

# faith in focus

Magazine of the  
Reformed Churches  
of New Zealand

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"The birds of the air  
nest by the waters..."

*Psalm 104:12*

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**Editorial**

Television is a powerful influence in our society. The 'worm that wiggled' during the televised Election Debate helped ensue that one political party had at least seven more seats in Parliament than what one might have anticipated otherwise. And while that might be argued positively, because a number of those new Members of Parliament are professing Christians, it yet illustrates what television can do.

A number of articles in this issue are concerned with the negative influence of television. The cartoon in this column highlights one particular influence television had had negatively in recent times. I hesitate to use cartoons but this one brought home to me the power of 'the box'. And if you know something of what is on the 'box' you will agree to the aptness of the cartoon.

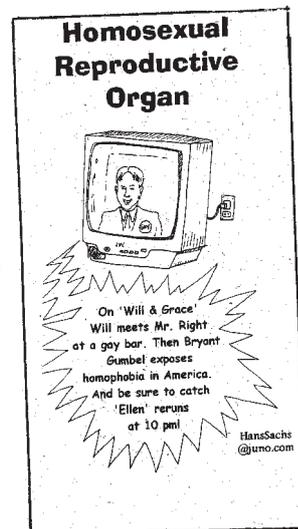
While on the subject of the homosexual agenda, Tony Payne, in *The Briefing*, perceptively brought out the glaring inadequacy of the gay-lobby and media-perpetuated perception that homosexuals may well number up to 10% of the general population, and that they want to enter into faithful, couple relationships, with loving partners, just like heterosexuals, in a look at the recent Australian Census figures. For what did those figures indicate but that there are around 20,000 same-sex couples in the whole Australia, which makes up only 0.3% of all the couples in Australia; the other 97.7% being heterosexual. Extrapolating these figures, in the same way as one would with the heterosexual figures, to the wider community and the total homosexual population would be 60,000 throughout Australia. That's not 1 in 10 - that's 1 in 300!

Another influence which the media, particularly television, has brought to bear upon the public is a generally one-sided perception of the Middle East and the Moslem world generally. We pray that our articles dealing with this area will help inform you in a much broader way.

**Side By Side**

*They lie on the table both side by side  
 The Holy Bible and the TV guide.  
 One is well-worn and cherished with pride,  
 one is used daily to help folks decide.  
 No, not the Bible but the TV guide.  
 As the pages are turned what do they see?  
 Oh what does it matter, turn on the TV.  
 So they open the book in which they confide,  
 No, not the Bible but the TV guide.  
 The Word of God is seldom read  
 maybe a verse before they fall into bed -  
 exhausted and sleepy and tired as can be  
 not from reading the Bible, but from watching TV.  
 No time for prayer, no time for the Word -  
 the plan of salvation is now seldom heard.  
 But forgiveness of sins, so full and so free  
 is found in the Bible and not on TV.*

Anon.



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

# Turning off the tube

## 6 months without TV

### Deborah Gibson

Last fall I unplugged my television. I had bought a new car, and I was looking for ways to cut back my monthly budget. As I asked myself what I could possibly cut, my cable (read: SKY) bill seemed the most obvious choice. Not only did I want to save money, but I had also been thinking how easy it was to fritter away the hours watching television with nothing to show for the time I had spent. I thought about the books I wanted to read, but didn't have time; the hobbies I had set aside because I didn't ever get around to pursuing them; and the way television tempted me put off until tomorrow the tasks that I really should be doing today.

### TV as a pill

Even more important to me than the issues of time and money, however, was the question of what I was putting into my mind in the hours I spent watching television. As a thinking Christian, it's easy to find messages in both the shows and advertising that are contrary to the Biblical principles that tell us what is really important in life. I thought of Philippians 4:8: "*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*" I also thought about what Romans 12:1-2 tells us about being transformed into Christ's likeness by the renewing of our minds. What was I putting into my mind? How would my thoughts change if I cut off this source of mental and spiritual pollution?

The reactions of my family and friends were interesting. One person in my family told me, "If you get depressed, get your cable hooked up again right away!" The idea of using television as an antidepressant gave me pause. I thought that this was a ridiculous solution to depression, but after I had begun I was surprised to find how much it was part of my routine to use the television as a way to escape from my daily concerns. I was very restless and at loose ends some evenings. Many people assumed I was just switching to "peasant TV," and were surprised when I refused to take their old television antenna. I discovered just how much we talk about television programs—I was out of the loop in a lot of conversations about the latest

*Survivor* program or new developments in *Friends*. Especially on and after September 11 I felt like I might be missing out. I never saw the video clips of the tragedy in New York—however, I still heard a lot of the sounds and was touched by the personal stories from radio news broadcasts. Although I was shocked and horrified along with everyone else, I was glad to have some detachment from the tragedy, and to be able to distance myself from the barrage of news.

### Alternate inputs

Despite my initial restlessness, I gradually settled into finding other things to do. I began tackling some of the books I had always wanted to read, but hadn't because I knew they required more intellectual focus than strictly recreational reading. For example, I read *The Iliad* in September, and enjoyed it. I also read books by Christian philosophers and commentaries on the Scriptures, and books about history. **I found that I was spending more time with other people**, and I spent more time outdoors too—if you're bored, a walk down a tree-lined path is a refreshing way to spend an evening! I found I was better rested, because I was going to bed on time more often. I listened to more

music, particularly Christian and classical music, which I found lifts my mood much better than television programming. And most importantly, after awhile I did notice a difference in my thought life.

I told a friend that my head felt cleaner and less cluttered—I felt better able to focus on the really important and good things in life. Because of my reading, I had much more interesting and meaningful things to think about. I actually felt more content with what I have, I think because I dramatically cut my exposure to advertising. I didn't actually save much money, because I spent more than usual on books, but I guess I could have used the library instead.

I also felt a sense of accomplishment as I looked at how I was spending my time. When I turned off my television, I sought out activities that gave me a lasting benefit—exercise, mental stimulation, creative hobbies, wholesome and interesting literature, building my relationships with friends. Did I miss my favourite television shows? Sometimes. Was going without them worth it? Absolutely!

*(This is taken from Reformed Perspective with permission.)*

## The great TV turn-off challenge

TV turn-off week occurs each year in Northern America in the last week of April. Since 1995, when the event was first organized, millions have taken on the challenge of going seven days without TV.

Bob DeMoss has taken this idea one step further and challenged families to go 30 days without TV. His book, *TV The Great Escape*, includes journal entries from kids and parents who have turned off their televisions. He doesn't promote doing without TV altogether, but suggests that a 30-day TV fast will help Christian families get back to more healthy viewing habits.

The difficulty most people have is figuring out how they will spend their extra time. Dinners will have to be spent talking, instead of watching, and evenings will have to be planned out a bit to ensure kids aren't bored and counting the days until they can turn on the television again. DeMoss's book is full of helpful hints and encouragement, and is a must-buy for anyone considering a TV fast. Even if you're not considering a TV fast, you should probably still read his book, to see if your reluctance is a sign of a suffering spiritual life. If you can't go 30 days without TV, who's really first in your heart: God or your TV?

You can find out more about TV turnoff week at [www.tv-turnoff.org](http://www.tv-turnoff.org). Bob DeMoss's book *TV The Great Escape* can be ordered at any Christian bookstore.

*(Taken from 'Reformed Perspective' with permission)*



# September 11, 2001

## One year later (Part 1)

### John Haverland

About this time last year New Zealanders woke up on the morning of the 11th of September to hear news they could hardly believe: Terrorists had flown two aeroplanes into each of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York, and another aeroplane into the Pentagon building in Washington DC. The whole world was shocked at the audacity of such an attack, and horrified at the sheer scale of the destruction and the loss of life.

The events of that day have prompted a great deal of reaction, discussion and analysis about Islam and Muslims. (Islam is the name of the religion; Muslims are those who practice this religion).

Many Muslims have sought to distance themselves from those who carried out those attacks and have portrayed them as fanatical terrorists. To be fair we should not put all Muslims in the same box, because there are two strands in Islam. On the one hand, there are those who are peaceable. President George W. Bush promoted this view when he visited a mosque a few weeks after September 11; as he left he stressed that Islam is "a faith of peace". No doubt his comments were partly motivated by a desire to promote peace and stability in his country. On the other hand, many Muslims promote the concept of a Holy War (Jihad) and use the Quran (their Holy Book) to justify acts of violence.

It is difficult to say what percentage make up each of these two groups. Phillip Matthews, writing in *The Listener*, claimed that "Those in the Muslim world who oppose Osama bin Laden are the overwhelming majority" and stated that bin Laden "occupies a position in relation to Islam similar to Jim Jones or David Koresh in relation to Christianity." (December 22, 2001, pages 21 & 23). By contrast, Joanne Teitsma, writing in *Reformed Perspective*, believes that bin Laden is not an isolated extremist and quotes estimates that 50 per cent of Muslims support him (*Reformed Perspective*, January 2002, p. 10). We will

probably never know which group is in the majority, nor by how much. Nor is this all that important. What is important is that we understand something about Islam and especially the challenge it poses to Christianity.

### On the march

Islam has a long history in the world. It began with a man named Muhammad who was born around 570 AD. One night in 610 AD he claimed a vision of the angel Gabriel that launched him on his mission as The Prophet of Allah. By the time of his death, he had imposed Islam on most of Arabia.

He was succeeded by Abu Bakr, who extended Islam much further. Jerusalem was invaded in 634; Syria fell in 636; Egypt, Iran and Iraq by 641. Within 100 years of Muhammad's death Islam had spread to Spain in the west and India in the east, and embraced more territory than did the Roman Empire. Islam's advance into Europe was halted by the forces of

Charles Martel at the famous Battle of Tours in France in 732.

Over the last couple of decades we have again seen Islam on the march. A *Time* magazine cover story on Islam in 1992 wrote, "Today a reconstructed idea of Islam is spreading at what often appears to be the same speed [as its early expansion] over much the same territory Muhammad's precepts are galvanising Muslim societies with hope for renewal—and fear of upheaval." (*Time*, June 15, p. 16).

Islam is a force to be reckoned with. It is estimated that over one billion people in the world are Muslims—between a sixth to a fifth of the world's population. Islam is the dominant religion in 55 countries with Indonesia boasting the world's largest Muslim population. In the 1981 census in New Zealand only 1,701 people identified themselves as Muslim in the census. In 1996 that had jumped to over 13,000, and it is now estimated at over 20,000.

### A Christian response

How should Christians view Islam as a religion and Muslims as adherents to that religion? How should we respond to them?

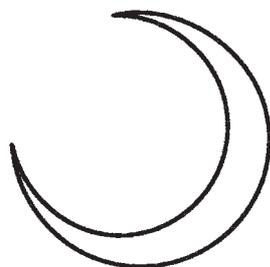
First, we should respond with **Christian**

**love, compassion and gentleness.** Muslims are lost and in need of the saving grace of God. They do not believe in the Lord God of the Bible as he is known through Jesus Christ and so they are without hope and without God in the world, living in ignorance and darkness, lost and headed for hell. Yet they are image bearers of God and each one of them shares the same humanity we share. We should not respond with fear, hatred or revenge but with love, compassion and earnest prayers for their conversion and salvation. Our attitude to them should not be any different from our attitude to other unbelievers who are in need of God's saving grace.

This means that we should approach them in the same *manner* we would approach any other unbeliever—that is, with gentleness and respect. Paul told Timothy to "gently instruct" those who oppose him "in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 2:24-26). This is good advice for our approach to Muslims. Avoid direct attacks on Muhammad, criticising the Quran and condemning the morals of Islamic society. This will harden Muslims against our message.

When we witness to our unbelieving secular Kiwi neighbours we try to find common ground with them, building on interests we share, starting where they are, with the knowledge they have and taking them on from there. We can do the same with Muslims. They know about One God, Jesus as prophet and teacher and healer, the last judgement and prayer. Begin with these matters, where they are, with the knowledge they have and seek to take them on from there.

Witness to them with *confidence in God*. They are not beyond conversion, and witnessing to them is not a hopeless endeavour. The Lord is almighty and He can bring anyone to a knowledge of the truth. Muslims too are searching for the truth. They too want forgiveness and acceptance by God, and freedom from sin and guilt. They too are looking for meaning in life, and the assurance of an eternity in God's presence. Islam does not offer any sure hope of these things, but Christianity does. Islam is not impregnable, and Muslims are not beyond the grace of God in Christ.



Secondly, let's remember that Islam and Christianity are **opposing worldviews**. A worldview is a holistic way of looking at life and reality, a comprehensive view of all of life, a 'big picture' that directs and guides all daily decisions and actions.

*Islam is a worldview.* Muslims believe that Allah is sovereign over all things and therefore everything in life must serve him. They don't look upon religion as part of life—they see religion as life itself. "They believe their faith is foundational and comprehensive for an entire culture and way of life. And they are aggressive about spreading that faith, and bringing other cultures and societies under the sway of Islam." (G. Bahnsen, *What We Can Learn From Muslims*, Penpoint, Volume 12, No. 9, November 2001). They apply their faith to their politics, economics, business and personal life. They make no separation between the secular and the sacred.

