

faith in focus

Magazine of the
Reformed Churches
of New Zealand

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*"See how the lilies of the field grow.
They do not labour or spin.
Yet I tell you that not even Solomon
in all his splendour
was dressed like one of these."
Matthew 6.28b-29*

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Editorial

The Sessions have been extra busy these past few months. They have had their heads down, and read through quite a tome! They have been challenged linguistically, exegetically, theologially, missiologically, and, I pray, spiritually, too! Why now? And so soon in the new year, barely out of holidays?

Well, Synod is on the way. There are the Reports and Overtures to take in, think about, discuss together, and look to see they respond to them at Synod itself. There are the usual house-keeping details, but also those issues of concern, particularly with how we relate to other federations of churches and reformed organisations. Please pray for our Synod; pray for faithfulness to God's Word; and pray for the Spirit to knit us together even more.

And pray knowing that the Lord hears our prayers. He is the Father God who is intimately concerned about His children. That's the image the psalmist gives us when he speaks of being "under his wings" (Psalm 91:4.)

I reflect here on how the Lord has been answering our prayers for the special Synod we had a year ago. This announcement was sent to the Sessions of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand by the Palmerston North Caretaker Session for Foxton:

Since the special synod in Palmerston North in March last year, there were still some matters considered to be not yet fully resolved. To help in this process of resolution and reconciliation between Rev Ed Rademaker and former and present office bearers in the Reformed Church of Foxton, a reconciliation meeting was held on Thursday evening 7th of February at Palmerston North, called by the Palmerston North Caretaker Session for Foxton, between Rev Rademaker and all past and most present office-bearers in Foxton concerned in the reconciliation process (an invitation was not extended to the two new deacons at Foxton, as not directly concerned in the process).

Other sessions were represented at the meeting in their official capacities, namely Masterton, Silverstream, Palmerston North and Wellington, and Rev Bruce Hoyt attended as Presbytery appointed counsellor for Rev Rademaker.

We give thanks to the Lord that full reconciliation was achieved to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. We ask that you continue in prayer for our churches and office bearers in the Wellington Presbytery, that we may serve the Lord together in peace and mutual understanding.

Let's pray this way for this month's Synod, too.

We are unable, this month, to continue the story of Samuel. That was lost with a hard-drive which wasn't going anywhere (except perhaps to the repair man!).

We do have, however, the first in a series on how different senior folk have dealt with their changing health and family situations. We hope this helps our older members, and their children, to work through their own particular situations.

*"Jesus Christ will be Lord of all
or he will not be Lord at all."*

Augustine of Hippo

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

It's nearly time for Synod

A preview from the Stated Clerk

Every three years (give or take a bit) delegates from each of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand meet together in Synod to discuss and decide on matters of mutual interest to all the churches. Since there was a special synod held in Palmerston North in March 2001 to decide on appeals from the elders of the Reformed Church of Foxton against various decisions of the Wellington Presbytery, the regular synod, which originally was to have met in October 2001, was delayed for 6 months. Synod will meet in the Reformed Church of Christchurch from 27 April until 4 March, 2002.

What is on the agenda for this synod? In general, only matters of mutual concern to all the churches. A synod is not to decide everything that goes on in the churches. It is to deal only with things that are common to the life and work of the churches and which enable them to work together in unity. Our church order puts it this way in Article 26: "In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be determined in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common. In all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be dealt with."

So what things pertain to the churches in common for this 24th Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand? As of the time of this writing, there are 3 overtures and 17 reports on the agenda of synod.

Overture 1

In Overture 1, the Wellington Session requests that "the Reformed Churches of New Zealand shall again attempt to seek close bonds with other churches of Reformed persuasion." As they say in their grounds, there are a number of churches of Reformed persuasion throughout New Zealand. These include several Presbyterian congregations which have withdrawn from the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand because of its unscriptural direction. There is also the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Free Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Congregation, some Afrikaans-speaking Reformed churches and groups, Korean-speaking Presbyterian churches, the Reformed Episcopal Church, and a couple of Anglican congregations of Reformed character. Wellington session rightly argues on the basis of Scripture and confession that we have a duty to join

with churches having similar commitments, and that we ought to be *one* even as Christ prayed in His high priestly prayer. The unanswered questions which arise from this overture are, "How should Synod do this? What steps should it take to carry out this task?" Delegates will have to suggest ways of doing this as they meet in Synod.

Overture 2

Overture 2 is from Masterton, requesting that "Synod mandate the Inter-church Relations Committee to establish contact with the Canadian and American Reformed Churches (CanRC) with the view of working towards establishing a sister-church relationship with them." Masterton points to our joint membership with the CanRC in the International Conference of Reformed Churches, the sister church relationship which the CanRC now have with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (which is also our sister church), our continued discussions with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (a sister church of the CanRC), and the fact that the OMB is seriously considering joint mission work with Stephen 't Hart in Papua New Guinea, who is sent by one of the CanRC churches.



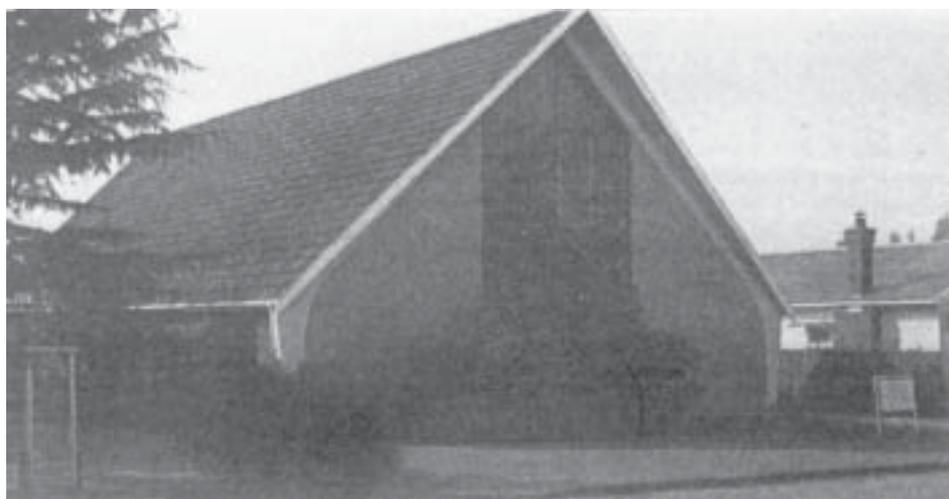
Bruce Hoyt

Overture 3

Overture 3 comes from the North Shore, requesting that we cut the Gordian Knot that has us tied up in interminable discussions about which Psalter/Hymnal to select. Their request is that we prepare our own selection of Psalms and hymns for use in the worship services of our churches. While acknowledging that this is a big task, the North Shore thinks it is achievable. They are asking Synod to appoint a committee to select Psalm versions that are as faithful as possible to the Scripture, and to ensure that for every Geneva tune there is an alternative tune. The committee is also to select a "reasonably large" selection of hymns taking into account the various preferences in our churches, including preferences of both young and old, and those from various cultural backgrounds in our churches. They also ask that the committee not update the language of the original hymn writers unless necessary for meaning. Will this overture cut the Gordian knot? I'm sure everyone hopes something will.

Reports

I won't comment on all the reports, since some of them are routine. For any who are interested, you can download them from our



The Reformed Church of Christchurch, Cornwall Street

web site (www.reformed-churches.org.nz), managed by one of the students for the ministry, Andrew Nugteren.

Report 2

In Report 2, we have an excellent piece of work by the committee to investigate theological education in New Zealand. This committee has found that the only theological institution giving Reformed theological instruction is Grace Theological College. However, its instruction is of a lower level than we require for students training for the ministry. The committee agrees that it is “desirable” to establish a theological institution



Much hymn singing. A scene from our last general synod.

here in New Zealand to train men for the ministry, but believes it is not “feasible” to do so “in the foreseeable future”. (I wonder whether it was ‘feasible’ to establish the RTC when that was done many years ago, and I wonder what is required to push ‘desirable’ into ‘feasible’?)

One member of the committee, Rev. M. Flinn, brings a minority recommendation. He suggests that a step-by-step approach eventually leading to establishing a theological institution would be feasible. One possible way forward which the committee appears not to have considered is setting up a branch in New Zealand of an existing theological college, if one could be found willing to cooperate with us in such a project. The committee also recommends the Synod acknowledge that study by correspondence is an “effective and practical alternative” for some men. And finally, they recommend that all men who are training for the ministry come under the supervision of the deputies for the

RTC (something the deputies themselves are also recommending).

Report 3

The Interchurch Relations Committee brings a report about positive developments on all fronts but one in our relations and contacts with churches abroad. The one exception sadly is our relationship with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (formerly called the Reformed Churches of Australia). This relationship has once again been strained by recent decisions of the last CRCA synod to ordain women to the office of deacon and no longer to regard the dea-

lands (Liberated), and with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. Due to the very positive steps toward merger between the CanRC and the United Reformed Churches (URC), the committee recommends that Synod await further developments between them before pursuing the previous mandate to assess “the feasibility and desirability of a sister-church relationship” with the URC. And finally, the Interchurch Relations Committee notes that our churches’ web site is averaging about 4000 hits a week! That’s good exposure for the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Report 4

The RTC Deputies take the honours for the longest report, at 49 pages. This includes a 30-page appendix from the two professors at the RTC whose views have been challenged as out of accord with our confessional standards in the matter of continued revelation. These professors have argued, and continue to argue, that Paul’s epistles do not “exclude the possibility of God communicating information to his people” but that any such communication “from God will be extraordinary and so infrequent and not to be sought”. They also argue that the Westminster Confession of Faith does not and was not intended to exclude those who hold such views. However, the deputies do not agree with the professors on either of these points. Therefore the deputies recommend that Synod give notice of the termination of the contract between the RTC and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. This requires a notification of one year. Until then, the deputies recommend that Synod continue full synodical quota support of the RTC, and after that the synodical quota support be reduced by \$10,000 per year. The deputies recommend that the RTC still be commended as a “suitable college for our students”, and that the churches consider how we might continue to give financial support to the college as one of the better options for training our ministerial candidates.

