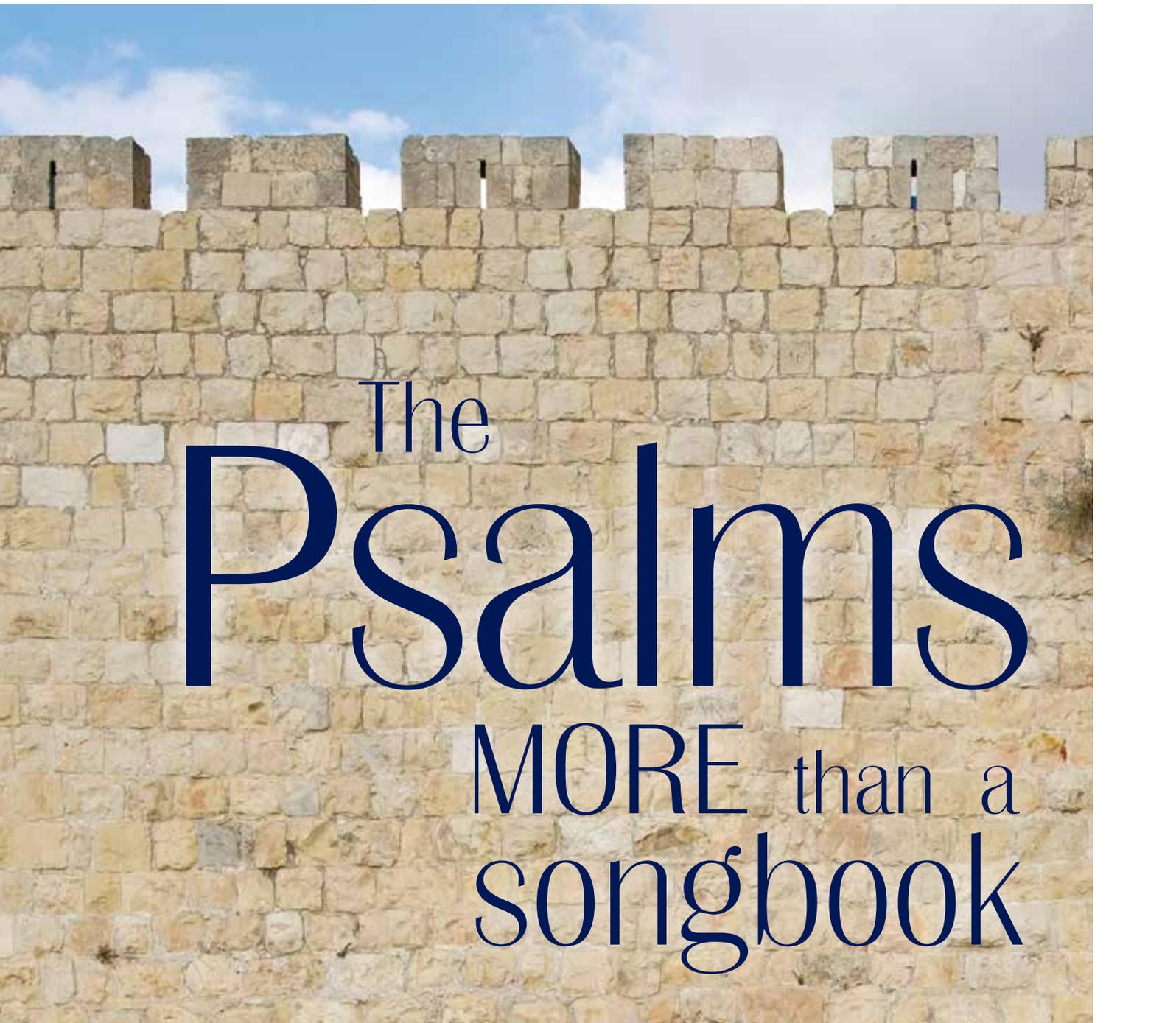


# faith in FOCUS

Volume 45/10 November 2018



The  
**Psalm**s  
MORE than a  
songbook

# Contents

"More than a song-book"	3
The Psalms: God's spiritual encouragement in every season	7
Psalms as history	10
Letters from New Zealand	13
Church leaders, prepare your people for persecution	14
World in focus	18
Theological student focus	19
Letter to the Editor	21
National Diaconate	21
Focus on Papua New Guinea	22

---

## Published monthly for the Reformed Churches of New Zealand

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

### The Editor:

Walter Walraven  
Email: [fnf@rcnz.org.nz](mailto:fnf@rcnz.org.nz)  
Reformed Churches Home Page  
<http://www.rcnz.org.nz>

### Editorial Assistant:

Mrs Sally Davey

### Production Staff:

Distribution: M. & D. van der Zwaag  
Design & Layout: Matrix Typography  
Printed by: Flying Colours

### Copy Deadline:

Six weeks preceding the month of publication.  
Church and family notices are free, subject to sufficient space and editorial acceptance.

All correspondence regarding distribution and payment of subscriptions to:

### The Secretary:

Mrs Nicola Wharekawa  
79 McLeod Street  
Upper Hutt  
Email: [nicwhare@gmail.com](mailto:nicwhare@gmail.com)

### Subscription per volume:

\$40.00 (eleven issues)  
Bulk Rate: \$40.00  
Overseas: \$60.00  
Electronically Mailed (overseas only): \$40

# Editorial

One of the things that attracted me to a Reformed church back in the early 1980s was the singing of the psalms from the Psalter Hymnal.

I remember the first time I heard them sung in a congregation with about 300 voices. I couldn't believe my ears! I was excited to hear God's people singing His praises with such gusto. It reminded me of Jacob in Bethel when he awoke from his sleep, and said: "... surely the Lord is in this place"!

Some 35 years later, I continue to grow in my love for the Psalms, not only in singing, but also in reading and meditating on them. The more I read them, the more I appreciate them. Often, I come across something that I hadn't seen or considered before – it just pops out of the page and grabs my attention. A good example of this is Psalm 27, where it refers to "the beauty of the Lord".

<sup>4</sup>One thing I ask from the Lord,  
this only do I seek:  
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life,  
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord  
and to seek him in his temple.

We don't talk like that in our day, do we? So, the Psalms instruct us how to behold the Lord and to worship Him, recognising His beauty as well as the other attributes unique to Him alone.

We may not always understand them in their context as they express the believers' love for the Lord, their struggles in the faith, their sorrows and pains, and the joys that exist for the one whose God is the Lord. But to learn to empathise with them, is a wonderful path to travel, as we too serve the Lord of Glory in our time. I recommend them to you, dear reader.

Our contributors write about the Psalms, looking at the theology, the practicality and pastoral usefulness and the way they deal with history.

Mr Paul Archbald considers the Psalms more than a songbook.

Mr Graeme Zuidema views them as spiritually encouraging.

Mr John Goris looks at them as history.

We consider some interesting snippets written by the late D. G. Vanderpyl some decades ago.

We hear from the National Diaconate about the Compassionate Catalogue. A letter to the editor in response to a previous article.

Mr Campbell Markham (pastor at Cornerston Presbyterian Church in Hobart), calls church leaders to prepare their people for the future.

Focus on home takes in Gleanings from the churches, a profile of the Rademaker family at Mid-America Reformed Seminary and Richard 'tHart on deputation in New Zealand.

Cover image: Jerusalem by Arno Smit on *Unsplash*.

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 Dort, 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.

# “More than a song-book”

## Paul Archbald

Many years ago – when I was preaching regularly in a church, but not yet ordained as a minister – an elder came to me and said, “You don’t include many Psalms in the services you lead.” I was taken aback by the comment, because I thought I had a balanced set of songs, overall. I replied, “Well, maybe I don’t have many in one service, but in another I might have more Psalms than hymns. I’m sure it evens out overall.” I then went back and looked over my past service-details. The elder was right. I was neglecting the Psalms.

Is it really necessary, though, to give so much emphasis to the Psalms? They are “Old Testament.” We find out so much more about the work of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament. Shouldn’t our emphasis be far more upon the hymns that have been written by those familiar with the whole counsel of God?

To answer that question, I want to explore the theology of the Psalms, so we can see something of what matters they cover, their nature and purpose. It is my hope that as we consider these things, our interest in using the Psalms may be revived.

## The purpose of the Psalms

The general purpose for which God gave the Psalms was *singing*, especially in worship services. The Psalms themselves actually *command* the singing of Psalms (Pss. 47:7, 95:2). Moreover, it is clear from the New Testament, that this command was not just for the Old Testament church. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 exhort the members of the New Testament church to address one another with *psalms*, as well as with hymns and spiritual songs. In the Book of Revelation, the songs of the re-

deemed in heaven appear to be either compilations of OT Psalms (e.g., Rev. 15:3-4, 19:1-6) or at least Psalm-like in their style (Rev. 5:9-14). The role played by the Psalms in the OT, the NT and in heaven, argues for a strong reliance on them in our worship today.

Ultimately, the purpose of the Psalms is to hold forth the Lord Jesus Christ – like the rest of Scripture. The language used in Luke 24:27 implies that the Lord worked His way systematically through the whole Old Testament to explain how every Book pointed to Him – including the Psalms. In Luke 24:44, the Lord refers to all the things written about Him in the Law, the Prophets *and the Psalms*. Moreover, the Book of Psalms is the OT Book most frequently quoted in the NT and the one from which the Lord Jesus Himself most frequently quoted. Indeed, the last words Jesus spoke on the cross were from Psalms 22:1 and then finally from 31:5. It is true that the Psalms speak of Christ in an “Old Testament” way. But when we learn language, we don’t dispense with the “ABC’s” just because we have learned to speak polysyllabic words. We use the fundamentals in our understanding and use of the more developed language. The Psalms are not to be *replaced* by “New Testament” theology or songs; they are to be given their place in them.

