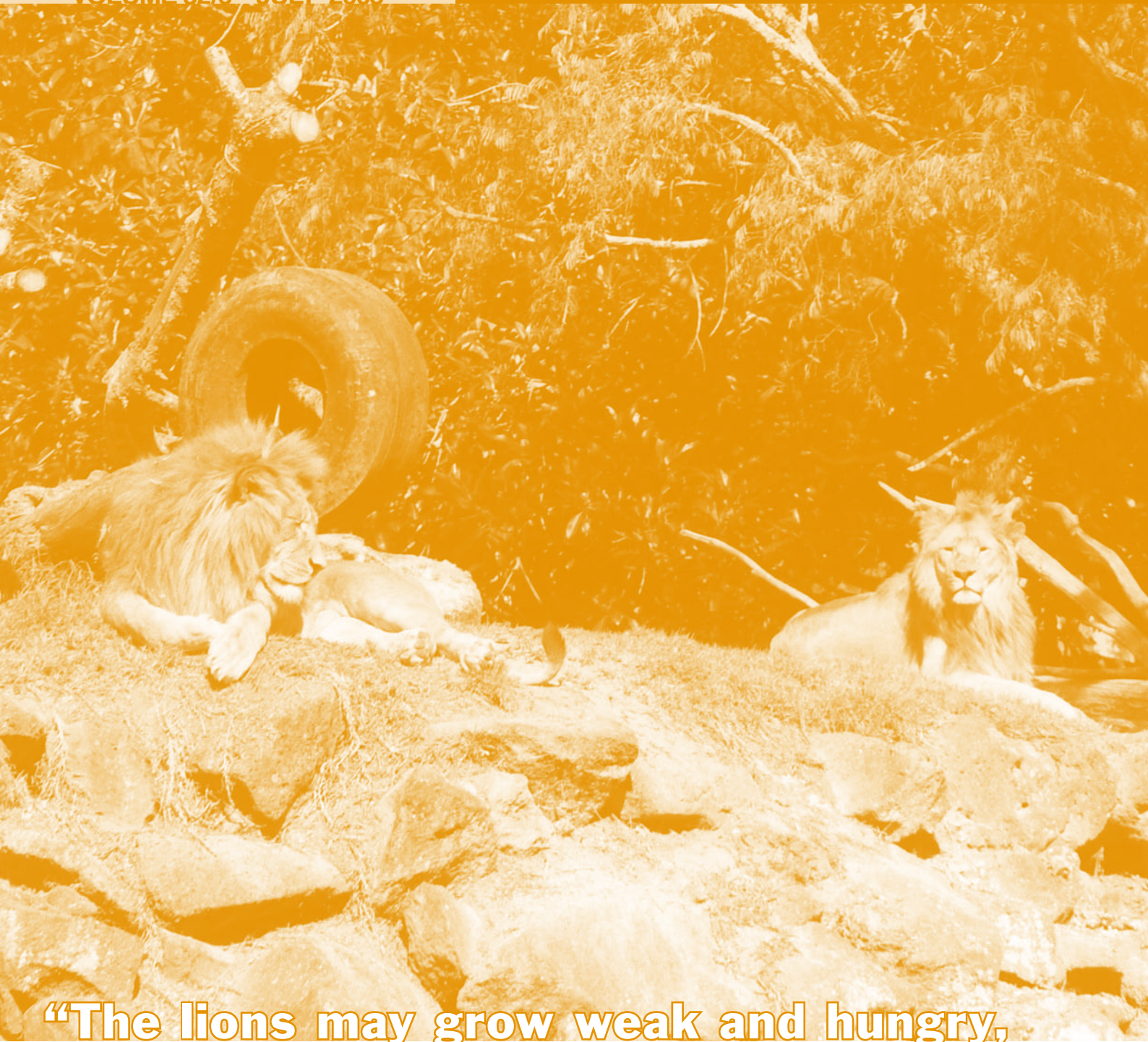


# faith in **focus**

Magazine of the  
Reformed Churches  
of New Zealand

VOLUME 32/6 JULY 2005



**“The lions may grow weak and hungry,  
but those who seek the LORD  
lack no good thing.”**

*Psalm 34:10*

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**Editorial**

The very current relevance of Hans Voschezang's article in this issue came home to me with an item in our local paper about deforestation in the Amazon rain forest in 2004. It was the Brazilian government itself releasing the figures which showed that 2004 was the second worst year ever.

It seems human greed knows no bounds and will do whatever it possibly can to make that extra dollar. Despite all the enlightened educational philosophers given huge government funding nowadays, the gaps between people within one society or between different countries grows wider by the day. Oh well, perhaps it needs another one of those special UN resolutions!

You will also notice we give quite some space to a letter and a reply to that letter. This kind of debate is healthy. It is rarely seen in the world around us, and yet it's what we need to engage in as much as possible as it is a valuable method of educational learning, especially in regards to our Christian faith.

This is one area I was challenged on recently. It was raised with me that all we Reformed people seem to do, especially the ministers, is to "bag" other churches and differing Christian beliefs. Well, I understand that this type of "bagging" is where you portray a different view than your own unfairly. Publishing it in this magazine like that, however, would be hard to do because you, the reader, can and will react to that. What I hope 'Faith in Focus' never gets down to is being the type of magazine where what is published is only that which is according to a certain 'line' - and that line must be in a positive, upbeat, manner. I recall one denomination where when it was suggested that it would help add perspective and balance to the major missions committee by adding a conservative the reply from the hierarchy came that it would disrupt too much the smooth working of a vital synodical body.

"Where seldom is heard a discouraging word" might be true of Oklahoma but may it not be said of this magazine.

*As iron sharpens iron,  
so one man sharpens another.*

**Proverbs 27:17**

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

# This is my Father's world

## The environment and our responsibility

### Hans Voschezang

#### Abinish's struggle

She woke up at the first crow of the rooster early in the morning, while it was still dark. Shivering in the cold night of the desert, she got up and went out the door, grabbed her water container and joined her friends, already waiting at their neighbour's hut. The girls started walking briskly while it was still cool, as they had a long march of 15 miles ahead of them to a rocky outcrop in the hills. Soon the sun would come out and it would be very hot. It would take them nearly the whole day to get to the well, draw a few liters of water and walk back to their village. They stopped talking when the well came in sight. Approaching the cavern very carefully, the girls stayed hidden while they waited to see whether it would be safe enough to go inside. One of them threw a rock; it clattered noisily down the rock face to scare away any animal inside. They waited for several more minutes. With still no sound or movement from within, they decided to approach the well, draw the water and leave as soon as they were finished. They worked quickly while Abinish was on lookout duty outside, ready to alert the others of any danger. About a month ago, they had been attacked by marauding militiamen. Some of the girls were caught, severely beaten and raped. On that day they still managed to bring a little water home, but only the children got a cup of it.

Clan infighting was common, and the militiamen were a law to themselves. Usually they had not been paid for months. Searching the area for food, they terrified the people in the villages and, in the open. Years of civil war and anarchy, had destroyed the irrigation canal systems, or these were in disrepair.

Abinish and her friends wrapped twisted pieces of cloth around their heads to make a kind of platform for the water containers to sit on. Steadying it with one hand and balancing it, they started the long walk back to their village.

But things have changed now. The different clans and other tribal groups, on initiative of Unicode, have formed a committee for training on joint projects such as water supply and sanitation; how to operate and maintain irrigation plants, de-silting water reservoirs, etc. to ensure clean water and

continuity of water supply. More importantly, they will re-build inter-clan relationships and co-operate to reach set goals for the benefit of all concerned. Neighbours who have sat together to plan a project are less likely to turn to violence when problems arise.<sup>a1</sup>

One day Abinish noticed a huge drilling rig arriving at her village. The foreman went to the village elder to tell him his team had come to drill for water. They would like to have his permission to do some test drilling to search for the best spot to install a permanent pump. The word spread quickly. The village would get water and there would be no more long walks to find some contaminated water. No more waterborne diseases such as bilharzia, affecting so many children.<sup>b2</sup> A



week later the team of workmen installed a brand new pump just outside the village. When the foreman announced that everything was in place, Abinish ran to the pump and listened to the foreman explaining how to operate the pump and how to look after it. Abinish couldn't wait any longer, she pushed forward and fell on her knees and wickedly splashed hands full of water in her face..... aaaah..... water.....precious water.

#### Water use taken for granted

In stark contrast, in our western world, it is difficult to estimate the amount of water we need to maintain an acceptable minimum living standard. Different sources figure that, on average, 20 to 40 liters of fresh water per person per day is needed to meet the bare minimum, for drinking and sanitation. If water for bathing and cooking is included, this figure can go easily higher.

In the developing regions of the world people use domestically far less water than in the West.

For example: In Africa the annual water withdrawals average 47 litres per person per day.

In Asia 85 litres. In the UK 334 litres. In the USA 578 litres. In Australian cities 250 – 300 litres.

In New-Zealand (Larger Auckland region) 185 litres.<sup>c4</sup> Globally, the level of water use reflects the level of urbanization. Low household water use in many developing countries today reflects the difficulty in getting to fresh water. Two thirds of the world's population, the majority in the developing countries get their water from public standpipes, community wells, rivers, lakes, or rain water collected off roofs. As the world becomes predominantly more urban, and agriculture depends more and more on irrigation, it will become difficult for cities to meet rising demand for fresh water.<sup>d5</sup>

#### So, how wasteful have we become?

"Pure water" is sold worldwide in plastic bottles in all sizes and shapes. The demand has risen to 89 billion bottles. In the USA alone, 14 billion sipper bottles are sold every year and 90% of the plastic ends up as landfill, taking 1000 years to biodegrade. The demand for bottled water will triple over the next 10 years. This so-called "pure water", the quality of which is debatable, is heavily promoted by the bottling industry; everyone is buying it, thinking it is good for them. The pressure on drink water infrastructures, in some regions is so great that it threatens agriculture, which relies heavily on irrigation. Water depletion has become an additional problem to an existing water shortage.

We only have to look at the inorganic waste collection at the curbside of what is thrown out. Think about the amount of junk mail arriving in our mail boxes and how much paper is wasted. But this is only small fry. Think about industrial waste, chemical waste, toxic waste, nuclear waste, air- and water pollution, agriculture run-offs, and so the list goes on.

#### Deforestation

Before widespread human settlement began to encroach on the borders of the Amazon rain forests there was no fire season.





