

faith in **focus**

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of New Zealand

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**Then
another
angel
came out of
the temple
and called out in
a loud voice
to him who was
sitting on the cloud,
“Take your sickle and
reap, because the time
to reap has come, for the
harvest of the earth is ripe.”
Revelation 14:15**

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All correspondence regarding editorial content and advertising should be sent to:

The Editor:

Sjirk Bajema
17 Phoenix Place, Papatoetoe,
Auckland.
Ph/Fax: +64 9 277 9360
Email: thirty@paradise.net.nz
Reformed Churches Home Page
<http://www.rcnz.org.nz>

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Mrs Nicola Wharekawa
79 McLeod Street
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Editorial

Being the size congregation we are here in Mangere, we need everyone on board for all the different jobs in the church. If you're not able to help out with cleaning you're on the flower roster, and so on.

It was our turn for cleaning. After dusting and watering plants it was on to the vacuuming. Some pews were quite clean and didn't really seem to need a vacuum while others, though not messy as such, needed a vacuum. And some of those pews more so than others. Why? Well, it was where the people who came twice every Sunday sat.

Because if you're not in church all the pew will do is gather dust. But come to church and you really use it. That's where the clothing lint and small pieces of rubbish from the bottom of your shoes and other things come from. It's because you're there. And the more you're there the more there will be there.

What an encouragement from cleaning the church! But also what cause for prayer for those who are hardly there. And then there's the hint of sadness, yet much more of thankfulness, in remembering those who used to be there but are now with the Lord or serving Him elsewhere. Because we all have our favourite spots. Almost traditional! Except, of course, when a visitor got there earlier than you. Then you're glad they're there. And you know if you want your spot you should be in church earlier.

But I haven't come to the messiest pew of all. You know which one it is. Yes, the one at the back. Inevitably the one inhabited by the youth. But isn't it good they're there, too? Just make sure they get their turn on the cleaning roster!

Word and worship belong indissolubly to each other.

*All worship is an intelligent and loving response to the revelation of God,
because it is the adoration of his name.*

*Therefore, acceptable worship is impossible without preaching,
for preaching is making known the name of God,
and worship is praising the name of the Lord made known.*

*Far from being an alien intrusion into worship,
the reading and preaching of the Word are actually indispensable to it.*

The two cannot be divorced.

*Indeed, it is their unnatural divorce which accounts
for the low level of so much contemporary worship..*

*Our worship is poor because our knowledge of God is poor,
and our knowledge of God is poor because our preaching is poor.*

*But when the Word of God is expounded in its fullness
and the congregation begins to glimpse the glory of the living God,*

they bow down in solemn awe

and joyful wonder before his throne.

It is preaching which accomplishes this,

the proclamation of the Word of God

in the power of the Spirit of God.

That is why preaching is unique and irreplaceable.

John Stott

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

The churches in the widest counsel

The 25th Synod reviewed

Sjirk Bajema

Hamilton welcomed us with a wonderfully warm and sunny day on our first day of Synod. Following much hand shaking and catching up we filed into the Hamilton church building, the venue for Synod's meeting for this the twenty-fifth Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

The Rev. Reinier Noppers, the Counsellor for the Hamilton church, opened proceedings with reading Philippians 1:1-11 and meditating on the verses 3 till 11 in particular. He then led in prayer.

Following this the credentials were received of the churches of the federation. These were checked, and then Synod elected as the moderamen the Rev. J. Haverland as Moderator, the Rev. M. Flinn as Vice-moderator, the Rev. B. Hoyt as 1st Clerk, and Elder R. de Vries as 2nd Clerk.

That night the opening Prayer Service was held for Synod. A number of our delegates were involved in reading scripture and prayer, while the Rev. John Goris preached on Revelation 1:9-20, with the theme, "The Lord of the Church Revealed."

The business proper

Monday morning was somewhat overcast and inside it was a little cold, but that soon changed. For after the opening scripture, prayer, devotion and song, we were warmed into synodical business with the reports of the Minister's Conference, the Synodical Interim Committee, the Synodical Archivist, and the Cadets & Calvinettes Liaison. Then we spent some time on the Emeritus Fund and Long Service Leave. Br Bill Weeda, on behalf of the Committee, was one of a line of Report presenters who not only spoke to their reports but also did so in an interesting and enjoyable way.

The evening began with the Rev. G. van Schie speaking on behalf of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia and Professor H. De Waard presenting Robert van Wichen with his Bachelor of Theology.

So it flowed that the next major subject was the Reformed Theological College. After much discussion a new Memorandum of Understanding was endorsed. This acknowledged that the confessional nature of the relationship with the College could not be as it was before. As a consequence, it could well be that individual churches would have principal objections to paying a quota amount. Thus it was agreed to be a "recommended contribution." Synod felt satisfied, however, that there was arrangement in place which meant that our churches, through our deputies, could continue to have a significant input into the College, which we

support in quite a substantial manner. The two Professors at Synod – Brs Henk De Waard and Murray Capill – spoke strongly in favour of the new arrangement.

Refreshment

By now it was Tuesday morning – the rain was lightly falling around us. A boon for the farmers and a welcome damper to the dust raised by a week of drier weather.

We continued hearing of how busy our members have been working for our churches – the RCNZ RTC and Student Assistance Committee, the Education Resource Committee, and the Synodical Treasurer, Br Richard Vanderpyl.

The delegates of the GKSA (Reformed Churches of South Africa) – the Rev's D. Fourie and H. Stoker - gave us a dynamic dimension to their work in Southern Africa and elsewhere. They believe they have a distinct role to play in remaining in South Africa and being a light to a faithful biblical witness there.

The Interchurch Relations Committee presented their Report's recommendations regarding the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (formerly the RCA). The Committee recommendation was passed that we declare the relationship with the CRCA was "under strain" because of their decision to ordain women in the office of deacon in 2000 and to reject the appeals against this in 2003. This situation will now be closely monitored by the IRC as it is now the second Synod is a row we have declared the relationship to be under strain because of this matter. The more serious amendment to "suspend" the relationship did not receive enough support as there were two

areas of concern the ICR felt had improved or been clarified to their satisfaction – the matter of children at the Lord's Supper and worship practices.

It was helpful that Synod could have two CRCA delegates contribute at this point. They spoke of the different understanding of the regulative principle they have. That was why following their 2003 Synod they could say in a Pastoral Letter to their congregations, "Both the 2000 and 2003 Synods acknowledged that there is no conclusive evidence in Scripture that women may or may not serve as deacons, and that therefore the freedom exists to appoint women as deacons." As was raised in the discussion, however, this is not really a different understanding of the 'regulative principle', as the 'regulative principle' binds us only to what Scripture says or may clearly be deduced from Scripture. Rather, the CRCA position follows the 'normative principle' which understands that as long as something is not specifically prohibited in Scripture it is allowable.

Tuesday night began with the Rev. Peter Boyd speaking on behalf of the Grace Presbyterian Church. This is a new Presbyterian denomination formed in New Zealand from a number of existing independent Presbyterian groups and some who have recently broken away from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand because of their unbiblical doctrines and practices. He spoke warmly of the value of the contacts that we had.

Then we came to the Psalms & Hymns Committee. We were able to hear of the work the Committee has done so far. A work much appreciated and so we strongly approved the



The Moderamen



back section of the meeting



The Psalms & Hymnody Report

continuation of their mandate. Lord willing, within 18 months we will see in our churches either photocopied bound or over-head projections of the 150 Psalms. For those who are wondering, much is being retained from the old blue Psalter Hymnal, especially in the way of the tunes – about 75% so far.

A long day

Wednesday morning was a little overcast although the sun did make a break through early afternoon. For a little while. Then it was overcast again. It was a long day at Synod and I say that especially because we did become quite involved in an issue. But that happens at Synod and so an ad-hoc committee was put on to it and we got on with other things. Among these was the consideration of the National Publications Committee report. Following our thanks to the Committee special thanks was noted to the Editor of Faith in Focus. As well we had some more addresses from the overseas delegates, of which we had a record number of at this Synod. So we could hear from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of North America, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and the Christian Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. Tying well in with this overseas flavour, the Overseas Mission Board began presenting their work, and the evening concluding with a digital presentation of the work being done in Uganda by the O.P.C., of which we have shared in through the Rev. & Mrs James, who were both present. (A digital data projection is kind of a fancy slide show!)



Time for singing

Morning sun

A new day dawned and with it the sun. Today we continued on smoothly at Synod. Following an address to us on behalf of the United Reformed Churches of North America by the minister-elect of the Masterton Reformed Church, the Rev. Peter Kloosterman (that's frugal!), we dealt with more of the Interchurch Relations Committee.

After morning tea, the Church Extension Committee presented their report. Tied with this were some recommendations from the Vicariate Committee. This was because we are blessed to be able to have an increased number of vicars over the next four years and the finance to be able to support them needs to be there.

We finished going through the Overseas Mission Board Report. We were very much encouraged by their work and also by some new initiatives – like seeking out opportunities for Short Term Missions through ICRC member churches. This is the opportunity for particularly our young people keen to taste mission work to use. So if you're interested in something like that contact your minister and he'll get you the information.

We dealt with the Overture regarding changing our denominational name. We did not



Time for listening

become “Christian Reformed” but stay simply “Reformed”.

The evening brought an address from a minister of the Korean American Presbyterian New Zealand Presbytery (see, you can get a lot of countries into one name!) They seek fellowship with those of the same confessional basis. And then the National Diaconate Committee presented their Report.

Everything in the mix

It was Friday and we were a little behind. The weather was a bit of everything and so was our agenda as we dealt with the remaining Reports and Overtures and tidied up the pieces left over from previous days. Amongst these was the decision to implement a study committee looking at the present versions of our two pulpit Bibles - the NASB and the NIV - and at the ESV and the NKJV. Actually if you’re wondering about all the acronyms it did confuse some the delegates a bit too! We committed ourselves to continuing the present level of support for the Overseas Mission Board, building up the work of our National Diaconate Committee, and sustaining existing sister-churches relationships and looking to further ones with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches of North America.

The ad-hoc committee returned to the floor with a wise solution to our impasse of two days ago and, so, after brief discussion, we could deal with it in a God-honouring way.

Synod declared in relation to abortion: “Since human life begins at conception, wilful abortion is contrary to the sixth commandment, the only possible exception being cases where the life of the mother is in jeopardy, and every reasonable effort has been made to save the life of her unborn child.” In connection with conception it was understood that this takes place at fertilisation. To further guide our members a study committee was appointed to look into what is conception and when it occurs, whether the ‘morning after’ pill and other emergency ‘contraception’ prevents conception and/or act as abortifacants, and whether there are steps that may be legitimately taken to prevent conception after rape.

We also sent the traditional ‘Letter of Loyalty to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.’ Unlike previous letters to the Queen, in this letter we added: “We also wish to express our deepest concern about a deteriorating standard of morality in our country, not unaffected by a growing rejection of the Christian faith, even to the point of discrimination against Christian viewpoints. We draw these to the attention of Your Majesty, mindful of Your Majesty’s designation as defender of the (Christian) faith.”

And it all turned out

The delegates expressed their deep gratitude at the fine work of the moderamen, of whom Br Haverland received special note for his chairing. We also conveyed our tremendous



Hamilton church



Vicar Robert van Wichen being presented with his Bachelor of Theology



The Masterton minister-elect, Rev. P. Kloosterman, speaking for the URCNA



GKSA delegates



An impeccably dressed American gentlemen - Mr Mark Bube of the OPC



Synodical reactions





The Editor tucking in



'Incredible' food



Ron Voschezang - The Synod Manager

Karaoke

A fish out of water

Brothers and Sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ. The members of the Hymnal Committee attending our recent Synod were asked to respond to some of the questions posed by the delegates. Being one of them, I found myself unexpectedly put on the spot and presenting a recommendation that my father, Rev. Bruce Hoyt, had worked up in consultation with myself and some others.

I'm afraid that I am not a good public speaker and my wits were also somewhat muddled by the sheer number of men in front of me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie! I could have made the following point at the Synod, but missed my cue. Together with all my readers, I can now exhort those same men using the Word of Christ – whose sandals none of us are worthy to untie.

This regards one of the recommendations I presented: that the Hymnal Committee produce a computer CD with words and music (karaoke) for use in the home. This was approved by the Synod. The computer CD will enable each home in our churches to view/print and play accompaniment to the songs put out by the Hymnal Committee.

At home?

The Scriptures in Colossians chapter 3 call us to peaceful unity by living in Christ. It says that this lifestyle requires (v16) that Christ's Word dwell richly within us, which involves – believe it or not – singing.

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

Furthermore, this singing of Christ's Word is adjoined with teaching and admonishing one another in wisdom. Brothers, this is saying no less than that knowing Christ's Word in song is a necessary part of living in Christ and in peace.

Let me ask you three questions. As members of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand,

1. Does Christ's Word dwell richly within us in song?
2. Is our song prominent enough in our lives that we can even say Christ's Word dwells in us *richly* in song?
3. Do we know our songs well enough that their truth helps us teach and admonish?

If the answers are 'no' then it is because we are not taking our music home, and are not making it part of our family devotions. If you had a tool to put the music of the church into its members' homes, would you use it? Would you admonish each other to use it? The proposed computer CD may be just the tool you need.

