

faith in
focus

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Helping the ordinary Kiwi bloke

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Editorial

Who is my neighbour? It's an interesting question isn't it? The Collins English Dictionary definition is: 1. a person who lives near or next to another. 2. a person or thing near or next to another. ~vb. 3. to be or live close to. The biblical idea of neighbour is anyone in need of our help, kindness or mercy – "love your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:27b-37).

While the dictionary definition could be considered quite accurate, especially in today's context, it is the biblical view of our neighbour that we should consider when someone we know or who lives near us is in need. Over the last several months we have seen some very graphic reminders of neighbours helping one another. First, there was the earthquake in Christchurch, then the Pine River mining disaster in Greymouth, and a little further abroad, the floods in Eastern Australia. What was evident in all of these incidents was people helping people. People being neighbours to one another. You might reply, "of course, people are going to help out in those sort of situations, who wouldn't?" And, I will agree with you. However, what we see here is how whole communities rally together in times of national distress, especially when there has been a significant loss of life. But, what about the guy at work who has some serious problems? What about your neighbour who has been made redundant, or has some serious marital issues? What about your friend who has depression? These sort of things require a one-on-one approach, and as Christians we should be able to help our "neighbour", not to big note ourselves, but to glorify our Father in heaven (Matt 5:16).

Mr Michael Willemse looks at how we can help when "My mate has been made redundant". This is a very helpful no-nonsense approach to helping our unbelieving "neighbour". Mr Steve Sterne gives us a glimpse of "A day in the life of a farmer" and how he has interacted with people who work on his farm. Mrs Andrea Vosslander writes about her experience as a teacher working in a Christian school in Christchurch during the aftermath of the September earthquake, and tells us how the Christian community has worked together to alleviate the suffering of others. Mr and Mrs John and Harriet Haverland write about the "Trowel and Sword – the end of an era". Mrs Lois Hoyt informs us of what has been involved in producing our new book of praise, *Sing to the Lord*. Mrs Sally Davey reviews Jerram Barrs's helpful book, *The Heart of Evangelism*. Mr Erik Stolte writes one last time about his experiences in the USA while preparing for the ministry of the Word. Miss Marlene van Tonder of the Reformed Church in North Shore writes to us about her year-long experience working in Tanzania for the Africa Inland Mission (AIM).

Mr John Goris shares one of his latest poems: "Convulsing to the end ...", a reflection on Psalm 77:16-20; Matthew 24:7; Luke 17:26-30; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10; 1 Peter 5:8-11.

Photo credits:

Images: Cover image and p5 Mrs Sally Davey

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Helping the ordinary Kiwi bloke (1)

My mate has been made redundant

Michael Willemse

At least since the dawn of the industrial age, people have been evaluated by the job they do. A person's job is an indication of their usefulness to society and, in return, of the value that society places on them. One of the first questions people ask when they meet for the first time is "what do you do?" Our work defines who we are. This is one of the reasons that redundancy can hit people so hard.

But how ought we to respond to a friend or neighbour who has been made redundant? How can we bring Christ's kingdom and rule to bear on their lives?

It is easy for us to assume that we have little to offer to those who are not Christian – the comforts of the gospel do not belong to them – and so we can often offer empty platitudes and feel out of our depth. But Christ's purpose was not simply to redeem a bunch of individuals from sin (though it is certainly that – praise God!) but also to redeem creation itself from the effects of sin. So how may Christ and His kingdom be brought to bear on our friend's situation so that he experiences something of the redemption Christ came to bring?

As the opening paragraph suggests, redundancy can be profoundly disorientating. Since we derive so much of our identity from our work, it can feel as though, overnight, we have become a nobody. This is particularly true for men, who not only lose their value to society but also in the home. They are no longer the provider and breadwinner. They can feel as though they have gone from being an asset to a liability, from being the one bearing much of the financial load in the home to being a burden. And, on top of this, every rejected job application reinforces their loss of identity and value. It is not uncommon for those who are made re-

dundant to struggle with despair and even depression.

As if these things are not enough, the lack of work can often make finances tighter, contributing to frayed tempers and brittle relationships in the home. Another ingredient to this situation can be the loss of social contact that came through work circles with the previous employer. Those made redundant may

find it awkward to relate to former workmates who still have a job! (As Christians we can often forget the real benefits of being part of a large church family! Those outside the church often rely on their workmates.)

So how can we reach out to our friend and demonstrate the redemption and wholeness that Christ came to bring? A useful starting point can be to

“Listening is one of the simplest ways to show that we genuinely care. Show a willingness to stand with them in the midst of their crisis and resist the urge to try to “fix” things for them. Be a friend to them.”



<http://pastorrobort-nikos.blogspot.com>

ask “how we would help someone in the church?” and then try and help our unchurched friend to experience those same benefits.

One of the most obvious ways to minister to our friend is simply to be there. Empathise with his situation. Acknowledge that it is hard and try not to offer pat answers. Ask probing, thoughtful questions that give him an opportunity to speak about the difficulties he faces. Listening is one of the simplest ways to show that we genuinely care. Show a willingness to stand with him in the midst of his crisis and resist the urge to try to “fix” things for him. Be a friend to him.

As we get alongside of our friend, we are, in the first place, seeking to build a relationship with him and to demonstrate that we are willing to be there for him.

temporary work or permanent employment. Invite him and his family along to a Bible study group or a fellowship lunch and help them to feel welcome.

Remember your goal in all of this is not just to open up an opportunity to speak to him about the gospel. It is also to allow him to *experience* something of the gospel and the benefits of Christ’s Kingdom. We want him to come to regard the church community as his community, to experience the blessings that come from being part of God’s people, to see Christ’s love and compassion in the lives of His people. And, as he does this, *he is continually being exposed to a people whose value is not determined by what they do, whose hope is not bound up in this world and whose confidence is in their God.*

What we must understand as we

are not in control of their lives so that they can hear that “in his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.” We want them to understand that all that they have has been given them by God so that they would reach out for Him and find Him.

That is why our immediate goal is **not** for our friend to replace the job that he has lost with a better (or even similar) one so that we can go back to our separate lives (though we can and should help them as we are able). It is rather to show him that no job lasts forever. No amount of career success can stave off the day of his death. No amount of worldly wealth and security can keep him from leaving this world and entering eternity. Our goal is to help him see his *real* need – of which redundancy and its effects are but symptoms. But we do that by *showing* him what real hope looks like, how it remains “fastened to the rock that cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Saviour’s love” amid the storms of life. And, as we show him, we are to make use of the opportunities God gives to *tell* him about Jesus Christ and life eternal.

But all of this, of course, begs a question: Are we different from those we seek to help? Does our sense of value come not from our work but from the price paid for us on the cross of Calvary? Are our hopes grounded in eternity and do they give us strength among the trials of life? We cannot hold out a hope we do not possess. Perhaps God has also allowed our friend to be in this situation in order to test **our** hearts and ground our confidence more securely in Him.

May God grant us the humility to deal with our own hearts, the godliness to show others His Kingdom and the wisdom to speak to them of the only one in whom they can find real hope, security and peace.

Mr Michael Willemse, is the Minister of the Word and Sacraments in the Reformed Church of Hamilton.

“We want them to understand that all that they have has been given them by God so that they would reach out for Him and find Him.”

So do the things that friends do for each other – invite him and his family over for dinner or for an evening. Bring them a meal or give them a card to show that you are thinking of them. Offer to look after their children so they can have a day or two away. Assure them that they are in your prayers – and make sure that they are! And, if things progress, offer to pray with them – short simple prayers that show your trust in a sovereign God: “Lord, you know all that Bob is experiencing at the moment. Help him and his family in the middle of his situation and turn things for his good. Help him to know that you answer those who come to you for help. Amen.”

We can also use the opportunity of their redundancy to try and draw them into church life. Invite them over when you have another church family there. “Jill, we’re having some friends over this evening and we’d like you to come.” Introduce them to your “family” and help them to find support in the broader circle of the church. You could also use your church contacts to help find your friend

to speak to our unemployed friend is that their “problem” will not be fixed when they get another job. In God’s grace He has forced them to reckon with some unpleasant but critical truths. And in our response to them we do not want to blunt the sharp edges of these truths. Rather, we want to use every opportunity to show that we have hope **despite** these truths in order to gain their ear to “give the reason for the hope that we have ...”

God has allowed them to see that “in this world you will have trouble” so that they might be able to hear Jesus’ words “... take heart! I have overcome the world.” They need to understand that redundancy has only confronted them with the fact that retirement, old age, disease or death would eventually have confronted them with – this world offers no lasting hope – so that they can understand the real hope offered in the Gospel: “we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.” Their circumstances have also shown them that they

Helping the ordinary Kiwi bloke (2)

A day in the life of a farmer

Steve Sterne

Every disciple of Christ wants to share the good news with others; and yet it is not uncommon to hear Christians say they have difficulty sharing the gospel with others. Often you hear it said – “I don’t know what to say”; or if people are more honest, “I am afraid of being rebuffed”. Most days bring us into contact with people who need our compassion; and our willingness to be concerned about the suffering of others is often the key that will so easily open the door for us to share the gospel with the unsaved.

Trouble at home

My day started with a routine drive around the farm just to check on a few items that I hoped the staff had attended to, when I spied one of the guys packing up the water blaster, ready for the next job. As usual I pulled up alongside and casually asked how his day was going.

With a wide grin only half-filled with teeth J. replied, “I have been better”.

“Why, what is the problem?” I asked.

“Well”, started J., “my wife has been sleeping around with other men, my daughter is off the rails and on antidepressants and I’m in counselling once a week just trying to keep my head together. I still love her (my wife) and can’t bring myself to throw her out of the house so each day is the same. I arrive home from work, my daughter won’t talk to me and K goes off to the bedroom and refuses to come out until I have cooked tea and put it on the table. My daughter has made a couple of failed attempts at taking her own life and refuses to go to school.

In small communities, nothing stays secret for long and I had heard the rumours about the nefarious activities of J’s wife long before.

This was the first time he had openly discussed the situation with me, though.

J. had decided it was no longer helpful

bottling it all up inside and decided to tell anyone who would listen. No doubt he would receive plenty of advice of a fairly earthy nature from his fellow workmates. I am guessing his counsellor probably spent most of the time exploring how all this made J feel, and I was left wondering what advice would Jesus have offered this mild-mannered man as he watched his life come crashing down around his ears.

I know that what I wanted to say was not necessarily all that sanctified. My own callous nature would not have shown as much patience as dear ol’ J. did. I have little doubt that, had I been in the same situation, there would have been blood and fur all over the ground.

For a brief moment I thought about J’s wife. Was she sick in the head? After all, what person treats those closest to them with such contempt and still expects to



have all the comfort and blessing of a home and family to return to after a night on the town?

Shattered lives

The truth is most of us to some degree or other abuse the people we love and still hope to retain the perfect marriage and home. It took little time to realise that this was not an isolated case. When I thought of the other 40+ workers on the farm I noted that the majority of them were on their second or third relationship and that was only counting

tical steps to rebuild the shipwreck they call "Life". I am not going to wash my hands of J., though, just because the case seems hopeless, and neither am I going to make my help conditional upon his warming to the gospel message, even though I know in my heart that is the only real hope he has of ever seeing any true restoration.

