replied, “Yes, I will, and God helping me, I will.” When she woke she realized she wasn’t ready for heaven, and during the next few years she tried hard to find God and forgiveness for her sins, as well as to do good works. She became a regular attender of a Methodist Episcopal church, one of the more actively evangelistic churches in the United States on the frontier in the earlier days, and by Fanny’s time, in the big East Coast cities among poor immigrants as well. But it was not until she was 30 that she finally took the step she regarded as her decision for Christ. Her church was holding what was commonly called a revival meeting, or mission, and she stepped forward when the

invitation (altar call) was given, shouting, “Hallelujah!”

Despite her blindness, Fanny was a very active Christian. She was involved in a lot of charitable work carried out by her church among the desperately poor of New York’s worst area, known in those days as the “Bowery.” These were the days of massive immigration into the United States from southern and eastern Europe. Italians, Irish, German, Poles, and millions of Russian Jews (many of them fleeing for their lives from the pogroms the Russians periodically raised against them) were entering through Ellis Island. These people were destitute when they arrived in the cities of America’s east coast, and crowded slum housing was all they could afford until work in factories or removal further west enabled them to improve their situation. Churches like Fanny’s worked hard at providing food, shelter and other necessities of life. They were also very



Fanny Crosby

active in caring for the sick during a terrible cholera epidemic (Fanny was a nurse at this time). They also took the Gospel to them in a very simple, emotionally-charged way. Many of her songs were written for singing at the mid-week “revival” meetings where evangelistic speakers would urge the unconverted to decide for Christ.

### Her marriage

At the School for the Blind she met and fell in love with a fellow blind student, Alexander van Alstyne, and they married. He was an accomplished musician, and taught music at the school in later years. In fact, they collaborated in producing a number of hymns. They had a long marriage—Alexander died in 1902, when Fanny was 82.

Throughout her life Fanny continued song-writing. She became so well-known that her songs were used in every large gathering for evangelistic work. (Dwight L. Moody, the most famous travelling 19<sup>th</sup> century evangelist, included 76 of them in

*Redemption Songs*, his book for revival meetings that he compiled together with Ira Sankey, the musician who always accompanied him.) From her pen poured a multitude of verses. During her long life of 95 years, Fanny wrote over 8000 songs. One music publisher commissioned her to write 3 songs a week, all through the year; and for two firms alone she wrote over 5000 of them. It is said that she used 216 different pen-names for her writing—perhaps some of her publishers preferred their customers not to know they had one writer producing such a vast volume of material, lest that cast doubt on its quality.

### Her type of hymn

She also “wrote to order” for various requests. Often the themes of her songs were suggested by visiting evangelists wanting a new song on a particular subject. Sometimes musician friends would compose some music, then ask Fanny for the words. This is how “*Blessed Assurance*” happened. A Mrs Knapp apparently asked Fanny, “What does this tune say?” and she replied, “Why, that says ‘Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.’” The themes of heaven and the Lord’s return were her favourites, and the anticipation of seeing her Saviour had great personal meaning for this blind lady. A well-intentioned Scottish minister once remarked to her, “I think it is a great pity that the Master, when He showered so many gifts on you, did not give you sight.” Her rebuke came quickly: “Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition to my Creator, it would have been that I should be born blind?” “Why?” asked the surprised clergyman. “Because, when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Saviour.”

So where does Fanny’s type of song fit into the tradition of American religious music? To understand this properly, it is necessary to look back to the early days of church life, particularly on the frontiers of the southern states. It was there that, through the work of itinerant preachers, mainly Methodist and Baptist, isolated farming families were taken the gospel, and tiny, far-flung churches were established. The isolation of these people, their simple tastes and their zeal for gospel-preaching of a rather spectacular (or sensational) kind, made what were called “camp meetings” or “tent meetings”, which were held during the summer months, very popular. These were large gatherings of simple country people for the purposes of an intense period of fiery preaching under canvas. And sometimes people were converted by some rather emotional means. The singing of rousing songs designed to prick the conscience and stimulate the hearer to “decide for Christ” was one of these means. Sometimes these

songs were sung over and over as the meetings progressed day by day.

Early in the nineteenth century one of America's most famous evangelists, Charles Grandison Finney, thought long and hard about how to stimulate conversion in the audiences to which he preached. Finney, a New England Presbyterian minister, Arminian in theology, was driven by an urgent desire to make converts; and as a consequence he introduced a number of innovations that were to have a long history in American evangelism. Among these were praying for people by name, having women praying publicly in meetings, preaching everywhere—even in small towns without an invitation from the local pastor, praying to God in a very familiar way, very long meetings, the use of an "anxious seat" for troubled souls, inquiry meetings, and the immediate admission of converts into the churches. He did later become more restrained after beginning a long period of settled ministry in New York City in the 1830s, but his practices were quickly picked up by other churches; and Fanny's Methodist Episcopal church was one, as we can see from the story of her own conversion. And these practices have endured to the present day—nowhere more emphatically than in charismatic circles.

#### **Her background**

The songs that accompanied these revivalistic practices (practices specifically aimed to "produce" conversions) have often been called "gospel songs". Fanny's songs mostly fall into this category, and they have certainly been used very much for this purpose in the century and a half since they were written. Various writers on worship and worship practices have written about the history of these songs—and generally, it can be said that they aim to urge the singer to do something. Often they encourage the sinner to "decide for Christ"—to give his heart and his soul to the Lord in repentance. Sometimes their aim is to persuade the singer to witness for Christ. Fanny's most famous song, "Rescue the perishing," is one of these, written after she had spoken at a meeting where she was particularly urgent that someone there needed the Saviour. Such songs, usually with repetitive choruses sung at the end of each verse, are definitely aimed at reinforcing the message in the singer and hearer alike.

