

faith in focus

Magazine of the
Reformed Churches
of New Zealand

Volume 44/6 July 2017



I spread
my wings
and . . .

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Editorial

What typifies young New Zealanders? You might say that some seem to be consumed by wanderlust – a strong desire to travel. This is not a new thing, because young Kiwis have been going on the *Big OE* for many years. With higher wages, and overseas travel cheaper now than it has ever been, it seems that many a young Kiwi wants to see the world.

So far, so good.

But, what if you are a Christian, and you want to go travelling, or maybe you have the opportunity for a working holiday, or better still a full-time job offer in some exotic European destination? There are things that you will need to consider.

As a Christian, the most important thing is that your plans include a church to attend. It is a major issue, because Christians don't cease to be who they are, just because they go on holiday! The Lord still desires our worship, and on the Lord's Day, that is where we should be.

So, if you are a member of a congregation in the RCNZ, it makes sense for you to seek out a reformed church or one that upholds the doctrines of the Reformation. Not so easy, you think? It will require some thoughtful enquiry and discernment on your part before you travel.

Your enquiries could be via the internet and email, your parents, pastor or elders, or someone who is in the know.

If you are going overseas for work or study, it is important that you find a church where you can worship in Spirit and in truth, and have genuine Christian fellowship based upon the truth of the Scriptures.

Our contributors write briefly about their overseas experiences, while on working holiday, and while attending universities etc., in England, Germany and Denmark.

William and Rachel Haverland spread their wings for a working holiday.

Mr Jeremy Watson reflects on life in Cambridge while studying.

Mr Steven Watson surrounded by 18th century charm as he studies classical piano at the conservatory in Detmold, Germany.

Jake and Beccy Gulliksen, while on the outside looking in, find Christian fellowship in Denmark.

Mrs Sally Davey considers some of the implications of living at a distance from church.

The Reformed Church of Foxton 12 months after the opening of its new building.

Letters from New Zealand looks at holiday time church activity and New Year's resolutions.

Mr A Terpstra thinks outside the box as he looks at pop singer Ed Sheeran.

Miss Juliette Posthuma reports on the national youth camp in Teapot Valley.

Cover images: Ganet flying over the Delaware Bay. Sing H. Lin / http://www.shltrip.com/Crossing_Delaware_Bay.html ; William and Rachel Haverland looking over the desert from Mt Sinai; Trinity College, Jeremy Watson; Statue of Luther outside the Marktkirche in Hannover, Steven Watson; Jake and Beccy Gulliksen at Himmelbjerget in Denmark.

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not to be considered the official position of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand 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 New Zealand. 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.

NB: In line with common publishing practice *Faith in Focus* reserves the right to publish the names of all contributors with their articles, unless compelling reasons are given to the editor for not doing so. This applies to both print and online versions.

I spread my wings and ...

William and Rachel Haverland

Rachel and I got married in October 2006. We moved to a small house in Mangere Bridge, Auckland. I worked as a cabinet maker for a super yacht company and Rachel worked in radiation therapy. After six months we decided to make plans to travel, and chose to move to the UK as Rachel's qualifications and registration could be transferred easily. We were keen to see a bit more of the world and experience living in a different country. We booked flights for six months later and Rachel signed up with a recruiting agency. They called up

two weeks before we left informing us that Rachel had a job in Guildford, one hour south of London.

Upon arrival we were picked up from Paddington station by Rachel's cousins. We stayed with them for a few days in their small 5x4m apartment, while we recovered from jetlag and sorted out a few things like bank accounts and phones as well as looked for accommodation near Rachel's workplace.

We then moved temporarily into filthy nurses' accommodation in Guildford while we continued house hunting with increased urgency (we stayed there for one week – enough for Rachel to want

William and Rachel with a backdrop of the Pyramids and Sphinx in Egypt.



to leave the UK). I found a small, self-contained converted loft in Wimbledon, London –in our landlord’s house. It was a little bigger than a single garage. Within two weeks I also had work as a cabinet maker in London, but within a month found a new job as a builder.

We had initially gone to church with Rachel’s cousin for the first couple of weeks but wanted to find something closer to where we were living. Dad had done some homework for us and gave us several churches we could look at in our area. Each week for six weeks we visited a different church –

one high Anglican with candles, pomp and ceremony; another unfriendly with no greeting on arrival or leaving. (This really highlighted to us the importance of welcoming and greeting visitors and new members in our local church when we returned home.) We finally settled into St Luke’s in Wimbledon South, where the preaching was sound and challenging and the pastor and some members were very friendly. Being so close to church meant we were able to attend the Bible study, which was also very helpful in establishing friendships more quickly. The pastor would often call and challenge the congregation to accept Christ as Lord of their lives and to be more than pew warmers. When I asked him about this he said that many older members in the Anglican church would come to church out of social expectation with no real faith of their own. This was something we found quite different to our church in New Zealand.

At times, people would recommend we change church to one kind or another with more young people, but we found that once we were settled we did not want to move again and frequent change makes it difficult to get to know others properly. Rachel’s agency work meant friendships in the workplace were hard to establish as she regularly changed jobs. My workplace was a godless one with little respect for morality or for my Christian beliefs. The constant jibing was a real test but from this workplace also came the best witness opportunities and discussions. I think our light shines brighter when our world view is so different to that of others. Having a few Christian church friends was therefore of real importance and encouragement to us both.

During our time in the UK, which was just over one year, we lived in five different homes, often sharing with others. Rachel had four different agency jobs and I had two. We travelled for a total of 10 weeks or so and did a lot of day trips and weekends away.

All this change and travel created a lot of opportunity for things to go wrong. but God’s provision for us really strengthened our faith. A few examples of this are – when my passport turned up only two days before we were due to fly out to Spain after our futile efforts to get it back earlier; leaving Athens only two days before it erupted into riots and then returning to London with nowhere to stay and church friends coming to our rescue at the last minute. Through

(top) Temple in Aswan, Egypt.

(bottom) The view from Rachel’s work (Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS hospital) looking across the garden to Big Ben.



“The pastor would often call and challenge the congregation to . . . be more than pew warmers.”

all these times we really felt the Lord’s guiding and protecting hand; and our awareness of how little control we have in the situations and circumstances of our lives really increased.

With all the places we visited and sites that we saw, our faith was strengthened through the realisation of God’s power through the wonders of His creation, the sheer size of the world and the many abilities he has given to man to create countless marvellous structures.