The RTC Deputies also recommend that their mandate be extended to include supervision of all students training for the ministry regardless of where or how they are training. They recommend that approval of students entering a training course for the ministry involve the Presbytery as well as the Session. Financial support by the denomination would also be available to all approved students training for the ministry.

We need to be praying for wisdom from above as the sessions and delegates consider our future relations with the RTC and

cons as part of the session, and to allow children as young as 10 who make a modified profession of faith to come to the Lord’s Table despite the fact that their Synod (at first) regarded this as a matter requiring a possible change to our confessions. The relationship also continues under strain because of increasing divergence between the CRCA and the RCNZ in regard to worship practices and ecumenical relations. The committee recommends that we continue our sister-church relationship with the CRCA but that we emphasise our concern through several avenues, and that ministers called from the CRCA be carefully vetted in regard to these matters of concern by both sessions and presbyteries.

On the positive, side the Interchurch Relations Committee recommends entering sister-church relations with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (two of our student families in Geelong attend the PCEA), with the Reformed Churches of the Nether-

the CRCA. There are important matters of concern and also long-term historical ties which bind us together that make decisions on these issues very difficult.

Report 13

The Church Order Committee had several mandates from both Synod 1998 and the Special Synod 2001. The first issue addressed is whether pre-advisory committees (as have been appointed in past synods to organise material relating to discipline cases) are legal, and if so, what guidelines should direct their work. The Church Order Committee believes they are legal, and recommends some modifications to *The Office-Bearers' Handbook* which detail the procedures to be followed in such cases. In particular, a pre-advisory committee is to avoid "any and all evaluation of the merits of the case". A pre-advisory committee is to organise and index the documentation, produce a chronology of events, and advise concerning the order in which matters should be dealt with.

The Church Order Committee has also provided a full set of rules for the preliminary and final examinations of candidates for the ministry. These rules, if adopted by Synod, will regularise what has been somewhat left up to "tradition" and the judgment of the Clerk of Presbytery in the past.

In considering the mandate from the Special Synod of 2001 regarding "the jurisdiction of a presbytery to declare a church outside the denomination", the Church Order Committee realised that this is a matter with wide implications, and request more time to study the matter thoroughly.

Articles 14 and 16b of the Church Order came under considerable scrutiny at the Special Synod 2001. The committee was charged with the task of defining the scope of article 16b and the precise meaning of "peaceful severance". The committee recommends replacing the present 16b with a clearer 14b. This article avoids the use of the term 'peaceful severance' and makes clear that a non-disciplinary release from service may be initiated by either the minister or the session for "weighty reasons", and "only with the approval of presbytery" and the "concurring advice of the synodical examiners".

Report 14

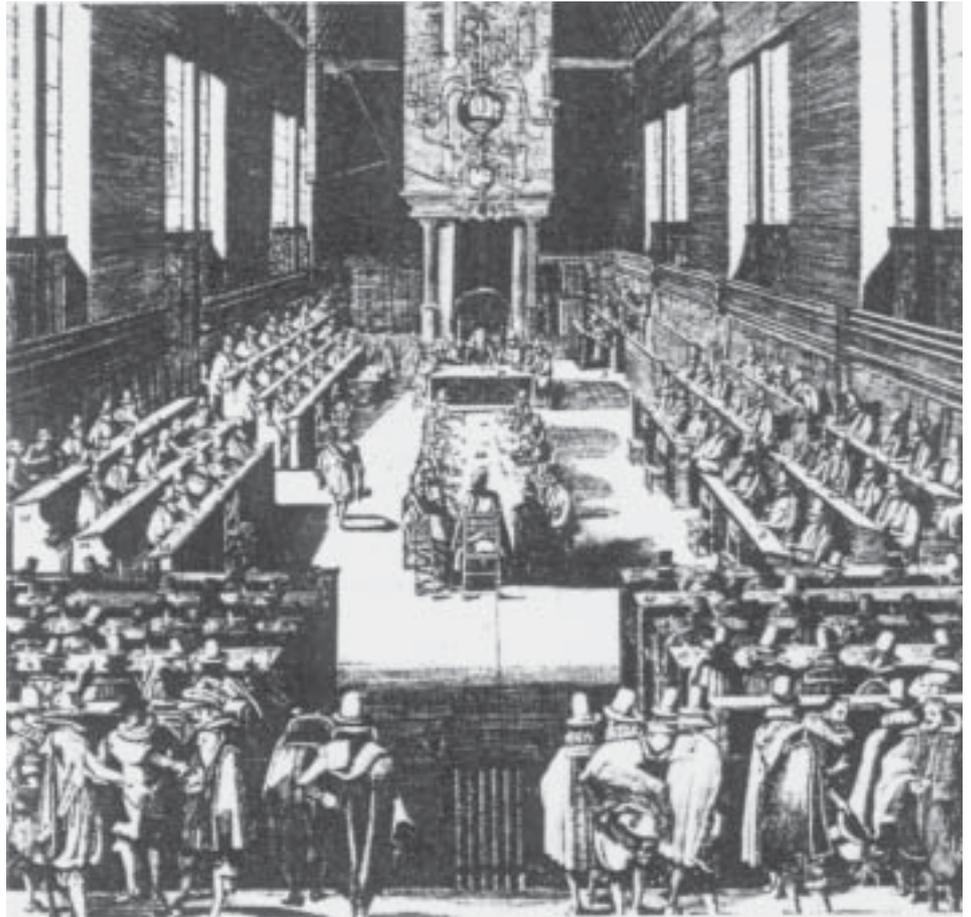
The Overseas Mission Board is a large committee, which has functioned well over the last inter-synodical period. A statement has been adopted by the OMB which set out their highest priority: "partnership with Re-

formed Churches and mission agencies world-wide in equipping, establishing and training local churches and their leaders." The OMB has assumed oversight of SPROUT by appointing a permanent OMB advisor to SPROUT, delegating appropriate work and suggesting short-term opportunities to SPROUT, and approving any short-term opportunities SPROUT plans to promote.

Though not yet received at the time of this writing, a report is due before Synod from the fact-finding mission the OMB sent to Pa-

able work of Janice Reid under the auspices of the Far East Broadcasting Company. I can't detail all that Janice is doing here, you will have to read the report—it's worth a good read!

Despite setbacks in Uganda, the OMB is thankful for the work done by Rev. and Mrs James and Liana Hoyt in Mbale. They report a very good working relationship with the Committee of Foreign Missions of the OPC, and hope for continued cooperation in the future.



The Synod of Dortrecht, 1618/19

pua New Guinea at the beginning of the year. The intention of the OMB is to provide Synod with a clear direction for mission work in cooperation with Stephen 't Hart from the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Rev. Goris continues to be very actively involved with the mission facilitating activities of the International Conference of Reformed Churches. This may possibly lead to cooperation between our National Diaconate Committee, the OMB, and the Word and Deed Ministry of the GKN (Lib). To promote such cooperation, the OMB recommends sending two delegates to the next Asia-Pacific regional Missions Conference.

The OMB commends the continuing valu-

Sadly, the efforts of the OMB to resolve the matters between Victor Atallah and our members who had worked in Cyprus have been unsuccessful. In the interim, a new international organisation called the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (Ltd.) has been set up, breaking all ties with the previous board of MERF based in Egypt. The OMB is not able to recommend support for this new MERF due to "unfinished business with Rev. Atallah and concern over the circumstances surrounding the formation of MERF Ltd." Further explanation and discussion about these matters will take place at Synod.

As its first priority, the OMB is asking Synod to "encourage the OMB to investigate all

possible openings for missionary service through the existing missions and agencies of the ICRC and sister churches; these openings may be for ordained or un-ordained missionaries, men or women, for a long or short term. Further, that the OMB be instructed to inform, encourage and enthuse sessions and members of our churches into supplying and supporting these opportunities for service." One aspect of this task has already been done by the OMB. They have written an RCNZ Missions Policy Handbook, and ask synod to approve it and authorise the OMB to distribute and promote it.

The excellent work of Michael de Ruiter as the secretary of the OMB is coming to an end with this Synod. Michael has shifted to Auckland, and so the OMB is requesting a replacement for this key role in its work.

Report 15

The Hymnody Committee was re-appointed by the Synodical Interim Committee with approval from the churches in order to "receive responses and suggestions from the sessions regarding the new Psalter Hymnal and to make a report to Synod 2001 with recommendations based on the responses received." The committee has received and summarised the responses. And based on those responses, they recommend "that synod add the grey Psalter Hymnal (1987 Edition) to the list of approved song books for use in our churches, whilst advising that discretion be exercised in view of the book's policy of using gender-inclusive language." It's an unsatisfactory conclusion by any standard. The reason for wanting a single approved Psalter hymnal is to unite the sing-

ing of all our churches. This won't do it. Will the overture from the North Shore do it? Does any church have a better suggestion?

Conclusion

In this review, I have left out many reports. Not because they are unimportant. Every issue considered by Synod is important, otherwise it should not be on Synod's agenda. My selection would probably not be yours, but perhaps it will have stimulated you to download some of the other reports from our churches' web site: www.reformed-churches.org.nz. In any case, there is plenty here for the sessions and delegates to consider. Thankfully we have not received any appeals, so perhaps, with an extra day scheduled, we shall actually be able to finish the business on the agenda.

Our ministers

What do they do?

Cor Feyter

It must be very demanding to be a minister in a Reformed Church. Let's have a look, from a layman's perspective, at some of the qualities he has to possess. The various categories are numbered because they will be referred to later.