In case you are sceptical of the value of song in the home, let me disabuse you. A requirement in my wife's school days was to learn to sing a verse of a Psalm each week. Most families would (and increasingly do in those churches) help their children learn this Psalm by singing it in family devotions each day. Today I can quote a part of a Psalm, and she will tell me which Psalm it comes from. When it comes time to send a card to a friend, she has the book of Psalms at her fingertips. Our cards both teach and admonish other believers on a regular basis.

Times have changed. No longer is a Reformed family known by its seven children and an organ. Nor do we, like David, have tambourine and lyre. But – as artless as it may seem – we do all have a computer.

*Let them praise his name with dancing,
making melody to him with tambourine and lyre!*

*For the LORD takes pleasure in his people;
he adorns the humble with salvation.*

*Let the godly exult in glory;
let them sing for joy on their beds.*

– Psalm 149:3-5

thankfulness to Ron Voschezang, our Synod 'Manager', and the team from 'Incredible Catering', a group of ladies fundraising for the Hamilton Christian School. It was truly professional, and with the newly renovated facilities of the Hamilton church it was excellent food and great service (I wonder, though, if some delegates didn't return to their homes rolling through the door rather than walking in!). We also were most appreciative to the Hamilton

and Hukanui congregations for all their time and effort into making Synod a blessed occasion.

And we must not forget that this Synod was the first time the Reformed Church of Hukanui was present as a fully instituted church. The Lord's work is going on. It was also noted that this would probably be the Rev. John Goris' last synod as a delegate and our thanks

were expressed to the Rev. Chris Kavanagh who has accepted a call with the Chelmsford congregation of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England & Wales (a fellow member of the ICRC).

Further reports on Synod can be viewed on the denominational website: www.rcnz.org.nz



At the crossroads in history

Reforming or deforming?

Hans Voschezang

On the morning of the 16th of April 1521, surrounded by an escort of one hundred mounted soldiers to ensure his safety, Martin Luther made his historic entrance to the city of Worms. Upon his entering at the city gate, many people tried to catch a glimpse of the man who had caused all the fuss, blocking the narrow streets as they approached the Johanniter Inn, Martin's lodgings. Martin looked in disbelief at the shouting crowds, not having anticipated so much public support. Still weak from his fever, sweating, and with his stomach on fire, he leaned against the door.

Once installed in his lodgings, he spent the rest of the day in conversation with friends and Church leaders. Early next morning he spent several hours in meditation and prayer, in preparation for the things to come, his trial later that day before the Emperor and the general assembly.

The scene

With palms sweating and stomach rumbling, Luther waited outside of the "Bishop's Court". Pacing up and down, he tried to shake off the feeling that he was judged not only by the living, but by the dead. The muffled voices from the other side of the door stopped abruptly, and the door opened for him.

He paused to take in the scene before him. The room was packed, every possible space filled. Electors and princes from every state in the empire were present. Justus, his friend, had managed to slip in, and stood near the back. At the end of the room, only one man sat. It was Charles V, the twenty one year old Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. At the right hand of Charles stood Johann von Eck, and in front of him a pile of books - Luther's works. All were silent as Luther approached the Emperor. Feeling as if he was wading through waist deep mud, he began to smile as he looked each member in the eyes, but it wasn't a smile of confidence. This situation was far beyond

his natural ability. In the audience he noticed Girolamo Aleander. Luther stopped in front of the books and bowed before the Emperor. Then Johann Eck stepped forward and rapped out two questions in quick succession.

"Martin Luther, do you acknowledge these books as your own? Are you prepared to recant what you have written in these books?"

The questions took Luther totally off guard and the awful truth stared him straight in the face. There wasn't going to be a debate at all. They wanted a yes or a no, so that they could decide there and then whether to accept his retraction of what he had written, or burn him at the stake as a heretic.

His legal council stood nearby and responded quickly to the first question. "The titles of these books must be named," he said forcefully.

Johann Eck rolled his eyes, but allowed a Court clerk to read out all the titles. It gave Martin a few moments to consider how to respond. But what could he say? These ques-

tions were so obviously designed to reduce his theological arguments to an inadequate black or white. He needed time to think. The Court clerk was finished reading the book titles.

Martin cleared his throat and mumbled, "These books... are all mine..., and... I've written more."

Johann Eck glanced at the Emperor, who was sitting perfectly still, staring at Luther as a hunter would stare at a stag in the forest. Eck asked the question again, "Do you defend all of them, or will you reject some?"

Martin stared at the books in front of him, he shook his head and spoke in a low voice as to himself. "This business... touches on God and His word... and the salvation of men. I dare not say too much... or too little. It would be too dangerous... for Christ Himself said: 'He who denies Me before men, I will deny before My Father.'" His legs were shaking while the eyes of the court were staring through him. Strangely, it was not the powerful men who intimidated him most, but the fact that all these men stood accountable before God. The decision they would make here and now would affect the eternal destinies of every man in this courtroom and of every family in the entire empire.

Martin looked at the Emperor, and said: "I beg you, give me more time to think it over." Eck and the Emperor looked at each other in surprise, and a low rumble of shock and disapproval broke out. Charles whispered something to Eck. Eck turned to Luther and said: "You will wait outside, Herr Luther." He then turned his back on Luther and started to talk to Aleander. Martin bowed and walked outside with his lawyer. Some of his friends and supporters followed them.

Justus was the first one to say something. "They aren't going to let you defend yourself, Martin. The best we can hope for is that the Emperor won't rescind his promise of safe conduct back to Wittenberg." Martin was in deep thought. "Of course," Justus continued, "you can always try to escape tonight, if they grant your request."

Martin smiled. "No, I'll give them an answer, but I need time to think, how to answer. They tried to trick me into recanting or changing my views. If the Emperor will play fair, he will allow me time to reconsider my defense."

Suddenly the door swung open and they were ushered back inside. Eck was standing with an angry red face, Aleander wouldn't even look at Luther, and the Emperor was obviously angry with both of them. Eck spoke: "His Majesty finds it incredible that you aren't prepared to answer a simple question. You are a seminary professor, Herr Luther, and yet you waste His Majesty's time and that of this Honorable Court with your request. However, His Majesty has decided to grant you time to consider your response." Luther bowed in acknowledgment. "One day, that's all," Eck continued. "We will reconvene tomorrow afternoon at four o'clock

in plenary session of the General Assembly. You are dismissed."

"Thank you..., Your Majesty," Luther began, "I realise...."

Eck interrupted loudly, "I said, you are dismissed!" Then, lowering his voice to an angry growl, "and if I were you, sir, tomorrow, I would come prepared."

The next day

The following day, the meeting was moved to a larger hall to accommodate more people, and possibly to intimidate Luther. So many had packed into the hall that there was barely enough room for the Emperor to sit. Luther was a totally changed man. He felt his self confi-



Martin Luther

dence restored. The Church, he was convinced, had to purge itself of the evil influences of Rome. The time for silence had passed. He had spoken on paper; now, if the General Assembly would open the doors, he would roar!

The business of the day took longer than expected. It was 6 o'clock when Martin walked slowly into the hall. Hundreds of candles burned brightly in their wall sockets. Soldiers stood guard in gleaming armor. Every eye was on him as he approached the Emperor and Johann Eck. The pile of books lay sprawled on the table, exactly as on the previous day. Luther bowed before the Emperor. Eck started to speak.

"Are these writings yours, and will you recant?"

Martin took a step forward and addressed the Emperor, Eck and the Assembly in a clear ringing voice. "Most serene Emperor, most noble princes and merciful lords, if I have not

given you your proper titles, I beg your forgiveness. I'm only a monk, not a courtier. Yesterday you asked me if these books were mine and if I would repudiate them. They are mine. But, to answer your second question, they are not of the same kind." A murmur rippled through the crowd. The Emperor frowned. Aleander rubbed his eyes and pinched his nose in frustration. "Some of my books deal with faith and life, so simple and in such a Christian spirit that even my enemies read them. The Pope's bull doesn't denounce all my books. If I were to renounce these books, I would be the only man on earth to deny the truth we all agree on." Martin took a deep breath as he realized full well that what he was about to say would set him apart from the Roman Church for the rest of his life, and possibly from the Emperor who held his life in his hands. "Another group of my writings reviles the evil lives and teachings of the papists for the desolation they have brought upon the Christian world."

At this point the Emperor leaned forward in his chair, Aleander stared disbelievingly at him, and Eck's mouth fell open. Martin continued quickly, before they could recover. "Who can deny this, when so many scream on the rack of papal law?"

The Emperor pounded his fist on the arm of his chair in anger, but Martin continued, "Rome is a beast. Germany is its prey, and our people are being devoured! This tyranny threatens every German. If I were to recant now, I would unlock the door to more tyranny, at the insistence of the Holy Empire."

Several electors and princes, who had sided with Eck before, now grunted their approval. Greedy popes had abused Germany long enough. Martin sensed the shift in mood of his audience.

"A third group," Martin continued, "contains attacks on private individuals and what I teach concerning Christ; therefore I cannot renounce these books either, without increasing tyranny and unholiness."

Aleander snorted out loud.

"Show me my error," Luther said, "and I will be the first to throw my books in the fire. My teaching creates division, I know, but I must walk in the fear of the Lord. I can't escape my duty to my Germans. I commend myself to Your Majesty. I pray you would not allow my enemies to blacken my reputation without cause."

Clearly Eck wasn't happy. "Look at these books; some are outright bad, and others even worse."

"All I ask is to be heard from Scripture..." Martin began, but Eck waved his hand impatiently.

"Every heretic wants to be heard from Scripture. Really... Martin, how can you assume that you are the only one to understand the Scriptures? Will you elevate your own opinion above the judgments of so many others, and claim that you know more than they do? You have no right to question the holy and ortho-

dox faith instituted by Christ, proclaimed by the apostles, sealed by the blood of martyrs and defined by the Church. You have no right to dispute that which we are forbidden by the pope and the Emperor to discuss lest there be no end of debate....” Eck paused, to catch his breath. “Now,” he said in a low threatening voice, “I ask you, Martin, and answer me straight. Do you or do you not repudiate your books and the errors they contain?”

Luther looked directly at Charles and spoke without hesitation. “Your Majesty, since you and your lordships desire a simple answer, I will give one. Unless Scripture and plain reason convict me, I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other. My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against my conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”

The occupants of the hall sat in stunned silence. Charles spoke quietly to Eck, who then addressed Luther. “His Majesty would hear your defense in Latin.” Martin breathed a silent prayer of thanks to God. He was grateful for the Emperor’s challenge to repeat his defense in Latin, the official language of the court, but it would also broaden the impact of his message. As he finished, the Emperor gave an abrupt sign and rose. The meeting over. The Emperor retired to his private apartments. The hall erupted in jeers and hisses, and some Spaniards shouted, “Al fuego, - into the fire.” But Martin’s friends and supporters surrounded him and escorted him back to his lodgings.^{a1}

Reforming or deforming?

Change can be good, but it is not always so. Trying to improve on technology is good; there is room for that. Trying to improve the Bible is bad; it cannot be improved on. We must be able to differentiate between good and bad changes.

Martin Luther began calling for reforms in the doctrines of the church of his day, leading to the Protestant Reformation. John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, John Knox did much to restore the Biblical standards for faith and conduct. These Reformers affected the lives of millions and altered the history of many nations. Through their studies of the Bible, they found that the church had been ignoring and contradicting the gospel message. They called for sweeping changes, which would recover and restore the faith proclaimed by Jesus and his apostles. Like Jeremiah, they were saying: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Jer 6 vs 16)

Reformers don’t want change for sake of change, but they want change for the sake of Christ. There are changes that reform, and changes that deform. We must be willing

New Zealand Conference on Reformation Theology

A Conference committed to underscoring the relevance of the Scriptures to all of life

THE Family

Instituted and Upheld by our Lord

Understanding the family as the fundamental unit of society, ordained and instituted by our Lord

SPEAKERS:

Dr. JOSEPH PIPA

*We welcome the return of Dr. Pipa to New Zealand this year, following his contribution to the inaugural NZCRT of October 2002. Dr. Pipa is president of Greenville Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina. He has also served as Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, California. An accomplished and frequent conference speaker, Dr. Pipa is also the author of several books including *The Lord’s Day*, *William Perkins and the Development of Puritan Preaching* & *The Root and the Branch*. Joey is married to Sissy and they have two children.*



Other Speakers include:

Rev. John Haverland, Rev. Hans Vaastra, Rev. Michael Flinn, Rev. John Rogers, Rev. Leo de Vos, Rev. Bruce Hoyt.

All are Ministers of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, currently serving their congregations.

On Friday evening at each venue, we will be presenting Dr. Pipa in seminar mode. He’ll be leading a ‘conversation’ with us on questions like:- how to find a marriage partner, what qualities should we be looking for? How best do we prepare for marriage? How do we help others who are thinking about marriage?

Young people, parents, anyone who wants to see God honoured in marriage choices, come along and be part of what will without doubt, be a lively discussion.

Saturday sessions will comprise of four topics focusing on individual roles and responsibilities in the home, from a biblical perspective.

The day will conclude with the popular question and answer panel discussion with all the speakers.

CONTACTS:

Auckland, Rev. John Haverland	Phone 09 238 2289	jhaverland@xtra.co.nz
Wellington, Rev. Leo de Vos	Phone 04 564 3577	leodevos@paradise.net.nz
Christchurch, Mr. Paul Davey	Phone 03 318 0770	stonewall@clear.net.nz

VENUES AND TIMES

CHRISTCHURCH – Reformed Church of Dovedale, 28 Shands Road, Christchurch, 21st – 22nd October 2005.