Our perspective on society was changed during our travels as we visited many countries and cities with various cultures and religions and saw how societies have been influenced through them. We realised that sin is deep-seated and that hate between cultures can go back hundreds of years; only through God’s grace could the difference between these cultures and races be bridged. Only God can change hearts and lives allowing the success or collapse of societies. This was particularly noticeable when we visited the many amazing ruins in Egypt which display the wealth and success of times past, now only a distant memory.

We realised the prominence of Islam

in Turkey with the prayer calls that could be heard throughout the city and which woke us up every morning, and with the large mosques towering into the skyline in every poor town. It made us truly thankful to live in New Zealand where we are not confronted with this, and have an unpressured religious freedom.

We enjoy being back in our local church with committed members taking an active role in the life of the congregation; and appreciate that those who come to church want to be worshipping our Lord and Saviour. We have a better appreciation for local churches being accountable to the presbytery and synod, as this gives good support to pastors and sessions and protects the local church from heresies.

One important lesson from our trip is knowing that the Lord will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. Ps 121 vv. 7-8

William and Rachel Haverland are members of the Reformed Church of Pukekohe.

I spread my wings and ... (2)

Reflections from Cambridge, UK

Jeremy Watson

I find myself in Cambridge, England, studying towards a PhD in Electrical Engineering at the University of Cambridge from October 2016. I am blessed to have this opportunity, and I thank the editors of the *Faith in Focus* for asking me to share some of my experiences with you. Beginning with the country itself, England was not a culture shock, although some British people do have trouble understanding the Kiwi accent, and different parts of England also have unique accents

which one comes to recognize over time. Nevertheless, the adjustments are limited to minor things such as remembering that potato chips do not exist in the UK, they are “crisps”; or remembering to make a distinction between “ear” and “air” and similar vowel sounds. In Cambridge, it is especially important to speak English with correct grammar and pronunciation, although being from NZ gives one a license to differ in pronunciation! I have also had the opportunity to explore some parts of the UK beyond Cambridge, and although the natural

scenery is generally far less stunning than what we have in New Zealand, there are many pleasant sites worth visiting in addition to places of historical interest. However, it does rain quite a bit, and sunshine hours are clearly lower as well.

Studying in Cambridge is a unique experience. The age of the buildings and traditions here are mind-blowing for someone who grew up in New Zealand. Cambridge itself includes 67 Grade I listed heritage buildings, many of Christian interest, including the Round Church (1130 AD), King’s College Chapel (1440),

“It is impossible for Cambridge students not to be very aware that allegiance to the orthodox Christian faith is acutely counter-cultural and can be costly.”

and numerous other churches and buildings within the colleges. My college (Peterhouse) dining-hall dates from 1290, for example, and is the oldest secular building in Europe still used for its original purpose. Formal dinners here occur every evening during term time, where those of us who choose to attend the three-course meal for a small fee gather in our gowns to dine. The College Grace, a medieval tradition, is still repeated in Latin before each meal after the gong is sounded: *Bless us, O Lord, and your gifts, which of your bounty we are about to receive, and grant that, fed wholesomely upon them, we may be able to offer due service to you, through Christ our Lord, Amen. God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him. May God be in us, and we in him. Amen.*

The collegiate system is the other major unique part of the University of Cambridge. There are 31 colleges in Cambridge, each comprising of 300-1000 students in a range of areas, and for undergraduates much of the tuition is arranged by their college rather than by the central university. The purpose of the collegiate system is to help the students develop close-knit communities,

and each college places every single undergraduate student into a college family (complete with college “marriages”, “parents” who matriculated a year earlier, “children”, and sometimes even “grandparents” and “grandchildren”). Colleges also provide one-to-one or small group tuition, and compete with the other colleges in many sports. Being Cambridge, rowing is a major sport, and many students somehow find the motivation to get up very early most winter mornings to freeze on the river. Association football and rugby union are also taken very seriously. Cambridge is also well-known for its vast number of concerts, especially choral concerts by the many college choirs (some of which are world-class), as well as an active theatrical scene.

Cambridge prides itself as being at the centre of world affairs, and it consequently is a hotbed of activism in many different forms, both at university/college level and in the wider community as well. I have been very encouraged by the very real commitment and activity shown by students in the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union. Given the very active political and social

The famous King’s College Chapel seen from inside the college.





climate here, it is impossible for Cambridge students not to be very aware that allegiance to the orthodox Christian faith is acutely counter-cultural and can be costly. Yet, by God's grace, there are a good number of young men and women who are willing to announce themselves as Christians and demonstrate this calling by holy living. May we remember our Lord's promise that "everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven (Matt. 10:32 ESV). There is also a strong focus on evangelism within the Christian community here at Cambridge. The Christian Union primarily focuses on sharing the good news of the Gospel personally with friends and acquaintances, and although the number of conversions are not as high as we would desire, every year a number of young men and women do put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation.

I am now a member of the Cambridge Presbyterian Church, a church with a membership of about 150. Unfortunately, this is considered a large church by

UK standards. Truly we must not forget to pray for revival, and, while praying for this, let us also remember the words of A. W. Tozer: *Have you noticed how much praying for revival has been going on of late — and how little revival has resulted? I believe the problem is that we have been trying to substitute praying for obeying, and it simply will not work.* Nevertheless, God promises that the gates of hell will not prevail over God's church (Matt. 16:18), regardless of what social commentators predict, and where the Gospel is still faithfully preached it is no less effective and powerful. I have been very blessed by the preaching of the church and by Christian fellowship with my brothers and sisters in the Lord here. The church also has a (very-much-used-and-appreciated!) scheme for looking after students and young adults for every Sunday lunch during term-time. We also support a good number of long-term overseas missionaries from our own congregation. There are regular church meetings, including various group Bible studies, social events, and, last but

The Old Court of the oldest college in Cambridge – Peterhouse, which the author belongs to.

not least, a weekly prayer meeting. The prayers of God's people are indeed powerful and it is encouraging to see how God provides for the needs we bring to Him in prayer.

May our great God continue to bless all of you as you seek to serve Him in New Zealand.

Mr Jeremy Watson is a member of Cambridge Presbyterian Church and a former member of the Reformed Church of Dovedale.