1. He must have the academic ability to study, to research, to select and extract relevant information and shape that into a suitable form to present to his congregation. He must also have professional discipline to give due priority to this part of his work, and manage his time accordingly.
2. A minister must have adequate public speaking skills. He must show imagination in illustrating his message. He must be aware of the strengths and weaknesses within his congregation in order to address them in his preaching, and have a knowledge of contemporary society to make his applications relevant.
3. He must have leadership qualities. He must show tact and wisdom to promote peace and unity of purpose within his session and congregation. He must be able to teach, to impart his knowledge and vision to others.



family. Weekends, when other men have time to spend with their families, are the busiest for ministers, while many evenings are taken up by teaching and church meetings. And at least a couple of times during their working lives they may well feel called to uproot their social lives and their children's education, to start again from scratch in completely new surroundings.

Generous estimations would be that about two in ten persons possess the qualities listed in category 1. Let's say four out of ten possess those in each of categories 2, 3 and 4 and that half of them would pass in category 5. Some simple arithmetic then indicates that about one in every 150 people is likely to possess all of the qualities listed above. Given

4. In order to be a successful pastor, a minister must have a genuine interest, concern and compassion for people. He must be ready and able to offer support, comfort and hope to members of his congregation at all times, in whatever circumstances may arise.
5. A minister needs to have a robust marriage and the unqualified support of his

that the total communicant membership of our churches is about 1800, of which half are women, this means that about six of our male church members are likely to have all of those qualities combined. Looking at things that way, it's amazing that we have ministers at all! Yet, a number have served and are serving our denomination faithfully and well.

I have the greatest admiration for those men, who delve into Scripture week after week and present it in an applied and digestible form to God's people. These men's sole objective is to serve their Lord by serving His people. I am ever grateful that we have had and still have faithful ministers to lead us. What would have happened to the Reformed Churches of New Zealand if they had not had them? Thankfully, we don't have to answer that question, but we may well have to consider the next one: what will happen to the Reformed Churches of New Zealand if we can't find ministers to serve us in the future?

A shortage

At present there are some vacancies, both in our own denomination and in our Australian sister churches. Difficult for individual congregations at times, but not yet a major problem. A problem is, however, that the flow of men studying for the ministry has slowed down to a trickle, and is certainly not sufficient to replace ministers due to retire within the next few years.

Some decades ago, a South African rugby team toured this country. That team was so plagued by injuries that it became a prob-

lem to field a fully fit team for every match, and reinforcements were sent for. A newspaper cartoonist depicted the situation as three or four battered and bruised springboks on a rugby field, desperately trying to hold a rampant opposition at bay. An aeroplane was circling overhead and one of the springboks was grunting to his mates: "Hold on boys, hold on, they're on their way." Will the Reformed Churches of New Zealand be in an analogous situation in twenty years time, with just a few ministers desperately rushing around from pulpit to pulpit, trying to hold the fort? Will there be an aeroplane circling overhead, bringing relief?

We should try to address this situation before it becomes a problem. At present, the churches take a rather passive role in the selection of future ministers. They may have to become much more active in that. They may have to actively look through their membership lists to identify potential future ministers. Every elder should be on the lookout for young men who may have the necessary qualities, and encourage them to consider the ministry as a profession.

Unsuitable candidates, however, should be discouraged. Both our denomination and our Australian sister churches have bad

records of candidates who, after gaining the academic qualifications, were rejected by the churches, or, having entered the ministry, lasted only a few years. This may have been a factor in the declining number of theological students from our churches. Perhaps an official approval system needs to be put in place. Some of our ministers have experience in dealing with theological students, and may have learnt to pick the character traits that will succeed and those that won't, even in young prospective students.

Once students have been approved in such a way, they need to be looked after (sponsored is another term for it). Fair is fair. Those men are vitally important to our churches, so the least we can do is to make sure that they are not disadvantaged by studying for the ministry. That may require financial commitment, but wouldn't that be an excellent investment?

These are a few suggestions as to what could be considered to avoid potential problems. What should never be considered is lowering the standards required of our ministers, to make it easier for students to meet them. Such a policy would create far greater long-term problems than it would solve short-term ones!

Between You and Me!

GAMBLING – *harmless or a sinful addiction?*

Some of the younger generation may never have heard of Alexander Solzhenitsen, who became famous worldwide for his writings and fearless condemnation of the Communist State in the 50s and 60s. Read about him in any library, and you will admire the man who received the Nobel prize for Literature in 1970, for his courage in defying Stalin.

Once he wrote, "No one can prevent the truth from spreading and to advance it to accept even death." He concluded, "but perhaps so many lessons will teach us in the end **not to stop** a writer's pen during his lifetime."

Now, what about the heading of this contribution? Over the years, when I would visit one of the shopping malls I'd reward myself with a mug of cappuccino, and enjoy the comings and goings of shoppers. On several occasions, I happened to see a member of one of our churches brazenly go into one of the Lotto shops—on both the North and South Islands—hoping to win the jackpot, scratching clear the numbers, and even going for another try in the hope to have some 'luck'. In Hamilton, I'd look down from the second floor and watch gamblers on payday trying again and again, all at the expense

of the needs of the family. It was no delight to see them mentally struggle, and mentally I tried to tell them to get away from that evil robot!

Once I read somewhere that, "no horse can go as fast as the money you bet on him."

A key concern our our early history

Hardly had we established the Reformed Churches in the early fifties, when Rev. Alex Scarrow, with some of his elders from the Presbyterian Church in Howick, sought membership in our Church Federation. It was the Lord's doing, and a brave step, to join a foreign-speaking church. It was our Heavenly Father who provided such a man as Rev Scarrow with conviction to stick it out with us until the day he died!

A lottery ticket won by one of their elders in the Howick Presbyterian Church had triggered the search by Rev. J.A Scarrow for a new church. There were a few hiccups here and there but in the long term it was quite a blessing, as they helped to guide us with the



Dick G. Vanderpyl

integration of our churches in this country, although at the time there were some headaches when different cultures clashed with one another. But our Heavenly Father steered us many a time away from the cliff!

Prior to the above event, I visited an annual Epsom Easter Show in Auckland, being still single at the time. A Housing Company promoted a three-bedroom house. Visitors were asked to jot their name and address in a visitors' book, and I did so also. As we left, each one received a lottery ticket. The winner would be the proud owner of that house.

Then, the late Rev. J. A. Scarrow and his elders came on the scene with the issue of gambling by one of his elders! Slowly, it started to dawn on me that trouble could come my way with that lottery ticket in my wallet. Being an office-bearer, I tossed this way and that way, hoping and fervently praying that I

would not be the winner. Did I sweat and pray not to be picked with the winning number! Much to my relief (phew!) my number did not come up out of the bag! After an ice-cold shower, I felt cleansed and relieved. Never, ever again!

Some years later, at the 1961 Synod, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach overtook Synod to oppose and speak out clearly against the temptations and evils of gambling and lottery. They gave as its grounds:

1. The widespread evil of gambling in New Zealand, and the seeming unconcern of the churches about it, makes it imperative for us to make this clear-cut testimony.
2. Our people are in need of such guidance in order that our testimony be united. This is necessary especially in view of:
 - a. The fact that many of our people are inclined to consider innocent the multitude of money-raising projects by means of lottery or raffles because of the small amount of money involved, or because of the 'good' cause for which the money is being raised.
 - b. The fact that the end does not justify the means, nor does the amount of money involved have anything to do with the ethical character of the practice.
 - c. The fact is that some of our churches are inclined to resort to such questionable practices in order to raise money for church support.

At one session meeting of the Auckland Church in the 'fifties, a member of the session proposed to collect beer bottles to fund our first church-building! "Never," exclaimed Deenick, "we're not going to build our church-

es on beer-bottles!"

By the way, in my teens, a distant uncle of our family had a "harmless" hobby of palm-reading. Once on a visit he grabbed my left hand, studied my palm, and advised me not to waste good money on any type of gambling; I couldn't find that particular line in the palm of my left hand—it was just his way of warning me against gambling!

Early warnings

Around that time we also had to deal with smoking and drinking, and even studied modern-day amusements at synods to decide what was permissible and what was not. Believe me, even sexual instruction for the new migrants, roaming around to find a wife or husband, was discussed. I remember Rev. Deenick warning his congregation that in the Lord's eyes, the first intercourse established a marriage. Shivers!

The world invents names like sweepstakes, Lotto, Scratch and Win, Powerball, betting, and roulette, under the mantle of gambling. For many, gambling is a last desperate throw, hoping for a big win to improve their life style. The apostle Paul says it so well under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For **the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.** Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith, and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness." (1 Timothy 6:9-11)

This is our culture! We can't serve two masters: it's either God or some idol—demon or world-power (Eph.6:12)

PS. Some time ago, I came across some figures which are almost unbelievable: \$450 million are spent on gaming machines, \$343 million on casinos, \$377 million on lotteries, and \$227 million on racing and sport. Remember, the responsibility lies equally with the providers and the players, of which the majority are the losers! (Ed: the latest figures show that an average of \$70 per adult over 18 is spent each week in New Zealand on gambling!)

With joy and thankfulness to the Lord we announce the

50th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

of our parents and Opa & Oma



NICK & CONNIE VAN DER WEL

on the 17th April 2002

Hans

**Clarence & Yolanda
Stefen, Annelies, Daniel
Sam, Tomas**

**Paul & Annamarie
Talia, Jordan, Breony, Keziah**

"I lift my eyes to the hills - where does my help come from my help comes from the Lord..." Psalm 121

**48 Carnoustie Dr. Wattle Downs,
Manurewa, AUCKLAND**

THANK YOU

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Faith in Focus

The greatest (fairy) story ever told

A critique of the movie, "Lord of the Rings"

Speaking as a rank amateur when it comes to reviewing movies and books, I would like to make some comments on the movie, "Lord of the Rings." Personally, I enjoyed it—enough to go a second time. I found the acting adequate, though not brilliant. Script



Paul Archbald

and dialogue were good, capturing the feel of the book nicely. Attention to detail—for example, pronunciation of elvish words—was excellent. And of course, the scenery waàò-great!