In addition to the purpose of revealing Christ, the Psalms are designed as what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called the “Prayer Book of the Bible.” Now I know that Bonhoeffer had a pretty hairy doctrine of Scripture, and that is no minor matter! I don’t encourage anyone to take that on board. But his booklet, “The Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible” makes some important observations. Bonhoeffer cites Ps. 72:20, where Solomon ends Book 2 of the Psalms by referring to them as “the

The Psalms are designed, to help us to bring all of life before God in sung prayer – as the Lord’s prayer covers all of life, in principle. Sometimes the Psalms will express God’s instruction on life, which we reflect back to Him, as an “Amen” to what the Lord has taught us – the “didactic (teaching) Psalms, the “confessing” aspect.

prayers of David the son of Jesse.” We may regard the Psalms as a collection of prayers. But then, are not the church’s songs a combination of her confession and her prayers, set to music?

Bonhoeffer argues that the believer needs to be taught how to pray. He agrees that the Lord Jesus taught us how to pray with the Lord’s Prayer. However, he maintains that every line of the Lord’s Prayer is a summary of the prayers of the Book of Psalms. The Lord Jesus Christ teaches His people that those prayers they learned from the Psalms have to be prayed not only in Him, but also by Him. As He renders all obedience for His people, the Lord Jesus looks to His Father in perfect prayer. He looks to His Father in all the areas where man must look, all the areas taught in the Psalms. The Psalms, says Bonhoeffer, are the “words He [God] wants to hear from us, because they are the words of His beloved Son.” David writes as a “prototype” of Jesus, who is speaking through him.

The Psalms are designed, then, to help us to bring all of life before God in sung prayer – as the Lord’s prayer covers all of life, in principle. Sometimes the Psalms will express God’s instruction on life, which we reflect back to Him, as an “Amen” to what the Lord has taught us – the “didactic (teaching) Psalms, the “confessing” aspect. At other times, the

believer’s response to the various situations of life is expressed, in Christ – in the way God teaches us to respond, not just in the way we might want to respond. This is why it has been said that the Psalms cover the entire range of the believer’s religious experience. This aspect of the Psalms also argues for retaining their prominent place in our worship. God has given us His “prayer-manual.” Can we write a better one?

### **The themes of the Psalms**

I mentioned that the Psalms cover all of life, in principle. I now want to demonstrate that this is so by summarizing the main themes of the Book. Some of these are “Didactic Psalms,” relaying God’s teaching on these subjects; others are more about the godly response of the believer in all manner of situations.

A Systematic Theology: The following list demonstrates how well the Psalms cover the main areas of systematic theology:

1 God’s Word and Law: Consider Psalm 119, the longest in the Book. Every section deals with some aspect of God’s Word. Several parallel words for “law” are used – testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments and ordinances. Sometimes “law” is used in the narrow sense, to refer to

God’s commandments and the principles behind them. At other times, we can see “law” as another term for God’s Word in general. Psalm 19:7-14 provides another good example of this theme.

Closely related, the Psalms also deal with the result of listening to God’s Word – Wisdom. Psalm 111:10 states that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, a thought repeated in Proverbs 1:7. Other Psalms simply speak of the blessings that come from walking in God’s ways, in contrast to the wicked (Psalm 1) – a familiar theme in the “Wisdom Literature.”

2 The Doctrine of God: From the Doctrine of Scripture, we move on to the Doctrine of God. The Psalms frequently focus on praising God for who He is. Many of His attributes (personal, defining characteristics) are mentioned: His justice (Psalms 10, 17 and 37) and holiness (Psalm 99); His sovereign might and majesty (Psalm 18, 77, 93, 97 and 99); His loving kindness (Psalms 107, 118, 119 and 136); and His unchanging faithfulness (Psalm 89). The Psalms also cover God’s Works: the doctrine of creation (8, 19:1-6, 33, 74, 89, 102, 104, 115, 136, 147, 148, to mention but a few); providence (Psalms 105 and 147); salvation and vindication (Psalms 27, 35, 49, 64, 73, 140 and 149 – again, to mention only a few); and judgement

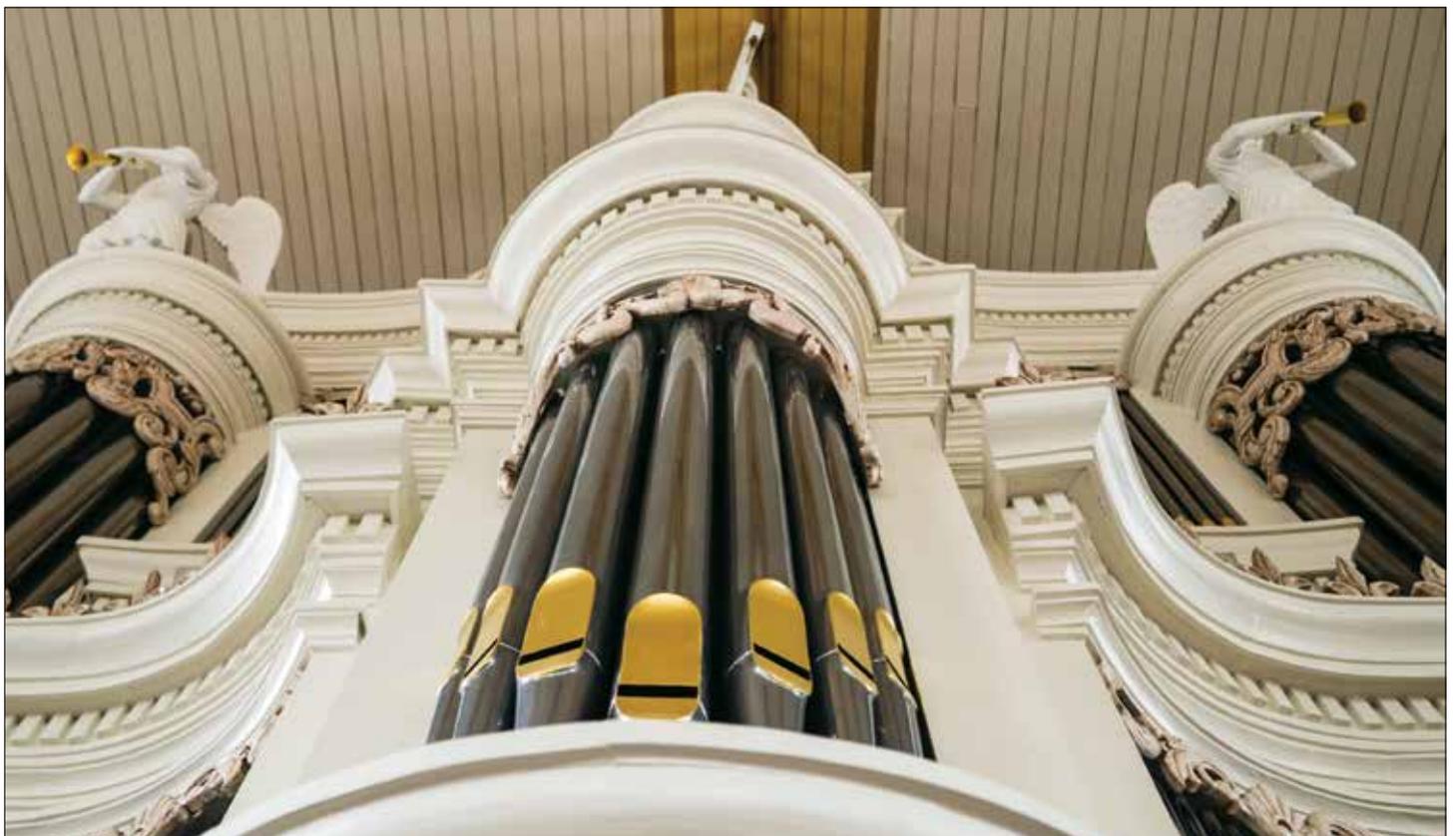


Photo by Wim van 't Einde on Unsplash

(Psalms 2, 96:10 and 98:9).

3 The Doctrines of Christ and Salvation: Most Christians are aware that there are a number of “Messianic Psalms” – Psalms that foretell the coming of the Messiah and His work. I have already indicated that the Lord Jesus explained to His disciples where He was revealed in the Psalms. He also applied the Psalms to His own work, by quoting them at critical points in His ministry. However, it may not be immediately obvious just how Christ-related the Psalms are. As Protestant Reformed theologian, Herman Hanko, explains, “In a sense, all the Psalms are Messianic.”

On the more obvious side, the Psalms sometimes foretell particular aspects of Christ’s work. Think of Psalm 2, which speaks of Christ’s authority, the giving of the nations as His inheritance and His judgement upon those who oppose Him. When David tells of his victories (Psalm 18), or the king is prayed for or praised (Psalms 20, 21, 45 and 72), this is looking ahead to the Great King. Psalm 8 similarly speaks of the glory and majesty given to the Son of Man. Psalm 16 looks to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Psalm 22 looks to His rejection, suffering and death. Psalm 40 refers to Jesus’ delight to do only His Father’s will. Psalm 41 foretells His betrayal. Psalm 45 speaks of His royal majesty. Psalm 68 tells of Jesus’ victory, ascension and giving of gifts. Psalm 69 describes Christ’s zeal for His Father’s house and His suffering on the cross. Psalm 78 points to Jesus’ use of parables (v. 2) and v. 24 is connected to His identity as the Bread from Heaven (Jn. 6:31). Psalm 97 shows His superiority to angels – implying His divinity. Psalm 102 declares the eternal, unchanging nature of the Lord Jesus and His role in creation. Psalm 110 teaches the eternal priesthood of the Lord Jesus, along with His heavenly session at God’s right hand, His divinity and His victory over all opposition. Psalm 118 points to Jesus’ triumphal entry, His vindication and His role as the Chief Cornerstone. All of these passages are applied to Christ in the New Testament. Of these Psalms 1, 22, 69, 110 and 118 receive the most attention in the New Testament.

