

faith in  
**focus**

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Work and calling –  
some things to consider

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## Editorial

Christian believers live in a world that views work as an end in itself, or sometimes, as a means to an end. However, the Christian should see the whole issue of work from a different point of view – a biblical point of view. The Christian needs to understand God's mandate to work, to be productive and be fruitful. Moreover, we don't just work for ourselves, but we do so in service to God first, then to others, and finally, for the maintenance of our families etc. The early Puritans used to view their work in this three-fold way, which I believe is truly biblical, and is something we as an older generation need to recapture and teach to the younger generation too.

Our three contributors look at work from a couple of different angles. The Rev Michael Willemse writes on "Working for the Lord", a good foundation for any young Christian person about to enter the work force. Mr Reuben Ploeg (a teacher) looks at "Choosing a Career", with some very practical guidelines. And, finally, Mr John van Dyk addresses the issue of "Balancing work, family and church life", a timely subject for all you busy people.

These articles combine to give a balanced, practical approach to the subject of work and calling, and I am very happy to recommend them to you, the reader. I would especially recommend that our younger covenant youth read these articles.

It's Easter time again. On page three there is a dramatic contrast between the poem "That hour of darkness" by the Rev John Goris (Emeritus) and the question posed by the Rev. John Haverland – "The resurrection: does it matter?" For the Christian, both aspects of Easter are highly significant.

We examine "The submergent church", in the second and final article.

The Rev. John Rogers gives us further helpful information about Sing to the Lord and answers questions which were sent to the committee by the Palmerston North session.

Dr Sally Davey writes about Charlotte Yonge, a prolific writer and an able teacher, whose novel *The Heir of Redclyffe* left those of Dickens and Thackeray far behind in popularity.

Janice Reid gives us a further update on Timothy and Zara Woo in Zambia, where Timothy works in the library of the Theological College of Central Africa.

And finally, there are the regular newsy articles and a letter to the editor.

Just one final thing. Quite often I receive images for use in the magazine, which don't appear on the cover. The reason for this is that the cover images are going to tie in with the contributed articles, as you will be able to see on this issue. However, I can use your images for possible fillers and also in the "web" version of the magazine. The "web" version doesn't have the "MIF prayer notes" for security reasons, and is replaced with an image from one of our contributors. So, if you want to see whose image has been used in the previous issue, just log on to the RCNZ website at <http://www.rcnz.org.nz>.

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# The Resurrection: does it matter?

**Rev. John A Haverland**

A few years ago a movie claimed that archeologists had discovered the DNA of Jesus. This claim went back to limestone boxes discovered in Jerusalem in 1982 with the names of two Mary's, Joseph, Jesus, and "Judah, son of Jesus". Some stated these contained the DNA of Jesus, his parents, his "wife" Mary and his child.

All this was mere speculation. According to Joseph Zias, an Israeli archeologist, within a three kilometer radius of this particular tomb there are 70 graves with the name "Jesus", and two with the name "Jesus son of Joseph". Moreover, 48 per cent of women at that time had the name Mary or Miriam. What's more, the family tomb would more than likely have been in Nazareth, not in Jerusalem.

But what if someone did discover the bones of Jesus in a tomb in Palestine? What if the tomb of Jesus was not empty? Would this make any difference to our faith?

Some would say, "No". One of the leading movements in Christianity at the present time is the Emergent Church.<sup>1</sup> The Emergents want to make Christianity and Jesus more attractive and acceptable to post modern people. This is exactly what the old liberals of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries wanted to do for their time. To achieve this they downplay teachings that might hinder men and women from embracing Christianity, such as an infallible Bible, eternal punishment in hell, the virgin birth and the resurrection of Jesus. Is the essence of what Christians believe about Jesus is still intact even if he did not rise from the dead?

The apostle Paul answered this with an emphatic, No!. In 1 Corinthians 15 he declared that the resurrection of our Lord was absolutely central to his preaching and to our faith; "...if Christ has not been raised, our

preaching is useless and so is your faith" (vs. 14).

"**Our preaching**" would be useless because we would be proclaiming a lie; we would announce that Jesus had risen when in fact he had not! Liberal theologians deny that Jesus rose from the dead arguing that the disciple's belief that he did was based on wishful thinking. The disciples, they say, hoped he would rise and so they talked themselves into believing that he did. When liberal pastors preach about the "risen" Jesus they mean that Jesus "rose" in the *mind* of the disciples. In the same way, they say, we can live as *if* he were alive.

This type of preaching has emptied liberal churches of people.

Such preaching is useless! If I didn't believe that Jesus was a risen and living Saviour then I would not stand in the pulpit every Sunday to preach about Him. Why would I bother? What would be the point? Why call people to believe in a dead saviour? And why would you bother to come to church to hear a preacher intone about a person long dead and gone? Paul felt the same – without a living Lord his preaching was "useless".

"**And so is your faith.**" If Jesus' bones are still somewhere in a tomb in Palestine then what do you really believe in? You could learn from him as a great teacher, but so was Socrates. You could admire him as a great leader, but so was Winston

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## That hour of darkness!

The clouds were gathering....  
Downpour of God's holy wrath  
on the beloved Son.

Accumulation of accumulations  
Fall-out of evil peril  
has begun.

Observe.....  
the sweating, agonizing Saviour  
the sleeping, slipping followers  
the sniper-traitor shooting out of hiding  
to plant a kiss of deadliest intent.

Ah, how the darkness deepens  
Its hues immensely stark!  
Walk through Gethsemane in spirit...  
Be still, my soul, and mark!

How shall I measure  
the immeasurable?  
How, and to what extent  
fathom the way He went?

.....

And to His Father, in obedience still,  
He said, "I've come to do Your will!"

*John Goris*  
Wellington, January 2002  
(Luke 22:39-53; 23:44)



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<sup>1</sup> *Faith in Focus* has published a few articles critiquing this latest fashion in theology and the church.

Churchill. You could follow him as a good example, but so was Mahatma Gandhi. What makes Jesus different from all these others is that he was and is the Son of God who died on the cross and who was raised to life! Now that is something to believe in! This is the foundation and essence of our faith.

The resurrection is central to our preaching, and to our faith and to the **reliability of the apostles**. Paul wrote; "And if Christ has not been raised...we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead" (1 Cor 15:15) Underlying my sermons every time I preach is the absolute conviction that Jesus is alive. If he is not then I, with Paul, am a "false witness", a liar.

Finally, the resurrection is central to the **overall truth of the Bible**. Paul claimed that Jesus was "raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:4) Those reading the Scriptures in Old Testament times did not understand how some of the prophecies would be fulfilled.

Even those who spoke and wrote were unaware of how these things would come to pass. However, Christians who read these Scriptures after the resurrection of Jesus know that all these things happened "according to the Scriptures." Here are a few representative passages:

"...you will not abandon me to the grave nor will you let your Holy One see decay" (Ps. 16:10).

"After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied" (Is. 53:11).

"After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us" (Hos. 6:2).

The New Testament writers took statements like these and interpreted them in the light of Christ. They saw them as prophecies that were fulfilled in his resurrection, confirming the truth of the Bible.

"...if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God... And if Christ has not

been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. *But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead!*" (1 Cor. 15:14-20).

The entire Christian faith rests on the truth of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. This is the only sound explanation for the empty tomb. This is what the angels told the disciples who came to his tomb to anoint his body: "He is not here; he has risen!" (Matt 28:6) This is the testimony of hundreds of people who saw Jesus between his resurrection and ascension; their evidence is recorded in the gospels and letters of the New Testament. (1 Cor 15:5-8) This is the truth that must be proclaimed on Easter Sunday in the churches of New Zealand: "He has risen!"

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## Work and calling (1)

### Working for the Lord

#### Rev Michael Willemse

We live in an age where our view of work has become distorted in one of two ways: either work has become an obsession or it has simply become a means to an end. People either find their meaning solely through their work and it becomes all-consuming; or work becomes simply a means for them to earn money to do the things that they really want to do. People either worship their work or they resent it. And both of these extremes are found amongst God's people. But is that how God intended things to be?

In earlier generations, work was often spoken of as a vocation – a calling from God. But today it is common to think of men as "called" to ministry of some sort while thinking that everyone else just

has a job. It doesn't really matter what you do, as long as you provide for your family – or so such thinking goes.

But the truth is that the work we do is an immensely important part of our kingdom service – it is a calling from God Himself.

#### The enduring place of work

Thousands of years ago Solomon acknowledged the enduring place of work when he said "A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see is from the hand of God ..." (Ecclesiastes 2:24).

It is important to observe that God gave man work to do *before* the fall, filling the earth, subduing it and ruling over its creatures (Genesis 1:28). We read "The LORD God took the man and put

him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." (Genesis 2:15). It is the arduous and wearisome aspects of work which are part of the curse (Genesis 3:17-19) *not the work itself*. In eternity we will still have work to do – there will be the New Earth to tend, explore and develop to the glory of God. Believers will reign over the new creation with God forever (Revelation 22:5), exercising His dominion over it.

It is worth noting that God has instilled enormous potential in His creation, and that man's task is to discover that potential and develop it to the glory of God and for the good of his fellow man (a very practical expression of the two great commandments in Matthew 22:37-40). In this light, Dorothy Sayers defines work as "the gracious expression of creative energy in the service of oth-

ers.”<sup>1</sup> In our work, we imitate the God in whose image we have been created. Work, viewed in this light then, has inherent dignity and value – it is given by God, to be used in service to God so that we may delight in God and do good to our fellow man.

Not only does work have an enduring place in our lives but Scripture also hints that it has enduring value. Revelation 21:24-26 speaks of the splendour of the kings of the earth and the glory and honour of the nations being brought into the new Jerusalem. This seems to hint at the very best achievements of humankind enduring on in the new Heaven and Earth.

### Calling to particular work

Although work has inherent dignity and value, God has uniquely gifted each human being, giving them both skill and passion for particular kinds of work. Within the broad spectrum of possibilities, our gifts and character make us better suited to certain types of work than to others. In fact Scripture tells us that God has prepared certain work in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

Determining which work God is calling you to do is the subject of a separate article in this issue, but suffice to say that God has called each of His children to particular work. John the Baptist does not advise the tax-collectors and soldiers who come to him to seek alternate occupations but to pursue their existing work in a way that honours God. (Luke 3:12ff). Likewise, Paul’s advice to new converts is that “each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him.” And “each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.” (1 Corinthians 7:17,23).