I spread my wings and ... (3)

“All great literature is one of two stories; a man goes on a journey or a stranger comes to town.” — Leo Tolstoy

Steven Watson

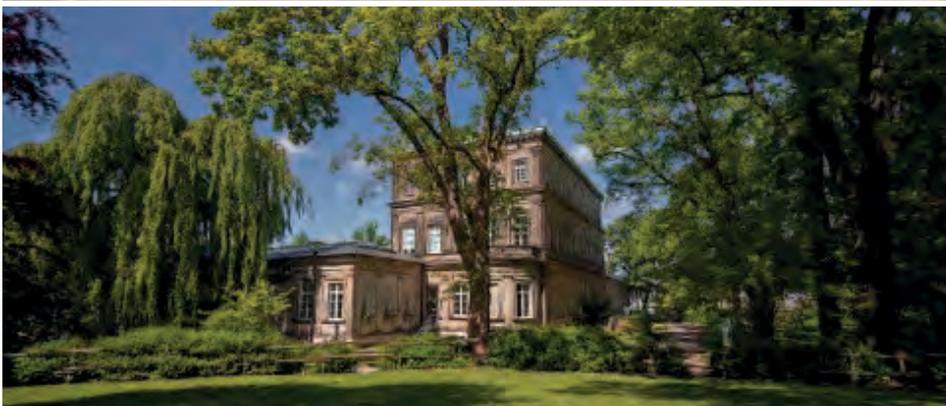
My journey began in January 2016, when I travelled to Germany to take part in entrance examinations; the town, Detmold, is a quiet and pleasant place located in the Teutoburg Forest, western Germany. Two short months later, I was leaving New Zealand to further my studies in classical piano performance at the conservatory there. The conservatory in Detmold is very multinational, and I have been enjoying my time there. Largely untouched during the Second World War due to its military insignificance, Detmold retains much of its 18th century charm. My accommodation lies at the edge of the town, and adjoins one of the many forested areas. Within a few metres I am in the forest with a multitude of walking tracks leading to various villages in the surrounding regions.

Living in a foreign country was for me not such an unsettling experience as some others have found it. Of course, there were challenges, and much to do and learn in the process of settling. The language also presented some difficulties, particularly in the first few months. All

class tuition is in German, so over time I have grown rather fond of German grammar, perhaps with just a few exceptions. Gendered nouns are one: why *Mädchen* (girl) or *Weib* (wife: archaic) are not feminine, while *Zwiebel* (onion) and *Tür* (door) are, is a question that has baffled many a philologist, and, no doubt, will continue to do so. And then there are separable verbs – but that’s for another day. A positive thing could be wonderful spelling bees I imagine the Germans have. Spell “Generalstaatsverordnetenversammlungen”?!

The classic German stereotypes of punctuality (with the exception of the rail system) and orderliness (such as waiting for the “green man” to appear before crossing a street even when there isn’t a car in sight) are certainly present. One humorous author put it this way: “At the end of each bridge stands a policeman to tell the German how to cross it. Were there no policeman there, he would probably sit down and wait till the river had passed by.”¹ Compared to the informality of New Zealanders, the formality and directness of the Germans can be conspicuous. On the last point, perhaps the relative absence of small talk is most noticeable. This should of course limit talk about the weather; however, with the climate Detmold has, this is not the case.²

Finding a church in Germany was a challenge; it is sad that a country that was one of the hotbeds of the reformation should, 500 years later, be barren spiritually. I am grateful to have met, through friends from the Reformed Church of Dovedale, a South African family who are active in SERK-Hannover (Selbständige Evangelische Reformierte Kirche = independent evangelical reformed church). I attend this church whenever possible, and have been very blessed by the fellowship and teaching there. However, as Hannover is around two hours away by train, this makes for a long day, particularly when the rail system is not running on time.



The “Palais” of the Hochschule für Musik Detmold, formerly a princely residence ⁶

As above, viewed from the Palace Garden

We are a small group, on most Sundays not exceeding 15 persons. A great blessing was to be instituted officially as a church this past February, which was something that had been much prayed for. We are closely affiliated with RTS Heidelberg (Reformatorisch-Theologisches Seminary), one of few places that is attempting to bring reformed teaching back to Germany. Outside of our church in Hannover, I have been privileged to meet a number of wonderful Christians in various places, all of whom have shown true Christian love and hospitality. There is also a newly-started Christian group at the conservatory, and we have weekly Bible studies and prayer meetings.

Two observations come out from the experience of living in a place where true churches and Christians are hard to find: the first is that unity between believers is of great importance, while the second is that adherence to the truth without compromise is vital. On a superficial level, there is often an observance of historical Christian practice: such as Sunday being a *Ruhetag* (rest day), where almost all shops are closed, most heavy goods vehicles must not travel, and one may not do anything making much noise, e.g. mowing the lawn, or using a washing machine. There is still a *Kirchensteuer* (church tax) which everyone who registers himself as a Catholic, Protestant or Jew must pay.

When one considers Germany as it is today, it is hard to imagine that just 80 years ago, Germany was controlled by the Nazis, or that it is only in the past 30 years that Germany was unified again. If there is one thing that history can tell us, it is that the human heart is “desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). Only the grace of God prevents the worst atrocities. At the start of the 20th century, very few would have thought that two world wars of a magnitude almost unimaginable would leave Europe shattered. It isn’t just the Nazis that were evil. The Holocaust caused 5-10 million people to lose their lives; since 1980, around 1.5 billion infants have been aborted.

“The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children” – so wrote Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a bold, highly influential pastor during the Second World War. Implicated in various plots to kill Hitler, he was martyred shortly before the end of the war. The world the Third Reich and its related philosophies left was one where its descendants struggled to survive. Our society, with all its wealth and sophisti-



cation, has killed the children it should be protecting. In Germany, like in New Zealand and worldwide, we need a revival. As Christians, we must be truly obedient to God, and pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit would come

“with all [his] quickening powers; kindle a flame of sacred love in these cold hearts of ours.”³

Thomas Watson once said that “the angel fetched Peter out of prison, but it was prayer that fetched the angel.” May we pray with the psalmist “Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?” (Psalm 85:6)

The current issues facing Europe are no doubt more interesting and important than any mundane descriptions of life in Detmold. The refugee crisis facing Germany and the rest of the developed world in general can be very divisive to Christians. The Islamisation of the West is dangerous and concerning. As much as the media avoid presenting the facts, there can be no avoiding the fact that the influx of refugees in Germany has led to a noticeable rise in crime. Terror attacks are sadly no longer uncommon. Winston Churchill once said that “an appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile hoping it will eat him last”. Europe’s tactics of appeasing Islam, even to the extent of building mosques, are nothing but a spectacular failure.

That we should have interest in, and concern for, our country and its politics is apparent in Jeremiah 29:7: “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find

Detmold at evening.