But, as has been said often, such songs are not hymns. They do not turn the singer's mind toward God, and praise of Him. As one writer has said, "A hymn coordinates with prayer." Hymns lead our thoughts God-wards. Revival songs aim to motivate unbelievers and believers into action. For this reason, it is hymns that are appropriate to worship of God. Erik Routley, a prominent English historian of hymnody, has shown clearly that

## **The RTC Biblical Preaching Workshop for 2004**

**Geelong, Thurs 30 September  
& Fri 1 October**

### **"Preaching Christ from the Psalms"**

The Reformed Theological College's Biblical Preaching Workshops are becoming widely known, and an appreciated professional development event for ministers and pastors. They provide an equally valuable instruction time for other Christian workers, lay preachers, elders and other Christian leaders. One of the most telling evaluations received was this one **"I learned a lot about everyday ministry, these workshops are for everyone!, not just for ministers"**

The Workshops are aimed at supporting preachers who are already established in basic preaching skills and committed to biblical preaching.

They provide two days of teaching and interaction, which will challenge and assist participants spiritually, stimulate their thinking about preaching, help them in their preaching ministry, and encourage them to ongoing faithfulness in Biblical preaching.

The Workshops have proven to be times of expert preaching skills instruction by RTC faculty members and guest lecturers, and joyful fellowship around The Word.

Participants have come from all over Australia, and New Zealand, and from a range of church denominations; evangelical, conservative, pentecostal.

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Workshop, to be held at the RTC, 125 Pigdons Rd Waurin Ponds, Geelong, DV on Thursday 30 September and Friday 1 October 2004, will be on the subject of "Preaching Christ from the Psalms".**

It is currently under preparation. Intending participants should note the dates in their diaries already, and talk about it with their church council. That will help planning to attend having regard to other commitments, and making timely preparations for travelling etc. Some churches enrol a group of delegates, which has proven most helpful in their work.

Intending participants should keep an eye out for the Programme & Enrolment Form, due to be issued around June. Accommodation on the RTC Campus will be at a premium due to the increased number of residents living there, so it is advisable to enrol and book accommodation on Campus at an early date.

RTC Faculty members look forward to again welcoming many participants to the 2004 Preaching Workshop.

Dr Henk DeWaard  
PRINCIPAL

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Fanny's songs are in the tradition of revival songs. They were designed for a special purpose—evangelistic meetings in the United States and Britain. They were very much “songs for ordinary people.” They were not designed for formal public worship. He adds that one hymnal (the *English Hymnal*) has them in a section entitled “for Mission Services”—discreetly subtitled “Not suitable for general use”. They were, as Routley rightly points out, designed for rallies of the Salvation Army and the like – men's and women's meetings, and weeknight evangelistic meetings of the churches. “They are not, in fact, by common consent, vehicles for the public worship of the Church as a whole...” And even as instruments for the salvation of souls, Routley believes (and the historical facts bear him out), Charles

Wesley's hymns (better in theology and Godward focus) have a longer-lasting and more significant history.

#### Her place today

Fanny's songs belong very much to their age and revivalistic setting. They were popular for a long time in the context for which they were written—evangelistic rallies and decision-focused church outreaches. However, as churches changed, most especially with the rise of the charismatic movement, Fanny's type of song was superseded by the much more emotionally daring—but shorter, and more repetitive—choruses. I have even heard it suggested that the refrains attached to songs of her era simply became the choruses of today. Certainly, they were the “repetition” element

in gospel songs. These days, the highly-charged emotional atmosphere of charismatic services is generally produced by bands of skilled musicians, and the music is something the congregation responds to rather than participates in. Their words—often vague and sensual—are subservient to the effect of the music. Even Fanny's songs contain too much verbal, objective content for the achieving of the sorts of subjective responses bands today aim for.

Fanny Crosby certainly had an interesting, and service-filled life, especially given the fact of her blindness. She served God wholeheartedly, and in this we can imitate her. But her songs were the product of an age and a theology far surpassed by the better, and more enduring models with which we have been blessed.

## Manners

### Bringing out what we're meant to be

#### Benjamin Hoyt

**Too often we don't have manners.** More to the point, too often I don't have manners. And these days, we hardly know what the word “manners” means.

#### What are manners?

They're how our mothers taught us to behave. They are culture. But what do they do? They show respect. They say that others are better than ourselves.

Speech manners show that we want to listen as much as we want to talk. They show that we realise it's the person talking, not his feet. They show that we're big enough to use words bigger than four letters.

Table manners set us apart from cows and pigs. They show respect for people's table comfort and dignity. Others don't want to see our half-chewed food. Others don't want to feel our elbows in their faces. Nor do they want to see our heads in books; they'd rather see our faces.

Courting manners show that we respect women, despite what the feminists say. They show that we think of women more highly than ourselves. They show that not all men only think about sex. They also remind us that if it weren't for those special women, our mothers, we wouldn't be around.

In other words, manners make us better. They make us respect our neighbour more, and therefore they make us more Christian.

#### But, as with all good things, manners are dangerous

They should humble us, but they can make

us proud. Showing off our “good manners” is having no manners at all: it's like “doing in Rome as the Romans do,” but just to make us look good. Instead, we must act out of respect and courtesy. Manners are not posh; they are humbling.