Gospel restores lives

The only real solution we have to offer men is the gospel, and it is good not to get distracted with plastering over

we already know. It can be the jolt we need to make us act. Finding others to commiserate with does nothing to solve the problem long-term and can lead a person to wallow in self-pity.

Two contribute

A rather insightful person once said to me "whenever you have a problem in a relationship take a long look in the mirror and see what you have to change about yourself to make things better". When relationships go wrong, one person may be more to blame than the other, but usually both parties have made a contribution to the problem. Fix the bits you can fix and forget the rest. You cannot change the other person, but by concentrating on changing the things in your own life it is possible to contribute to the solution, if there is ever going to be one.

Considered response

Most of us struggle to find the right words at the right time. I usually need to go home and cogitate for a while on the issues. I never had anyone resent me coming back a few days later and saying "I have been thinking about our conversation where you talked about your wife and I have some thoughts to offer." Sometimes weeks can pass and I will raise a subject that the other person has probably thought I had forgotten about, but the very fact that I have thought about the issue and given a considered response has often gained ground with the person. Nor have I ever had anyone reject the offer of prayer. Recently another staff member needed to be told his behaviour was unacceptable. He was your regular tough, grizzly sort of a guy who rarely showed any emotion. He accepted the criticism well and toward the close of the conversation I said to him, "I have never seen you act like this before, is there something else going on in your life I should know about? Your actions are not what I have come to expect from you."

Tears welled up in his eyes and he said, "My kids are giving me h... at the moment, my ex is not helping and I don't know where it will lead." Behind the mask of self confidence was a man deeply hurting and as usual I had no ready pre-packaged answer to give him but I did offer to pray for him.

Follow up

To my surprise he thanked me with obvious sincerity, despite having no sym-

“If we believe in a sovereign God then we view every interaction we have with others as a meeting with a purpose. No one enters our life randomly.”

the obvious relationships. Evidence of shattered lives, uncontrolled children and ruined finances were obvious everywhere I looked.

Man pays a high price for his sinful life and yet most non-Christians see the way of righteousness as so restrictive and stifled that it holds no fun at all. Of course the opposite is true. The law of God protects us from a world of pain and suffering that comes to all those that ignore it. We are not above falling victim to the Devil's lies and think that a little "sin break" won't hurt once in while. Bitter experience tells us that we eventually pay a price for our sins, often in the form of broken relationships and estrangement from those we should feel closest to.

What J needs more than anything else is to find a lasting solution to the problems in his life. J. needs to be able to lay all his burdens at the foot of the cross. For many this may sound a little glib, but without dealing with the sin that causes all these problems in J's life we are only putting Band Aids on mortal wounds.

Can J ever expect to get his life back to anything resembling "normal?" Well, to be honest, the prognosis is bleak. Few people seem able to take the prac-

tical cracks when the foundation is shattered.

In the meantime I will offer what encouragement I can to help J. change the situation he is in. I can, for example, tell him that he needs to exercise the courage to deal with his wife in a loving but firm way. That may mean she needs to leave the home until she is prepared to change her pattern of life. The daughter may be reacting to the destructive forces around her, and allowing the mother to stay in the home is possibly only aggravating the situation. Taking mind-numbing drugs to dull the pain is no remedy. The problem will not go away or magically disappear on its own. It has to be dealt with. His daughter may object to her mother's behaviour and being soft on the mother may leave the daughter isolated and frustrated.

Someone once told me that we are not supposed to be too directive when counselling people. I may be mistaken, but offering some direction to a person who cannot see where to go seems like a good idea to me.

There are times where we just have to man up. Hopefully, I can find a kind way of telling J. this without simply heaping another burden on his shoulders. Sometimes we need people to tell us the things

pathy for the Christian faith. In the following weeks I was able to follow up our conversation several times, and with good results. From a difficult situation came an opportunity to show genuine concern for the issues that really mattered to the guy. I don't know if he will ever acknowledge the hand God played

in His life, but I don't consider that is my business. I am happy to leave God's work up to God.

If we believe in a sovereign God then we view every interaction we have with others as a meeting with a purpose. No one enters our life randomly. For all we know God has sent them to us to hear

the gospel and so be saved. If we are prepared to approach these interactions with genuine compassion and a listening ear, few people will turn away or be reproachful. In this way we can surely be more winsome when trying to share the gospel with those around us.

The Christchurch quake – our response

'Although the mountains quake and earth's foundations shake...'

Andrea Vosslander

It's interesting how a local disaster can change one's vocabulary. Before the 4th of September, the majority of Christchurch residents would have considered the numbers 7.1 to refer, most probably, to the minimum daytime temperature. The word 'liquefaction' may have conjured up images of inebriated boy racers, and the abbreviation 'EQC' 'Eternally Quiet Christchurch'. After the earthquake, however, we all understand numbers, words and abbreviations differently.

It wasn't just our general knowledge that increased, either. We learnt something about trauma and our different responses to it, both at a personal and at a communal level. We were all in this together, whether we liked it or not, and somehow we needed to help each other get through. As a teacher at Hillview Christian School, I was privileged to witness the responses of a Christian community to a pressing need. The response was at three levels, firstly to aid staff and pupils, secondly to help struggling families, and thirdly to assist the wider community.

Staff and pupils

The school itself wasn't badly affected by the quake. When I went in the day after the big shake to check my classroom, three chairs out of a total of 24 had fallen off the desks, the clock had made a crash landing, and the numbers board was face down. The damage in

my room was not a-typical, though some others had lost ceiling panels and the old hall was deemed unfit for students (though not for teachers – maybe there's a message in that!) This being the case, we initially thought we would take only two days off, opening the school again on the Wednesday after Saturday morning's 7.1.

On Tuesday afternoon the staff met to discuss how we would move forward. The events were still very fresh and we were all struggling to cope in one way or another. On a personal level I found my reactions to the quake surprising. Had I sat down and thought ahead of time about how I would react to such an event, I would have imagined myself to

be very rational. The reality, as is often the case, was quite different. I began Monday and Tuesday writing myself a list of what I was going to achieve (Protestant work ethic and all that), but at the end of the day found I'd done nothing on the list. I seemed to aimlessly move from one task to the next, not being able to complete anything, let alone focus on it.

My fellow staff members at Hillview were in a similar way, though some were much worse. We began our Tuesday meeting by getting together in groups to talk about our experiences of the quake and pray for one another. I was in a group with about six other women, all of whom were mothers. They were all



The west wing of the new Helena High School lay in ruins after a second major quake in two weeks on Oct. 31, 1935. <http://montanayesterday.com>

very traumatised and had spent sleepless nights with children who wouldn't settle. The constant aftershocks had left them totally frazzled. One of my colleagues had packed her car, ready to evacuate her entire family should anything worse happen. This, though an unreasonable response, was understandable if one considered various other circumstances in her life.

We then spent time talking about what we would do on the children's first day back at school. Earthquake drill was the first on everybody's list, along with evacuation procedures should we get another large aftershock. We then

majority of the families I rang were badly shaken. I learnt that about 80% of the six-year-olds in my class were too afraid to sleep alone, and so were sleeping in Mum and Dad's bed. At the time of writing this article (five weeks after the earthquake) a couple of the children are still not sleeping alone.

One family in my class (Mum, Dad, and three children under 7) were hit particularly hard. Their property was covered in silt and their house was on a terrible lean. They had substantial cracks both inside and outside their home and had had to vacate it temporarily.

The school community was pre-

“A few years ago when a local state school in a poor area was subject to an arson attack, our Year 10 students decided to raise money to help them purchase necessary equipment.”

discussed the types of behaviours we might see in the children and how we were going to respond to these. The school had a full 'response to trauma' policy which was handed out to each staff member.

Near the end of the meeting I looked at my fellow staff members and realised that quite a number of them were not ready to leave their children, return to work, and have to face the possibility that they may have to guide 24 panicking children through a civil emergency. Great was our relief when we received word from the Ministry of Education that no schools in Christchurch were to open until the following Monday due to unsanitary water conditions.

Struggling families

The following day (Wednesday) we were hit by another large aftershock shortly before 8 o'clock. Not only did this do further damage to buildings, it also rattled many nerves. The staff at Hillview had decided the previous day to ring all parents of children in their class and see how their families were coping. The ma-

pared to help people with these sorts of issues. A parent in our school had gathered together a gang of young men and had asked to be informed of any needs. Once informed of the plight of this family in my class, he got his gang together and headed out to their place with wheelbarrows and shovels. The gang spent a few hours there and cleared the garage and property of layers of silt. The mother could hardly hold back tears when she told me, later that day, about the help.

That wasn't the end of the school community's aid to her, either. Thanks to shovelling work, her family was able to return to their house only days after the quake and return to a sense of normality. On the children's return to school the following week she was also informed that an anonymous member of the school community had gifted her family a week in a house in Wanaka, to help them recover from the trauma they had suffered. Once again, she was close to tears when she told me about this and was completely overwhelmed by the care that had been shown.

The wider community

There were many other acts of kindness being shown to individuals in our school community who had suffered. Hillview, however, is also a school that is known for its outreach to the community in general. A few years ago when a local state school in a poor area was subject to an arson attack, our Year 10 students decided to raise money to help them purchase necessary equipment. Hillview's Board of Trustees offered to match whatever the students raised, dollar for dollar. The Board may have regretted that decision, as the students managed to raise \$3,000. The Board was, however, faithful to its word and representatives of the Year 10 class went along to the school to present them with a cheque for \$6,000. You can well imagine the impact this had on the school, and its principal, who happened to be a Christian.

In similar vein, many students in our school considered themselves blessed compared to students in Halswell School, who were not able to return to their school for the final two weeks of term after the earthquake. The school was forced to relocate to alternative buildings in Halswell which were far from ideal. In consultation with their teachers, the students in our Year 4 classes decided to donate gifts and write cards to students at Halswell School. The girls brought along a gift for a girl, and the boys brought along gifts for boys. After cards had been written to go with the gifts (many of them with a Christian message), the two Year 4 teachers took a group of children over to Halswell's temporary premises one lunchtime. The children at Halswell school were overwhelmed with the gifts and cards, as were the teachers. It was a simple but important expression of love from a Christian community.

We're now coming near the end of the school holidays and we'll all be back into it on Monday. I'm sure the quake will continue to loom large in our lives. We will continue to look for signs of sleeplessness and trauma in both our children and our staff. We will also continue to thank God who kept every resident of Christchurch safe during a major civil emergency, and trust that He will continue to do so in the future.

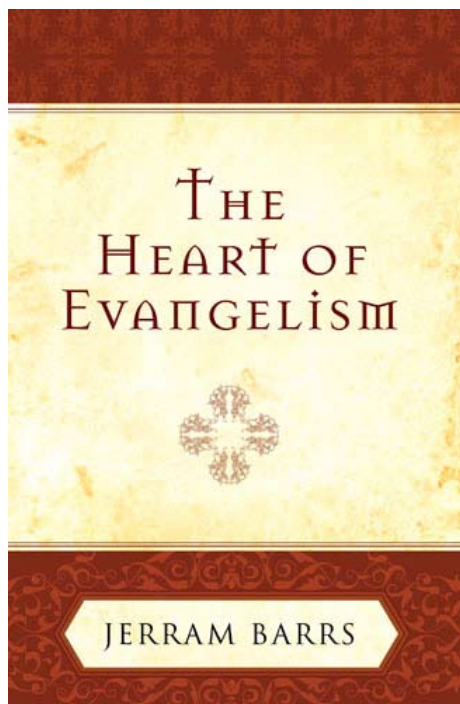
Book in focus

A review

Jerram Barrs, *The Heart of Evangelism*

(Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois, 2001), 278pp.