These are just the more obvious references to the Christ. The more subtle ones come from the fact that the Lord Jesus came to do all righteousness for us and to intercede for us. When the Psalms speak of the “blessed man” who

*continued p5*



## PS

PS ...

An afterthought  
that ought  
have been included.  
This board for hymns  
made sure  
a psalm was not excluded\*

Too oft an afterthought  
too oft ...  
though God has wrought  
a wondrous thing  
taught us to sing  
inspired truth  
from Scripture’s holy psalter!

Here speaks the Spirit  
through human delegation  
Here sings the soul  
in solemn jubilation  
Here cries the heart  
from depths of devastation  
and grapples with  
the grace of restoration.

Had God not taught us  
had he not tuned us  
from the very start  
to shout His praise ...  
all we could raise  
would feebly stir His heart.

But now a boldness He bestows  
and how it grows ...  
that His might be the glory!

*\*Cathedral hymnboard*

**John Goris**

*Wellington, July 1999*

shuns evil, does what is right and seeks refuge in God (1, 15, 34:8, 40:4, 41:1, 84:12 etc.), they are speaking of the Lord Jesus first, then us in Him. That is one of the reasons why gender-inclusive Bible translations do so much harm – by masking the references to this Man. When the Psalms pray for justice upon God’s enemies, they are also praying for Christ as Judge – while at the same time reminding us that Christ’s work on the cross does not undermine God’s justice; it upholds God’s just anger at our sins, as well as expressing His great mercy. When the Psalmist speaks of his fellowship with God (Psalms 16 and 63), this is pointing to Christ’s fellowship with His Father and the truth that our fellowship with God is derived from the Lord Jesus.

4 The Application of Redemption: The Psalms speak of regeneration – the creation of a clean heart in the sinner, by God’s own doing (Psalm 51:10). The Psalms speak of conversion – sinners turning to God (51:13). Justification by faith is also pre-figured in the Psalms – in terms of the awareness that God can be called upon to refrain from imputing sin and to reckon the sinner as righteous, on the basis of His grace (32:1-5; 51 and 106:30-31). Sanctification is a strong theme in the Psalms (see the section below on that subject). Glorification is also spoken of, in terms of the future glory of Zion (48, 103:12f).

5 The Church and Her Worship: Israel is a “type” of the Church. Moreover, the tabernacle/temple, Mt. Zion on which the temple was located, and Jerusalem in which it was placed, all point to the intimate presence of God through the Lord Jesus Christ and the peace He brings. The joy of worship in the Old Testament setting points to the joy of worship by the church both now and in heaven. The “Songs of Ascent” (Psalms 120-134) along with Psalm 84, 42 and 43 express this joy. They also warn of the things that can disrupt that joy.

The Psalms were designed, as mentioned, for the worship service. We may even have some idea of how they were sung, with Psalms like 136, which appear to be *antiphonal* – sung by two groups alternating. Other Psalms make reference to the singing at the Old Testament festivals – such as 81.

B In addition to the various aspects of systematic theology, the Psalms cover what we could call Biblical theology – as they rehearse the redemptive history that runs through the Books of the Old

Testament (Psalms 78, 105 and 106).

C Finally, the Psalms express the godly response of the believer to the teaching of God’s Word. The Psalms cover all sorts of life-situations, reflecting the struggles and joys of the authors, so that we can know how to respond rightly to any situation in life.

1 Praise and Thanksgiving: One cannot go far into the Psalms without coming across praise or thanksgiving addressed to the Lord (Psalms 8, 9, 29, 33, 103, 104, 107, and 144-150, to mention but a few. Some Psalms also express thankfulness by means of vows (76 and 116).

2 Humility and Repentance: Psalms like 32, 51, 77, 81, 106 and 130 remind us of the loathing we should have for our individual and collective sins. They also declare that sinners may come humbly before the Lord, seek forgiveness and find it – ultimately through the Lord Jesus.

3 Struggling with God’s Providence: One of the most common themes in the responsive Psalms is the difficulty of coping with persecution and other types of affliction. The Psalms are honest about the way this can occasion complaint from the believer (44:9f; 64; 74; 79 and 142). But while these Psalms may begin with a “complaint,” they nevertheless draw the believer back to the Lord. They call upon us to trust in Him – even when we can’t see the reason for our afflictions (Psalms 22, 31, 80). They urge us to call upon His Name for deliverance and relief (Psalm 22). They point us to the Lord Jesus, who always looked to His Father, even in the greatest extremity. Many Psalms simply express the believer’s trust in the Lord, even in the valley of the shadow of death (Psalms 23, 11 and 16).

4 Petition: As mentioned in the previous category, some Psalms teach us that we may petition the Lord for assistance and relief, either for ourselves or for others.

5 The Cry for Justice: The “imprecatory Psalms” call upon the Lord to bring vengeance upon the enemies of His people (5, 7, 9, 10, 28, 31, 35, 40, 54, 58, 59, 68-71, 137, and others). God’s people today sometimes balk at singing such Psalms. We should remember, however, that while we are not to seek personal revenge, we are to praise God for His justice. That means calling upon Him to display His justice. In fact, when we sing these Psalms,

we are crying out for the return of the Lord Jesus, who is coming to judge the earth. If we have trouble singing these Psalms, how will we cope with the final judgement?

6 Sanctification: Those who love God’s Word have a desire for obedience. Those who love His salvation also desire to show their gratitude by walking in His ways. The Psalms, which speak about God’s Word and His redeeming work, therefore call upon God’s people to pursue sanctification. This is seen in the Psalms that describe the “blessed man.” This Blessed Jesus imputes and imparts His righteousness to His people. His people are commanded to live out of that righteousness. The desire for sanctification is expressed (Psalms 141, 143), sanctification is described (Psalm 1), pleaded for (Ps. 51, 81:13) and promised (Psalm 32:8-9). It is also the subject of vows (26:11).

### Conclusion

Putting all this together, I note that the Psalms are God-given: they are inspired by Him; we are commanded to sing them in worship. As we have seen, they cover all the main headings of systematic theology and much of the Biblical theology of the Old Testament. They outline the believer’s experience and what should be our godly response, in virtually any situation in life. No wonder this is the Old Testament Book most-quoted in the New Testament! This argues for the Psalms being given a prominent place in our worship today. Dietrich Bonhoeffer concludes, “The Psalter filled the life of early Christendom .... A Christian community without the Psalter has lost an incomparable treasure, and by taking it back into use will recover resources it never dreamed it had.”

This does not mean that we should act as if there were no New Testament – as if the Psalms say everything we find in the New Testament. We cannot expect the Psalms to speak of Christ with the fullness of the *whole* counsel of God.

That means that when we sing the Psalms today, we should do so with a New Testament understanding – as the New Testament itself does when quoting the Psalms, and as the Book of Revelation does when it brings them into its songs.

Let us take care, then, that we neither lose this “incomparable treasure,” nor lose sight of the fulfilment of it in Christ.

*Mr Paul Archbald is the minister in the Reformed Church in Silverstream.*

## The Psalms – more than a songbook

# The Psalms: God's spiritual encouragement in every season

**Graeme Zuidema**

I don't know about you, but I love to sing, and I love to sing Christian songs. Now, between you and me, I'm probably not the best singer. Nonetheless, there is nothing stopping me from singing full gusto *whenever When Peace Like a River* is sung. Don't stand in my way when *Jerusalem the Golden* is the next song on the song-board, either. And please, don't get me started on *Nearer Still Nearer*. These Christian songs ground me in great truths; they move me, and by God's grace they bring me spiritual encouragement. I am very thankful for great hymn and song writers of the past and I am loving the resurgence of faithful hymn and song writing in the present. Long may it continue.

Nevertheless, can we be grounded in great truths, be moved and spiritually encouraged by the psalms? Absolutely! This is God's word that we are talking about. This is the section of the Bible entitled 'Praises'. Well, it may surprise you, but it took me some time to really appreciate the psalms. Before I entered full-time pastoral ministry, I remember reading psalms to people, and I



Photo by Josh Applegate on Unsplash

The psalms not only provide us with spiritual encouragement in our times of despair, but they reveal that God gives us the strength to carry-on. The psalms are wonderful in the fact that they have been a blessing to God's people throughout the generations.

saw how different psalms affected and brought spiritual encouragement to them. However, for me it has only been the last five to ten years that I have come to appreciate the psalms in all their beauty no matter what season of life I am currently in.

John Calvin famously wrote that "I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, 'An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul;' for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror."<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, how did Calvin come to this conclusion, namely, that whatever season of life a Christian finds themselves in that the psalms are an appropriate place to turn? Therefore, it is my intention in this article to show you that God graciously gives us spiritual encouragement in the psalms no matter what season of life we are in.

#### **God's listening ear in our times of despair**

For many of us, the season of life that we struggle the most with is when we are in despair. However, the psalms make plain that we are not alone in our despair and reveal many of the writers pleading with God in times of desperation. In Psalm 13 the psalmist cries out, "How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever...How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?" I'm sure that there has been more than one occasion that you have thought to yourself, or even cried out, "How long, O LORD?" We can often have seasons when we ask this question especially in times of despair. Perhaps some of us can really identify with the words of Psalms 42 and 43. Psalm 42:3 says, "My tears have been my food day and night" and verse 5, "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?" No doubt for many of us there are times and seasons in our lives, and in those dear to us, that we cry out with the psalmist similar appeals from our hearts. However, perhaps for many of you Psalm 88 is one that you skim over because – you ask – how can anyone be in a position where they say in verse 18, "The darkness is my closest friend". How can psalms with these pleas of distress and despair help us in our spiritual walk? How can we gain spiritual encouragement from these types of psalms?