*Christianity, too, is a worldview.* Yet, we can learn something from the Muslims

because we don't apply our worldview as consistently as we could. We often divide life into secular and sacred categories. We don't always carry our faith into our sport, business and family life. We don't apply our faith and belief in politics, art, entertainment and the media as much as we could. An Islamic pamphlet even recognises this: "religion does not dominate everyday life in the west today, whereas Muslims have religion always uppermost in their minds, and make no division between secular and sacred." (*Understanding Islam and the Muslims*).

As Christians, we need to be more comprehensive in our worldview and more consistent in its application. We need a worldview which is well thought out, and then lived in every aspect and sphere of our lives. The prophet Zechariah looked forward to a time when "HOLY TO THE LORD" would be written on everything in Jerusalem and Judea, from the bells of the horses to the cooking pots in the house of the Lord (Zechariah

14:20-21). We need to be applying this in our lives. Everything we do must be "holy": that is, set apart for God, dedicated to him and placed in his service. For the Christian, religion is life and life is religion. Our belief in God and our understanding of the Bible must direct how we run our business, educate our children, raise our families and play rugby. Christ is Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all. Everything and everyone must submit to him and serve him.

Both Christianity and Islam are worldviews. Yet we believe ours is true to the Bible, honouring to God and better for humanity. So let's apply it as well as we are able with confidence in our Almighty God, with faith in Christ and with the strength that comes from the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

*(The next issue will cover the third point: Islam is a false religion).*

## Israel today

### The two sides

#### P.O. Posthuma

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of June it was 35 years ago that Jerusalem was reunited on the last day of the Six Day War. Terrorism has cost many Jews their lives since that time, while Israel's retaliation has given rise to international condemnation. Yet, according to supporters of pro-Israel movements, specifically in the Netherlands, such criticism is hypocritical. Jews have been discriminated against and killed for centuries not for their skin colour, religion or political convictions but for the simple fact that they are Jewish.

Suicide bombers nowadays deal out death wherever they can. The trauma and the threat of such actions have had dramatic repercussions throughout the country. Places where people would normally gather such as supermarkets and public transport are avoided. Everyone lives in fear for their own life, and for that of loved ones.

Yet, while all this is going on, and in spite of similarities between the Jewish and the US struggles against terrorism, support for the Jewish cause has waned in western nations. Many Jews regard declining support as an indicator of anti-Semitism. They

discount the link between their country's retaliation to terrorism and anti-Jewish judgments across the globe, regarding Israel's unique position as the only western nation in an Islamic, Arabian world a more likely cause.



#### The Christian support for Israel

What do Christian supporters of Israel say about all this? *Nederlands Dagblad* published an article<sup>1</sup> where three authors, L van de Kamp, P Koelewijn and M van der Zwan, asserted that today's Israel remains God's chosen nation. They quoted from Balaam's prophecies (Numbers 23: 9): "There! A people dwelling alone, not reckoning itself among the nations," Nevertheless, in spite

of Israel's unique situation the words of Romans 11: 28, *but concerning the election they [Israel] are beloved for the sake of the fathers*, are quoted as evidence that today's Jews are and shall remain special in God's eyes. These authors therefore urged the church to pray for peace (Psalm 122) in physical Jerusalem and to proclaim with Ruth, "Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God" (Ruth 1:16).

#### A different angle

Another author in *Nederlands Dagblad*, aid worker Imja Nyznayu, approached the Palestinian versus Jewish problem from quite a different angle.<sup>2</sup> She contended that peace is only possible via Christianity. She lamented existing polarisation between western Christians, one lot supporting Palestinians and the other Jews. While not denying that both groups suffer, she pointed out that there is a third group of people in the area: Christians living in the Promised Land, who suffer more than any of the others. About 5000 of them call the West Bank home, and another 500 live in the Gaza Strip. They are an irritation, especially to Moslems, and whenever Red Crescent (the Moslem

version of the Red Cross) aid is distributed they invariably miss out. Because these Messiah-confessing Jews and their Palestinians fellow believers sense a unity of faith, both nations consider them traitors, people who befriend the enemy. And, states Nyznayu, few Christians in other countries seem to care about them.

Assuming that she is factually correct and that these people are indeed believers who expect salvation through Christ alone (i.e. not via a pope, saints or good works etc.), we ought to indeed remember such people in our prayers. Moreover they are also worthy of our practical support for, Nyznayu writes, these Christians are the only ones who can build bridges of hope and peace in this area. Enmity between the Jews and Arabs is so deep-seated, so intense that all political efforts are bound to fail; peace is only possible in Christ.

**What does the Bible say?**

Such prayers and support are not promoted by authors such as van de Kamp, Koelewijn and van der Zwan, or by Zionists and millennialists, people who select Bible texts and interpret these literally and who,

since 1948, have great expectations from the Jewish return to their ancient homeland, especially since the Six Day War in 1967. To understand such conviction much can be learned from what Dr. K Deddens<sup>3</sup> wrote in 1987. Of course this does not take in recent history, and neither does it predict the future in Israel, yet by addressing often-misused portions of Scripture the author puts matters back into a Christ-centred perspective.

Besides his theological views Deddens also expressed some strong opinions about the war between Israel and the Arabs. He wrote:

*That war is considered a holy war by the Zionists, which fact unites the Zionists in Palestine together today. It is the conflict of yore between Ishmael and Israel, about which Israel already sang in the Middle Ages when they feared the threat of the Arabs. Today, however, it is no longer the fearful cry of those days, but now it is a cry for self-assertion. It is the same contours of hatred and enmity against the Arab world, the enemy of ancient times, which control the Israel of today. Present day Israel does not praise God's mercy as Paul did in Romans 11 but praises itself, in total contrast with the praise of Romans 11. Today Israel sings of blood and soil. While the destroyers of this people, the Nazis of Germany, gloried in German blood and German soil, the Jews now glory in Jewish blood and Jewish soil. They sing of self-vindication and of salvation by their own efforts. For now I touch upon an essential point in the present Jewish development: they are full of . . . themselves, of national values and national pride. And they even go so far that they imagine themselves as nation, as people, to be the messiah who was to come. This Israel does not differ from the Christian faith in that it places in the future what for us has already happened. No, they see the messiah incorporated in the people, the nation, "blood and soil."*

I don't think much has really changed since Dr Deddens wrote the above. Therefore, in spite of all the moves for peace by US and other envoys to the Middle East, we ought not to expect human answers to provide meaningful reconciliation in Israel. When we hear of new atrocities there, let us consider above all that there always was and always will be, for Jews and Arabs both, only one road to peace and salvation, even to the end of time: the way of God's mercy in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let us pray for that!

*(This is taken from Una Sancta, a magazine of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, with whom we have a reciprocal arrangement)*

**(Endnotes)**

- <sup>1</sup> "Christenen moeten solidair zijn met Israel" by L van de Kamp, P Koelewijn and M van der Zwan, 6.06.02. <http://www.nd.nl.htm>
- <sup>2</sup> "Bruggen bouwen in Midden Oosten moet van Christenen komen" by I Nyznayu, 7.06.02. <http://www.nd.nl.htm>
- <sup>3</sup> "Questions Concerning the Jews" by K Deddens, Clarion Vol. 23, No. 10, 11, and 12 (1987)

**CELEBRATION QUILT**

**Reformed Church of Wellington  
May 1953 – May 2003**

In May 2003, D.V., the Reformed Church of Wellington hopes to celebrate God's goodness to us in the 50th anniversary of her institution.

To commemorate this we plan to make we plan to make a Celebration Quilt to hang in the Church building. We are asking any interested past and present members to make a 9 inch square. These squares will then be joined together, quilted, and framed to make a large quilt. Your square can be anything from your favourite scripture verse, your memories of church life, or something about Wellington itself.

The finished size of the square should be 9 inch x 9 inch, and made from pre-washed cottons. Please send the completed square, together with your name and address, and a short description of your square, to me by the end of December 2002.

If you would like any information you can contact me at the address below.

Your sister in Christ, Marianne Bos

**12 Arahiwi Grove  
Tirohanga  
Lower Hutt  
email: mareb@clear.net.nz**

*/ f . . .*

"Just how bad would television ... have to get, for Christians by the hundreds of thousands to turn it off—maybe for good?"

If mainstream TV regularly scoffed at all we hold sacred; if it lifted up as wholesome that which we find shameful and repugnant; if it consistently wasted our precious time and dulled our own and our children's minds; if it inoculated us against sin; if it enhanced our cheapest materialistic tendencies; if it kept us, even at its best, from doing things that were better—if TV did all these things, and stuck a finger in our eye while doing them, then might we at last pull the plug on the ugly one-eyed monster?

Of course not, because it's already done all that and we haven't."

**Joel Belz**

"Sweeps month – how about sweeping TV out of your life for 30 days" November 18, 2000 *World*.

## A feminine focus

# Lady Rachel Russell

*"To love and to cherish... till death us do part"*

Some women—not many, but some—have been called by our Lord to give up their lives for Him. Yet, many others have suffered, and given much, in that they were called to give up their dearest ones in this life—their own husbands—for the cause of Christ. They remain, mourning their loved one, continuing to feel their loss, sometimes suffering financial hardship, and maybe the difficulty of bringing up children on their own. The writers of Christian biography typically give us much more detail on those put to death. Seldom do we learn anything of those they left behind in this life. In the case of Lady Rachel Russell, we do.

### Rachel's background

This lady, a woman of noble family and endowed with great personal charm, played a significant role in the political life of England in the later seventeenth century. She enjoyed friendships with some of the best-known characters of the age, including Sarah, Lady Churchill, and King William and Queen Mary. Large estates, great wealth and a happy home life were hers in addition. She and her husband, Lord William Russell, were deeply committed Christians, and their love for Christ bore fruit in very many ways in all their varied life's work. But if it had not been for the one, and very great sorrow that came in the middle of her life, there would have been little to distinguish her from many good Christian wives and mothers. It was her conduct at the time of this trial that makes her story remarkable—and instructive—to us, so far down the years, who may read it today.

Rachel's father, the Earl of Southampton, was a serious, honourable man who had deep religious convictions and a sympathy for Puritan teachings. His kind of theological convictions were unusual—but not unheard-of—among men of his type and class, who were devoted supporters of the King's cause during the English Civil War in the 1640s. Rachel's mother, Rachel Mass\_e de Ruvigny de la Maison Fort, was a French Huguenot, and a lady with vivacity, charm, beauty and a deep personal faith in Christ. All of these qualities she passed on to her

daughter.

Rachel's education was quite a good one for a girl of her time. She loved literature, and grew to be a fine writer—her ability to express herself with her pen marks her out as an intelligent, fluent writer on matters of a theological and personally spiritual nature. Her later correspondence with several bishops and theologians show her to be at



*Lady Rachel Russell as a widow.* By Sir Godfrey Kneller

least their equal in these things. She was also good with figures. Later on in her life she proved to be an excellent manager of her large estates. She was also well-grounded in the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer and probably some of the prominent Puritan writers of the time, such as Richard Baxter.

### Rachel's relationships

At the age of 17 Rachel was married (an arranged marriage, as negotiated between

their families) to Francis Vaughan, heir to the Earl of Carbury. He was a 16 year-old and rather immature youth, given to uncontrolled passions and somewhat undisciplined. It is likely Rachel was unhappy as a young wife. After 13 years of marriage, and the death of two infant children, she was widowed when Francis died of the plague in 1667.

After two years of widowhood, and at the age of 37, Rachel remarried, to William Russell, second son of the Earl of Bedford. The two had fallen passionately in love—and married for love, as both sets of their parents had done themselves. William was a man of few words, and apparently very shy in Rachel's presence during their courtship. However, Rachel encouraged him, writing to a friend, "If I love once, I shall do so ever."

She and William and enjoyed the most harmonious and happy of marriages. Together they had three children—two daughters and a son. William apparently had a deep and steadfast heart, and was faithfully devoted to both his wife and children. To all who knew him he was a fine, honourable Christian man, who was universally respected. The death of his older brother made him heir to his father's title, and his involvement in affairs of state accordingly increased. He had clear and strong convictions in political matters, and worked hard as an elected member of the House of Commons during the 1670s. Often, he had to be away, and during his absences he and Rachel wrote long and affectionate letters to each other. These letters give detailed evidence of the happiness of their marriage, and of their deepening walk with Christ. In one letter Rachel wrote:

"I write this to my dear husband, because I love to be busied either in speaking of him or to him. It is an inexpressible joy to consider I shall be with the person I most and only long to be with before another week is past. I should condemn my sense of this expected happiness as weak and pitiful if I could tell it you. No, my best life, I can say but little; but think all you can, you cannot think too

much: my heart makes it all good

My best life, you that know so well how to love, and to oblige, make my felicity entire by believing my heart possessed with all the gratitude, honour, and passionate affection to your person any creature is capable of. What have I to ask, but a continuance, if God see fit, of these present enjoyments; if not, a submission without a murmur to His most unerring Providence, having a thankful heart for the years I have been so perfectly contented in? Let us cheerfully expect to be together to a good old age. Excuse me if I dwell too long on this; it is from my opinion that, if we can be prepared for all conditions, we can with the greater tranquillity enjoy the present, which I hope will be long; though when we change it will be for the better, I trust, through the merits of Christ. Let us daily pray it may be so, and then admit of no fears. He knows best when we have had enough here."