“Finding a church in Germany was a challenge; it is sad that a country that was one of the hotbeds of the reformation should, 500 years later, be barren spiritually.”



The Hermannsdenkmal, located in the Teutoburg Forest near Detmold, is a monument commemorating the victory of the Germanic tribes against the Romans in 9 AD.

your welfare.” Social and historical commentators speak quite frequently about the possibility of a third World War, as today’s political climate resembles that before World War 1; or regarding the ever present threat of Islam, which has never been greater since 1529.⁴ Yet in

all this, we need not be unduly disquieted. For all Christians, God speaks to us in Zechariah 2:8 that “he that touches you, touches the apple of My eye.” Perhaps there are some readers who do not know if they are “the apple of God’s eye”. Hear Surgeon’s words, preached in 1862: “Am I thus dear to God?” Let each man and woman ask that question. How can I answer it? Is Christ dear to me? Then I am dear to God.”⁵

If this is true for us, then we are safe anywhere!

- 1 Jerome K. Jerome, *Drei Männer auf Bummelfahrt* (Three Men on the Bummel).
- 2 Clue: the students call it “Wetmold”.
- 3 Isaac Watts, *Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove*, 1707.
- 4 In case you’re wondering, the Siege of Vienna ended on October 14th, 1529.
- 5 Charles Spurgeon, *The Lord’s Care Of His People*, 1862.
- 6 By Tsungam. Licensed through Creative Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Detmold_-_Hochschule-fuer-Musik_-_Panorama.jpg [Accessed 11 May 2017]

Mr Stephen Watson is a member of the Reformed Church of Dovedale

I spread my wings and ... (4)

Outside, looking in

Beccy Gulliksen

Making it to the bus stop in the nick of time, as usual, we hopped on the bus, trying not to look out of breath. Adjusting our hats and scarves, we clipped our ‘klippeports’ and found a seat. Through the window I could see a large pram, like a modern version of those old 1950s prams, sitting on the foot path. It reminded me of our first day in Denmark, seeing rows of prams lined up on a snowy day at a day care centre, sheltering the sleeping babies inside.

It seemed like an age ago, when, as newly-weds, we had received confirmation that Jake had been accepted for the PhD programme in physics at

Aarhus University. We had had just a few weeks to make the decision, and although we had been praying about it for a few months, this was crunch time. A decision had to be made as the start date was in just two months’ time. Being young and, perhaps – no definitely - a little naïve, we saw only opportunity and excitement in the move; and before we knew it our flights were booked. We had packed our lives into boxes and, with just our suitcases we were headed towards Denmark, on February 6, 2011.

Stepping off the bus onto the snow and bending our heads into the cold, blustery wind, we made the short walk from the bus stop to the little church that Google had found us our first weekend

here. Gratia Kirken was a small, conservative Lutheran church which had broken away from the State Church. We were greeted at the door by our good friend Klaus, and welcomed inside. We had enjoyed many ‘hyggelig’ evenings with Klaus and his wife. I especially remembered their Christian hospitality and fellowship when, on our second Sunday in Denmark, strangers in a new country, they had invited us to their home.

As we moved on to find our seats, our minister, Leif, came over to give us his sermon notes, translated into English. Although I had attended Danish school and was fairly fluent in conversational Danish, attempting to understand the concepts of a sermon was still too chal-

lenging for me, and we appreciated the effort Leif went to, to help us in this way. We found our seats and joined in the singing and the rest of the liturgy we had now come to know so well. Then, having already read through the sermon, and now making an attempt to listen to Leif's preaching, my mind wandered to the many Sundays I had sat under my Dad's preaching at the North Shore Reformed Church in New Zealand. I realised I had taken for granted the privilege it was to sit under solid, Scripture-filled preaching in my mother tongue. This led to thoughts on mid-week Bible studies, youth group and the fellowship found when an active member of a church family. I looked around at the people sitting there this morning, grateful that after three years we finally felt at home. Like most Danes, as we had discovered, our Christian brothers and sisters took a long time to build close personal relationships, something we had struggled with in the early years.

After the service I watched Jake, without surprise, as he wandered over

to have a chat with Leif about some of the points in his sermon. We had been greatly challenged in our beliefs during the past three years and had had the opportunity to question and discuss many of the doctrines we had been taught growing up in the Reformed Church of New Zealand. We were thankful for the openness and desire of our Danish brothers and sisters to discuss, to the best of their English-speaking abilities, the various differences in our interpretations of subjects such as baptism, the Lord's Supper and election. Some members of the congregation had mentioned how encouraging it was to them to meet Christians they thought even more conservative than themselves!

I went to find a cup of tea and mentally prepared myself to converse with people in Danish. It had certainly become a lot easier, and at least now I could stand with a group of people and have a general idea of the topic of conversation. We had gone to youth group a few times in our first year. However, we soon found that while they were

Jake and Beccy Gulliksen at Himmelbjerget, which is a hill located between Ry and Silkeborg, Denmark in the area known as Søhøjlandet. Wikipedia.



very welcoming and did their best to include us, most of the conversations were in Danish and it could be exhausting constantly to make the conversation ourselves, if it was to be in English, and we began to find it more depressing than uplifting.

As the group I had been standing with dispersed, I made a mental note to myself to make an effort to look out for foreigners and visitors and to consider their specific needs, when I was back at church in New Zealand. This experience had been good for me, learning what it's like to be on the outside looking in, not something I was used to. Growing up as a PK (pastor's kid), I was involved in many activities in the church, knew everyone and had no idea what it was like to be new to a church. As I finished my cup of tea I glanced up to see our 'Danish Parents,' Per and Kari, heading towards the door. This was our cue to leave. For the last two years Per and Kari had been generously giving us a ride home from church every week, and we valued the input and relationship of older Christian friends.

Our time living in Denmark and worshipping in a different denomination, in a different culture, opened our minds and challenged us in ways we never would have been without this experience. While we might do some things differently a second time round, we don't regret the spiritual and emotional challenges we went through. It put things into perspective for us. We have really had

to look at where our hearts are before the Lord. Being so heavily involved in church activities with a strong Christian family life, I thought I was pretty well sorted and considered myself a committed Christian. I might even have gone so far as to say a strong Christian. I soon discovered that, while I didn't doubt I was a Christian and believed the Bible, I was missing a vitally important part of Christian life, a personal relationship with the Lord. I realise now that this contributed to my struggle when away from the church and all its activities. Without these things I didn't feel like the 'strong' Christian I used to be. It wasn't until we moved back to New Zealand, found jobs, settled into a new phase in our lives and were able to regularly attend an English-speaking church and get involved in different activities that I really began to mature in my faith. I truly believe God used this experience to break us and shape us into who we are now. He has humbled us and brought us to an understanding of just how dependent we are on Him for everything. Although we have grown spiritually we know just how far short we fall and how much growing there is still to do.