Well, we certainly can appreciate that the psalmist in Psalm 13 recalls in verse 5 that he trusts in God's unfailing love; God's loyal covenant keeping love. This

is the love that is evident throughout redemptive history and seen most superbly in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we see in psalms 42 and 43 that the psalmist reminds the readers that they are to "Put your hope in God". Thus, when we're in a season of despair the plea is still the same, "Put your hope in God." Nonetheless, what about psalm 88? Yes, it is a psalm that begins with a grounding in the God who saves, but overall it is a very bleak psalm. As one person said to me recently, "There's no up-tick in this psalm". However, let us remember that no matter how we are feeling, we can tell God about it.<sup>2</sup> This, then, is the curious comfort of this psalm: we are not alone in our times of despair. Other believers have felt the same things. God in his grace has inscripturated the sentiments to assure Christians that it is actually legitimate to feel such things and to bring them before God in prayer.<sup>3</sup> These are but a few psalms, but they shows us that within our relationship with God we can pour out our hearts to him like the psalmist of old and be assured that God's ear is listening to us in our times of despair.<sup>4</sup>

#### **God's sustaining strength in our daily living**

The psalms not only provide us with spiritual encouragement in our times of despair, but they also reveal that God gives us the strength to carry on. The psalms are wonderful in the fact that they have been a blessing to God's people throughout the generations.<sup>5</sup> The psalms continue to give us confidence in our day-to-day life. Psalm 27:14 declares, "Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD". What a wonderful promise this is for God's people, namely that we can wait upon the LORD. So often in our daily lives people quantify productivity by what we do. However, there are times and seasons in our lives that we would be better off waiting and take heart and let God do his thing. Psalm 55:22 also provides us with the same encouragement by stating, "Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you". God sustains his people because he is the subject of the psalms and he reveals himself as a precious companion as we go about our day-to-day life.<sup>6</sup> The psalmist reinforces this truth in the last beatitude of the psalms in Psalm 146. Here the psalmist makes plain in Psalm 146:5-6 "Blessed is he whose hope is in the God of Jacob,

whose hope is in the LORD his God the maker of heaven and earth.” God’s people are especially favoured by God and are delighted because they have received God’s favour. In other words, they are blessed because God sustains them; he sustains his people.

Furthermore, it is a blessing that within many Reformed Churches, the minister or service leader will announce at the beginning of a worship service, hopefully in an enthused and interesting manner, the ‘Votum’, “Our help is in the name of the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth” (Ps 124:8). This declaration reminds us that it is only by God’s sustaining strength that we are gathered to worship the King with thanksgiving and praise (Ps 100)!

Therefore, the blessing of the psalms for our daily living is that although they are rich with theology and with comforting truths, they are not abstract writing about theology or philosophy beyond comprehension.<sup>7</sup> God through the psalms by his Spirit has a unique way of speaking to our hearts and ministering spiritual truths that guide and ground us in God’s sustaining strength for our daily living.

### **God’s powerful promise of our eternal glory**

The psalms not only remind us of God’s listening ear in our times of despair and God’s sustaining strength in our daily living, but they present us with powerful promises. Promises for us in the present but also promises for the future. Jesus states in Luke 24:44, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” In other words, Jesus makes plain that the promises made in the Old Testament, including the psalms, are fulfilled in him. Jesus is the promised Saviour who will redeem his people from their sins (Ps 130). Jesus is the promised King sitting at the right hand of God the Father about whom various psalms speak (Ps 110). Jesus is the gracious King who is installed forever, and he summons people from every nation to trust in him (Ps 22). Jesus is the reigning King who rules over all people (Ps 2). Whilst these promises are wonderful for the present, they give us great assurance for the future. Hebrews 13:6 refers to psalm 118, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”. The writer to the Hebrews goes on to say that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever”. No

matter what season of life we are currently in, but especially in times of suffering and persecution, we read the psalms with one eye on our Saviour who is the same yesterday, today and forevermore.

Therefore, Mark D. Futato is right when he writes, “While we may experience different kinds and degrees of suffering in this life, suffering is not our destiny. We have not been created for suffering in this life, nor have we been redeemed for suffering. We have been created for glory, and we have been redeemed for glory.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed it is a powerful promise that brings spiritual encouragement that we look forward to our eternal glory free from despair and heartache that we experience here on this earth. In fact, we can declare with the psalmist, “I will praise God’s name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving” for the eternal glory that awaits his people (Ps 69).

The psalms, then, present us for our spiritual encouragement with a priceless resource relating to God in all circumstances, and they are a deep and wide ocean looking to be explored.<sup>9</sup> We would do well to go to them when we are happy or when we are sad – in whatever season of life – knowing that by the Spirit we will receive spiritual encouragement when we read and sing the psalms.<sup>10</sup>

### **Notes**

- 1 Calvin, John, *The Book of Psalms*. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1999. xxxvi– xxxvii.
- 2 Williams, Michael, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens: A Guide to Christ-focused Reading of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2012. 75.
- 3 Godfrey, W. Robert, *Learning to Love the Psalms*. Orlando, Florida: Reformation Trust, 2017. 154.
- 4 Williams, Michael, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens: A Guide to Christ-focused Reading of Scripture*. 75.
- 5 Boice, James Montgomery, *Psalms: Psalms 1-41*. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2002. *Olive Tree*.
- 6 Yates, Kyle M., *Preaching from the Psalms*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1948. ix.
- 7 Harman, Allan M., *Psalms 1-72*. Vol. 1, Mentor Commentaries. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2011. 32.
- 8 Futato, Mark D. “Psalms,” in *A Biblical Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised*. Edited by Miles V. Van Pelt. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2016. 345.
- 9 Carson, D. A., *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015. 976.
- 10 Johnston, James, *Psalms: Rejoice, the Lord is King: Volume 1 – Psalms 1 to 41*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton: Crossway, 2015. *Olive Tree*.

*Mr Graeme Zuidema is a minister in the Reformed Church in Pukekohe.*

**It is a powerful promise that brings spiritual encouragement that we look forward to our eternal glory free from despair and heartache that we experience here on this earth. In fact, we can declare with the psalmist, “I will praise God’s name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving” for the eternal glory that awaits his people (Ps 69)**

---

## The Psalms – more than a songbook

# Psalms as history

**John Goris**

Here we have a treasured collection of Hebrew poetry as a gift from God for the Church of all ages. These songs teach us to praise, to pray, to adore, and so much more. Whether in cries of jubilation, or cries from deep pain or frustration, sin-awareness or deep-felt longing for God, here we sing!

That is why the Church has always loved to express herself in psalms, even in preference above other songs.

Indeed, here God teaches us to respond to Him in His providence. Not that our own words cannot express deep thoughts, but that here we do so, ***bonded*** with the people of God throughout the ages. Here we also feel ***bonded*** with our Saviour who so often speaks through these words which also speak of Him. Think of the many Messianic psalms.

Speaking of the Psalms as history we could well express it as “His story”, for they are pulsating with Messianic content, notably Psalm 22.

These psalms are an expression of Hebrew poetry. That poetry is not produced with rhyme in sound, but rhyme of “thoughts”. The same thought is usually repeated or expanded in similar ideas or wordings.

Martin Luther called the Psalms, “The Bible in miniature”. They have played such an amazing role in the lives of God’s people all along. How did this collection of songs and prayers come about?

Who are the authors?

### **Davidic authorship**

Almost half the number of psalms has Davidic authorship, especially in the



---

*King David, the sweet psalmist of Israel*

earlier part of the Book of Psalms. We have come to know a great deal about David’s life. Hardly anyone else in the Bible (apart from Christ) had such an extensive coverage of personal life. From the book of Ruth to the end of 2 Samuel we find much that is recorded about David, all his ups and downs come into the picture, and the psalms add to that picture.

First we meet David the shepherd, youthful and full of faith and vitality. The 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm speaks eloquently of his faith in the Lord who is his Shepherd! We also meet David, the warrior, the valiant fighter for God’s cause, singing his heart out in Psalm 18: “The LORD is my Rock, and my fortress and

my deliverer... He equipped me with strength". Then we see the resources of that strong faith expressed in Psalm 19: "the law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul...". Ultimately we also see it in the strong and growing bond with his Lord in Psalm 25: "the friendship of the Lord is for those who fear Him...".

But ... there is also a shadow-side to David's character, his weakness and his failure, when he cries out to the Lord from the depth: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love... wash me thoroughly from my iniquity... create in me a clean heart...restore to me the joy of your salvation" (Psalm 51).

### **Levitical authorship**

The second division of the Psalms begins with songs of the Sons of Korah, a Levite. Although Korah perished in the rebellion against Moses (Num. 16), the sons of Korah remained alive (Num. 28:11). Also the psalm-writer Heman was a Korahite.

These people were doorkeepers (Ps 84:10), as well as musicians in the temple. A dozen psalms are linked to them. Two consecutive psalms in this group express the highs and lows of God's people. Psalm 88 touches on the depth of pain experienced in life, while the next psalm (89) soars to heights of joy and strength. Don't separate them! We need to be aware of both. Similar twins are Psalms 42 and 43. The best known psalm in this group sums it up well: "God is our Refuge and our Strength!" (Ps 46).

The third division of the book of Psalms (Ps 73-89) begins with a collection of Asaph's psalms. Asaph was one of David's chief musicians, and possibly his descendants played a role in providing songs for worship. These Psalms are like the prophetic books of the Bible, using history as a teaching tool, e.g. Psalm 78. This was written for the young. Likewise Psalm 73 is addressed to the more mature believer who needs to be reminded often about the reality of life as God's people experience it. The journey through life may be rough with all its ups and downs, but our destination must be kept in mind, otherwise we "fret" and "stumble". We should often read the last part of this psalm (e.g. 16-28).

### **Intensely human... intensely Divine**

The Psalms do indeed speak of the human experience with all its ups and downs, and as such we live "before the face of God" (Coram Deo).