It must be said, of course, that not all work is good work. There are certain occupations which violate God’s commands and do not honour Him. There are also certain occupations which harm rather than help our fellow man. The prostitution, pornography, drug-dealing, abortion and gambling industries are plainly no-go areas for Christians. But it is also possible to pursue legitimate occupations in ways which do not honour God or serve our fellow man – exploiting employees or customers, selling sub-standard products, shirking on our work.

Whatever work we are called to (or find ourselves in as we search for work to which we are better suited!) is to be pursued in a way that gives glory to

God and helps others (Colossians 3:23; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Leviticus 19:18).

This is why it is important to seek the work to which God has called us and for which He has equipped us. If we do work for which we are poorly equipped, it will be hard to produce a result which is honouring to God and will often be immensely frustrating for us. But when we do work that ‘fits’ with God’s gifting, the result will be great satisfaction and joy, a sense of God’s pleasure in the fulfilment that comes from a job well done.

### Christian work is Kingdom work

In the Lord’s prayer we say “... your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10). We can turn this around a little and say that Christ’s Kingdom comes wherever His will is done – that is, in the lives of believers pursuing their work to His glory. When we approach our work conscious of God’s calling and seek to carry it out to the best of our ability, we bring Christ’s reign to bear on our workplace. When we do an honest day’s work,

refuse to steal from our boss, refuse to compromise on the quality of what we produce or to compromise our faith in producing it, we are like outposts of the Kingdom of Christ. People see our faith in our work and catch a glimpse of the one for whom we are working and the influence of Christ’s reign is felt.

Because Christians work with their eyes on the Lord, our work should consistently be of the highest standard, our loyalty unwavering, our time-keeping scrupulous, our honesty beyond reproach. Christians should be the most valued employees wherever we work. We recognise that our work is for God, even though our boss may be unreasonable, our co-workers lazy, the conditions sub-standard and the wages below average. Our work does not give us our identity but flows out of our identity in Christ. And when these things are true in our work, even unbelievers will sit up and take notice (1 Peter 2:12). Work done with this attitude inevitably means that our lives influence our workplace and that we become salt, light and

“... our work should consistently be of the highest standard, our loyalty unwavering, our time-keeping scrupulous, our honesty beyond reproach.”



leaven there (Matthew 5:13-16; Luke 13:20,21).

Our work is not just something that we can use to advance God's purposes. Christian work, done well is a major part of God's purpose. It is a tangible expression of Christ's kingdom. It engages our creative energy – a significant part of being God's image-bearers. It is redemptive in nature, helping bring healing and wholeness into people's lives. Work done in this way transforms cultures and countries. It brings people who do not yet know Christ to live under the ethics of His Kingdom. It curbs evil and promotes good, helps the disadvantaged and strengthens society. It provides a climate in which not only Christians but all people can flourish and prosper.

History is filled with examples of Christians who saw their work as a vital part of Christ's kingdom. A useful book to read in this regard is *What If Christ Had Never Been Born?*<sup>2</sup> Christians ministered to the poor, changed people's view of the value of human life, fought racism, ended slavery, and established free public education as well as many of the world's most famous universities. They advanced science, art and music, health

and medicine, justice, morality and economic prosperity. There is scarcely a sphere of human life untouched by Christians who saw their work as a calling from God, something intrinsically good and redemptive.

Even in our own churches in New Zealand, there are many who seek to apply these principles to their businesses and who continue to provide employment for many New Zealanders both inside and outside the church. They run their businesses on Christian principles, aim to produce quality products and do excellent work which stands the test of time – quite something in a throw-away, fad-driven society! They seek to treat their staff well and have earned a good reputation in the community. In a similar manner, individual Christians have earned the respect of their employers and co-workers through their consistently high standard of work and their reliability and loyalty. And through such people, Christ's kingdom advances.

### Conclusion

Work is a gift of God through which He invites us to participate in His redemptive and re-creative work in this world. We

do well to seek the work to which God calls us and for which He has equipped us, and then to work at it with all our might, seeking the glory of God and the good of our fellow man. Viewed in this way, we will neither be slaves to our work nor tempted to think of it as inconsequential. We will not judge our work by the money that we (or the business) make, but by the value of the work done. And we will prayerfully seek the advance of Christ's kingdom through the work He has given us. In another quote from Dorothy Sayers, "The only Christian work is good work, well done."<sup>3</sup>

### Notes

- 1 From Dorothy Sayers' essay "Why Work?" quoted by Tim Keller in a sermon entitled "Work" <http://download.redeemer.com/rpcsermons/storesamplesermons/Work.mp3>
- 2 *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?*, D. James Kennedy & Jerry Newcombe, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994)
- 3 Quoted in "Loving the Creation, Loving the Creator: Dorothy L. Sayers's Theology of Work" by William H. Harrison in *Anglican Theological Review*, Spring 2004.

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## Work and calling (2)

### Choosing a Career

#### Reuben Ploeg

Choosing a career or deciding which job or type of work to enter into is one of life's more challenging decisions. Young people today are faced with a multitude of options and possibilities that present them with lots of opportunities, but that also render the decision much harder to make. What are some of the issues that Christians need to consider when choosing a career?

#### It is good to work

If you are a young person considering what job or career to pursue you can be sure of this, that it is right to look for work. God made Adam and immediately set him to work (Gen 2:15). The fourth

commandment says that "6 days you shall labour and do all your work...", and Paul reminds the Thessalonians of the rule they gave them that, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." (2 Thess 3:10). The Bible makes it clear that the question for any young Christian should not be whether or not to work. This much is obvious. Nor does Scripture appear to differentiate between the status of different types of work and jobs – all work is important. The difficulty lies in where to invest your time and talents.

#### Where to start

Somewhat similar to deciding who to marry, finding the 'right' job for you is essentially very open. As long as none of the options before you lies outside

of biblical guidelines, then each one is potentially acceptable. Here are several simple steps to consider:

#### Ask others

Seek the wisdom of your parents and other respected members of your family and church. Find out what they know about the different jobs that you are interested in. They may have some good ideas and, perhaps, some useful warnings too. People who know you will also have insight into your abilities and temperament and could be able to point you in the right direction. Someone may even offer you a job! Also, most high schools have careers advisors from whom you may seek out careers advice and discuss courses and further study options.

### Consider your gifts

Look at the skills, interests and abilities that God has blessed you with. It makes sense that you will try to get work in an area where you have skills and gifts. If you do a job that is beyond your abilities it could potentially lead to dissatisfaction, stress and a failure to fulfill your responsibilities.

This is not to say that we should expect a job that meets all of our needs and interests. I have occasionally seen people who proclaim that they love their job so much that it does not feel like work. Many subscribe to Confucius's teaching of, "Find a job you love and you'll never work a day in your life". Clearly, it is desirable to like your work. However, there is a danger with such an idealised claim. Due to a fallen and sinful world there will always be a lack of perfection in our work. We are all sinners and we work with sinners. Christians struggle at times with even such wonderful things like marriage and church, so it is unrealistic to expect to always love your work. No job is perfect. As Christians there is also more to life than just our job. Our work should not completely define us. Christians have families and churches as part of their makeup. Anyone who loves their job too much is in danger of making it their idol. A further temptation for



many who seek this ideal is to quit when the going gets tough. Christians, on the other hand, should be prepared to display such characteristics as perseverance and patience. When work colleagues behave sinfully towards us we should respond with love in a godly manner. Being content is an area all Christians need to work at in their jobs.

As a teacher I have seen that some students are extremely gifted. Where

will be satisfied and literally stop working once they have achieved the minimum requirement – even if the subject they are currently in offers many more credits. This is clearly not a Christian attitude to have. Furthermore, it is unwise. If there is competition for the job or course that you are seeking to enter then it is possible that the employer or provider will select only the better qualified applicants. Plus, in the future you may wish

“As Christians there is also more to life than just our job. Our work should not completely define us.”

many of us might be good in one area, they are blessed with many talents across a number of subjects including arts, science, mathematics, and English, all at the same time. Whilst having so much ability will clearly open up numerous employment opportunities, being so able may actually make finding the 'right' job even more difficult! It may actually be harder to find work that will utilise all of your skills, and will probably require more sacrifice and a willingness to be content with what you have.

### Pray

Ultimately, we must commit all of our choices, plans and decisions to the Lord in prayer. If we seek His will for us in our career choice then we should be seeking Him in prayer. Scripture does not indicate that there is anything mystical about choosing work, or that we should be seeking special signs or wonders to confirm a choice. Personal preference is acceptable if it is within the bounds of God's Word and we have placed it before Him in prayer.

### Widen your options

We need to be considering our future options. We don't want to hide our talents in the ground. God has given us talents and abilities that he wants us to use for the furtherance of his Kingdom. A negative trend I have noticed among some students is to adopt a minimalist attitude. If the course or job that they wish to apply for requires, for example, a minimum of 8 credits in a subject, they

to explore other options that could be limited by your lack of marks.

### Have perseverance

Another area of concern is how easily some young people give up. Rather than sticking at it, many chop and change very quickly. Some quit their course with big student fees or leave their apprenticeship half-way through without gaining any qualification. Of course, if you realise mid-way through a course of training that you have chosen the wrong one for you it is all right to change, but consider it carefully first – don't rush to quit – it is a serious matter. Sometimes it is good to have a qualification as a backup even if it is not in your main area of interest. Finishing a course or continuing in employment will show an employer that you can finish a job, have determination and character. The skill and experience learned will add to your repertoire. The apostle Paul became an apostle but still went back to his tent-making trade to support his missionary endeavours. Your previous experience may help you in future jobs and can open opportunities for future work and ministry.

### Have realistic expectations

It is also important not to expect to fall into the job of your dreams immediately. Obviously you can apply for your target job but that is no guarantee of success. Many times we need to accept lesser jobs. Working is biblical. Refusing to work until we get our dream job is not biblical.

Many jobs come through opportunities. Often we may get jobs through contacts or people we know. We need to be willing to consider that these opportunities may come from God. An opportunity to work may be worth more than our selfish desires for a particular type of job. On the other hand, if you are offered work that is ungodly or which could hinder your walk with Christ, would you have the courage to refuse it or quit if necessary?