#### Rachel's fears

Rachel clearly had some fears in her heart for the future. The times they lived in were turbulent; and already, in her lifetime, there had been three great revolutions in the way England was governed. There was still uncertainty and danger during the reign of Charles II. He was increasingly sympathetic to the Catholic cause during the later years of his rule (his younger brother James actually converted to Catholicism) and many

Englishmen feared a return to something like the persecutions of Mary. It was still possible for a man to face death for his religious convictions. Lord William Russell was a passionate supporter of England's political freedoms, and in particular was a champion of the right to dissent from the King's views. These views led to his implication in a plot to murder Charles in the early 1680s. Though innocent, he was imprisoned, and found guilty by a court acting improperly.

Rachel left no stone unturned in her efforts to save her husband from threatened execution. She wrote letters, pleaded, and even pulled every string she had access to in order to win an audience with the King. She begged him, on the basis of all her family had done to serve his father's cause, and even to shelter him when "on the run" in the 1640s, to spare William's life. But he remained unsympathetic. Through all this William remained faithful to his convictions. He would not say things to excuse his own actions at the expense of others. He even refused the offer of a friend to take his place in prison and allow him to escape abroad, because this would have appeared as an admission of guilt on his part. He preferred to die for what he believed in.

From the beginning, William knew how powerful his enemies were, and believed his cause was hopeless. This did not dim his gratitude for all Rachel was doing on his behalf—but he warned her that she should expect the worst. For her part, Rachel never gave way to depression or uttered one vain regret. Once the blow she had feared had fallen, she turned all her considerable energies to encouraging and strengthening her husband. It seemed that danger cleared her sight for action. She believed it would help him if she were allowed to sit at his side during the public trial, ready to do anything he wanted. This was a most unusual thing for a wife to do—but she asked, and was granted permission. "My resolution will hold out", she wrote to him, "Pray let yours." And it did. It was no small trial for her to sit there, day after day, and hear the accusations brought against him to secure his condemnation to death. She even acted as a note-taker for him when William asked permission of the court for someone to do this. This loving action sent a thrill of admiration through the crowd in the courtroom. But William was condemned to death.

#### Rachel's selflessness

Rachel's strength held out until the end. She managed to discipline herself not to give

way to grief or anguish as long as he remained alive. William expressed great joy at the selflessness of her spirit. He said parting with her was the hardest thing he had to do; for he was afraid she would hardly be able to bear it. While he lived, the efforts to save him had filled her thoughts; but when that was over, he feared that the strength of her feelings would be too much for her. The day before his execution Rachel spent the whole day with him in his prison cell. "Stay and sup with me," he said to her just before the evening meal; "let us eat our last earthly food together." At 11 pm they parted. William kissed Rachel several times, but there were no tears. Their sorrow was too deep for that, and they parted in silence. When she had gone, William said, "Now the bitterness of death is past." And then, though a man of few words, he ran into a long and moving discourse on the blessings she was to him as his wife. It was a great comfort, he said to a friend, to leave his children to such a mother's hands. Her courage and behaviour "in this extremity" he said, "was beyond all."

The next morning he died, after delivering a speech on the scaffold. Rachel had helped him prepare it, and it was one of the tasks that kept her going afterwards to have it printed and distributed. But, as William had predicted, the aftermath of his death prostrated her. There was nothing more to do, and she almost collapsed with grief. For months she lived in retirement in her country estate; only having the strength to write letters to a few trusted minister friends. But slowly, over time, their helpful counsel (much of which has been preserved) drew her back to living for the Saviour in service to others. As one biographer has put it, "The blank of his loss was never filled, but more and more to her it became a door into the heavenly world whither her faith followed him; more and more her heart was drawn up in love to the God and Saviour to whom he had gone."

Her faith deepened, and the spiritual lessons learned from such suffering became strength that she was able to give others. First came the ability to weep, from the heart, with others who wept. Then, after time, as the consciousness of William's own joy in heaven brightened her heart, she was also able to rejoice with those who rejoiced. She had a warm heart, and a wise one. Many of her friends remarked on her calm good sense; and this she used to good effect in her dealings with her (still young) children as they grew up. In her later years she remarked that she counted it "the biggest blessing to love and be beloved by those she loved and respected." In her lifetime

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many, both those who shared her convictions and those who did not, commonly honoured her as "one of the best of women."

**Rachel's example**

What impresses us the most in Rachel Russell's devoted life? Surely, the selfless strength she showed at the time of her husband's imprisonment and death. How many of us put ourselves in her situation as we read this part of her story? I'm sure we all asked, "How could I do this?" as we read, tears pricking at our eyes? But isn't there a sense, a true and sure sense, in which we could? Hasn't our Lord promised us strength for the time of trial? Hasn't He promised us that when sorrows and stress come, He will give us words to say, and whatever we need to do what is necessary? We know that He will never leave us or forsake us.

But there is more. Rachel's cares were for far more than her own personal peace. She was actively working in every way she could to smooth her husband's path in the difficult choice he was making. This was real selflessness in action. Her real concern was that he, standing firm in his convictions, would be free of anguish as far as she was concerned. Of course a man about to die for his faith will worry about his loved ones. But the steadfastness of those loved ones, and their confidence in the rightness of his choice must be an enormous strength and comfort. Instead of being a burden, such a wife becomes a pillar of support. And this wife was a wonderful support.

Have we ever stopped to think how cheerfully bearing the consequences of any sacrifice our husband wants to make will make his own hard decision about that much less difficult? It is what promising to love "for better and worse till death us do part" means—and Rachel had promised these very words at her wedding service in 1669. Whenever anyone close to us suffers, we surely make their load much easier for them when we keep ourselves from giving way to grief as Rachel did.

But there also comes a time when there is nothing more we can do—when it is all "over." William died. And then, we must go on without the other to comfort, support, and help. This is when the going, dreadfully hard before, becomes agonising. This is when Rachel's grief almost submerged her. But what enabled her to rise above it? It was that old truth—that we do not live to ourselves, or for ourselves. Others needed her—her children, and other sufferers. There is so much truth in Paul's reminder to the Corinthians that God "comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." (2 Corinthians 1:4). This was true for Rachel in her great trouble—and it can be true in our lives in our troubles—both great and little.

Lady Rachel Russell was called to give up what—in this life—was closest to her loving heart. More than that, she gave of herself to strengthen that closest one in his determination to do what would lead to her loss. Surely this must have called forth from her the greatest acts of love that ever a wife, designed as a helper for her husband, could give. For that, and for her example to us, we have God Himself to thank.

P.S. If you'd like to know more about the life of Rachel, and of her husband, William, and their children, the two sources I used are: *Sketches of the Women of Christendom*, by the author of *Chronicles of the Schonberg-Cotta Family*, and *Lady Rachel Russell: 'One of the Best of Women'* by Lois G. Schwoerer.

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**WELLINGTON** – Hutt City Conference Centre, 14b Rutherford St, Lower Hutt. Pastors' and Church Leaders' seminar begins at 9.00am and the full conference 12.30pm on Wednesday the 23rd October 2002.

**AUCKLAND** – Reformed Church of North Shore, 74 Trias Rd, Totaravale, Glenfield, Auckland. Pastors' and Church Leaders' seminar begins at 1.00pm and the full conference 3.30pm on Friday the 25th October 2002.

**New Zealand Conference on Reformation Theology**  
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*"For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith." Romans 1:17.*

# A novel idea

## *Another in the series of Senior Living Options*

"I wish I lived in a caravan, with a horse to drive like a pedlar man.

Where he comes from, nobody knows, or where he goes to, but on he goes."

Did someone say, "NO!" ?

Once we visited in the camping ground a retired couple from Auckland. They had sold their house and were travelling at their leisure around New Zealand, not horse drawn, true, but such a magnificent caravan home, easy chairs, gas heater and all. I am assured that they had about five wonderful years and then settled back out of their 'gypsy life' into a

going to live in one, but hers would remain in the same place. We were surprised with the speed at which this was accomplished, but then, Corrie has always been as determined (should I say stubborn?) as any Dutchman! She soon had her little home with its freedom, nicely laid out with attractive pot plants, and surrounded by people - most transient, but some, like herself permanently residing in a corner of the camping ground. A telephone was installed, and Corrie was ready for anything. Being a friendly person, she soon knew her neighbours, especially a student next to her with whom she had many

surprise, then, when reading an Auckland newspaper, to find an article featuring their grandmother which never made it into the daily paper of the local city where she lived. They sent her a certificate for 'The World's Bravest Grandmother', and if you like a good laugh, read on!

One morning, Corrie was waiting for the owner of the camping ground to unlock the six-foot gate so that she could make her way to the Lido next to the camping ground for her morning swim. A stranger rode up on a bike, and tried to lift it over the gate. Just then the camping ground owner came along, and asked the stranger what he was doing there, as it was private property. The stranger pushed his bike between the owner's legs, and started attacking him, hitting him hard.

"Call the police, quick, Corrie," shouted the owner. Corrie rushed to her caravan a few metres away, and dialled 111. When she looked out from her doorway again, the stranger was throttling the camping ground owner. Dauntless Corrie rushed back, grabbed the man by his pony tail, pulled him backwards and wouldn't let go, dodging round and round behind him so that he could not get at her. She hung on tightly, and was still hanging on when the police arrived.

Later the grateful camp owner called with a box of chocolates, and the news that police inquiries had revealed that the Nelson police had been looking everywhere for her captive, who had escaped from their custody. Another camper drawn by the commotion filmed the whole incident on her video, useful for the police, but I've not heard that Corrie got a copy. She saw it though, and said it was a shock to see herself at the age of seventy-five, swinging back and forward, hanging on to a greasy pony tail.

She was quite reticent about telling others of this episode, and we only heard of it when we asked about the grandchildren's certificate pinned on the wall of her caravan.

### **A later move**

Even a considerable measure of ill health did not daunt Corrie. Leave her caravan after a stay in hospital? Why should she? Having medical problems, she had home help, and it was only after three years that she was ordered by her doctor to find herself a more substantial home. She now rents a unit in the Lutheran Homes, which consist of small



conventional, immovable residence. I'm sure many of you will recall a visit to your church from these two during those five years.

### **A lively life!**

Corrie did not get the idea from this couple, but she too loved the caravan experience, which she and her husband, Jan, had shared each holiday with another church two-some. (During Cyclone Bola, they got stuck between two flood areas, and have startling photos of the caravans parked in the middle of a main highway north, washing strewn up on a line, chairs and table on the roadside and a friendly helicopter dropping in from the skies to see if they had supplies enough.) Corrie made up her mind long before she lost her ill husband that she was

a discussion, some theological in nature. Far more company than there would have been in her town house. Many were her visitors, too; from far and near they would pop in, always sure of a warm welcome and a cup of tea or coffee. Occasionally she needed help (such as banging in nails to make a platform outside the front door, which a couple of handymen from church did); weekly help with other difficulties, and the same kind friend who gave transport to Marietje in our earlier story, taking her to do her weekly shopping. Another church member was by trade a leather and canvas worker, so he was able to do some repairs to her awning. Corrie wanted for nothing. She also felt very safe in the camping ground, fences and people all round. Imagine her family's

self-contained homes for independent older folk, where she continues with daily home help and frozen meals, some from the supermarket, some from a friend, and more acceptable than mushy meals on wheels, which are a great service but not always very palatable. She welcomes gifts of home-made soup.

Corrie is losing her sight, but is wide awake and 'with it'—if you want to know the latest news, go to Corrie, for everyone keeps her informed. The Lutheran church folk have the units and inhabitants under observation, and Corrie has for long had an alarm round

her neck, which she used to summon an ambulance one night when she fell and managed to wedge herself between bed and wall. She appreciates the occasional functions organised by the church; barbecues and get-togethers. There is a weekly Bible study at the units for any who wants to attend. Corrie appreciates, too, the willing acceptance of the Lutherans of her belonging to a different denomination.

Finally, as our indomitable Corrie's sight gets worse, she continues to welcome all for the inevitable 'cuppa' which she still insists on making herself, but she can no

longer see to read her Bible, so her son in America has sent her the complete New Testament on tape to listen to each day. This she is finding a tremendous blessing. She only wishes she also had the Old Testament, especially her favourite psalms. One day!