Yet we also discover that there are

intensely *divine* elements in the psalms. Not only are they expressing the praise of God in superb ways, but they also point to the human experience of the very Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. These Messianic psalms show that God in His grace entered into our human lives, ultimately to lift our lives out of this world of sin and pain to perform the miracle of salvation. Psalm 22 is the most moving one of all, but even the Hallelujah psalms (146-150), and especially 150, point us to the heavenly Hallelujah chorus (Rev. 19): the great Doxology! And note, that every division of the Book of Psalms has a doxology at the end (Pss 41, 72, 89,106,150).

### **The Psalter's impact on human history**

Just as the psalms reflect history and personal life of God's people in Bible times, they also became deeply immersed in the history of God's people, both in Bible times and afterwards.

*In Biblical days...* the collection called "*Songs of Ascents*" (Psalms 120-134) appear to have been used by God's people when they travelled to Jerusalem on their journey to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish feasts. They travelled in groups usually (see Luke 2:41-51). To reach Jerusalem people had to ascend the mountain region coming from the plains of Jericho (Luke 18:31-43f). The prominence of the word Zion, and "lifting our eyes to the hills" is reflected in these psalms.

It has also been suggested that these psalms were a collection of songs sung when the people ascended the fifteen steps to the temple courts.

A further suggestion relates them to movement of the sun-dial after the illness of King Hezekiah (Isa 38:1-8). However, the main idea is that they were *already* used as an encouragement in the Bible days.

### **Ever since the spread of Christianity**

Throughout the centuries God's people have veered towards the psalms in expressing their faith. They surely felt one with the Church of all ages.

The early church fathers, Athanasius and Jerome, Ambrose etc., sought to find encouragement in the psalms. Augustine used them in his "Confessions". In later times Thomas a Kempis referred to them in his "Imitation of Christ". Blaise Pascal quoted them in his "Pensees".

In the time of the Reformers the psalms became even more popular.

Throughout the centuries  
God's people have veered  
towards the psalms in  
expressing their faith.  
They surely felt one with  
the Church of all ages.

How amazing that people from so many different walks of life have been intrigued and inspired by the Book of Psalms! Indeed, it is a special source of inspiration in times of pain and of joyful celebration.

Luther spoke highly of the psalms.

The Strassburg Reformer Martin Bucer introduced them in worship for congregational singing. Previously they were mostly sung by choirs, in Latin. Calvin followed his example in Geneva.

After that, it was the Huguenots who made them very popular. When persecuted and attacked they sang the psalms, when burned on the stake they sang the psalms. In the end their persecutors gagged their mouths on the stake to stop them from singing.

The Puritans were singing psalms, and the Pilgrim Fathers sailed to America singing psalms.

Many of the early missionaries were fond of the psalms and taught them to those who heard them, e.g. John Elliot, David Brainerd, William Carey, Henry Martin etc.

It was well-known that David Livingstone, could recite the whole of Psalm 119 by heart as a nine year old.

Napoleon's defeat and withdrawal

from Moscow, in 1812, was climaxed by the Russians singing Psalm 68 ("God shall arise and by His might..."). It is known that President Paul Kruger of South Africa often quoted the psalms.

How amazing that people from so many different walks of life have been intrigued and inspired by the Book of Psalms! Indeed, it is a special source of inspiration in times of pain and of joyful celebration.

And you... Do you have particular psalms that you often sing or quote, or meditate on? Press on with them!

#### Sources consulted

A.F.Kirkpatrick, The Book of Psalms  
G.Campbell Morgan, The Analyzed Bible  
R.E.Prothero, The Psalms in Human Life  
A.B.Rhodes, Psalms  
H.Veldkamp, Uw Huis en Tempelzangen  
New Bible Dictionary (IVF)

*Mr John Goris is an emeritus minister and a member of the Reformed Church in Wellington.*

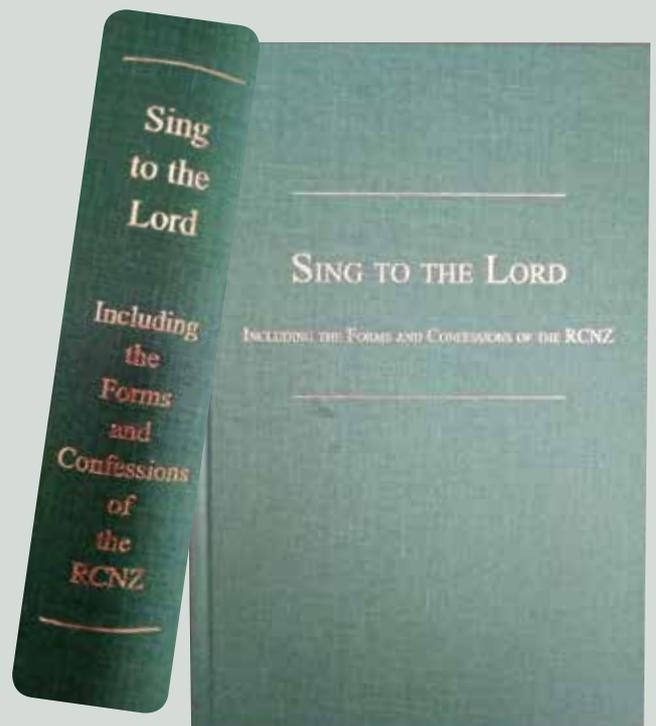
# SING TO THE LORD

## More information on the newly printed Sing to the Lord book

- It is a smaller book with somewhat smaller dimensions and weighing more than 200gms less than the larger book, making it easier to hold.
- It includes the RCNZ confessions, forms, and church order.
- It has thumb tabs to help locate the indexes, confessions, and forms.
- Though the paper is slightly thinner, it is still opaque enough for clarity.
- The cost is **\$15**, plus postage when applicable.

The books will be available from your local church or by contacting:

**Stuart Williams at [stu@faanz.co.nz](mailto:stu@faanz.co.nz)**



## Letters from New Zealand

D. G. Vanderpyl

### January/February 1981

Almost every time I meet people from overseas who have been visiting one of our churches, I hear one particular complaint and that is, "There is a lack of public relations." They like the preaching and feel quite at home but notice a general reluctance by the people to approach strangers. I think it is high time that we learnt the art of communication because after all, it really is the key to an effective relationship.

Our communication with others is not solely verbal. As a matter of fact, the actual words in our communication with others only represents 7% of the complete message. 38% is in our tone of voice while the remaining 55% is non-verbal language, such as facial expression, gestures, eye-contact, posture, touching and physical closeness or distance. So our communication lies mainly in the unspoken 93% of our message.

When a visitor comes to our church, he mainly sees clusters of "backs" as he worms himself through them to the door. More often than not he has to find a hymnbook himself and a seat at the back. At one of our churches it has even happened that he was told to move to another place because he was occupying a family's row of seats. When he leaves, the only contact he has made, has been the pastor's handshake at the door.

Maybe a bit of re-education has to come from the sessions. What about appointing some people whose sole task is to be on the lookout for visitors and strangers and introduce them to other members. What about the elder on duty who walks to the door with the minister, perhaps remaining there with the pastor, doing his bit of communication with outsiders. These ideas have been tried here and there and they do work.

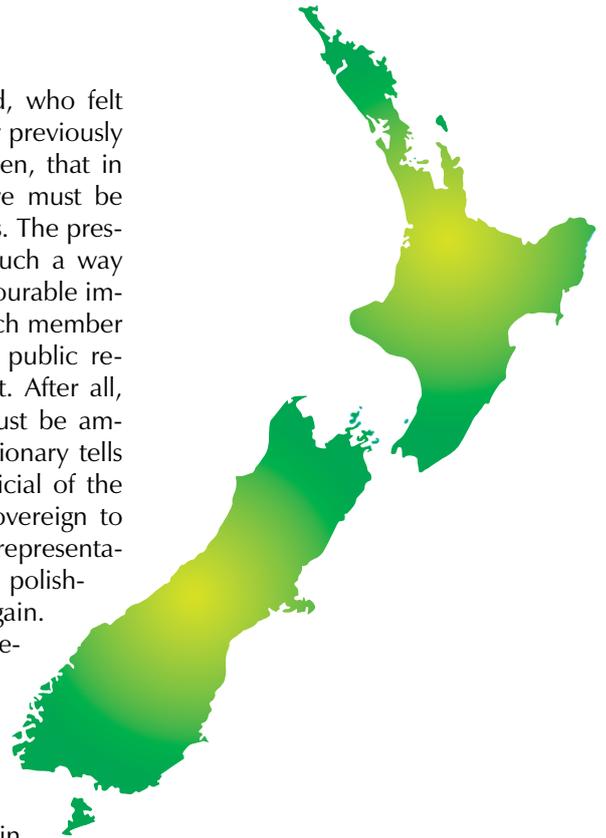
I saw the film *Deceived* dealing with the Jonestown tragedy. In the interviews, it became apparent that the followers of the Rev. Jim Jones had been dissatisfied with their Christian past in two main areas, viz. they did not feel loved in their previous (orthodox) church and the people in those churches did not seem to love the needy outside the church. Jim Jones provided a warm and caring

community to those in need, who felt rejected by the churches they previously belonged to. It is obvious then, that in all our church activities there must be an element of public relations. The presentation must be made in such a way that it will make the most favourable impression possible. Every church member should become an effective public relations officer for Jesus Christ. After all, Paul tells us too, that we must be ambassadors for Christ. My dictionary tells me such a person is "an official of the highest rank, sent by one sovereign to another state as its resident representative." Wow, we'd better start polishing our shoes and medals again.