Reviewed by Sally Davey



Have you ever been asked about your efforts in evangelism and felt painfully aware that you almost never speak to anyone about Christ? Deep down, in your heart, you doubt whether anyone has ever come to saving faith because of your witness? You don't know how to begin, or what to say? Unbelievers seem like people from outer space, they're so unfamiliar and, well, *frightening*? Then here is the very book for you. In fact, **Jerram Barrs's *Heart of Evangelism*** is, I believe, about the best book out there for people in our situation. Let me show you why.

Jerram Barrs is an experienced Christian of Reformed persuasion. He grew up in England in an unbelieving, though loving family. As a young man, he was converted through the kind and patient witness of a fellow-student. He was introduced to the L'Abri community and spent many years serving as a staff member at the English L'Abri, which was started by Edith and Francis Schaeffer's son-in-law and daughter, Randal and Susan Macauley. Later, he was the founder and resident scholar of the Francis Schaeffer

Institute at Covenant Theological Seminary in St Louis, Missouri. There, he teaches apologetics and outreach as professor of Christian studies and contemporary culture. He has taught many, many students how to share the gospel, lovingly and compellingly. He knows the struggles we all face. He wants us to become better evangelists, and to be encouraged that we *can* love the lost and minister to them much more effectively – to their eternal benefit, and our own encouragement.

Here is what he writes in his introduction:

"One of the concerns that has spurred me on [to write the book] has been my observation that many Christians are afraid of sermons and seminars on the topic of evangelism. They are afraid because so often they have been made to feel guilty and inadequate about their involvement in making the Gospel known. All too frequently this has not been a Spirit-induced sense of guilt and inadequacy that has led consequently to a deeper trust in God, to a growing gratitude for His love, or to transformation in the patterns of one's life. Rather this has been a humanly induced sense of guilt and inadequacy that has been paralyzing and that has driven an even deeper wedge between Christians and unbelievers..."

This book is devoted to helping us overcome this situation. It is a simple, clear and effective message, showing us why and how we should share the gospel with those who so desperately need it. Above all, it is a message about loving the lost; not seeing them as "targets" for a strategy, or dangerous creatures that we take pot-shots at before dodging back into the safety of our church walls. Barrs sketches in the responsibility Jesus gave us in commanding us to take the gospel to "all nations"; then goes on to teach us how to begin to take on that responsibility, with prayer, with faithful living in the workplace, through a life of love, and through generous hospitality – to those who are not easy to have as guests, and who cannot reciprocate. He makes it seem quite doable.

Barrs also deals with some of the bar-

riers to communicating the gospel – barriers within ourselves, barriers between the church and the world, and barriers between the world and the church. I found this section of the book particularly good – and it's perhaps where Christians in our setting will find the most challenge and the most practical help. Let me refer to a few of Barrs's most helpful observations.

One of our problems, Barrs notes, is that we get thoroughly overcommitted:

"We sometimes believe the illusion that many programs and a full calendar equal spiritual effectiveness and maturity. We become so busy about the work of being a Christian... that there is no time left to invite friends, neighbours, or work-mates for a meal or simply to have some fun together. Perhaps we need to cut out some of the activities... so we have time to become good friends with a few people who are not believers." (p. 133)

Then there's the fact that many of us "are afraid of the culture around us. We see that it is deeply hostile to the Christian faith... Our response to this is fear – fear for ourselves, fear for our church members (particularly our young people), and fear for our children. Yet Jesus tells us not to fear the world, or even the devil, but to fear only God (Luke 12:4-5)." Sometimes we condemn the general culture, and condemn unbelievers. We thank God we are so different from the world... just like the Pharisee in Luke 18. Even when Christians try to "make a difference", Barrs notes, and stand for public office or school boards, we can do it with an adversarial attitude, ready to slash at unbelieving opponents, or to ridicule them or call them names or "demonize" them. He comments:

"A more appropriate response to our dilemma than this war of words might be repentance for the failure of Christians to be more involved in the political process at the local and national level over the past few generations. Of course, those who have worked to undermine the hold of God's moral law over the consciences and minds of Americans will have to bear their own load

before God. But we in the church of Christ bear a far greater responsibility for the present situation and must examine the plank in our own eyes, the plank of our failure to be salt and light in the public square for several generations. We were given so much by the efforts of believers of earlier times, and yet we failed to be faithful in holding fast to that which was good and in serving our communities with the gift of God's moral law.

We ought to be involved in the culture war, but we ought to take our part with humility and repentance and with words of grace, seasoned with salt, not with crude jokes, the name-calling, the demonizing, the abuse we too often use...”(p.145)

But this book not only throws the torch on the problem – it also suggests the way forward; and there is plenty of practical help on how to bring the gospel to our world. Barrs begins with the Apostle Paul's method, which he il-

lustrates by careful reference to a number of evangelistic encounters in the book of Acts. The last section of the book contains a series of seven well-thought-out principles for sharing the gospel. These are, firstly, showing respect to those to whom we bring the gospel. Secondly, we need to build bridges between our (Christian) world and the world inhabited by our unbelieving friend or neighbour or workmate. That means we need to understand our world – and it will take a bit of effort on our part. Thirdly, we need to understand what others believe; which involves helping them see what secret idols really lurk in their hearts and motivate their choices and actions. The fourth principle is speaking the right language – communicating effectively and clearly, as well as helpfully. Fifthly, we should become practitioners of reasoned persuasion, and be ready to answer objections to the reasoned persuasion we offer unbelievers. This, too, will take careful preparation – maybe years of attention to Bible study and reading good

books! Sixthly, we need to be able to give a clear presentation of the message of the Bible concerning salvation; one that is tuned to the hearts and ears of those listening. And the seventh and final principle is that we must challenge people's hearts and minds – so that they really do hear the need to repent and believe. It is not enough just to know a simple explanation of what Jesus did – there needs to be a personal challenge that leaves them in no doubt that this message applies to me.

Please do get this book. Read it and apply it. Think about it. Do what it says. Get it for your church library as well as your own. It would be a very good project to work through *Heart of Evangelism* with a friend, encouraging one another as you go. It would also make a very good study book for a group in your church who is interested in becoming better evangelists.

(You can easily find it at amazon.com, christianbook.com, or other Christian web sites.)

World in focus

New children's biography of John Owen reviewed

A new children's biography of John Owen by Simonetta Carr titled "Christian Biographies for Young Readers: John Owen" was reviewed by United Reformed Churches in North America pastor the Rev. William Boekestein in a 23 December 2010 article on the Life Reformation website titled "New Children's Book on John Owen".

+ *Life Reformation*

Christian Anti-Defamation Commission Publishes Top Ten Anti-Christian Events of 2010

DefendChristians.org, a ministry of the Christian Anti-Defamation Commission, recently conducted an online poll of what were the Top Ten Anti-Christian Events in 2010, which resulted in the following list:

10. Eighty-eight Pro-Lifers were arrested for protesting President Obama's participation at a leading Catholic university, Notre Dame, and await trial for standing up for true Christian values.

9. Southern Poverty Law Center; A liberal ACLU-like organisation that has continued to label many Christian organisations that hold traditional values as "hate groups" in lists that include violent racists groups.
8. Larry Grand; Christian journalist fired from his job for sending an e-mail from his personal account on his own time in support of traditional marriage.
7. Stephen Ocean and Tite Sufra; two young men who were murdered in Boynton Beach, Florida while out sharing the gospel in their neighborhood.
6. Chai Feldblum; a liberal law professor and open lesbian, appointed to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Feldblum stated that in any conflict that might arise between religious liberty and homosexual "rights" she would have a hard time coming up with any case in which religious liberty should win; or "Gay's win; Christians lose."
5. Michigan Muslims attack AGAIN; Christians attacked, denied their

civil rights and falsely arrested for disorderly conduct at a public festival for peacefully sharing the gospel. This happened the previous year, too. They were again acquitted of all charges.

4. Elena Kagan; President Obama's radical appointment to the Supreme Court bench. While serving under the Clinton Administration, Kagan successfully corrupted unfavourable evidence on partial birth abortion to deceive the Supreme Court.
3. Julea Ward and Jennifer Keeton; two women expelled from their respective Master's programs in counselling at two different universities because they wouldn't deny their faith and affirm the validity of the homosexual lifestyle.
2. Vaughn Walker; California judge who overturned Proposition 8, a State Constitutional Marriage Amendment, and the will of the people by making homosexual marriage legal.
1. Employment Non-Discrimination Act; a proposed federal bill that would force ministries to hire people who

oppose their beliefs or who live in open defiance of their values.
+ *Christian Anti-Defamation Commission*

The Syncretist Driven Life

On 15 January 2011, Saddleback Church pastor Rick Warren joined with Dr. Mehmet Oz, Dr. Daniel Amen, and Dr. Mark Hyman, to kick off a fifty-two week program for a healthier lifestyle called The Daniel Plan. The Daniel Plan, located on the Saddleback Church website, will feature weekly blog posts and articles from the Drs. Oz, Amen, Hyman, and Pastor Warren offering advice, encouragement, guidance, and other resources.

Dr. Oz is Professor of Cardiac Surgery at Columbia University, is a follower of the cult of Swedenborgianism, which denies the atonement, the trinity, and the deity of the Holy Spirit, believes all religions lead to God and that Christianity must go through a rebirth; does not believe in a personal devil; believes that the Bible is not inspired, and believes that when people die, they become an angel or an evil spirit.

Dr. Amen is a teacher of tantric sex, a Hindu mystical approach to sex, and teaches eastern religion meditation and energy-based Reiki, a New Age practice.

Dr. Hyman promotes mystical meditation based on Buddhist principles.

Christian Investigator President Steve McConkey commented: "It is troubling for a top pastor in the United States to promote false teachers. We are living at an all-time low spiritually in the United States with weak leaders. We need to teach basic Bible principles without legalism."

+ *Christian News Wire*

Thirteen Queens, New York, abortion clinics now making adoption referrals to Bethany Christian Services

In the summer of 2010, representatives from Bethany Christian Services (BCS) visited the thirteen abortion clinics located within a one and one-half mile stretch of Queens, New York City, New York, known as "abortion row" to educate the clinic workers about adoption and to ask the clinics to refer to BCS women whose pregnancies are too advanced for abortion and women seeking alternatives to abortion.

All thirteen clinics agreed to make referrals to BCS, and BCS has already received several referrals from the clinics.

BCS asks for prayer for the women

referred to BCS, that BCS would not only be able to provide a superior alternative to what these women would find on "abortion row," but that they would express the love of Christ as well, and that the young women coming to them would encounter Christ and choose life.

+ *Mission Network News*

California Appellate Court rules home school teachers must have State Government recognised teaching credentials

A January 2011 article by Seema Mehta and Mitchell Landsberg in the Los Angeles Times titled "Ruling Seen as a Threat to Many Home-Schooling Families" reports that the California Appellate Court recently ruled that home school teachers must have state government recognised teaching credentials.

Enforcement of the appeals court decision is unlikely pending an appeal to the California Supreme Court.