Meantime, Corrie is grateful for modern inventions that enable people like herself to hear daily the Word of God.

She would agree with the old chorus, "The Lord is my life, and the Lord is my light, and the Lord is my strength and stay."

## World news

### Pakistani Christian attacked in his cell

A Christian high school principal jailed 15 months ago by Pakistan authorities for alleged blasphemy against Islam has been attacked while asleep in his cell. Pervaiz Masih, 34, was struck twice in the head by another inmate before he awakened enough to wrestle with his attacker and call the jail guards, a Christian human rights advocacy group in Lahore confirmed on July 6.

According to the Center for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS), Masih was asleep on the night of June 17 when another inmate, Akhtar Bashir, attacked him. His assailant struck him in the face with a sharp fragment of glass and tore Masih's Bible before guards intervened.

"Pervaiz seemed to be under a lot of distress," said Pakistani journalist Sadia Bokhari after visiting him in Daska's Bukshi Khana Jail last week. "He had a slight scar that could be seen over his left eyebrow from the attack," she said. The "Daily Times" reporter said Masih was well-respected in the prison, where the superintendent has allowed him some freedom of movement and assigned him duties over some prisoners. "Everyone there knows the allegations against Pervaiz are false," she said.

Masih has been refused bail since arrest in April 2001, when he was accused of slandering Mohammed several months earlier to three teenage Muslim boys he had been tutoring. Sajjad Ahmed, a Quran teacher in the Chelay Kay village near Sialkot, filed the case against him.

According to CLAAS coordinator Joseph Francis, at least 10 other prisoners accused of blasphemy have been attacked or abused in Pakistan's jails during the past three months, in addition to one defendant who was murdered in his cell.

Since the June 11 murder of Yousaf Ali in

his Lahore cell, human rights advocates have renewed appeals to the government of Gen. Pervez Musharraf to keep prisoners accused of blasphemy in separate cells from other inmates. Jailed four years ago, Ali was a 60-year-old moderate Muslim whose death sentence was still on appeal before the high court when a fellow prisoner shot and killed him.

+ Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana CA  
92799-7250 (949) 862-0314  
compassdirect@earthlink.net

### CRC gets many new insights at 2002 Synod

Thirty years after the Christian Reformed Church in North America adopted a policy on its homosexual members, the church will try to focus its pastoral response. In 1973, the CRCNA adopted a position that distinguished between homosexual practice and orientation. Practice is sin, the report said, but an individual may not be able to avoid a homosexual orientation.

That report also called for the churches to care for its homosexual members. However, according to Mel Hugen, "there was a deafening silence."

This year the CRCNA synod adopted a report urging its churches to create "an accepting, forgiving community of the unashamed." Hugen chaired the study committee that wrote the report. He said the committee was worried that this report, too, will meet with silence.

Delegate response was mixed. John Tenyenhuus of Toronto noted the challenge of the report to "love completely without understanding completely." Morris Greidanus of Grand Rapids thought the issue was so hot to handle that the churches "just let it sit there. I'm afraid we are going to do the same thing today."

The CRCNA synod also saw new steps in ecumenical relations. It decided to apply for

membership in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and it hopes to draw nearer to the Reformed Church in America, from which it formally withdrew in 1857. These actions came along with the news that its more conservative partners were breaking away because of the women in office issue.

While the Reformed Church in America was offering "greater unity" with the CRC, the CRC was a little more cautious. They wanted to

## Hendrik Jan (Pop) HOLTSLAG

*Passed away peacefully on  
Sunday 11 August, 2002.*

*Aged 86. Beloved husband of  
Ali for 59 years.*

*Loved father of  
Dick and Gina (Foxton),  
John and Maria (Upper Hutt)  
Martina and Neil Gyde (Whitby).*

*Loved Pop of his  
11 grandchildren and  
great-pop of his  
18 great-grandchildren.*

**Proverbs 14 verse 26.**

**71 Fraser Crescent,  
Upper Hutt  
New Zealand.**

work toward greater cooperation in ministry and mission.

Women's ordination processes are one obstacle for greater unity. The CRC refused a proposal to allow women to be synodical deputies, while the RCA was removing its "conscience clause" that had tolerated objectors to women's ordination.

At the very time the US Catholic Bishops' conference was debating its policies on sexual abuse by priests, the CRC also moved to strengthen its policy. They used the language of "zero-tolerance" to send a message that they will deal with sexual abuse. Dealing with it is still up to local churches, whose councils hold the authority to suspend, depose, or defrock an offending minister. [REC]

+ Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2850 Kalamazoo Av. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560

### Professor files lawsuit against DePauw University

Janis Price, a professor at United Methodist-related DePauw University, has filed a lawsuit against the school, charging that her salary was cut and her teaching duties were taken away after she distributed religious materials in her classroom. Price, an elementary education teacher, put issues of *Teachers in Focus* on a table in her classroom. The publication is produced by *Focus on the*

*Family*, a Colorado-based Christian organization.

The magazines included the October 2000 issue, which contained articles on gay activism in schools. One of the stories, "Love Won Out," was accompanied with the text, "Feeling helpless against the onslaught of gay activists in your school? Focus on the Family has the answer for you." A student in Price's class filed a complaint, which led to a reprimand from university officials.

"She never instructed from the magazines or assigned anything from the magazines," said John R. Price, an attorney representing the professor but no relation to her. "One student asked her about her views on homosexual teachers after looking through one of the magazines and she replied, 'If a school hires someone to teach English or math, they need to do the best job they can at teaching English or math.'"

Seven weeks later, the professor was called into the office of Neal Abraham, vice president of academic affairs at DePauw, and told that her salary was being reduced 25 percent and her job responsibilities were changing, the attorney said.

Price has worked at DePauw University since 1988 as a part-time employee, and since 1992, full-time. She is still with the university but is no longer teaching. In her lawsuit, she is requesting her teaching duties and full salary be restored and that the disciplinary action against her be dropped. + DePauw University, PO Box 37, 313 South Locust St, Greencastle, Indiana 46135-0037 (765) 658-4800

### Two Nigerian churches hold reconciliation meeting

Two Reformed denominations in Nigeria have vowed to "reject [their] bitter pasts and move toward opening a new chapter in [their] lives as God's people." Meeting on May 15, officials of the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria and of the Reformed Church of Christ of Nigeria took steps to heal a rift that dated from a church split in 1973.

Eighteen officials from the two churches issued a joint communique trying to mend the schism. They acknowledged their maltreatment of each other, and that they had "provoked each other to anger and to wanton and senseless destruction of each other's lives and personal effects."

The communique urged that steps be taken to accept and respect each other. It urged patience over past sufferings. Concretely, they urged pulpit exchanges between the two, and invitations to each other's meetings. The leaders should bring back a message of forgiveness and love to their respective churches.

The communique was to be presented to the synods of each denomination in late June. At the time of this writing, the synods' actions

were not known. The communique concluded that this meeting was not an effort at church reunion, but aimed to "foster unity, better understanding and a better relationship."

Four years ago, these two churches had their offices in the same town, Takum, when a local war broke out there. Members from these denominations found themselves caught up in that ethnic conflict. At their request, the REC and the Christian Reformed Church in North America helped facilitate the start of a peace process there. That peace process has expanded to include community leaders and representatives from all levels of society. In May 2001, community leaders signed a peace agreement.

Organizers of the peace process in Nigeria have now presented this agreement to officials and the community, and the community has made progress in starting to live together again.

From the beginning, those helping to guide the peace process hoped that reconciliation between these two churches would be part of it. A permanent peace would be difficult to maintain if enmity remained between the churches. This first step may eventually heal some wounds from the split almost 30 years ago.

+ Reformed Ecumenical Council Secretariat, 2050 Breton Rd., SE, Suite 102, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

### Presbyterian selected Prime Minister of South Korea

Dr. Sang Chang, a 1977 Ph.D. graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, was named Prime Minister of South Korea on July 11, by Korean president Kim Dae-jung. Chang, 63, is the first woman to hold this position, and will serve as Acting Prime Minister until her anticipated confirmation by the National Assembly in July.

Holding the Ph.D. in New Testament, Chang has spent her career as an educator at Ewha Woman's University in Seoul. Having graduated from the university herself, Chang joined its faculty in 1977. She is ordained in the Presbyterian Church of the Republic of Korea.

+ Princeton Theological Seminary, PO Box 111, Princeton, NJ 08542

### Archbishop of Wales will replace Carey at Canterbury

An often controversial bishop has been chosen as the next Archbishop of Canterbury, religious leader for 70 million Anglicans worldwide. The BBC reported on July 23 that the Archbishop of Wales, Rowan Williams, has been confirmed as the successor to Dr. George Carey in the Church of England's top post. Prime Minister Tony Blair chose Dr. Williams from a shortlist of two names, put forward by the Church after months of debate.

According to the BBC report, Dr. Williams

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said he approached the job with a sense of awe but hoped to give the Church a renewed confidence in the 21st century. "If there's one thing I long for above all else, it's that the years to come may see Christianity in this country able again to capture the imagination of our culture, to draw the strongest energies of our thinking and feeling," he said.

The BBC also said that Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, head of the Roman Catholic church in England and Wales, welcomed the appointment of Dr Williams in what he called "challenging times" for Christian leaders. "As a theologian of distinction, a man of deep spirituality and a gifted communicator he will, I have no doubt, prove to be a force for great good in this country and throughout the Christian world," he said.

+ ASSIST, PO Box 2126, Garden Grove, CA 92842

## Today's New International Version Bible

By Art Toalston

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) —The gender-neutral *Today's New International Version* "has gone beyond acceptable translation standards in several important respects," according to a statement issued by 100 Christian leaders on May 28.

The TNIV, a revision of the widely-used 1984 New International Version Bible translation, was introduced in January by the International Bible Society and Zondervan publishing house.

The nine-paragraph statement, coordinated by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, cites three key areas of concern: "— The TNIV translation often changes masculine, third person, singular pronouns (he, his and him) to plural gender-neutral pronouns. For example, in Revelation 3:20, the words of Jesus have been changed from 'I will come in and eat with him, and he with me' to 'I will come in and eat with them, and they with me.' Jesus could have used plural pronouns when He spoke these words, but He chose not to. (The original Greek pronouns are singular.) In hundreds of such changes, the TNIV obscures any possible significance the inspired singular may have, such as individual responsibility or an individual relationship with Christ.

"— The TNIV translation obscures many biblical references to 'father,' 'son,' 'brother,' and 'man.' For example, in Hebrews 12:7, the NIV says 'Endure hardship as discipline:

God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?' But the TNIV translates Hebrews 12:7, 'Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their parents?' The reference to God as Father is lost. In numerous other verses male-oriented meanings that are present in the original language are lost in the TNIV.

"— The TNIV translation inserts English words

into the text whose meaning does not appear in the original languages. For example, in Luke 17:3, the translators changed 'If your brother sins, rebuke him' to 'If any brother or sister sins against you, rebuke the offender.' The problem is, the word 'sister' is not found in the original language, nor is 'against you,' nor is 'offender.'"

The May 28 statement notes that the TNIV, in modifying masculine meaning in the original Greek to something more generic," changes:

— "father" (singular) to "parents."

— "son" (singular) to "child" or "children."

— "brother" (singular) to "someone" or "brother or sister," and "brothers" (plural) to "believers."

— "man" (singular, when referring to the human race) to "mere mortals" or "those" or "people."

— "men" (plural, when referring to male persons) to "people" or "believers" or "friends" or "humans."

— "he/him/his" to "they/them/their" or "you/your" or "we/us/our."

— and, as the statement puts it, switches "hundreds of whole sentences from singular to plural."

The statement then notes, "We wonder how the TNIV translators can be sure that this masculine language in God's very words does not carry meaning that God wants us to see."

Beyond gender-language translation concerns, the statement also laments other "serious problems with the TNIV," such as changing "Jews" to "Jewish leaders" in Acts 13:50 and 21:11. The statement asks, "How do the TNIV translators know (that the change) does not make a false claim, and obscure a possible corporate meaning?"

Another concern, also posed as a question in the statement:

"How do (the TNIV translators) know that changing 'saints' to 'those' in Acts 9:13 or to 'believers' in Acts 9:32 or to 'God's people' in Romans 8:27 does not sacrifice precious connotations of holiness which the Greek word carries?"

According to the May 28 statement, the TNIV "raises more concern in this regard than previous Bible versions because, riding on the reputation of the NIV, the TNIV may vie for a place as the church's commonly accepted Bible. We believe that any commonly accepted Bible of the church should be more faithful to the language of the original."

And, the statement concludes, "Because of these and other misgivings, we cannot endorse the TNIV as sufficiently trustworthy to commend to the church. We do not believe it is a translation suitable for use as a normal preaching and teaching text of the church or for a common memorizing, study, and reading Bible of the Christian community."