Given the length and breadth of the trilogy, it was necessary that some parts of the story be dropped. This did not seriously detract from the integrity of the story. More annoying were the additions. Most notably, the role of Arwen, daughter of Elrond, was expanded, making her Aragorn's equal—whether in stealth, daring or horsemanship. It is

hard to be sure whether this was done in the interests of feminism, or to keep immature male viewers happy.

The only other criticism I would make of the movie is that it sometimes lacked the suspense the book creates. The book conveys a sense of great fear and tension in the scene where the hobbits hide under the embankment from the "black rider." The movie was less successful in that department. I suspect that lighting and music were not used so effectively at some of these points. In fact, the music was a disappointment. It may well have been good music, but not so good for a movie of this kind.

The place of fantasy

Lord of the Rings will not be everyone's cup of tea. Many of the older members of our churches have been raised with the view that everything must have a use in the real world. The idea is that *Lord of the Rings*—along with the whole fantasy genre—has nothing to do with the real world, therefore it is useless. In addition, anyone not inured to violence by TV/movie saturation may find some scenes a bit too much.

Others in our churches are opposed to themes of magic and the demonic in entertainment. This view should not be dismissed out-of-hand by those of us who enjoy the fantasy genre. There is no doubt that witchcraft, spiritism and necromancy are forbidden in Scripture (Deut. 18:9–14; 1 Sam. 28). Obviously, these sins should not be encouraged or glorified, whether in fantasy or any other literature.

The question is, does Tolkien encourage witchcraft and spiritism? Gandalf the wizard is certainly one of the "good guys," and his magic one of the factors that delivers "Middle Earth" from the evil one, Sauron. There are also references to demons—the Balrog in Moria—though I do not believe the term "demon" is used in the relevant chapter of the book. Some have sought to excuse this by pointing out that Tolkien was a Roman Catholic with a strong view of good and evil. It is argued that his use of magic in the story simply portrays the struggle of good against evil, with the good finally overcoming the evil. It could also be pointed out that there is some sense of fore-ordination in both book and movie: Frodo is "appointed" for the task of bearing the ring.



A world apart

In reality, the philosophy behind “Lord of the Rings” is somewhat more complicated. Tolkien himself denied that his book was an allegory. He did not set out to provide an allegory of this world’s struggle between God and the devil. Further explanation is found in the essay on fairy tales in *Tree and Leaf*. The world of “Faerie” has nothing to do with this world, directly. It is a self-contained fantasy-world. The successful fantasy writer sets up a world that operates consistently according to its own rules—enabling the reader not so much to suspend disbelief, but for his mind to enter the secondary world of the writer.

It is in this department that Tolkien excels. The book especially succeeds in setting up an internally self-consistent world—a world in which magic has a part. But there is no direct encouragement to practice of magic in this world, because “Middle Earth” is a different, secondary creation of J.R.R. Tolkien.

Why does the writer set up such a world in the first place? And what is the value of it? Here Tolkien’s philosophy resembles that of C. S. Lewis. The writer seeks to satisfy certain primordial desires. Man has a desire

for marvels: to survey the depths of space and time; to commune with other living things; to do things he cannot do in this world (shoot a bow, and so on); and to become a sub-creator, as man is created in the image of the Creator.

According to Tolkien, fantasy also aids with the process of recovery, escape and consolation. We all need to “clean our windows,” to free ourselves from the drab blur of triteness and familiarity and possessiveness. But this escape is the escape of the prisoner, not the deserter. We long for a better world, as we should. We long to escape death, to be consoled by the happy ending, to be delivered from universal and final defeat. Such themes are undoubtedly reflected in Tolkien’s sub-creation, *Lord of the Rings*.

A comparison with the Book of Revelation

In this connection, it is also worth giving some thought to the role of the Book of Revelation in the Bible. Someone has called Revelation a “sacrament of the imagination.” In other words, truth about Christ’s victory over Satan, and the church’s joyful participation in that, are driven home forcefully and graphically by appeal to powerful symbols. The im-

agination is engaged in the truth of the Gospel. Images of giant, world-spanning angels and hideous monsters are used to do this. But it is definitely about this world, as well as heaven.

Keep this fact in mind as you consider Tolkien’s argument that the Gospel is the greatest fairy-story ever told. This might easily offend the Reformed reader, but we must understand that the author does not mean the Bible is not true. In fact, in the Gospels, Tolkien says, the “fairy-story” breaks into history. What he means is that the Gospel evokes and answers the above desires, more than any of the sub-creations of man. In the Gospel, we get a glimpse of joy beyond the walls of this world.

With this last part, I agree: that the Gospel answers the desires that express themselves in, and are sometimes heightened by, fairy stories. But to say that the Gospel is the fairy story breaking into history, with that



I have a problem. After all, if fairy stories are not about this world, how can the Gospel be a fairy story?

What we learn from it

Notwithstanding this criticism, I believe we can learn something from Lewis and Tolkien. Lewis also used fantasy to give glimpses of joy beyond the walls of this world. Essentially, he was trying to excite the *sensus deitatis*—the sense in every man, implanted by the God who made us, that God exists and rules this world; that there is therefore good and evil and judgement—and a better world than this fallen one. It appears that Tolkien sees a similar purpose in the better fantasy literature.

Personally, I think he succeeds in doing this with *Lord of the Rings*, perhaps better than any other writer in the genre. The movie succeeds in this to a lesser extent again. But this success is limited. *Lord of the Rings* may evoke the desire for the triumph of good, but it has no answers. Lewis tends to give the answer more openly in story. Perhaps Lewis then fails to meet Tolkien’s criterion for a fairy story, resorting instead to allegory!

I believe there is a place for both approaches, so long as we remember that there is no substitute for the Bible. Fantasy literature, like life, may help increase our longing. But only the Bible answers it.

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A feminine focus

Don't be afraid of Teenagers!

Sally Davey reviews Paul Tripp's 'Age of Opportunity'



Sally Davey

Are you barely "surviving" your teenagers? Even worse, do you **dread** the prospect of teenagers in the house? Then here's some help for you—an author to calm your tattered nerves, give you hope, and strengthen your faint heart. Better still—this man has a sense of humour. And... he has brought up three teenagers!

His own teacher

Paul David Tripp has many qualifications for this task. The brother of Ted Tripp, who wrote *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, Paul has spent many years helping people deal with their personal struggles and family difficulties in a biblical way. He served in the pastoral ministry for ten years, and now counsels and teaches practical theology courses to seminary students. For 14 years he has been part of the Christian Counselling and Education Foundation in Philadelphia, which has a close affiliation with Westminster Theological Seminary. Dr Jay Adams began this foundation some thirty years ago, out of a concern that non-Christian psychiatry was failing people—and in fact was underpinning a damaging approach to counselling. What was wrong with it, he saw, was a faulty view of man and of sin. Those of you who have read Jay Adams's books will know well how helpful he has been in encouraging his readers that the Scriptures, by contrast, may be relied on as a

completely sufficient guide for helping those in need.

Over the years, many ministers have been trained in counselling by Adams and his successors (including Paul Tripp). Their confidence in the Scriptures and their solidly reformed understanding of God, man and sin have also been passed on to ruling elders and ordinary congregational members through their courses for Christians in all walks of life. This application of sound theology to practical daily problems has result-

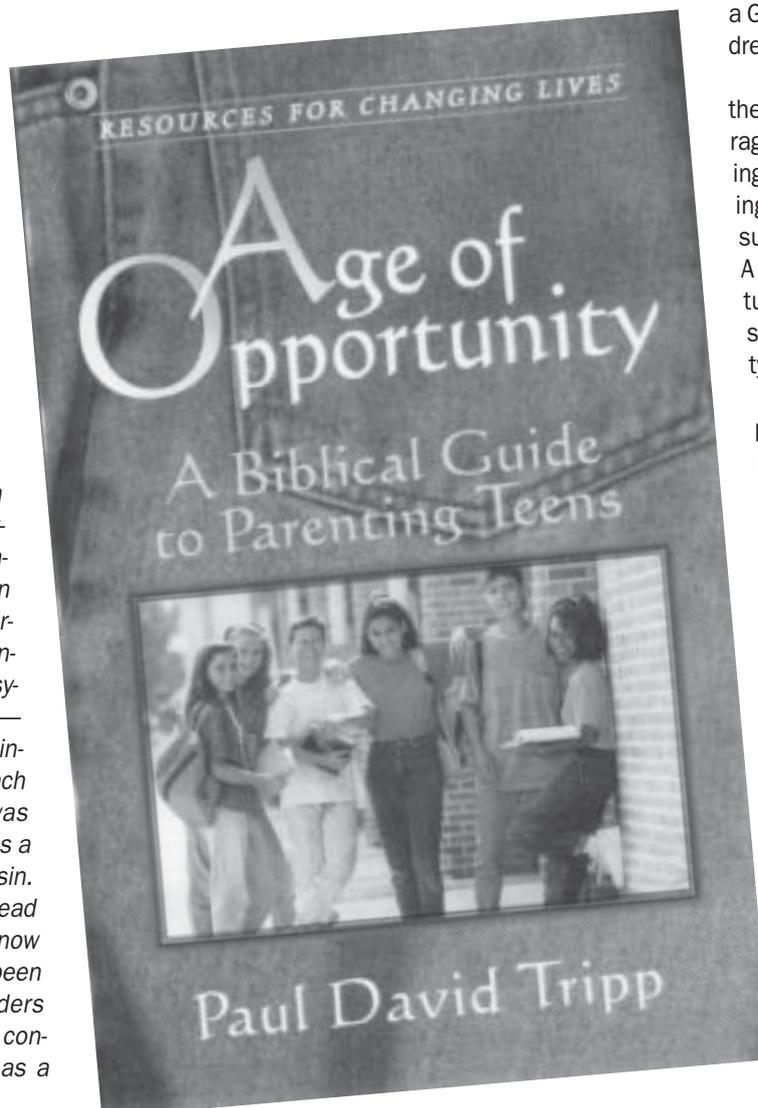
ed in a number of lively, readable, wise and very up-to-date books on a range of topics. One could list Wayne Mack's book, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, Edward Welch's *When People Are Big and God is Small* (dealing with the problem of fearing other people more than God), as well as Paul Tripp's *Age of Opportunity*.