However, true manners will never stifle us; they will bring out the child in us. They will encourage laughter and romance and honour. They will make men Real Men, and women Real Women. They will make us more human.

#### In my own journey with manners, I have failed often

The great thing is that the only room is for improvement. I have been proud and childish; now I must be humble and child-like. Now I must have manners, but still I must have fun. And the two are not opposites. They may even be the same thing. Let me give some examples.

We're just arriving at a meeting, perhaps a Bible Study. I sit down and start chatting to the guy next to me. He's a decent guy, and I listen to his interesting banter, throwing in my own stories along the way. Soon a lady arrives, and we stand up and offer her both of our seats, leading to confusion and laughter all round. The scene is mannerly as well as fun, and it sets the tone for the whole evening. The Bible Study starts. A Bible Study is a Study for God, so it's just as well God invented humour. The jokes, where appropriate, continue. And I, being who I am, like to throw quite enough spanners into the stagnant works. It's not the done thing, but what could be more

thoughtful than helping people to think?

Or maybe we're going to a restaurant. I, of course, forget to pull out a chair for my fiancée. She grins at me and waits. Finally I realise, and her whole family cracks up. Some time after the meal, I reach over and give her a quick peck on the cheek, and then notice the funny smiles of the other patrons. Nobody else does that sort of thing, but in this case I don't care one bit. My “manners” show my love for my fiancée as well as amuse the other patrons.

Perhaps I'm at university doing an arts degree. Everyone here is so nice; everyone is so politically correct. No one rebukes, no one criticises, no one really thinks too hard. I play along for a while, throwing in a manner or two where appropriate. Eventually some of them are nice enough to ask how I got my manners. I tell them it's because I respect others, and serve a King who does the same. They usually go quiet, smiling and thinking to themselves, “how nice.”

#### In fact, that pretty much sums it up

Whatever others think, I'm going to serve my King. King first, manners second. Call me old-fashioned, call me other-worldly, call me a romantic, but my King calls me a Christian. Christ is my King, and He commands me to care for my neighbour, to listen before I speak, to love my family, to be like a child, and to hate sin.

These are the King's manners, and really, I want no others.

## Mission in focus

Janice Reid

# Using the Third Millennium

Are you making use of the third millennium? "What are you talking about?" I can hear you ask. "The third millennium is a era, not a thing!"

In fact, it's both. Third Millennium Ministries (IIM) was founded by Dr Richard L. Pratt, Jr., in 1998 (1). It uses computer technology to deliver instructional resources throughout the world. IIM's mission is to equip church leaders in their own lands by creating a fully scalable, multi-media seminary curriculum in five major languages in fifteen years.

Let me quote IIM's own description of their plan:

*The church is growing at an astounding pace in Latin America, the former Soviet Union, sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia, but leaders in these regions have very little opportunity to learn the Scriptures and sound theology. Because equipping indigenous leaders is so vital to the strength of the church, Third Millennium Ministries (IIM) is producing a multi-media seminary curriculum that can be used in support of existing schools and delivered remotely to groups and individuals in these parts of the world.*

IIM has developed a cost-effective means of providing high quality seminary instruction in English, Spanish, Mandarin-Chinese, Russian and Arabic. Following the example of the Protestant Reformers, who utilized the printing press to distribute Christian teaching throughout Europe, IIM employs digital technology and the internet to distribute instructional materials throughout the world (2).

The IIM website ([www.thirdmill.org](http://www.thirdmill.org)) is a large one. It contains instruction from evangelical theologians, pastors and seminary students in each of its five target languages. The site includes a weekly online magazine, hundreds of articles, discussion forums, audio sermons and lectures, electronic books, and more.

IIM has forged strategic relations with a number of mission agencies, as well as several seminaries in the United States and overseas. Together, they are committed to equipping indigenous leaders in some of the poorest regions of the world.

### What are the ministry values?

The theological values of this ministry appear to be thoroughly sound. IIM derives its call from the Great Commission which, it says, implies an imperative to equip church leaders throughout the world, so that those men can, in turn, apply Scripture and sound theology in their ministries.

IIM acknowledges and upholds the Holy Scripture as "*inspired and given by the Holy Spirit, infallible and inerrant, to be received, read, believed and obeyed as the written Word of God.*"

Their theological statement is brief (as is usual for such organisations) but it is in agreement with our own Creeds, and with Reformed theology.

### Why this way?

You may be wondering why seminary professors and church leaders in the west are staying there—working at their computers to reach out to those in other lands, instead of getting on a plane and going in person? Or, why don't they bring students over to their American institutions and train them there—where they can keep a close eye on the students'

understanding of Reformed teaching?