Today, fire poses the main threat to the survival of the Amazon ecosystem. Slash and burn agriculture converts rain forest into farmland. The obvious destruction is only the beginning. The fires get frequently out of control and burn into the underwood of nearby forests, killing, but not completely burning small trees, vines and shrubs. The dead trees are falling to the forest floor and so opening up the forest canopy overhead. This in turn heats up the forest floor pushing fire danger to the highest level. Smoke from the fires suppresses rainfall and so begins an unnatural dry season. The forest soil is so fragile and easily exhausted, these farms can't sustain grazing or growing crops for more than two or three years. With the rainy season and the hot sun baking down on the forest floor, the soil simply disappears. So, when the farmers are left with the rocky sub-soil underneath on which nothing will grow; they move on and do some more slashing and burning. There is no alternative, unless the poverty problem is addressed properly. The Brazilian government is in no position to help, being heavily in debt to the World Bank. In the mean time it takes up to a hundred years for the rain forest to re-generate, without the hardwood trees. "Save the rain forest," they say, but what are the alternatives, let people die of starvation? Billions upon billions of dollars are spent on warfare, to safeguard "wealth and prosperity". If only 10% of that money would be spend to alleviate poverty on the two thirds of the needy world's population, the wanton destruction

of the environment would be drastically reduced.<sup>e6</sup>

### Stewardship and our responsibility

Of all the TV ads, I like a cheese ad best. It is a story of a schoolboy friendship between "Me and Billy Wallis" that lasted well in to retirement. It's not the story as such that I admire, but the breathtaking pictures of an awe-inspiring piece of wilderness down by the river, with the alpine mountains as the backdrop. It captures the moods of the seasons: "All good things take time".

That's how it must have been, in the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth and planted the Garden of Eden, unspoiled, in perfect harmony and in soul-refreshing splendour.

God said: "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over....all the creatures..... *"Be fruitful ..... fill the earth and subdue it"*. (Gen.1 vs 26 – 28) There are only a handful of Bible verses that talk about the image of God and how God created human beings in His own image. It is remarkable that as soon as human beings are mentioned in the Bible, they are immediately described as having been made in the image of God. By Divine design we are God's image-bearers and each of us is a mirror in which others should be able to see God's likeness. But because sin has corrupted us, this God-likeness has become defaced. We need to be delivered from our sins if we are going to come even close to being like God. In the New Testament, Paul tells us that, as we become more like Jesus,

the image of God, so damaged by sin, is repaired and renewed in us. The more we grow in Christ-likeness, the more we are renewed in the image of God, our original design. As baptized believers we have to "put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of the Creator". (Col.3 v 10) In the beginning, we were made in the likeness of God. In Christ we are re-created in that likeness. So, what does it mean to bear this image?

The author of Genesis1 mentions two other things: the fact that we were made male and female, and the fact that we have been given the mandate to rule over this world and all its creatures. This obligates us, as God's vice-regents, to act in a way that is consistent with God's own standard of care. If we don't behave like God in how we treat all the creatures, the water resources in particular and the environment in general, we are not being true to God's purpose in creating us. Instead we once again allow sin to smear God's image to the point that it is all but lost from sight.

### The Lord keep you

Genesis not only tells us that we are rulers over the earth, but also forces us to grapple with this basic question: "What does it mean to be a God-like ruler over all of creation?" God's image-bearers are given the charge to "work and take care of," or to "tend and keep" the creation. The word "take care of" or to "keep" is the word used in Aaron's benediction, "The Lord bless you and keep you....." (Numbers 6 v 24) When a minister closes a worship service with this benediction, why are we glad to hear that God is going to "keep" us? Is it not because we know that such divine keeping implies a protective nurturing, and a providential attending to our health, safety and wellbeing? If God's keeping of us means His careful, attentive, providential guarding of all that we are and all that we have, then our keeping of God's world should reflect exactly that. We are to preserve, to love and tenderly hold His creation, not ruling it in a despotic but a Godlike way. For, like Jesus, we are most like God, when we rule by becoming servants.

### A Lord like Jesus

*It was I who taught Ephraim to walk.....I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love.....* (Hosea 11 v 3a – 4) What does it mean for human beings, as God's image-bearers, to "rule" the earth in the way God rules it? The Heidelberg Catechism tells us in this lovely phrase, "the Almighty power by which He upholds, as with His hand, heaven

and earth and all creatures." We are told that all things come from "His Fatherly Hand." Although described as an Almighty power, He is not a ruthless despot. Rather, God rules gently with a Fatherly hand, as Hosea beautifully expresses in chapter 11; God takes His children by the hand as they slowly learn to walk. The nature of God's dominion over all things is similar to the loving and kind way a good parent rules his household. God has His eye upon the sparrow, seeing to its every need. His superintending of this world is attentive and tender. As image bearers of the Creator, we should give God's design for each creature room to flourish.

### The hope for creation

The Bible is realistic about the dismal state of our fallen world. But it is also hopeful that God will not let it remain in this state. Hope, like good fertiliser, has been spread throughout this earth. The creation does respond to its Maker and is even now clinging to the hope God infused into His creatures. But, for now we still experience the sadness and pain of our world. This is not how things are supposed to be. This earth, and the entire cosmos, is the creation God loves and adores. He holds it close and has died to redeem all of it. To envision the new kingdom as anything other than a renewed creation would be to concede a great victory to Satan. If God would have to annihilate the

present cosmos, then Satan would have succeeded in so devastatingly corrupting the present cosmos and the present earth that God could do nothing with it but blot it out of existence. But God will prove His victory over Satan by salvaging and re-invigorating this very earth that Satan has so long been seeking to destroy. For the believer there is hope in, and for, a new heaven and a new earth, this is the best way to live joyfully despite all the wanton environmental destruction and water pollution. We have God's word to tell us how to distinguish between what is right from what is wrong in creation. But nothing is as grand as what we learn from the prophet Isaiah and from the apostle Paul: that God Himself will make sure that what He intended for His creation in the beginning will in the end return and triumph. This is a hope that can further enhance our joy in a creation that will endure for all eternity. We look to God and His Word for guidance in all of life because we believe that only there do we find a consistent vision for this creation in the past, the present and the future. We stick with the gospel truth of our God because we know He is the Word of God who spoke creation into being and He will one day be the same Word of God to re-speak the creation into a new order. We recognize that, as in all moral matters, so also in regard to the creation: We must live in accordance with God's design and wishes. We are commis-

sioned to keep and take care of all things God created, that He still takes delight in, that He died to save, and that He will one day re-create. Christians should be staunch environmentalists in the true Biblical sense, not because we have our own best interests at heart, but because we have God's best interests at heart: "May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in His works." (Psalm 104 v 31)

He has chosen us to keep and care this part of God's visible glory alive and to let His praise continue. The glory of the Lord is all around us, if we just would see and appreciate it.<sup>17</sup>

### (Endnotes)

- a 1 [Http://www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk) Somalia / Somaliland Overview
- b 2 [Http://allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com) four million Ugandans likely to get bilharzia
- c 4 [Www.watercare.co.nz](http://www.watercare.co.nz) Letter to the editor of the NZ Herald by: Owen Gill Water Care Services Ltd
- d 5 [Www.infohealth.org](http://www.infohealth.org) Chapter 2.2 How water is used by: Peter Gleick
- e 6 [Http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/](http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/) From Forest To Field by: Rebecca Lindsey
- f 7 For further reading I recommend: Remember Creation by: Scott Hoezee

## World in focus

### Pakistani Christians arrested

Saudi Arabia's religious police arrested 40 Pakistani Christians while the group met privately for worship on 22 Apr. in Riyadh. The gathering was a joint Catholic-Protestant prayer service held weekly. It was reported that Islamic religious police surrounded the house, halted the sermon, and beat some of the worshippers, upsetting the furniture and breaking Christian symbols as they searched the house. All the men, women, and children present were detained at the police station and later released. One Pakistan church leader said, "Why do Saudi Muslims have the right all over the world to build mosques and worship in them, when they refuse to designate places of worship for Christians who are guest workers in Saudi Arabia?"

+ Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0314

### Heartland Presbytery

Activists within the Presbyterian Church (USA) are targeting the General Assembly in an effort to overturn the denomination's ordination standards and rescind its 'authoritative interpretation' regarding homosexual behavior.

Heartland Presbytery on 19 Apr. voted 109-92 to approve an overture on the issue to the 217th General Assembly, which will be meeting in Birmingham, Alabama on 15-22 Jun., 2006.

The Authoritative Interpretation is a thorough assessment of what the Bible teaches about homosexual behavior. It unequivocally says that homosexual behavior is contrary to the will of God and that self-acknowledged, practicing homosexuals could not be ordained.

+ Heartland Presbytery, 3210 Michigan Ave., Kansas City, MO 64109 (816) 924-1730

### PCUSA Korean church files property claim

The largest Korean congregation in the Presbyterian Church (USA) has filed civil action stating its claim to its property in anticipation of a scheduled meeting of the congregation in which members will decide whether to leave the denomination.

Peter B. Min, an associate minister at the 2,700-member First Presbyterian Church in Torrance, California, said the session has already voted to dissolve the relationship with the PCUSA. Min cited two reasons: Denominational leadership that has espoused non-Biblical causes and treatment by two presbyteries and the Synod of the Pacific.

First Presbyterian issued a call to a pastor in Washington to become its senior minister, but the Presbytery of Olympia

halted the process by deciding to consider charges against the minister. Min said the charges had to do with style and not theological substance, and that an investigating committee determined that there was no justification for the accusations. A second investigating committee began pursuing other allegations and the pulpit has remained vacant. None of the accusations against the man selected by the congregation to be the minister dealt with charges of heresy or impropriety, Min said.

The staff and session have asked presbytery and synod leaders for permission to move forward, but to no avail. Membership at First Presbyterian was listed at 3,100 in 2003, and has dropped by about 400.  
 + PC(USA), 100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202 (800) 872-3283

**Baroness speaks out about threat on 'militant Islam'**

Baroness Caroline Cox, who was created a life peer in 1982 and has been a deputy speaker of the British House of Lords since 1985, is a human rights campaigner both in the House of Lords and also in the media. She is also President of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), and has

traveled extensively on humanitarian and fact-finding missions.

Baroness Cox is now voicing her concerns about the threat of militant Islam in a new book that has just been released in the US called "The West, Islam and Islamism. Is ideological Islam compatible with liberal democracy?" Baroness Cox states that the vast majority of the world's 1.2 billion Muslims are peaceable, but there is a serious growth of militant Islam and unless Westerners take militant Islam seriously there will be a backlash against all Muslims, because as militant Islam is associated with acts of terror, terror creates fear, and fear creates extinction.

Baroness Cox also said "We need to understand what is happening and many people are, for understandable reasons, very ignorant of the nature of Islam. But it is a phenomenon that we need to understand in order to pray for an appropriate response."  
 + Christian Solidarity Worldwide (USA), PO Box 50608, Casper, WY 82605 (877) 450-4516

**Iraq swears in new Government**

Iraq's first democratically elected government has been sworn in and the new Prime

Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari said he would unite a nation divided along religious and ethnic lines.

The government's cabinet currently has 15 Shiite Muslims, seven Kurds, four Sunni Muslims and one Christian with several positions still to be filled. There is still division in the country, evidenced by the absence of the Vice President, Ghazi al-Yawer, who is a minority Sunni Muslim.

Iraqi Christians will have a part in the drafting of the new constitution, which is scheduled to be finalized in August, according to Georges Sada, a Christian who was an adviser to the outgoing Prime Minister Ayad Allawi. Sada was confident that Christians and other minorities would be protected under the new constitution.