+ *Los Angeles Times*

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Abortionist and nine others arrested after grand jury indictments including eight counts of murder

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, abortionist Kermit Gosnell, his wife, and eight other suspects were arrested 19 January 2011 after a grand jury handed down indictments including eight counts of murder, conspiracy, drug offenses, and other crimes. Gosnell is charged with the murder of Karnamaya Mongar, 41, on 20 November 2009, after Mongar was overdosed on painkillers during an abortion in her eighteenth or nineteenth week of pregnancy, and for the murder of seven babies who were born alive during failed illegal late-term abortions, then killed by Gosnell or his clinic workers.

Gosnell and four of his clinic workers were charged with murdering the delivered babies by cutting into the necks of the babies with scissors and severing the babies' spinal cords.

When police raided the home of Gosnell and arrested the abortionist, US\$240,000 in cash was found in the residence. Gosnell's clinic received US\$325 for abortions carried out during the first thirteen weeks of pregnancy, and received US\$1600 to US\$3000 for performing late-term abortions on unborn babies in their thirtieth week of development in the womb. The abortuary took in between US\$10,000 and US\$15,000 per day.

The editor notes the irony of the widespread attention being given to Gosnell's grizzly death chamber for unborn babies and some of the babies' mothers, when for many years "legal" late-term abortion facilities have practiced the same barbarity and murder, including a procedure called "partial-birth abortion" where, after labour is induced, the late-term prenatal infant has its torso and limbs breech delivered, then the abortionist stabs a scissors into the back of the baby's neck and into the brain, sucks out the infant's brain, then crushes the skull and completes delivery of the now-dead baby.

+ *Christian News Wire*

Reformed Presbyterian Pastor arrested for protesting state visit of Chinese Communist President Hu Jintao

Reformed Presbyterian pastor and director of the Christian Defense Coalition the Rev. Patrick Mahoney was arrested 18 January 2011 for staging a protest in front of the White House in Washington DC against the state visit of Communist China President Hu Jintao.

Before his arrest, Pastor Mahoney drew attention to a Christian Chinese woman beaten by the Chinese government and Nobel Prize Laureate Liu Xiaobo who could not attend the Nobel Prize award ceremony because the Chinese government had imprisoned him for speaking out for freedom and democratic reforms in China.

Pastor Mahoney stated: "We are calling upon President Obama to publicly, passionately and boldly speak out against the human and religious rights abuses by the Chinese government against their own people when President Hu Jintao visits the White House this week.

"Sadly, the Obama Administration has remained painfully silent when it comes to China's utter disregard for human rights and religious freedom. He has refused to speak out against their policy of forced abortion and gendercide against Chinese women.

"I am bringing this single empty chair to serve as a prophetic reminder and witness to President Obama that it is more important to honour and remember those who cannot attend this State Dinner rather than those who will be in attendance. While the guests are dining on expensive and extravagant food there will be scores who will be oppressed and behind bars by the Chinese govern-

ment because of their faith and political beliefs; people like Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Liu Xiaobo who is in prison, Christians who are in prison, Falun Gong members and Buddhist Monks who are in prison and women who are fleeing forced abortion and gendercide.

"We simply ask President Obama to embrace justice and human rights and live out the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King when he said, 'He who accepts evil without protesting against it, is really co-operating with it.'"

+ *Christian Defense Coalition*

Women, Children and Youth Dominated UN Agenda in 2010

NEW YORK, January 6 (C-FAM) The post-holiday quiet at the UN this week stands in marked contrast to the usual frenetic schedule facing UN delegates. The past 12 months saw intense debates as the international community addressed issues related to women, children and education.

Women's issues dominated the UN

In the headlines

Leader of German Protestant Association says a Europeanized Islam is prerequisite for interfaith dialogue

New Commission may insert abortion in \$40 billion UN program

300,000 additional U.S. breast cancer deaths caused by abortion since 1973 Roe. Vs. Wade U.S. Supreme Court decision

Skyrocketing abortion rate in New York City galvanizes religious leaders

US State Department steps up promotion of homosexual agenda

last year as the General Assembly created a new super-agency on women with potentially a billion-dollar price tag. The GA chose former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet to head the new agency. The decision capped a victory for radical feminist groups who lobbied for years for a mega-office to highlight women's issues at all discussions at the UN like UNICEF does for children.

Samantha Singson

Somali mother of four slaughtered for her Christian faith

A 17 January 2011 Compass Direct News Service article titled "Somali Mother of Four Slaughtered for her Faith" reports that Muslim al Shabaab militia members tapped the telephone of Somali mother of four Asha Mberwa, where they confirmed that Mrs. Mberwa had become a Christian. al Shabaab militia members subsequently arrested Mrs. Mberwa, then murdered her by cutting her throat in front of villagers called out of their homes to witness the killing.

Mrs. Mberwa is survived by her husband, who was out of town when she was arrested and killed, and four children ages 12, 8, 6 and 4.

+ *Compass Direct News Service*

Terrorist threats on Christians in Iraq leads to anti-Christian sentiments in Egypt

As bombings continue against Christians in Iraq, Christians in Egypt have gathered to pray and plan for their own safety. When a group of Islamic extremists on 31st October 2010 burst into 'Our Lady of Salvation Church' in Baghdad and began spraying the sanctuary with gunfire. The militant organisation that took the responsibility said Christians in Egypt also would be targeted. Security has been increased at churches throughout Egypt. The recent wave of concern came against a backdrop of already heightened tensions between the Muslim majority and the Coptic Christian minority in Egypt.

WEA Religious Liberty – December 2010

Pakistani Police threaten father and supporters after murdering Christian son

An 18 January 2011 Compass Direct News Service article titled "Pakistani Police Allegedly Make Threats after Murdering Christian" reports that on 6 January 2011, policemen in Karachi, Pakistan, arrested without warrant or charges, kidnapped, sodomised, tortured,

murdered, and threw into a sewer the body of eighteen-year-old Waqas Gill who was a Christian.

Two Muslim police officers have been arrested for Gill's murder, and two others are still at large, their freedom being abetted by police inaction. Police have threatened to kill or charge with false crimes the murdered man's father and his supporters if they do not withdraw the charges against the officers.

Six other Christian youths have been similarly murdered.

+ *Compass Direct News Service*

Afghan Christian convert facing execution for his faith

Said Musa, an Afghani amputee in prison for his Christian faith since May 2010 has been illegally detained for over six months and now faces an unjust trial.

He has been beaten, abused, and threatened with death for holding to his Christian faith. The Afghan government was supposed to try him in a Shari'a court Sunday 21st November 2010, but the hearing was delayed. Said Musa has no legal representation nor any knowledge of the charges levelled against him.

In a letter to the churches of the world Said said that when potential lawyers find out he is a Christian they spit on him and refuse to help.

WEA Religious Liberty – December 2010

Burmese officials order closure of Chin Church

Officials in Mergui Region, Burma, ordered a Baptist church to cease holding worship services after the pastor refused to wear an election campaign T-shirt supporting the military government's Union Solidarity and Development Party(USDP).

The election commission summoned 47-year-old Pastor Mang Tling of Dawdin village, Gangaw township, Mergui Region on the 9th November 2010, two days after the election and ordered him to stop holding services and discontinue the church nursery programme, although the new 2008 Burmese constitution guarantees religious freedom as it forbids "abuse of religion for political purposes" and the election laws bans members of religious orders from voting for or joining political parties.

WEA Religious Liberty – December 2010

Persecution during the holidays

The first Jubilee Campaign release for 2011 informs that the recent holiday

season has been a peaceful and joyful time for most of us, while during these holiday weeks many Christians around the world experienced intensified persecution by Muslim extremists.

Jubilee reports that in Nigeria a Christmas Eve bomb killed at least 32 Christians and left another 70+ wounded. Local Muslims also attacked three other churches, burning one to the ground and leaving six Christians dead.

Another bomb set by Muslim separatists in a southern province of the Philippines was less deadly, wounding 11 and killing no one.

Pakistan saw its first female suicide bomber kill 47 refugees and leave another 100 people in the hospital.

In Iraq attacks specifically targeted at Christians destroyed ten homes, leaving at least a dozen injured and two Christians dead.

The Muslim government of Iran arrested at least 25 Christian men and women for 'apostasy,' and the Taliban in Afghanistan mounted fierce attacks throughout the holidays.

Finally just past midnight on New Year's Eve, a bomb attack in Egypt killed 21 Christians and injured approximately 100 more as they left the Church of Two Saints in Alexandria.

WEA Religious Liberty – January, 2011

Obstacle to worship in Indonesia

Compass Direct News Service reports that Government officials in West Java Province, Indonesia, blocked the Indonesian Christian Church in Bogor's Taman Yasmin area from worshipping on December 26th and Islamic groups pressured authorities to seize the property of another during the Christmas season.

Demonstration against the Christmas service of the Indonesian Christian Church were carried out on 25th December 2010, but police were able to restrain the demonstrators. But the Bogor municipality requested that the GKI cancel Sunday morning worship scheduled for 26th December 2010. Beside their refusal, members of the congregation were not permitted to enter the church premises on the next day. The spokesman of the Indonesian Christian Church said that "discrimination is becoming systemic and spreading, yet it is ignored by the nation in many places."

WEA Religious Liberty – January, 2011

Mass arrests of Christians in Sudan

Reports inform us that on 2nd January 2011 Eritrean officials arrested 30 Chris-



Lecturer in New Testament

The Reformed Theological College, Geelong, Australia, is seeking to appoint a full-time lecturer in New Testament. The expected starting date is January 2012.

The position is suited to someone who has a postgraduate research degree in New Testament and is able to teach Greek, biblical theology, hermeneutics and NT exegesis. Proven ability in teaching, extensive ministry experience, good communication and inter-personal skills and a strong commitment to Reformed theology are essential.

For further information on the position and application procedures, email principal@rtc.vic.edu.au or write to:

The Principal
Reformed Theological College
125 Pigdons Rd,
Waurin Ponds 3216
Australia

Applications close 30 April 2011

2011 WELLINGTON LADIES PRESBYTERIAL

PRESSING THE RIGHT BUTTONS

Are you driven nuts by someone who can't make up their mind?

Or exasperated by someone's need to get it right and perfect, every time!

Perhaps you have in your life a "Show pony" that keeps horsing around, even before they talk!..

Or you feel short-changed as the most "outspoken" person gets what they want every time.

Those 'weird' people that you want to sort out, are the very same people who want to sort you out!

Perhaps they're not Weird, but Wired a certain way.



*Allie Mooney, CSP
People Interpreter*

Come along for a fun and entertaining morning with NZ's highly acclaimed and award-winning speaker Allie Mooney.

She will give you insight on how to get along with people that are different from you.

"Different but not wrong, just different".

You will see how to truly enrich the partnerships with your spouse, children, friends, work-mates and all of those you come in contact with – all in a simple, unique and fun way.

Get ready for some fun and "great take home".

Come and join us at the 2011 Wellington Ladies Presbyterial for a day of fun, fellowship and most of all laughter.

Mark your calendar now and be sure to be there.

When: 19th March 2011

Where: Te Awahou Hall, 79 Main Street, Foxton

"Let us not give up meeting together, ... but let us encourage one another..."
Heb 10:25

tians, members of the Philadelphia Church, for praying at a private house in Asmara, the capital. The Philadelphia Church is an evangelical church outlawed in Eritrea, as several other churches, forced to go underground in Eritrea since 2002, when officials required all religious groups to register.