The TNIV's New Testament, which was published this spring, will be followed by the complete Bible, "expected in 2005," according

to IBS/Zondervan news releases, which also noted that the NIV will continue to be published.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### A response to "What about prophecy and tongues today?"

This is a response to an article by Dr. Gaffin, which appeared in the May 2002 issue of *Faith in Focus*.

Although it is with some trepidation that I put pen to paper, it is the only avenue to air my disagreement. It needs to be acknowledged, though, that different views do exist in the Church. I think it is good to be able to discuss this openly. Please bear with me and have your Bible handy.

A strongly held position as to what one thinks the confessions say or imply, and then explaining Scripture in the light of that understanding, creates uneasiness in my mind.

I would agree with Robert Meischke's suggestion in a recent issue of

*Trowel and Sword* (May 2002) that: "the 'Reformed' character of our Churches should not be judged according to how well or how often we quote Calvin, Luther and the confessions, but on our submission to Scripture", and then he writes, "The moment we consider it necessary to be quoting them we are guilty of a form of idolatry no different to those who would revere certain 'saints'".

Dr. Gaffin starts his article with, "The Westminster Confession of Faith insisting that Scripture is sufficient" A bit later he says, "According to the Nicene Creed" and he finishes with, "the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures (Westminster Confession of Faith, 1:10)".

One could be forgiven for thinking that the confessions have too much influence here.

I accept that the NT apostles have ceased to exist, that they were witnesses and were bearing witness to the world of events that had taken place in their time. I agree the foundation of the church was laid as far as the first apostles are concerned. Yet I cannot ignore 1 Cor. 12:28, where Scripture says, "in the church God has appointed apostles, prophets, teachers." etc. without any time limit. Read also Eph. 4.10-13.

God appointed a number of apostles in the NT Church, other than the Twelve and Paul, like James, Andronicus, Junias, Barnabas, Timothy, Titus and Epaphroditus.

Perhaps nowadays we would call them missionaries. Today's missionaries are like apostles: they do groundbreaking work, evangelise, plant churches, train and appoint leaders, then move on to other locations. Their function is the same except that they don't write Scripture.

Can we deny that God still appoints apostles (missionaries) in the church today?

Can we deny that God still appoints elders, deacons and teachers in the church today?

To just stay with building terms, Gaffin denies that the "superstructure" is still being built and strengthened today, mostly with the same "materials" as in the NT times. Those "materials" are Spirit-given gifts (1 Cor.12: 1-12 and 27-31) like prophecy, tongues and a host of other gifts. If we are the body of Christ, should not all these gifts apply in the Church today as well?

What is the point of Paul saying in 1 Cor.14: 1 and further: "*eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.*" Was God giving the gifts of the Holy Spirit only for the duration of Paul's lifetime? The Bible doesn't support that, in my view.

Paul says in 1 Cor. 14:37-39, "*what I*

*am writing to you is the Lord's command .be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues*".

Words like "be eager" and "eagerly desire" are ongoing, forward-looking words.

A great encouragement for future Christians.

Re heading: "What about prophecy?"

I think we would agree that prophecy in the OT is foretelling or predicting by Divine Inspiration. It is different from NT prophecy, which is telling forth the Good News.

Gaffin does not explain who prophets are, or what prophecy entails in the NT setting. He appears to believe that there are no prophets in the Church today. Let me point you to 1 Cor.14: 3 and 31 where you see the result of prophesying, which is encouragement, instruction, strengthening and comfort from Scripture. This means that prophets are also with us today. They have not ceased to exist, as Gaffin wants us to believe. I am sure many of you have experienced encouragement, instruction, strengthening and comfort in the Church, no doubt in very recent times.

Now Gaffin makes a leap to Eph.2: 20 to say what he thinks it implies:

" *it affirms that the prophets have a foundational role*". I agree only in part, and would like to add that it is

a role which is ongoing today to strengthen the Church.

Gaffin then says, "*it clearly implies that prophecy was a temporary gift*".

Then at the end of the paragraph, he makes a statement of fact: "*the NT prophets are no longer a present part of the Church's life*". I cannot accept that such implication or deduction can be turned into fact just like that.

Take a look at Eph.2: 20. It tells us how it all began. In my view it does not imply at all that prophecy was only a temporary gift, although I agree that prophecy did have

a role to play in the foundation of the church, but that this role is ongoing.

That prophecy was only a foundational and a temporary gift surely cannot be true. When you read 1 Cor.14 3, 4, 26 – 32 and Eph.4:1-13, Scripture describes clearly the function of prophets for time to come till the glorious return of our Lord Jesus.

When Gaffin writes, "*By God's wise and gracious design .apostles and prophets .did not continue beyond its foundation laying era*", he does not do justice to the fact that the Church (superstructure) is still being built and strengthened today by God Himself (1 Cor.12:28, Eph.4: 11-13). By God appointing apostles (missionaries), prophets, pastors

and teachers, together with tongues and all the other gifts in the Church. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one just as He determines (12:11). What Paul writes is the command of the Lord (1 Cor.14:37). Is this not relevant for this day and age?

Re. heading: "What about tongues?"

Dr. Gaffin goes to great length explaining prophecy and tongues at work, but not in today's Church. Paul gives guidelines and direction on how the Church should function and be strengthened with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Did Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, mean this to be only in his own lifetime and not beyond?

The Biblical evidence in 1 Cor.12-14, Eph.4, and today's reality, cannot be ignored, and is much stronger than the weak explanations that apostles, prophets, tongues and other gifts have ceased to exist. Why try and limit the work of the Holy Spirit?

So what am I to do? I turn to Scripture and read 1 Cor.14: 36-40.

It is quite obvious that Gaffin puts all tongues in the same category. If indeed one utters mysteries to God with his spirit (14:2), he edifies himself (4), and tongues are only revelatory if interpreted so the Church may be edified (5), if it is individual spirit language to God and the mind is unfruitful (14), then these workings of tongues cannot be attributed to the tongues in Acts 2. Therefore they are not the same gifts.

Although the gift of prophecy is obviously rated higher, tongues is nevertheless commended. Paul instructs that they were not to be forbidden (39). This verse carries an implication that some in the church of Corinth wanted it banned.

Re. heading "What about 1 Cor.13: 8-13".

1 Cor.13: 10 says : "*but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears*".

Gaffin says, "*with the arrival of "the perfect" knowledge(v10)"*

He continues,"

*that conclusion (these gifts will not cease until the second coming) goes beyond the aim of this text*". I believe it is perfectly appropriate in its context, and it does mean that these gifts will not cease until the Second Coming.

When "perfection comes" (13:10), that surely refers to the state of the members of the Church at the Second Coming. There cannot and there will not be perfection before that time. We see but a poor reflection as in a mirror, and we know in part (12).

According to Gaffin the knowledge of God is perfect, prophecies will cease, tongues will be stilled and knowledge will pass away

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(8-10) as a result of the completed and closed canon. The questions need to be asked: What knowledge (8) has now passed away? What imperfection (v10) has now disappeared? I must say for sure that imperfect knowledge is still with us, and imperfection has not disappeared. "When perfection comes" cannot possibly mean the complete and closed NT canon. The knowledge of God we now have through Scripture (we know in part), will pass away, and we will not be "perfect" until we see "face to face".

Paul writes in v12, "we shall see Him face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known". The word "then" can mean nothing else but the time of the Second Coming of our Lord.

This degree of knowing God cannot be attributed to believers in the present age.

In 1 John 3:2 we read, "We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is".

Gaffin says, "

that the passages (Eph. 2:20 and 4:11) do not even address the question of whether or not any other gift will cease before the Second Coming. It needs to be settled from other passages". It is unfortunate that Gaffin does not give us conclusive "other passages". 1 Cor.13:8-13 does not help prove the non-existence of prophesy and tongues in the Church today. Rather the reverse.

Scripture is complete, sufficient for life, faith and salvation. Prophecy and tongues are to be desired, are given by the Holy Spirit and are revelatory only in the context of what Scripture has revealed. They are given to strengthen the Church of Jesus Christ.

It is my view that Scripture in 1 Cor.12-14 does not support the conclusion that prophecy and tongues belong only to its foundation-laying phase. Perfection is still a distant future.

Telling forth the Good News comes in different forms, given by the Holy Spirit, and is working through His power in NT times as well as today.

Why then does the Spirit give me a different understanding to Gaffin's? Is it my lack of understanding, or perhaps is it a confessional position on Gaffin's part?

God is revealing His Will in the Bible, through many, and in many different ways, as the Spirit determines (12:11). The imperfect understanding of Scripture now, will become perfect knowledge when we "shall see face to face".

Nevertheless the Holy Spirit enlightens us through Gods Word, not through our

confessions, which are a theological framework and guide. I must say, though, that I do subscribe to them.

I conclude with quoting again Robert Meischke (*Trowel and Sword*, May 2002):

"it is the challenge to focus on the works of God, rather than the works of men".

**Henk Reitsma**

## Professor Gaffin replies:

The editor has kindly offered me the opportunity to reply to Henk Reitsma's response to my article, "What about prophecy and tongues today?" (May 2002 issue).

1. I commend Mr. Reitsma for his overriding concern: on the issues in dispute, as in all other matters of faith and life, Scripture, not the church's creeds or a theological tradition, must be our final guide and authority. That's my concern also.

Consequently, I'm more than a little nonplussed to learn that Mr. Reitsma thinks I don't share this concern. What he finds in my article, instead, is "[a] strongly held position as to what one thinks the confessions say or imply, and then explain[s] Scripture in the light of that understanding", a position, he adds, that "creates uneasiness in my mind", along with the thinly veiled suggestion that I'm "guilty of a form of idolatry no different to those who would revere certain 'saints'!" (I hope the latter is an overstatement, for it's a most serious accusation, which one ought to be careful even implying about another Christian; what follows here shows how groundless it is.)

What appears largely to have contributed to his perception is the fact that I cite confessional documents (the Westminster Confession and the Nicene Creed) several times. So if it needs to be said more clearly: my use of confessions is only as I view them as subordinate standards, that is, as subject to the supreme authority of Scripture and so to be accepted only as they are faithful to Scripture. At any rate, it comes as quite a surprise to find that among what he considers my questionable appeals to confessional material is what I say in the closing sentence, namely that the final arbiter on the issues before us is "the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures"

(Westminster Confession of Faith, 1:10)". But how can Mr. Reitsma take exception to that? That is precisely his point (which I share, and, I might add, doesn't somehow become less true because it's in the Confession)!

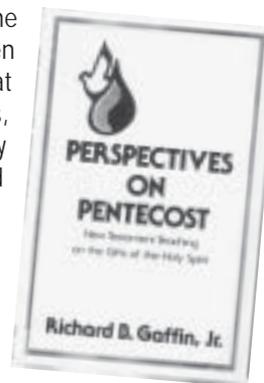
It's not helpful, then, for Mr. Reitsma to leave the impression that the basic difference between our positions is that his comes from an open Bible, while mine suffers from being unduly inhibited by the outlook of the Reformed confessions.

2. Turning to New Testament teaching, the response gets off on the wrong foot in discussing apostles. It is certainly true that the New Testament uses the word apostle in more than one sense. But that means it's important, whenever the word occurs, to be clear which sense is intended. Otherwise, we will fall into confusion, as I believe the response does in this regard.

We meet two kinds of apostles in the New Testament. Those mentioned in 2 Corinthians 8:23 (in virtually all English translations, "messengers ["representatives"; NIV] of the churches") are like Epaphroditus ("your messenger", Phil 2:25), sent by a particular church on its behalf for a specific task or on a temporary mission. In this looser and more general sense, there is probably no final objection to speaking of their being "apostles" in the church today (say, missionaries, especially on short term assignment, or evangelists with a specific commission), although such language could be confusing and its usefulness is doubtful.

The other, far more prominent New Testament sense is more definite and even technical. In view are the original 12 apostles and Paul, and certain others (the New Testament is not concerned to limit the exact number; 12 is symbolic of their totality). Each, like Paul, is an "apostle of Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1, etc.). This identification marks out the apostle as set apart by Christ to represent him and his authority in a full and incommunicable way. The apostle, among other things, speaks (and some, like Paul, write) God's word, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in and to the church; together they are "the foundation" of the church (Eph 2:20).

The response and I apparently agree that



apostles of this sort, in its words, "have ceased to exist." But then what about those mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28-29 and Ephesians 4:11? Which one of the two kinds are they? This is a key question. The response basically assumes that not only are they of the first, more general sort mentioned above but are also present in the church today. But that is hardly the case. There is no good reason from the text to think that the "apostles" of Ephesians 4:11 are any others than those prominently in view just a bit earlier, in 2:20 and 3:5, as "the foundation" of the church, that is, present in the New Testament church only for that initial period of its history. Similarly, the "apostles" of 1 Corinthians 12:28-29 are evidently the same, noncontinuing sort as those, like Paul himself, mentioned elsewhere in the letter (4:9; 9:1, 2, 5; 15:7, 9). (It's worth noting that many non-Pentecostal charismatic interpreters agree with the conclusions in this paragraph).