### Examine your motives

We should also consider carefully our motives in choosing our career path. Do you want that job just because you want to make lots of money? Sometimes making money can be important but serving the Lord should be our primary motivation, not the selfish and greedy accumulation of wealth. 1 Timothy 6:6-10 speaks clearly of the benefit of contentment versus the love of money, and highlights the dangers for those who

love money and who want to get rich.

Ultimately, our desire should be to honour our Creator in whichever work situation we seek or find ourselves. I wish you success as you begin the task of seeking to find a job or career and hope that the words of Colossians 3:17 encourage you, *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

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## Work and calling (3)

# Balancing work, family and church life

### John van Dyk

There's a limerick entitled "Relativity" that is sure to appeal if, like me, you have struggled to understand Einstein's theories of time.

*There was a young lady named Bright  
Whose speed was far faster than light;  
She set out one day,  
In a relative way  
And returned on the previous night.<sup>1</sup>*

We are reminded that, for ordinary mortals, time relentlessly marches on. We live each moment only once and then it's gone, never to return. For most of us time is a precious commodity. We never seem to have enough of it to do all the things we would like.

Part of the problem is that we must divide our time between multiple responsibilities. For most men, and for

an increasing number of women, we not only have the specific demands of working at our careers, but there is also service within the church, attention to our families, and our own needs as individuals. Another reason we are pressed for time is that we live in a fallen world. After the fall, God placed a curse on the ground, making our toil painful and labour-intensive. Even though most of us aren't farmers, and while we may enjoy the benefits of modern technology, our work has nevertheless been made much more difficult because of the curse. The fall into sin also affects our other pursuits – family and church – as they require more time to manage. Rather than continuously deriving pleasure from our relationships within our families and church families, much of our time is spent maintaining harmony and rectifying wrongs.

### Neglect and selfish interest

In considering the attention that family responsibilities ought to receive, there would appear to be two common pitfalls. First is the neglect of spouse and children by parents who are overly busy with the affairs of career or church or, more sadly, selfish interests. The other pitfall is a disproportionate focus on family life and even a misguided view of it. This is often apparent when parents are forever taxiing their children from one sporting/cultural/social event to the next, when hospitality is limited to immediate





and extended family members, or when families spend a very large number of weekends away from home. The way in which family life ought to be conducted is beyond the scope of this article, however there will be some attention given later on striking a balance so that family is not neglected.

Pursuing livelihoods, too, has enormous potential to sap the time of those in the workforce. This is especially true for the self-employed, for young professionals, and is often the case for those in marketing, information technology and farming. The potential demands on one's time ought to be a factor for Christians in choosing a career – as Reuben Ploeg will no doubt observe in his article. No matter what career we choose, we must be vigilant lest our employment begins to take over our waking hours. However, it's often not easy to say no to increased work demands if the burden then falls to our colleagues or our careers are stalled as a result. Talking these matters over with the boss may bring about a resolution. However, in extreme circumstances more drastic action, such as a change in position, employer or even career, may be required.

### **Many have responsibilities**

Then there's service in the church. Often we think of the office-bearers – with all their pastoral, teaching and diaconal responsibilities – as the ones who are rushed off their feet. But it's not just office-bearers who get busy. Many times those who teach Sunday School or Catechism, those who regularly visit and offer support to those who struggle with ill health or other troubles, those who run weekly outreach or youth programmes can find that their time is under great pressure. For others the squeeze may only be temporary – preparing annual financial reports, seeing through a building project or some other one-off task. And for those who are especially willing and able the problem is compounded as they frequently end up with multiple concurrent tasks.

Sometimes it's necessary to differentiate between real, valuable kingdom service and works of vanity. For example, you're handy at wood carving, but does your church really need the Reformed emblem engraved into the ends of its pews? Or, you're a whiz with databases, but who's going to consult your listing of the church library catalogue sorted by publisher nationality? Admittedly these are extreme examples, but I'll venture

that these sorts of things are being done right now in many churches by people who appear to be very busy. Sometimes we need to ask ourselves whether there is a purpose in our endeavours and check that we aren't making unnecessary work for ourselves by striving for an unrealistic level of perfection or completeness. We need to be sure that what we do is truly furthering the kingdom of God.

television, films, social networking can and do use up enormous amounts of time. Perhaps it's different at your home where it may be the garden, workshop, novels and magazines, or sports that take up too much of your time.

It's also possible to feel under pressure for time because we are not well organised. When there are four or five tasks (or even more) that need our at-

“And, as brothers and sisters in Christ, we ought to be encouraging one another, by word and example, to maintain a healthy balance between our competing responsibilities.”

### **Focusing on the important**

With regard to personal time, relaxation in some form of leisure activity is important. Of greater importance, for the sake of our spiritual wellbeing, is to set aside ample devotional time. Sessions already aim to be a help to our members in this. Part of the annual home visit is used as a spiritual check-up to ensure that the means of grace are being properly used. Sessions should also be ascertaining whether the demands of the church on her members are realistic and that time isn't being wasted needlessly. Often, as churches, we are adept in reviewing ministries and programmes to ensure that the church's financial resources are well used. Are we as proficient in making sure that the church's labour resources – members' time – are similarly well used? There are occasions, too, when we need to be more decisive in winding up ministries that are not bearing fruit. And, as brothers and sisters in Christ, we ought to be encouraging one another, by word and example, to maintain a healthy balance between our competing responsibilities.

### **Deal with time-wasters**

Perhaps the easiest way to find more time is to cut down on waste. In our house the biggest time waster is associated with screens. Computer games,

attention – particularly when they are for a number of different taskmasters – then we can start to feel stressed. This is where good time management can help. Make a list of the tasks that need doing. Sort the list into order of priority. Typically some tasks are urgent while others have no particular due date. Start with one or two tasks that can be accomplished fairly quickly and whose completion will give a sense of satisfaction. Don't keep putting off the less pleasant tasks. Some people (we call them task-oriented) will find time management comes naturally while others (often relationship-oriented) find this a challenging exercise.

We have seen that the areas which compete for our attention are, broadly speaking, employment, family, church and personal time. If we find that one area is making disproportionate demands, we shouldn't think that curtailing time in that area will necessarily result in more time being spent elsewhere where it is needed. Freeing up time for the neglected spheres of our life is only half of the equation. Along with this newfound time there must be the inclination to use it wisely. If we are not inclined to spend time with our families, if we have no desire to serve the Lord in his church, then no amount of extra time will bring about change. We live in a self-serving, individualistic age whose

thinking is apt to rub off on us in many subtle ways. To look beyond ourselves – to the needs of employer, family and kingdom of God – may well require a deep change in our outlook.

Arguably the biggest challenge in managing our time is to find a balance. The wisdom of the age would say that

whatever balance we settle on is a matter of individual choice. However as Christians we know we are accountable not only to ourselves, but also to our employers, spouses, parents, elders, and ultimately to our heavenly Father. So this question must be considered carefully, in consultation with others, and in prayer.

May God grant us wisdom in how we use our time, and may all the different uses of our time be to his glory.

#### Notes

1 "Relativity", by A.H. Reginald Buller (1874–1944), first published in *Punch*, Dec 19, 1923.

## The submergent church

(Part two)

**Rev. Derrick J. Vander Meulen**

*Continued from last issue*

### The Church and the World

When Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica, he began by commending them for their witness: "And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything." (I Thessalonians 1:6–8)

As the church of Jesus Christ, our calling is to worship and make disciples. We make disciples within our church body through education and instruction (Bible studies, catechism, Sunday school, etc.). But, sadly, this seems to be where the vision of some churches ends. We are, indeed, to be diligent in training our children and be diligent in studying God's Word and growing in our knowledge and understanding. But our calling is more than this. Our vision must be greater. We are to go to the nations and make disciples: "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, bap-

tizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age'" (Matthew 28:18–20).

A submergent church lacks such a vision. Its vision is one simply of maintenance. "As long as we have regular worship services and good preaching; as long as Bible Studies are offered (whether or not I attend is beside the point); as long as I'm visited when I'm sick – then the church is healthy." Such a church is completely focused on itself. It views ministry as nothing more than a "religious cushion." As C. John Miller writes:

*The local church was intended by Jesus to be a gathering of people full of faith – strong in their confidence in Him – not a gathering of religious folk who desperately need reassurance. Perhaps seeking personal comfort is not wrong in itself. But it is desperately wrong when it becomes the primary reason for the existence of the local church. When that happens, the local church is no living fellowship at all, but a retreat center where anxious people draw resources that enable them merely to cope with the pains of life. The church then becomes a religious cushion.<sup>4</sup>*

For the maintenance church, right doctrine is something to be taught, but not lived. It views our reformed doctrine defensively, as something simply to preserve and defend rather than to proclaim and promote. The vision for missions and evangelism goes no further than contributing money in the offering plate (and often without thought or prayer as to its destination).

We need to change that vision. Jesus said we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13–16). If



that is who we are, then let's be that. Our vision should be offensive, not defensive. We have the truth of the Almighty Creator God. We have the good news of free sovereign grace – a message this world needs desperately to hear. Our vision must be to advance that truth in order to change lives and conquer sinners for Christ. Our churches need to take responsibility for reaching

labor in foreign missions. **But there are very few who have actually done it.** Churches need to acquire a global vision and send missionaries.

Our churches should consciously consider church planting. Some “conservative” reformed churches are actually growing numerically. Praise the Lord. Now what? The tendency is to build a bigger building, increase

When we are engaged in such meaningful and significant activities, the inevitable human weaknesses within the church body will be more easily overlooked. Instead of fights, anger and bitterness, our focus will be on greater things. Our vision will be concerned with the reputation of Christ and the advancement of His Kingdom.

I suspect that like so many other “movements” in church history, the emergent church movement will eventually submerge into nothing more than an interesting footnote. My fervent prayer is that our Reformed churches, who have received such a blessed inheritance, will not only be “the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Timothy 3:15), but also “a city that is set on a hill **that cannot be hidden**” (Matthew 5:14).

Now that would be truly emergent.

“A submergent church lacks vision. Such a church is completely focused on itself.”

the unreached rather than assuming this responsibility belongs to others.