WELLINGTON – Reformed Church of Wainuiomata, 98 Wainuiomata Road, Wainuiomata, 28th – 29th October 2005.

AUCKLAND – Reformed Church of North Shore, 74 Trias Road, Glenfield, Auckland, 14th – 15th October 2005.

All Pre-conference seminars begins at 7.30pm Friday evenings, with the Conference beginning at 9.30am on the Saturday for Christchurch & Wellington, and 9.00am in Auckland; all finishing in the late afternoon.

New Zealand Conference on Reformation Theology
P.O. Box 31-334, Lower Hutt
Phone (06) 3444291
Fax (06) 3444291
Email: warrenmilne@xtra.co.nz

Christchurch: 21st – 22nd October 2005
Wellington: 28th – 29th October 2005
Auckland: 14th – 15th October 2005

to change in order to grow closer to Christ. Churches that call themselves Reformed have a saying: "A Reformed church must always be reforming." Some take this to mean that the churches must always be playing around with new ideas and unbiblical beliefs or immoral behaviour. What they call *reforming* is in fact *deforming*. "Always reforming," means striving to think and live in tune with the Bible and more in touch with Jesus. It doesn't mean, always coming up with new doctrines or new ways to God that Jesus and the apostles never spoke of. Modern progressives haven't been always honest about new ideas they try to push. They may use our vocabulary, but they mean something quite different by it. They pay lip service to the historic teachings of Christianity but believe things that are utterly at odds to those teachings. There is only one supreme standard for knowing God and determining whether something is true or false, good or bad, for Christ or against Him. That standard is the Bible. "If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn." (Isaiah 8 vs 20)

When a belief or behaviour is contrary to the Bible, the reformer rejects that belief or behaviour; the deformer rejects the Bible. A deformer wants to be progressive; a reformer wants to be Biblical.

A deformer wants what is new; A reformer wants what is true. A deformer claims there are many ways to God; a reformer knows Jesus as the only way to God. A deformer says it is primitive to insist that only Jesus' blood can take away sin; a reformer keeps on telling sinners that without Jesus' blood there is no forgiveness of sin. A deformer wants to stay five years ahead of the times; a reformer wants to be ready for eternity. Are we reforming or deforming?²

I will build My Church

"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Matt. 16 vs 13) The disciples responded: "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and other Jeremiah or one of the prophets." (vs 14) Jesus therefore demanded an answer, "But what about you?" He asked. "Who do you say I am?" (vs 15)

The question becomes personal. It's all well and good to speak about "those people out there." But unless we have settled this issue personally, we would do well to remember that salvation begins with our personal standing before Jesus, who demands an answer as to who He is.

Simon Peter answered: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." (vs 16) A simple man, called by Jesus, made a profession of faith in His name. The Bible calls us to believe, as Peter did about Christ, not just following Him as the best of men, but worshipping Him as the only true God.

Christ replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not **revealed** to you by

man, but by My Father in Heaven." (vs 17) A profession stands at the center of a saving relationship to Christ. Peter didn't come to this conclusion using just common sense, or some appreciation of personal experience with Jesus, when He performed some great miracles. Peter's faith arose from *the revelation* of God the Father. Jesus continued with a great promise, "I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church." (vs 18)

The Church of Rome teaches that Peter was the first bishop of Rome. They reason that the rock on which Jesus promised to build His church was Peter, and therefore the Roman Catholic Church is the one true church, the succeeding bishops of Rome, the popes, being the successors of Peter. But there are gaping holes in this argument. Peter founded the church in Jerusalem and the one in Antioch, but not the one in Rome. At Pentecost there were probably men from Rome who came to faith. Undoubtedly, these men returned home and began the church in that city. Look at Jesus' word play: "You are Peter, and on this Rock, I will build My church." Jesus found in Peter a real believer, and on that foundation He could build His church. Peter was the one who would lead the Twelve in the weeks after Jesus' death and resurrection; it was Peter who would preach on the first Pentecost. Jesus also added a promise: "and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." (Matt 16 vs18) Shortly after Peter's confession, Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the Jewish leaders, be killed, and on the third day be raised. Jesus was explaining that the way of the cross is to be the pattern for His followers. "If anyone

would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." (vs 24) This is the principle that must govern Christ's church. Christian men and women must take their stand on God's Word before a watching world, ready to suffer for the sake of our Lord. Only thus can our church today, by the power of God, be able to overcome the powers of evil.

When we take seriously the cross of Christ and its claim on our lives, the world will stand up and take notice.³ For the believer this is not always an easy road to take. Sometimes, when we try to build on the church and add "one stone", it may feel as if "two stones" break away. But one day, at the end of history, His church will be complete, and His people will be gathered together before the throne of the Great Reformer of all time in heaven.

Glorious things of Thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God;

He whose word cannot be broken formed thee for His own abode:

On the Rock of Ages founded, what can shake thy sure repose?

With salvation's walls surrounded, thou may'st smile at thy foes.

Footnotes:

- 1 Condensed and adapted from the novel: Storm by: Reg Grant; Reformation in Europe by: G R Elton; and The Church in History by: R B Kuiper
- 2 Adapted from a Back to God Hour message: Deforming or Reforming by: David Feddes
- 3 Condensed and adapted from the book The Church, One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic by: Richard D. Phillips

World in focus

Hurricane Katrina affects many PCA members

TE Richard Bailey, Pastor of Plains Presbyterian Church in Zachary, Louisiana, reports that their church has been opened as an evacuation shelter. They have the ability to keep about 75 - 100 persons. "This is a big blow to Southeast Louisiana Presbytery. Bailey stated that they may have lost three churches, two church plants and a Ministry. They are: Desire Street Fellowship plant, Desire Street ministries. Three Rivers Presbyterian Church in Covington, Trinity Presbyterian in Slidell, Redeemer Church plant in New Orleans, and Grace Presbyterian Church, Metarie. TE Rob Oates, pastor of Faith PCA in Brookhaven, Mississippi, has reported that about 250 people in the church are without a place to live as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Other areas of Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama and Florida, experienced significant

damage. There are a number of PCA churches in these areas which include the following Presbyteries: Southeast Louisiana, Louisiana, Grace, Mississippi Valley, Southeast Alabama, Evangel and Gulf Coast.

+ Plains Presbyterian Church, 22929 Old Scenic Hwy., Zachary, LA 70791-6224 (225) 654-2960

Congregation releases pastor for his comments on homosexuals

The congregation of Davis Memorial Presbyterian Church in Elkins, West Virginia (PCUSA), has voted to oust their pastor, Rev. Jeffery Falter. On Sunday, 21 May the congregation voted 100 to 72 to release Falter, and Falter's job terminated on 23 May. The reason for Falter's dismissal is that he wrote an article for The Inter-Mountain in which he reportedly wrote that gay and lesbian Christians are not different from straight Christians and so should not be treated differently. Falter and his family are to

be allowed to live in the manse next to the church until 31 December.

+ *Davis Memorial Presbyterian Church, 450 Randolph Ave., Elkins, WV 26241 (304) 636-2788*

Guatemala mudslide kills Presbyterian pastor

Church-related assessment teams have been at work in a remote Guatemalan mountain town where a mudslide in mid-June killed at least 23 people.

Authorities report about 50 people were injured and others are still missing.

The Rev. Jose Pop, the community's Presbyterian minister, died in the disaster as he tried to rescue his children from the family's mud-engulfed house. At least one of the children died with him and two more were injured.

Pop served in the National Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Guatemala, a denomination of 17 presbyteries that is partnered with the Presbyterian Church (USA).

+ *National Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Guatemala, IENPG, Apartado 655Ave, Simeon Canas 7-13, zona 2, 01002 Guatemala +502 2 288 4441-2*

"Failed" may be removed from British classrooms

A group of teachers has proposed that the word "fail" should be banned from use in British classrooms and replaced with the phrase "deferred success" to avoid demoralising pupils.

Members of the Professional Association of Teachers (PAT) argue that telling pupils they have failed can put them off learning for life.

A spokesman for the group said it wanted to avoid labeling children. "We recognize that children do not necessarily achieve success first time," he said.

+ *PAT, 2 St. James' Ct., Friar Gate, Derby, DE1 1BT Tel:01332 372337*

Two Reformed communions form deeper partnership

The Reformed Ecumenical Council may join the World Alliance of Reformed Churches as an independent, but subsidiary entity, making this one of the largest steps toward the global Reformed Church in modern history.

REC's general assembly agreed to begin a new process that could deepen its relationship with the WARC. The REC has 10 million members in 39 churches in 25 countries while the WARC has 75 million members in 218 churches in 107 countries making the largest communions of Reformed churches in the world.

The two fellowships may start sharing projects and personnel. The two churches already share 27 common member churches, and have been in bilateral talks since 1998.

+ *World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 150 Route de Ferney, PO Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2 Switzerland*

Mega-church research

Mega-church researcher Scott Thumma, a professor of sociology at Hartford Seminary, has collected data on over 800 mega-churches across America. Thumma says there are probably 1,500 mega-churches now, and he hopes to learn more about the rapidly growing phenomenon.

Thumma says "The switch between the

regular church and the mega-church is that the regular church is basically a Sunday experience." "That's absolutely not the operation of the mega-church. "The mega-church is a seven-day-a-week church, and it's there to fulfill the whole range of needs of human beings - not just the spiritual needs." Thumma mentions the Brentwood Baptist Church in Houston, which is the first in the nation to have a McDonald's franchise on its ground. It also houses a basketball court, an aerobics studio, a computing center, an arcade, a banquet hall, and more than 60 classrooms.

After 15 years of research he only found two types of people: Those who love mega-churches, and those who hate them.

+ *Hartford Institute for Religion Research, Hartford, CT 06101 (860) 509-9543*

New Online Magazine

The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals has begun an online magazine called reformation21. The tone of reformation21 is positive and pastoral, yet will not be afraid to touch on the controversial and to provide criticism when necessary. It is designed to serve, edify, and educate Christians by presenting an authoritative Reformed perspective, while embracing various denominational positions, on a variety of relevant historical matters, current issues, and thoughtful positions that inform, inspire, and challenge

Christians to think and grow Biblically.

The editorial editor will be Dr. Derek Thomas.

+ *The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, 1716 Spruce St., Philadelphia, PA 19103 (800) 956-2644 <www.reformation21.org >*

Borgdorff new director of CRC

Peter Borgdorff will serve as the executive director of the Christian Reformed Churches in North America, until the search for a new executive director is found. Borgdorff, 65, has been the church's executive director of ministries since 1992 and has been a CRC minister for over 30 years. Borgdorff was due to retire this month.

The executive committee of the Board of Trustee made the appointment on 3 Aug. The appointment takes effect 22 Aug., 2005 which is the date which Borgdorff was scheduled to retire as executive director of ministries.

Calvin L. Bremer, was to have assumed the duties of executive director on 22 Aug., 2005, but was forced to resign after church leaders felt he showed bad judgment in seeking to promote a female colleague to a prominent CRC post. Bremer also resigned as executive director of the Back to God Hour, (BTGH) the denomination's worldwide broadcast ministry.

Jimmy Lin has been appointed as the in-

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terim administrative director of programs and ministries of the BTGH until a new director is found. Lin, who was born in Hong Kong, has served with the BTGH since 1990 as its Chinese-language broadcast minister.

+ Dr. Peter Borgdorff (616) 224-0832 <borgdor@crna.org>
+ Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave., SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560 (616) 241-1691

Killer who became minister dies

James Nelson, a murderer who bludgeoned his mother to death, has died at the age of 60. Nelson made history by becoming a Church of Scotland minister.

The ordination of Nelson created a bitter split in the Kirk and some within the General Assembly tried to revoke his candidacy. Nelson had been secretly accepted as an approved candidate and trained for four years in secrecy, with only a few Church and university officials aware of his past. After Nelson's release on parole in 1979, the Church of Scotland offered him a place in the divinity faculty at St. Andrews University.

The truth about his past was discovered in November 1983, only months before he was licensed by the Presbytery of St. Andrews. In 1986, the Kirk appointed Mr. Nelson to Chapelhall and Calderbank, in Lanarkshire.
+ Church of Scotland, 121 George St., Edinburgh EH2 4YN

Orthodox Church leaves National Council of Churches

The Antiochian Orthodox Church is leaving the National Council of Churches because it believes the Council has adopted a liberal "political agenda."

The delegates to the Orthodox Church's 47th General Assembly voted to reject "all extremist positions that are contrary to the teaching of the Holy Orthodox Faith." This meant that they would be leaving what they saw as a far left-leaning organisation.

This is the first time in over a decade that a church decided to rescind its membership from the National Council of Churches (NCC).
+ National Council of Churches Communication Dept., 475 Riverside Dr., Suite 880, New York, NY 10115 (212) 870-2227

Christ Presbyterian Church in Ghana observes 170th Anniversary

On 7 Aug., the Akropong-Akuapem Christ Presbyterian Church in Ghana held a commemorative service honoring the early missionaries from Jamaica, who established the church 170 years ago. This laid the groundwork for the Presbyterian Church in Ghana today.