Sources report that "currently, more than 3,000 Eritreans have been detained for their faith in Christ. Most are kept in underground dungeons, metal shipping containers and military barracks. Several Christians have died while impris-

oned due to torture and lack of medical attention."

WEA Religious Liberty – January, 2011

Arrests of Christians in Iran is condemnable, incongruous

The ongoing raiding of homes and arrests of Christians in predominantly Shi'ite Iran, which began deplorably during the Christmas season, needs to stop immediately.

Since December 26, Iranian security agents in plain clothes have searched the homes of many Christians and

arrested at least 40 of them in a crackdown in the capital city of Tehran and a few other places.

The onslaught, targeting converts from Islam and those engaged in evangelism, continued despite preceding international concerns over the arrest of a pastor, Behrouz Sadegh-Khanjani, and conviction of the pastor of the Full Gospel Church in Rasht, Yousef Nadarkhani, for apostasy, leading to the awarding of the death penalty.

Tehran's governor, Morteza Tamadon, was quoted by state news agency IRNA as saying that missionary evangelicals had stepped up their activity in Iran, which according to him is a "cultural invasion of the enemy." The governor went on to say, "Just like the Taliban, who have inserted themselves into Islam like a parasite, [evangelicals] have crafted a movement in the name of Christianity."

WEA-RLC Executive Director Godfrey Yogarajah said, "The growing authoritarianism in Iran only shows that the regime's popularity is falling drastically which is making the government highly insecure and unnerved."

Yogarajah added: "It is highly condemnable and incongruous that while Shi'ites themselves face persecution in Sunni-majority countries like Pakistan where they are minorities, in Iran some of their leaders emulate the same intolerant Sunni extremists by persecuting Christians and other minorities.

"Regular campaigns against minorities by the Iranian regime cost the people of Iran dearly, as they divert the country's limited resources that could be used for citizens' welfare to fund activities that only create tensions and isolate the country even further."

In Iran, Christians account for only around one percent of the Muslim-majority population. The Iranian regime also persecutes other minorities, including Zoroastrians, Baha'is, and Sufis.

WEA-RLC urges the human rights and religious freedom fraternity and international policy analysts to treat and highlight the escalating persecution of minorities in Iran as an extremely serious issue.

WEA Religious Liberty – January, 2011

You are invited to the **17th Hamilton Easter Convention** **22nd-23rd April 2011**

Theme:

Our Love Affair with Dutch Flowers Studies in the Doctrines of Grace

Speaker:

REV. JOHN WESTENDORP

Convention Venue:

Hamilton Reformed Church
11 Aberdeen Drive
Dinsdale, Hamilton

Meeting Times:

Fri 3.00 & 7.00 pm
Sat 10.30 am, 1.00 pm & 3.00 pm

Convention addresses:

Friday

3.00pm

Total... ? Are we really so bad?

(Psalm 51:5 & Canons of Dort III:2,3)

7.00pm

Election with no strings attached

(Ephesians 1:3-6 &
Canons of Dort I:7-10)

Saturday

10.30am

For whom did Christ really die?

(John 10:11 & Canons of Dort II:2,8)

1.00pm

When resistance is futile

(Acts 16:14(b) &

Canons of Dort III&IV:11)

3.00pm

Once saved always saved

(John 10:28 & Canons of Dort V.3,8)



Our guest speaker this year is Australian pastor Rev. John Westendorp.

After working in commerce and industry for ten years John studied at the RTC in Geelong. He served four congregations in the Reformed Churches of Australia before retiring in 2006 to care for his wife, Ali, who was in failing health. After her death at the end of 2007 John spent two four-month spells in Christchurch to help out the Reformed Church in Cornwall Street.

He married Merle in September 2009 and recently came out of retirement to again serve the Toowoomba congregation in Queensland.

John has five married children and twelve grandchildren and is now dad to seven-year old Leah.

John served as editor of the periodical *Trowel and Sword* for seven years.

As our guest speaker John draws on thirty years of experience as a preacher, pastor and teacher.

A bookstall will operate
on Friday and Saturday

A crèche will not be available

Inquiries

Pieter van der Wel

Ph. 07-853 3144

E-mail ecap2011@gmail.com

Trowel and Sword

The end of an era

John and Harriet Haverland

In June 1952, delegates from seven small congregations in Australia met together for the first time. Their "... desire was to stay together and be one in the fellowship of a church that would be warmly evangelical and Reformed. The Reformed Churches of Australia – as a denomination – were instituted at this first synod." Just over 2 years later, in 1954, the first edition of their denominational magazine, *Trowel and Sword*, was published. Fifty-six years later, in December 2010, its last issue has been printed – the magazine will continue as an online edition only.

For the first 20 years of *Trowel and Sword's* publication the Reformed Churches of New Zealand shared this magazine with the Reformed Churches of Australia. It was only in 1974 that the 14th Synod of the RCNZ, in response to an overture presented by the Wellington Presbytery, decided to have our own national denominational journal. *Faith in Focus* had its first edition printed in March 1975.

Over the years many members and churches of our denomination have subscribed to *Trowel and Sword*. It has been of interest to us because of the close connections between our two denominations: these include sharing ministers; theological training through the Reformed Theological College; and many trans-Tasman marriages. The cessation of *Trowel and Sword* in its printed format seems to us a sad loss for the CRCA. No doubt this has some important lessons for us as a denomination.

The Rev. Geoff van Schie has been the editor for the past nine years while pastoring in the Christian Reformed

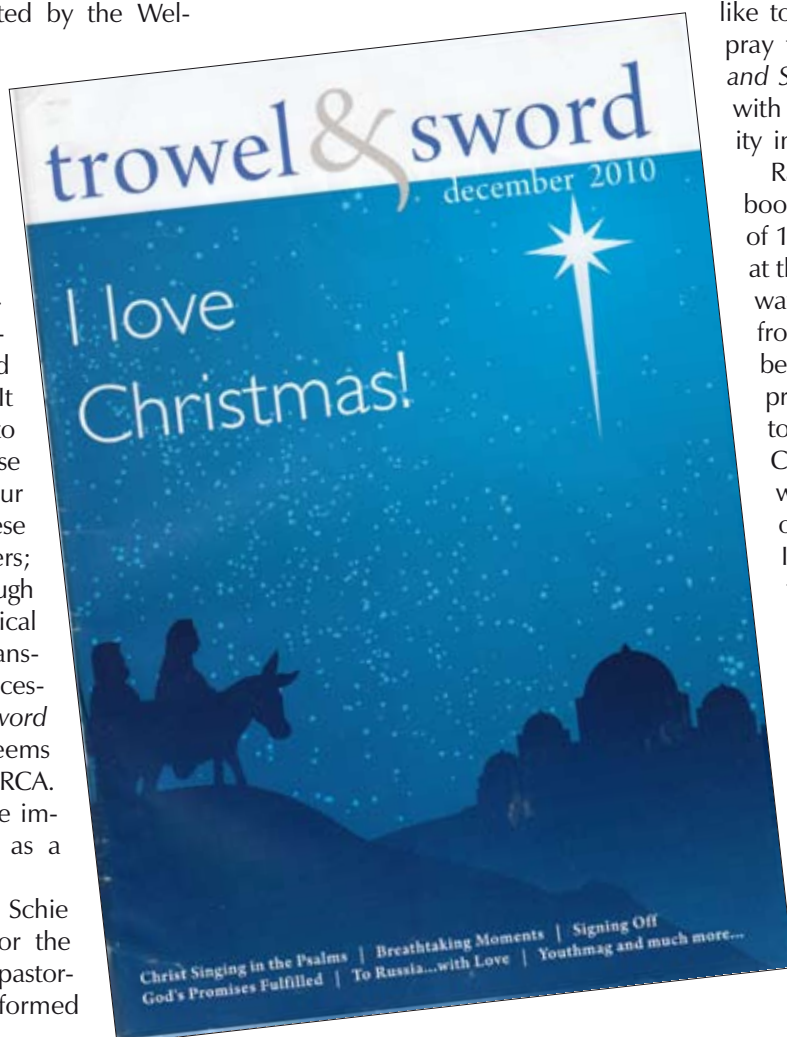
Churches in Western Australia. In the final issue he reflected on the work done while he was editor and prior to that. What follows is a series of quotations out of this last printed issue. "T&S came to WA in 2002 and only a small number have served on the publishing committee – a testament to the stability of the team and its ability to work cohesively." "With love and joy this team has endeavoured to fulfill the original vision of the founders of *T&S*, that *T&S* should be a 'popular' magazine with something in it for all the family. Indeed we have worked hard to steer away from *T&S* being again perceived as a publication written by ministers for ministers. We pray that we have achieved this if even in some small measure. *T&S* also would never be what it is without the many volunteers who over the years have done an outstanding service to the CRCA in the provision of a wide variety

of items. These volunteers have come from every state, and some also from New Zealand."

"The level of commitment of the team is demonstrated in the report to the last synod (May 2009) the team was prepared to work on indefinitely to produce *T&S* for the CRCA with the strategy laid before synod to increase subscriptions and move toward self sustainability. Synod decided instead to move towards an internet version and as they say, 'the rest is history'."

The business manager, Lizelle Fourie, lamented the end of the magazine. "I have had numerous letters and phone calls of subscribers who tried to convince me that *Trowel and Sword* should continue in its printed format. Most subscribers felt that *Trowel and Sword* was the only contact we had with other congregations within the Reformed Churches – and I agree wholeheartedly. I would like to encourage all our subscribers to pray for the changing future of *Trowel and Sword* and that it will be a change with a positive outcome for Christianity in Australia."

Ray Hoekzema has reviewed 164 books for the magazine over a period of 14 years. He wrote: "We're looking at the close of an era, perhaps in more ways than one. *T&S* is going on-line from the beginning of 2011 and will be a very different version from the printed one we've become accustomed to over the many years ... Compared to 30-40 years ago, one would have to agree that the world of today is a very different place. I'm not saying that those earlier times were better but they did tend to be more stable. Nowadays, staccato-like rapid changes have the effect of transforming churches into something almost unrecognisable from decade to decade. In view of that, I wish those at the helm of the coming on-line *Trowel and Sword* every blessing as they seek to establish a new format. Hopefully, it will keep us as churches connected and stimulated through informative and edifying material."



The Rev Peter Gadsby collected “Snippets and Sayings” for the magazine from various sources. In this last issue he commended the editor on his fine work. “Geoff has tried hard to produce a high-quality magazine that would commend the Reformed and Presbyterian Faith in Australia, and help to cement the unity of the Christian Reformed Churches. We all owe him a debt of gratitude for his hard work over many years, ably assisted by his team in WA, and all those who have faithfully contributed material to our denominational magazine.” He continued, “... it is sad to see the demise of this magazine, but perhaps it parallels the fragmentation of our bond of churches. At Synod 2009 it was clear that there were some who had no interest in *Trowel and Sword* continuing – they apparently saw it as having little

value compared to the investment of finances and time spent in publishing it. This attitude carried the day at Synod 2009, and so now we have arrived at the final edition. Perhaps I could be forgiven for thinking that this attitude is also helping to fragment our churches, with ‘each one doing what is right in his own eyes.’ If this attitude and process continues, there will be little to hold us together as one bond of churches. May God forbid, but is there a danger that we will become ‘a loose confederation of warring tribes’? But maybe I’m being overly pessimistic.”