Christians in Iraq make up about three percent of the entire population. Most are Assyrian Christians, with much smaller concentrations of Protestant, Evangelical, Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians.  
 + Assyrian International News Agency

**Oregon invalidates 3,000 same-sex marriages**

On 14 Apr., the Oregon Supreme Court invalidated nearly 3,000 same-sex marriage licenses issued by Multnomah County in April of 2004.

The justices' reasoning suggests their ruling would have been the same even if voters hadn't passed Measure 36 last November, an amendment to the constitution that notes "only a marriage between one man and one woman shall be valid or legally recognized as a marriage." "Oregon statutory law in existence before the effective date of Measure 36 also limited, and continues to limit, the right to obtain marriage licenses to opposite-sex couples," the unanimous ruling concluded. Pro-family leaders hailed the ruling.  
 + Oregon Supreme Court, 1163 State St., Salem, OR 97301-2563 (503) 986-5555

**Methodists spend millions on Ads**

The United Methodist Church, after spending US\$20 million on an ad campaign that raised name recognition, will be spending an additional US\$25 million on advertising to fill church pews with new members.

The second phase of the "Igniting Ministries" campaign will use television ads pegged to Christmas, Easter, and the start of the school year in late summer to target adults ages 25-54.


Church officials said that the Methodists' "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors"

**IN TOUCH**

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

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

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



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



campaign boosted first-time attendance at Methodist churches by 19 percent and increased long-term attendance by 9 percent in 160 test markets.

+ United Methodist Church (Communications), PO Box 320, Nashville, TN 37202 (615) 742-5400

### Record low for Kirk membership

The Church of Scotland lost another 17,000 worshippers last year, taking its membership levels to a new record low.

Last year's drop of more than three percent contributed to an overall fall of nearly 60 percent since 1960. Membership in 2004 was 535,834, compared with 1.34 million in the 1960s.

Baptisms of children are also down, with only 7,500 babies christened in 2004 which is 500 fewer than in the previous year.

Professor Callum Brown, a religious historian from Dundee University, said the continuing decline was a disaster for the Kirk. "The drop in attendance between 1960 and 2004 is 59.5 percent. That is a membership catastrophe," Brown said. "These membership figures make even worse reading when you

turn to Christian churchgoing in Scotland, which currently stands at around only 11 percent of the total adult population." + Church of Scotland, 121 George St., Edinburgh EH2 4YN

### Mob of 200 set fire to church

The Rev. S. Prim Vaiphei said a mob of 200 Hindus overpowered a police patrol and set fire to the Believer's Church in the Thoubal district in Manipur, India on 19 Apr. Damage to the building which was still under construction after previous attacks, was estimated at around US\$10,350.

Villagers have now asked church members to abandon the premises or face the consequences.

+ Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0314

### Small printing of Scottish hymnbook

The Church of Scotland is expecting editions of its first new hymnbook in more than 30 years to be bought by fewer than one in 10 of the Kirk's 600,00 members and has only ordered 40,00 copies to be printed. The new hymnal is viewed as being much more Scottish than previous editions.

The decision to order only 40,00 copies of the new book has surprised the publishers, the Norwich-based SCM-Canterbury Press. A spokesman for the company said that new technology and fashions meant

that the whole future of the hymnbook was in question. Some churches have taken to buying CD-Roms which include huge numbers of hymns and which can be regularly updated. Congregations can then select their hymns for the day and print them out on individual sheets which are given to parishioners at the door.

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

### Sung Seo Pao released

Seventeen days before the end of his 11 year prison term, Vietnamese Christian leader Sung Seo Pao was released on 3 May, 2005. Seo Pao was serving an 11 year sentence for spreading religion and was released after having served eight months in jail in 1990 on the condition that he would not preach the gospel. However, Seo Pao continued to spread the gospel and was again arrested in 1995.

Quite a number of tribal Christian leaders are imprisoned in Vietnam for "spreading religion."

+ Voice of the Martyrs, PO Box 250 Lawson NSW 2783, Australia

### Mother sues after Bible reading barred

Donna Busch was invited to visit her son, Wesley's kindergarten class in Philadelphia and to take part in "Me Week." Wesley was allowed to choose his favourite book and have his mother read an excerpt from it aloud to the Class at Culbertson Elementary.

But when Wesley chose the Bible as his preferred book, his mother was barred from reading a passage from Psalm 118 because of its religious content.

The incident might have passed over without further incident but when Wesley came Wesley said, 'My teacher told me.' " Busch decided to take action and to stand up to the school officials she believed had unfairly abridged their religious liberty. Busch contacted The Rutherford Institute, which has since filed a lawsuit against the school, alleging that the mother and son's freedom of speech and equal-protection rights were violated.

+ The Rutherford Institute, PO Box 7482, Charlottesville, VA 22906-7482 (434) 978-3888

### Christian families attacked in India

Hindu extremists physically attacked 11 Christian families from Jamanya village in Jalgaon district, Maharashtra state, India, on 15-16 May. Village officials had summoned the families to a panchayat (com-

munity court) on 15 May, and asked them to renounce their faith. When the families refused, the men were beaten with heavy sticks and chased from the village. On the following day, the mob attacked the women and children; some children fainted after being beaten. Witnesses said the mob also tried to disrobe the women. Police are investigating the case, and local Christians say they will push for a resolution to the three years of hostility in the village.

+ Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0314

### Fourteen Christians killed in Nigeria

Fourteen Christians were among 17 people killed in the central state of Benue, Nigeria, after Muslim militants attacked the villages of Chilakera and Imbufu on 10 Apr. Tsenongo Abancha, told Compass News that tensions between the two religious communities was fueled by the rape of a Christian student at the hands of two Muslim men. "This girl was not only raped by these Muslims, but was also poisoned to death on 17 March."

+ Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0314

### The Confessional Presbyterian available

The first issue of "The Confessional Presbyterian," a journal for discussion of Presbyterian doctrine and practice, was due to be mailed out in late May. Among the 13 contributing editors are C.N. Wilborn (PCA), Ligon Duncan (PCA), David W. Hall (PCA), Mr. Wayne Sparkman (PCA), John R. Muether (OPC), Alan Strange (OPC), Thomas G. Reid (RPCNA), Ray B. Lanning

# PRISM

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(ARP). Subscription rates are: Individual: US\$18.00 and Library/Foreign" US\$25.00. To subscribe and to see more information and the table of contents of the first issue, visit <<http://www.cpjjournal.com>>

In a day when it appears that Presbyterians are drifting further away from the doctrines of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, we hope this journal will provide a forum for inter-denominational discussion among conservative Presbyterians, wishing to defend closer adherence to these old standards of Biblical Christianity.

+ Chris Coldwell, Editor, *The Confessional Presbyterian* <<http://www.cpjjournal.com>>

### PG-Rated films outrate R-Rated

Even though greatly outnumbered in 2004, films rated PG had a bigger share of the box office than those rated R.

According to MovieGuide, a publication of the Christian Film & Television Commission, the 98 R-rated movies released last year took in just over US\$1.8 billion. However, PG-rated films beat that figure by more than US\$300 million.

John Fithian, president of the National Association of Theater Owners, said, "Diversity is great, but family films sell better than R-rated films. Sometimes it seems like Hollywood overlooks the middle of the country, which wants movies that everyone can enjoy."

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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*To: The Editor of Faith and Focus.*

After reading Patricia van Laar's article "The Saints in Ancient British History", I wondered if this article had a reference to Protestant Church history, so I looked up some of the names of the persons mentioned in this article.

Starting with Pope Gregory called "Gregory the Great". This pope had a zeal for missions; he sent Augustine (not Augustine of Hippo, who lived from 354-430) to England with the goal of bringing the Gospel, and the old English Church under Roman authority.

Gregory 1, who was pope from 590 to 604, was also the one who laid the foundation for the Roman papacy, brought Pelagianism back into the church, promoted Mass, purgatory, celibacy for the clergy, transubstantiation, glorified the past and held tradition on a par with Scripture. He praised

Queen Brunhild of the Franks for her good works for the Church, whilst ignoring her evil deeds. She has gone down in Church history as "Isabel II".

I also looked at Augustine, who became the first Roman Catholic bishop in England. You will find him among the British Saints in the Catholic Encyclopaedia. His relics are buried in a silver shrine in Rochester. The importance of relics was discussed at the Synod of Trent, as were the views of Luther "the heretic" and other issues. This council decided on the "contra-reformation" of the Roman Catholic Church.

Another famous person was King Edwin. According to [www.CatholicOnline](http://www.CatholicOnline), "St Edwin was certainly venerated in England, though his claims to sanctity are else doubtful than those of some other royal saints, English and other, he has no cultus so far is known. His relics were held in veneration, churches were dedicated in his honour in London Somerset; and Pope Gregory XIII permitted him to be presented among the English martyrs on the walls of the venerable at Rome."

From the above it appears that the Roman Catholic Church does not support Mrs van Laar's claim, "Neither Edwin nor Paulinus have received much honour as "Saints". The last sentence of her article: "But using the true Biblical meaning of the word, these two men were indeed beloved saints of God, chosen and called of Him to play their part in England, as links in that golden chain on witnesses to His love and grace" is a view that might not be shared by every reader.

As this article refers to those who were 'saints' according to the Roman Catholic definition, I question whether this is appropriate for our Reformed denominational magazine. Does not Scripture refer to all believers as saints (as in 1Corinthians1:2 and Ephesians 1:15), who have become so not through their own worthiness, or the appointment of church leaders, but through the merit of Christ?

Roel Arends  
Silverstream

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## Reply

Mr Arends has raised some matters of history that are of concern to him, and may be also to other readers. I am grateful that he raised them, as expressing a view perhaps shared by others, and grateful to the editor for giving me the right of immediate reply. Bear in mind that my aim in the articles

was two-fold, to fill in gaps in the knowledge and understanding of the British/English Church, which has been commemorated in place names of New Zealand, and secondly, without labouring the point, to tear away the idea that the ancient church belongs to the Roman Catholics.

As several questions have been raised, I have numbered my comments on them:

1. The Protestant Church proper (i.e. the Reformation Church) began with Martin Luther's action in 1517, although its precursors, such as John Huss (born c.1370), John Wycliffe (c.1325) and William Tyndale (1492 – 1536), paved the way for this event. Therefore, none of the articles in the series could have reference to Protestant Church History. Augustine of Canterbury, as he was known, (a title used of him in two of my articles), arrived in England in 597, almost a thousand years earlier than the Reformation.

But nor do the articles have reference to Roman Catholic Church history. This term was not used until post-Reformation times. The excesses of this church do not belong to the apostolic age, nor to the very early church. Which raises the question, when did the 'Roman Catholic' Church begin? When did the Catholic (Universal) Church, which term we recognise in our ancient creeds, turn into the Roman Catholic Church? Or did it?

If I were asked to date the beginnings of this church, I should suggest its rejection of the Reformation at the Council of Trent, 1645 - 63.