The main thread in the response's case is that apostles of the kind we find in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11 are for the church today, and so too, consequently, are all the other gifts in view, notably prophecy and tongues. But now, if such apostles are not [ed.: ital] for the church today, that argument begins to unravel. By the same token, if these apostles don't continue in the church today, then perhaps neither do at least some of the other gifts listed along with them, like prophecy and tongues (which my article seeks to show is in fact the case).

3. Toward the close of the response we read: "Scripture is complete, sufficient for life, faith and salvation. Prophecy and tongues are to be desired, are given by the Holy Spirit and are revelatory only in the context of what Scripture has revealed."

These words are troublesome, for what must be judged the confused and contradictory scenario they envision. I touch on this scenario in the last two paragraphs of the article but address it here again: If prophecy and tongues are present in the church today and are revelatory, then Scripture is NOT "complete, sufficient for life, faith and salvation." Rather, we would then have a source of revelation in the church in addition to Scripture; Scripture would then be no more than relatively [ed.: ital] complete and sufficient for faith and life.

The response is confident that there's no problem here, because, in its words, prophecy and tongues "are revelatory only in the context of what Scripture has revealed." This sounds good but what does it mean exactly? How will it work out in the life of the church? Consider this. Of the two explicit instances of (nonapostolic) prophecy recorded in the New Testament, those of Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:10-11), both are specific predictions. New Testament prophecy of course involves more than that, but if and where that gift is present in the life of the church, these instances lead us to anticipate that revelatory predictions will be a regular occurrence. What sound biblical reason would we have for not expecting that?

And just there lies the problem. The content of Agabus-like predictions, with the corresponding course of action they may envision (note in Acts 11:29 the offering taken in Antioch for Christians in Judea, based on the prediction in verse 28), have a specificity about them that simply can't be meaningfully assessed "in the context of what Scripture has revealed." For instance, when a claimed revelation is made the basis for urging a particular course of action upon an individual ("you should take this job") or upon a group ("our congregation ought to buy this property"), that revelation can't be

judged by existing Scripture, other than where the proposed action would involve violating a general biblical commandment. For the rest, we are in the proverbial situation of comparing apples with oranges; Scripture is silent on the specific details. So in claiming that such details are revelatory, there is no way we can NOT go beyond Scripture; we are

bound, however well intentioned, to compromise its sufficiency and authority.

As I pointed out in the article, prophecy and tongues, as revelatory word gifts, were for the initial, "foundational" era of the church, that is, the period when, among other things, the New Testament documents were in the process of being written. In other words, those word gifts were designed to function in an "open canon" situation, so that now, since the New Testament is complete, that is, since the canon is closed, their function is over and they are no longer present in the church. A closed canon and continuing prophecy cannot coexist; the one excludes the other. That conclusion, though confessional, is not dictated by any Reformed confession but by Scripture and the coherence of its teaching.

4. We Reformed Christians must be on guard against being presumptuous or indifferent about the work of the Holy Spirit. As individuals and in our church life we must take very seriously the biblical admonitions (which, after all, are addressed not to the world but the church), not to "grieve" or "quench" the Spirit (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19). But, where, regrettably, that is no doubt true of us all in various ways, we can be sure of one thing: the problem isn't because we are lacking or failing to seek the gifts of prophecy and tongues. May God deliver us all, Reformed churches in the South Pacific, in North America and elsewhere around the world, from the confusion and turmoil that are bound to result in our midst from pursuing the illusion that the grass of Pentecostal/charismatic distinctives is greener than the Reformed pastures in which he has so richly blessed us to dwell. May he grant us—and I'm confident Mr. Reitsma would share this prayer—not only the desire to experience more of the Spirit and his work in our midst, but just to that end, expectations that come ultimately from listening to "no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture."

[I refer readers who may be interested in more extensive treatments of the issues dealt with in my article and this reply to my Perspectives on Pentecost (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), especially pp. 55-122, and my contributions in the symposium edited by W. Grudem, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* (Zondervan, 1996), pp. 25-64, 149-55, 284-97, 334-40.]

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# The two sisters

## *The R.C.N.Z. & The C.R.C.A. compared*

### Cor Feyter

For at least a couple of decades after their institution, the Reformed Churches of Australia and those of New Zealand maintained a close relationship. As they came from the same background, were started for the same reasons, had to deal with a similar environment and experienced similar problems, they had a lot in common. Consequently, they understood and supported each other. In fact, over those years, the two denominations were like real sisters to each other. And if now and again there was some minor disagreement between them—well, what else would you expect of sisters? From about 1980 on, however, rumours of some strange developments came drifting from across the Tasman. Firstly, it was reported that worship services in some churches were being conducted with little regard to a commonly accepted, traditional order of service. Then, it was alleged that some congregations had become increasingly charismatic in their attitudes and practices. Finally (this happened some time later) there was the so-called Word & Spirit controversy, when some ministers held that direct revelations from the Lord still occurred in the present time.

Initially, I regarded those developments as separate and unrelated, but later, mainly through discussions with people who had experienced them from close at hand (the editor of *Faith in Focus* was one of them), I came to the realisation that they had a common origin and were simply different stages of the one process. So I have tried to piece together how it all happened. My conclusions may not always be 100% accurate and there will inevitably have been local variations, but, generally speaking, this is how I believe it went.

### Trying to appeal

There appear to have been a number of ministers, mainly younger ones, who were concerned that traditional worship services would, in the long run, fail to attract young people. So they invited members of their congregations, particularly the young people, to take an active part in the services, starting with Bible readings and music or choral groups. As those activities were encouraged,

they increased and occupied ever greater proportions of the services, so that soon the central part was no longer the preaching, but performances by members. Then, personal testimonies started to appear and inevitably their emphasis became not so much on what the Lord has done, but on people's reactions to that. And emotions would play a large part—in fact services would not be considered successful unless the congregation had become emotionally charged (had got on a high, so to speak).

At about that stage Rev Deenik made the sad comment that some so-called Reformed churches were by then indistinguishable from any other charismatic group around the corner. The final step (and again it appears inevitable) came when people in their testimonies stated that the Lord had shown them such and such, or that the Lord had told them etc. Initially, such utterances would be ignored, but when they became commonplace, they had to be given credibility, hence the statement that direct revelations still occur.

### Is it happening here?

I know that many members of Australian churches are distressed about those developments, but the denomination as a whole has attempted to accommodate them. The purpose of my writing about them, however, is not to decry them, but to consider if there is a lesson in them for the New Zealand churches. So far, we have been spared from similar problems. Some people have claimed that it could not happen here. I disagree. In fact, in my opinion, given the right combination of circumstances, it could happen virtually overnight. The problems in Australia started from a concern to retain the next generation in the churches and in their efforts to address that concern, some churches have ended up compromising the very nature and the mission of their

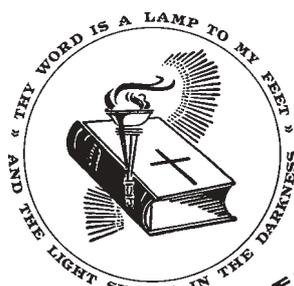
denomination.

Our mission and sole reason for existence is to preach salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. That message must always stay the same; it cannot be changed, and proclaiming it must remain the central part of our services. But the way it is brought and the way services are conducted can change, as they have done over time. Churches can and should, like everything else, go along with their time. I remember my parents talking of church services when they were young, say in the first two decades of the previous century. Men and women were seated strictly separate in different parts of the church building; men and boys were expected to

stand during prayers; in one case I heard of, men also stood throughout the sermon. That must have been some effort, because sermons lasted close to an hour, with a break in the middle, when a lengthy psalm was sung to give the minister a break and the congregation a chance to use up some energy.

### Time for a review?

The way services are conducted in the Reformed churches of New Zealand has changed little over the past fifty years, mainly because the foundation members of the churches still have a lot of influence. I can say that because I, too, am of that generation. This lack of change has also come at a cost. Quite a number of young people, baptised in our churches, have drifted away, sometimes whole groups at once. The inflexibility of church leadership appears to have been one of their most recurring complaints, although I do not accept that it was their only, main, or even real reason for leaving. But as the next generation is now rapidly assuming leadership of our churches, I believe that the conduct of the worship services, particularly congregational involvement and musical accompaniment, is overdue for a review. I would plead that such a review be considered, planned and directed from a denominational level, lest some individual churches be tempted to go their own way and lose control.



## Between You and Me!

### The Rise and fall of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Known as the GKN

**Dick Vanderpyl**

May I speak this with a good and fair conscience? Yes! Having been to the Netherlands a number of times and recently having read two Dutch books, called *The Century of my Father*, by Geert Mak, and a recent edition of *De Gereformeerden* (The GKN) by Agnes Amelink, a daughter of a Reformed pastor. Presently, at the most, only 8% of the population belong to a Reformed Church. In the Seventies, church attendance in the (orthodox) Reformed Churches declined from 95 to 60 per cent; and even

gradually accepted liberal teaching from the pulpit.

It reminds me of the story of the frog in a pot of cold water on the stove—gradually the heat is raised, and the frog adjusts itself to the temperature, and is finally cooked!

The bulk of our original membership here comes from these churches, including myself!

#### A sliding scale

This development did not come overnight, of course. Already in 1964, our churches admonished them for joining the World

i.e. buying an ice-cream cone on the Lord's day, or hopping on our bikes, as one of the authors quoted! We had a bicycle-shed at the back and managed to sneak the bikes on our shoulders to meet up with our girlfriends. Sunday meals were prepared on Saturdays so as to give a restful atmosphere! It was a biblical principle—read Exodus 16 verses 23 & 29.

In the years of our marriage, with the children growing up, we had a plaque:

*"Christ is the Head of this house, The unseen Guest at every meal,*

*The silent Listener to every conversation."*

Old and faded it hangs now in the garage, next to the entrance door to the house! Still, it is a reminder for the casual visitor.



worse, the youth deserted en masse! According to Agnes Amelink, the church attendance drops by the ten thousands each year.

In 1999, only 40% of the Reformed membership underwrote the Confessions of the Church.

When I mentioned this topic to some they disagreed with me, stating that there was nothing wrong in their home churches! For a moment I hesitated to put this to them, fearing to upset them. The pain lies with the older generation, including myself, to see this happen in our time. But it is the truth, and painful when so many of our families over there have left churches where they were baptised, had made confessions of faith, and

Council of Churches. Synod 1969 had an overture from one of our churches that the GKN deviated from our Confessional Standards. Two years later, we were compelled to send a letter of admonishment. Each following Synod forced itself to lower our relationship, and eventually by 1986 we had no option but to discontinue it. Since then, it has gone from bad to worse! It was not an easy thing to do, as so many of our families had ties with these churches.

You may think I delight to write all this! Far from it! I've seen too many spiritual casualties in my family and friends leaving their church, without office-bearers even bothering absentees!

Decline often starts with small things—

#### What matters there now

What is left of our Reformed Churches in our homeland? The original, sound orthodox Gereformeerde Kerken contracted to be one Denomination with the liberal Hervormde Kerk! Their mutual motto is "Samen Op Weg (Together On our Way). However, one section—the Reformed Bonders Congregations, as a solid orthodox entity in the Hervormde Kerk—manage to block this marriage on the basis that a false church will strengthen the liberal sector in their churches. These "Bonders" are therefore much hated and despised for their unbending obstruction!

There is also a valid concern in some of the Reformed Churches (the GKN), not so much based on doctrine but property. An elderly uncle of mine, well in his eighties, worries now about the consequences of seeing their church buildings being sold to Sects and Muslims. This is already happening! Income of the sale goes into the coffers of the State as the Hervormde Church is a State Church, so I am told! The reason for their anxiety is that if this amalgamation doesn't work, they will have to start right from scratch again.

#### Thankfulness

With half a century behind us here in New Zealand, we may be truly thankful to the Lord that on the whole the vast majority still stands on the foundations of the early Fifties in the 20th Century, when our churches were

established on a sound Scriptural and Confessional basis. Till now, purely by the grace of God, we have not been contaminated with false teachings. Of course there is always that little adder, slithering silently for changes, seemingly looking so harmless with the propensity to be a spark to light a fire. The danger is that the elderly may get tired and lose their 'zeal.' A new generation may well look for new ways and methods. It will always start so harmless, but beware! The devil quietly stirs and disturbs some and develops apathy in others, and the trap is set!

As in the days of the prophets with the trumpets on the walls of Jerusalem, we must be on our guard at all times.

In the Seventies, our Churches agreed unanimously that office-bearers are bound by the "Form of Subscription"—i.e. acceptance of the doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture. As Article 55 of the original Church-Order of Dort—1618-'19—puts it:

*"To ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly through heretical writings, the ministers and elders shall use the means of teaching, of refutation, or warning, and of admonition, as well in the ministry of the Word as in Christian teaching and family visiting."*

### Watch out!

Why am I writing this? Not to gloat or look down on our brothers and sisters in Christ who have been betrayed by their clergy and are now too old to get into battle. Coming generations may be tempted by the devil to relax and follow the way of the world around them. After all, there are plenty of temptations to be trapped in.