The Rev Geoff van Schie noted the importance of bulk subscriptions for the viability of the magazine. “Thank you to all those who have kept *Trowel and Sword* alive through their subscriptions, especially those few churches that bulk

ordered for every family and single unit. Those churches were indeed the backbone of *Trowel and Sword*’ financial sustainability.” He concluded; “As I sign off I must confess that I am afraid we will discover we have moved in the wrong direction in ceasing a printed version of T&S – a matter of not knowing what we have till it is gone.”

The Rev Peter Gadsby closed this issue and the magazine with these words; “In my experience nature abhors a vacuum, and we may well see some enterprising individuals or sessions working to fill the gap left by the demise of *Trowel and Sword*. I certainly hope so. In conclusion, farewell good reader. May the Lord continue to bless you, and thanks for reading.”

Sing to the Lord

“What makes it take so long?”

Many readers may be wondering why the process of preparing a hymnbook for the Reformed Churches of New Zealand stretches out over so many years. I will try to guide you on a little tour of the process of selecting and preparing the hymns for *Sing to the Lord*.

Selection process

First, to back up a little in time, I’ll mention that the process of choosing the words and music for the *psalms* in the provisional psalter – a complex and time-consuming undertaking for the committee members at that time – was in many ways quite different from the process of selecting the *hymns*. Here I will be discussing only the latter.

As mentioned in previous articles by the Rev. John Rogers, the Hymnal Committee has worked its way through the hymns in the blue 1976 *Psalter Hymnal*, the *Book of Worship*, the 1987 *Psalter Hymnal*, and the *Trinity Hymnal*. In addition to the hymns in these books we received over 300 submissions from churches and individuals. (Thank you for your contributions!)

That has meant hundreds and hundreds of decisions to make! Well, the

best way to get any task done is to make a beginning. So one by one we have looked at each hymn. But what does ‘look at’ mean? How easy it would be if we could just choose our favourites ... but our chairman, John Rogers, would not let us get away with that – and we haven’t let him get away with it either!

Underlying everything, of course, was the Statement of Principle adopted by Synod in 2005 to guide our choices. Here are some of the specific factors we considered:

- Do the words reflect biblical truth?
- Is the meaning of the words clear?
- Even if the words are true, could they be misleading?
- Is the tune singable?
- If not, is there a better tune?
- Is the hymn appropriate for congregational worship?
- Is the hymn of good quality?

There are many other questions that arise as we consider specific hymns and specific topics, but these are some of the basic ones.

So could we simply come to our meetings, give each hymn a tick yes or no,

then move on to the next one?

It wasn’t quite that easy, either. Prior to our meetings various subcommittees would make comments about the hymns, then individually we would consider these comments as we looked at the hymns, and only then would we be ready for a meeting. Sometimes by that time the choice was straightforward, other times there was so much yet to consider.

If our pre-meeting comments were at variance with each other, a lively discussion often ensued. You may have read the extract from the Hymnal Report of the United Reformed Churches that was in the December *Faith in Focus*; a paragraph there expresses exactly the dilemma we face at times in our discussion with the different perspectives we bring to the selection process, and the reasons are very well stated! In fact, I recommend reading that report (extract) for further insight into what our own project involves!

Our selection process often included comparing words in various books. What is the usual way the words are sung in the English-speaking world? Are little changes here or there what we should

be considering? Is an updated version one that has gained credibility? Is such a version necessary for understanding? We referred to many books for our comparisons, as well as consulting other people who had broader knowledge than ours.

You can imagine that by this point several hours might have been spent on a single hymn, taking into account both individual pre-meeting time and meeting discussion. Yet it might not end there: a hymn could be taken back 'home' for further thought and research before another discussion.

Selection of music

Many hymn selections also involved a tune choice, as I mentioned in my previous article. This, too, was often not a quick-and-easy decision, with much time spent in consultation and research.

Once a tune or tunes were chosen, our music subcommittee would check out the harmonies and rhythm. At times there was no variation, but in many hymn tunes harmonic arrangements have been altered again and again. When there are different harmonies, quite a bit of investigation may be needed. Let's just say some of the alterations were improvements while others seemed otherwise! In short, we have learned we should look carefully at other sources on this point also.

Generally speaking, we have chosen four-part arrangements of the hymns. Many people have requested this. Even when we have not chosen a four-part version, we have tried to avoid a 'solo' arrangement that is not so appropriate for a congregation.

All of this interaction described so far might take place on just one hymn before we get to the 'printing' process.

Transcription

As soon as the decisions were made, the information was passed on to our transcribers. All of the music and words are being transcribed in digital format by a hard-working team following the layout we have used for *Sing to the Lord* (the provisional Psalm selections).

But that is not the end. Three committee members then read each transcribed hymn, checking for accuracy and for conformity to the decisions that have been made. We also check capitalisation, punctuation, hyphenation, correct credits; we look for the

correct layout of music and words. You might ask whether this is all so important. Punctuation, for example – does it really matter? Most of us don't think about punctuation while we're singing! However, how something is punctuated often changes the meaning or gives it more clarity; even things like punctuation and capitals will contribute to our singing with understanding in the long run.

Does checking by three people sound like overkill? It is not the end! You'd be surprised how much can be missed by any of us. Lydia Nugteren, who is handling all of our transcription correction, makes the corrections and sends the hymns back to me for yet another check or two before we are close to finished!

Copyrights

Meanwhile we have the assistance of Sarah-Kaye Flinn working on copyright details, no small task! In fact, it is quite a complex process to get copyright permissions for the hymns written in the last 50–100 years.

Categories and topics

Running parallel with our selection process is the ongoing task of placing each hymn in a category and developing a topical index for the psalms and hymns. John Goris perseveres in this challenge!

Publication

Having meandered, or so it sometimes seemed, through the above process, we are getting closer to publication. But that will involve organisation of the hymns by topic, approval by the Synod, feedback from sessions, finalisation of the topical index and other indices (all underway but not completed) ..., and I could go on.

However, you are probably tired just reading about it and may have left me long ago, so it is time to wind things up. In short, we are working for a hymnbook that will be of a high quality and that will find acceptance among our churches, promoting unity among us in our singing.

Will every one of your favourite hymns be in it? If so, that's more than I can say! But our aim is a wide selection of good hymns of many different types. May God be pleased to use it to build all of us up in our faith and in our faithfulness.

Lois Hoyt

Convulsing to the end ...

Our world is adrift,
astutely quite swift,
convulsing its way to the end.
The current's world-wide
affecting the tide –
A-waltzing, though, seems the
world's trend

Storm, cyclone, flash flood
tsunami and mud
eruptions and 'quakes queuing up.
Convulsing away
seems the stuff of the day
and that without little let-up

How fierce needs it be
for the final decree
that calls all to halt in the end?
Discern the approach
of destruction's deft coach –
that doomed man of sin, Satan's
friend?

How faithful indeed
How firm in their creed
is the flock of our Shepherd-King?
Is love growing cold
commitment less bold?
Has death then indeed lost its
sting?

Press on, self-controlled
alert and still bold
the enemies' tactics transcend
There's power with Christ
His glory is prized
So humbly press on to the end!

God's Kingdom shall come
to palace and slum
renewing the earth in the end.
God's church all along
will burst into song
because of the Son He did send!

John Goris

Wellington, June 2009

Psalm 77:16-20; Matthew 24:7;

Luke 17:26-30; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-

10; 1 Peter 5:8-11

Focus on home

Harriet Haverland

Gleanings from our bulletins...

QUOTABLE "QUOTES"

"Prayer is not inconsistent with the most confident anticipation of success in undertaking; and confidence of success can only spring from prayer." – *Albert Barnes*

"Sympathy is no substitute for action." – *David Livingstone*

"There should be no sacraments except those found in the Bible: I can find only two, the Lord's Supper and Baptism." – *Martin Luther*

"Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength." – *Charles H. Spurgeon*

"The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed." – *Hudson Taylor*

BIRTHS

Currie, Ashton Robert Royston – a son born to Robert and Nadia – 11 January (Pukekohe)

De Reus, Katy Samara – a daughter born to Hadleigh and Jenny – 27 December (Bishopdale)

Senekal, Ivan Adriaan – a son born to Willem and Wanja – 27 December (North Shore)

Vos, Heidi Annelies – a daughter born to Sebastian and Sarah – 11 January (Bishopdale)

PROFESSIONS OF FAITH

Bishopdale: Joshua Vlaanderen

Christchurch: Kathleen Flynn, Thom Littlejohn, Reuben Posthuma, Andrew van Leeuwen,

Hamilton: Luke Keast, Keziah van der Wel

Hukanui: Louizanne Allers, Olivia Illing, India Pennings, Ollie Van Woerdan, Luke Wassenaar

WEDDINGS

18 December – Russell Mulder and Rachel Wierenga married in Welling-

ton

15 January – Kerry Dykstra and Angelina Landkroon married in Hastings

15 January – Nathanael Cressy and Adri Bakker married in Christchurch

DEATHS

Huizinga, Grace – Sincere condolences are extended to the Huizinga family in Palmerston North at the passing away of Mrs. Grace Huizinga into glory on 6 January. Although we will miss her, we are thankful for Grace's peaceful departure into glory.

Snoeijer, Albert – was called home by the Lord, 26 December. We pray that the Lord may comfort the family and friends of our departed brother, especially Jane with our assured Gospel-hope, the hope of eternal life and blessing for all who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Silverstream)

Stagg, Ann – On 28 December our God and Father took Ann Stagg home. Her suffering has ended and she is now in glory. Our sympathies go out to Brian, her sons and the rest of the family. (Bishopdale)

FROM THE PASTOR

Avondale: Peter Moelker

"... Do you live in the fear of man? Are you afraid of what people think? Of what they might say? Is your Christian life about pleasing as many people as you can? Has the thought of telling someone about your faith in Jesus filled you with the fear of being seen as a fool? In your life, are people BIG and is God small? May we remember the words of Proverbs 29:25, that the "fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe". Without the forgiveness of sin, we will continue to live in the fear of man, but once our sins are covered with the shed blood of Christ, we will know that it is the fear of the Lord that "leads to life" (Proverbs 19:23) and is "the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10)."

WEBSITES

Dovedale: Church Website Update – We now have an Afrikaans welcome page and a Dutch welcome page on the church website. Hopefully, we will

add other languages soon also.

Nelson: You may have noticed a new addition to the top of our Newsletter. It now includes our web address – www.rcnzonline.com/nelson I would encourage everyone to go online and take a look through the new site. The site address can be passed on to visitors and friends to tell them more about us as a church. The plan is to make this a profitable site for the congregation as well. In the long term, we hope to have a private members page to share prayer requests, to have a discussion board and connect with other members in the congregation. You will also be able to download sermons, articles and find helpful links to other websites to help you in your daily walk with the Lord. I welcome any suggestions or critique! If you still haven't checked out our new website, please do so.

MINISTERS AND CHURCH WORKERS

Christchurch: The Rott's have received their Police checks this past week so now their Immigration application can be sent in for consideration. The expected timeframe for this to be completed is 8 to 10 weeks. Please continue to remember them in your prayer that they may be patient during this time and that the sale of their home and acquisitions will go quickly.