2. Certainly, by the time of Gregory I and Augustine, the church of Rome was spreading its tentacles, and desired to take the Celtic British church into its embrace, as was clearly stated in my article in the April issue. Yes, Pope Gregory was ill-advised, unwise and blameworthy in his desire to take control of the British Church. I made this point in the Augustine article, by using the word 'audacity'. [The source quoted in Mr. Arends's letter was anachronistic in using the term "old English" Church.] By his time, too, certain unbiblical teachings and practices were increasing. Some had made quite an early appearance. Celibacy among priests was already somewhat common by A.D.300, for customary and practical reasons. Yet the exclusive doctrines of Roman Catholicism developed gradually over many centuries, culminating in the latest (1950), the bodily Assumption of the Virgin Mary. It wasn't until A.D.1139, at the Second Lat-



eran Council, that mandatory celibacy was officially imposed on all priests, although this was not fully implemented until the Council of Trent (1545-1563). The RC doctrine of transubstantiation was officially stated in AD 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council, affirmed and expounded more fully during the Council of Trent, and recently reaffirmed in the encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* in 1965, following the Second Vatican Council. These are all hundred of years after Gregory, supporting a Protestant contention that the Roman Catholic Church is in fact, not ancient. Of course, long before these dates, some of the distinctive RC doctrines were developing and becoming cemented into belief. But it was a slow, gradual change, not an overnight mushroom.

Gregory's other mistakes had no place in my purpose. None of my sources have associated Pope Gregory with Pelagianism, which was officially repudiated more than a century earlier after its peak of about 30 years, but without further study, I cannot deny it as a possibility. Other mistakes of his were not relevant to my record. Queen Brunhild was indeed a treacherous woman, described by historians as a Jezebel, but that did not affect my account. I was speaking of his influence in England.

Notice that even the R.C. source, quoted by your correspondent, stated first as Gregory's concern for England, "the goal of bringing the Gospel". The *Encyclopaedia* places second, the stated aim of domination of the British Church. I consider from my study, that his desire for the salvation "from wrath" was his first, and main, motive for sending Augustine and his monks to England, which was at that time wholly pagan. The assessment of Pope Gregory's character and abilities is not mine. It is the assessment of the researchers behind my sources. History has recognised the enigma of Gregory by dubbing him, "the last of the good, the first of the bad."

My first six articles dealt with the ancient Celtic Church of Britain, which was not an 'old English' Church. The article on St Augustine (April) and that on King Edwin and Paulinus, (May), record the very beginnings of the old English Catholic Church.

3. The fascination of the R.C. church with relics and shrines are of no interest to me, for I hold, like so many of my fellow Protestants, that they have no part in our faith or worship, though they might have a mild tourist interest. The R.C. Church seems to be able to produce them in abundance, many of doubtful origin, at the drop of a hat.

4. King Edwin. The source of our information must be carefully considered and weighed. Mr. Arends has quoted as his sources the Roman Catholic w.w.w. Online, and the Catholic *Encyclopaedia*. I think this is a mistake on his part. The Roman Catholic view of history is completely different from the Protestant one. In my experience it is distorted, but it is surprising and sad that many Protestants seem to hear and accept only this 'side of the story.' How often do you hear, for instance, that Henry VIII started the Reformation in England? Have you heard why this is untrue?

The Roman church assumes that all the "Saints" from Peter on, including such outstanding figures as Augustine of Hippo, belong to itself, and many of its adherents would think, to itself alone. Obviously this church approaches historical questions from the opposite end from us. [I find it interesting that theirs is so far, the only place I have seen the king referred to as "St" Edwin.]

J.H. Merle d'Aubigne (*The Reformation in England*, Vol. I), referring to the 40 men who accompanied Augustine, states, "We do not wish to undervalue the religious element now placed before the Anglo-Saxons, and we can readily believe that many of the missionaries sent from Italy desired to work a Christian work." I see no reason not to include Paulinus in this assessment, and no reason to see the account of the conversion of King Edwin, culled from my reading matter, as less than a fair account of his search for the truth. He lived only six years after his baptism, and was killed in battle. If this entitles him to a place as a martyr in the Church of Rome, so be it. The modern estimation of his standing in Roman Catholic eyes is not important. Nevertheless, reading between the lines, it seems that the RC Church does support my claim (if we disregard its 'veneration' of his relics). It states that "his claims to sanctity are doubtful," and that "he has no cultus as far as is known." (Two very prominent elements of Roman Catholicism!)

Incidentally, I included Edwin and Paulinus as too important to omit, although the only name in New Zealand associated with Edwin, as far as I know, is "Dunedin", reputedly a combination of Dundee and Edinburgh. Edwin is purported to have given his name to the Rock of Edinburgh on which the famous Castle of Edinburgh is built.

I see no reason to retract my opinion that these two men, King Edwin and Paulinus, in the true biblical sense of the word, were indeed, beloved saints of God.

5. I cannot understand the thinking behind the first sentence of the last paragraph in Mr Arends's letter. The article is *not* referring to "those who were 'saints' according to the Roman Catholic definition." I thought that my contrast between "Saints" (using inverted commas and a capital S) and true biblical saints, would have made this obvious. Mr Arends has made the mistake of concurring with the Roman Catholic Church's usurping claim to the eminent leaders of early Christendom, which, I have endeavoured to show in my articles, is simply not factual. Furthermore, it is beyond understanding how anyone brought up with Scripture, can fail to see that Scripture refers to all believers as saints. So I could from an historical view, include Edwin and Paulinus as true saints in the biblical sense. What evidence has he that they were not?

6. Finally, I am quite aware that the church in Holland does not append *heilige* (saint) to the names of prominent early Christians. The practice in the English world is different, and no one in Christchurch would say, "I live in Albans." Possibly the custom arose in the absence of surnames, to distinguish from other Pauls and Johns etc. By the time of John Wycliffe, surnames were commonplace, so the practice died out of general use, while lingering on in the case of early prominent churchmen.

I myself as a Protestant child, was told that the title St. is a mark of respect, just as I showed respect for my parents' siblings by attaching the title aunt or uncle to their names, and just as I spoke of my teachers, not as Beattie or Ferguson, but Mr. B and Miss F, although I must admit that sometimes out of adults' hearing, we called them 'Jim' and 'old Furguts'! So, 'St' was considered both a mark of identification and of respect, not a means of adulation and veneration. (In general, Protestants pronounce "St." as *sint*, whereas Roman Catholics usually say the title fully, as *saint*.)

May I suggest that anyone who has had concerns, carefully reads all the articles again, bearing in mind all of the above.

*Patricia van Laar.*

*(I intend to attach the sources of my information to the final article.)*

## Focus on home

# Gleanings from our bulletins...

**Andrew Reinders**

### Avondale

Family devotional thought: Why do we do what we do in a worship service? And does it really matter what we do during a service of worship, or how we do it? Let me begin to answer those questions today. By way of introduction we remember that an important principal of biblical worship is dialogue, or conversation. When Christians meet together to worship God they enter into dialogue with Him. They enter into conversation with the triune God who has revealed Himself as God the Father, God the Son, and God the holy Spirit. Dialogue is a two way street. God speaks while His people listen. God's people speak and God listens. In this sense our worship services reflect the principle of the covenant. We shall see how this works itself out as we continue our look at the matter of worship services, the how and why. Rev. John Ter Horst – Pastor.

### Bishopdale

Message from the Elders: For anyone who would like to talk about membership, spiritual and pastoral issues please do not hesitate to talk to one of the elders, to our Vicar or you can contact the chairman of session (contact details are given at the end of the pastoral notes.) If you are not sure who any of these people are ask the person sitting next to you at church for help. We have been greatly encouraged that even though we do not have a regular minister the work of saving faith and discipleship continues – Praise the Lord.

This past week many of us attended the funeral service for Millie Vlaanderen, daughter of Marcel & Alice, who was still born. Last Sunday we had to share our emotions between happiness at baptism and sadness at loss. We grieve with the family at their loss but we are comforted with the knowledge that she is safe in heaven. To Marcel & Alice

we promise to help and support you as much as we can.

### Christchurch

We join with Br. Jouke van der Woude and the rest of his family in mourning the loss of Sr. Sophia van der Woude, who passed away peacefully in her sleep this past Monday. We give thanks to God for His work in her life. With all of God's people, we find our comfort in belonging to Jesus Christ, and we look forward to the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

Are you going to church on Ascension Day? This is a wonderful opportunity to gather together with God's people to celebrate what Jesus Christ has done and continues to do as our ascended Lord and Saviour. The Ascension was not a minor event barely worthy of our attention. It was in fact the glorious culmination of Christ's work on earth. And it allowed him to take his rightful place at the right hand of God, there to reign over all as head of his church and Lord of creation. The book of Acts begins with the ascension of Christ. This is the book that goes on to describe the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church, and the witness of Christ's followers beginning at Jerusalem and proceeding to the ends of the earth. We continue to be the Spirit-filled church, and we continue to witness to the power and truth of our Lord and Saviour, and this is only possible because Christ ascended into glory. The Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 18 speaks eloquently of how Christ's ascension continues to benefit us. It speaks of how Christ is now in heaven as our Intercessor. It speaks of how Christ being in heaven serves as a guarantee that he'll eventually take us there to join him. And it speaks of the ascended Lord sending his Spirit to us. Please join us for a combined worship service this Thursday, 5 May, here in our church building, at 7:30 pm. The offering is for the National Diaconate Committee of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand to help with World relief projects.

### Dovedale

Hanmer Springs Adventure 2005: When: April 29th-30th, Friday 5pm onwards - Saturday evening. Where: 4a Cheltenham Street, Hanmer Springs. Who for: The Dovedale

Youth Group. What to bring: Warm clothes, sleeping bag and pillow, swimming togs, strong footwear for a 4-6 hour hike, Meat, snacks, and a Gung-Ho Attitude! Contact: Lennert or Sean to book. Be in quick!!! Hanmer Springs Adventure 2005: When: April 29th-30th, Friday 5pm onwards - Saturday evening.

### Dunedin

This week we learned that Mr Kelvin Millhouse, known to a number of us, died as a result of being knocked off a bike by a truck. Please remember in prayer his wife and two young daughters whom he leaves behind. Kelvin and Ruth Millhouse worshipped with the Dunedin Reformed Church in the early 1990s.

Prison Fellowship Garage Sale. Please remember this event which is to be held on Saturday 7 May in the church hall from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Please look around your home for saleable items that are not useful to you anymore, but may be for someone else. We would also very much appreciate baking and preserves to sell. The contact person is Connie van Dyk, phone 453 0840 or 021 155 4879. Proceeds from the garage sale will go towards the work of Prison Fellowship in Dunedin and the work of the prison chaplains.

### Foxton

Hymns, Psalms, and Spiritual Songs "R" Us. The congregation is invited to bring along a sandwich to share after the evening service on Sunday, 15th May. After this we will do some congregational singing, ably led by some of our up and coming musicians. We will be singing some old favourites, and hopefully enjoying some new ones as well. We would love to have you join us for about an hour or so. For further info, see JZ.