We can begin to change our vision by raising our children to have hearts for missions and the lost. A couple from our church spent several weeks at an orphanage in Kenya this past summer. When they returned they gave a presentation to our church on a Wednesday evening. I made sure my children were present. Afterward, we picked up a photo and information about one of the boys in the orphanage named Moses. Now, at every supper, my children pray for Moses. They are acquiring a global vision for the spread of God's kingdom.

Our youth programs need to be intentionally service-oriented rather than consumer-oriented. Instead of constantly providing activities and pizza for our children, let's search and find projects for them to help others and serve. There might be an older couple in your neighborhood whose yard is covered with leaves that need to be raked and bagged. There may be an inner city organization that needs volunteers. Let us train our children to think about and care about things beyond themselves, to love their neighbors, and to gain a global vision.

Our churches should consciously consider sending out missionaries. In the URCNA there is a surplus of ministers and candidates. Jesus said the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few (Matthew 9:37), yet He has supplied our small federation with an abundance of laborers. Our church polity recognizes that it is the responsibility of the churches to call those who

the annual budget, and try to maintain. The result is that the pastor and elders become burdened – too often over-burdened – with the inevitable increased needs that arise within the body so that there is no time or energy to engage the community. As a result, we are frenetically active within the “church walls” while we are invisible to the world. Our churches need to recognize when this is happening and look for biblical ways to remedy this. One such remedy is church planting.

#### Notes

4. Miller, C. John. *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) p. 20

*Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen is the pastor of Bethel United Reformed Church in Jenison, MI*

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### Lecturer in Old Testament

The Reformed Theological College, Geelong, Australia, is seeking to appoint a full-time lecturer in Old Testament. The expected starting date is January 2011.

The position is suited to someone who has a postgraduate research degree in Old Testament and is able to teach Hebrew, biblical theology, hermeneutics and Old Testament exegesis. Proven ability in teaching, extensive ministry experience, good communication and inter-personal skills and a strong commitment to Reformed theology are essential.

For further information email [principal@rtc.vic.edu.au](mailto:principal@rtc.vic.edu.au) or write to:

The Principal  
Reformed Theological College  
125 Pigdons Road  
Waurin Ponds VIC 3216  
Australia

**Applications close 30 April 2010**

### **Two Christians in Boynton Beach, Florida, murdered for sharing the Gospel**

Steven Ocean, Tite Sifra, and another young Christian man went onto the streets of Boynton Beach, Florida on 30 January 2010 to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Ocean and Sifra were following the call of God to minister to troubled youth in the same city where the two themselves had experienced prior run-ins with the law.

The three men shared the Gospel with Jeriah Woody for about fifteen minutes, then began to walk away from Woody. Woody then ran after the trio, pulled a gun, and shot Ocean and Sifra dead. The third evangelist fled to safety. Woody was arrested and has confessed to killing the two evangelists.

+ *Christian Anti-Defamation Commission*

### **Protestant Church of the Netherlands retains atheist minister due to similarity in views with liberal theologians in denomination**

A 5 February 2010 Radio Netherlands Worldwide article titled "Dutch Church Retains "Atheist" Preacher" reports that a regional church assembly of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN) in Zierikzee, The Netherlands, has decided to retain atheist preacher Klaas Hendrikse because the atheist minister's views do not differ fundamentally from liberal theologians in the PCN.

The PCN was created in 2004 by a merger of Reformed Churches, the Dutch-Reformed Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

+ *Protestant Church in the Netherlands*

### **Cumberland Presbyterian Church celebrates 200th Anniversary**

A 2 February 2010 article in The Tennessean by Chris Gadd and Lindsay Melvin titled "Cumberland Presbyterian Denomination to Celebrate 200 Years" reports that members of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (CPC) gathered 4 February 2010 at the Montgomery Bell State Park in Burns, Tennessee, and 7 February 2010 at CPC churches to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the founding of the CPC, on 4 February at a site in the park which is now marked by a chapel and a replica of the home of denomination co-founder Samuel McAdow.

McAdow and two other Presbyterian ministers previously suspended for their support of The Great Revival met at McAdow's cabin to form a new denomination with less formal education required for clergy in a region of harsh conditions and limited education.

The CPC today has 50,000 members in 730 churches. CPC General Assembly Stated Clerk Robert Rush describes CPC theology as a mixture of Reformed and Evangelical Christianity.

+ *Cumberland Presbyterian Church,*

### **Church of Scotland Ministers react to Elton John's claim that Jesus Christ was homosexual**

A 19 February 2010 article in the Daily Record by Iain Burchell titled "Chart Star Sir Elton John Sparks Row after Claiming Jesus was Gay" reports on the reactions of two Church of Scotland (COS) ministers to the claim by musician Elton John that Jesus Christ was homosexual.

Former member of the Steering Group for Forward Together, an evangelical group within the COS, the Rev. Ian Watson, said: "There is absolutely no truth whatsoever in what Elton John has said about Jesus being gay. Jesus was a Jew and Jewish law regards homosexual practices as a sin. When Jesus challenged his enemies to prove him guilty of sin, they couldn't do it. Therefore, I have no doubt whatsoever that he was not a gay man."

Chaplain the Rev. Lindsay Biddle of Affirmation Scotland, which seeks the affirmation and dignity of homosexuals within the COS, said: "I think it's wonderful for anybody, including Elton John, to imagine Jesus as being like them. This is very common, and in the Western world we do it all the time, imagining Jesus to be white when, in fact, he was a man of colour."

+ *Church of Scotland*

### **Christian Defense Coalition reminds Washington DC and Haiti of several inconvenient truths about arrested missionaries**

Reformed Presbyterian pastor and Director of the Christian Defense Coalition (CDC) the Rev. Pat Mahoney is working to free the American missionaries jailed in Haiti on kidnapping and human trafficking charges, and has reminded

Washington DC and Haiti of several inconvenient truths about the missionaries and various government responses to the situation.

A CDC 4 February 2010 press release says that "The Obama Administration's silence on this issue has slowed efforts to free these Christian missionaries," and reveals that the missionaries "attempted to comply with local Haitian law, to the best of their ability, as they reached out to these thirty-three children. They were actually arrested as they were returning back to Port-Au-Prince [Haiti] to secure the necessary paper work for their charitable mission."

A CDC 6 February 2010 press release "calls for the Obama Administration to treat the American missionaries jailed in Haiti with the same commitment they are treating the three American hikers jailed in Iran," as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has called for the release of the Americans held in Iran, but has washed her hands of the American missionaries, saying the missionaries fate is "a matter for the Haitian judicial system."

A CDC 8 February 2009 press release reminds:

- The Obama Administration gave attempted underwear bomber Abdulmutallab his Miranda rights hours after he tried to kill hundreds of Americans, yet Obama has not demanded the release of ten American missionaries jailed in Haiti.
- The jailed missionaries' Haitian lawyer, Edwin Coq, was fired because he tried to extort a US\$60,000 bribe to obtain their release.
- The Haitian Prime Minister called them "kidnappers" even before any formal charges were filed.
- Haitian officials publicly stated they "wanted to make an example" out of the missionaries even before they were charged.

+ *Christian News Wire*

### **Push for Islamic courts in Kenya**

Christians in Kenya have been alarmed by the recent push on part of the Islamic community for expanding the scope of Islamic courts through the debated draft constitution, reports Compass Direct News. The Islamic courts have functioned only in Kenya's Coast Province, but the draft constitution proposes its jurisdiction

to expand across the nation and its scope to increase from matters of personal status, marriage, divorce, and inheritance to civil and small claims cases, with the Muslim tribunals being upgraded to High Court status. Christians, who make up eighty percent of the population, have defeated a similar proposal in a referendum in 2005. Christian leaders claim that the proposed draft discriminates against non-Muslims and foresees an attempt to expand the scope of the Islamic courts as part of a long-term effort by Muslims to gain political, economic and judicial power. The raised religious tension in Kenya comes at a time when authorities are on high alert against Muslim extremists with ties to Somalia.

+ WEA Religious Liberty – February 2010

### **Bible study raided and Christians arrested in Morocco**

Compass Direct News reports about eighteen Moroccan Christians who were arrested and about one U.S citizen who was deported after the Moroccan authorities raided a Bible study in a small city in Morocco, southeast of Marrakech. The incident happened on 4th February 2010 at the home of a Christian in Amizmiz city. Among the arrested were five children including two infants. Interrogations of detainees continued for fourteen hours. A statement of the Interior Ministry claimed that the raid took place “following information on the organisation of a secret meeting to initiate people into Christianity, which would shake faith of the Muslims and undermine the religious values of the Kingdom.”

+ WEA Religious Liberty – February 2010

### **Christians expelled from their homes in Laos**

Human Rights Watch for Lao Religious Freedom (HRWLRF) reported that in Katin village of Ta-Oyl district, Saravan Province, Lao about 100 local officials, police and villagers, forced 48 Christians during their Sunday morning service to an open field. Six of the eleven Christian households in the village have been destroyed and belongings from all eleven homes have been confiscated. Since then, officials from the local police at Katin village are keeping the Christians from returning to the village, making all adults and children sleep on the ground in the woods and hardly able to survive with no supplies. All the harsh measures undertaken against Christians in the village are in order

to persuade the believers to renounce their Christian faith.

+ WEA Religious Liberty – February 2010

### **Unregistered Christians continuously targeted in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan**

The latest reports from the Voice of the Martyrs continues to alarm the world about the unjust treatment of authorities towards unregistered Christians and church communities in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

In recent weeks several Christians from the Baptist Council of Churches in Uzbekistan have faced arrests and abuse. The Baptist Council of Churches refuses to register with the state.

On 17th January 2010 a Christian in Kazakhstan has been fined 100 times the minimum monthly wage for hosting a worship service for women and children in her home. She will face criminal charges if does not pay the fine.

+ WEA Religious Liberty – February 2010

### **IPPF Africa Conference pushes abortion and youth sex**

(NEW YORK – C-FAM) Recently in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) hosted the 4th Africa Conference on Sexual Health and Rights. Plenary speakers included a United Nations (UN) Under-Secretary General, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the Executive Director of UNAIDS, the Chief of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Africa Section, and the director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Liaison Office, as well as Dr. Jacqueline Sharpe, IPPF’s President. Major conference themes included promoting sexual education and sexual rights for young people, establishing closer links between “sexual rights” and “reproductive health rights,” transforming traditional cultural and religious norms about human sexuality, and advocating for legal abortion on demand throughout Africa.