There is some healthy excitement in Palmerston North. They are contemplating a separation, believe it or not. Over the years they have developed two groups, namely, about 70 members in and around Palmerston North and a number of families, totalling about 65 members, who have settled in and near Foxton, about three quarters of an hour car-racing from Palmerston North. With the reminder that if you aim at nothing, you'll be sure to hit it, the following objectives have been presented to the congregation:

- Seek to have two completely separate places of worship by 1981. This will offer the people in Foxton a viable worshipping community;
- Aim for two fully independent congregations with separate sessions by 1984 or earlier, if and when both congregations reach a size of 100 members each;
- Set a growth rate of say 10% per annum and prayerfully ask God if He will honour their step in faith;
- At the time of separation (1984) a division of assets on a 50/50 basis, or on membership ratio basis.

I tell you that I was thrilled with that news when I read it. Each church should have goals, objectives and plans for the future on the drawing board. Congregational meetings should be times of reflecting on the previous year's objectives and planning new ones for the following



year, including long-term planning for at least 5 years hence.

I can feel a wind of change blowing through some of our churches and affecting others. Plans and goals for the future are being prepared and improved. There is an awareness of adjusting to a new set of priorities. What are we here for?

With the new year 1981 upon us we should ask ourselves this question: If our Reformed Churches were to close down tomorrow, would the communities we live in, miss us?

### Abridged

# Church leaders, prepare your people for persecution

**In the western world, political correctness seems to be advancing rapidly in most areas of society. From educational institutions, to corporate business and right through to the halls of government, the way we are expected to express ourselves is changing to such a degree, that Christians quickly find themselves being alienated, because they do not adopt the current ideologies and language of the day. Australia and New Zealand appear to be experiencing similar distress and that can be seen in the recent debate on free speech. Mr Campbell Markham addresses church leaders in Australia to prepare their people for persecution. It may well be time for New Zealand Christians to be prepared too!**

## **Campbell Markham**

Last year an 18-year-old Australian Christian named Madeline was dismissed from *Capital Kids Parties* after putting an “It’s OK to Vote No” filter on her Facebook profile.

In April this year, the ACT Fair Work Ombudsman upheld Madeline’s dismissal, and said that it would “pursue no further action.” There was no outcry against this decision. In fact there was no response at all.

**In 2018 marriage stands redefined at its roots, and there is nothing remarkable about dismissing a Christian employee who can’t agree with this change.**

This is just one small example of how the Australian Church now teeters on a social earthquake. We live and worship within a growing hostile environment. How are we going to go? How must we respond to this change?

Here I offer a *Prognostication*, a *Promise*, and a *Plea for Preparation*.

## **Prognostication**

The *Ruddock Religious Freedom Review* was created by Malcolm Turnbull in the midst of the marriage plebiscite. It was meant to defuse the argument that a change to marriage law would – as already seen in Scandinavia, Britain, Canada, and the United States – bring a wave of prosecution against religious organisations and individuals who could not work and speak in conformity with redefined marriage. This was the Prime Minister’s lullaby: “Hush, little ones. We’ll care for you when marriage is changed.”

Mr Ruddock will soon hand down his recommendations – which are expected to include certain legislative protections for so-called “religious people” (doesn’t

everyone have a world-view?). Laws will likely be made to guarantee certain rights to worship, to publicly communicate one’s religious beliefs, and to work and educate our children according to one’s religious convictions. I expect that many in the church will raise a cheer when such legal protections are made.

Here, however, is my prognostication, which I extrapolate from parallel events in France some four centuries ago.

In 1598, after two generations of religious civil war and the brutal persecution of Protestant Christians, Henri IV (1553–1610) signed the *Edict of Nantes*, granting certain defined religious freedoms to France’s 1.5 million Protestants (about 10% of the population). Henri himself had been born and raised Protestant, but had converted to Catholicism in order to secure the crown of France, arguing cynically that “Paris is worth a mass.” His Edict freed his former *coreligionnaires* to build temples and to assemble for worship in certain regions and cities. They were freed to baptise, marry, educate their children, and bury their dead according to their beliefs. They were freed to defend themselves against violent persecution. There was even a secret provision of 45,000 gold *écus* – a vast sum – to pay Huguenot pastors.

These provisions brought relief and jubilation: “At last we may live according to our faith. The state gives us this right!”

**These provisions brought relief and jubilation, but the Edict of Nantes created the framework and means for the state to crush the Huguenot church. By 1685, Louis decided that there was no viable Protestant Church left.**

However, subsequent events proved that the Edict of Nantes, probably un-

expectedly, created the framework and means for the state to crush the Huguenot church.

Henri's son Louis XIII (1601–43) felt no allegiance towards the Huguenots, and felt far less confident than his father ruling a nation with a substantial minority who held different convictions to himself. He steadily repealed and constrained the 92 articles of Henri's *Edict*. And Henri's grandson Louis XIV (1638–1715), who, when not in the bedchambers of his mistresses, was a deeply pious Catholic, finished dismantling the Edict. He destroyed Protestant temples. He banned the distribution of Huguenot literature. He excluded Protestants from the civil service. Eventually he unleashed the *Dragonnades*, the forced billeting of violent French soldiers in Protestant homes, where they were under orders to steal, harass, and make life unbearable for their hosts. Relief from this ordeal was found only in conversion to Catholicism.

Mass exodus from the French Protestant Church ensued, either by conversion, or by flight to other countries, to the point that by 1685, Louis decided that there was no viable Protestant Church left, and that the Edict of Nantes was a dead-letter.

*Le Roi Soleil* revoked the Edict of Nantes and Protestantism was declared illegal. Huguenot men were condemned to the living death of the royal galleys. Huguenot women were interred in dungeons until they abjured (most never did). Huguenot pastors were hunted down and hanged.

The moral of the story is crystal clear: once a government presumes to grant religious freedom, the government can take away religious freedom.

### Once a government presumes to grant religious freedom, the government can take away religious freedom.

In Australia right now our freedom of religion, conscience, and assembly are considered natural rights – rights that a government can no more grant or restrict than our right to eat, sleep, and breathe. Article 18 of the 1948 *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights* expresses this:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to*

*change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.*

If our government grants religious freedom: then natural rights will be transmogrified into state rights. And my prophecy is this: that these state-granted rights – given the anti-Christian mindset and trajectory of our society – will be steadily restricted and repealed. The native forest of religious freedom will be gazetted and fenced, and the chainsaws will begin to buzz.

I expect, within the remainder of my lifetime, that Christians will be legally restricted in their ability to speak out and live out their faith in the public sphere. Abortion centre “exclusion zones” and recent anti-discrimination actions are the thin end of the wedge here.

I expect, within the remainder of my lifetime, that Christians will be forbidden to educate their children the way they want to. Recent changes to the Tasmanian Education Act have already cleared the way to enforce state-approved curricula within Christian private-schools, and even our home schools.

I expect, within the remainder of my lifetime, that professing Christians will begin to be barred from such professions as law, education, healthcare, the academy, and the civil service. We received a foretaste of this last month, when the Supreme Court of Canada upheld the decision of the Law Societies of British Columbia and Ontario to refuse to licence law-graduates from the private Christian *Trinity Western University* in B.C.

In brief, Christians who live out their lives as Christians will soon be punished and prosecuted.

#### Promise

For those who read and believe the Bible this persecution will not be at all surprising or alarming. Thus from personal prognostication I move to my second point, the very certain, severe, and precious *promise* of Jesus in Matthew 10:17-20:

*Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when*



Louis XIV

*they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

Up until now, Australian Christians have enjoyed persecution-free liberty to speak and live out their faith. According to Jesus this is strange. We are about to face normal. "You will be arrested. You will be flogged. You will have to explain your Christian convictions and behaviour before governing authorities."

**Up until now, Australian Christians have enjoyed persecution-free liberty to speak and live out their faith. According to Jesus this is strange. We are about to face normal.**

But persecution is not to be feared. In fact it is God's surprising plan to get out the Christian message. We live and speak as Christians; we upset our world



*Polycarp bishop of Smyrna, martyred 23 February 155 AD*

who has never willingly recognised nor received the Christ; we are called to explain and defend and be punished for our convictions; and as we do so many more people hear about Jesus.

This was Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego before Nebuchadnezzar. This was Peter and John before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4. This was Paul before Felix and Festus, and then Caesar himself.

And Jesus promises, in these situations, that we will "be given what to

say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you." It is our Lord's will that we be persecuted, "I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves." And he will reveal himself to a fallen world through our trusting demeanour and patience under punishment, and he will preach to a fallen world through our mouths.

Church history confirms the effectiveness of his plan.

The second century *Epistle to Diognetus* asks, "Do you not see Christians flung to the wild beasts, to make them deny their Lord, and yet unconquered? Do you not see that the more of them are punished *the more their numbers increase?*"

And in the same century Justin wrote, "Though we are beheaded, and crucified, and exposed to beasts and chains and fire and all other forms of torture, it is plain that we do not forsake the confession of our faith, but the more things of this kind happen to us so much the more are there *many others who become believers* and truly religious through the name of Jesus."

Thus Tertullian's third century aphorism, "The blood of the martyrs is seed."

A corrupted text claims that when John's disciple Polycarp was martyred, the executioner pierced his burning body with a dagger:

*And there came forth a dove, and a great quantity of blood, so that the fire was extinguished; and all the people wondered that there should be such a difference between the unbelievers and the elect.*

The dove symbolised the Holy Spirit, and so the corrupted legend symbolises the New Testament's beautiful truth: that on the patient martyr rests the Spirit of Glory, and that when Christ's own suffer, the Spirit of our Father preaches the Gospel.

### **Plea**

This brings me, thirdly, to my *plea for preparation*, addressed directly to pastors, elders, Christian parents and educators, youth leaders and any Christian who has any influence over Christian young people. Prepare them for hardship and persecution!