Beccy Gulliksen is a member of the Reformed Church of Avondale.

Beccy walking through the snow on the way to church.



"I realised I had taken for granted the privilege it was to sit under solid, scripture-filled preaching in my mother tongue."

Outward focus

Sally Davey

When Church is a long drive



Many of us are commuters to church, meaning that we live a significant distance from the place our congregation meets. This presents us with a series of challenges, and it raises the cost of commitment to all the various aspects of church life. Could it be useful to consider the pluses and minuses of adding kilometres between us and our church building?

Unlike North America and perhaps Europe, most of us travel distances to church because we choose to live in rural settings. For the most part (unless you live in, say, Drury, and commute to the North Shore church), distances to church within cities in New Zealand are not great. In countries like the U.S., however, Christians will often commute long distances across cities to attend the church of their choice. They frequently pass many other churches to do so, which has led to concern about

the demise of the “community church” ideal. How can Christians serve Christ in their communities and draw their neighbours into the church if they worship far away from home? Blogger Tim Challies recently addressed this question, but concluded that if we shop at distant stores because we like them, why should we worry about attending the church of our theological, or demographic, or cultural choice?¹ I wasn’t sure if I agreed.

As a couple, we have had occasion to think about this subject often. Like others of you, we are farmers, which entails living on the job, well out of the city. Before we bought our farm we considered the question of how far was too far. Sixty-five kilometres and a 45-minute drive is what we settled on for commutability and affordability. For over 30 years it has worked quite well; and we have been able, by God’s grace, to make the journey twice on Sundays and

“The man who attempts Christianity without the church shoots himself in the foot, shoots his children in the leg, and shoots his grandchildren in the heart.”

enjoy having guests as well. We knew there were costs to this, and we haven't always found it easy. But we have also seen the effects of *not* commuting to a biblically-sound church. We've seen what it's done to the families of friends and relatives when they've opted to attend a weak, liberal, local rural church. In the wise words of Kevin DeYoung: “The man who attempts Christianity without the church shoots himself in the foot, shoots his children in the leg, and shoots his grandchildren in the heart.”²

What you choose to do about church has very long-term consequences. And because these choices may be important for others of you, I thought it might be worthwhile to discuss them briefly here.

Some background

First, though – how has living a distance from church been viewed historically? It has not always been smiled upon by serious Christians. The early American Puritan churches would not allow their members to do it. Even if they were farmers, members had to live in the towns, close to their church. Realistic, as always, about sin, they knew isolation was a temptation. Without the watchful eye of their brothers and sisters they could fall prey to bad habits, and neglect the means of grace. They knew we need each other, as iron sharpens iron. So, village life and community churches were the order of the day.

Since the coming of the motor car, however, distance has not been an insurmountable problem. Christians can have their cake (rural life) and eat it too (remain part of a sound, city church). Nevertheless, it is still harder to drive 45 minutes than 15; and there are times when rural Christians just wish they didn't have to. There are times when commitment to being at church can wear thin, and the temptation is to stay at home rather than make yet another long trip to church.

The costs

Suppose you're thinking of living at a distance from church. What are some of the costs to count? All things being equal, and even if you're thoroughly committed to being at church, a long trip might not be practical, or good stewardship of time and resources. You may have been figuring out the cost of running the car, but that is just the beginning. Let's say you're contemplating living 45 minutes' drive from church. Are you prepared for spending 3 hours in the car every

Sunday? That's what it will take if you drive in to both services. Add that to the service time and fellowship over coffee or simply chatting and getting to know people afterwards. Even if you are thinking to yourself – I'll stay around town all day, and so save a second trip, do you have friends or relatives eager to host you? What will you do with tired children – or guests you might bring to church with you? Can you handle being away from home from 9am until 7pm every Sunday?

But let's say you have decided to live out of town and, given that all our churches are situated in cities or towns, you face quite a drive to your church. What are the some of the factors you will need to deal with, and that make involvement in church life more difficult? You may be quite busy at home: farms are a time-consuming (some would say all-consuming!) business; and even lifestyle blocks require commitment to animals, pastures, fencing, probably large gardens, and all manner of other tidying-up chores. They take more time than the average city section.

It is often more difficult to be at every activity your congregation has organised (admittedly, proximity is not the only consideration in being at every activity). This obviously affects your children, since going to catechism classes and cadets etc requires extra, tiring and time-consuming trips. Mid-week Bible studies and prayer meetings for the adults of the family are another consideration. Service as an elder or deacon ramps the commitment up to an entirely different level. All this takes careful, wise deliberation as to competing priorities.

But then there are also the more optional commitments in church life, those related to fellowship – and there are plenty of them in most church calendars: things like birthday parties, kitchen parties for brides, baby showers for new mothers, weddings, funerals, men's breakfasts, pot-luck dinners or variety concerts. What to do? How many of them should I feel obliged to attend? There is the risk of running yourself ragged; and yet, each one, considered on its own merits, can be seen to have a claim on us. Distance heightens the dilemma.

The local considerations

Another big consideration is the responsibility we all have to our neighbours and workmates. Living out of town normally means a closer relationship with neigh-

bours and farm staff, which is something rural people hold dear. Living with more space between your houses, ironically, means you feel more interdependence with your neighbours and hence a greater sense of responsibility to them. There is a sense of community; and if any crisis strikes, neighbours will look out for each other. Common farming livelihoods might mean you share equipment, lend tools, offer help with seasonal tasks, carpool to community events or children's activities. Living out of town often means you socialise more with your neighbours.

This not only means that rural people typically spend more time with their neighbours than city people do, it also raises the question of how we bring the gospel to our neighbours. As I've already noted, rural living gives a lot of opportunity for personal interaction – and the further out of town you are, the warmer and more frequent the interaction is likely to be. This lends itself to discussion of the gospel as well as the opportunities for service that Christians have always wanted to take.