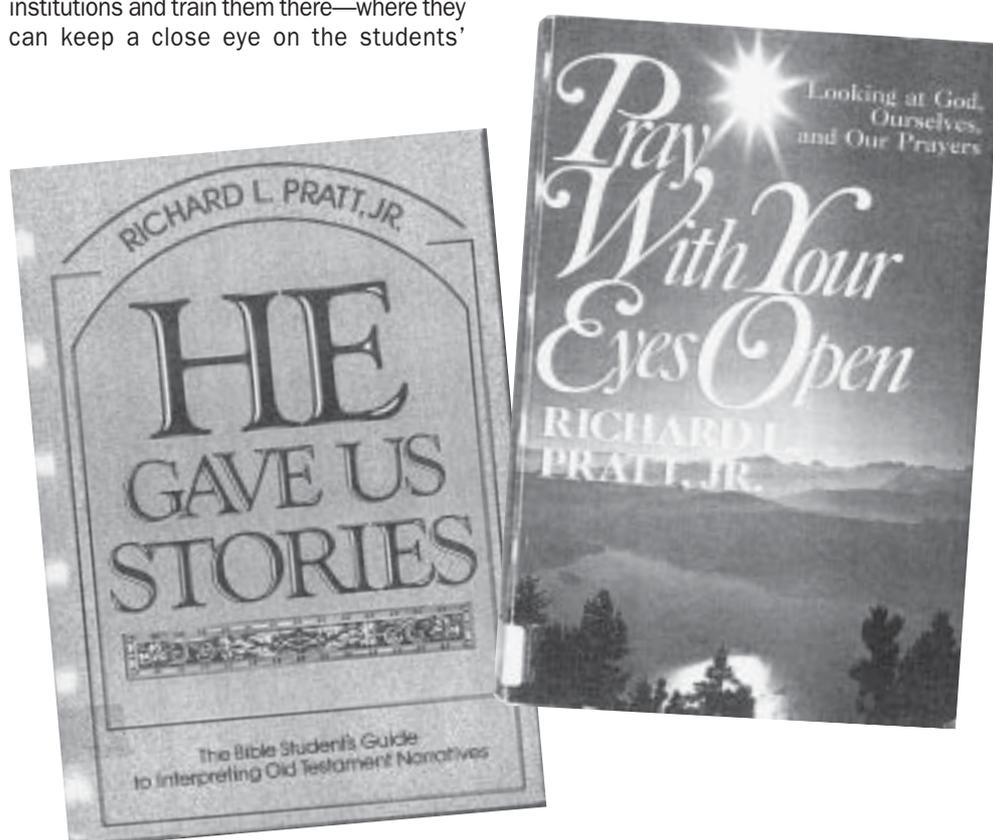
Third Millennium Ministries acknowledges that these approaches to mission work are important and should continue. But it also points out that:

- Missionaries have started Bible schools and seminaries in many developing nations, but the schools are normally understaffed and lack curriculum in the languages of those they serve
- Professors and pastors sometimes travel to developing nations to hold short-term teaching sessions. However, these events can reach only a small portion of those who need training
- Some leaders have been brought to seminaries in the west, but many of them never return to their homelands. (3)

### Why these languages?

Why should IIM concentrate on these five languages? Well, they do have plans to expand in future, as they are able. But, to quote their own explanation, "*English, Spanish, Mandarin-Chinese, Russian and Arabic are spoken where the church is growing most rapidly and the need for well-taught leaders is greatest.*"

English and Spanish are crucial languages for the growing church of the southern hemisphere, especially in Latin America and English-speaking Africa. In his recent book



*The Next Christendom*, Philip Jenkins describes the astounding pace of the Church's growth in the Southern hemisphere (4). By 2050, if current trends continue, Latin America and Africa will account for half of the world's Christian population.

"China and Russia are also expected to be new strongholds of the Christian Faith. The government of China, the world's second most populous nation, reports 20 million Christians in its registered state churches, but does not recognise unapproved congregations or private house churches. The U.S. State Department estimates the total Chinese Christian population between 80 and 100 million. Recent political changes in the former Soviet Union also make missionary efforts and ministry partnerships with Russian speakers strategic. According to U.S. government statistics, Russia will rank among the world's 20 most populous nations and 10 largest Christian communities in the year 2025 (5). The growth of Christian minorities in Muslim nations along the Pacific Rim, like Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as more entrenched religious and ethnic strife on the African continent, present unique challenges to church leaders in the Arabic-speaking world."

### Why so much focus on theology?

I've seen it myself, everywhere I've been in Asia. I've seen it in ordinary church members—like the woman who had a handkerchief "blessed" and tried to give it to her missionary employer, saying, "It'll bring you luck, and stop you from being hurt in an accident." I've heard it from church leaders, who all too often preach that faith in Christ will remove people's problems and give them easy access to this world's goods. And I know that many non-Christians in developing nations have a horribly twisted understanding about Christianity—like the village in Java where people were eager to see the old Christian grandmother buried...because they'd heard that Christians crucified their dead ones before burying them.

Wherever you go—and the West is unfortunately no exception—people mix up their little knowledge about the Lord of Truth, with their extensive knowledge of their traditional practices. The result is what we call "syncretism"—it is neither true faith, nor glorifying to the Lord of glory. Philip Jenkins calls it "a thinly disguised paganism" (6) IIM says the solution is to provide proper teaching: "In many areas, theologically sound training would no doubt lead to genuine conversion and authentic spiritual growth."

But here's the rub: how can church leaders in these countries receive such training? IIM says: "While a recent study of seminaries in North America listed the total number of full-time students around 25,000 (7), Ralph Winters, founding director of the

U. S. Center for World Mission, estimates that there are currently at least "2 million functional pastors" outside of North America who do not have access to theological education. Access is the very need that IIM seeks to meet through free internet materials, donated video materials and equipment, and on-site teaching seminars that forge key relationships with pastoral leaders where the church is growing so rapidly."

### Is it doing any good?

We know there's a need. Third Millennium Ministries is reaching out to meet that need by means of its website, videos, cassettes, and printed materials. But is it doing any good? The letters speak for themselves:

From Alexander Barchuk, Vladivostok, Russia: "I have listened to all eight of Dr. Richard Pratt's lectures *He Gave Us Prophets*. I want to say that it significantly helped me learn this course at the seminary. My understanding of prophecies significantly deepened. Thank you all who support this ministry."