Dunedin: Although it was another year of being without a minister, we have nevertheless been richly blessed by the services of those who came to help. In particular we remember the wonderful assistance given by Rev Dick and Mrs Mary Wynja for three months from March. Rev Wynja's preaching as he charted a course of the Lord's work from creation to consummation was greatly reassuring and reviving. Nine other preachers, in addition to our regular readers, appeared in our pulpit over the course of the year. Rev Martin Geluk's series of Revelation sermons has been a feature of our evening services. In them we have been urged to take a big-picture view of the period between the first and second comings of Christ and the implications for life as Christians of the New Covenant. The search for a minister continued, culminating in

a visit from Rev Mark Wheat and his family in August followed by a call. Although the outcome was not what had been hoped and prayed for, we remain confident that the Lord knows and will provide for our needs in regard to an under-shepherd.

Silverstream: Please remember the Baaman family in your prayers. Iwan has asked for and been granted release from his vicariate in Silverstream. He will be returning to Canada on the 25th of January and will be pursuing further academic studies.

EVANGELISM

Bishopdale: On Saturday we plan to hold a free carwash in our church carpark. This promises to be a great opportunity to serve our local community and share the gospel. All car washing gear will be provided, just bring yourselves!!

North Shore: A hearty thankyou to all who pitched in for our Carol Sing. We had a good turnout of both church people and those from the neighbourhood. It was good to see many visitors stay for supper and be able to talk with some of them.

Pukekohe: Our church will be leading our final service at the Pukekohe Geriatric. We will be reading the account of the birth of Jesus Christ and singing Christmas hymns. The elderly in the hospital seem to appreciate our coming.

Silverstream: The choir will be singing at Home of Compassion. New voices are welcome and encouraged to join the choir.

MISSIONS

Hastings: The next Lord Supper special collection will be for the work of Alan and Odette Douma in PNG. We have recently been updated, by Henk and Bernard, about the very good work in the College and the nearby churches that the Douma's are undertaking in a land that is going through dark times.

Wainuiomata: The Ladies Fellowship, together with the ladies of the Congregation, raised money for a personal gift for the Hagoorts. They are planning to be in New Zealand in March to meet with the Overseas Mission Board. It also will be their 30th Wedding Anniversary. Sjanette would like to meet with our Ladies during this time. We have allocated Saturday the 26th March to get together.

Wellington: Please join ladies from Wellington, Wainui and Silverstream to hear Susan Larsen speak about her work at the Bethesda Disability Centre in the Solomon Islands and have fellowship over afternoon tea. Bring a tea-towel or hand-towel. We will be doing a short craft with these so that they will be a useful gift for Bethesda. We will also have a collection for Bethesda's operating costs for anyone who would like to contribute.

PRISON MINISTRY

Christchurch: The Prison team will be visiting Christchurch Men's Prison. Please remember Rob Vosslander as he brings the Word there and that the men who attend will have open hearts to the things of the Lord.

Hastings: Pray for the Prison Ministry team as they also bring the Christmas message to their unit. Pray for the Christmas message that will be delivered over the radio by Harry Landkroon and Neal Grant.

Pukekohe: The special collection for the Lord's Supper service will be for the Crossroad Bible Institute. This is a Bible Study correspondence programme aimed especially at those in prison. These inmates greatly appreciate the lessons they study and the letters they receive. CBI NZ relies entirely on donations to support this valuable ministry.

ACTIVITIES

Avondale: Our Fellowship Committee has been formed to foster and encourage opportunities for all members of the congregation to join together throughout the year in various activities of fun, learning and service. The emphasis of the committee is on building a "one another" atmosphere in the congregation, where God's people love, serve, build up, encourage, comfort and share with one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. Plans are underway for some events that will enable us to enjoy some good fellowship with each-other.

Bishopdale: We will meet for a prayer meeting at 4pm today in the double Sunday school room. We will pray in particular for those ill in our congregation, for Christmas in the Park and the National Youth Camp. This is also a good time to thank God for His goodness and grace towards us. Tea and coffee will be served afterwards.

Bishopdale: We will be having a special service here for those who are intellectually handicapped. The theme of the service will be "Hope for the New Year." After the service, ice-cream and cake and other goodies will be served. Please come if you can. We need you to make this a memorable occasion for those who are coming.

Buckland's Beach: The enrolment forms have been handed out explaining the church camp planned for April 1. There is a cost involved. We would really like everyone to come. It will provide a tremendous opportunity to spend quality time together at a first rate site.

Buckland's Beach: What a year it has been! The Lord has been good to us in many ways. The programmes – Sunday School, Cadets and Gems, Catechism Classes, Youth Fellowship Groups and Ministries, LABS classes, Fellowship Groups, Ladies Fellowship, Committee of Management, Session, Pastoral Care Team, Musicians ... have been blessed and been a blessing! It is surely true that the joy and fullness of living for and like Jesus is precisely in serving! We thank God for the opportunities and also for the way he has been faithful in gifting and equipping us to be a part of this work of maintaining and building his Church. As final activities, the Cadet and Gem campout was, by all accounts, a wonderful time. The Ladies fellowship rounded off their year's activities on Thursday evening with a progressive dinner of sorts. The Pastoral Care Team organised the yearly luncheon involving the seniors, the PCT and session. Thanks also to those who played instruments and sang.

Christchurch: Senior Singles Lunch – A big thank-you to all the ladies, young and not quite so young anymore, for the absolutely fantastic treat that was dished up for those who attended. No doubt a lot of "behind the scene work" was needed to make this a very pleasant event. We would also like to say a big thank-you to those who contributed musically.

Nelson: From the Cadets and Calvinettes – Thank you very much to those who came along to support our recent Pine-wood Derby races. It was a lovely way to end the year's programme. Racing was extremely competitive. Our cake auction money has been added to other fundraising we had done through the year, to go to the Reformed Bible College in Papua New Guinea.

Wainuiomata: A heartfelt thank you from all us seniors to the congregation, for a fantastic Christmas present in the form of a bag full of delicious goodies, mugs and some nice smelling things. It

was quite a surprise and much appreciated. We love you all.

Wellington: From the Organ Bench – This evening you are invited to come and listen to the final two Cantatas of

Bach's Christmas Oratorio, celebrating the joyful event of the birth of Jesus and looking forward with even greater joy to his coming again.



News from the USA

We write this for what we hope, Lord Willing, to be the last time. We are nearing the end of our time in the States with graduation only a few months away in May. Looking back we are amazed at God's grace to us. We have grown in many different ways during our stay, for which we are very thankful. It will be difficult to farewell all the friends we have made, yet we go with joy seeking to go back home and serve the Lord in New Zealand.

This year, aside from Erik's usual studies, we went to New Jersey (which is 'out east') to serve a 12 week internship (a 'mini-vicariate') which becomes an extremely valuable time of learning and applying the classroom to practical ministry. Pompton Plains Reformed Bible Church, where we were, is a church with a full time youth ministry, two pastors and an extremely active body life, even through the summer vacation period. I, Erik, was able to be involved in many different aspects of church

body life, which proved an invaluable learning experience. Although it was all rather scary to go half way across the States, and be confronted with meeting new people again, as well as trying to settle down for 12 weeks, God's people were so warm, open, and welcoming that we immediately felt at home. We made many friends and acquaintances and as we have said to one another often, "Wherever we go, be it half way around the world, God's people are the same, and his love is extended to us through them."

This final year has proved to be the 'best so far.' The first year was an uphill battle trying to stay on top of all the course work and keep-up with the 'young-fellas.' The second year was a chance to catch my breath, start to feel the exhilaration of knowing that by God's grace, this is actually do-able. That second year also brought with it the faint light at the end of the tunnel. This year all the courses seem to be coming together, I can look back and see with amazement how much I have

learned, even when I didn't think I was. It has been a beautiful walk of growth academically and spiritually. May God use it to serve Him and His churches.

As a family we have also grown. The children have each become so much more outgoing and able to interact, making friends in whatever situation they are in. They have also learned the highs and lows of life without a permanently 'fixed-abode.' Although it has been difficult to leave family and so many friends behind in New Zealand, our Lord's promise in Mark 10:30 that he would add to them so much more, even in this life, has been experienced by us. What a blessing!

That is all from us. We hope soon, by God's grace, to see many of you who have supported us by praying for us over the past years. We continually thank God for you, may he bless you for your labours in this way.

With God's richest blessings

*Erik & Georgina,
Juliette, Johanna, Jacob, Rebekkah,*



CBI NZ Newsletter – November 2010

In the past few months I have been made more keenly aware of just how deeply the Lord interacts in and with our lives reminding me again how very much dependent we are upon Him in all things.

In August I travelled to Wanganui, New Plymouth, and Palmerston North. I had very encouraging meetings with the Chaplains at New Plymouth Prison and also at Manawatu. One of the Chaplains at New Plymouth came to the CBI meeting on her 'day off'. I would like to thank the Chaplain at Manawatu, and his wife, for having us stay at their home. Thank you also to the folk in Wanganui for their warm hospitality and support. It was a time of meeting with Instructors and running Instructor training sessions. It is always a joy to meet and catch up with Instructors and not only receive their feedback on the ministry but see their enthusiasm as they interact with the students in the study of God's Word.

In October I went to Hamilton/Auckland. The highlight for me on this trip was being able to meet with some of the CBI students now released. I was totally blown away when one of these students later asked me if it would be possible to train him as an Instructor. Lord willing this will happen next year.

I was also very much encouraged to hear of more fellow believers going into prison to visit inmates and share the Word of God. And others doing Bible Studies with prisoners who are released and living in a Christian 'half way' house.

It reflects the breaking down of barriers many people have about prisoners. Yes, they are men who have broken the

law but they are also men made in the image of God, men for whom our Lord Jesus shed His blood and gave His life. When we as believers look at those who are or have been in prison, what do you see first? – the prisoner, the criminal who has broken the law? Or – the man created in the image of God and in need of healing and restoring before the Lord?

There but for God's mercy and grace we or one of our children or grandchildren could stand.

It was a pleasure to meet a Christian couple in Huntly who support the CBI ministry by handing out the enrolment forms to prisoners as they meet them for Bible Studies in prison.

During the two Instructor training sessions in Auckland it was a blessing to see the enthusiastic attitude from people to be involved with this ministry in sharing the Word of God with prisoners.

I also visited Waikeria Prison and had some very positive discussions with the Chaplains regarding how the ministry of CBI could effectively reach more inmates in prison. We agreed to work together to put this in place and I pray the Lord may bless our efforts to bear much fruit. We then hope to take this to other prisons. We very much appreciate and seek your prayers and support in this as we step forth in faith, trusting the Lord.

Meeting with groups of Instructors in Auckland was a wonderful time of fellowship and interaction as we discussed the growth of the ministry and the implications of this.

It was also very encouraging to meet with a group of approximately 15 believers in Hamilton who came to a CBI Information evening on a Friday night! It is wonderful to see people's interest in the ministry with a growing awareness of our responsibility before the Lord to reach out to those who are spiritually lost.

Although the time was very busy, I am so grateful to experience the enriching fellowship and unity amongst the body of Christ, workers who are working with zeal in the Lord's harvest fields in the prisons of New Zealand.