A problem arises, though, if neighbours respond to the gospel. Sometimes people do get interested in the Bible, and take God's claims on their lives seriously. What then? The obvious next thing is to invite them to a church service, since they'll have gained some understanding of what it will be all about. But how can you expect them to come, given your distance from church? You may have weighed up the sacrifices involved in devoting your own Sundays to church; but is it reasonable to expect an unbeliever to give three to four hours on a Sunday morning to attend church with you? And what if it's only the husband or the wife who wants to come? Will they be willing to leave their spouse and children for all that time? It is a big ask. It's not insurmountable, of course, if the person is really keen. But these are the kinds of questions that arise for rural New Zealand Christians.

Now, I realise that some of this may sound rather negative. It's not that there aren't positive sides to living a distance from church. People actually seem to enjoy a visit into the country; and ever since I was a child (in an even more remote rural setting) I've been accustomed to having city friends come out for visits for half a day, a day or even a weekend. These lengthier visits often give good opportunities for extended, meaningful conversation about truth, matters of the heart and direction in life.

In conclusion

So, there are pluses and minuses, difficulties and opportunities in living out of town and far from church. One thing is clear: we no longer have, for the most part, neighbourhood churches where members are but a short walk or drive from the church building. It is not easy for everyone to come to meetings or social events any or every day of the week. We do not live in villages any more.

It seems to me that there are two main challenges to meet. The first is to work out what commitment to the church should mean for out-of-town members. Is it reasonable to expect as much as from city members? Should we, like the Puritans, encourage everyone to live near to the church? Or should we rethink how many activities we have, perhaps for the sake of city members as well? Is it worth asking what is actually important to church life? Could more activities happen on the same weeknight, so that all families can spend a little more time together; and have more time to reach out to friends and neighbours with the gospel? Many American churches have only one midweek meeting, either for prayer, Bible study, or maybe both, for just this reason.

The second challenge is that of connecting our rural neighbours with the church. How do we do this, in ways that are practical? Perhaps there are several things that could be tried. One might be to extend Bible study groups further out of town, so that there is at least one, even small one that would enable interested neighbours to meet at least a few church members at a friendly, informal Bible discussion in a home setting.

The answers to such questions take a while to think through; and I certainly don't have them all by any means. Nevertheless, it seems to me a good idea to ask them, especially if you do find yourself living – and commuting – a good distance to church.

Notes

- 1 <https://www.challies.com/articles/suburban-sprawl-and-the-dying-dream-of-community-churches>
- 2 Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness* (Crossway Books, Wheaton Illinois, 2012), p. 132

“One thing is clear: we no longer have, for the most part, neighbourhood churches where members are but a short walk or drive from the church building. It is not easy for everyone to come to meetings or social events any or every day of the week. We do not live in villages any more.”

The Reformed Church of Foxton



"The LORD declares to you that the LORD Himself will establish a house for you:" 2 Samuel 7:11b

And indeed He did. On Sunday 19th June 2016 the Reformed Church of Foxton held its first services in the house the Lord had provided for them.

It is with thanks to the Lord that the Foxton congregation looks forward to the 1st anniversary of worshipping in their new church building. God has been gracious and after many, many years has provided the congregation with a place to call "home".

The Reformed Church of Foxton was instituted on the 1st April 1984, after having been part of the Reformed Church of Palmerston North since its inception. For many years the congregation worshipped in the Union Church building; however, after the Christchurch earthquake in 2011 the building codes were reviewed and the Union Church was no longer considered safe for use. A new venue was needed and the Lord graciously provided the hall at Manawatu College.

Way back in 1999 the Foxton congregation had purchased 2 adjoining sections at the south end of Main St, with the plan, DV, to build a church one day. Being suddenly 'homeless' reignited the congregation's desire to have a building of their own and the planning began in earnest. Plans were drawn up but these were rejected as many felt they were too elaborate for the size of the congregation. After much discussion a plan was finally agreed upon and in mid 2015 the building process began. Slowly the congregation and the local community watched as the building took shape.

On Saturday 13th August 2016 an official dedication service was





held, led by Rev John Goris, who had also led the service when the Reformed Church of Foxton was instituted in 1984. On the 3rd December a community open day was also held.

When we look back over the last 30-plus years we give thanks to the Lord for what He has done for our congregation. Our prayer is that He will make us a shining light in the Foxton community and we look forward to what is yet to come, as we not only live by God's grace but bring it out into the community also, "for we are confident of this, that He who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philipians 1:6

Jolanda Nugteren



Letters from New Zealand

D. G. Vanderpyl

January/February 1977

By the time that this issue appears, the Christmas holidays will be over again and everyone will be settling down for another year of labour and activities. The churches are also affected by this annual state of national relaxation when everyone tries to run away from the everyday tensions of life, seeking mental and physical relaxation. Not only do all church activities cease almost completely during that period but many churches also change the hour of worship. Unfortunately, there is no uniformity in this and consequently many a visitor or camper gets caught out arriving at the church thinking they had just made it for the Votum but then realising that they are receiving the Benediction. Some church members think it quite hilarious and show it on their faces, not realising that the visitor has been denied the Word of God due to their changing the time of the hour of worship. The reason for these changes seems to be purely that it will give the members more spare time for themselves, for entertainment. This is the answer I get every time I ask for the reason for the change. Strange, isn't it! I was always taught that Sunday is the Lord's Day and not ours to do with as we please. Wasn't it Voltaire who said, "If you want to kill Christianity, you must abolish the Sunday?" Well, we had better watch out that we don't kill it ourselves by equating the Lord's Day with "going to church" at a certain time and allowing the rest of that day to become "private property."

Sometime ago a study report on church attendance in the GKN (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands) was presented at the Free University in Amsterdam. Without going into details (which are quite revealing, by the way) I will only mention that at present, church attendance in the morning is 45% of the membership and that the evening service is attended by only 23% of the congregation. The report indicated the causes of such poor church attendance included the following factors: there is less and less acceptance of the norm "twice to church on Sundays"; the need to "go out for the day" and the changes

in the socio-economic situation of this age. So you see, if we are not careful, we may be preparing ourselves for a similar climate on this side of the globe.

The fifteenth annual Reformed Family Camp has been well attended by close to 500 campers. Regardless of the economic depression and the continuous inflation, the number of caravans almost tripled compared with last year. Our New Zealand Reformed people seem to make a good thing (Dutch: slaatje uit slaan) of these "bad times." The main speaker was Keith Vethaak who has served as a vicar in Christchurch and accepted a call from Kingston, Tasmania. He will now receive some practical tutoring from an old hand in this work, the Rev. J. F. H. VanderBom. The topics he dealt with at Camp were: love, marriage, relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, marriage difficulties and problem solving in a marriage. With so many youth at this camp and no generation gap between young Keith and his audience, communication must have been tops.