From missionary Dale Hollenbeck, Uganda: "Today I began showing your tapes to some diploma TEE students. They were loving it! I asked them about your accent and the speed of your words—they said everything was great. They were captivated by the lesson and were diligently taking notes. OOH, I am so encouraged to see this working well. There are three other schools that are considering using the tapes as well. Westminster Bible College will begin as soon as we can copy the tapes for them."

From Moisés Zapata, National Presbyterian Church of México: "As Chairman of the Christian Education Department of the National Presbyterian Church of México, I am recommending *Por Qué Bautizamos a Nuestros Hijos? (Why do we Baptize our Children?)* to all of the Mexican Pastors I talk to and to the Hispanic Pastors in the USA. If Third Millennium Ministries persists in the endeavour to produce Spanish versions of their video tapes, I can see each local church using them to instruct the people of God."

### What can we do?

The work of Third Millennium Ministries relies on prayer, and donations from Christians (both churches and individuals). I didn't enquire about staffing needs, but if that's something you're interested in, visit their website and see if they need more workers. Above all, we can ask the Lord of the harvest to use these teaching materials mightily, to grow faithful under-shepherds who will be used as instruments to spread His Word. The church in developing nations is in desperate need of solid, biblical foundations; and IIM is serious about helping to build some.

## MIF prayer notes

Please pray for the team in Papua New Guinea. Wally & Jeanette Hagoort are settling into their role in Mapang Missionary Home, as well as building relationships with the Reformed congregation at Nine Mile. Please pray for good health, safety, and a clear understanding of what tasks they should focus on in the coming months.

At time of writing, Stephen and Dorinda 'tHart may be in Australia after the birth of their new baby. Please pray for safe travel as they return to PNG, and for good health for Dorinda and baby as they settle back into life in Ekor.

Pray also for new team members, Wayne and Cheronne VanderHeide. Their visa status is unknown right now, but it is hoped that they will soon be in PNG and able to take the same cultural orientation course that Hagoorts found so helpful.

Janice Reid is in Cambodia, working together with Jean-Luc Lebrun as they develop new training materials for Radio Training Services. In September they will, DV, provide basic training for managers of several small stations in Indonesia. Please pray for wisdom as the course material is designed and tested.

Pray for the team in the Solomon Islands: Kevin and Machi Rietveld, Jack and Trudy Visser, and Jenny Van Wyk. Pray for good health, for safety, and for God's blessing on the work that each team-member does—whether in preaching, in teaching, or in works of mercy throughout the islands.

### Notes:

1. Dr Pratt is author of such Reformed classics as *Every Thought Captive* and *He Gave Us Stories*. He lectures at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi, USA.
2. Quotations by IIM come from the ministry's promotional material and were supplied by webmaster Ra McLaughlin. See [www.thirdmill.org](http://www.thirdmill.org)
3. More than 70% for the United States. I do not know the figures for Australia and New Zealand.
4. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford, 2002).
5. *The Annual Report on International Religious Freedom* and the *CIA World Fact Book* cited in Table 5.2 by Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, p. 90. For the discussion of Chinese Christianity, see p. 70. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
6. *Op.cit.*
7. Robert Banks, *Re-envisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 4-7.

## Country profile: **Latvia**

Latvia is a small nation on the edge of the Baltic Sea, surrounded by other countries of the former Soviet Union. Mismanagement by its former overlord has left Latvia with a lot of rebuilding to do; and poor natural resources have forced it to look to industry as the source of its recovery. Latvia hopes to become a regional centre for high technology.

Latvia has a long and troubled history. It has been ruled by outsiders since the middle ages, and under Stalin one-fifth of the population was killed. Many Russians were forcibly relocated to Latvia, and their presence has repercussions for the country's rulers, even today.

Fifty-eight percent of Latvians claim to be Christian, with numbers split almost evenly between Protestant groups, and the Roman Catholic "church." The majority of Protestants are Lutheran; the second largest denomination is Russian Orthodox.



### Pray for Latvia:

1. The economy is in serious need of a boost, and the gap between rich and poor is rapidly widening. The partial disintegration of society has left a moral vacuum—economic growth takes priority over the needs of the elderly and children who rely on the state for care. Many Latvians are pessimistic about the future, but most still feel that the Church is a trustworthy institution and God needs to be a part of Latvia's future.
2. The post-independence religious bubble has burst. The spiritual urgency of the early 1990's has largely lapsed into general spiritual apathy. While religious freedom exists, only about 2% of the population regularly attends church. Pray for healthy growth in the churches and harmony between believers of different ethnicities.
3. Leadership training is important, as great hunger exists in the churches for biblical teaching and training. There is also a need to equip believers to recognize false teaching.
4. Youth ministries are again beginning to take off, and there is great need for outreach in this area. Among Latvian youth,

- 80% believe in God, but few have been introduced to Christ. Pray for more workers with the vision to reach young people.
5. Literature. A new Latvian translation of the Bible has been sponsored by the King of Sweden. Some Christian books are now being translated into Latvian and a few are also being written by Latvian Christian authors. Pray that the Christian literature ministry may be fruitful in every segment of the population.
  6. Media: pray for effective communication and biblical teaching which does not compromise Scriptural truth. Main media ministries are:
    - a. *Radio*. There are several radio ministries, including a station called *Christian Radio* which has broadcast 24/7 since 1993.
    - b. *TV*. The Lutheran Church broadcasts a series of Christian films and talk shows, which are tied into church programmes.
    - c. *The JESUS film*, in Latvian and Russian, has been viewed by an estimated 90% of the population, in film and on national television.