I learned the importance of preparation for hardship the hard way. For six years my wife Amanda-Sue and I ran short-term mission trips for young people to the Aboriginal town of Roe-

bourne, in the Pilbara. Roebourne is dirty and blazing hot. Feral dogs roam the streets and too many live in squalor. The mission team was billeted in a old mechanical workshop – dusty, greasy, no air-conditioning, and crowned with spider-infested showers and toilets. On the first morning of our first trip a team member called her mother and arranged a bus back to Perth that same afternoon. The second day another team member caught a flight back to Perth out of nearby Karratha.

Thereafter, in subsequent pre-mission training sessions, we laboured the hardships of Roebourne. We waxed eloquent about the heat, the grime, and the spiders. We made Colditz seem luxurious by comparison. We never thereafter lost a single team-member. In fact most participants would later say to us, “Roebourne isn’t *that* bad!”

It’s all about correcting expectations, and I use the same tactic in pre-marriage counselling. I reinforce that “the first year of marriage is the hardest,” and recount newlywed horror stories. (There are many.) Thereafter I get the same kind of feedback: “We had a good year! We *like* being married!”

If our young people walk into the future thinking that the Christian life is going to be easy – that they will never face abuse, ostracism, restrictions and threats to their study, work, and career – then they are going to be mown down like the British at the Somme.

**If our young people walk into the future thinking that the Christian life is going to be easy then they are going to be mown down like the British at the Somme.**

Thus the New Testament incessantly warns believers to expect persecution, and shows us how to handle it. “In fact,” Paul said, “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2Ti 3:12). The final verb is not in the subjunctive mood.

In my own church I have been explicitly warning our young people about persecution for some five years now. This is not about creating a victim mentality, but the opposite. “Expect persecution. It links you with Christ. Rejoice when you are ‘counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name.’ Rejoice when you’re made to explain your faith and life, for the Holy Spirit will preach through you! And in any case there are Christians who

are suffering far worse across the world right now.” This is the victor mentality, that “we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

But are we ready to suffer more? So far I have not had to pay a big fine. I might be able to scrape together enough money to pay an \$8,000 penalty. A second or third would mean selling my home. Am I ready for that? Am I willing to do that? Am I willing to go to jail? Terrible things can happen to people in jail.

What about our children and grandchildren? What about when they are told that they can only practice law and medicine if they sign certain diversity policies? What about when they are told they can only be a teacher if they agree to certain ethical statements regarding homosexuality and marriage (The kinds of policy a person must *already* sign if they want to use Airbnb)? Will they be ready to suffer for their convictions? Will their churches be ready to step in to help them with help and resources?

The Parable of the Sheep and Goats in Matthew 25 presupposes that our brothers and sisters will be naked, hungry, thirsty, and imprisoned. Are we ready to give up our own comfort and resources to help them? Are we giving up our comforts right now for our suffering brothers and sisters in Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, the Sudan, and North Korea?

**Prepare your churches for persecution, and particularly your young people. You have no time to lose.**

Prepare your churches for persecution, and particularly your young people. You have no time to lose. And give them the priceless gift of gospel clarity. No Christian will survive persecution if they do not have a very clear, comprehensive, and precise understanding and conviction about the gospel. Only the gospel will hold us up upright under the hail of persecution’s arrows.

I conclude by returning to the example of the Huguenots. I would love to say that when the Bourbon kings started to excise Christian freedoms that the whole Protestant Church community stood firm, and stood as one. In fact the response was depressingly complex.

Thousands of Huguenot nobles converted to Catholicism in order to protect their privileges and careers. When the *Dragonnades* commenced, entire Huguenot communities defected to protect

their womenfolk and property. When Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes there were about 600 pastors. Some 500 fled France, and a large number of the remaining 100 abjured, so that by 1745 there were only 33 Protestant pastors on French soil.

The academic question is: “Was the Church ready for persecution?” The highly practical and pressing non-academic question for Australian church leaders right now is, “Will you make the Church ready for persecution?”

Before long our Federal Government will make laws to regulate Australian Christianity. First these laws will protect the church, then they will be screwed tight to tame and restrict and muzzle the church. Social media, workplaces, classrooms, lecture theatres and civil institutions will labour concurrently to the same end. Young Madeline will be only the first of many to lose their livelihood.

Church leaders, prepare your people for this. Be a good and wise shepherd and prepare your flock for the wolves’ attacks. Don’t gloss over the copious New Testament warnings. Model calm determination, and courage when necessary. Above all, rejoice that the Holy Spirit, through our persecution, will powerfully preach the life-giving gospel to a world that so desperately needs to hear it.

*Mr Campbell Markham pastors Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Hobart. He is undertaking part-time doctoral research at the University of Western Australia, translating and analysing the letters of Marie Durand, imprisoned for 38 years for her Christian beliefs under Louis XV.*

*First published at <http://campbellmarkham1970.blogspot.com/>*

*Used with permission.*

# Family Breakdown Behind New Zealand's High Prison Numbers

MCD Staff

A new report on imprisonment rates and contributing factors argues that the 'elephant in the room' is family structure, and that if the government does not want to keep building more prisons, it needs to look to the children who are potentially tomorrow's offenders and acknowledge the role family plays. The report is entitled "Imprisonment & Family Structure: What is the evidence telling us?"

"Data from other developed nations shows a minority of prisoners grew up with both natural parents. A number of studies have found that growing up with a step-parent (or serial step-parents) is a particular risk factor for later incarceration. Biological parents appear to provide a protective role which replacement parents do not. The strongest predictor for imprisonment is growing up in state care – the ultimate consequence of family or whanau breakdown. Several researchers have shown that family factors – in particular, family structure – have greater impact on future risk of criminal offending than socio-economic factors, albeit the two are closely intertwined," says author Lindsay Mitchell.

"There is no public messaging about the critical importance of parental commitment to each other and their child. The community is a poor substitute for caring, committed parents."

The report notes that Maori make up around half of the current prison population but only 15% of the general population, yet this over-representation is a relatively recent development influenced by rapid urbanisation and the loss of whanau support systems. A sharp increase in unmarried births during the 1960s correlates markedly with a later rise in the imprisonment rate. Ex-nuptial births made up 79% of total Maori births in 2017, but for non-Maori, the corresponding figure was 34%. Many minorities in developed countries display the same over-representation in prisons and high rates of unmarried births.

"A pronounced risk factor for becoming a prisoner is having a family member who is or has been incarcerated; especially a father. Inter-generational imprisonment has been identified in NZ, more strongly among Maori. Coincidental to this is the documented increased likelihood that very young Maori men will also be fathers, anecdotally, with children by more than one mother. International research shows a direct causal link between male imprisonment and female Multiple Partner Fertility (MPF)," says Ms Mitchell.

"However, there are some positive developments. Teenage birth rates – Maori and non-Maori – are falling, and critically at-risk children are increasingly being put into permanent as opposed to temporary care placements. Internationally, specialised male prison units focused on family and fathering are not only reducing recidivism but producing other positive outcomes such as climbing school attendance rates amongst the children of inmates. There is also NZ evidence mother-with-baby prison facilities and Maori Focus Units lower reoffending rates."

"But while too many children continue to be born into high-risk circumstances – to unstable, uneducated and unsupported single parents – there is little prospect, all else being equal, of a diminishing imprisonment rate any time soon."

The report follows on from two earlier reports, also written by the same author. "Child Abuse & Family Structure: What is the evidence telling us?" (released in November 2016) argued that the growth of child abuse has accompanied a reduction in marriage and an increase in cohabiting and single-parent families. "Child Poverty & Family Structure: What is the evidence telling us?" (released in May 2016) said that while unemployment, low wages, high housing costs and insufficient social security benefits are consistently blamed for child poverty, a major culprit – if not the major culprit – is family malformation, that is, a lack of two married committed parents.

All three reports have been written by welfare commentator and researcher Lindsay Mitchell and examine histori-

cal change in family structure and the effect on child poverty, child abuse and imprisonment.

Family First NZ is welcoming the report and calling on politicians and policymakers to develop policies which support marriage – including free counselling, income-splitting, removal of the marriage tax penalty, tax incentives for stable marriages – and promoting the strong formation of families and preventing the breakdown of families.

"Children being raised by their married biological parents are by far the safest from violence, poverty, and imprisonment – and so too are the adults," says Bob McCoskrie, National Director of Family First NZ.

"Whenever marriage is promoted, it has often been labelled as an attack on solo or divorced parents, and that has kept us from recognising the qualitative benefits of marriage which have been discovered from decades of research. In virtually every category that social science has measured, children and adults do better when parents get married and stay married – provided there is no presence of high conflict or violence. This is not a criticism of solo parents. It simply acknowledges the benefits of the institution of marriage, and the strong formation of families with parents committed to each other and to their children."

The paper has been endorsed by criminologist Greg Newbold who says;

*"Overall, I found the 'Imprisonment and Family Structure' project to have been comprehensively researched, intelligently analysed and compellingly written. The logic of its structure and argument reinforced its conclusions, underlining its importance as a reliable guide to future policy. Its wealth of figures and data, concisely encapsulated in text as well as in its many graphs and tables, makes it essential reading for anyone seeking a solution to New Zealand's burgeoning prison crisis."*

## Theological student focus

# Introducing the Rademaker family

Nathaniel and Sharon Rademaker, Mid-America Reformed Seminary, USA:

Our family has been in America since 25 June, 2016. We have six children ages 1-10, Marielle 10, Luana 9, Rachel 7, Lucas 5, Emma 4, and one child born here, Raphael 1, so he is an American citizen! Nathaniel was born in Australia but has lived almost all his life in New Zealand, Sharon was born in Nelson to Dutch parents, Leo and Heidi Hendrikse. As a family, we love sports, reading books and having people over. Our home church is the Palmerston North Reformed Church and we are very thankful for the support and love of the church and our families. Nathaniel worked as an ED nurse prior to begin-

ning his ministry training and Sharon is a homeschooling Mum.