New Year resolutions. How often have these been so lightly made on New Year's Eve and then clean forgotten about the following morning? Allow me to pass on a good resolution handed down by my grandfather to me in my teenage years: "To build up a library and to read good books," although it frustrated me at times as a youngster to get more books than toys on birthdays etc. Now I do agree that children who grow up with an understanding and an appreciation of this heritage of reading have much more to sustain and console them through life than those who are given nothing but material objects. To me it is vital to have a good library in the home and to expand it continuously. The value of a library as a resource centre for personal enrichment is tremendous. Of course, it costs money, but a small, regular outlay will soon do the trick. It is also sensible to buy books while you are in your earning years, you may not have the time to read them all, but later on in life, when limited income stops you



from buying, you will have plenty of time on your hands for reading. A home without books is a barren place, as cold as an empty fridge. Most homes, unfortunately, have welcomed a thief into the house. The family loves him. He kills the conversation when visitors arrive. He stops them from enjoying nature. He stops them from reading a good book. He forces them to buy things that are not really wanted and relentlessly steals from them their most precious asset: time. That thief is given the best corner in the lounge and rules as an absolute despot in the home. Have the courage to throw him out of the house and start reading again.

Nevertheless, after all that has been said and done, usually more is said than done, which also goes for those annual, befuddled, resolutions.

Abridged

Thinking outside the box

A Terpstra

At the start of this year the name Ed Sheeran meant nothing to me. I first heard of him when early this year he was announced as coming to “Sunrise,” the Channel 7 Breakfast Programme. It was announced under the heading “Breakfast with Ed” and touted as an amazing event, featuring one of the world’s greatest music superstars. Not only would he sing on the show, he had agreed to make himself available to interact with fans in Sydney’s Martin Place, where Sunrise is hosted.

Wednesday, 8th February eventually dawned and Ed Sheeran appeared on the show to engage with show hosts, to promote his new album, and to mingle with the hundreds of adoring fans outside, many of whom took the opportunity to pose for a selfie with the music sensation. Dressed very informally, with a disarming and relaxed manner, Ed Sheeran cut a popular figure in Sydney that morning.

I couldn’t help casually wondering if Ed Sheeran had a following among Christians and more specifically, members of the Free Reformed Churches. Other matters, however, took over and Ed Sheeran took his place, as a name, along with other insignificant trivia somewhere in the recesses of my brain.

Then on 4 March, Ed Sheeran entered the house again, this time on the front cover of the *Weekend West, Seven Days* publication. No doubt the Channel 7 and West Australian connection made the sequel inevitable. The cover story, “Ed Space,” found on pages 18 and 19, made for interesting reading. It gave some insight into the songs (hit singles) that make up the new album, *Divide*. Apparently, “Shape of You,” “How Would You Feel (Paean),” and “Castle on the

Hill” recently held the top three spots in the ARIA singles charts.

The question as to whether Ed Sheeran had a following among Christians and especially Free Reformed Christians pressed itself on me once again. Following the reading of “Ed Space,” I did ask around and received confirmation that Ed occupied a place on the playlists of many of our young people especially. There was mixed reaction to my question on how he might be rated, with suggestions that some of his music “was ok” and some “a bit dodgy.”

In connection with this, I thought it good to quote and provide some discussion around what Ed Sheeran states in relation to “Supermarket Flowers,” another of his songs on the new album, *Divide*. Simon Collins, who interviewed Sheeran, reports about “Supermarket Flowers” that it is:

... a song written from the perspective of his mother about the recent death of his grandmother. It’s sure to be a tearjerker on his world tour, which starts in Italy on March 16. “She was sick a very long time and she was staying in a hospital around the corner from where I was making the album,” Sheeran explained. “I visited her all the way through that. She passed away while we were making the album. She left at an age where it is normal for people to pass away at some point and she did it in the best and most graceful way you could. That’s all you can really hope for”.

In the last sentence, Sheeran provides insight into the worldview that he holds to and that no doubt finds its way in to the alluring lyrics and music of his songs. In life’s most critical matter, the matter

of death, the best that Ed Sheeran feels we can hope for is that it is accomplished in the “best and most graceful way possible.”

Put that beside the Christian perspective that for those who believe in Jesus Christ, death is the portal to an eternal life of perfect relationship with God and fellow man and you see the real divide between Sheeran’s perspective and the perspective of Christians. Ironically, the album title *Divide* is a very appropriate title.

Of course, in promoting this life view Ed Sheeran is not alone. It’s a prominent worldview held by many and promoted at all levels. We live and have meaning only in the box that is bounded horizontally by the earth and the sky and vertically by our birthday and the day we die. Living in the box has no meaning in itself; people have to create their own meaning. Nowhere is this better captured than in Michael Steger’s TED talk, “What Makes Life Meaningful.” It’s a talk I encourage readers to listen to, not because it is in itself edifying, but because it provides such an amazing insight into what drives those in the world who we engage with on a daily basis.

Interestingly, the search for meaning and the conclusion that there is none to be found in this life is not just a phenomenon of our age. A classic in this respect can be found in Scripture itself, in the Old Testament book Ecclesiastes.

*“Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher;
Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”
(Ecc 1:2)*

From the outset and throughout the twelve chapters of the book, the Preacher proclaims the perspective that every endeavour of mankind is simply vanity. He acknowledges the value of different



Ed Sheeran. Photo: Eva Rinaldi, Flickr.com

elements of our existence, but concludes,

When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth ... I saw ... that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. (Ecc 8:16,17)

Indeed, when restricted to life under the sun or within the box, you cannot find meaning and purpose. That's where the Preacher, and with him all those who believe in the infallible Word of God, can truly start to think and live outside of the proverbial box and reach out to embrace meaning in God. In the final

verses of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher does exactly that:

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:
Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all... (Ecc 12:13)*

What worries me still is that so many of us are prepared to give Ed Sheeran and others like him so much time and space on our playlists and so in our lives. I want to encourage all readers to see the real *Divide* between a world view that only thinks inside the box, and a worldview that takes in the whole cosmic

reality of God, his work and his plan for us into eternity.

Let's not pretend that Sheeran's worldview doesn't extend beyond the graceful exit his grandmother made from this life. That statement was just the window into his limited inside the box type thinking. Bring up the lyrics to "Shape of You" or the seductive images of "Thinking Out Loud" (a YouTube search brings them up in seconds), and you see that across the spectrum of life's activity he preaches and models a false and insidious doctrine that is at best unhelpful and at worst destructive to growing and mature Christians.