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*Calling all country boys and girls to become*

## NETWORKERS



*If you have always wanted to be a Cadet or Calvinette but live too far away from a club, we would love to hear from you!*

**NETWORKERS** is for children aged 9-15 years old, and you would be a correspondence member with the closest club, able to attend camps and any club functions that you could make.

Your counsellor and cadre would be your correspondent friends and leader.

**INTERESTED?**

*Then write to me –*  
**Cr Rob Wierenga, 35 Humber Street**  
**Island Bay, Wellington**

## Focus on home

# Gleanings from our bulletins...

**Andrew Reinders**

### Avondale

Prayer time: As Elders we would like to make ourselves available for prayer after the morning service. If you would like prayer as part of your response to the Word that was preached, or if there is another matter, an Elder will be available at the front of the church. He will be there for short time after each service, and you may choose to have prayer with him in the study of our Pastor.

A note from the Pastor: Last Sunday Corrie and I were in Taupo. Amazing place. We were informed that there is enough water in the lake to cover the whole North Island to a depth of half a metre, [assuming the North Island was flat.] That is a lot of water by anyone's standards. When arriving on the Saturday we discovered a Baptist church close to the park we were staying at. So at ten thirty on Sunday we joined many brothers and sisters in Christ as we worshipped God together. Amazing, God has His people everywhere, and it was good to be part of that fellowship. One news item from their bulletin caught my eye. The minister wrote something along the following lines. 'Let me

suggest a radical new thought. I believe that it is inevitable that sooner or later we will need to introduce evening services on a Sunday.' What a pleasure to read that. So many denominations now only offer one service on a Sunday due to lack of interest/attendance. Yet here was a church that felt the need to reverse that trend, and start holding a second service on the Lord's Day. Praise God! Two worship services on the Lord's Day is a tradition Reformed Churches have held to strongly, and rightly so. In spite of the pressures of busy workdays, and people moving further away from the church property, attendance at our second services is generally good. As guardians over your spiritual well being, that pleases us immensely as Elders. It pleases us because we know it pleases the Lord. As we read in Psalm 149: 1, 4; "Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, His praise in the assembly of the saints. "For the LORD takes delight in his people; He crowns the humble with salvation. Attending to the worship of God twice on His day is not a chore, but a pleasure. Not so much a duty as a privilege. After all, people in love do not need to be told to say the words. Rev. John Ter Horst – Pastor.

### Bishopdale

Calling Committee: The Rev John and Rolanda de Boer will be arriving this Thursday afternoon, Please pray that this visit will be will be a beneficial one for us. The calling committee will be meeting with John on Friday night while the wives of the calling committee members will be having a get together with Rolanda.

### Christchurch

Julie and I would like to begin opening our home Thursday evenings at 8 pm for anyone to come over for a time of Bible reading, prayer and fellowship. Even if you are not comfortable offering prayer out loud in public, feel free to come and join with us as we pray for our church, our families, our country and our world. We want this to be rather informal, so you don't have to feel that if you come once, you will be expected to come every week: just come when it works out for you. Young and old (or in between), everyone is welcome.

Milestones to give thanks to our lord for... Congratulations to the following: Mr. Ids and Mrs. Annigje Dijkstra who celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary and Mr. Wiebe Gorter who celebrates his 90th birthday

Survivor Waipara! 4-7 June 2004 - Queens Birthday Weekend. All Cadets and Calvinettes and those children interested in joining are invited to a weekend of fun and fellowship. Camp forms available from your Counsellors this week!

### Dovedale

From the Pastor: I've been thinking about the importance of the Christian family lately, especially in the lead-up to the church camp this weekend. The family is very much an institution under attack in our society, but it has been established by God from the beginning of creation, and we can confidently look to our Lord for its preservation and fruitfulness. Let us pray for blessing upon our covenant homes. This week, I start teaching again at the Bible College on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons. I'm looking forward to teaching the Bachelor of Theology course in Interpretive Method, or how to interpret the Bible accurately. It will be the first time I've taught this particular course. This is a great opportunity, because the people taking this course will most likely end up teaching and preaching God's Word to many people in the city. I'd appreciate your prayers for this and will keep you posted as to how things are going. – MF.

### Dunedin

Religious Education lessons start at College Street Primary School, Caversham this term, continuing on through to the end of the year. Lynne Aidney and I will be teaching at the school along with three other teachers. We do covet your prayers for this ministry, especially since there is a pressing need for new RE teachers at present.

### Hamilton

I only became aware last Sunday that Martin and Corrie Vink have been together as husband and wife for 50 years. Our warmest congratulations, Martin and Corrie, even if a little late. The fact that Martin and Corrie have made this milestone together is really quite amazing. Nearly 40 years ago Corrie was told that she would have only 6 months to live if she did not leave the Netherlands, because of her severe asthma. We praise the Lord for keeping you and may He continue to bless you and make you both a blessing.

50th Lagas This past week Gerry and Janny Lagas of Tokoroa celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary. We extend our warm



congratulations to them and wish Gerry and Janny the Lord's blessing and guidance for the years ahead.

Call to Inala. Last Sunday the Reformed Church of Inala, Queensland, voted to call Bill Wiersma to come and serve them as their minister. Betty and I would appreciate your prayers as we think about this call and yours. WW (Ed. Subsequently we have been informed that the Wiersma's have accepted the call to Inala and plan to leave Hamilton in late July, D.V..)