Letter from Craig Van Echten: Greetings to you all. The weather in Geelong is not too cold yet which is good. Lately, I have been working on assignments. These are progressing well. The first assignment was frustrating because I did not realise the amount of time that was required to complete it. But now I have just completed my second one, which has been more enjoyable. This assignment was based on evaluating the three views

of creation (young earth, old earth and evolution). And although it took a while to complete it was a good learning experience. Classes are very interesting and all the people at the college are great to get along with. On Friday the 29th the college held a dinner in Melbourne to celebrate 50 years of existence. The reality is that for the college to continue for another 50 years, more students are needed. I ask people at home to pray for this. I also ask that you pray for all of the students here. There are students who are not only studying but managing their large families as well. In terms of my church life, the local church has made me very welcome and I enjoy being a part of their church community. However I have not forgotten about my church family in Foxton and pray for the Lord's blessing on you all. Yours in Christ, Craig Van Echten

## Hukanui

Studies in Leadership: In Ephesians 4 the apostle Paul reminds us that God's gift to his church of elders and leaders is, "To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." With this in mind, a series of studies in Leadership will commence on Wednesday evening, the 11th May, for a period of 8 weeks. Please keep this date free and invites will follow soon. For further information speak to either Robert van Woerden or Henri Pennings.

The story is told of a farmer who was trying to teach his son how to plough straight furrows. After getting the tractor and plough ready, he told his son to keep his eye on some object at the other end of the field and aim straight toward it. Do you see that cow lying down over there? He asked? Keep your eye on her and plough straight ahead. The boy started ploughing and the farmer went about his own work. When he returned a little later to see how much progress had been made, he was shocked to find, instead of straight rows, something that looked more like a question mark. Upon asking why, he found that, although the boy had obeyed his instructions, the cow had moved! The standards in this world continue to change. We are never quite sure whether something that was acceptable last week is still so now! But Jesus is an object that will never move. He is the foundation of our faith, the Rock that stands firm, immovable, who never

changes in his love and forgiveness for His people. We can be sure that if we set our eyes on Him, our path will be straight.

Congratulations to Ross and Jessica with the birth of Sarah Rebecca last weekend. She weighed in at a healthy 7lb, 11 oz, and mother, father and daughter are all doing well. Megan and Rachelle are also 'over the moon' with their new little sister. What a rich blessing again from our wonderful God, and may He also provide every strength and wisdom as you seek to bring all your family to know and love Him.

## North Shore

Forthcoming Wedding: Hesther Cettina & Michael Bell wish to announce that they will be married at St Matthews in the City on Monday, 25th April 2005. You are welcome to attend the ceremony. We pray the Lord's grace and guiding hand on Hesther & Michael in the years ahead.

This years' Annual Women's Presbyterial will be held at Avondale Reformed Church on Saturday 14th May. Please mark this date on your calendar. As this is our 40th Anniversary we will be asking you to bring some memories of the past 40 years and would love to see you there. More details to follow. Avondale Ladies Fellowship and Auckland RYC. Any questions please contact Sharon Jefferies

Next Lord's Day Sheryl & I will be away. Some years ago Session agreed that I could have two weekends off per year if necessary for family functions – that are sometimes hard for a minister to get to. For the first time I am using one of these to go and see my mother in Tauranga. She is 81 now and frail and we have not seen her for many months. We will be away Friday and Saturday as well. I want to visit country members Andrew & Sarah Flinn and Tinus Pistorius; and a couple of South African families in the Bay of Plenty we have recently come in contact with. Earlier in the week, I hope to get two Synod reports written. JR.

We extend a warm welcome to Rev. Joe Poppe and Aart Plug, from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. The FRCA and the RCNZ have been talking about becoming sister churches for some time, and they are here to further acquaint themselves with us – and us with them. They're keen to talk with you – today's church lunch will be a prime opportunity for you to spend some time with

them! They will also briefly introduce the FRCA at the AGM tomorrow evening.

## Pukekohe

It is with joy we announce the engagement of Sam de Vries and Dalena den Harder. May the Lord direct and guide your preparations towards marriage.

We express our sympathy to Hannetje, Wanda and Marius van Niekerk with the death of their husband and father, Dirk, this past week. The van Niekerks attend the Afrikaans service and have visited our services at times. The funeral was held yesterday. Please

*Thankful to the Lord, we will remember on the 31st of July, with our parents, pake and beppe:*

## Wiebe and Elisabeth GORTER



*that they were married 60 years ago.*

*Palmerston North:  
Eke and Anton Meister  
Minnesota, USA: Nichole  
Wellington: Nathan & Miriam*

*Auckland: Anneke and Tom Kroon  
Elizabeth and Jeremy  
Monique and Nathan*

*Rangiora: Maaike and Henk Dirkze  
Robert and Cherie  
Natalie  
Jacqueline*

*Tawa: Helen and Peter Dirkze  
Anna  
Benjamin*

*and two great grandchildren: Martha  
and Samuel*

**38 Arthur Street, Christchurch**



remember the family in your prayers.

Church Bible Studies: In preparation for the evening Bible Study groups I am planning an evening on "How to Lead a Bible Study" for all who may be asked to do this. This will be held at 7:30pm on Tuesday 26 April at the church. Those involved in the youth and ladies Bible studies are also encouraged to attend.

We express our sympathy to the Bylsma

and van der Wel families with the death of Mrs Leny Bylsma last Monday morning. The funeral service was held here on Friday. Mrs Bylsma has been struggling with poor health for a long time and has now been taken home to the peace and beauty of heaven through her trust in Jesus Christ. We are sad at times like this but we do not grieve like those who have no hope. We can find comfort in the knowledge that Mrs Bylsma is with the Lord in heaven and that we will meet again at the resurrection when Jesus returns.

Help Needed: Our church is rostered to take the weekly service for the month of May at The Franklin Village retirement home, 44 McNally Road, Pukekohe. These are held at 10:30am on Thursday mornings beginning this week. I will lead a devotion but it would be great to have some extra people along to assist with the singing. Please let me know if you can come. We will meet there at 10:25am.

## A feminine focus

### Back to Basics – Elizabeth George's

# 'Woman After God's Own Heart'

#### Sally Davey

This week I had one of those Mondays – you know the kind I mean? I had been away all weekend cooking for our church camp, been somewhat busy the week before, and the house was looking like a bit of a bomb site. Laundry was piling up, the lawns hadn't been mown, and weeds flourished in the garden. But that wasn't all. I had several writing projects underway (or overdue), and some elderly relatives I hadn't spoken to or visited in weeks. Whichever way I looked, I felt guilty and neglectful; and that I was simply responding to the most urgent – or embarrassingly undone – task in sight. I certainly had the impression I was lacking order and priority in my life; and that I could do with a kind of spiritual refresher course to help me get first things first.

At that moment, I decided to re-read Elizabeth George's *Woman After God's Own Heart*, and to share my thoughts with you as I reviewed it. It's a book that has set my thoughts straight several times before, and I've no doubt it will help you as well – especially if you sense the need to "get a grip" on an overly busy or disorganized life.

#### Two problems

Thinking about it, I've got two problems (at

least). Maybe yours are the same, maybe they're different. For one thing, I lack motivation. I get going too late in the morning, I put off getting started on the tasks of the day. I daydream. For another, I tend to get immersed in one job and stay at it too long. This is necessary for writing, or preparing for lectures. One needs long, uninterrupted stretches of time to be able to concentrate properly and keep your train of thought going until the task is finished (interruptions and unexpected callers are *dynamite!*). But this is not the best way of doing housework or keeping the garden in order: little and often, I'm sure you'll agree, is the recommended regime. But whatever your organizational shortcoming, you'll find practical help in *A Woman After God's Own Heart*.

#### The parts of the book

The book is divided into three parts; the first of which, "The Pursuit of God", deals with our personal relationship with the Lord, that heart-commitment that is the foundation of everything we do in our everyday lives. The most basic questions Elizabeth George asks are: what is the condition of your heart? Do you have an eternal relationship with God? If so, how is your walk with Him? Do you choose God's ways at every opportunity? Are you seeking better rather than good, and

best rather than merely what is better? Do you commit yourself to God every day, prayerfully and sincerely, laying all you are and have upon His altar, putting yourself entirely at His disposal? Do you have a "hot", passionate heart toward Him (not merely a warm or even worse, a cold heart)? A telling question she asks is, "What kind of Christian do you want to be in ten years' time?" Answering that involves working out the steps to get there: and the most important of these are regular immersion in God's Word, and committing ourselves to prayer.

#### Very practical

In these important spiritual tasks Elizabeth is tremendously practical. She talks about her own struggle to implement them as regular routines, thereby suggesting ways that we might ensure they are part of our own daily programmes. There are several things she stresses. One of them is that time with God, alone, will be our source of strength – the well from which we will be able to draw fresh supplies to keep us going through all manner of trial and upset. Quoting another writer, she remarks that "the greater the proportion of your day – of your life – spent in quiet, in reflection, in prayer, [in study] in scheduling, in preparation, the greater will be the effectiveness, the impact, the

power, of the part of your life that shows.” And quoting another, “The impact of your ministry to people [you can include your husband and children here] will be in direct proportion to the time you spend away from people and with God.” So, how, when and where does Elizabeth do it? She says it has varied over the years – but always, first thing in the morning is the best. Sometimes it has been at the breakfast table, at others in the living room (at the couch and coffee table). Most lately, she has used her bed. And what tools does she use? (This is very interesting: she’s definitely a “project” person). A good reading light, pens, pencils, markers, sticky notes, small cards, a pad, a prayer notebook, a hymnal for singing, memory verses, a journal, perhaps some reference books. You will need whatever it takes to learn from God what you will need for the years ahead – for marriage, singleness, widowhood, for serving others. You are building up resources to be a strong oak tree with deep roots, not a mushroom that shrivels away at the first hint of heat or wind.

#### **A converted feminist**

Elizabeth George is a university-educated woman, and for a time in her twenties had a career as an executive secretary – something she tried to continue after the birth of her two daughters. She had been a young woman in the rebellious sixties, and a convinced feminist in the seventies. But just as the stresses of marriage/family/work were beginning to unravel her life, God intervened and she and her husband were converted. Through a process of re-training (Bible study on her own and the teaching of Grace Community Church, pastored by John MacArthur) she completely re-ordered her priorities. What has been important to her for the last thirty years or so are what, she writes, a woman after God’s own heart has always wanted. The woman who loves God, who knows Him through his Word and seeks Him in prayer, will be the woman who gives herself to her husband and her children, and to creating a rich and satisfying home life.

#### **Her husband’s helper**

Above all, Elizabeth defines herself as her husband’s helper – as she writes, “I am on assignment from God to help my husband.” And while she sketches out, thoughtfully, some of the ways we might live out the matter of submission, it is what she says about our helping role that sat me up straight and melted my heart. It is the kind of help that is written of in Proverbs 31:11-12: “The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will

have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.” So how, exactly, does Elizabeth George describe this kind of help? How does she do it? I think it’s in making her husband the most important person in her life, *and showing him that, by demonstrating it in lots of small actions every day.* These include asking him most mornings, “What can I do for you today?” and “What can I do to help you make better use of your time today?” They include always speaking well of him to others, and asking herself whether given actions will help or hinder Jim’s life and work. They include organizing the family routines so that family devotions, which he has the responsibility to lead, *can actually happen.* They include organizing things so that the house is tidy, ordered and restful so that when he comes home, tired, he can peacefully re-charge his batteries. (I remember this was something my mother always majored on, and she did it well. It taught all of us how much she loved him, and how important his welfare was to her). One thing, in particular, Elizabeth does is make sure she is not engrossed in a phone call when his car pulls into the drive. (A small thing, but it tells Jim that she is gladder to see him than to chat with a friend).