+ Terrence McKeegan, J.D.

### **US Congressman Calls upon UN delegates to respect life**

(NEW YORK – C-FAM) In a speech at the United Nations (UN), veteran pro-life United States (US) Congressman Christopher Smith (R-NJ) addressed delegates from over 30 countries and urged them to respect the universal right to life as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, reminding them that the right to life should extend to unborn

children. Congressman Smith, the keynote speaker at a briefing organised by Focus on the Family, urged delegates to resist the push by UN agencies and non-governmental organisations to “legalise, facilitate and expand access to abortion” in their home countries.

+ Samantha Singson

### **Chilean Maternal mortality study undercuts pro-abortion claims**

(NEW YORK – C-FAM) Preliminary findings by a prominent biomedical researcher examining the dramatic decrease in maternal mortality, over the past fifty years in the Latin American nation of Chile, appear to undercut claims by global abortion lobbyists that liberal abortion laws are necessary to reduce maternal mortality rates. According Dr. Elard Koch, an epidemiologist on the faculty of medicine at the University of Chile, Chile’s promotion of “safe pregnancy” measures such as “prenatal detection” and accessibility to professional birth attendants in a hospital setting are primarily responsible for the decrease in maternal mortality. The maternal mortality rate declined from 275 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 1960 to 18.7 deaths in 2000, the largest reduction in any Latin country.

+ Piero A. Tozzi, J.D. and Susan Yoshihara, Ph.D.

### **New UN Human Rights Treaty on aging promoted, questioned**

(NEW YORK – C-FAM) At the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York, a federation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) proposed a new “International Convention on the Rights of Older Persons” and a new special rapporteur for aging. The group included the powerful American lobby, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). The launch of the campaign for a new aging treaty took place at a panel discussion during the 48th Session of the Commission on Social Development, whose theme this year was social integration.

+ Susan Yoshihara, Ph.D. and Emanuele Rizzardi

*Please pray for the Christians in troubled parts of the world who are suffering for Christ. Pray that the Lord would bring to naught the efforts of the enemies of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

# Sing to the Lord – our choices of hymns

We are making good progress on our hymn selections. We are working in stages – we have worked through the current blue Psalter Hymnal, are presently working through the Book of Worship, then the New (grey) Psalter is next in line; and then it's sort of open slather – suggested selections from any number of hymnals and the many submissions we have received from you over the years. The progress is better than that might actually sound because there is a lot of doubling up in the first three-mentioned books. And it is our aim to have all our selections made in good time for consideration by the sessions for our next Synod, planned for 2011.

As I mentioned last month, we recently received a letter from the Palmerston North session regarding our presently intended inclusions and exclusions from the present PH. We have also received some similar feedback from others, but PN's clear questions were helpful and with some adaptation, here is our answer to PN. Hopefully it will help many others understand our approach to this part of our work.

We realise that to some extent, we have hoisted ourselves on our own petard by our procedure! A few months ago we realised that we must not put

before the sessions four months (or so) before the next Synod 300 completely new hymns and expect them to review them within that time to make decisions upon at synod (at least, completely new so far as being in our approved repertoire is concerned; and we say 300 just for the sake of argument at this point). So we decided to release our work in stages, namely, our selections from the blue PH, then from the BoW, then from the new grey PH (NPH), and finally all others. But of course, doing things this way, we have, in a sense, only released what we propose to take away from the PH and not what we propose to replace them with! In retrospect, perhaps we asked for the concerns that have been raised.

Firstly, Palmerston North asked: **Do you intend to lessen the number of hymns in the final version of the book?** Answer: a resounding No! The ministerial members of the committee have for too many years often felt frustration at the limited selection of hymns available to us, especially, for example, for hymns before but even more so after the sermon, when one would like a closing Psalm or hymn that in some way reflects at least some of the thought of the sermon or provides an appropriate response to it. As a committee, we have given ourselves no target, but we envision a selection similar in size to that of the BoW. That would mean many new ones to learn. Yet, even so, many of those would be known by many of us from our private/personal engagement with the hymnody of the broader church and through usage of the Book of Worship.

PN's second question was: **Are there any musical principles or guidelines that you are using in order to make your selection?** Yes. We have in our minds while going about our work the *Statement of Principle* and its statement of Interpretation adopted by the 2005 Synod; also the *Statement of Principle for Music in the Church*, on p. v of the 1976 blue Psalter Hymnal.

As well as these and among the good deal of reading we have done on the subject in general over the years, we have found particularly helpful an article entitled: *Seven Standards for*

*Worthy Hymns* from the book, *Worship in the Melting Pot*, by Peter Masters of Metropolitan Tabernacle (Spurgeon's old church), which someone very kindly passed on to us. More recently, the Rev. Bruce Hoyt prepared a paper to assist the Hastings Session in discussing music in worship. This is a very helpful paper and reflects to a great extent our own approach. (All these may be obtained, if you are interested, from our secretary, Mrs Elike Hoyt; at [www.hymnal.ws/contact](http://www.hymnal.ws/contact).)

Thirdly, PN asked whether **there are any theological principles we are using to guide us; e.g. do you believe that hymns that invoke the name of Christ or the Holy Spirit are ipso facto inappropriate?** The answer to this question generally, viz., re theological principles, will be found in the above-mentioned documents. More specifically, No, we do not believe it is wrong to address our Lord Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit personally. Yet we would want to state that carefully. We understand the biblical principle to be that we are to pray to the Father in the name of the Son through the Holy Spirit. The preponderance of our hymnody, therefore, ought to be addressed to the Father/God generally; to a lesser extent to the Son; and to a considerably lesser extent to the Holy Spirit for his work is to point to Christ; and that we think has probably been how the church catholic has placed the emphasis over the years. No doubt this question arises because we are proposing to omit a number of hymns addressed to the Holy Spirit in the current blue PH. The reason for that is simply that perhaps the two areas that are most difficult to find good hymns are on the subject of prayer and the Holy Spirit. We find the hymns we propose to delete from those sections problematic for various reasons. We wouldn't like to commit ourselves to numbers ahead of time, but we imagine we would end up with a similar number of hymns on prayer and the Holy Spirit as we have in the present book. Already we have chosen some to replace what we propose to remove. (Which answers PN's fourth question: **if you are bypassing some**



**PH selections, is it your intention to replace these with what you consider to be better hymns?)**

**PN also asked: if you are removing some hymns in a particular genre, such as Christmas songs, are you intending to replace them with others in the same genre?** Indeed. For example, there are so many wonderful Christmas songs/hymns/carols, not all so suitable for the Neighbourhood Carol Sing perhaps, but very meaningful for Christians who are taught in the Word, who are used to interpreting Psalms into NT thought as they sing. We hope to present you with better and more than we are proposing to remove.

More generally, it is true that some of the hymns we propose removing have been sung often and may even be favourites. (Everything is somebody's favourite! On the other hand, one man's meat is another man's poison!) Probably every committee member has lost a few favourites too. We are not removing any without what we consider good cause. That a hymn has been used often

doesn't mean it was necessarily good. After all, when you have only 170 approved hymns, what else can you do? There are so many beautiful hymns in the broader church's chest, our difficulty will be knowing what to cut out so as to keep the book to a manageable size. And when it comes to favourites lost, the blue book will be around for a few years yet, so it can still be used. But time moves on and time sifts. Charles Wesley, one of the very best of hymn-writers from every point of view, is believed to have written upwards of 6,000 hymns; not more than a dozen are sung today. We are trying to preserve the best of the past, yet recognise that the gift of writing hymns has not been taken away from the church.

So, with regard to PN's final question, **will you be sourcing more modern material for inclusion in the book?** Yes. We do not believe old is necessarily good and new necessarily bad. Hence, just as we have some more 'contemporary' tunes among the Psalms, so we will with hymns. From what has been presented

to us we will seriously consider including what we deem worthy material, musically, literarily, as well as theologically.

Perhaps we could address one other question that has been raised a few times re the Psalms: why the reliance on the Free Church of Scotland's *Sing Psalms*? Simply because their approach seemed to be the same as our own, according to our mandate – the Psalm completely done, proportionate to its length in Scripture, and as close to Scripture as possible in words and phraseology. It is not that we deliberately restricted ourselves to them as distinct from some other source. But from the books we were aware of, they seemed so often to do the job better than others.

If anyone is interested in our reasons for omitting any particular hymn in the list, we have written that up in a document supplied to all the sessions. Ask your elder if you would like to see that.

**John Rogers**

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## **Feminine focus**

Sally Davey

# **Charlotte Yonge (1823-1901)**

## *The Writer as Teacher*

Given the ways we measure usefulness these days – even in the church – most of us would be hard-pressed to consider the life of someone in Charlotte Yonge's position useful. The daughter of a well-off gentleman, who neither married nor brought up children; who did no housework or gardening, who had no career, nor earned her household income, would hardly rate as someone influential in the world or particularly deserving of respect these days.

She was active in her church, yes. But when we think of people who rate a mention in the affairs of the church, we tend to think of those who preach, or who make decisions about pastoral matters or money. Charlotte Yonge did none of these things. And yet she was an enormously influential person; a Christian whose extraordinary ability to

teach reached well beyond the Sunday school children she loved and instructed for over half a century. Charlotte Yonge was a writer; and while she used her gifts in preparing materials for her classes and articles for a church magazine, *The Monthly Packet*, it was her novels that most successfully conveyed the truths she held dear.

### **Over fifty novels**

*Novels*, you ask? We tend to think of novels as entertainment; and to speak candidly, most of the novels we read today, even those termed "Christian", are entertainment. In Charlotte Yonge's day, as in Jane Austen's, it was no different. There was suspicion that novels and novel-reading were frivolous and even potentially harmful. Those who were committed to teaching something useful

thought very carefully before choosing the genre of fiction to do it. But through the course of a long life, almost exactly contemporaneous with that of Queen Victoria, Charlotte Yonge wrote over 50 novels. It was her intention to teach young women what a life of loving, self-sacrificing Christian character looked like. She also hoped to popularise the peculiar doctrines of the branch of the Church of England she was devoted to. Perhaps it surprised her that the entire English-speaking world, and much of the western European world, adored her stories and made her a best-seller. Prime ministers and bishops of the church wept over the deaths of her heroes, while university students and soldiers at war were fired by a desire to live – and die – like Guy Morville or Felix Underwood.