So, what wisdom does Tripp offer those harassed and perplexed by the enormities of life with their teenagers? Above all, he advises us that the teenage years are not to be feared: instead, we should see them as a God-given opportunity for teaching our children the ways of God. Here's how he puts it:

"We often talk about our teenagers as if they were nothing more than collections of raging, rebel hormones encased in developing skin. We see our goal as somehow holding these hormones back so that we can survive until the teen has reached twenty. A parent rejoiced to me that her son had turned twenty, as if he had passed through some magic portal from danger into safety. "We made it!" she said.

"This survival mentality exposes the poverty of this view of teenagers. Many parents who talk to me about their teenagers talk without hope; they see them as victims of hormones that drive them to do crazy things. Although they would never say this, the working theology that hides behind this view is that the truths of the Scripture, the power of the gospel, biblical communication, and godly relationships are no match for the teen years. Yes, we believe that God's Word is powerful and effective – except if some poor soul is trying to apply it to a child between the years of thirteen and nineteen! We now even have a category of children called 'pre-teen.' These are the years when the monstrous characteristics of the teenagers begin to develop and rear their ugly heads."

Are we comfortable with a view of



teenagers that says that because of the significant biological changes going on inside them, they are essentially unreachable? Are we comfortable with a hormonal view of teens that reduces them to victims of biological forces, freeing them from responsibility for their own choices and actions? Do we really want a view of teens that would have us believe that the truths that give life and hope to anyone who believes cannot reach a teenager? We cannot hold onto a robust belief in the power of the Gospel if we continue to buy into our culture's cynicism about the teen years.



Paul David Tripp

Opportunities

First of all, Tripp encourages us to see teenagers' ups and downs, and the conundrums they bring for us, as **opportunities to disciple** our children, showing them wisdom, understanding and love. He shows us how to do this through many delightful examples from his own and his children's lives (he must have a marvelous friendship with them, given that they allowed him to tell all these tales!). In particular, he recounts a lot of stories about that all-too-familiar ogre—self-consciousness. Teenagers (and adults!) have that horrible propensity to see themselves as they fear that others see them. He warns that if we fail to take these opportunities as prompts for helpful discussion, and don't take our teenagers seriously, then "we will miss opportunities to make these moments more than moments of human embarrassment; we will not bring the presence, power, love and direction of the Redeemer to a crushed and confused young person." However, he warns, we need to be ready for such moments:

"The problem is that teenage crises sneak up on you. I was just minding my business one morning when I turned around from the kitchen counter to find my son standing there. Before I had a chance to greet him he said, 'Dad, what do you think of my ears?' 'What do I think of your ears?' I thought. I hadn't really been thinking about his ears. I hadn't thought about his ears ever, and I know I had never discussed them with my wife! But, all of a sudden, he was very serious about his ears. He could tell that I was hesitating, so I wanted to say something quasi-intelligent! So I said, 'Well, what do you think of them?'

I don't think I've been particularly opinionated about ears. I don't notice them in the mall. I've never prayed, 'God, thank you

for the beautiful set of ears you've given me. I don't know what I would have done if they'd been like so-and-so's.' Yet, all of a sudden, without warning, there I was in a very serious discussion about ears. My son had been looking in the mirror that morning hoping he had grown to look more like a normal human being when he saw his ears—and they didn't seem to fit his head! I tried to talk about the majesty of God's creative ability and the technology of ears... That morning, I talked longer about ears than I had before or have since".

The need to talk

But most conversations Tripp has had with his teenagers have been about more weighty matters of the heart than this. Some have been serious, and not all of them spontaneous. He impresses, again and again (my second point), that nothing replaces interested, friendly communication with our teenagers. We need to **talk to them!** Of course, the habit needs to be built-in long before the forbidding silences of adolescence sets in, but he suggests a regular, daily chat is something that a wise father or mother will do all they can to maintain. Don't, he urges, accept the silence of your teenager and adopt silence with them. Don't quit talking because he does! Cross the moat he has built around his room and go in! Daily chats keep you in touch with your children—but they also lay the groundwork for the "crisis" chats that need to happen. Again, some more practical advice about this...

"Win your children for wisdom. Be a salesman for it. You don't do this with nasty, inflammatory confrontations and ugly verbal power struggles. No wisdom is imparted in these moments. If you hit your kids with a barrage of verbal bullets, they will either run for the bunker or come out firing themselves. Here is a good rule: Deal with yourself before you deal with your teenager (Matt. 7:3–5). Sometimes I will begin a conversation with one of my children and I will notice my wife behind my son or daughter, waving her hands back and forth at me. No, she is not flagging in ships. She is telling me that I am not ready to have a talk. I need to take time and prepare myself by considering the issues at hand biblically, discussing them with my wife, and praying for my child and myself. By the time I have done this, I am in a completely different frame of mind and therefore

prepared to function as God's instrument of change."

What matters is the heart

Thirdly, and above all, Tripp wants us to realise that what we need to do is to work with the **heart** of our child. We are not simply trying to modify his outward behaviour (Teenagers, he warns, are master-legalists—they know only too well how to keep the letter of the law we have set down while ignoring it in their hearts). "...Because I want to help my teenagers to grow in self-awareness, I don't burst into their rooms announcing the rule that has been broken and the punishment that will be meted out. In times of correction we talk. I try to ask probing questions that are designed to break through the deceitfulness of sin and expose the heart. And the more my children grow in self-awareness, the more they will appreciate the things I say to them, because they will realise that they need my instruction. Part of the defensiveness so typical of teenagers comes from their utter lack of self-awareness, their utter spiritual blindness. I'm constantly working to help my children to know themselves so that this knowledge will lead them to hunger after God. I believe that every moment is self-revealing."

This is a thoroughly delightful, wise and charming book written by a pastor and a parent, with the wit of someone who has travelled this route before us. I urge you—buy it, read it, and be helped by it! [And don't pass it by if you're not a parent—if you're like us, there'll be plenty of teenagers crossing your path. And secondly, if you're a sinful human, like me, you won't get far into Tripp's stories before his clear insight has exposed the teenage propensities still lurking in your own heart!]

An age old challenge – old age

Fifty years ago, our church members faced an unknown future and many challenges. Were you one of those who tackled a new language, absorbed a new culture, worked in a foreign environment, started a new business, encouraged coffee beans to replace liquid from a bottle, introduced coffee shops, stood firm in spiritual loyalty?

These same first immigrants now face a different challenge—the challenge of old age. The phrase ‘challenge’ of old age is preferable to ‘problems’. Every age has problems. ‘Problems’ is a negative concept: ‘challenge’ is positive, life-giving, inspiring! The elderly prove themselves as versatile and determined in seniority as ever in their younger days, and not least in deciding where and how to spend the last years of their lives. Most of them are able to determine what they want to do, and do it, even if it is not exactly what others think they should do.

This year, we shall look at some of the decisions for the future made by older members of our congregations. All are different. All solutions have in some way been criticised. None will suit everyone, but all in practice have proved satisfactory and satisfying. Some of you who are beginning to look into this question may even get ideas before making up your own minds about the future.

So we shall examine some solutions, including the pros and cons of each, in the hope that it will help others who are reaching the age of sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety!

Staying put

Henk and Maria brought up a large family in a large garden. In fact, I’m not sure whether they had the garden to match the family or the family to match the garden!

Of course, there was a house too, but on talking to them, one gets the definite impression that the garden was the incentive for buying that particular house in the first place. Henk loves gardening. Apart from his work and his church, it has long been his big interest, and has grown into his big hobby. So this couple have found a good reason for ‘staying put.’ They did at one time look into the possibility of a move to Auckland, where five of their seven children now reside, but the cost of housing there made that simply out of the question. They could never find a house that would suit their needs in their price range, let alone one (yes!) with a garden! The congregation was pleased. If this had come to pass, the couple would have

been sorely missed—their friendship, Henk as an elder and lay reader, Maria in many directions, as you will see.

Until recently, then, they have stayed in the family home and have been quite happy to do so. It has been a convenient place for them. Ria’s mother lived in a little house around the corner, and it was reasonably handy to the schools. But above all, there was *the garden*. Henk kept not only his family well supplied with vegetables, and Maria produced delicious preserves (try her pickles and gherkins!) but you may be sure plenty of others have enjoyed the produce. “So,”

and preserving, and the trouble is, everything all seems to come at once. Even with Henk’s help. “I’d rather do my own ‘hobby things’, she said. “But I can’t waste the vegetables.”

Ria has had many ‘hobby things’ over the years—carpentry - she took a course at night school and made all kinds of useful articles, including two planter boxes which graced the front of the church in Grey Street in Palmerston North, and are now to be found in the foyer at Harmony House). Calligraphy, cake icing, and card making satisfy her artistic urges. Ria also served for many years on the local Citizen’s Advice Bureau. She started



Henk says, “my garden has also been a means of sharing.” With a big family and not a correspondingly big income, money to spare was not always to hand, but there were always beans, a lettuce, a cabbage or a bunch of carrots for friends or for the needy—and that gave great pleasure, and, I must add, was a service to God.

The garden is still the reason for remaining in the family home long after the last little bird has flown away. Henk still loves his garden. Ria is not so sure about this. She has always had to do so much bottling

and organised the Senior Citizen’s afternoon that was put on each year in the church, and for twenty-five years has baked and decorated the Christmas cake for this function. It puzzles me how she ever had time to deal with the produce from Henk’s garden!