#### **Her mother’s heart**

As a mother, the woman after God’s own heart prays for her children, always – a priority. She also teaches them the way of the gospel; she lives joyfully before them, because happiness and cheerfulness are contagious. (I’m reminded of several things, here. Contentment is also contagious: a contented mother soon teaches her children to be thankful and uncomplaining. Likewise, a trusting, faithful Christian mother passes the habit of being secure in the faith to her children. Children can safely pass through considerable outward upheaval and change in family circumstances if their parents are secure and don’t worry). Elizabeth also

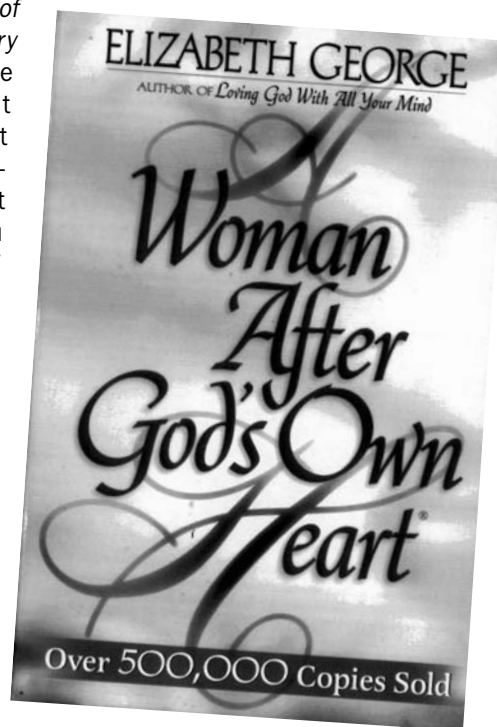
emphasizes a generously giving heart, and one that gives preferential treatment to her family. She illustrates this by telling how she once cooked a really special meal to take to a lady in her church who’d had a baby. When asked by her daughters what she had made, she bent down and showed them. They

straight away asked what they were having for dinner that night – and when she told them, was convicted of how low a priority she had made them! There are all kinds of ways we can make our children, and their life at home “special”, and this book is full of ideas. (You’ll find a lot of references to Edith Schaeffer here, and this is appropriate: Edith Schaeffer was a master of this art). But all that said, one thing Elizabeth is careful to remind us is that our children should never come before our husbands: it is easy to

do, but definitely the wrong order of priorities.

#### **Her homemaking**

The section of this book that I love the most is the one on homemaking. These are the chapters that deal with housework, home decoration, time management. It’s great! It exposes some of my failings and gives me ideas – and hope! I think this is one of the things that makes this book unusual in the “for Christian women” genre. Many books deal with marriage and motherhood, but this one gives enticing glimpses into an efficient and creative Christian woman’s own, daily home routines. It used to be the case that mothers always taught their daughters household routines. You know the kind of thing: clean the bathrooms every day, vacuum every morning, hang out the washing, and do the ironing before the day is over, baking on Thursdays, grocery shopping on Fridays, etc. Well, we all live the sorts of lives that make it difficult to create that sort of pattern, and as a consequence some of us have neglected homes. (Sometimes I think it’s those of us who’ve studied longer, or who have professional careers who can be the worst offenders: we’ve gotten into the habit



# “Preaching the Gospel”

The Reformed Theological College’s Biblical Preaching Workshops are an appreciated professional development event for ministers and pastors. They provide valuable instruction time for other Christian workers also; lay preachers, elders and other Christian leaders.

The 4th annual Workshop, to be held at the RTC, 125 Pigdons Rd Waurnd Ponds, Geelong, DV on Thursday 29 and Friday 30 September 2005, will be on the theme of “Preaching the Gospel”.

The Workshops are aimed at supporting preachers who are already established in basic preaching skills and committed to biblical preaching. They provide challenging teaching and interaction, and assist participants spiritually, stimulate their thinking about preaching, help them in their preaching ministry, and encourage them to ongoing faithfulness in biblical preaching. Participants have come from all over Australia, and New Zealand, and from a range of church denominations: evangelical, conservative, pentecostal.

## Presenters for 2005

Guest Speaker Rev Dominic Steele will give addresses on “A Dummies Guide to Evangelistic Preaching for Post- Moderns”.

Dominic heads up the “Christians in the Media” network ministry, reaching out to secular media workers in Sydney with the Gospel of Jesus. He also pastors the Annandale Community Anglican Church in inner Sydney. He is the author of the popular new Australian evangelistic course “Introducing God”, which is being hailed as a breakthrough tool in connecting with the 21st century post-moderns.

RTC lecturers for this year’s Workshop are Rev Dr Murray Capill, Lecturer in Practical Theology, Rev Dr Bill Berends, Lecturer in Systematic Theology and Ethics, and Rev Dr Henk DeWaard, Principal and Lecturer in Missiology and Church History. Murray is the foundation lecturer of the Preaching Workshops. All are experienced preachers.

RTC Faculty members look forward to welcoming many participants to the 2005 Preaching Workshop.

The Registration Fee of \$95, covers the lectures, catering, all hand-out materials. Limited accommodation is available at the College, \$33 bed and breakfast, so please book early. Concessions prices are available for RTC financial members.

Please address enquiries to Kylie Stewart at: RTC, 125 Pigdons Rd, Waurnd Ponds Geelong, Vic 3216, ph 0352442955, fax 035243 055, email admin@rtcvic.edu.au.

of abandoning our housework the instant books or workplace call.)

## The Titus principle

Sometimes we need someone to teach us these things. The Apostle Paul knew this: his letter to Titus explained the principle. As Elizabeth George comments, we women need models and examples. She said that when she was a new Christian, she had very sensitive antennae for what other women did – how they behaved in church (even what they wore). Did they pray out loud at prayer meetings and bible studies? Did they speak in mixed groups? She noticed how they treated their husbands, how they showed respect, how they disciplined their children and what tone of voice they used... “Nothing slipped me by because I knew I needed help!” (Are we aware of this when we welcome visitors and new Christians into our midst?) One of the stories in *A Woman After God’s Own Heart* that I loved the most was of Elizabeth’s decision to ask a woman in her church whom she admired to give her advice on marriage and homemaking. She had to pluck up the courage, but Jane (the older woman) was totally delighted. Jane arranged that the meeting would happen in her own small home (“Note”, adds Elizabeth, “I didn’t say a large gorgeous showcase.”) Jane showed her some books on marriage that had helped her, then took her on a tour of her house, pulling out drawers, opening cupboards, and showing Elizabeth what systems worked for her. “She was *teaching*... she showed me how she kept her home neat in a minimum of time.”

## Staying at home is just that!

And this point leads on to another: Elizabeth George has great ideas on efficient use of time. She has even (at Jim’s suggestion) studied time management books (he gets his theological students to read these too, so they can use their time better as pastors). Helpful lessons in using time abound. One of these is the simple principle of *staying at home*. Instead of zipping out on small errands every day, or several times a day, Elizabeth learned to stay at home more. It is far more efficient – you get more done that way. She goes out only one day a week, for bible study, shopping, errands and visiting. The other days she does her housework and cooking; and writes and does teaching preparation (she is often asked to teach at women’s conferences). Each morning Elizabeth lists the tasks for the day, prays about them, and then prayerfully sets priorities, choosing to do the most important (in God’s



eyes) first. All this is sensible, practical and God-honouring. It gives hope, and help, for increased fruitfulness in His service.

This is a spiritual, and a practical book. It is the perfect back-to-basics pick-me-up when life threatens to dissolve into chaos.

But even better, it's the sort of book to *start* with - when you begin to be a homemaker

## Mission in focus

Janice Reid

# Looking up

When I lived in the Philippines, I produced a daily devotional radio programme called *Looking Up*. It consisted of readings of the Psalms, followed by gentle Christian music on the subject of that day's reading. The programme was broadcast to South Asia by shortwave.

Then, when I went back to New Zealand, I had regular meetings with a friend—a session member—who gave counsel about my work, and served as a liaison in my dealings with session. I vividly remember those cold winter evenings, standing by the car on the way home from our meetings, when Theo Grul would pat my shoulder and say, "Keep looking up!" I'd grin, and think of my programme.

Years later, and here I am in Cambodia—still 'looking up.'" I enjoy 'looking up' at the sky: the brilliant orange globe that peeks in my front door early in the mornings...the clear blue expanse of midday (with nothing to separate burning sun from tender skin)...the approaching clouds that tell of a thunderstorm (and cooler weather). Looking up, in fact, is something that I take great delight in.

Looking up...looking back...looking forward. These are the things I'd like to reflect on today, as I think about these last 18 months in Cambodia, and missionary service in general. I'll concentrate on four different areas: highlights of the journey; what it has all meant for me as an individual; what I've left behind; and what the Lord has done for me.

### Highlights

First, the highlights. My visit to Cambodia, in 2003, was the first one. Just five days after the anti-Thai riots that left many buildings in ruins and brought Cambodia to within minutes of an attack by the Thai Airforce (after rioting Cambodians stormed the Thai

embassy in Phnom Penh)...the visit was fascinating. There was a sense of near danger: although by that time it wasn't near at all. But what amazed me most was the instant bond I felt with the country; the sense of loving it and being able to picture myself living here. Looking back, I'd say that was clear guidance from the Lord!

Having our first workshop was a highlight, too: having the new training course completed enough to test it. Several aspects of that workshop really stand out in my memory: co-facilitating with Jean-Luc...using our portable studio for the first time...having Buddhist participants (to make up numbers, and for evaluation purposes)...sitting on a romorque to go to a riverside restaurant for lunch one day during the workshop.

Another highlight has been the friends I've made: both local and expat. The 'laminating ladies' along the street sit at their rickety stalls all day, out in the heat, waiting to earn the odd riel when school-students need their books covered in plastic. They're delighted when I come past and say hello, shake hands with them...even though we can't understand one another. The Chinese girl at the local stationery shop has been a good friend...as has Malyneth in the market (she loves to practice her English on me),

and my neighbour's teenage children (who come to visit quite often).

Church is yet another highlight. I go to an interdenominational, international service (there are no Reformed churches here). The pastor preaches very well, and I finally found out why: he did his theological training at More College in Sydney—same place our Reformed ministers get their qualification (Geelong is accredited with More, which issues the degrees)...and the same place I got my own, through Bible College of New Zealand. He's also a typical Aussie who loves Kiwi-baiting, and I'm gradually learning to give as good as I get!