Let us be reminded what the Apostle Paul has urged us, "to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in our ways, that are contrary to the teaching we have learned. Keep away from them," he warns us. "For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they will deceive the minds of naïve people."<sup>1</sup>

So far the Lord has been good to us. May it continue to be so, by the grace of our God!

### (Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Romans 16: 17 & 18

## Our churches in focus

In general we can note the installation of the Rev. Jan Lion-Cachet to the Waikanae mission post of the Wellington congregation on the 28th of July, and the 'official' opening of the North Shore church building on the same day.

### CHRISTCHURCH NEWS

In my previous offering, I was already anticipating the advent of the Klazingas. I am happy to report our new minister and his family have now arrived safe and well and are becoming more and more involved in our congregational life. The family seems to be settling in in Christchurch, and is striving hard to adapt to a new home and culture. After only a few weeks, "Pastor Jim" claimed to be picking up the language even faster than his children, and told us that he considered this to be "just foine." Whether his striving will extend to rescinding a passion for ice hockey in favour of rugby remains to be seen, but we're working on it!

We have also welcomed a number of other new members from various congregations, including Erik de Boer from Bishopdale, Sam de Vries from Palmerston North, Teresa Schwellnus from South Africa, and last but certainly not least, Liana Havelaar (nee Hoyt) from Masterton—via Uganda and Hastings. Another new arrival is Elisa Posthuma, born to Raymond and Monique, and just a few days old at the time of writing.

On the other hand, during the last few months we bade farewell to Linda McCully and Geert Tepper. One of our older members, Mrs H Tuininga, was called to Glory earlier this year; a reminder of our human frailty. Likewise, we are also grieved at the loss of Mr Gjalt van der Zee, who has passed away after contracting cancer.

This report would not be complete without a mention of Synod, which was hosted by our congregation this year. This was a busy week for many of us, but we were able to enjoy some of the privileges that came with the extra responsibilities. One of the cooks confessed to have volunteered for that job

in order to hear the men sing. Those acting as hosts got the opportunity to meet some of our denomination's elders and ministers at close hand. And of course, many of us took the opportunity to sit in on parts of Synod to hear the deliberations of the delegates.

One of the delegates to Synod was the editor of *Faith in Focus*. He has been vigorously promoting the inclusion of digital photographs to accompany written submissions. Imagine his delight when he discovered our new pastor had a digital camera! Pastor Jim was immediately conscripted as Synodical Photographer—the fruits of his labours were published impressively soon after Synod.

As it happens, I recently attended a wedding from which I have a large number of digital images more than sufficient for an entire special edition of *Faith in Focus* but I shall show some restraint. I am bound so say though, that it was the best wedding I



Ed and Liana Havelaar

ever attended, and my bride, Liana, has a similar opinion.

One of the outcomes of this wedding is the debate over my future health. My colleagues who now see arriving at work on a bicycle expect me to become fit. The elders who sample the cakes that now sometimes accompany me to meetings maintain I will get fat. It is yet to be seen whether the wisdom of the world or the wisdom of the elders will prevail.

On the subject of physical health, a growing proportion of our members suffers from a variety of maladies. For the most part, this is to be expected. We have a sizable number of senior members, and as we get

older our bodies testify that they too are not durable, but are subject to decay. So we must look beyond the natural life of our bodies to a time when there will be "no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain." Something worth looking forward to!

## CHRISTCHURCH PRESBYTERY

The Christchurch presbytery met on Saturday the 20th of July 2002. Rev Hans Vaatstra acted as moderator for this meeting. A special welcome was given to Rev Jim Klazinga, as this was his first meeting as a delegate of the Christchurch session.

Dovedale answered the questions of Article 47 of the Church Order and gave a positive report of congregational life. Both the preaching of the word and the district fellowship meetings are focused on the letter to the Romans, and this has been spiritually profitable for the congregation. There is a good attendance at worship and at the fellowship meetings. Seven people have professed their faith and two babies have been baptised, and all this has been of great encouragement to the congregation. Some

of the senior members of the church are struggling with poor health. Dovedale also reported on how they had applied advice given at the last presbytery meeting on a pastoral matter.

Nelson also answered these Church Order questions. Rev Ralph Adams is preaching a series on the books of Kings, and one of the Bible Study groups is also studying these books. Both services on the Sunday are well attended. A number of Bible study groups are held in the congregation, and almost all families are represented at one of these. The congregation is looking forward to a profession of faith and two weddings coming up soon. Some recent visitors and members have added enthusiasm and blessing to the congregation. Nelson is still pursuing an application for financial assistance from the needy churches fund. Last year they received support from the churches of the local presbytery (for which they expressed thanks) and this year they have received gifts from churches in the other presbyteries, for which they are also very grateful.

The Bishopdale session proposed a revised wording for the supplementary questions to Article 47 questions. This revision was adopted.

Rev Hans Vaatstra brought to the attention of the presbytery items of interest from the minutes of the presbyteries of Auckland and Wellington, and those of the classes in Australia. There was some brief discussion on these matters.

Rev Ralph Adams reported on his attendance at the July meeting of the Wellington Presbytery in his capacity as synodical examiner from the Christchurch presbytery. The Wellington presbytery conducted the examination of Vicar Nigel Cunningham and the colloquium doctum of Rev Jan Lion-Cachet.

The Christchurch session raised a question about the oversight of the studies and worship at the presbytery youth camp over Queen's birthday weekend. Dovedale plans to follow this up by writing a letter to the presbytery with a suggestion about the oversight of these camps. Dovedale will also revise the mandate of the presbytery Youth Liaison Officer, with input from the other sessions.

The next meeting will be held on Saturday the 9th November at the Reformed Church of Dovedale.

**Reporter: John A. Haverland**

## WELLINGTON PRESBYTERY

The delegates from the 7 churches of the Wellington region met in Presbytery on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2002 with two major items on the agenda: 1) the colloquium doctum of the Rev. Jan Lion-Cachet who has been called from the Reformed Church of Port Elizabeth in the GKSA to the home mission work in Waikanae by the Reformed Church of Wellington, and 2) the preliminary examination of Nigel Cunningham, who is serving his vicariate in the Reformed Church of Hastings.

Questions in the areas of dogmatics, ethics, symbolics and the Church Order were asked of Rev. Lion-Cachet. After a lengthy discussion and further clarifying questions of Rev. Lion-Cachet, Presbytery voted to sustain his colloquium doctum. The synodical examiners concurred. Rev. Lion-Cachet was welcomed into our midst as he takes up his work in the Waikanae home mission under the supervision of the session of the Reformed Church of Wellington.

Nigel Cunningham was examined on Saturday morning. After hearing his sermon from Numbers 3:40-51 and considering two written sermons submitted by Nigel in accord with the new rules for preliminary examinations, Presbytery decided not to sustain the sermon, since only one of two Synodical examiners concurred. Nigel was then asked whether he would like to continue with the rest of the examination (Old and New Testament exegesis and dogmatics). He decided to continue, and answered all questions without difficulty. This second part of his examination was sustained with the concurrence of the Synodical examiners. Nigel will be able to re-sit the sermon portion of his preliminary examination in the November meeting of Presbytery.

During the remaining time after lunch on Saturday, the presbytery heard brief verbal reports from the Youth Committee Liaison, Rev. E. Rademaker, concerning the Queens Birthday camp, and from Rev. B. Hoyt, the counsellor of Masterton, on their progress toward calling a minister, and gave advice to the Wainuiomata session in closed session. The committee report concerning the use of the Silverstream building for "informal worship" and a discussion of the Reformed Youth Web Site were deferred until the next meeting of Presbytery.

**Reporter: Rev. B. Hoyt**

## TEACHER VACANCY

Homeleigh Christian School invites applications for a Teacher/Principal in a Primary School commencing January 2003.

Homeleigh Christian School is a Two Teacher Primary School operating from years 1 to 8. Its Constitution upholds the Reformed Faith and Doctrines. Applicants must be committed to the Reformed Faith and to Christian Education. For more information contact K.Verbeek on (06) 379 7595 or per E-Mail [verbeek@infogent.net.nz](mailto:verbeek@infogent.net.nz)

# From the D.A.'s Office

Synodical Archivist  
 Roy Nugteren  
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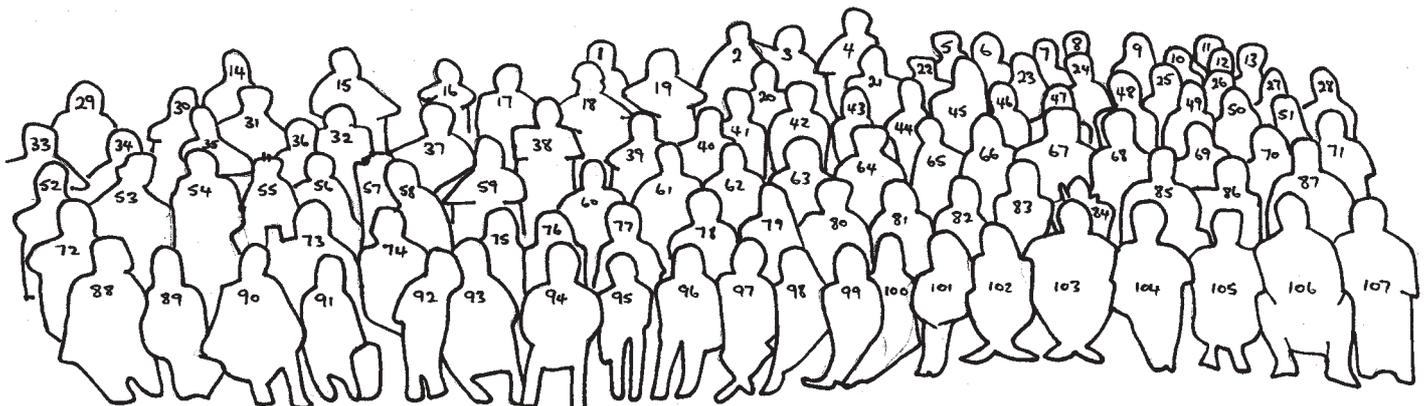
## National Youth Camp 1971

Small copy of the photo and number diagram from the Feb 2002 Faith in Focus?

On the back page of the February 2002 issue of Faith in Focus, a group photo from the 1971 National Youth Camp was published. Thank you to all the people who sent in names for the photo. There were a

number of situations where two names were provided for the same number, so I've had to choose in some cases, by referring to the listing of all those who paid camp fees at the camp. That list was supplied to me by the Treasurer of that camp (Jacob Ploeg), who had kept the list (and other items), all those years. Apparently the dog in the photo was just a stray that was wandering around camp! Here's the list, as best as we can get it.

Back Row	2nd Row	3rd Row	4th Row	5th Row	Front Row
14 Henry Alberts	29 Rob van Weerd	33 John van Weerd	52 Walter de Vries	72 Bill Wierenga or Mark van Voorthuizen?	88 John Wierenga
15 Bert Verkerk	30	34 John de Vries	53 Gerry Loef	73 Ben Jongepier	89 Margaret Hofman (Vannoort)
16 Anton ten Hove	Roy van der Woude?	35	54 Jos Steetskamp	74	90 Tony de Graaf
1 John Verkerk	32 Arie Geerlofs	36 Donald de Vries	55	75 Joyce Kroon (Verkerk)	91 Ellen van den Engel
2 Wiebe Roffel?	17 Peter Zeeland	37 Jim Gouman	56 Simon Gjaltema	Veen)	92 Beppe ten Hove (Dijkstra)
3 Peter Verkerk?	18 Roy de Vries	38 Peter Bangma	57 Thom Hofman	77	93 Roel Dijkstra
4 Bert Kroon	19 Wim Bouman	39 Roland Storm	58 Ingrid Oosterbaan or Co Ham?	78 Elly Cornege	94 Bill Berends
5 Bernie Bosgra	20	40	59 Rev Tom Tyson	79 Eleanor Storm (Bosgra)	95 Henny Bosgra (Berends)
6 Ben Van Den Engel	21	41 Ria Loef (Verkerk, Kuipers)	60 Peter Vijver	80 Charlie Bosgra	96 Anne Achterstraat
7 Albert Esselbrugge	22	42 Harriet Faber	61 Robert Storm	81 Bonny de Graaf (Steetskamp)	97 Coleen van den Berg (Berends)
8 Harry Berends?	23	43 Paula Fietje (Couprie)	62 Michael McTigue or Clarence van der Wel	82 Caroline Trowbridge	98 Sietske Bosgra
9 Irene Bloemendaal	24	Margaret Everaarts (van den Burg)	63 Wessel ten Hove	83 Gerda Wierenga	99 April Angus
10 Jacob Ploeg	25 Margaret Wierenga?	45	64 Simon Couprie	84 Lieda van Selm (Brooks)	100 Marieke de Rues (Smit)
11 Rini Westera	26	46 Margaret Dirkze	65 Jeltje Dijkstra (Loef)	85 Bert Koelewijn	101 Anne McTigue
12	27	47 Louise Storm	66 Joan Dirkze (Tepper)	86 Eve ?	102 Anneke Gorter (Kroon)
13	28	48 Linda de Geest	67 Andre van Rij	87 Elke Wesbonk	103 Tom Kroon
		49 Louise Geerlofs	68 Anita van Rij		104 Hans Berends
		50 Marie Slegh or Gladwen Hartley?	69		105
		51 Penny Hartley	70 Tracy Jongepier (Landkroon)		106 Rini Haakma
			71 Albertjan Landkron		107



# Take a real break this year!

Do you want a high quality family holiday in beautiful surroundings over the December/January school holidays? Yes? Well, read on. An opportunity to get away from all the hustle and bustle of everyday living, chores, city noise, traffic and pollution? Yes? Well, read on. A refreshing time of spiritual growth and time to focus on the important things in life? Yes? Well, read on. And you would like to meet other wonderful Christians from all over New Zealand? Yes? Well, read on. But you do not want to dig into your superannuation savings to pay for such a holiday? Well, your dream holiday has become a reality. Welcome to Family Camp 2002/2003!!!