### **A quiet life**

Charlotte was born on 11 August, 1823, in a Hampshire village. She was the daughter of William Yonge, a retired army officer, and his wife, Fanny. William was the younger son of a well-to-do Devon-



Charlotte Yonge at 21

shire family, and had served in the British army in the Napoleonic Wars. In fact, he had fought at the battle of Waterloo, regarded throughout his lifetime as a great honour. William and Fanny lived all their married life in a large, comfortable home – which was also Charlotte's home until in middle age she moved a few hundred metres away to make room for her brother's growing family. From our point of view it was the quietest life imaginable: apart from annual visits to the family home in Devonshire, occasional trips to London or Oxford, and one brief trip to France, her whole life was contained in the village of Hursley. How could such a circumscribed life's experience provide sufficient material for such a literary output?

### Observed people intently

The same question may be asked of Jane Austen and of her life circumstances, of course – and the answer is that both had deep insight into what they knew so well. Human nature is a great theme; and it may be studied as well (or even better) in small villages as it may be in wider social landscapes. All her life Charlotte was an acute observer of people. She would even run upstairs to her room after a conversation was over, writing down everything all the participants had said.

She became adept at understanding the ways the motivations of people's hearts are revealed in what they say; and as her writing developed, it was her characters' conversation that was its chief charm. In fact, much of the action of her plots, as well as the development of her themes, are carried through conversation.

But there was more to the training of a novelist than listening to conversation. Charlotte was taught at home by her parents, particularly by her father, from whom she learned mathematics, Greek and Latin. Visiting masters taught her Spanish and French so that, ultimately, she became familiar with the languages, literature and history of several cultures.

### High Church all her life

The Yonge family were primarily solid, committed Church of England people; and Charlotte was born into a long line of clergymen, as well as of military men. Their views were of the old, traditional "High Church" line, which meant they took seriously the relationship between the monarchy and the Anglican church in England. They had great respect for the Bible, believing it as the Word of God, and read it faithfully. Their vicar, John Keble, a close family friend, was of the same mind. Keble was no ordinary clergyman: it was he who had preached the sermon which set the High Church movement of the nineteenth century going. He was a friend of John Henry Newman, his younger pupil, and was in touch with all its leaders. Charlotte was 12 years old when Keble became her vicar; and three years later he prepared her for confirmation. Keble was a most thorough teacher, and Charlotte a fervently devoted pupil. She imbibed both doctrine and attitude from her vicar; and later said: "Of this I am sure, that no-one else, save my own father, had so much to do with my whole cast of mind."<sup>1</sup> For thirty years Keble was the family's pastor and friend; and Charlotte ran all her writing past him, accepting his suggestions for refinement.

High Church leaders taught devotion to the Prayer Book and the catechism, and encouraged frequent churchgoing, the building of beautiful church buildings, missionary work (both overseas and in England's cities), and Sunday school teaching. There was also a wrong emphasis on the efficacy of the sacraments in a Christian's life; and the role of the clergy was similarly overplayed, with the result that parishioners looked to the

vicar for everything. These views were unbiblical, and Bishop J.C. Ryle was right to oppose them. Nevertheless, it has to be said that writers of High Church leanings produced some of the best (and most doctrinally driven) hymns, poetry and fiction of the period. Charlotte was steeped in these teachings, and held to them all her life.

However, one would look in vain for explicit teaching of High Church doctrine in Charlotte's novels. High Church believers held that one should be reticent to discuss doctrine. Not only was it bad taste to argue one's views openly, but there was also the risk that precious truth would be exposed to abuse or misuse by those who did not appreciate it. Certainly, a polemical defence of doctrine was not something that a well-bred lady would enter into in her novels.

### Taught Christianity through her characters

The great strength and charm of Charlotte Yonge's fiction is her depiction of family life – family life as lived out in the context of her beloved church. It is through the conversation and the actions of her characters that she taught the Christian faith. And because her novels are driven by the basic pattern for Christian living as found in the Scriptures, they are generally edifying. One has to keep in mind that the sacraments, and the clergy, will be over-represented in the characters' lives, but there is also much that is entirely consistent with Scripture.

One of the best of these (and perhaps my favourite) is *Pillars of the House*, which concerns a family of thirteen children left orphans when the young-



Charlotte M Yonge at 75.



est, who are twins, are three years old. It falls to the two oldest children, Felix and Wilmet, to bring up their younger siblings. Felix, sixteen years old, and already showing great academic promise, had wanted to study for the ministry, but sacrifices these hopes for the sake of his family, and takes up an apprenticeship in the printing business to support them. He and Wilmet eke out a slender living on his 220 pounds a year. It is a wonderful story of self-sacrificial love of family; and contains many delightful incidents that illustrate their author's warm understanding of family life. There are naughty schoolboy problems, concern about the drifting from the faith of one teenager, and careful development of the fond affection between Felix and his invalid sister, Geraldine. Ultimately, Felix dies as a result of trying to save one of his brothers in a drowning accident. And Wilmet anguishes over whether to accept the proposal of the man she loves, hesitant to leave her family. It is the strength of this novel that the older children's heroism never loses its realistic, human face.

#### Runaway best seller

But the great love of the Victorian world was her first novel, *The Heir of Redclyffe*. Written when Charlotte was only thirty, it was a runaway best-seller; reaching its twenty-third edition by the time she was fifty-five. The story of two young men, cousins Guy and Philip Morville, and the family of their sweethearts, Laura and Amy Edmonstone, it is a tale of a passionate nature learning self-restraint in the face of adversity. Guy, the hero, is set in relief against Philip, a self-righteous hypocrite whose own adversity has made him somewhat bitter and twisted. Virtue is represented in this novel as dutiful devotion to parents, family and church. Guy's tendency toward impulsive passion is recognised by him as a sinful propensity, and he works hard to curb himself. Provoked by Philip, who has misrepresented his character to Mr Edmonstone, he rushes out onto the moors. His thoughts turn first to revenge, even murder – then the glow of sunset brings Ephesians 4:26-7 to mind. After a spiritual struggle with himself he becomes horrified at the wickedness he had been contemplating, and “locked his hands more rigidly together, vowing to compel himself, ere he left the spot, to forgive his enemy – forgive him candidly – forgive him so as never again to have to say, ‘I forgive him!’” And he

keeps to this, despite further and even more damaging false witness from Philip. Much later, after marrying Amy, and on their honeymoon in Europe, Guy comes upon Philip, ill of a fever through his own arrogant risk-taking, and nurses him back to health, only to succumb to the disease himself. His deathbed scene is deeply moving, and reduced generations of readers to tears.

It is a strong story of repentance and forgiveness; and one of the most perceptive and instructive parts of the book is the year after Guy's death, when young, widowed Amy struggles to adjust to her bereavement while awaiting the birth of Guy's child. It is a long time before she recovers her physical strength, but through her trial she is rapidly maturing in spiritual wisdom and helpfulness. Her sister Laura, rebuked by Philip for her blindness in idolising him, asks Amy “surely you never thought Guy had faults?” “Yes, Laura”, she replied, “I could not have understood his repentance if I had not thought so...”. And she went on, regarding Philip and his sin “... does not that word ‘forgive’ imply something? I could not have done anything to comfort him that day if I had not believed he had something to be comforted for. It can't be pleasant to him to see you think his repentance vain.”<sup>2</sup> Amy's suffering is very genuinely described; but so is her tender love for her sister and the joy that her little baby daughter, Mary Verena, brings her. She is a mature, but believable twenty-one year old Christian woman.

#### Respect for Christian virtue

With the rejection of the Christian faith appreciation of Christian graces has eroded; and it is a long time since the likes of *The Heir of Redclyffe* has been loved – or even understood. Modern readers simply cannot comprehend how it was that this novel left Dickens and Thackeray far behind in popularity. To love Charlotte Yonge's heroines one must share their values; and few today still do. But should there be a revival of true Christian faith, and a recovery of respect for Christian virtue – even on the part of the B.B.C – *The Heir of Redclyffe* would make a great mini-series.

#### Notes

- 1 Barbara Dennis, *Charlotte Yonge (1823-1901), Novelist of the Oxford Movement: A Literature of Victorian Culture and Society* (The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, 1992), p. 55
- 2 Charlotte Mary Yonge, *The Heir of Redclyffe* (Macmillan, 1853), p. 431

## NELIE BERTHA DE VRIES (nee Graaff)

Aged 93, passed away into glory after a brief battle with cancer, 27 January 2010, in Auckland. Born in Haarlem (The Netherlands), immigrated 1952, loved wife of the late Harmen de Vries. A woman of God, strong and courageous. “The Lord is my light and my salvation. The Lord is the stronghold of my life” – Psalm 27:1. Mum cherished and held firm her vibrant faith in a living and sovereign God and desired to share that with others around her. Her wanting to be used by God to teach and encourage others young and old spurred her on, and the words, discussions, brief comments, deep dialogue we all received or were party to will be missed. Have a read of *Trust & Obey* (DG vdPyl) pp10-11, 515-518. An end of an era but not the end of the legacy of faith in an awesome God and faithful Saviour that they expressed and that you and I must do also.

- Agnes and Gary (Drury)  
 Selma & Louis, and Emma-Rose, Anton (Pukekohe)  
 Krista & Steve, and Noah, Roman, Mace (East Timor)  
 Lloyd (Auckland)
- Gus and Carol (Auckland)  
 Tim and Sonya  
 Suzanne and Phil
- Donald and Joanne (Sutton NSW, near Canberra)  
 Nicole & Peter, and Raphael, Jessica, Elianna (Sydney)  
 Russell & Naomi, and Ewan (Sydney)  
 Elissa (Canberra)
- Roy and Michele (Christchurch)  
 Jessica & Malcolm (Christchurch)  
 Kirsten & Peter (Christchurch)  
 Nadia & Robert, and Izzy (Tuakau)  
 Aaron (Christchurch)

54 Jesmond Rd, RD 2, Drury, AUCKLAND 2578

## Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

# Gleanings from our bulletins...

### Avondale

Peter Moelker visit – For some months now, Session has been corresponding with the Rev. Peter Moelker who has shown a keen interest in coming to New Zealand. On Friday 5 Feb, Peter, his wife Lisa and baby Abigail will arrive in Auckland to meet with us and for us to meet with them. The Moelkers will have a fairly full programme during their stay – Peter will lead the services here for two consecutive Sundays, meet with the Session, congregation and ministers of the presbytery, and observe a number of our activities. Weather permitting, we will arrange a picnic at Cornwallis on Saturday 13 February for those who can attend. It will be an opportunity for all of us to meet the Moelkers informally while showing them some of our beautiful scenery.