Delegations from Jamaica, Sierra Leone, and descendants of the early missionaries in Akropong-Akuapem and Accra were present at the church service.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Roderich Hewitt, Moderator of the United Church of Jamaica, and Cayman Islands, preached the sermon. Later, Hewitt was assisted by the Moderator of the General

Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Rt. Rev. Dr. Yaw Frimpong-Manso to inaugurate a 200-million computer training center for the Youth Resource Center of the church.
+ Presbyterian Church of Ghana, PO Box 1800, Thorpe Rd., Accra, Ghana +233 21 662-511

Three congregations leave United Church of Christ

On 4 July, the United Church of Christ's (UCC) general conference passed a resolution that supported gay marriage "rights" both inside and outside of the church. This resolution has caused three congregations to disassociate from the church. On 24 July, the Center Congregational UCC in Atlanta voted to withdraw from the UCC's Southeast conference, and on 31 July, Shiloh UCC in Faith North Carolina voted to break from the Southern Conference. Also on 31 July Salem-Darmstadt UCC in Evansville, Indiana voted to leave the Indiana-Kentucky Conference.

The UCC is the only mainline denomination that recognised homosexual marriage equal to heterosexual marriage.

+ United Church of Christ, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115 (866) 822-8224

South African church must defend policy on homosexuality

A former organist and music teacher at the largest Dutch Reformed congregation in the country, Johan Strydom, is taking the Dutch Reformed Church Moreleta Park in Pretoria to court for dismissing him after they found out that he had a relationship with another man.

Pieter Oberholzer, head of the organization Inclusive and Affirming Ministries that keeps track of the situation and supports gay issues in churches, said he does not know of another case where a church in South Africa had to defend in court its position on homosexuality. "It will definitely be a test case. The outcome will be of great interest."

+ Dutch Reformed Church (NGK), PO Box 4445, Pretoria 0001 South Africa

The Free Church (Continuing) loses civil court case

The Free Church (Continuing), (FCC), a church group resulting from a division in the Free Church of Scotland, has lost its civil court case against the present Free Church of Scotland (FC). The Free Church

(Continuing) was suing the present Free Church of Scotland for the assets of the whole Free Church.

The FCC argued the FC "by denying FCC members" the right of continued protest "over certain past events" had departed from a fundamental principle of the church and because of this the FCC should be recognised as the true Free Church of Scotland.

The FC's acknowledged that, "There still remain enormous problems in the relation between the two denominations," but hope "that in time these problems may be put behind us, that legal action will cease and that a way can be found for the two denominations to exist

together in peace in local communities."
+ Free Church of Scotland, The Mound, Edinburgh EH1 1 2LS, Scotland Tel: 0131-226-5286

Scotland revolutionises genealogical research

Scotland boasts having the best maintained public records and research facilities of any country in the world, but with the construction of the \$A31.6 million Scottish Family History Centre, it will create the world's first "family history campus," with access to more than 40 million digitized records. This centre is due to open at the beginning of 2007.

Two websites are now available to researchers.

<www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk > includes the GROS records of census data and Scottish births up until 1904, marriages until 1929, and deaths up until 1954.

The other site, <www.nas.gov.uk> gives access to the National Archives of Scotland's vast repository of public and legal records of Scotland.

+ The National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh EH1 3YJ, Scotland

Bible Presbyterians repudiate Rick Warren's 'Purpose Driven Church'

The 69th General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church, which met from 4-9 August, 2005, at Olympia, Washington, urges congregations and all believers of whatever denomination to fiercely repudiate and expose the egregious error espoused by Rick Warren and other proponents of the "purpose-driven" paradigm (PDP), of church growth.

Several of the problems with the PDP according to Bible Presbyterians are:

1. The entire strategy is based upon the concept that unbelievers are seeking after God, in spite of the fact that the Bible could not be clearer to the contrary.
2. The PDP values the opinions of unbelievers more than the opinions of God as revealed in His Word, believing that "felt needs" should dictate what is said from the pulpit.
3. The PDP asserts that Christians must think like non-Christians to reach them.
4. The PDP believes God is not concerned with the manner of His creatures' entering into His presence.
5. The PDP misunderstands the nature of the church, ignoring the Biblical teaching that the institution and worship of the church exists for the glorification of God Himself and the edification of believers.

+ John T. Dyck, Assistant Clerk of Synod, Edmonton Bible Presbyterian Church, 12229-38 St., Edmonton, AB T5W 2J2 (780) 479-0746 <jdyck@bpc.org>

Call for suspension of the Church of England

The Most Rev. Peter Akinola, Primate of Nigeria, has called for the suspension of the Church of England from the Anglican Communion following a move that would allow homosexual clergy to enter into civil unions under British law as long as they promise not to engage in sexual conduct. The Archbishop said that he believed

that the temporary suspension of the Church of England was the right course to take, suggesting that the Church should be placed under the same conditions as the Episcopal Church in the United States and the Anglican Church of Canada faced following earlier departures from Biblical teaching regarding morality. In a demonstration of the ridiculousness of the policy, he asked if English Bishops were going to put cameras in the bedrooms of their clergy. The Church of Nigeria has between 16 and 18 million members.

+ Rev. Mr. Charles A. Collins Jr., 289 Hastings Dr., Goose Creek, SC 29445

Home schoolers in Germany send children abroad

Seven Christian home schooling parents have decided to have their children educated in Belgium and Austria, where home schooling is legal.

Home schooling is illegal in Germany so parents are obligated to send their children to a state registered school. They may not educate their children at home even for reasons of faith or conscience.

The Baptist parents, who are ethnic German immigrants from the former Soviet Union, object to sex education and esoteric influences in primary schools.

+ Wolfgang Polzer, ASSIST New Service, PO Box 2126, Garden Grove, CA 92842-2126=20

Islam's message of hate

Plans to protect Britain's Muslim community with a bill to outlaw incitement to religious hatred could backfire on the very people it is designed to help. So says Dr. Clifford Hill, a clergyman sociologist who is Research Director of the Family Matters Institute. Believers in the Muslim holy book, the Koran, could well be accused of breaking such a law should it be passed. For though most British Muslims have never read the book but rely on what their imams tell them (they are forbidden to read it in English), its message is not the peaceful one politically correct politicians and church leaders would have us believe. Commenting on the link between Islam and terrorism in the wake of the London bombings, Dr. Hill said: "There are a number of verses in the Koran that are used by fundamentalist Muslims as justification for acts of terrorism against non-Muslims. For example, 'You who have believed, do not choose Jews and Christians as friends; they are friends to each other; whoever makes friends of them is one of them.' (Surah 5.56) 'And another: 'Fight against those who do not believe in Allah nor in the last day and do not make forbidden what Allah and his messenger have made forbidden and do not practise the religion of truth.' (Surah 9.29) 'Though it is demonstrably true that the vast majority of Muslims are decent, law-abiding and peace-loving citizens, it is a dangerous lie to say there is no connection between Islam and Muslims who carry out acts of indiscriminate murder in the name of the Islamic faith. This only obscures the path to any solution of the problem.' One of the problems, he says, is that Muslim scholars, who believe that such passages are

not binding upon its adherents today, dare not say so publicly for fear of their lives. Writing for his Bedfordshire-based Centre for Contemporary Ministry web-site, he said: "Only if Islamic scholars are brave enough to say in public to their own people what they say in private will there be peace in the 21st century world. "Islam needs to move away from its medieval stranglehold and allow free and fair scholarly discussion of its beliefs without the threat of violence. Their theologians need to state clearly that the passages in the Koran exhorting the faithful to kill Jews and Christians do not apply to Muslims today any more than the instructions to Moses to kill all the Midianites encourage us to murder Arabs." But the so-called "war on terror" was not the way to go about rooting out terrorists, he warns. It only spawns more of them. The trouble is, he adds, the decadence of the West weakens its resistance to spiritual attack, with a faith vacuum encouraging disillusioned westerners to seek alternative solutions. Dr. Hill blames the church for the spiritual mess that produced the London bombers... "for the political correctness that has created a great wall of silence around Islam, for missing the opportunity of evangelizing the Muslim immigrants in the first place and for the dangerous false teaching of misguided liberal theologians who say there is no difference between Islam and Christianity." And he hopes that Muslims who respect Jesus will allow his teaching – that you should love your enemies – to modify the medieval war passages in the Koran. Until September 11, 2001, he says, the West has largely ignored Islam's record of cruelty to Christians and Jews. "In Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Sudan, Christians are regularly persecuted, tortured, even crucified and forcibly converted to Islam. Christian pastors are doused with petrol and burnt in front of their churches, their homes torched, their churches destroyed, their congregations butchered. Many thousands of Christians have suffered in this way every year since the 1970s, yet these atrocities are rarely reported in the western press."

By Charles Gardner, Special to ASSIST News Service

House church pastor in Beijing dies

It was reported by the Voice of the Martyrs that Br. Allen Yuan, well known house pastor in Beijing, died on 16 Aug., 2005.

Yuan endured more than 20 years of suffering in China's prisons and labour camps for his faith.

+ Voice of the Martyrs (United States), PO Box 443, Bartlesville, OK 74005 (918) 337-8015

Christians set up Bible Society in Iraq

According to a report published by the United Bible Societies (UBS) in Reading, England, sporadic explosions are a common part of life in Baghdad. Churches, Christian organizations, and individuals are the main targets. But steps have been taken towards starting a Bible Society in Iraq. A task force has set up office in Baghdad and started the process of registering the Bible

Society as a non-profit organization.

A Bible center has set up in rented and renovated premises. Also in conjunction with World Compassion, Christian Freedom International, World Evangelical Alliance, and Campus Crusade for Christ, thousands of Arabic pocket Bibles, illustrated Bibles and New Testaments have been distributed. Close to 150,000 were handed out all over the country.

+ American Bible Society, 1865 Broadway, New York, NY 10023 (212) 408-1200

Religious discrimination in Russia

The Slavic Law Centre has reported that in Russia the first four months of 2005 yielded more cases of religious discrimination and violation of believers' rights than 2003 and 2004 combined.

Reported cases include attempts to seize church buildings or destroy them by arson or explosions. Protestant Christians have endured physical attacks, verbal insults, and beatings from the police and from groups of fanatics. Many churches are having problems getting permission to construct church buildings.

Because of these problems, Protestant churches are becoming more active in raising their voice to remind the authorities and society about their constitutional rights. Protestant churches are also urging Russians to disregard the lies from mass-media, from representatives of authorities, and from the Russian Orthodox Church about Protestants.

+ Slavic Centre for Law and Justice, Russia 115035 Moscow, 3rd Kadashevski per., 5, building 5, <irlaw@online.ru>

National geographic offers printable maps

National Geographic's Xpeditions Atlas features detailed maps of the world. Use the selection tools to pick a continent and then the country you want. Different views help to customize the maps. The maps are optimized for printing. This is a good site for preparing travel, especially overseas, and for students doing their geography assignments.

+ <www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/atlas/>

Westminster Assembly project website

The Westminster Assembly (1643-1652) was both the largest parliamentary committee of the English civil war and the last of the great post-Reformation synods. The Assembly is best known as the creed-making body behind the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, documents which have guided Presbyterian and Reformed churches for centuries.

The Westminster Assembly Project is making the writings of the Westminster Assembly and its members available to scholars and to the general public. The Westminster Assembly Project website will be of interest to those interested in Puritanism, English civil-war studies, post-Reformation theology, or the history of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism.

+ Dr. Chad B. Van Dixhoorn, General Editor, The Westminster Assembly Project, Wolfson College, Cambridge, CB3 9BB, England

Kansas downgrades evolution teaching

The education board of Kansas has tentatively approved new guidelines supported by some Christians that encourage public school teachers to teach a variety of theories about the origins of life, downgrading the core of the theory of evolution.

Kansas teachers would still be able to teach the standard theory of evolution advanced by Charles Darwin, that theory, based on the notion of 'natural selection,' would no longer be required in Kansas public school curricula

and would be complemented by the teaching of other theories.

+ *Kansas State Board of Education, Topeka, KS*
66612-1182 (785) 296-3201

Embryonic cell removal without ethical drawbacks

Three teams of researchers have announced discoveries of cells with potent capabilities without their ethical problems. They are:

The Washington Post in a 22 Aug., report stated that Harvard University scientists announced they have transformed skin cells into

embryonic-like stem cells without the use of human eggs or the creation of embryos.

The Houston Chronicle reported on 19 Aug., that a team of Texas and British researchers revealed they have generated what seem to be embryonic stem cells from umbilical cord blood.

The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review reported on 5 Aug., that University of Pittsburgh scientists have discovered embryonic-like stem cells in the placenta.

+ *Harvard Medical School, 22 Shattuck St., Boston, MA 02115-6092 (617) 495-1000*
+ *University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260 (412) 624-4141*

The saints in ancient British history

The Venerable Bede

Patricia van Laar

In this series of glimpses into ancient British history, we have frequently come across the name of Bede. He was one of the characters of whom I knew little, but learnt to admire while still in Sunday School, for we children were given a leaflet that told the moving story of his death, and which I kept for a long time in my Bible. Then I realised that a boys' school not far from my home was named after him. As it was a Roman Catholic school, I was somewhat puzzled. My only 'acquaintance' from this school was a boy who whistled at me as I passed him cycling in the opposite direction to my own secondary school!

Known as the 'Father of English History', Bede was the most learned man of his age. Born in the far North of England c. 672, he was the most important English Christian scholar, teacher and writer between the age of the Church Fathers and the Carolingian revival of learning. Sent at the age of seven to be an oblate in the twin monastery houses of Wearmouth and Jarrow, he studied at Wearmouth under the well-known Benedict Biscop, and his successor, Ceolfrid, before transferring to Jarrow.