## Hastings

Report from Session meeting held 29th April. Session has appointed a committee to look at church expansion for the Hastings Church. The committee has been asked to report back to session by the July meeting. It has been asked to look into church expansion or re-location or other options for a growing congregation.

## Mangere

It was yesterday a week ago that the Lord took to Himself our Br John Bloemendal. While we knew that humanly speaking he had only a few months to live it came even quicker than that. We may also say this was mercifully so given the pain he had and how his physical condition would have continued to deteriorate. Now our thoughts are very much with Liz, the children, the brothers, and wider family. They will miss a husband, father, brother, and friend. We will miss our fellow saint. We pray that the Lord would very much be their strength and guide, helping them in days and weeks and months ahead of readjustment.

The Board of Trustees of the Hillpark Primary School in Manurewa recently sent home a survey to parents late last year asking their views on religion taught in school, among other issues. Two thirds of the surveys sent were returned and of those...Guess what? 70% of parents "want religion taught in school. This will continue to occur at Year 4 level." We are all very encouraged with this result as our classes had been reduced when the number of syndicates changed from three (junior, middle and senior) to just two (junior and senior) a few years ago. The four (Year 4) classes presently taught all have very keen students who soak up the good news like sponges! Manurewa presently is an area in need of more volunteers to teach Bible-in-schools.

## Masterton

Pastoral Notes: We welcome Rev Harms once again to our pulpit to lead us in worship

today. May the Lord bless us as we worship Him together. The Harms family will be leaving to return to the USA tomorrow. We give thanks for the time you have had among us during the last two weeks. May the Lord give you safety as you travel, and may He make His will clear to you and us in the weeks and months ahead.

This term a number of the sisters in our congregation have taken up Bible in Schools at Douglas Park School. We thank the Lord for the freedom there is to bring His Word in our primary schools. Pray that the Lord would give our sisters, who sow the seed of the gospel to these young hearts, boldness and wisdom.

Men's Breakfast at Night: Yes, you heard right. The next Breakfast will be at 7:30pm this Friday (the 14th) at Ben Hoyt's new place, 20 Fergusson St. The topic is Prayer, and you're welcome to come with things to pray for. Please bring a chair and something to snack on.

## Palmerston North

Singing. Anyone desirous of singing extra praises to the Lord is welcome to stay immediately after the morning service next week 16 May. We will sing from the Psalter #s 13, 14, 37, 48, 55 and 68 for the pure joy of singing them! Learn the soprano, alto, tenor and bass parts at home during the week if you are able. See you there!

**Charmagne Smith**

Youth club. The session is glad that John and Sandra Fransen have taken up the youth work. We pray them every strength from the Lord, and his wisdom, and joy in this task in his church. We ask that you will support John and Sandra in this important work, and that you will encourage the young people of the church by your support. Meetings and events for the young people are planned, and include studies at the homes of congregation members once a month, after the evening service. You could be a real blessing to the young people by opening your home to them in this way. Please see John or Sandra (phone 329 0093) to help. Your prayers are always important, never more so than in this area of work.

Session Notes. Wanganui now has 46 Confessional and Baptised members, plus 9 regular visitors.

## Pukekohe

Home Educators Camp: A Reformed Home Educators Camp will be held on Queen's Birthday Weekend - Friday-Monday, June 4-7, 2004 at Harmony House, Reformed

Church, 541 Ruahine Street, Palmerston North. This is for all those who hold dear the Reformed Confessions and are interested in or are currently home educating. Please see John Haverland for an enrollment form. For further information phone Craig & Barbara Smith, ph. (06) 357-4399 Palmerston North.

From the Pastor: Tomorrow the minister's and wives of the Auckland presbytery will get together over lunch at the Noppers' home in Hamilton. We are thankful for these opportunities of building relationships and for fellowship.

Keep this date free: 12 June ..... for our famous Family 'Lympics. From 2:00 – 5:00pm at the Recreation Centre in Pukekohe. There will be a potluck dinner afterward in the church for all you people who have not experienced our FAMILY 'LYMPICS yet: form a team, preferably family members (young and old), about 4-6 persons, and compete against our fellow church families (mentally and physically). Please enter your team on the form on the notice board in the church lounge as soon as possible, so we can make up the rosters. If you have any questions please see Ineke Grosscurt.

## Silverstream

We rejoice with Stuart and Rebecca Williams on the safe arrival of Sam Duncan, born last Friday. Mother and child are doing well. We pray also that Sam may grow up in the fear of the Lord, according to the Lord's mercy.

We give thanks for the birth of Amy Wilhelmina to Br. Stefan & Sr. Hester Bryant. Mother and child are doing well. She is expected to remain in hospital for a few days – later in Levin – as she recovers from the caesarean.

Short Report on Faith Based Unit in Rimutaka Prison. On Wednesday we were privileged to listen to Mr Leen Groen and Mr Patrick Lewis speak about the work they are involved in with 60 prisoners in the Faith Based Unit in Rimutaka Prison. This Unit, the first in Australasia, was opened 16 October 2003. Many prisoners have been in prison, on and off for a long time and realise they need to make a change in their lives. Some even are taught to read and write. There is gardening and voice training/music to learn. The day starts for them at 6.30am and ends at 8.30pm when they are locked in their rooms for the night. The evening is the time when Bible study occurs. The teaching programme includes topics such as: integrity, restoration, responsibility, community building, participation and productivity. We as a congregation have been asked to pray for this work, as Satan is very active in trying to

destroy this work of God. We can donate any Christian literature towards their library. Mr Groen shared some verses from Acts 16 and Luke 23:39-44. Our questions were answered and we enjoyed supper together.