Congregational news – On Wednesday evening our sister Nelie de Vries was called home to be with her Lord. We rejoice and give thanks for her life among us. She loved the Lord and she had a profound knowledge of the Scriptures which she shared eagerly; many of us experienced her gracious hospitality. At various times she undertook teaching roles within the church. May God grant comfort to her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. The funeral was conducted yesterday (Saturday) by Rev John Haverland.

This morning is a time of celebration in the life of our congregation as we will witness the reaffirmation of faith by Anthony Makaea, profession of faith by his wife Tina and the baptism of both Tina and their children, Ellejanique and Seibelline. We thank God that in his boundless grace, he has drawn this family to Himself and enabled them to express their faith in Him. We pray that God will bless them and their covenant children as members of His body.

### Bishopdale

Wedding Invitation: Desiring God's will

for their lives and believing that the Lord has brought them together, Nathan Watson and Tammy Braam invite you to share in their joy as they exchange marriage vows before God, on Saturday 13 February at 11.30am at the Reformed Church of Bishopdale.

Points for Praise: Lord willing, we look forward to celebrating the marriage of Marco Bosgra and Anita van Ameyde on 13 February 2010. The service will be held at 1 pm at St John's, Latimer Square. Please remember them in your prayers as they make those last minute wedding preparations and as they look forward to married life together.

Pastoral. We rejoice with Marcel and Alice Vlaanderen on the birth of Marcel Ishmael on 3 February. Mother and son are doing well. Last Sunday morning, Hendrik Nathaniel van Wichem was born to Robert and Laurel.

Biblical Theology Studies. This year Grace Bible College is offering a course of study on Biblical Theology to be taught by Trevor Webb, an elder at Grace Presbyterian Church. Andrew Young (former principal) writes 'Over the past fifteen years this subject more than any other has been used to shape the way students at Grace Theological College view and read their Bibles. Time and time again former students have said that this course gave them the "big picture" view of the Bible, enabling them to see the overall message of the Bible and to see where the individual parts (books, chapters, verses) fit into the whole. This course has been life-changing for many. It could be for you as well.

The van Wichens thank you for the many, many cards, gifts, meals (yes, some brave people have even cooked for our family of 10) and other forms of encouragement we've been inundated with over the past few weeks. We are thankful to belong to such a supportive church family. And we are also very grateful to the Lord for blessing us with a healthy, beautiful baby boy. Hendrik is doing very well! – Robert and Laurel and family

### Buckland's Beach

Pastoral. This morning we are called to receive Mrs Rosemary Wei (Wei Hong) into the life and fellowship of our con-

gregation. Rosemary was introduced to the Lord and our fellowship via our Language Assisted Bible Studies programme. She has been a part of the studies for about 2 years. Last year she expressed her desire to publicly commit her life to Jesus as Lord and become a member of his body, the Church here at Bucklands Beach. She and several others attended a special course (Preparing for Membership), and met with the elders of the church. This morning she professes her faith and receives baptism in the name of the triune God. Her younger daughter, Vivien Li, will also be received into the life of our fellowship through baptism. Praise and thanks be to our saving God. We welcome you into our fellowship and hearts.

### Dovedale

Prayer Meeting. Even though some of our 'regulars' may be rehearsing for weddings the next day, we plan to meet for our bi-monthly prayer meeting this coming Friday, for an hour, here at the church, at 7:30pm. We read some Scripture, sing a hymn or two, and spend time in prayer before the Lord. You do not have to 'lead' in prayer if you attend, but it is a rich blessing just being together for prayer (Matt. 18:20 & 1 Thess. 5:16-18). All most welcome.

### Dunedin

Pastoral Notes. Each Lord's Day your Session issues a call to worship at both the morning and afternoon services. The corporate worship service is the principal means for the church to unite in praise to God and to be fed from his Word. For most, joining in worship twice on a Sunday is not an onerous commitment. Quite the opposite – when we consider the extent of God's love that he has shown to us in Christ, when we consider how little we know of him and his Word – what response of ours could possibly be regarded as adequate? If we attend worship but once a week, or even less regularly, does that say that we have succeeded in giving God his due, that we have had our fill of his Word? Let us have a whole-of-life response to what God has done for us. A glad and thankful response that is evident in our commitment to congregational life, and in the way we conduct our family, personal and working lives.

We rejoice with William and Emma (and grandparents and great-grandparents) at the safe arrival of a son, Conrad Wilson Vaatstra, born on Thursday morning. Praise God for the gift of new life.

Willem and Hayley Steenkamp and family have succumbed to a gastro-intestinal virus. Pray that they will be recovered soon and for Hayley in particular that she may continue to make good progress in her recovery from leukaemia.

Session Notes. With regard to calling, Br P A Schinkelshoek is in contact with Rev Darren Thole of the OPC to obtain audio sermons. Br B E Duthie is in contact with Gerry Macklin, OPC Texas, for an indication of possible ministerial candidates.

### Hamilton

Pastoral and matters for prayer. We give thanks with the den Hartighs that Frank & Rachel are now legally Joseph's guardians and that, as a result, Joseph could be baptised last Sunday. God is good!

This morning we have the privilege of witnessing the baptism of Hayden and Jess's new daughter, Rose Eleonore (Rosie). Pray that the Lord would grant wisdom to them as they seek to raise their children in His ways.

Congratulations to Luurt and Ina Bos who celebrated 50 years of marriage yesterday! May the Lord grant you many more years together.

### Hastings

From Pastor Waldron. We rejoice with the Haakma and van Beek families over the wedding yesterday of Tim and Elke. To marry in the Lord is God's will for His people. Holy matrimony is a rich blessing. The godly union of husband and wife is designed by God to be an ongoing testimony to the world of the relationship between Christ and His bride, the church. But how do you find the right bride? That is the question we consider this morning from Genesis 24.

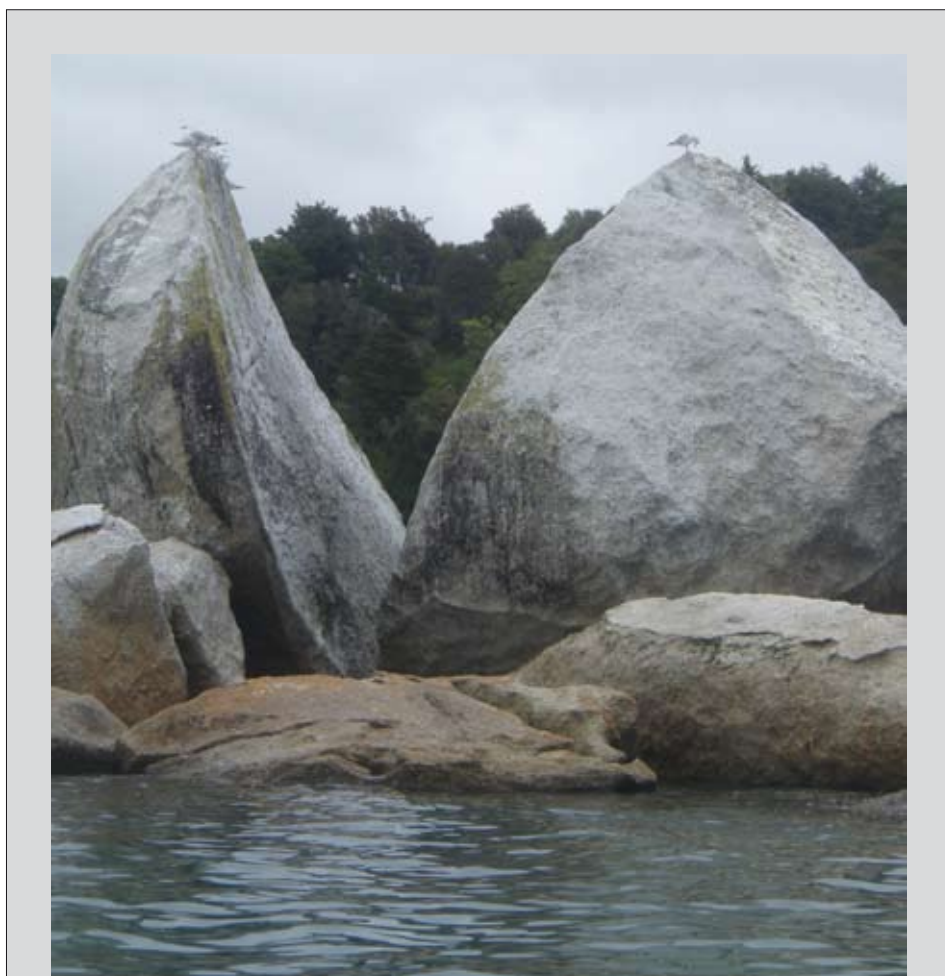
Wedding invitation. The church family are invited to attend the wedding of James Ellery and Adele Ford this Saturday 30th of January at 11:30am here at church. You are welcome to stay also for an afternoon tea after the service.

From Pastor Waldron. Our sister Nellie Braam went to be with the Lord on Wednesday night. Thanks be to God for Nellie's faith and trust in Christ, and for the relief from suffering with which she is now blessed. Please pray for her children, Raymond and Sharon, and

for the wider family as they mourn the loss of a beloved mother, grandmother and sister. We will all miss Nellie. Her departure brings us sorrow, however we do not grieve as those who have no hope, but rather we may be confident that Nellie is alive now in the presence of her Saviour. A graveside ceremony has been planned for 1p.m. Tuesday 2nd February at Western Hills Cemetery, north of Taradale. A church service is then due to commence at 2:30p.m. at 903 Florence Street, followed by refreshments. Sharon and Raymond would like to invite everyone to attend both the graveside ceremony and the church service. There is a map on the noticeboard if you need directions to Western Hills. Car parking close to the graveside is limited. It would therefore be helpful if you could leave the closer parking spots for our older members; who may also wish to consider car-pooling in order to reduce the walking distance for as many as possible.