Two traditions

His was an inheritance of the two Christian traditions, the Celtic and the Latin (Roman) Churches. Partly due to the influence of St Patrick, Celtic Christianity became strongly evangelical. Bede held Aidan in high regard, and revered the dying tradition of Lindisfarne's spirituality. However, at the same time, he was a staunch supporter of the authority of Rome, and a protagonist of the Roman See in questions of law and discipline. (It is hard for us to appreciate today, these two very different traditions "hand in hand" in one person.) The Celtic missionaries had carried the faith

into Britain from Iona and Lindisfarne, and Pope Gregory I had sent the mission under Augustine to convert the Angles, Saxons and Jutes and to advance the centralisation of the church under the Latin papacy of Rome. The organisation and devotional life of Lindisfarne were Celtic in spirit, but by the time of Bede, this community conformed to the Synod of Whitby, 664, which had officially linked the church with Rome. Quarrels between the two



over differing practices seem trivial to us, for they were mainly concerning the date of Easter, and how the monks should shave their heads. These two contentious subjects crop up in every text. The Latin Church with its disciplined clergy won. Bede took the pro-Latin position in the struggle, but gave the Celtic Irish monks and their converts all credit for their work and Biblical doctrine.

This is illustrated by Bede's commendation of the doctrine and living of Aidan. "He cared for peace, love, self-control, humility," wrote Bede. "His spirit triumphed over anger and greed, and despised pride and vainglory. He was zealous to teach and to do God's will...He knew what was taught by the Gospels and the Apostles and the books of the Prophets, and did his utmost to fulfill them all. These things in him I much admire and love, as surely well pleasing to God."

Foster (in 'They Converted Our Ancestors') comments on this, "From one belonging to the 'other side' it is praise indeed for the noble founder of a noble mission."

The same doctrine

Practices were different, not doctrine. The Gospel was preached – frequent was the recurring emphasis on the Bible. Bede recognized that in doctrinal matters Aidan's heart "held and revered and preached nothing different... the redemption by the passion, resurrection and ascension into heaven of the mediator between God and Man, himself Man, Christ Jesus," Bede continued.

In spite of his approval of the subjection of the Celtic to the Roman Church, Bede's education included gems from both streams; the democratic charity of the Celts and the efficiency of the Roman order. In his time, as mentioned above, the main differences between these Churches were not so much in doctrinal matters, but in practice. Unfortunately the triumph of Rome opened the whole British Church to the increasingly unbiblical teachings and practices that Rome was developing and encouraging.

In 682 Benedict Biscop founded the monastery at Jarrow, where Bede spent most of his quiet and tranquil life. Bede gives us particulars of this, and records how such a life consisting of monastic discipline, singing and the delights

of learning, teaching and writing, was for him deeply satisfying. From the continent, Biscop and the Archbishop of Canterbury collected a vast and valuable treasury of manuscripts for the libraries of Wearmouth, Jarrow and Canterbury. These monasteries developed the best libraries in Britain. Bede also had at his disposal classical pagan literature, and the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible. He was familiar with all aspects of the available learning of his age, including some medicine and astronomy. (King Alfred the Great later translated some manuscripts into Anglo-Saxon).

The secluded life of a gifted scholar

Bede, during his long, secluded life, concentrated on scholarship, didactic and ethical writing. Teaching and literature dominated the western monastic education until the rise of the universities. The preservation of learning in the monasteries is a heritage we should be grateful for, whatever our view of monasticism. Without them the world and Christianity would have lost many of its records. Bede's learning covered Latin, Greek, astronomy, medicine, and probably some Hebrew. Ordained at 19 as a deacon and at 30 a priest, his whole life was spent in Northumbria, with Jarrow as his principal home. As well as theological treatises, he wrote works on time, producing a treatise on the calendar, works on history, Scriptures, hymnology, geography, and also some scientific works - studies of natural phenomena. His "Ecclesiastical History of the English Church" is our chief source of knowledge of early English history, a major source of information on life in early England. Bede wrote everywhere he could for copies of documents,

so as to portray events accurately. He had the gift of co-ordinating facts into what has been described as a "vivid historical pattern." This and his keen critical faculty helped his historical writing to stand the test of time. A manuscript copy of his main historical work, probably written in the late 8th century in Southern England, still exists in the British Library in London.

A man of influence and of attention to detail

Bede's writings influenced generations of historians. The historian Eddius's book on the Life of St Wilfrid, and Bede's Life of Cuthbert and his Ecclesiastical History, are the three main sources for the early history of the Church in Britain. His best known work, the Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation, is a description of the English nation from Roman times through to 731. Sources were always given, and checked where possible, Bede sending to other monasteries for clarification and advice. Devotion to the truth and accuracy set a standard for the writing of history. His poetic description of the Christian mission in Great Britain has been described as unforgettable. Linear history (Judeo/Christian chronology) was an important aspect. Individualism was also emphasized. Biblical exegesis followed the early Fathers in interpretation and allegory, but with his own 'unique and interesting digressions'. Times, the church's year, chronology, the Biblical use of numbers, all were part of his study. The eccentricities of the Christian Celts, the wildness of the heathen Saxons, the pragmatic orderliness of the Catholic church all flowed in Bede's veins, rendering him altogether unique.

Yet, his writing did not lure him away from

what he considered the most important function of the Christian, the praise of God. Known from the 9th century as 'the Venerable Bede' for the saintliness and devotion of his life, Bede's praise was expressed through the music of the monastery and the Christian Word.

A man of the Word

And what was the story of his death in 735, that so impressed me as a child? It was a fitting end to the life of the man.

Many are aware of the contribution to the Bible translation into English of John Wycliffe and William Tyndale. Not so many can point to the first one to translate a Bible portion into that tongue. Yes, the first known was Bede. At the time of his death, he was busily translating the Gospel of John into English. According to tradition, as the days passed and the work progressed, Bede was becoming weaker and weaker. Determined to get the task finished, he persisted. One day his secretary, seated by Bede's bed, paused during the dictation, and seeing the extreme weariness and frailty of the master, cried out, "Stop now, for there is but one more sentence to do." "Write quickly, then," Bede said, and dictated the last sentence to the scribe.

"It is finished, sir," called out the scribe, and hearing this, with the praises of God on his lips, the great soul of this great man returned to its giver. His work on earth was completed. How apt are these closing words: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." John 21: 25 (A.V.)

Focus on home

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Andrew Reinders

Bishopdale

A special welcome to family and friends who are here to witness the Profession of Faith of Andre Posthuma. Once again we can testify to God's goodness in our lives.

Support the Leper house Project with Your Building Skills: The deacons are looking for

volunteers to erect a kitset garden shed, and in exchange the grateful owner will make a donation for the Leper House Project. So here's the chance to practice your building skills, have some fun and double the benefits! If interested please see one of the Deacons.

Church Camp: We are planning another church camp to be held at Hanmer Forest Park for the weekend 28 - 30 October. The costs will be adults - \$45, children (2-13) - \$15. This includes accommodation and food for the weekend. There will be a trip to the hot pools planned for Saturday afternoon which will be extra. There will be some time set aside for Bible study; walking; mountain biking; and a family skit night planned for Saturday night. This is a great way to get to know some more people in the church so we hope heaps of you will come along. Pick up a registration form in the foyer

and get it in to Peter or Vivien Mahoney.

Thankyou: Marcel, Alice, Eva and Nina wish to send you this huge THANK-YOU for the enormous amount of support prayers, baking, meals, cards, phone calls and visits since the very sudden loss of our wee Millie. There are not enough words to express how thankful and loved we feel, so please accept this as our personal acknowledgement. Also a big thankyou to the ladies who came out for the coffee morning, it was much appreciated.

Bucklands Beach

Mens Presbytery Conference. When? Saturday July 23rd 2005. Programme commences at 8.45am (coffee and a nibble for weary travellers!). First (devotional/introductory) session begins at 9.15pm. Days programme ends at 3.00pm. Where? Reformed Presbyterian

Church, Bucklands Beach, 228 Bucklands Beach Rd! Excellent, warm, user-friendly facilities. What to expect? The days programme aims to help us in ministering to and through the young people in our churches. The theme for the day's programme is TEENS CHALLENGE TEENS. In short: the challenges teens present and the challenges to present to teens in our covenant community. Guest speaker will be Mr Mal Green, who has spent many years working with and ministering to young people both in New Zealand and Singapore. His current work is with Youth For Christ on Auckland's North Shore with a special interest in ministering to and among Korean Teenagers. The programme will be interactive allowing plenty of time for discussion and considering practical ways and means of engaging and young people. For YOU? Those engaged in leadership – both as office-bearers and in the various areas of youth ministry! Those who are wanting to know what

AUCKLAND PRESBYTERY

The Auckland Presbytery of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand met on Friday 29th July 2005, at the Pukekohe Reformed Church. Elder Len van Trigt, on behalf of the Reformed Church of Avondale, opened the meeting with a reading from Philippians 2:1-11. Elder Ray Smith then led us in opening prayer.

Agenda Items included:

Rev J Haverland reported on a second Reformed Pastors and elders meeting held in Auckland, with a good time of discussion and prayer. A third meeting is planned to tie in with the visit of Dr Joseph Pipa who is coming for the Reformational Conference in October.

Thanks was expressed to the Bucklands Beach congregation for organizing the men's presbytery Leadership Training day, with North Shore agreeing to organise the next one. All Suggestions for suitable subjects will be gratefully received!

The sessions of Mangere, North Shore and Pukekohe answered Church Order Article 47 questions. Overall, the responses were constructive showing a healthy and encouraging church life, with a positive emphasis on evangelistic efforts and outreach.

Correspondence received was considered, with a request from Mangere to discuss Youth services tabled till the next meeting. A letter from Hamilton regarding Mission among the Jews was referred to individual sessions for their consideration.

Most Church visitations are in the process of being organised.

The meeting was closed by Rev D van Garderen at 9:05 pm.

it is all about. Those who are concerned about this issue of ministering to and through teenagers! All of you guys! What to bring? Yourself and a carload of friends! Your Bible and something to write and take notes on. Morning tea and lunch is provided. Cost for the day (covering lunch, etc) is \$10.00.

Youth to be invited. Young people from the churches in our presbytery have been invited to come and worship with us during the afternoon service of Sunday, 14th August. The idea will be that afterwards a special time of fellowship will extend to sharing a meal and some quality time together. More details next week.

Christchurch

With thanks. To all those who congratulated us with our 60th wedding anniversary – by cards or otherwise – we like to say: thank you very much! That Sunday was a special day. A few people had asked us: "Did you get married on a Sunday?" No, we were married on Tuesday the 31st of July 1945, but in 2005 the date fell on a Sunday and we were very happy about it. Now we could celebrate it with the whole congregation. A sermon of Pastor Klazinga on our wedding text was a total surprise. The musicians played some of our favourite hymns, a full church, the speeches and the flowers, all those things together, it made our day! We thank the Lord that we can still be together after so many years.

Wiebe & Elizabeth Gorter

Dovedale

From the Pastor: I've just begun teaching again at the Bible College. The course is called "Interpretive Method" and deals with a wide range of subjects relating to Scripture interpretation. This week we will be looking at the how the canon of Scripture was formed, or how the 66 books of the Bible came to be recognized as Scripture. There are about 18 students in the class this year and the lecture is on Wednesday afternoon. Most of the people doing this course are either in full-time ministry or are preparing for it. I'd appreciate your prayer for this in the coming weeks and months.

From the Pastor: Last Thursday and Friday I had the privilege of visiting the Assembly of Grace Presbyterian Church, which this year was held in Christchurch at the Bible College. It was great to be able to convey greetings on behalf of our churches, especially because the Wellington Presbytery has overtured our forthcoming synod in September to hold talks with the GPC with a view to seeking closer bonds with them. This is further to a decision made by Synod 2002, namely: "to encourage the RCNZ to attempt to seek closer bonds at a local level with other churches of Reformed persuasion in NZ for the purpose of a united stand in common matters and to work towards closer ties doctrinally and DV organizationally". MF.

Dunedin

Vicariate. As announced last Sunday both congregations voted in favour of session proceeding with an application for a vicar for 2006. The Vicariate Committee will receive our application along with those of any other churches that may decide to apply. The closing date for applications is 26 August. Pray that the Lord may grant wisdom to the committee (Revs J A Haverland and J H Rogers) in making their decision.

We enjoyed a wonderful evening of food and fellowship last Saturday at the church hall. Sorry that the quizzes didn't happen but everyone seemed involved in conversations. It is possible that there will be a dessert night in a couple of months so we will definitely need pen and paper then.