This year, Family Camp will be from 27 December 2002 to 2 January 2003 at Finlay Park on the shores of Lake Karapiro just outside Cambridge in the beautiful Waikato. Our key speaker will be Rev. Bill Wiersma and registration forms and detailed information will be sent to all the churches during September.

Now you probably want to know what happens at a family camp? Let me begin by telling you that every time we leave Family Camp and look back to Finlay Park as we drive off, my family whole-heartedly agrees ... that was the best of times!!!

I will only cover the main activities. After

breakfast at eight the main event of the morning for adults is a study and discussion session relating to the camp theme. In the morning children are attending a Bible school program where they sing, cover a Biblical theme and do crafts. After lunch the afternoons are free to spend as you like. There are organised games for children, or you and your family can spend the afternoon in the swimming pool, canoeing on Lake Karapiro, fishing, walking, playing volleyball or just sitting around talking. After dinner there are evening devotions, and most evenings have something special planned like a glow worm trip, a talent quest and many more exciting things.

Finlay Park is in a beautiful setting on the shores of Lake Karapiro with good facilities for groups. There is a big dining hall and a well-equipped kitchen, another big hall for the Bible school program and a chapel that we use for the morning studies and devotions. In terms of accommodation there are cabins available, as well as camping sites if you want to bring your own tent or caravan. There is a great swimming pool, trampoline, children's playground, adventure playground, and canoes that can be hired at a very reasonable fee.

How does it all happen? There is a camp committee that organises the camp, and believe it or not, volunteers who run all the activities. We have camp cooks who take responsibility for the meals, somebody who organises the Bible school program, ministers who prepare the studies and devotions, and the camp committee who plans, organises and administers the whole camp. All campers are requested to volunteer for at least one duty at camp, for example chopping veges, or loading dishwashers, or setting tables for breakfast. Everyone does his or her little bit, add some organisation, and voilá - a whole camp running on oiled wheels!!

Does this sound good? Look out for further information and registration forms at your local Reformed Church. In the mean time, reserve 27 December 2002 to 2 January 2003 in your diaries. We look forward to seeing you at Family Camp this year!!

**Family Camp Committee, Auckland Presbytery.**



## Missions in focus

*Janice Reid*

### The 't Harts & Papua New Guinea

No more pencils, no more books ...

Our eldest daughter, Miriam, completed her first year of school today. Being homeschooled, she won't be getting a report card. But because she has been homeschooled, a report card is hardly necessary. As parents we have watched her learn, grow and develop. We are pleased with the way she is now able to read (in two languages!), write, do arithmetic. And of course, her knowledge of the Bible has also increased. Like all parents, we want our children to receive a good education, and we rejoice as we see them grow.

But while all parents want their children to be educated, not every child receives the same opportunities to develop to their God-given potential. Our local community primary school, for example, doesn't just lack some basic teaching aids. It lacks trained, committed teachers. Children of our congregation are in grade 3 but unable to read. I doubt they will learn much this year. They are on to their second teacher, and haven't been to school for weeks because this teacher has vanished as well! In Port Moresby, there are children in grade 5 who still can't read. Others have never managed to graduate past grade 3. And still others have hardly or never been to school.

The problem is a complex one. For some, the teachers are either not showing up or not doing their job. Some children start school late because the parents had trouble finding money for school fees or uniforms. Or if they had that, there was no money for bus fares, breakfast or lunch. Then a relative dies, someone gets sick or another problem arises. And then a relative of the teacher dies and so classes are cancelled. Then because school becomes such an on-again, off-again affair, truancy becomes more of a problem. This drags the whole class back and since there is a lot of cultural peer pressure to keep a child from excelling well ahead of his/her peers, each child gets pulled back even more. To compound the problem, classes are held in English, a language not widely spoken in most homes. And by the way, even if you got homework,

it's not easy to complete it in a tiny, crowded house with no water or electricity.

But while the poorest children have difficulty progressing in school, others do better. Some have completed primary school, and a small handful even attend high school. Those who have better educated parents, or live in better housing, tend to do better at school, too. Not only might their home situation be more stable, they are sent to better schools and have fewer interruptions to their education schedule. And that is why one Catechism class can include both high school and illiterate or semi-literate children. Which poses quite a challenge!

#### **An education committee**

There are no simple solutions to such a complex problem. Money helps, and we could do with some, but money alone rarely solves anything. You can pay a child's school fees, but if he hasn't had breakfast or a decent evening meal, he probably won't even come to learn that one potato plus one potato equals two potatoes. Sadly it would be more likely that he'd be snooping around trying to score a real sweet potato or two from someone's garden.

But with God's blessing, a difference can be made. In the church of Port Moresby, an education committee was established at the beginning of this year. Their task is to find ways to assist the parents in educating their children. The Committee is very determined, and they're doing a great job. Their long-term hope is a Christian primary school. But for now, we do what we can.

#### **Vacation Bible School**

The first project was a Vacation Bible School. The Committee told me (I'm their advisor/facilitator) that they'd like to start with this smaller project, so could I please help them put a program together. With less than a month, it was a bit of a rush to get everything ready. Dorinda and I organised a small program with the theme of "Become a fisher of men". Five volunteer teachers were recruited from the Port Moresby congregation. Supplies were purchased (mainly with the help of some individuals from Canada), and suddenly everything was ready for the June 24 starting date.

The Vacation Bible School (which was not intended as an outreach activity) was a great success. Forty children were registered in the two classes, and the attendance was very

steady throughout the entire week. Every family of the congregation sent their children and most parents were involved in setting things up, teaching or cooking. The cooperation was tremendous, and most of the children participated well.

#### **Saturday school**

Perhaps the VBS went a little too well! Flushed with success, the Education Committee pushed to move on to their next phase: beginning a Saturday School. In their desire to keep the momentum going, they began their Saturday School activities on the first Saturday of July. The Saturday School is to have a strong emphasis on Religious Instruction, but is also intended to meet the other needs of the students. In particular, teachers were shocked at the poor English and reading skills of some children. They feel that Mathematics also needs some attention. The only concern we have at the moment is that we lack facilities. No classrooms, no desks, very few books, little expertise. But what is lacking in materials is made up for in enthusiasm!

#### **Introducing ...**

Lord willing, there is some relief on the horizon. Some books have been donated and will be sent to PNG shortly. They will go a long way to meeting some of our needs, and also to help set up a church/school library that the parents are keen to have.

And even more importantly, we hope to have two teachers, Srs. Caroline and Heleen Knol, come out for a number of months to assist us, particularly with the different educational concerns. The Knol sisters come to us via British Columbia and the Netherlands, and we are excited to have them come out here. One thing that bothers me is that as missionaries, you are expected to be a "Jack of all trades" when in fact you are master of none. While we enjoy the variety this gives, we are limited in what we can offer the people. For that reason we're happy to have the expertise these teachers will bring. And hopefully, I can keep focused on my main task here.

The teachers in Port Moresby (who are just mums and a dad and have had no more than 7-10 years of education) are also keen to get some help. In addition to help setting up a curriculum, one said, "They can teach us how to teach!"

Unless the LORD builds the house ...

Nothing will have any effect unless God gives it His blessing. But it is our hope and prayer that these small beginnings will have a positive effect on the congregations here in Papua New Guinea. And small things can have a great impact. A sister in the church of Ekoru has borrowed a book to teach her son to read. After three lessons she's seen such an improvement that she is excitedly telling others how just a little bit of coaching each day can make a difference. And so in the circle of the Communion of Saints, the parents can assume a greater responsibility for teaching their children about our Wondrous God.

### MIF Prayer Notes:

**Janice Reid** is grateful for your prayers as she completes her travel around the country in the first half of this month. This is Janice's time to report to the churches about the work she is doing with Far East Broadcasting Company. In the second part of the month she will be based in Hamilton, preparing for October's workshop in Myanmar, as well as getting in touch with people throughout the FEBC community who use the announcer's training manuals she is now responsible for.

**Stephen and Dorinda 't Hart** need our continuing prayers as they minister to national believers in Papua New Guinea. Please pray for safety on the roads as Stephen must frequently travel between Ekoru and Port Moresby. Pray for the Knol sisters, for their work in teaching members of the congregation, for their cultural adjustment, and for safety. Pray for the growth of the church and that godly, mature men would be raised up to govern the church.

**John Goris** would appreciate your prayer support as he continues to co-ordinate the Missions Committee of the International Council of Reformed Churches. Pray for effective communication between Reformed denominations as missions conferences are planned for next year.

The **Overseas Mission Board** asks for continued prayer as they look to future involvement with Rev Stephen 't Hart and the Canadian Reformed Churches in their outreach in Papua New Guinea. Pray that the Lord would raise up people from our own congregations to fill vital positions in ministry in Papua New Guinea. The three Reformed congregations in PNG need every sort of help, from Sunday school teachers to literature to leadership mentoring.

The **National Diaconate Committee** also asks for the encouragement of your prayers. Please continue to pray for the C.A.R.E. project in Madurai, India, which has been supported by our churches through the NDC. Pray for those suffering from HIV/AIDS, especially that they would be open to the Gospel and that the Lord would call many of them, before they die, into relationship with Him. Pray for the NDC in their continuing work, and ask for the Lord's wisdom as they determine how funds should be used.

Please keep the **OPC work in Uganda** in your prayers. News that "something is happening here" continues to reach the OPC's *Committee on Foreign Missions* from South Karamoja, Uganda. Attendance at the Wednesday evening Bible study in Nakaale is approaching two hundred—which seems especially puzzling, since Ugandans do not usually go out walking at night. Ask the Lord to pour out His Spirit upon His own in Karamoja, that their eyes and hearts might be opened to see and to take hold of the glorious promises in His Word.

## Country profile: *Kyrgyzstan*

Kyrgyzstan has a population of some 4.5 million, of which only 0.6% are evangelical Christians. It is the poorest of the central Asian countries (the "-istans") with an income per person per year of approximately \$960NZ.

Kyrgyzstan became independent of Russia in 1991. President Askar Akaev instituted free market reforms and a measure of democracy, but economic hardship, criminal control of the economy and attempted invasions by Islamic militants from Tajikistan led to some limitations of democratic freedoms in 1999.



### Pray for Kyrgyzstan:

1. Kyrgyzstan is a secular state with religious freedom, although there is some opposition to this by Muslim fundamentalist groups.
2. The Kyrgyz church has grown from about 20 believers in 1990 to over 3200 in 2000. Pray for continued growth, and especially for mature national leadership
3. Pray that the Lord of the harvest would remove barriers to the Gospel:
  - For centuries foreigners have ruled the Kyrgyz and imposed their religions: Islam, Russian Orthodoxy, and then Communism. Pray that the Kyrgyz won't see Christianity as simply another foreign religion
  - The Kyrgyz are culturally Muslim, but the practice and understanding of Islam is low. A Kyrgyz becoming a Christian is seen as a betrayal of ethnic identity
  - Spiritism is widely practised, and the occult and shaman priests are a very potent force in many people's lives
  - Nomadic peoples who live in the mountains have little, if any, opportunity to hear about Christ
4. The New Testament was published in 1992 and 1997, the same time as a Kyrgyz version of the Qur'an. Many have compared the two and are favourably impressed with the Bible message. Christian agencies are working together to produce the first full Bible by 2006.
5. Christian radio programmes are aired by Trans World Radio-Armenia and FEBC-Saipan in Kyrgyz, as well as in other Central Asian languages. Pray for effective program content and a wide listenership.