Other highlights include the blessing of teaching radio announcers (and station managers) both here and in Indonesia, and the joy of being able to help stations here in Cambodia (FEBC, particularly) with individualised training that meets their needs. When announcers complete the training and head back to work with increased confidence and excited plans for new programmes to reach out to their communities—that's the greatest joy of all.

### What it means for me

Coming to Cambodia was daunting; it would have been even more so without that first





visit, which showed me how well I could cope with living in one of the world's poorest nations. But it has certainly had its challenges.

For one thing, before I came here, I had never lived alone in the community. First I was home with the family; then at Bible College (institutional living...yum!). Then I rented a room with Vanessa Larsen, in Auckland. In the Philippines, I shared a house with other single women who worked for FEBC. But here, I'm on my own. It's been a major adjustment.

Another significant change is the noise: whether it's the pig-slaughtering place on the right, or the karaoke joints down the street, or the sundry Buddhist weddings, funerals, merit ceremonies and what-have-you that fill up days (and nights) with wailing chants and strange, other-worldly music. Of course, there's plenty of silence when the power goes out—as it does all too often, since Cambodia currently does not produce enough electricity to meet demand. Working in a dark, hot house with not a breath of air to stir the sweat, is just a bit distracting!

Coming to Cambodia also meant coming face-to-face with Buddhism and the animistic superstitions that rule the lives of most people here. Chinese religion is also very influential: with New Year ceremonies and other forms of ancestor worship featuring large in the community.

But physical/environmental adjustments are really only a small part of the picture. There are other things, too:

- Loneliness, depression (being on my own so much of the time is hard, even though I normally prefer to work alone)
- Uncertainty (what does the future hold? How will I know the right path to take?)

- Isolation (feeling cut off from friends and church life)
- Inconvenience (everything takes longer here; every conversation with a Cambodian is an adventure into misunderstanding; even the simplest purchase can take all the time and action of a major dramatic event)
- Regret (at missed opportunities, when I feel I could have made better use of time or resources; at missed relationships with family members in New Zealand, who don't know the Lord)
- Rootlessness (moving house is bad enough; moving country every few years has made me feel somewhat separate from whatever community I end up in)
- Giving over (my family into God's hands, even though the parting was incredibly hard)
- Gratitude (for the Lord's patience, peace and compassion; for sermons and fellowship and email messages that encourage and restore)
- Acceptance (of new environments, opportunities, people, and roles. Acceptance of differences in lifestyle, support mechanisms, friends, the taste of food)
- Awareness (new appreciation of nature, landscapes, and relationships. Awareness of precious moments and views and scenery that flit past and might be overlooked if I lived all my life in the same place)
- Joy (in new experiences, friends, and opportunities for service. Joy in seeing the "Eureka!" moment as the people I train grow in their understanding of ministry)
- Humanity (understanding myself better because I can see 'me' outside of my normal cultural milieu; understanding

others better for the same reason; learning to see the world and its people with spiritual eyes, to pray for them and weep over their lostness and look for opportunities to point them to Christ. Increasing boldness to speak out in His name, and tell of His goodness)

- Understanding (greater knowledge of Cambodians than I ever had before; increased awareness of the huge problems facing people in this country as they deal with the trauma of the past, and face the challenges of present and future)
- Wonder (at how older Cambodians live with the knowledge of their country's brutal past; at how little the younger generation knows about the atrocities; at what will happen in the future if the endemic corruption that fed that revolution continues as it does even now)
- Love (I now have a greater love for Cambodians than I would have ever imagined; and a passion to see the growth of the church in this country)

### Saying goodbye

Many people embark on missionary service with the illusion that they're going to 'change the world.' In fact, what they're going to do is wait in lines as they suffer the foibles of banana-republic bureaucracy; they're going to get sick from contaminated water, or disease-carrying mosquitoes; and they're going to say goodbye. Leaving loved ones in your home country is like tearing out a piece of your heart; leaving loved ones in your adopted country is pretty-much the same (if not so intense). And the more places you move, the more it happens...again and again.

There are also lots of other, more mundane things we have to give up, when we become missionaries: houses with carpet (most of Asia is so dusty the floors are tile or cement), cool weather, food we know and like, freedom of movement without people staring at us or problems with personal safety, support networks of friends and counsellors, entertainment, resources (for leisure, study, ministry).

But these goodbyes are all a matter of perspective. With every goodbye there's a hello...or there can be, if we take advantage of our opportunities. There are new and amazing experiences that other people will never get to see. There are mundane experiences that are precious in a way other people will never understand. There are insights into worlds and lives so different from our own, that they give us no option but to bring them to the foot of the cross.

And most of all: with every bit of our

hearts we leave behind in one country, there's a poignant reminder that our only true homes are in heaven.

### God's gifts

This restlessness—this sense of the unending nature of our time in any country, and on the earth itself, is a real gift from the Lord. When I reflect on the transience of my life over the last 14 years, and I realise that the very things that hurt the most may in fact be the greatest blessings: it's all in the way you look at them. Isolation can lead to depression—or it can lead to a deeper, stronger walk with the Lord. When we grieve at our own failures, that very experience gives us a fresh sense of God's compassion and His patient forbearance.

And there are lots of other good things about this life: too many to list. Accomplishments and challenges, satisfaction and longing, victory and defeat: they're all the Lord's blessings. Friends and prayer support—given and received—are also special parts of this life in Cambodia (or wherever). Wider eyes and heart to perceive the needs of the world—that's another gift (I was awfully insular and naïve before I left New Zealand the first time!).

Strange, really. It's called, 'missionary service.' But at least as much, it's 'missionary blessing.' How true are those words of our Lord's: "everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life." (Matt 19:29, NIV) If you're considering service on the mission-field, don't be daunted by the amount of things you may have to give up, give away, or do without. For every thing or person you give over into His care, God will bless you more than you could ever ask or think!

## MIF prayer notes

**Heidi Posthuma** is back in New Zealand for a short break, before returning to a restricted country to teach English for a second year. Please pray for safe travel, for a good time of refreshment with friends and family, and for the spiritual and physical resources to continue her ministry in the year to come.

**Jared Berends** expects to travel to the USA for a couple of weeks, for team meetings.

Then he will return to Mongolia for a second year of teaching English. Please pray for safe travel, and productive time with the team.

**Wally and Jeannette Hagoort** continue their ministry in Papua New Guinea, and are ever more challenged by people's hunger for spiritual truth. Pray for them as they help the groups that meet in Vanagi, East Boroko and other areas. Pray also for strength as they minister to people who stay at the Mapang Missionary Home. It is now the busiest time of year, with many missionaries coming and going on their way to home assignment.

**Janice Reid** is back from teaching two courses in Indonesia, and spending some time with the radio group she taught back in March. The courses helped participants to learn principles of effective radio announcing, and also of station management. The time spent with the third radio group helped them to learn about their listeners, to plan a broadcast schedule to meet the needs of their radio audience, and to establish policies which will guide the station's ministry in the future. Please pray for strength and direction as Janice considers the Lord's plans for her ministry in the future.

# The 'substitute motion'

## Dirk J van Garderen

With Synod nearly just around the corner, sessions are no doubt spending lots of time and energy on the study of the overtures, reports and appeals as they come to hand. Many of the recommendations will be agreed to, but not all. Some of us will feel strongly about a particular issue and wish to see something else in its place. On the instruction of our session, the overture or recommendation will, unless persuaded otherwise, be voted down. It will also be tempting to present a preferred alternative. How do you do this?

The route to follow is that laid out in considerable detail in the **Office Bearers' Handbook** under **Rules for Synodical Procedures** (2:3-16). But do the procedures contain work? Are they being applied?

During the past few synods the use a '**substitute motion**' has become an increasingly common way. I say 'increasingly' because in earlier years such motions were virtually unheard of and used only at times

when the meeting was at a near or total impasse – as a last resort. The 'substitute motion' was used to try to determine a way that would enable both sides of the debate, with an acceptable and God-honouring degree of compromise, to continue to work together in harmony. Whether or not this was a correct understanding of the nature of a substitute motion was, as I recall it, generally glossed over. The process worked and provided a way ahead that maintained unity.

However, I believe that this kind of motion is now being used in a rather different manner. It is has become a means of introducing a new or preferred 'angle' that has not been considered beforehand by the other churches. Given the understanding that such a motion, if accepted, takes precedence over the main one, a session (having two votes) can therefore arrest or set the course for the business of Synod at any time by moving (and seconding) a substitute motion. If agreed to, it causes the original motion to disappear from view altogether.

What is frustrating about this procedure

is that if the original motion has been formulated and prepared as an overture or as a recommendation from a standing or study committee, that work can be set aside before full discussion and evaluation of it has taken place. This often to the dismay of the Synodical committee that spent much time formulating it!

This frustration I refer to is two-fold.

It can and, in some instances does, introduce what amounts to 'new business' onto the floor of synod – something which the other sessions have not had time to study and deliberate on beforehand. Because it is tabled as a 'substitute motion' it is understood to have priority. It is the content of the substitute motion that becomes the focus of debate before the main motion has been properly discussed. Such a procedure opens up the possibility of a committee's work being overlooked as well as making for hasty decisions which have in fact not been before the churches (sessions) for due





consideration.

It means that we fall into a real danger where the will of a minority (remember it takes only one session!) begins to dominate a particular aspect of the church's deliberation. This would, I suggest, amount to the danger of what some have called a tendency towards a dictatorship of the minority.

Should substitute motions be used in the manner they are? Should they be used at all?

#### What is a 'substitute motion'?

Our Rules of Order call for the Synod to deal with 'ecclesiastical matters only' and to do so 'in an ecclesiastical manner' (CO Art 26). It goes on to explain: 'Our Synods should therefore not be bound to observe detailed parliamentary rules. These may be proper in other gatherings, but they do not fit into the pattern of ecclesiastical assemblies which demand a large measure of freedom in discussion and action. However, a few general rules of order may serve a good purpose.'

For all the ambiguity in that statement, there are nevertheless some very specific guidelines regarding the making of motions that follow. Our Rules describe (1) the main motion, (2) a motion to amend, (3) a motion to defer or withhold action. Under the concept of a motion to amend, the rules allow for certain words which may be substituted, but do not contemplate a substitute motion. In other words, there is nothing in our rules about a substitute motion.

Looking further afield, Berghoef and de Koster, in the CRCNA's *The Elders' Handbook* do discuss the concept of a substitute motion and quote Roberts Section 33. They

write:

*'It may become clear that the business before the body would be served best if the entire Main Motion were reformulated. This can be done by proposing a Substitute Motion, which can be made even though one Main Motion is already on the floor.'*

The purpose of this motion is:

*'to substitute an entirely new motion (to serve the same purpose) as one already on the floor – is like an amendment to the whole motion.'*

Notes:

*'Discussion on the substitute motion can include comments on the other motion for which the substitute is being recommended.'*

*Normally, the substitute motion should intend the same purposes as the previous one for which it is being offered – only better.*

*The Chair may not itself simply decide to substitute one motion for another.*

*(Roberts, Section 33)'*

I wish to highlight the following:

Very obviously a substitute motion is introduced as a last result when, what can only be the result of considerable debate, it becomes clear that the business before the body would be better served if the entire main motion were reformulated. To introduce a substitute motion before the necessary discussions on the pros and cons of the main motion have been debated is a misuse of this kind of motion. Therefore, if a session decides on a substitute motion before Synod, the proper procedure would be to introduce it by way of an overture which in its turn should first be tested on the floor of the presbytery.