Foxton

Meditation: During the week someone made the suggestion that we should possibly exercise Censura Morum as a congregation before we celebrate Lord's Supper. For those who are unaware, Session exercises Censura Morum at the Session meeting prior to celebrating the Lord's Supper together. The chairman asks each brother in turn if there is any reason that would prevent him from celebrating the Lord's Supper with any of his fellow office bearers, or anyone else for that matter. Usually, it is a time of mutual encouragement, for we also have opportunity to encourage each other in our specific tasks. Can we exercise Censura Morum as a congregation on the Sunday before? Theoretically, it should be possible. When we celebrate the Lord's Supper together there shouldn't be anything that prevents us from coming to the Lord's Table and remembering the Lord's death and payment for our sin until such time we eat and drink in His presence. Yet, in reality it would be unwise to go that way for not only are the logistics too awkward, it would give the wrong understanding of the Lord's Supper. True, the Scriptures call on each person to examine themselves, and if there is anything that would prevent them from worshipping and participating wholeheartedly, then they need to go and correct it [Mat 5:22-23]. Our liturgical forms also encourage us to do so and that is why they are read a week beforehand as a reminder. Elders are given the extra charge to ensure that the Lord's Supper table is protected from unrepentant sinners. Perhaps a few other things we should keep in mind in regards to this question. First, it is the Lord's Supper and not your supper. Second, we are called to examine ourselves and not others. Third, if you think someone shouldn't attend the supper because of a particular sin, then make sure you have had the decency to speak to that brother or sister in Christian love outlining your concern. Fourth, the Lord's Supper is for forgiven sinners. We all do things

that make us unworthy participants and that is why we don't attend Lord's Supper in our own righteousness, but we go because we have asked for forgiveness from the only One who can forgive us our sins, the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, the day you think you are worthy to attend because you have been 'so good', is the day you should not attend! Finally, let's be very careful that our lives do not cause our fellow Christians to stumble, whether it be what they see in us, hear from our lips, or even hear from the lips of others. After all, we want to keep the unity of the faith and at the same time be a witness to our friendly, yet unbelieving neighbour too. JZ

Fellowship news: Congratulations to John and Marianne [nee Slykhuis] Draijer with the birth of James Johan. Born the 10th July and weighing 3760 gms [about 8.4 pound]. All are well.

It has been a rather turbulent week. Flying to Aussie to visit a very ill father and then being called back home for the funeral of Br Michiel Dykstra, who the Lord suddenly called heavenward last Wednesday morning. When these things happen, life seems to stop for a moment and it leaves one rather still and contemplating about the more important things in life. In light of that, one can hardly find more comforting words for the believer than the words we find in John 14:1-6.

23rd Psalm – a new way of looking at it:

The Lord is my Shepherd - That's Relationship!

I shall not want - That's Supply!

He makes me to lie down in green pastures - That's Rest!

He leads me beside the still waters - That's Refreshment!

He restores my soul - That's Healing!

He leads me in the paths of righteousness - That's Guidance!

For His namesake - That's Purpose!

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death - That's Testing!

I will fear no evil - That's Protection!

For You are with me - That's Faithfulness!

Your rod and Your staff they comfort me - That's Discipline!

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies - That's Hope!

You anoint my head with oil - That's Consecration!

My cup runs over - That's Abundance!

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life - That's Blessing!

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord - That's Security!

Forever - That's Eternity!

Hamilton

Invitation to celebrate. We, Nico and Caroline van't Wout, are delighted to invite you to the wedding of Linda van't Wout and Owen Mataiti on Saturday 23 July. They will seal their love for each other before the Lord at 2 pm in this church. Please join us for afternoon tea in the hall after the ceremony.

Session Meeting Notes: The full Session met on 18 July and Elders only on 27 July to discuss the calling of Rev Gerald Vanderkolk. After full discussion, prayer and continued contact with Gerald since his visit, the Session has unanimously voted in favour of recommending Rev Gerald Vanderkolk to the congregation to serve as Minister of the Word and Sacraments in the Reformed Church of Hamilton. The congregation will be asked to vote on this matter after the morning Worship Service on Sunday 7 August. The threshold for a call has been set at 75% of those voting. A paper has been put in all communicant members' pigeon holes giving the reasons for Session's recommendation.

Hukanui

For those of you who have not yet heard, Anthony & Petra Lagas had a baby girl on the 29th July, and have named her Elske Petronella.

Mangere

An invitation to our women. The Bucklands Beach Women's Fellowship group would like to invite you to join us at our meeting on Friday, August 5th commencing at 7.45pm at our church (228 Bucklands Beach Rd.) Our intention is to provide a DINNER. We therefore need to know in advance how many plan on coming along to join us. Please let us know by July 15th.

PS. Maybe you could provide a few bottles of grape juice to serve as drinks? On behalf of the BB Women's Fellowship, Gonny van Garderen.

Pastoral. Just over a week ago the combined youth of our Auckland Presbytery held a sports day, organised by the Pukekohe youth. Reports I've heard were very positive, aside from a few injuries! Our indoor soccer teams held their own, though volleyball wasn't quite the same. We're thankful for these occasions as they foster a good fellowship amongst our young people.

North Shore

Girls day in! Once again we invite all girls aged 12 and up to join us for fellowship and a look at purity. Date: Sat July 30th. Time: 2-4pm. So mark the day on your calendar and keep an eye out for more details next week! Any questions, just have chat with Bec or Marlene.

Well, the big news is that, this past Thursday, Peter and Michelle Brunton received a healthy 9 pound baby boy. All is well with both mother and baby. Praise the Lord for His blessings!

Palmerston North

Jim and Oxana. We look forward to Jim and Oxana joining the church this morning through profession of faith and baptism. And we praise our heavenly Father for His grace.

Pukekohe

Course on Christian Education in the church: This course is offered by Grace Theological College in Manurewa and will be held from 4-6pm and 7-9pm from Monday 25 to Wednesday 27 July. It will be taught by Dave Matthews who is the associate pastor of Briarwood Presbyterian Church and a lecturer at Birmingham Theological Seminary in the States. Further details can be seen on the notice board.

Silverstream

Prism Magazine. Not just another discussion group. This one's a real, printed magazine written by people you know, about stuff you're keen on, and with talent you'll want to see. Books, movies, politics, food, work, science, stories, cars, sport. The first issue is coming out mid to late August, and it's FREE! To sign up, or for more info, see www.prismmagazine.co.nz.

Wainuiomata

Prayer Meeting. This afternoon after our worship service the Session has called the congregation to gather again for a time of prayer for Anna Bartlett. Let us come and whether publicly or privately, pour out our hearts to God in prayer.

Youth Group. This coming Saturday (30th July) 'The Great Valley Race' will be run!! It will commence at 9:45am from Silverstream Church. Teams will travel around the Hutt Valley and possibly surrounding suburbs using transportation you have yet to discover! Also performing activities never yet ever heard of... Please bring a packed lunch (and any snacks) as this race may finish around 3-4. Please also bring \$5 to cover costs. If you haven't already done so, please organise yourself a team of 4 (previously mentioned rule of at least one girl and one guy per team is no longer valid). For those of you unable to find yourself a team, there will be opportunity when you arrive at the church on Saturday to sort this out.

Greetings from Chicago in the USA!

At the time of writing this letter, we have been in the States for a little over 1 year. We live in a suburb of South Chicago called Sauk Village. Our village is 5 minutes drive from both the seminary and the church that we attend. We live in a regular 3 bedroom house, different only from those in N.Z. by the double glazed windows and the central air conditioning and heating system. We have certainly learnt to appreciate those differences having now experienced our first full Winter and most of our first Summer. Winter was not to extreme by Chicago standards, but the children enjoyed every minute of life lived amongst snow! We got as cold as about 10-15 below zero and had the first snow on Thanksgiving weekend in November. January is generally the snowiest month and Snow can still arrive as late as April, but we did not experience any that late this year. At least with snow you can dress up warmer. Summer on the other hand has been a different story all together! We have had a very summer even by Chicago standards. An average year has about 17 90 degree fahrenheit days. We have had close to 30 and the difference between 88 and 90 is unnoticeable. Most of the midwest has been declared a drought zone and we have spent a lot of the time indoors to avoid the heat. Neighbors of ours shifted house and



Abe and us



The De Jongs with Andre, Jonathan and Michael



Our home in Chicago

decided that rather than take their swimming pool with them they would leave it to us! The children certainly appreciated this on the hot afternoons. Many people have pools and they get quite warm with the heat, so we have enjoyed BBQ's with different folks over the summer time.

I have completed my first year of studies at Mid-America Reformed Seminary and begin the second year on August 30th. The Master of Divinity is a 3 year program and the second and third year students take their classes together. This means that the class will be around 20 students this year instead of the 10 of last year. The seminary owns some land around about and hopes to continue to grow as the years go by. All students agree that the first semester of the first year is the most difficult as you take 7 courses including Hebrew. Those who do not arrive with Greek down also must take that. I had tested out of the summer Greek intensive course which is held six weeks before the regular begins, but had to take Greek during the first semester. This means an extra 3 hours on a Thursday afternoon and an extra exam at the end of the semester, but thankfully the Lord was gracious. Next in difficulty is the final semester of the last year, which includes your comprehensive exams including a oral examination from the professors that covers all courses taught at seminary. This is done also as a preparation for the candidacy exams that all graduates take upon leaving seminary.

I was elected to serve as the Secretary/Treasurer of the student body this year, which means next year, Lord Willing, I will serve as the President of the student body. Last year as a student body we completed the translation of the three forms of unity into the Hindi language and into the Mharati language for use amongst missionaries in India. One of the students here is Indian and he has taken the book back to India and is distributing it there.

We worship at Lynwood United Reformed Church. The URC is a federation made up of churches which left the CRC about 10-11 years ago. They use the blue Psalter Hymnal as many of our churches do and we feel very much at home worshipping with these Brothers and Sisters. They are a denomination with which ours is engaged in the formal procedure of becoming Sister churches with. I have just completed my first summer internship here at Lynwood. This basically means you serve as a type of 'apprentice' Pastor for 12 weeks. This gave me numerous opportunities to preach and to visit with members of the congregation and has been a wonderful experience that has taught me a lot. I am very grateful to the Lord for the opportunity to serve as an Elder and as a Deacon back home in Silverstream and also look back with thanksgiving on the process of preparing to come here to undertake ministerial studies. This experience has helped me immensely in my study and in the internship.

One of the church members here is Dr P.Y.DeJong. Some of you will know him as the author of the commentary on the Belgic Confession of Faith called The Churches Witness to the World.

It has been a privilege getting to know someone of his stature and immense ability. He is a very humble man who will celebrate his 90th birthday this year, Lord willing, and he also celebrated the 65th anniversary of his marriage to his wife Joanne as well as the 65th anniversary of ordination into the ministry, last month. He preached in our morning service and was then presented with a number of congratulatory letters in a small ceremony after the service. Even though he is nearly 90 he still leads the service with vigour and preaches without notes. He has an extraordinary memory and was called to serve in the Reformed Church of Dunedin at one time, but declined the call. He is fairly familiar with the N.Z. scene and is always interested in news from there.

Anita has continued to homeschool the children. The American school year is enjoying its 3 month summer break. This is a very long time and we are doing the odd week of work throughout the summer to keep their minds in the groove. As we near the end of our summer break we are house sitting for friends this week and then we hope to travel to Washington D.C and to New York for a few days. The network of Kiwis living abroad has helped us with accommodation and we look forward to seeing some of the sights.

Well we hope that this gives you something of a snapshot of our time here thus far in the USA. You may wish to check out the following websites. Our family has a website located at [HYPERLINK http://www.onzies.zoomshare.com](http://www.onzies.zoomshare.com) . We update this with news and photos from time to time. You may also send us a note at this address. Lynwood URC has a website located at [HYPERLINK http://www.lynwoodurc.org](http://www.lynwoodurc.org) . Finally, you can also find out more about Mid-America Reformed Seminary at [HYPERLINK http://www.midamerica.edu](http://www.midamerica.edu) .

We still get our church bulletin sent over along with the Faith in Focus. With them and with the news we get from stuff.co.nz it is good to be able to keep up as best as possible with goings on in Kiwiland. We hope that the Synod this year is a blessing to the churches and there may be a spirit of concord and unity. I also wish once again to thank all those who have supported us with prayers and financial support across the denomination. We are very grateful for the generosity of the folks back home in Silverstream and others who have made this possible for us. We look forward in the Lord's grace to returning home in due course and serving the church of the Lord Jesus Christ to the glory and honour of God's name.

Andre, Anita, Jonathan, Laura, Michael, Caroline, and Julia Holtslag.
2019 E216th Court, Sauk Village, Illinois,
60411. U.S.A. onzies_usa@hotmail.com

Editor's Note: I have been informed that the Rev. Dr. P. Y. De Jong passed away on Sunday the 28th of July 2005. We pray for comfort for the family but also thanksgiving for the life of this faithful servant.

A feminine focus

Dealing with the Sin of Worry – John MacArthur's 'Anxiety Attacked'

Sally Davey

This is a wonderfully straightforward and helpful book, typical of the style of John MacArthur, minister of Grace Community Church in Los Angeles.

His aim here is to help Christians out of a common difficulty - worry. Who does not worry sometimes; who is never a bit fearful about the future? Some of us, of course, are more prone to this than others. For a few, terrible stress, even racing hearts and "panic attacks" can be the result of dwelling on the terrible things that *could* happen to us. Generally we feel quite sorry for those who are anxious, and, quite rightly, do what we can to encourage them. But how do we view the problem? Do we see it as some kind affliction, or what? Usually we say that people "suffer from" it – and by that phrase we are suggesting it is a kind of sickness or depressive condition, thereby implying that treatment would be appropriate.

Why anxiety is sin

That is not how MacArthur views it. Anxiety, he warns, is no sickness; it is sin. It is "blatant distrust of the power and love of God", and the Christian who worries "is really saying, 'God, I know You mean well by what You say, but I'm not sure You can pull it off.'" (p.15)..

Now, this perspective may make you angry. You may never have viewed anxiety in this light before. You may even consider it quite insensitive. (I remember having a friendly disagreement with one dear friend at a Bible study on this point). I have no doubt but that MacArthur is right. As one who is inclined to sin in this way far too often, I find it a great relief to have the real facts about worry laid bare Biblically. You see, when the Scriptures show us the problem, they also show us the solution. And the only treatment MacArthur recommends is reality therapy – or Biblical truth. The gospel that shows us our sin also gives us the hope of forgiveness, of cleansing and ongoing help to resist that sin in the future. And that is certainly true of the sin of anxiety.