God's Word gives good direction and provides excellent examples to those who harbour Sheeran and others like him on their playlists. The author of the letter to the Hebrews states:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. (Heb 12:1)

In Acts 19:19 we read of Christians doing just what the author of the letter to the Hebrews urges,

Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totalled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Somewhere on your computer and your phone is an icon, appropriately named "Trash." I suggest that it's time to relegate Ed Sheeran and probably many others to that part of the computer. If you purchased it from iTunes, never mind, I doubt it would have cost you the equivalent of fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Mr A Terpstra is a member of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. Una Sancta, 6 May 2017. Used with permission.

NYC 2017

Juliette Posthuma

We arrived at the Teapot Valley campsite at 1:30pm on the 2nd of January. Seven committee members, one year of planning and praying, and around one hundred and twenty campers turning up in under two hours. We stood in the legacy of 50 years of national youth camps and now it was up to us to run one! God had provided people (including fourteen all the way from Australia!). He had been with us through the planning process and we were ready to run the camp in His strength!

Studies

Pastor Erik Stolte from the Reformed Church of Dunedin led the studies. Earlier in the year, when we were bouncing around ideas for topics, one theme rung out: we wanted the gospel to be clear and people to be challenged and encouraged. From this the topic for the camp emerged: Grace - what it means for our past, present and future. We also wanted to reflect on the ways God has shown us his faithfulness for the past 50 years.

At 9:00am the next morning we got stuck into the first study, which was entitled: **The past** (our need for grace). Pastor Erik covered the desperation of our sinful state: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). He clearly articulated that we are desperate sinners in need of God's grace.

The topic of the second study was: **The present** (the meaning of grace). Pastor Erik began with the quote "till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet". The previous day we had seen the desperate state of our sin, yet God gives grace. Grace is a gift that God has given us out of the goodness of his heart – it is nothing we have earned. We are undeserving. We deserve to rot in hell, yet we have received mercy. That is grace, pure and clear. In this study, Pastor Erik clearly showed the amazingness of grace. I personally

left feeling like a massive bucket of grace had been poured on my head.

The third study marked the shift of grace into the future with the title of: **the future** (the God of all grace). God deals with his children on the basis of grace. Nothing that we do can make God love us more or love us less. He gave us the example of Peter's life. Over and over he messed up- doubting Jesus' authority (Luke 5), losing faith in Jesus (Matthew 14:29-30), when he promises he will not deny (Matthew 26:35) and then later in his life as well (Galatians). Yet God was gracious over and over. God is the fountain of all grace. He shows us our weakness to demonstrate how much we need his grace .

Our fourth study continued the theme of the future with: **the future** (relationships in grace). Pastor Erik made the point that "the economy of grace is more than enough to go around". We have been blessed with a bountiful tap of grace, and that grace must flow out of us into our relationships with those who are around us. As we eat with,

we dwell with and live with sinners (as we all are), we must show the grace of God in our relationships.

After each of the studies, we broke off into study groups for discussion. As well as discussing the talks we had just heard, we also tackled some more difficult and relevant issues. These included how we relate to gay acquaintances, and the topics of abortion and alcohol. The grace of God was shown to us so clearly in the talks. They showed us that all are the same: desperate sinners in need of God's grace. We are used as God's instruments to show that grace to others therefore that is how we are to respond in all relationships, no matter what the sin. Two sinners tackling the sin together.

The studies were a huge blessing and eye opener and we were thankful for how God appeared to be working in peoples' hearts. This was evident from the discussion during and after camp.

Activities

Icebreakers on the first evening were a real hit and ended with having to send





everyone out of the hall to clean blood streaks off the carpet! We had broken everyone into their study groups and then had different challenges they had to nominate team members for. The last activity was a horse and jockey race. This proved to be nasty and despite four layers of duct tape on the jockeys' knees, the final race ended with blood streaks all up the carpet!

Due to rain, the afternoon activities the following day needed to be postponed. Instead we had an afternoon of free time.

The following afternoon we kicked off the competitive sport. On offer were frisbee, football (all the Aussies seemed to think it was called soccer!) and volleyball. The football finals ended with one team versus the Aussies. They were

beaten but only just. We Kiwis' allegiance wasn't too faithful as many of us were cheering them on! This, though, had a lot to do with the fact that the same team won the volleyball, frisbee and football! In acknowledgment of the 60s, while the sport was running there was also the opportunity for campers to do some tie-dyeing, which was well attended!

Round robin within the study groups was scheduled for the following day. This included different stations where the groups aimed to get the highest points. The stations included blinded taste testing, team chants, giants' knots and crosses and many more. That evening we were entertained by two of our very own comedians: Jono and Ben at 8:10.

The next morning the sky was overcast and the air was a bit chilly. To our relief, though, the sun came out and the sky cleared for the afternoon. We had planned a massive water sport activity. This ended in a huge water fight with thousands of water balloons. After this finished everyone headed to their cabins to get ready for the 60s themed banquet.

The hall was decked out with bright colours, fairy lights and 60s music. We were served up a feast and got entertained during dinner with volunteers for karaoke to some 60s classics.

We ended the final day with a talent quest which included a variety of amusing acts. Many people stayed up late and some didn't get any sleep in the aim of dragging out the camp as long as possible.

The next morning we closed the camp, cleaned up the campsite, said our sad farewells and headed off home with loads of good memories and in need of a lot of sleep.

Reflecting on the camp, we are so thankful. We are thankful that God provided the campers. We are especially thankful for the Aussies who made the effort to come across. They brought a whole new dynamic to the camp and had a lot to teach us! We are thankful that despite a few hiccups, everything ran very smoothly. We are thankful for safety! We are ultimately thankful to God for how he worked during the camp and for the grace he has given us, beyond what we deserve.

Camp was a blast. The studies were a massive blessing. The friendships which were formed were a huge encouragement and will last a lifetime. In closing, we have a question: what do you see as the point of our churches' national youth camps? Do you see





them as important? The camps are getting smaller and smaller and one of our biggest worries when organising it was having enough people. We believe that a massive part of the camp is to be encouraged and challenged from God's Word but also to be encouraged and to encourage those who come. Will you encourage those young people that you have contact with to go to camps so that they can be a blessing and be blessed by the youth of our churches?

Miss Juliette Posthuma is a member of the Reformed Church of Christchurch (Cornwall St.).

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