Time does take its toll, though. At the moment, Ria and Henk have their house on the market for sale. This is for health reasons only. Last winter was a difficult one, and the future must be met. Much as they regret it, change is at hand. Living in the family home has had no disadvantages so far, but reality

has to be faced. The section is too big—large enough to build two more houses on the back—so as you can imagine, even though retirement is supposed to give you more time to care for such things, it is hard to keep up with, and will be more so as age and incapacity increase. They would still like a house with some garden, but not nearly as much as that!

There is a problem here, though, that perhaps our churches should look at to find if it can be partly redressed. Henk and Ria are not the first to find the financial aspect of selling a house difficult. Land agents seem notoriously different in their assessment of the value of homes. In an approximately \$200 000 home, it has been known that advice on what to ask can differ as much as \$35, 000. Where does that leave the vendor? Some agents also ‘put down’ a house, looking for real and imagined faults in order to persuade the vendor to offer at a deflated price. Not all do that, but it does pose a problem

Henk said, “I know how much I want for it. I estimated my asking price on the value of the house, plus the fact that the land can hold two more houses. The garage would have to be moved to give access, and I cannot afford to do that, but a developer could. I have told the agent what I want as a fair price, and I am prepared to wait until I can

get it. Otherwise, I will not be able to purchase another home to replace this.”

This highlights a difficulty: if we could make a straight out swap, but... So, it is advisable to get an assessment of valuation from several agents before you begin. It is also a challenge to the churches. Should we have a small central deacon’s fund which people like Henk could call on interest free, to be able to do things like move a garage, subdivide a section, slap on a coat of paint, or make some minor improvements to a property before putting it up for sale? Any loan should be repaid on sale date. Henk’s property would bring in more if he could offer access to the back, and perhaps he could even stay in the house much longer if he could sell his back sections separately. It is worth considering.

Another solution could also involve the church. As these two would be quite happy, (even would prefer) to stay in their house for much longer, as long as possible, in fact, could not some manpower help him put a fence right across the back and build, say, a strong chook house where they could have the upper regulation number of free-range laying hens? (They used to keep hens once.) City regulations probably do not permit a sheep or two, but hens would help keep the weeds down, and maybe bring in a small income. Or the bulk of the back sections could

be sown in grass. (Nice for church group barbecues.)

Sometimes, friends may make suggestions that we discard, yet from them we may get the germ of an idea that we can develop. So let us not be hesitant in discussing our plans with close, trustworthy friends who may bring a new perspective or a new idea that we can take up. Let us keep an eye out for other ways to help, too. Has old age or sickness prevented a vendor from keeping ahead of the weeds? No problem as yet with Henk, but a working bee with spades and forks or paint-brushes could make such a difference to the sale potential of the property of a sickness beneficiary, elderly person or widow. Should we be ‘hire a husband’ people without charge?

This is not a criticism, for our churches have been wonderful over this kind of action. Let’s just make sure we keep it up, and perhaps develop it further!

What about the future?

“I can’t look at what is in the future,” says Henk. “That is not to be faced now. So this lovely, faithful couple leave all in the Lord’s hands, and are not in a hurry, but happy to wait for a buyer—the right buyer at the right time. Meantime, trust in the God they have served all their lives shines in their cheerful faces.

What’s a family (camp)?

two reviews of the Family Camp

Introduction

The most recent Family Camp studies were excellent. This was partly because they were interesting and thought-provoking, but mainly because they were so un-politically-correct they almost *had* to be biblical. Some of our liberal politicians, had they heard them, wouldn’t have been sitting still. Thankfully liberal politics are not our standard—but the Word of God *is*.

Anyway, to the point: this article is a brief summary of what was said and discussed at Camp. I hope to present most things as they came across at camp, but whether I’ll accomplish that is another story. Rev. Bruce Hoyt (known as “Dad” to some of us) led the morning studies on “The Family”; Rev. John Rogers led the evening studies on masculinity and femininity, among other things.



God created families

To start with, how is the family like the Kiwi bird? Both are flightless, and both are nearing extinction in our society. God has called us to put a stop to that by doing all we can to have strong families. In the beginning He started families with marriage, so that's where we must start too. God made it normal and good for a man to leave his parents and be joined to his wife. But we think we know better: our prime minister rubbishes marriage, our society mocks it, and even the church sometimes undermines it. We can (and Dad did) quote statistics forever to show the damage this has done: marriages break up by the truck-load, evil pre-nups abound, the state takes the place of children's fathers, women are beaten or abused, etc. It's also easily shown that married men and women have fewer abortions, are healthier, fight less, and live longer than unmarriages. This is because God blesses marriage. He *made* it.

We often base relationships solely on romance, love, or sex. If we base marriage only on these things, it cannot work. God begins relationships with a covenant. The covenant is between one man and one woman, and what God has joined together we must not separate. So marriage starts with a covenant, and the other blessings are added to that. Such unions make up a godly society.

Family sin, family salvation

The first woman stepped forward to bite the fruit, the first man stepped back into sin, and the battle of the sexes began. Sin started, wimpy and godless men appeared, and feminism began—but that is not the end, Scripture tells us. And it's not the end of the family, either, because the command to be fruitful and multiply is still there. God cursed humanity: he made it harder for men to work the ground, and harder for women to have children. But He also promised: to the woman, "I will greatly multiply your conception"; and to the serpent, "her seed will bruise your head." In other words, God promised both that having children will continue, and that the Saviour would come through them.

The Seed of salvation is Christ, but "her seed" also refers to all children of godly parents everywhere (through Abraham—what we call the Covenant). 1 Timothy 2:15 says specifically that God saves women as they mother children—reminding us of the promise to Eve that they would "bruise the serpent's head". Practically, a society that has a high view of motherhood and the role of the family will be blessed. God uses children to give an amazing stabilising effect to society. And

in this sense children even *save* society.

High-tech culture says we don't want the blessing of children, or maybe one, or two at most. Psalm 127 (the camp theme passage) says they are "a heritage from the LORD". Our society and leaders totally reject this, and don't even care enough about children to discipline or teach them properly, if at all.

We evangelicals might object: "but doesn't God save nations by the spreading of the gospel?" Certainly, but families play a huge role in spreading this good news. As people are saved they will begin to have strong families. God then uses those families as a means to save many more, until

in a completely godly way is, in whatever way we choose to do this.

Getting priorities straight also helps us keep the LORD's Day in perspective. It is a day of rest, celebration, and worship—for God. We may live this out in many different ways, but our focus is on God. It's not primarily a "family day", but His day. And we can worship Him *with* our families.

Real men, real women

Another thing we focused on at camp was the great differences between men and women, and the beauty of the different tasks and functions God has given us. Saying we are



"all the families of the earth are blessed" through them (Genesis 12:3). He redeems His people through children, a holy seed, and ties them together in Christ, His Son. God's Covenant is as real today as it ever was.

Crooked priorities

We all know that family comes first, then church, then work. Or maybe not? No—ranking priorities like this is far too simplistic. God created all of these three things good and necessary. It's easy to put one first and then make an idol out of it, but we are to put God first and not have idols.

Family, church and work fit together like a three-strand cord. The church consists of families redeemed by God. Work advances God's kingdom by providing for families, among other things. Parents teach their children to be servants of the LORD as they start their own families and witness to all men. It was noted that schools *as institutions* are not mandated by God, but training children

the same (as the feminists do) is like saying a beautiful, tender strawberry is the same as a crunchy, sharp apple. Very different—but both amazingly good at the right time. Here I'll squeeze in only a little of what was said in our discussions. Any character traits given are only the usual case, not necessarily true with every single man or woman. In other words, they are generalisations.

Among animals, the male is usually the beauty of the species, but with mankind, God created the female beautiful (phew!). God did not make feminine beauty to be stifled or to be a light hid under a bushel, but neither is it allowed to be turned into an idol or a means to flirt (see 1 Peter 3:1–7). Women are physically weaker, and so should not go into combat—men must protect and be courteous (verse 7). Women are primarily home- and family-oriented, men are primarily world-oriented. God made our whole beings this way so we may best serve him.

Adam was created first, and so made to

initiate and lead; Eve was made from Adam to help, respond, and complement. That is the biblical structure. As such, women are sensitive, sacrificial, responsive, motherly, and appreciative of subtlety and detail; men are courageous, strong, providers, fatherly, and appreciative of the big picture (but too often forget the details). Women should delight in and overcome bodily weakness by means of goodness, wisdom, and beauty. Men should sacrifice and delight in bodily strength with humility and goodness.

Finale and encore

Space requires that I end about here, though there is much more to look at and discuss. For some great reading, grab *The Mark of a Man* or *Let Me be a Woman* by Elisabeth Elliot, and *Her Hand in Marriage* by Douglas Wilson (specifically for youth and unmarrieds, but anyone will find them easy reading, worthwhile and interesting). Two books that were recommended specifically for families are *Christian Living in the Home* by Jay Adams and *Shepherding a Child's Heart* by Tedd Tripp. They should be available at your local church library. If they're not, request them as necessary literature.

And of course *The Holy Bible* is a continual must-read. When reading Scripture, always interpret it with Scripture itself. This means that sometimes we have to throw away the baggage we've previously attached to certain passages. NIV chapter titles and study Bibles can be useful tools, but too often they dictate how we read the text.

So read away, serve God, and rejoice with your family in the gift of your masculinity or femininity!

Benjamin Hoyt

Family Camp 2001-2002

At the end of December 2001 many people from the Reformed faith gathered at the historical campsite of Finlay Park. The alterations and additions that the Finlay Park staff made in the last year have added to the attendee's safety and enjoyment. One such change is a new walkway down to the jetty where the sailboats are moored. The campsite has much to offer the family seeking a week away, with activities that you can choose to do. There is go-karts, Canoes, Sailing Boats, Riding the rocket behind the a Boat, Water Slide, Swimming pool, Glow worm trip on a barge that keeps you dry (provided it does not rain), Rock wall climbing, and more.