Matthew 6:25-34

This book, *Anxiety Attacked*, consists of a series of sermons by MacArthur, adapted into book form as a connected series of Biblical ex-

positions on how to deal with worry. You could say they give us the reasons not to worry. So, what are the passages he deals with? The three most critical are Matthew 6:25-34; Philippians 4:6-9 and 1 Peter 5:5-7.

In dealing with Matthew chapter six, MacArthur places us in the crowd listening to Jesus preach His sermon on the mount. He explains that Jesus' object lesson about the birds of the air and the lilies of the field is an invitation to observe the ways of the Father, and thereby weaken the temptation to worry. So often, we simply notice the beauty of the flowers, but fail to pay full attention to what their presence in the field teaches us. God adorns even the common meadows with intricately designed flowers, which are here today, but withered in the wind and sun tomorrow. So, if He does this, how much more do you think He will lavish tender care on the needs of His children? And what about the birds? Even though they don't have the equipment for sowing, harvesting and storing their food in barns, yet the Father feeds them by giving them instincts for finding food. He will provide for us. Worry, MacArthur underscores, never accomplishes anything productive.

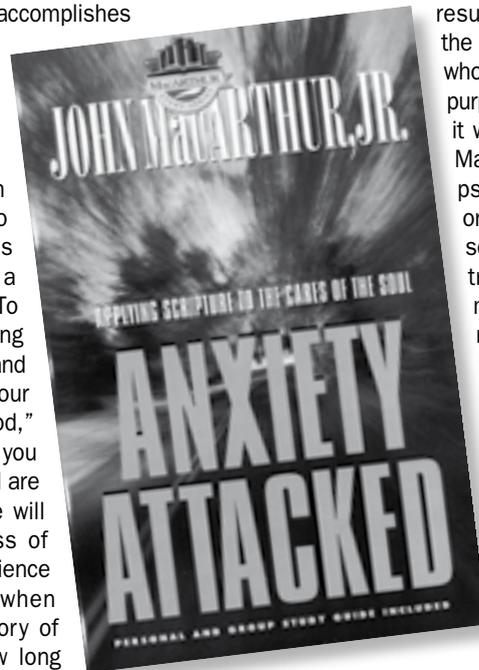
It will do nothing to prolong our days – nothing, not even in a privileged culture like ours, where so much attention is given to ensuring we have as long and as healthy a life as possible. "To worry about how long you are going to live and how to add years to your life is to distrust God," warns MacArthur. "If you give Him your life and are obedient to Him, He will give you the fullness of days. You will experience life to the fullest when you live it to the glory of God. No matter how long or short, it will be wonderful." He emphasizes his point with a few home truths about worriers. The worrier strikes out at God's trustworthiness, the worrier disbelieves Scripture, and the worrier is mastered by circumstances rather than by the truths of his

salvation. "It breaks my heart," this preacher writes, "to hear some Christians say, 'I believe in the inerrancy of Scripture' but then live as perpetual worriers. They are saying one thing out of one side of their mouth, and another thing out of the other." He goes on to observe that "Worry paralyzes its victim, making him or her too upset to accomplish anything productive. It will seek to do that to you by taking you mentally into tomorrow until you find something to worry about." Remember, God will give grace in time of need – when we need it, not before. If we worry about the future now, we will be causing ourselves to go through the pain of it twice over, without having the grace to deal with it.

Philippians 4:6-9

The Apostle Paul's charter on how to avoid worry is found in Philippians chapter four. As MacArthur says, this teaching is clear, compelling, direct and immensely practical. First, we are to stir up our minds into thankful prayer to God, rather than letting it fill with anxious thoughts. Thankful prayer affects our attitude and state of heart, and dispels anxiety. It is the first step in breaking the destructive, habitual pattern of worry. The promise is that, when we do this, our hearts will be filled with the peace of God. Secondly, we are to think, positively, on godly virtues – dwell on them, hide them in our hearts, meditate on them. An observation: "Some people assume worry is the result of too much thinking. Actually, it's the result of too little thinking in the right direction. If you know who God is and understand His purposes, promises and plans, it will help you not to worry." MacArthur adds, "Faith isn't psychological self-hypnosis or wishful thinking, but a reasoned response to revealed truth." Thus, Paul's command in Philippians 4:8 is really a summons to study closely the character of God. And because we eventually resemble whatever we make the focus of our thoughts, this command will increase our faith, hope and confidence in God and decrease our temptation to worry. As MacArthur observes, we still live in a fallen

world, and our renewed minds need ongoing cleansing and refreshment. God's chief agent for purifying our thinking is His Word. So study it, memorize it, meditate on it – take conscious effort to replace your anxious thoughts with true, trust-inspiring, Biblical thinking.



1 Peter 5:5-7

The Apostle Peter, writes MacArthur, was a worrier who learned to deal with anxiety. In his first letter, he passed on a valuable lesson. Humble yourselves, realize your hopeless inability to fix your problems on your own, turn to God in trust and confidence. With this attitude of heart, we will deal with the problem of anxiety in a state of dependence, "casting all [our] anxiety upon Him, because He cares for [us]" (1 Peter 5:5-7). Our Father really does care for us, and when we learn to live our lives consciously believing that, and acting on it, we learn not to be anxious. How does this look, in action? MacArthur quotes a pamphlet of Jay Adams on the subject of dealing with fear:

"Stop trying to stop fearing [or worrying]. Say to God in your own words (and mean it) something like this: 'Lord, if I have another [bout with fear or worry], I'll just have to have it. I am going to leave that in your hands.' That is something of what Peter meant when he wrote " 'Casting all of your care upon Him for He cares for you.' (1 Peter 5:7). Then, make your plans and go ahead and do whatever God holds you responsible for doing. Fill your mind with concern for the other persons toward whom you are expressing love and how you will do so, in whatever you are doing." (Jay Adams, "What Do You Do When Fear Overcomes You" – P & R, 1975)

Other reasons

There are other reasons, MacArthur writes, for not being anxious. They include the fact that God has put us in a company of believers, the church, and we have people around us who can encourage us, pray with us and for us, and whom we know will be there to help us if anything seriously bad does actually happen. Rejoice in that provision, and recognize it as God's way of caring for His children here in this life. Rejoice in the many gifts He has given His church, and give thanks for the gifts of others that especially help us in our own weakness. You may have been given the gift of teaching, or administration or giving – but are reminded often of your proneness to be choked by worry and rendered inactive because of it. Rejoice! God has given others, probably even someone near to you, the gift of faith and cheerfulness. Come alongside her, be stirred and cheered by her example, ask her to pray for you, to hold your hand through your fearful experience, and be stirred up by her to "love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24). This is how God helps us through. Remember, also, that He has given His angels to minister to us, unobserved, in many a dangerous and difficult moment. We don't know how often we have been preserved in times of spiritual or physical peril by the angels appointed to watch over us; but Scripture assures us that they do (Hebrews

1:14). Rejoice that our heavenly Father does this for us!

Fight the good fight

Do you worry? Are you anxious – about your health, your marriage, your children, your finances, your job? Are you robbed of rest and sleep by painful, angst-ridden hours of nighttime worry? Do you waste valuable time and energy raking over the should-have-dones of your life? Do you spend hours planning what you will say and do if this or that disaster strikes; or arranging plans of attack for forty different variations of a dreaded possible confrontation, argument, embarrassment or tragedy? Do you dissipate your

God-given gifts and energies in this way instead of giving them to useful, trusting service to His Son? Take MacArthur's advice, be cheered and encouraged by it – repent of your sin, and learn to trust Him. Be of good cheer, recognize where the battle lies, and attack anxiety head-on.

End note:

John MacArthur's *Anxiety Attacked* also includes a study guide with application questions to help you work the principles in each chapter out in your own life. There is also a helpful collection of passages from the Psalms that deal with the problem of worry, included as an appendix at the end of the book.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

In your August 2005 issue you answered quite pertinently Mr Zuidema's letter attacking Mr Milne for his back-cover article of June 2005; but there's a lot more one could say about gullible and naive Protestants who, since the 1960s, have increasingly sucked up to Rome. Mr Milne's article was a most timely warning to them, especially those who uttered nauseous tributes to the recently-dead Pope and his immediate successor as great Christian leaders.

True, we sometimes have to side and even co-operate with Roman Catholics in campaigns on moral issues or liberal theology; and very few Protestants have ever claimed that there are no saved Christians in the Church of Rome; but this should never be taken to mean that no Papists or Popery itself must ever be criticised or denounced.

Further, I don't doubt that Mr Zuidema's letter was motivated by human kindness and courtesy. Yes, I've long known and liked a number of Papists as neighbours, workmates and friends; but I still wouldn't trust one man-Jack or woman-Jill among 'em, practising or lapsed! Naive Protestants seemingly cannot grasp that leaders of a professed Christian Church would ever lie or even prevaricate/equivocate. The new Pope grew up and received nearly all his pre-tertiary education in Nazi Germany, whose propaganda chief, Josef Goebels acknowledged his debt to the Jesuits' methods; and so did Hitler himself. Think of principles such as: the end justifies the means; faith is not to be kept with heretics; the bigger the lie, the more likely it will be believed; keep on asserting something as fact, and it will generally be accepted as true. Rome has also used as its normal criterion the moral theology of St Alphonsus Liguori since he was canonised about 180 years ago; so just refer to his works.

A good old English metaphor is "the thin end of the wedge", while the Arabs have their

story about the camel who, bit by bit, got inside a tent and forced out the man inside! Mark my words, the surviving Protestants of 2005 will nearly all have been perverted individually or by a corporate takeover within 30 years, and will have swallowed Popery holus-bolus. Well, even in 1605, Papists, Protestants, Jews and Mahometans all had some beliefs in common.

By today's thinking, the Old Testament prophet Elijah ought to have proposed an open-ended discussion with the prophets and priests of Baal, with confidence that, in the final analysis or consensus, the two sides would find they had much more doctrinal and moral agreement than disagreement with each other. The line now is that Papists and Protestants simply misunderstood each other's soteriology for over 400 years. Yeah, right! Elijah's line was, "Thus saith the Lord", and to see the false prophets destroyed.

H. Westfold, Wellington

Dear Mr Editor,

Somone was very quick in replying to the letter of Rev. John Zuidema in August 'Faith in Focus'.

Should we not let the readers judge?
Yours sincerely, W.Gorter, Christchurch

Dear Sir,

Thank you very much indeed for publishing the "Letter to the Editor" by Rev. John Zuidema in the August issue - an excellent expose of our often unloving, very critical attitude to other Christians - very timely, actually long overdue in our circles and I regret to say that I was most disappointed in your editorial reactions which were quite typical of the whole issue Rev Zuidema tried to rectify.

While we are at it, thank you also for publishing the always interesting contributions by:
a/ Mrs Patricia van Laar (by the way Boniface had, and still has, also a chapel dedicated to him in the ancient Dom Kirche in Erfurt, Thuringen, the church where Luther celebrat-

ed his first mass; there a guide also pointed out to us the little old house opposite the cathedral, where Boniface allegedly stayed in mid 700 AD);

b/ Mrs Sally Davey, especially her latest one, the excellent article "Disappointed with Life"?

Thank you for those two, too, indeed!!

Sincerely yours, A & A E Snoek. Wellington

Dear Sir,

The Letter to the Editor from Rev Zuidema, in the August issue of the Faith in Focus caused me serious concern. At the risk of sounding "harsh" and lacking in "grace", I can only convey to the readers of this magazine that I am in complete agreement with Rev Milne and his assessment of why the Reformation took place. I also fully concur with Rev Bajema's closing comments at the end of Rev Zuidema's letter. Rev Zuidema's comments and those of others who think the Pope's are wonderful fellows, is a huge slap in the face to the thousands of martyred believers who died at the orders of the Pope's and Cardinals of the papal "church". What about men like William Tyndale, who gave us the Bible in our own language, and paid for it with his life? What about the men, women and children who were executed in the most barbaric fashion, simply because they believed the Scriptures alone, and put their faith in the Son of God alone. It may be true! Pope John-Paul may have been a wonderful virtuous man. But, according to our own Confession (WCF 25:6), he and all the other popes down through the ages are usurpers of the Head of the Church, who is Christ alone. The Pope's continued promotion of the Mass, the veneration of Mary and prayer to the saints is idolatry, and according to 1 Cor 6:9, idolators shall not inherit the kingdom of God. The continued promotion of the Roman Churches system of doctrine as the truth is in fact false and antithetical to the truth. Bishop JC Ryle wrote (Warnings to the Churches, p166, Banner of Truth Trust) quoting Bishop Jewell, "*We do not decline concord and peace with men; but we will not continue in a state of war with God that we might have peace with men! – If the Pope does indeed desire we should be reconciled to him, he ought first to reconcile himself to God*". Today's new Pope also needs to be reconciled to Christ and embrace the truth as it is in Him. Need I apologise for sounding harsh? I think not! We need to realise that at times the truth hurts, it cuts like a double edged sword. Why? Because without that double edged sword, the sword of the Holy Spirit, there can be no reformation in the church of Christ. I am sorry, I simply do not accept that Roman Catholicism can be equated as "a different understanding of the Christian faith", when it promotes damnable heresies and leads people away from that saving grace which is in Jesus Christ. The eternal Word of God bears witness against

Roman Catholicism and the Popes, and the blood of the martyrs cry out against them.