The substitute motion must 'serve the same purpose' as the original motion – only better. Therefore, a substitute motion should not be used to introduce an alternative view or a different 'angle'. That would be new business which can only be considered by Synod by means of an overture legally before it. Synod can always defer or withhold action on a motion even if it means a three year wait.

#### Can we do without the substitute motion?

One of the continuing dangers in the life of the church is that of undue haste in making decisions. This problem becomes all the more pressing in our denomination because synod meets only once every three years and for those who feel particularly strongly about an issue, that can seem like a lifetime.

However, for many years our churches were perfectly able to conduct their business without resorting to substitute motions. Since the reports should be to hand some six months before synod, if sessions (better presbyteries) wish to come up with an idea different from a recommendation, they should prepare an overture! Overtures can be presented up to two months before the Synod. Sessions should use this procedure because substitute motions will often present a viewpoint on an issue that other sessions have not heard about or considered beforehand. Overtures will be considered by all sessions beforehand. With a substitute motion, delegates are forced to make decisions that have often not been considered beforehand.

I am not suggesting that substitute motions have no place on the floor of Synod. They have, but only when it is clear that there is no other way out.

#### Notes:

- 1 Handbook, 2-11
- 2 The 'preamble' purports to quote Article 26 of the CO. In fact, it doesn't. The quoted article is in fact the old CRCNA Article 30 as found in Van Dellen and Monsma (1951) p 378! My suspicion is that this preamble therefore predates the new formulation of Art 26 which our churches adopted in the 1960s. An interesting anachronism.
- 3 I note the continental influence of our Dutch forebears!
- 4 Berghoef, Gerard and de Koster, Lester, *The Elders' Handbook*. Grand Rapids: Christian's Library Press (1979) See pages 43, 47, 48.
- 5 This is Roberts Rules of Order – the rules which, as I understand, are also referred to when our church courts encounter procedural difficulties.
- 6 See Rules for Synodical Procedures V (Matters Legally before Synod) B (2-7)

# Children in focus



# Sonshine Korner



## THE POLISHING PROCESS:

### Read: Ephesians 4:1-6

Jeremy sighed as he perched on the arm of his Dad’s chair. “Is something wrong, Jeremy?” asked Dad glancing up from his newspaper. “I’m tired of trying to be nice to Logan. He’s always bugging me,” grumbled Jeremy just as his younger brother, Blake, dashed into the room. “Today in Sunday school, Logan kept poking my arm. Why can’t he grow up? He . . . .”

“Dad! Can we go and look at my rocks now?” asked Blake, interrupting his brother. “It’s been a whole week since I put them in my rock tumbler!”

“Blake, the directions say it takes five or six weeks to polish stones,” Jeremy reminded him. “If you take them out now, they won’t look much different than they did when you put them in.”

“That’s right,” agreed Dad. “We’ll change the grinding agent pretty soon, but the rocks have to tumble for several weeks before they’re smooth and shiny.”

“Okay,” said Blake. He sighed as he left the room. “I’ll leave ‘em alone.”

After a moment, Dad murmured, “I guess Logan isn’t polished yet.”

Jeremy’s head shot up. “What do you mean by that?” he asked.

“Didn’t he accept the Lord at Bible camp last summer?” asked Dad. Jeremy nodded. “He’s a new Christian, and it takes a lot of ‘polishing’ to make us like Jesus,” explained Dad. “We’re all in different stages of spiritual growth. Those of us who have learned some lessons about how to behave need to have patience especially with new Christians.”

“You’re saying I need to be more patient with Logan, right?” asked Jeremy.

Dad nodded. “The Bible talks about iron sharpening iron and I think that’s a little like a grinding agent polishing rocks,” he said. “Maybe God wants Logan’s shortcomings, and yours, to work like grinding agents to polish each other. Next time Logan starts poking you, politely ask him to stop. Develop patience as you get to know him better and try to help him learn more about the Lord.”

#### MEMORY VERSE:

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” Proverbs 27:17

#### HOW ABOUT YOU?

How patient are you when you don’t like what someone does? Remember the “polishing process” isn’t finished for you or anyone else. None of us is perfect yet, in fact we won’t be until we

reach heaven. Ask God to help you to become more like Jesus and to be kind and patient with others as He is.

### The Polishing Process Word Find

E	C	N	E	I	T	A	P	Z	G	I	V	G	R	O	W	T	H	S	J
R	W	T	E	K	T	X	D	Y	T	M	S	I	T	P	A	B	Z	Q	D
Y	R	B	I	E	U	C	J	E	S	U	S	C	H	R	I	S	T	T	D
C	L	E	N	R	C	L	E	S	G	I	V	U	J	G	J	M	P	X	K
E	L	O	H	K	I	A	X	F	R	N	G	N	Y	N	G	V	F	H	E
P	G	C	O	T	P	P	I	N	R	R	I	H	D	I	N	C	R	F	L
H	G	N	D	H	A	U	S	M	I	E	T	K	L	C	I	A	Y	A	B
G	O	U	A	F	C	F	G	N	W	R	P	A	O	L	N	L	S	I	M
Z	D	W	E	H	S	S	D	E	O	H	U	M	E	P	E	L	L	T	U
J	N	P	E	E	C	I	Y	W	N	T	K	S	R	Y	P	E	A	H	H
F	O	A	G	B	N	X	C	A	I	T	S	I	T	E	R	D	I	X	L
H	U	A	I	G	V	S	X	R	D	O	L	S	P	C	A	I	H	E	O
W	T	B	W	T	B	E	I	R	N	N	E	E	R	A	H	P	X	X	R
S	L	S	C	D	S	P	X	S	H	N	U	E	I	E	S	O	Y	S	D
E	J	I	U	E	S	I	N	Z	O	C	J	S	S	P	V	L	L	G	N
H	A	A	L	V	T	R	R	T	B	U	G	G	I	N	G	I	V	E	X
Z	B	I	V	I	A	B	S	H	D	Y	G	Z	O	X	S	S	X	Y	W
W	F	U	I	E	F	I	F	K	C	D	K	H	N	H	M	H	T	R	Y
E	L	Z	L	C	O	N	E	B	O	D	Y	T	E	P	X	I	O	W	U
H	T	S	K	E	T	I	L	O	P	T	J	N	R	D	N	N	C	H	V
N	I	S	S	R	D	N	O	B	I	R	O	N	I	U	G	G	A	L	N

- |           |              |           |               |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|---------------|
| BAPTISM   | GOD          | LORD      | SHARPENING    |
| BIBLE     | GRINDING     | ONE BODY  | SIN           |
| BOND      | GROWTH       | PATIENCE  | SPIRIT        |
| BUGGING   | HOPE         | PEACE     | SPIRITUAL     |
| CALLED    | HUMBLE       | PERFECT   | STAGES        |
| CHANGE    | IRON         | POKING    | STONES        |
| CHRISTIAN | JESUS CHRIST | POLISHING | SUNDAY SCHOOL |
| FAITH     | LEARN        | POLITE    | UNITY         |
| FATHER    | LESSONS      | PRISONER  | WORTHY        |
| GENTLE    | LIFE         | RECEIVED  | WRONG         |

# Who's Doing What?

## **Sjirk Bajema**

Many Christians around the world gathered this past Pentecost for 'The Global Day of Prayer' (GDOP). Its mission is said to be "to seek God for the glory of Christ and the blessing of the nations."

It is a fast growing phenomena. In four years a single stadium event of 45,000 in South Africa has grown to involve 2,000 venues across 56 nations and 23 million across the continent of Africa. The plans are to celebrate this every Pentecost Sunday until 2010, aiming to a goal of 500 million participants. And it's more than a day of prayer: Together with being a day of prayer it includes mobilisation to actively bless towns and cities.

They take their model from the book of

your mind imagine and join us in seeking the face of God!"

Well, any reactions so far? I hope you have! And I hope it is an unhappy one. What we should see are at least two clear misunderstandings:

1) The failure to see prayer as the chief part of our thankfulness. Prayer actually comes out of what God has already done for us in Jesus Christ. And, true, it is by prayer that we become open to being further lead by the Lord. But prayer is not the condition to His using us. And it was certainly not the prayer of the early church in the ten days before Pentecost that meant that Pentecost came. Definitely not! Pentecost was fulfilling God's Word. It had to happen because Christ had fulfilled all that His Father had sent Him to do.

This campaign is based on arminian theology. It, in effect, denies the working of the Holy Spirit by insisting that it is what we do that makes the difference. Many charismatic songs today sing the same chorus! So if enough people are praying - and singing - hard enough and long enough we can force God's hand.

Which is exactly where the difficulty lies. Because we cannot force God's hand the emotional manipulation becomes more intense. Then we are told our faith isn't strong enough. You haven't got it right. If only you would do it like these other people do - the ones who had the alleged miracles, who have written the best seller, who have made the hit records, who you see on your television screen. And where does that all lead? Not to the One Pentecost is all about, that's for



Acts, for they see that the ten days from Ascension Day until Pentecost is marked by continual prayer amongst the followers of Jesus. Then, as they say with what happened at Pentecost, God answered their prayers publicly and gave birth to the Church. After Pentecost the new Church experienced intense unity across racial and economic lines, filled the city with awe and wonder, sold possessions and gave to the poor, saw astounding growth and experienced the favour of the city.

So the basic premise is clear: By Christians joining together in such a fervent and sustained and huge way, the door is opened for revival. And no mean revival - this is on the model of Pentecost! As their press release concludes: "What will God do with millions of His people crying out to Him for the nations and peoples of the earth? Let

To make claims, as the GDOP organisers do, that the only time the church had gathered together in prayer in a persistent and unified manner for 10 days leading up to Pentecost was immediately following Christ's ascension, is to make it very much man's work. It is also to terribly down-play the Spirit's work through the rest of history.

2) The nature of a blessing. What do they mean by blessing our towns and cities? For blessing by God and blessing by man are two completely different things. As the psalms make clear, when we bless we praise God for who He is, but when He blesses He leaves us with His peace, the presence and guidance of His Word and Spirit (For example, Psalm 134 uses the word "praise" for the Hebrew word "blessing" when it is used of man but "blessing" when the same word is used of God).

sure! In fact, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ couldn't become further away. There are too many other saviours!

It's in God's people everyday and in every way that His Spirit witnesses to what Christ has done and is doing. To turn that into a special event at a particular time is to go right against what God has been doing right throughout human history. Christ fulfilled God's plan for the ages and so we are empowered to always live as empowered believers.

There is still a special blessing when God's people come together in faithfulness to His Word. But that's in His Church every Sunday, and in His fellowship whenever His people meet. In the words of Brother Lawrence, *Those who have the gale of the Holy Spirit go forward even in sleep.*