This year the greater Wellington region or-

ganized the extra activities at camp. The kids had the added bonus of being able to produce differing items - edible and crafty. They also participated in wet games and a Top Town style of competition.

One evening consisted of an Entertainment night. Different people performed items. These items would be described under the following categories: Humorous, Moving, Intriguing, Musical, Bazaar and almost Dangerous. All in all definitely worth the time we spent sitting and watching them. One night we were given the treat of some country folk dancing, this provided to be a joy spinner for many. There were other activities that also proved to be body, mind and soul enriching.

I had a good start to the New Year while celebrating it at Family Camp. What better

place to be then with a large group of Reformed faith fellow believers on New Years Eve, bellowing out the songs of our LORD.

The Camp theme was "Family of God" - Unless the LORD builds the house, they labour in vain who build it. It was a theme that challenged us to consider our way of living and revealed areas that we can work on to improve our relationships with fellow believers. The ministers that lead us: Rev. Bruce Hoyt and Rev. John Rogers did justice to the topics.

It was a joy to be at camp. Especially to see Family's and the Family of God uniting together to achieve harmony. The camp community spirit was strong. Praise be to God for making such traditional meetings available to us.

Marianne Slykhuis

World news

When being literal is unscriptural

From our Reformed Presbyterian news source, we read that after 17 years in the Kingsville Elementary School, Pilgrim Presbyterian Bible Church moved into its new facilities in time for the new year. (Pilgrim is the anchor congregation for the Bible Presbyterian Church in the Baltimore area.)

We further read that to show this church as one literally built on God's Word, Bibles were placed in the foundation of the new facility. Sounds like a good idea, doesn't it? That's taking the Bible seriously! The difficulty with such a symbolic action is that a building is simply that, a building. It is the Church as a spiritual community which the Lord works through, and not through specially consecrated edifices. For instance, what kind of witness is it if in future years this congregation becomes quite liberal, and leaves the way of the Lord?

Dutch synods approve blessing of same-sex partnerships

Amsterdam (ENI) - The largest Protestant church body in the Netherlands has approved the blessing of same-sex partnerships. The decision was taken by the three synods of the Uniting Protestant Churches in the Netherlands at a joint meeting from November 22 to 24 near the town of Ede. The Uniting Protestant Churches—a federation of the two main Reformed churches

and the smaller Lutheran church in the Netherlands—represent some 2.7 million Christians. The three churches have been engaged in a long-running merger process. + *Christian News, New Haven, MO, USA, cnmail@fidnet.com*

Get to know Stonewall

Pastor David T. Myers has produced a study guide for churches on the life of Virginia patriot and Presbyterian educator Gen. Thomas Jonathan Jackson of Lexington. Entitled *Stonewall Jackson: The Spiritual Side*, the small guide retails for US\$4.25 plus postage and handling.

+ *CVBBS, PO Box 613, Carlisle, PA 17013 cvbbs@cvbbs.com*

Time is running out for tolerance in the RCA

The Reformed understanding of the authority of officeholders makes no distinction between men and women officeholders according to a 1998 Reformed Church in America General Synod report. When the oldest American denomination began to permit women officeholders, those who objected were guaranteed protection against prosecution for holding a minority position. Two essential phrases in the conscience clauses stipulate that objectors "shall not be required to participate in" and yet "may not obstruct" the ordination of women.

According to an account published in the official Church Herald, perspectives have changed. "[R]efusal to participate in the or-

dination of a woman is a refusal to recognize the authority that Christ delegates to a woman in that office. Such refusal, however passive, must itself be construed as a form of obstruction to the mutual recognition and respect that is essential among officeholders if they are to be effective servants and representatives of Christ."

Of the 1,938 ministers in the RCA, some 167 are women. Of these, only 35 are senior or solo pastors. Two others are missionaries, and 15 are without call.

Observers suggest, however, the handwriting is on the wall for hold-outs, and that the votes are present to finish the transition.

+ *Church Herald, Reformed Church in America, 4500 60th St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49512-9642*

With liberty comes decadence

Abortion has been legalised in Afghanistan through the third month of pregnancy if it is alleged that a woman's health is threatened. A woman must obtain certificates from three doctors and permission from the Health Ministry, according to the South African Press Association.

Ninety-seven countries with about 66 per-

cent of the world's population have laws permitting, in essence, abortion on demand, according to Human Life International. Ninety-three countries with about 34 percent of the world's population prohibit abortion or allow such exceptions as to protect the mother's life, or for reasons of rape and fetal deformity. About 55 million surgical abortions are performed each year worldwide, according to HLI.

+ *Tom Strobe, Baptist Press News Service, via Religion Today, 1-22-2002, <http://news.crosswalk.com>*

Ayub Masih will get a Supreme Court review

According to a report by Compass Direct at a preliminary hearing Feb. 13, in Lahore, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered a full hearing at the Supreme Court level for Ayub Masih, a Christian slated to be hanged for alleged blasphemy against the Muslim prophet Mohammed. A two-judge bench of the Supreme Court ruled that Masih's appeal was "a fit case for further consideration" in light of apparent legal irregularities in his prosecution.

Set for review before three or more Supreme Court justices, the case is expected

to be heard "within the next two or three months," Masih's defense lawyer, Abid Hassan Minto, told Compass.

It will be the final judicial appeal for Masih, jailed since October 1996 and kept in solitary confinement on death row for nearly four years in Multan's New Central Jail.

Now 34, Masih was convicted on the verbal testimony of one Muslim complainant, who claimed that during a private conversation his Christian neighbour had slandered Mohammed by praising Salman Rushdie's book, "The Satanic Verses."

+ *Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana CA 92799*

Satellite locator chip implants for your missionary staff

So...does your mission have a team in Colombia or some other location where kidnappings have occurred? Do you ever fear for their safety? Well, maybe your fears will be lessened soon. Imagine an implantable GPS ID chip that could identify your missionary's location to global GPS locators. Maybe it's not as far away as you might imagine.

Books in focus

In the beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and how it changed a nation, a language and a culture, by **Alister McGrath** (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2001) 340 pages. ISBN 0340-78560-8. **Reviewed by Rob Vosslamber.**

Since it was originally published in 1611, the King James Bible has been a benchmark by which all other translations have been assessed. Its high standard of translation, the quality of the English, and the virtual monopoly it enjoyed for nearly two centuries has ensured its status as a standard for Bible translators, and as a classic of the English language. For some it is the *only* Bible, as witnessed by the (unconfessional and unbiblical) bumper sticker seen in Wellington some years ago: "The Bible God loves and the devil hates: the King James Bible".

But how did this Bible come into being? And why has it enjoyed such a high reputation?

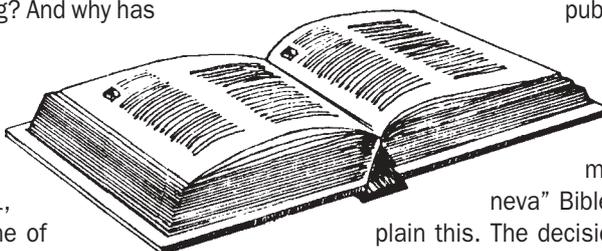
Alister McGrath, Professor of Historical Theology at Oxford, has written an excellent history of the translation. He does not commence the history in 1611, as might be expected, or even in 1601, when King James acceded to the throne of Great Britain, but rather discusses the factors that led to the possibility of, and indeed the need for, this translation. In so setting the scene, he highlights a number of factors which

resulted in this work, including:

(1) **Technology:** In this day of computerisation and rapid technological and scientific advance, we easily lose sight of just how revolutionary the invention of printing using moveable type really was. Information could now be disseminated rapidly, and spread far abroad. By today's standards, Gutenberg's press was still extremely labour-intensive. The actual laborious process of using an early press is interestingly described in the book.

(2) **Linguistic:** The author points out that the story of the King James Bible cannot be told without an understanding of the rise of confidence in the English language as a suitable vehicle for serious writing, and for the Scriptures, in the late sixteenth century. The reasons for this change in attitude are well explained.

(3) **Political/theological:** Although his name is tightly linked to the Bible, King James was no saint. That is a matter of public record. Why then did he authorise a new version of the Bible? The political manoeuvrings of the Puritans and the Anglican establishment at the time of James' accession, and the establishment's distaste for the popular Puritan "Geneva" Bible, with its Calvinistic footnotes, help explain this. The decision to authorise this new translation appears to have been almost a blessed afterthought, a way of keeping the peace, whilst at the same time thwarting the desires of the Puritans.



This historical background is well explained to the reader. No prior knowledge of the history of the time is required to follow the discussion, yet those familiar with the history will find much to feed the mind.

Given this background, the author then discusses the people entrusted with the responsibility of carrying out the royal decree, and how they went about their task.

In their preface, the translators stated their aim: *Truly (good Christian reader) we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one...but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against; that hath been our endeavour, that our mark.*

They built upon the edifice erected by previous, though unauthorised, translations such as Tyndale's, Coverdale's, the Geneva Bible, and the like. As such, their work was more a revision and improvement on previous translations, rather than a really new work. They were dwarves standing on the shoulders of the giants who preceded them, yet had the benefit of official sanction and of more recent scholarship. Oh, for such a humble attitude toward God's word and such a corporate view of the Church and the Scriptures in an age where there seems to be a new version published annually, in many cases bearing the name of the translator!