In Christ alone, by grace alone!

Walter Walraven, Silverstream

Dear Sir,

Being editor of *Faith in Focus* must be a demanding and often thankless job. We assume that you would receive more complaints than praise. We are sorry to add to your burdens, but are profoundly unhappy with your recent response to Rev. John Zuidema, in the August 2005 issue. We find it superficial at best, and consider that it does nothing to address the substantive concerns raised by your colleague. Rev. Zuidema made extensive criticisms of Garnet Milne's June article. We feel that Rev. Zuidema's criticism deserved a far more applied response than your bullet-pointed re-iteration of Rev. Milne's position.

Rev. Zuidema's letter seemed to us a useful and carefully nuanced call to perspective and humility in our dealings with other Christians. However, your response appeared to miss that entirely – indeed, its lofty, dismissive tone perfectly illustrated the need for Rev Zuidema to write his letter.

To address your points in order however, you begin by claiming that Rev. Milne's article about the late pope was a "tonic" and a "necessary balance" to all we have seen and heard about John Paul II. Yet we are not aware that the pope has been eulogised in any of the New Zealand Reformed Churches. What need for a 'corrective' in our circles? Perhaps the Rev. Milne was thinking of the general media? Why then does he not send his "tonic" where it is needed?

Secondly, if we do need a 'corrective', of what sort should it be? You admit that Rev. Milne may well not have been positive, loving, caring and gracious. You then go on to make the extraordinary claim that the prophets and apostles were not, either, because they were "very negative" about error. Are you seriously suggesting that to be graceless, unloving and uncaring is the same thing as being negative about error? And are you seriously suggesting that this is how we should deal with fellow Christians who are in error? The glibness of your response, completely failing to see the very distinction that Rev. Zuidema highlights, concerns us greatly. And so we are not persuaded that this sort of graceless and loveless corrective is what we, the church, God's Kingdom, or even the general media really needs.

Thirdly, you then go on to claim, for the Reformed system of doctrine, that "It is because it is Scriptural that it saves people".

This is simply nonsense. Our system of doctrine saves nobody. Indeed, when it speaks for itself, it leaves hopeless those who look to it for salvation, because they take their eyes from Christ. The Heidelberg Catechism is clear that Christ alone, and not any act of mind or body, is the source of our right status with God, and the Westminster Confession is even clearer

that faith - the God-given disposition of mind and body to rest in Christ alone - is God's sole 'instrument' for justifying us. The 'system of doctrine' is nowhere to be seen.

So Rev. Zuidema's stated question was entirely appropriate, and we invite you to respond to it again:

Of course, Br Milne is right when he mentions that the Roman Catholic System of Doctrine doesn't save anyone. However, are we then to infer that the Reformed System of Doctrine does?

In addition, we are puzzled about the context you created when first answering this question. You said, The Reformed System of Doctrine is not an alternative amongst a huge smorgasbord of Christian beliefs today. It is the Scriptural doctrine that as members we profess in our public Profession of Faith and as office bearers we affirm in the Form of Subscription.

To what errors were you directing these statements? Surely you did not read Rev. Zuidema as asserting anything like 'reformed doctrine is an alternative in a huge smorgasbord'? Again, we fear that the point Rev. Zuidema tried to make, regarding the speed with which we unfairly criticize, has been perfectly proved by your response.

Fourthly, you then stated that the new pope is leading millions away from the gospel. Do you have any evidence that Pope Benedict XVI is leading anyone away from Christ? Do you have any quotes from him that deny that salvation is in Christ alone?

Fifthly, your strong implication that Rev. Zuidema maintains a distinction between birth into the church, and later entry by grace is clearly false. Rev. Zuidema explicitly states that those of us born and raised in the church are "privileged" and "blessed". Only the most negative and selective reading of Rev. Zuidema's article could lead you to your conclusion.

Once again, brother, it is ironic and deeply concerning that you illustrate the very lack of charity that Rev. Zuidema is asking for in our fraternal dealings.

Finally, to top it all off, you go on to say that an appropriate prayer for the pope would be for his conversion. But in light of Pope Benedict XVI's baptism, as a member of God's covenant family, bearing the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, what right do you have to treat him as a non-Christian? Have you forgotten that the Reformation churches have recognised the validity of Roman baptism since the beginning? At the very least, this establishes among us a basic familial identity, which you seem to ignore.

We therefore say that you should treat the pope with the grace and love due a brother in the faith – which means, among other things, dealing gently with his errors, doing all you can to praise his strengths, and in general establishing his good name. You most definitely should not imply that he is not a Christian.

And in light of your response to Rev. Zuidema's letter, we feel the unfortunate need to state explicitly that which should otherwise not need saying: we do not agree with the pope's position on many very serious matters that approach the heart of our faith. But nor do we believe that familial love and grace means

blanket acceptance of someone's views or behaviour. We wish to see our familial love include earnest, serious debate, and even solemn admonition and rebuke.

Therefore we ask that you reconsider your position, and take proper direction from Rev. Zuidema's letter. We wish to see *Faith in Focus*

promote our familial duties, as we give a good account of the grace into which Christ has brought us all.

*Yours in His Name, Aaron Stewart,
Hans Snoek, Lynton Baird
Wellington*

Mission in focus *Janice Reid*

Unity in doctrine; unity in outreach

John Goris

It is great to belong to a family. Of course, there are sometimes disagreements or worse, but the sense of belonging is very important, as the pluses outweigh the minuses. Our congregations belong to a federation (denomination) of churches in New Zealand, and as a group of churches in one country we belong to a wider family of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. I am thinking of the ICRC (International Conference of Reformed Churches).

There are over 20 member denominations, from all continents of the world (except Antarctica!). The number is growing every time these churches come together in an assembly, which happens once every four years. Lord willing, this



Revs J Goris and Ray Sikkema



Mr Mark Bube, Dr LJ Joosse and Dr Ho Jin Jun

year's conference will be held this very month, in Pretoria, South Africa. ICRC member churches have common bonds and are an encouragement to each other, especially the younger churches in Third World countries. It is wonderful to have them in our midst, as it is quite easy to become complacent with all the riches of the heritage we have in the West.

One of the most practical ways in which the churches of this ICRC can work together is in the area of mission work. Hence, the Missions Committee of the ICRC is a significant tool for contact, encouragement and prodding of one another when it comes to the Great Commission: Go and make disciples of all nations.... (Matthew 28:18-20).

The Missions Committee has been given a Mandate, which is regularly revised to update and upgrade its task. One of the tasks is the holding of regional conferences for member churches in each area, and especially for missionaries to share their burdens and their joys, to be stimulated and to learn from each other. The most recent one in this part of the world was held in 2003, in Thailand, where the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin) has several missionaries (in fact, they have many missionaries, all over the world). It is also good to stand shoulder to shoulder with leaders from the younger churches, many of whom have endured times of persecution.

These younger churches seek help in training their prospective leaders. However we, the so-called older churches, still need to learn a great deal about the customs and culture of the countries where our workers serve. It is good to have some expert input from missiologists, even though the first requirement is the heart and mind of the great Shepherd (Matthew 9:36-38), who Himself was sent by the Father into the world.

The Missions Committee regularly makes data available about the activities of the churches and their mission involvement. This is of particular interest for younger and older people in our midst who wish to do "tentmaking" or short term work on the field. For example, many folk these days go out to teach English: in many countries, there is great demand for this service and it is an excellent door to ministry in countries where traditional missionaries cannot go. But English is not the only means of entry. There are many other professions that are highly sought-after in developing nations; professions which give people an excellent 'excuse' to enter a country

and then to reflect the values of the Gospel in their local communities, which would otherwise not have access to that light. If you are interested in this the OMB can provide details about different geographical areas. Here is a challenge for young and old!

The Rev. John Goris, Convenor of the ICRC Missions Committee, is the minister of the Reformed Church of Wellington

MIF prayer notes

1) Wally and Jeannette Hagoort: This month please pray for Jeannette as her students are advancing in their ability on the guitar and she faces new challenges with them week by week. Please also pray that the training on sermon preparation and delivery, which was undertaken by the leaders of our churches, will be successful, and that God's Word will go out in strength.

2) At time of writing, it is planned that Janice Reid will be in New Zealand, meeting with Hamilton session and with the OMB. Please pray for the Lord's guidance in discussions about the possibility of Janice joining another radio mission, HCJB World Radio (www.hcjb.org). Pray for safe travel and clear communication as Janice speaks in our churches about her work in training Christian radio workers in Asia.

3) Jared Berends asks us to remember church leaders as they start to move out to the countryside and settle in new villages where the Lord has established new groups of believers during the outreach over the summer. Ask the Lord of the Harvest to grant grace to these new believers as they grow in the faith, and to enable those who disciple and teach them: for wisdom, clear and accurate doctrine, and strength for holy living as they set an example for the new believers. Jared has recently returned from the US where he has enjoyed a break with his fiancée's family; pray for God's strength as he settles, once again, into his work in Mongolia.

4) Heidi Posthuma is in her second year of teaching English in a restricted country. Pray for wisdom as she prepares and conducts her lessons, and also for good opportunities to have personal contact with students and others outside of class-time; for clear communication as she conveys the message of God's love.

Children in focus



Sunshine Korner



Aches and Pains:

Read: Romans 5:1-5, James 1:2-4

"I feel terrible," Tim complained. "I can hardly breathe and my throat is so scratchy and sore."

"I know," sympathized Mum. "There are a lot of colds going around, but you'll feel better in a few days. Here's some juice for you. Just stay on the couch and rest while I go and make some beds."

Before long, Tim called his mother back to the room. "I still feel terrible," he said in a whining voice. "My head is hot!"

Mum brought a wet cloth for Tim's forehead, fluffed his pillow, and tucked his fleece blanket around him. "Try to sleep a little," she said.

But Tim didn't feel like resting. He kept on moaning, sighing, and whining until finally Mum said, "Tim, I know it's not fun to be sick, but we've gotten medicine for you, and I've done all I can to make you comfortable. Now you need to do your part. The Bible tells us . . ."

"The Bible?" interrupted Tim. "I didn't know the Bible said anything about how to act when I have a cold!"

"It says to be patient in affliction," replied Mum.

"What's affliction?" asked Tim.

"It's when you're having a hard time," said Mum. "It could be when you're not feeling well, or it could be other things that aren't enjoyable. For you right now, your affliction is your cold."

"But how can I be patient about that?" argued Tim. "I hate being sick."

"I know, but complaining won't help you or anyone else, either. In fact, it will make both you and those around you feel worse," replied Mum. "How about following Jesus' example, He didn't complain when He suffered and died willing on the cross to save us from our sins." She patted Tim's shoulder. "By being cheerful and uncomplaining even when you're not feeling well, you can bring glory to God," added Mum.

"Well . . . okay, from now on I'll try to be more patient," agreed Tim, "but it's going to be hard."

"Yes," said Mum, "but trust Jesus to help you. That will make it easier."

MEMORY VERSE:

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." Romans 12:12

HOW ABOUT YOU?

When you're sick, do you try to not complain about your aches and pains? It's necessary to let your parents know if you're not feeling well, but once you're getting treatment, there's no need to keep on complaining. Instead of dwelling on how bad you feel, think about happy things. Thank God for all the blessings you have, and spend time praying for others, too.



Aches and Pains Word Find:

Find the words from the list below hidden in the puzzle. They are in all directions.

Happy hunting! 😊

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N P T P J R W E C R T Z S D N L O H H J
E M A E L P M A X E E N H O J L O S O S
L S E T J X T U A G S S I E J L I V P F
B E X B I E I P K W R T T G Y C L E E D
I H A Q K E I K W A C O P S K I A R E E
B C E N S G N I N I A L P M O C E I L W
Y A A L G Z B T L M H I B E E Y F B F H
V L Y U N L F F O S R C A V A I A C S G
B N X F I P F E C I O J E R T T O Y N E
D D Q Y S A D J T B E D P S R M O I A H
R V L O S J L E N Z P A U O P I N Q M L
L E H J E J O S C E R J F L R I C U O S
C U T C L E C U Z E B M E H H H D Y R G
F Y F C B D J S N U O T Y W W O L L O F
T S P R A D H T N C E U K Y L H P P U R
F R O P E R S E V E R A N C E L I T J F
H Y I T A E A T H D S U F F E R E D B J
C T S A N H H H J J N T J E V O L W Z T
T E I Y L A P C C H E M A T U R E T N C
T L O A W S P A I N S W Z C H H A F J U
D O G S F E N I C I D E M J G K V T G Y
    
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| ACHES | COMPLAINING | JOYFUL | PRAYER |
| AFFLICTION | COMPLETE | JUSTIFIED | REJOICE |
| BED | EXAMPLE | LOVE | REST |
| BIBLE | FAITH | MATURE | ROMANS |
| BLANKET | FOLLOW | MEDICINE | SICK |
| BLESSINGS | GOD | PAINS | SUFFERED |
| CHARACTER | HAPPY | PARENTS | TESTED |
| CHEERFUL | HOLY SPIRIT | PATIENT | TRIALS |
| COLD | HOPE | PEACE | UNWELL |
| COMFORTABLE | JESUS | PERSEVERANCE | WHINING |





25th Synod of the RCNZ, Hamilton, September 2005