Lord willing, Nathaniel will graduate with a 'Masters of Divinity' in May, 2019 and we will head back home to New Zealand later that month. We have been very blessed in our time here in America. We have made some great friends and also many honorary family members who have taken us under their wing. Life here has been very busy, we try to reach out to people both in church and in the seminary community and it is definitely a mutual blessing. Seminary community life was vibrant last year and looks to be the same this year. The study workload is very intense, which, after we had adjusted, became a new way of life.



Nathaniel is impressed with both the academic level required at MARS and the practical training provided and is hopeful that this will provide a good basis for his future ministry D.V. This summer we went to North Carolina for a 10-week internship and it was a wonderful time of much learning, teaching, exhorting and fellowship. Last summer we were also blessed to have a more local internship only 45 minutes away in Indiana, so that we could stay in our house when Raphael was born. This was also a great time of learning, serving and being blessed.

In addition to the amazing support that we get from Palmerston North and other RCNZ churches, people here are very generous and we never go without, we are frequently humbled by their generosity. Our house here is also lovely and we feel so very blessed in the Lord's provision! We rely on the Lord day by day to give us the strength we need for all He requires of us and His promises never fail. Nathaniel has enjoyed all of his courses, it's hard to pick a favorite class, but he probably enjoys the Old and New Testament classes the most because they have a sermon component attached to it. All of the courses are very beneficial, and he has enjoyed the challenge of discussing different views and researching/cementing his own.

Even though life here is very busy, we have grown closer together as a family. And through the various challenges of adjusting to life in a foreign country, we have learned to rely on God more and to wait on His timing. Through studying Scripture and Reformed doctrine we certainly appreciate the Reformed faith more and more throughout the time we have spent here at MARS. As much as we have been blessed and have made many memories in America, we do miss family and friends in New Zealand and are very much looking forward to coming home and serving in the New Zealand churches!

**Much Love in Christ,  
The Rademaker Family!**

# Una Sancta

Digital subscription to *Una Sancta*, the family magazine of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, is available for **\$10/year (AUD)**.

Contact Sharon Heerema  
[admin@unasancta.com.au](mailto:admin@unasancta.com.au)



You're invited - book online today

# CHURCH CAMP 2018/19

December 27th - January 3rd

Pastor Erik Stolte

**Rest for the weary: Finding rest in Jesus**

**visit: [rcnzonline.com/familycamp](http://rcnzonline.com/familycamp)**

Finlay Park, Cambridge

**Questions? find us on FaceBook -  
RCNZ Church Camp**

---

## Letter to the Editor

We would like to commend Josh Flinn for his article on pornography addiction (sex addiction) in the September *Faith in Focus*. It is a difficult topic to address but a necessary one. Many of us are familiar with the expression, “when it rains in the world it drips in the church”. That certainly applies to this subject. As a pastor and his wife we have become much more aware of the breadth and depth of this sin and of the damage it does to individuals, relationships and marriages. The problem has become more widespread and more harmful with the arrival

of smart phones and the availability of high speed pornographic videos. And this is a temptation and trap not only for men but increasingly for women.

Shame keeps people from confessing this sin to others, which means that the person keeps trying to fight this on their own. Dealing with addictions like these requires the counsel of, and accountability to others. Josh Flinn pointed out that “sex addiction, by its very nature, is self-centered and isolating”; all the more reason to turn to God in a confession of sin, and to “confess your sins to each

other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (James 5:16). Speak to a friend, your elder or your pastor. Begin the long journey of breaking free from your sin and addiction.

In the last couple of years we have been reading a few books that are very helpful. Two we would recommend are *False Intimacy* by Harry W Schaumburg (Navpress, 1997), and *Beyond Betrayal* by Lisa Taylor (Oil of Joy, 2015).

**John and Harriet Haverland**

---

## National Diaconate

# Compassionate Catalogue 2017 Review

Over the last four years the National Diaconate Committee has teamed with the CRCA in promoting the Compassionate Catalogue as a means of giving to specific long-term projects. The response has been generous and has grown over these four years. Praise the Lord! Last year, 2017, was no exception with monies being raised to support projects in India and PNG.

Richard 'tHart, who is the campus manager at the Reformed Churches Bible College in PNG responded as follows to the generous giving from last year: “The amount deposited was K.31,599.75 and we here as Reformed Ministries Staff in Port Moresby and at the College are blown away with the generosity of people and stand amazed at God’s work in their hearts to prompt them to give. I think of 2 Cor: 8 & 9 when we have a large donation such as this. Praise the Lord!”

Rest assured this money will be used

well by the College and in supporting the work of spreading the truth of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as revealed in the Scriptures alone.”

Approximately 50% of the monies raised for PNG covered fees for the Bible College Students, 20% for Sschool uniforms and the remaining 30% for Children’s Bibles.

Other giving was directed at these other four projects:

- Bethesda Disability Training and Support Centre (Solomon Islands)
- SWIM – Short Workshops in Mission – overseen by Solomon Islands Workgroup
- G.O.S.P.E.L. – Gujarat Outreach Support Planting Churches, Economic Change and Literacy a CRCA church planting partnership in C/W India
- Peniel – A Vocational Training college for very poor young women in India

Specific areas of giving were for supporting GOSPEL missionaries, student fees, Pastor preaching packs, sewing machines, wells and pumps, Bibles, audio Bibles, student disability support, tools, livestock, clothing and teaching resources.

When you choose an item from the “Compassionate Catalogue”, your donation is allocated to the respective program. We ask that you consider again giving to the poor and vulnerable this year. The Compassionate Catalogues are normally distributed among the Churches in November.

NDC encourages you to pray that God’s kingdom may continue to grow through the generous giving of His people.

“whatever you have done for the least of these” Matthew 25:40.

In His Service  
**The NDC**

## Focus on Papua New Guinea



During the month of September, br Richard 't Hart spent time visiting in each presbytery to inform the churches about the work that he does as the campus manager at the Reformed Churches Bible College in PNG.

At the synod of 2014, it was decided

to find a man who would manage the day to day administrative matters, maintenance, building and staff management, so that the missionaries could concentrate their efforts on running the college and training men for ministry.

It was interesting to hear about the multi-faceted task that Richard is engaged in and the people that are involved in the every day events of the campus.

We were treated not only to his work, but he also shared daily experiences on the campus, showed pictures about what life looks like for the people of PNG and the students of the college when they return back to their homes. It was also interesting to see the development of Christian schools.

18 months into his three year contract, things appear to be progressing well, and the Lord is blessing the work in Papua New Guinea.

Please remember to pray for the missionaries and their families, br Richard, the students, the Christian schools and the progress of the gospel in PNG.

# Little-known Little Gems

*The Message of the Minor Prophets*

by JOHN GORIS

Available  
as soft cover  
or PDF

For many years John Goris has desired to write a book on the Minor Prophets. In the Lord's providence, he has finally written a useful and readable little book. The Twelve, as they are known to the Hebrews are not well known because their message are somewhat mysterious and at times hard to understand. John adds context with themes and occasions for each prophet. He comments: "The days of the Minor Prophets may seem different from today when Christians are living in a pluralist, post-modern society. However, the human heart has not changed.

These Minor Prophets spoke into a very real world, where typical human traits affected the minds and actions of God's people, just as they do today.

We do well to give more thought to these books of the Bible, and discover afresh how relevant the Word of God is".

*From each prophet he points us to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Great Prophet, and draws clear lines from these "mighty minors" to the New Testament.*

John A. Haverland, R.C.N.Z.

*His interpretation is always responsible and even in such a fairly short overview, he has seen things I did not see, always drawing proper and relevant application.*

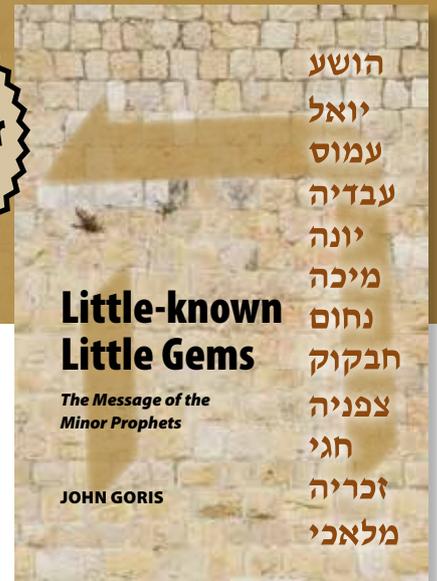
John Rogers, R.C.N.Z.

*In broad brush strokes the author captures the essence of each of these ancient prophetic writings. I appreciated John linking the message of the Minors to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

John Westendorp (Christian Reformed Church Australia)

*John Goris's "Little-known Little Gems" guides us through each of the 12 prophets, giving us the theme of each and relating it to our Christian lives today.*

Chris Kavanagh, U.K



ISBN 978-0-473-45672-6

Published by Matrix Typography

Soft cover price **\$20.00** (includes postage within NZ)\*

Bulk orders of 10 or more **\$15.00** + postage\*

PDF **\$10.00**

Send orders to:

**Matrix Typography Ltd**  
walter@matrix-typography.co.nz

*Orders must be paid online before despatch*

**\*Price and postage applies to New Zealand only**

**INTERNATIONAL PURCHASES \$20 + postage**

**\*International payments by PayPal**

## Organizing members online, to serve better offline



Simple church management software that helps reformed congregations manage membership information, share resources and communicate better online.

- Membership Management
- Statistics & Reporting
- Member Photo Directory
- Messaging & Bulk Emailing
- Photo Galleries
- Events Calendar
- Groups
- Schedules
- File Sharing
- Bulletin Archive
- Sermon Archive
- Office Bearer Tools

Church Social

0-200 members: **\$50 /month CAD**  
200-400 members: **\$75 /month CAD**  
400+ members: **\$100 /month CAD**

Used by churches in the Canadian Reformed, United Reformed and Free Reformed federations.

churchsocial.com