**Maria Holtslag, Secretary,  
Women's Fellowship**

## Wainuiomata

Mid-Winter Dinner. Our annual Mid-Winter Dinner this year will be held on Friday, 25 June 2004 from 7.00 pm onwards. Write this in your calendars now for a great night of fun and fellowship.

The Dovedale and Afrikaans kerk in North Shore have been sent a thank you letter from the deacons, in regards to their generous donations.

BOM Notes. We were advised earlier this week that the Hutt City Mayoral Flood Relief Fund has allocated our church \$2000 from the fund.

## SHORT REPORT OF PRESBYTERY AUCKLAND, MAY 7, 2004

On behalf of the calling church of Hamilton, Bill Wiersma welcomed delegates and lead in opening devotions, reading Psalm 62 and inviting the brothers to sing Ps H 222.

The chairman for the meeting was Rev Sjikr Bajema with the assistance of Rev John Haverland.

Matters arising from the minutes of the September 2003 meeting were discussed. Both the Bucklands Beach and North Shore churches have initiated special services in the Afrikaans language which are lead by Pieter van Huyssteen. The demand for these services is not as strong as anticipated. Brother van Huyssteen's sermons are greatly appreciated.

A meeting between leaders of the Grace Presbyterian Churches in New Zealand and some of our men has so far not eventuated.

The delegates of the Hamilton, Hukanui and Mangere churches reported on the state of affairs in their respective congregations. Hamilton and Hukanui delegates expressed gratitude for the keenness of some of the young people to serve the Lord and His kingdom. Hayden Bosgra of the Hamilton church will be working with OMS in Ecuador for a year commencing in June. It was also

# Greetings from Geelong!



For those of you who don't know Robert van Wichen, he is studying for the ministry at the Reformed Theological College. Not surprisingly then, he lives in Geelong with his wife (that's me!) and six children (with an 'Australian' addition due in October). We hail from the Palmerston North Reformed Church; while here we have been worshipping at the South Barwon Christian Reformed Church.

Robert began his theological studies by correspondence in 2000. At the time he was still closing down his legal practice. Though he found the courses he took with Greenville Presbyterian Seminary in the United States to be excellent, but he became convinced that correspondence study was not the best option for him. This eventually led us to moving to Australia so that he could study at the RTC.

It has been a rewarding time of learning—attending lectures, interacting with the lecturers and other students, and having time to study the Bible more deeply. Apart from study, there has been ample opportunity for Robert to preach. Churches nearby, and some not so near, have been very willing to have students lead in worship.

While the move to Australia was quite an upheaval, the family has settled well into life in Geelong. We quickly were made to feel at home at South Barwon and have made many new friends, whom we will most certainly miss when we leave. We have been enriched by our time here, and have had our horizons expanded by worshipping with God's church in another part of the world.

An added benefit of living in Australia has been the opportunity to take a few weeks last year to explore parts of New South Wales, and an even smaller part of Queensland. But we still consider New Zealand to be home, and we are looking forward to seeing many of you again this summer. Lord willing, Robert will complete his degree by then. He has just one more semester to go! He hopes to begin his vicariate in 2005.

**Laurel van Wichen**

reported that the Rev Bill Wiersma had received a call from the Reformed Church of Inala, Queensland. Mangere delegates expressed happiness with the positive spirit of their congregation, but also concern that their numbers are decreasing.

The Rev John Terhorst reported on matters from the Australian Classis (Presbytery) Meetings.

A roster for church visitation in 2004 was adopted. Br Terhorst accepted the invitation to lead at the next family camp. Br van Garderen reported in OMB matters. Two

young people, Heidi Posthuma and Jared Berends will be teaching English in Tibet and Outer Mongolia respectively.

Peter van der Wel of Hamilton has agreed to take over the position of Stated Clerk of Presbytery.

Br Mike de Ruiter was thanked sincerely for his work as clerk.

The Mangere overtures re Retirement Housing and Church Planting in the Tauranga were discussed.

Mangere was encouraged to circulate the churches for interest from members for a

housing venture.

Sessions were challenged to consider what might be done about setting up a work in the expanding Tauranga area.

The next meeting of Presbytery is scheduled for July 30, to consider how to resolve the 'tongues matter' in a way that is satisfying to all concerned.

Br Haverland closed the meeting in prayer to God with special mention of the churches and the van Garderen and Wiersma families.

**Bill Wiersma**

## Auckland Annual Ladies Presbyterial Mangere May 15th, 2004

This years Ladies Presbyterial was hosted by Mangere.

The day started with a morning tea put on by some very able young ladies which was most enjoyable.

The official meeting started at 10.30 with guest speaker Sjirk Bajema who talked to us about the Tower of Babel and what the implications for us as women were today.

This was followed by an activity of table setting which we were separated into groups by numbering off. This proved a most enjoyable time and when lunch was ready we could all sit at our dressed tables.

Soup was served along with a beautiful lunch of buns and salads.

The afternoon speaker was Ken Stevenson from Habitat for Humanity, Manukau branch, who talked to us about the work in our area and also the beginnings and where they are now and how we can help.

The day finished with another beautiful afternoon tea of cakes etc.

Thank you to the ladies of Mangere for a most enjoyable day, especially as they are so few and also for the wonderful contribution of several younger members who took it on themselves to make it happen.



**Jeanette Kant**

More pictures next page ►

# Auckland Annual Ladies Presbyterial Mangere

May 15th, 2004