Thank you so much to all of you for your support and commitment to this ministry in so many ways. Thank you to those who graciously offered their homes to accommodate us and/or host meetings, to those who faithfully uphold the CBI ministry in prayer and/or contribute financially. Finally, thank you to all the

Instructors who diligently mark lessons and encourage prisoners in their faith and walk with the Lord.

The following are only a small sample of student responses I have received in the last few months. Be encouraged!

"Dear CBI Instructors, Praise the Lord Jesus Christ for the Crossroad Bible Institute. Wow, talk about being touched by your very warm letters. It made me appreciate the fact that not all of us inmates are hated. Although I must confess to being a bad person before I accepted Jesus into my life. I would like to one day use my life's experiences to correct the ways of the younger generation who need Jesus in their lives. I do enjoy reading the Bible and I want to learn by these Courses so that I can use them in my life's experience while in Prison. God bless you all at CBI."

"Praise our Father God in heaven. Thank you for your letters of encouragement which I found to be quite moving. God has started to open doors in my life which in my wildest dreams I never thought would happen. I cannot thank you guys enough for the support that I've received from you all. To consider the person I once was and am now no longer, is indeed a special moment in my life. God bless you all my brothers and sisters in Christ."

"Thank you for sending me my next lot of studies, I hope and pray that I will do the best that I can do with my studies. Did I tell you that I'm 46 years old and when I came into prison over 4 years ago I couldn't read, I had dyslexia. But one woman came to me when I was in the 'at risk unit'. I admit I was sooo angry with everyone including the police, the officers and the inmates. However this one woman came and visited me and talked with me about God and Jesus, God's Son. She prayed for me and left me a Bible and the Word for Today. She then became my one and only friend. Four days later I was moved from the 'at risk unit' to another part of the prison. The woman came to visit me and she was reading a verse from the Bible. I was trying to follow what she was reading. She then asked me to read and I got all upset and angry. I finally told her that I couldn't read. From that day onwards she taught me step by step how to read. Seven months later I got sentenced and I was transferred to another prison. I took a literacy and numeracy course which took a while but through prayer and faith in God that I can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me. Today

I can read and write. Praise God."

"Yes I have been desperate. When I had lost everything – my family, possessions and I thought my life was over. I wanted to die but the Lord spoke to me in a prison cell and I surrendered, cried and repented."

After completing the first Course – *Great Truths of the Bible*, a student writes: "I would like to know if there are anymore studies that I possibly could do for this has given me a hunger for more knowledge and wisdom – God's wisdom and God's knowledge. It has also given me a passion to learn more. Thank you so much for your guidance, prayers and encouragement through this time of my studies. I am a child of God. God bless you all."

"It was God's will for me to be a Christian and to know God. It takes coming to prison to find out the true me. I will never go back to what I used to be for God is my life."

"The Lord Jesus opened my eyes and I saw how bad I truly was and now reading the Bible has confirmed this to me but it also shows me how I can turn all that around."

"I really appreciate the time and effort you invested in me for the Lord and I've got to say it's paying off not just for me but for a couple of my brothers who have started their Crossroads studies. Praise the Lord."

"The Bible is the written Word of God. It has one main message – that we may be saved from our sin and guilt and live a life of thanksgiving and obedience to God. All this becomes possible through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the central figure and the main focus of the entire Bible. This is the greatest benefit a person can get from reading and studying the Bible."

"I would like to thank you all that do this good work in helping people like me learn about God. I wish I could do more for you but all I can do is pray for

you and so I will for you all and your families. Thank you."

"The term the body of Christ is especially meaningful to me. This means that I have the other parts of the body to support and encourage me. It also means that what I do impacts on the rest of the body. Not only am I accountable to Christ the head but also to the rest of the body."

"God has let my sin land me in prison for a real long time. It took this time in jail for me to realise it is all part of God's plan for me in my life. He has brought me down to a place where I need help and forgiveness that only He can give and provide through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and by repenting and asking for forgiveness for my ugly low sins. Now I'm working at changing my life and becoming and living as a true Christian."

"I made a mess of my life without Jesus in it, so now I ask Jesus to forgive me and to save me – healing my mind, heart, soul, spirit and body to be righteous. Thanking Him for taking my place on the cross for my sins. And for His promise not to leave or forsake me."

"Nine months ago when I was in solitary confinement for being bad, I fell to my knees a complete emotional mess and asked Jesus to please forgive me of my sinful and self centered ways."

"Thank you for the opportunity to get closer to God and to learn about the gospel. I really enjoy spending time each day reading and studying and I feel calmer and more at peace. I have had many times during my life where I have felt lost and felt terrible. But I am surprised how I can spend time reading the Bible that something changes inside me, that is amazing compared to how hard and scary life was in the past. I feel more secure now because I know deeply that God exists and is fair."

"Just a thank you to you and the Lord for making this Course available to me and people like me to enjoy. Thanks heaps. God bless."

A student commenting on GTB Lesson 10: "This has been a thought provoking and illuminating study which has blessed, challenged and encouraged me."

Please continue to pray for the ministry of CBI in the prisons and for those involved with the work of CBI in NZ.

If you would like further information about the CBI ministry you can contact us at cbi.nz@xtra.co.nz or write to Crossroad Bible Institute, P.O. Box 11005 HASTINGS 4158.

Have you been conscious of **God's call** on your life?

Are you praying for the **right place** to serve Him, with your skills and interests?

For the past twelve years, Rev. Kevin Rietveld and his wife Machi have served the Lord faithfully in **Honiara, Solomon Islands**.

These beautiful, tropical islands are three hours flying from Brisbane, but poor and in need of the Gospel of Jesus.

Machi and Kevin have responded to many requests and challenges, such as: *Teaching, distributing aid, co-ordinating visiting teams of helpers and builders, establishing a prison ministry, broadcasting and publishing, sponsoring school students, training church leaders, caring for the disabled, teaching children in hospital etc.*

With a regular support team, and a functional, comfortable base, they've found this mission work fulfilling and enriching.

They testify to the numerous blessing they've been privileged to share, and receive in return.

God is good!

It is Kevin's intention to retire as **MISSION DIRECTOR** in late 2012.

The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, through its Solomon Islands Mission Workgroup, is seeking applications, and expressions of interest, and would love to hear from **YOU**.

Enquiries can be made to:

KEVIN RIETVELD in Honiara
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(Chairman, S.I.M. Workgroup)
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Missions in focus

Marlene van Tonder

Mission Profile:

Name: Africa Inland Mission (AIM)

Established: 1895 as the Philadelphia Missionary Council by Peter Cameron Scott

Mission Aim: "Christ centred churches among all African peoples."

Nearest Sending Office: Australia (est. 1919)

Contact: www.aimint.org

In January 2010 I headed out on the most challenging, yet rewarding, journey our Lord has called me to so far in my life. For one year I went to Tanzania through Africa Inland Mission with the opportunity to teach some of the young people of this remarkable country. For those of you racking your brain to remember back to college geography, Tanzania is situated on the east coast of Africa, below Lake Victoria and Kenya and above Mozambique. It is a large country with a population of 41 million and its largest city is Dar es Salaam situated on the east coast. However I was heading for a small town called Kahunda, situated on the shores of Lake Victoria about three to five hours from the second largest city, Mwanza. Yes, I realise there is a big difference between three and five hours, but to travel in this area depends on how often the car ferry decides to run on any given day, the road condition during and after rainy season and how many flats you have along the way.

After a two day journey by car from Nairobi I arrived in Kahunda on the 6th of January and by the 15th I was ready to teach and standing in front of my class ... a total of five students. Lesson #1 for me: Students turn up as money and family situations allow; plan accordingly. By week four I had two full classes ready to learn Form Three (Year 11) Geography and I was standing in front of 130 faces staring sceptically at the 'Mzungu' teacher from ... where exactly is New Zealand? That was lesson #1 for my students.

Teaching was fun and definitely challenged me as the students have very little English and the school has no resources whatsoever. But together we got there in the end.

It didn't take me too long to figure

out that while the school wanted another teacher they didn't really *need* one so the question came loud and clear: "Lord, why did you bring me here?" As always, God answered that prayer.

Along with teaching I also picked up coaching the 'netball' team and after some lessons in how we actually play netball we were ready for game day. Hosting three schools from around the region I got the 'honoured' position of umpiring the games which at times resembled a wrestling match rather than a netball game.

Umpiring netball on the basketball court

With two wins and a draw under our belt we were feeling rather good and I had a few mental notes ready for a devotional debrief with the girls about Christ-like behaviour in *all* aspects of life including the netball court. Feeling a bit exhausted I decided to skip out on the second half of the soccer match and head for home, but the Lord had other plans. I fell into conversation with one of the Form Four guys who eagerly enquired why I had come to Kahunda. After a short explanation of the Lords' call on my heart and a clarification that, no, I was not here to do research, he decided it was safe to open up and share with me from the heart. "Madam"

he said "I have been at this school for three years. I've attended all the different religious groups, but I don't see it." "See what?" I asked gently, hoping I was thinking on the same wave length. "See it in peoples' lives."

So, there it was. This one searching soul was my answer to prayer. That's why I was there. The conversation continued and I organised a time to meet with him to study the Word and he, along with some friends, spent time with me on a weekly basis simply searching the Scriptures. We opened it



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Umpiring the netball.

as a Bible study for others to join in and I used it as a time to challenge and encourage the students to seek to know our Father; to seek out His will and to do it wholeheartedly.

My Friday morning whole school devotions adopted this slant, looking at various people from the Bible and how they used their gifts to serve the Lord and encouraging the students to move from nominal Christianity, which is so common there, to truly committing their whole life to the Lord in thankfulness.

Along with my work at the secondary school I jumped on board with Margaret Andersen (a full time missionary) to

help out with the start of a new kindy/primary project. Spending time with the children, planning lessons and training the teachers in basic classroom management and 'doing maths differently' was my main involvement there. We were hoping to move the staff away from a 'rote learning' teaching philosophy to ensure the students have an understanding of concepts along with the knowledge gained. It was great to see the teachers taking on board our guidance and producing their own plans by the end of the year.

So what was it like living out there? Tough, but rewarding. I enjoyed it a lot!

Kahunda is a small community (around 6000 people) without all the mod-cons. Apart from a couple of house mates at different times in the year I shared a rather roomy three bedroom house with various creepy crawlies and a couple of cats who kept the home relatively rodent (and therefore snake) free and had the luxury of solar power and cell phone reception. In town on market days we could get some fruit and veggies and beef on Tuesdays. If you wanted chicken ... well, they come with feathers and still clucking, so it depends entirely on how brave you are.

There are a few small shops in town so we could get kerosene for our freezer, but most shopping was done on a monthly basis in Mwanza. During the year the missionary population varied between 4 and 7 people so you learn a lot about getting on with each other, no matter what. This year the Lord also taught me so much about trusting in His providence in *all* circumstances and searching for opportunities to proclaim His name no matter where I am. So, what about you? Are you called to missions? Well, the lesson I had confirmed to me again this year is that we all are. No matter where we live or work we are all called to minister to those around us at all times, both in word *and* deed.

Would I do it again? ... in a second and moreover I would recommend it to anyone thinking the Lord may be calling them to step outside their comfort zone.



Teaching Form III A Class.



'Downtown' Kahunda.



Spending time with the kindergarten kids.