The King James Bible has left us a legacy of King James English. The author discusses some of the features. The mandate that the translators received to follow previous English translations explains their use of the archaic *thee* and *thou* (which, incidentally, were not capitalised). At the time, these pronouns were commonly used to

address inferiors, and not superiors. They were not chosen by the translators as a means to show respect to God. When used today they are often used incorrectly, and are best avoided, not only because they are so often used incorrectly. This conservatism required by the translators' mandate also resulted in the use of archaic verb endings (e.g. *sayest* and *sayeth* instead of *say* and *says*), and the awkward use of *thereof* in the phrase *A cubit shall be the length thereof*, where *A cubit shall be its length* would save some breath.

Although the King James Bible had become the standard Bible by the nineteenth century, it did not receive immediate acceptance. How it came to be dominant had as much to do with economics and politics as with the quality of the translation.

Overall, this is a fascinating read. It is a full-orbed history, setting the work in its economic, cultural, political, and theological context. It provides a summary of English Church history of the times within its covers. Perhaps the author stresses the economic motivation too much. However, even today, Bible publishing is big business, and regrettably the Word of God is peddled as a commodity rather more than it is received with joy as the very Word of God. Human nature being what it is, there is nothing new under the sun...

It is a joy to come across such a book. It is an even greater joy for one of Dutch extraction to find such a book in a public library. Look for this one in yours. You may find it there, as I did in Hastings. Otherwise, the pain of parting with \$49.95 at your local bookseller will certainly be mitigated by the joy and profit of the read!

How Now Shall We Live?

A diligent reader has alerted me to the fact that there is a Study guide to the above book - you can buy it from Geneva Books (Willi Bryant (06) 357 8826).

CELEBRATION QUILT

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

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

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

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

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

Your sister in Christ, Marianne Bos

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

**LADIES' AID FOR
THE REFORMED THEOLOGICAL
COLLEGE**

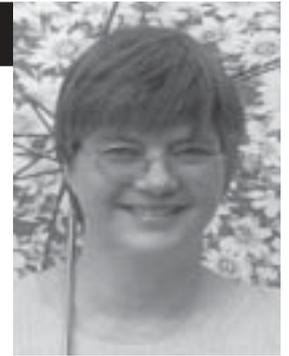
To the Ladies' Aid representatives,
Thank you again for the work you do in collecting the monies for Ladies' Aid for the RTC, and thank you all those families who have saved up their coins. I haven't heard from the Australian committee what the money has been used for this year, but the College still needs finishing touches and the students really appreciate what is done for them. I would also like to thank you for the kind little notes that sometimes accompany the cheques and would like to wish you all a blessed and peaceful 2002.

With Christian greetings
Arja Amersfoort, Christchurch

Avondale	\$175.00
Bishopdale	\$436.05
Bucklands Beach	\$117.35
Christchurch	\$110.30
Dovedale	\$24.00
Dunedin	\$64.00
Hamilton	\$111.80
Mangere	\$190.84
Nelson	\$25.50
Wellington	\$191.10

Missions in focus

FOCUS ON ETHIOPIA



Janice Reid

[OPC missionary Hailu Mekonnen spent a month in Ethiopia towards the end of last year. Following are excerpts from his report about his time there.]

"I left for Ethiopia on October 18, and returned on November 17. Even though my stated goal for this trip was to help in the organisational aspect of the work, I had significant opportunities for ministry of the Word, both in the Ethiopian Reformed Church (ERC) and outside it. I spent a total of four Sundays in Addis Ababa. In addition to the three sermons I preached on Lord's Days, I also preached a wedding sermon for one of the newest couples of the congregation. Pastor Melaku conducted the ceremony, and I preached the sermon.

"There were two groups of people outside the ERC that invited me to speak. One was the Adult Sunday School of the International Evangelical Church. They asked me to speak on two topics: one was National Israel and the Promises of God to the Jews; the other was the Biblical Perspective on the September 11 Terrorist Attack. On this, I simply used Luke 13:1-5, and reminded the multinational audience to take to heart the exhortation of the Lord in this passage.

"The other group that asked me to speak was a coalition of believers from different churches, who met for intercessory prayer for the poor and the sick in Addis Ababa. I spoke from 2 Chronicles 7:14, emphasising the need for Christians to pray scripturally.

"I had the opportunity to hear reports from the two ministers in the ERC. Some exciting reports concern the planting of two new congregations in Langeno and Abuka. These are two small towns about two to three hours' walk from the main road. In each of these two places, there are sixty to eighty individuals. In southern Ethiopia, we now have three congregations: Humbbo, Abuka, and Langeno. There are three other places where regular Bible studies are being conducted:

Shone, Yirga'alem, and Awassa.

"Pastors Melaku and Leul held a week-long leadership training course for fourteen leaders in Humbbo. In this course, they taught the whole of the Westminster Confession of Faith, explaining it article by article. At the end of the course, they administered a test to see how much the participants understood. They were very encouraged with the results.

"One of the participants was Habte Assefa. Habte was the Bible study group leader in Yirga'alem. Several years ago, Melaku led this brother to the Lord, and kept up with him through the years. When Melaku learned that Habte was seeking a fulltime Gospel ministry, he had him preach at the Humbbo congregation after the leadership conference. Both Melaku and Leul were very pleased with his preaching, doctrinal understanding, and position. They suggested to the Steering Committee of the Humbbo con-

gregation that Habte become the pastoral intern under the supervision of the Addis ERC, and we examined him in life and doctrine and then licensed him to preach the Gospel in Humbbo. This has relieved Leul to return to Addis Ababa and help in the work there, where he is greatly needed.

"I met numerous times with Melaku and Leul to discuss ministry matters. I was not able to see any of the men from Wachechu because they were not in Addis Ababa during my visit. The drought continues to be severe in that area, and ERC is assisting the believers there with food. The funds are provided by the deacons of Grace Church (Virginia), by the OPC Committee on Foreign Missions, and by personal contributions.

"We praise the Lord for His mighty works through the ERC that He is doing in Ethiopia. It is a privilege for us to be partners in the work of the Kingdom with the Ethiopian Reformed Church."

MIF Prayer Notes

The **Overseas Mission Board** asks for prayer as it considers if and how our churches can help Rev. Stephen 't Hart in his ministry in Papua New Guinea. They ask us to continue in our prayers for Stephen and his wife Dorinda, for their safety, strength and effective ministry. The OMB also asks prayer for Kamran Nazir, who is back in Pakistan. Please pray for his safety, and also that he would find an appropriate place of ministry where he can use his talents and training.

Rev John Goris is busy with organising the Asia/Pacific Missions Conference of the ICRC, which is being hosted (as I understand it) by South Korea. The conference is less than a year away, and there are many details to plan, and countless messages to write! Please pray that all will go smoothly as this conference is planned.

At the time of writing, **Janice Reid** is expecting to travel to Perth in April, for meetings regarding her work in providing training services to FEBC radio programmers. After these meetings, she may be required to stay on for some weeks to oversee the production of a new radio series that will be test-broadcast in the Philippines later this year. If the meetings cannot be held in April (due to an uncertain situation in another FEBC field office), they will be moved to May.

From the D.A.'s Office

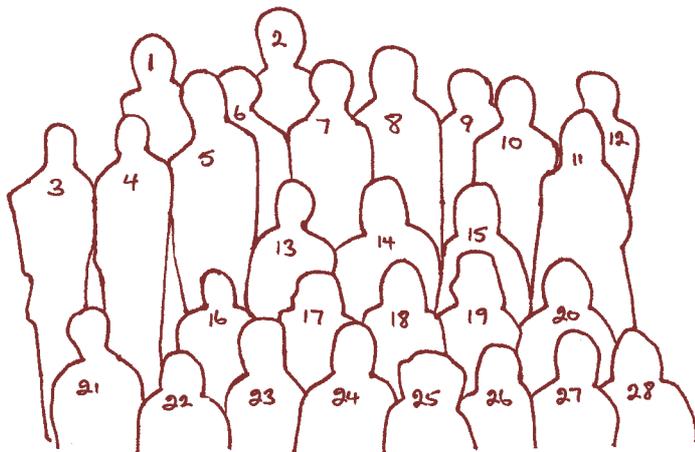
Reformed Church of Bishopdale



The Bishopdale Cadet and Calvinette Club circa 1979-1982?]

This month, on the 1st of April, the Reformed Church of Bishopdale, in Christchurch will be celebrating 20 years since it was instituted in 1982. The Bishopdale congregation was a daughter of the Christchurch mother congregation, which continues to worship in the original Cornwall St building. Now, twenty years on, the Reformed Church of Bishopdale has itself become a mother, with the institution last year of the Dovedale congregation.

The photo is of the Bishopdale Calvinist Cadet Corps and Calvinette Club, as it was in the late 1970's or early 1980's. Can anyone supply a more firm date? At the time, Bishopdale did not have their own building. Perhaps someone can also identify where the photo was taken. I'm able to identify the two male Counsellors, Andy van Ameyde and Fred Braam, but as to the rest, I have no clues. Perhaps you can help with some names? I'd love to hear from you.



**Synodical Archivist
Roy Nugteren
42 Bancroft Terrace
Newlands
Wellington
Ph: (04) 478 6406
Mobile: (025) 396 872
E-Mail: rojo@free.net.nz**

Archives Statement of Policy & Procedures

And now the sixth instalment of the Archives Statement of Policy and Procedures, "Regulations".

REGULATIONS

1. All who request facilities for research must abide by the rules governing the Reformed Churches of New Zealand Archives.
2. No documents, photographs or other material shall be removed from the premises devoted to archives. This must be strictly adhered to.
3. Photocopying can only be done of non-copyright material and by the archivist.
4. Copies of photographs may be ordered, if copyright approval has been obtained.
5. There shall be no open access to boxes of original documents, photographs etc. kept in the archives.
6. The number of documents issued to any person at the one time shall be limited at the discretion of the archivist.
7. Researchers must sign the attendance book each day.
8. All brief cases etc. are to be left out of the archive-room.
9. Smoking and eating are not permitted in the archives or its vicinity.
10. Those concerned shall abide by the regulations regarding publishing. (next month's section)