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. {Revelation 2:10b}

From the Pastor. Our brother Jeen de Vries went to be with the Lord on Wednesday afternoon. Thanks be to God for Jeen's faith and trust in Christ. Please pray for Marijke, Sandra, Esther, Judy, Evan and Jerome and for the wider family as they mourn the loss of a beloved husband, father, grandfather and brother. We will all miss Jeen. His departure from this earth brings us sorrow, however we do not grieve as those who have no hope, but rather we may be confident that Jeen is alive now in the presence of his Saviour. A graveside ceremony has been planned for 1p.m. Monday 15th February at Western Hills Cemetery, north of Taradale. A church service is then due to commence at 2:30p.m. at 903 Florence Street, followed by refreshments. Marijke and the family would like to invite everyone to attend both the graveside ceremony and the church service afterwards. Jeen's



“His wrath is poured out like fire And the rocks are broken up by Him”. Nah 1:6b

*Photo: Laurence Palmer*

body is available for viewing at Beth Shan Funeral Directors, 157 St George's Drive, Napier. If you would like to make an appointment to view, please contact Beth Shan between the hours of 9a.m. and 4p.m. on Saturday and 9a.m. and 12p.m. on Monday.

### Masterton

Pastoral Notes: The Lord is good to His people He gives us His word and Spirit to deliver and guide us. Just as He led Israel out of Egypt the Lord continues today to lead us from bondage to sin into the freedom of living in Christ. May this truth invigorate our souls. This morning we have the privilege of witnessing the profession of faith of Hannah Snoeijer, Sarah Snoek and Robin Stolte. We thank the Lord for His covenant faithfulness shown in confirming His promises made in their baptism.

Caleb Kloeg has asked the elders to delay his public profession of faith. In reflecting on the vows he will take, he asked for more time to consider their implications for his life. Please remember him in prayer that in this way he might continue to seek the Lord's grace and be further confirmed in following the Lord's ways.

Congregational Singing. Starting this evening there will be an opportunity for congregational singing after the evening service. This is for the purpose of becoming more familiar with the Psalms in Sing to the Lord. We will review songs we have already learned from our singing before the service and learn some new ones, particularly those that are not suitable for singing as preparation for worship. It is anticipated that this will take about 20-30 minutes. When school resumes we will sing on Sunday evenings when Youth Club does not meet.

Editorial: Over the coming year, I will be using the editorial to offer some prayers written by Calvin. As I select them I hope you will find them helpful for reflection and preparation for worship. – "Grant, Almighty God, that as we cannot look for temporal or eternal happiness, except through Christ alone, and as you set Him before us as the only true fountain of all blessings, – O grant that we, being content with the favor offered to us through Him, may learn to renounce the whole world, and so strive against all unbelief, that we may not doubt that you will always be our kind and gracious Father, and fully supply whatever is necessary for

our support. May we at the same time live soberly and temperately so that we may not be under the power of earthly things, but with our hearts raised above, aspire after that heavenly bliss to which you invite us, and to which you also guide us by such helps as are earthly, so that being really united to our Head we may at length reach that glory which has been procured for us by His own blood. Amen" (From Devotions & Prayers of John Calvin).

### North Shore

News & Announcements. We have the privilege today of baptising young Joseph Laki den Hartigh, now that all the legalities of the guardianship have been concluded. Frank & Rachel, we all rejoice with you in the children the Lord has given you and may you know the Lord's guidance and blessing as you seek to bring them up for Him. And to Joseph's birth family who may be visiting with us this morning, we give you a special welcome and trust you will enjoy the service and that you may experience the presence of God with us.

Profession of Faith & Baptism. At our pastoral meeting on Thursday night the elders met with David Bilton, who began worshipping with us a bit over two years ago. It was a real pleasure to hear him give testimony to his repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ, along with his acceptance of the Reformed Confessions as his own understanding and confession of faith. We thank the Lord for so working in David's heart and with joy announce that, Lord willing, he will profess his faith and be baptised on a date yet to be arranged (but soon). If anyone has any lawful objection to this, please see your elder.

Wedding banns. Session also received a request from Beccy Rogers and Jake Gulliksen to be married; which request we are delighted to consent to. Failing any lawful objections, that will take place in this Church on Saturday 13th March. May the Lord bless you both in your final planning and give you many years of happy married life, productive for the kingdom of God.

### Palmerston North

From the Pastor. Our condolences to Alan Bryant at the passing of Bev, and also to Dennis and Willi and Stefan and Hester. May the Lord be your strength and comfort and you adjust to this loss and the new circumstances in your life.

Congratulations to Bernie and Vanessa Vaatstra (and to the Flinn's!) at the safe arrival of Oliver Vaatstra this past Tuesday.

### Pukekohe

From the Pastor. Tom and Miriam Norman were married last Thursday and we rejoice with them in that very happy day. A warm welcome to family members and friends who are still here for this occasion.

From the Pastor. Michael and Larissa Haverland were married yesterday. A warm welcome to family members and friends who are here for this occasion.

### Silverstream

Session Notes. EGM Notice: Session invites the congregation to attend a special EGM on Wednesday, January 27, 7.45 pm at the church. There are two items on the agenda. First, Session has agreed in principle to support Rev. & Mrs. Archbald in their plans to assist the OPC mission in Mbale, Uganda, during the pastor's long service leave. The Archbalds are not being officially sent by the church, but the proposal is to give financial assistance to the tune of \$4,500. Rev. Archbald has been asked by the OPC to teach for 4-5 weeks at the Bible College there, beginning in the first week of April. Session seeks congregational concurrence on this. The other item on the agenda is a proposal to ratify the use of the church facilities by the new Silverstream Christian School, along the lines already indicated. As was mentioned when this was voted



Laurence and Elise Palmer cutting the cake at their wedding reception on February 6. Elise is the daughter of Walter and Yvonne Walraven of Upper Hutt. Laurence is the son of Trevor and Elsie Palmer of Perth, Western Australia.

on previously, the final details would be brought back to the congregation once matters such as the new constitution, charitable trust status and lease were ironed out. Further details, including specific motions, will be handed out to the congregation in due time.

**Pastoral Notes.** We rejoice in the birth of Levi John Fransen, to Sr. Rachel and Br. Tim. Levi arrived on Thursday, a healthy 10 lb 3 oz. We give thanks to the Lord, and pray that He may grant a speedy recovery to Rachel, and that Levi may grow in knowledge and grace

in the years ahead, according to His purposes.

We also rejoice in the birth of Ruth Llyan Baumann, to Iwan and Justine. Ruth arrived last Sunday, weighing around 7 lb 2. Both mother and daughter are doing well. The Baumanns must now wait for the birth certificate to be sent, before they can apply for Ruth's passport and then resubmit the visa application. We thank the Lord for Ruth's birth, and pray that the Baumann's plans to move here may now be brought to fruition in the Lord's providence.

**Wedding Banns.** Laurence Palmer and Elise Walraven have signified their desire to be united in marriage in this church on Saturday, 6 February 2010 at 1.30pm. If there are no lawful objections, the ceremony will take place on that date, Lord Willing.

### Wellington

From the Pastor. We rejoice with Daniel & Fiona Reurich in the safe arrival on Thursday of a daughter, Juliette Marjoleine. Both Fiona and Juliette are healthy and doing great! Praise the Lord!



## **CBI NZ NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2010**

At this time of the year, many of us are enjoying our holidays and spending time with family and friends. Yet for those in prison, and their families this is not a time for joy or holidays. Many students have asked if CBI will continue over the December/January period and then are so grateful to hear that we do. During these months of the year, more than any other, it is very difficult for those in prison. They are separated from families and loved ones. The Chaplains are on leave and not available. There are no Bible Studies, no church services and no prison programs running. A time when more than ever they need to be in the Word of God to receive strength, comfort and encouragement. Please continue to uphold the students and their families in your prayers.

In October I met with CBI Instructors

in Hamilton and Auckland. I was very thankful that Andrew (who was a CBI Student) was willing to speak and share with the Instructors of his life before prison, in prison, and after prison and how the Lord used CBI to reach out to him. In November Andrew also spoke to the Instructors in the Wellington region. Lord willing in 2010 he will also share with CBI instructors in other parts of NZ allowing them to hear first hand how the Lord has used their efforts to help those in prison.

In my trip to Auckland/Hamilton I was also able to meet with the Chaplains at Spring Hill, Auckland Prison, Auckland Remand, Auckland Women's prison and Waikeria Prison.

No matter how well things may be organised, you never know what to expect when going to prison. My intention was to show the DVD of Karla Faye Tucker asking the Chaplains to use it in the form of a Bible Study with the prisoners. However in one prison we met other believers who had come to the prison to lead Bible Studies with the prisoners. We had the opportunity to share the work of CBI and these men promptly asked for brochures to give to the prisoners they would meet shortly. One of these men was in the process of establishing another Faith Based Unit in the Auckland area. At two other prisons I was rather overwhelmed at the lengths the Chaplains went to welcome me. Making themselves available to meet (meetings which lasted more than 2 hours) which is

not always possible as most Chaplains only work part-time. They were very interested in the work of CBI and asked many questions.

At yet another prison, expecting to

meet with the Chaplain I was greeted with apologies for 'double booking' and promptly invited to attend the graduation ceremony of prisoners who had completed a series of 15 studies on the Biblical aspects of manhood. Security clearance was sorted – no mean feat! And we went into the bowels of the prison. I felt honoured to attend and was totally blown away when I came to learn that 3 of the 6 graduates were very active CBI Students. Words cannot express my gratitude to the Lord for this incredible blessing.

In November it was a privilege to be asked to attend and speak at the Regional meeting of the Chaplains in Wellington (Chaplains from Arohata Women's Prison, Rimutaka and Mt. Crawford Prison). Here one Chaplain shared with me that a CBI Student, now released, had been to visit her – sharing that she was now attending Bible College.

I was very thankful to once again be able to post Christmas cards to all the active and enrolled students (approx. 350). Thank you to those who helped with this. Many students have responded expressing their gratitude for thinking of them at this time.

Following up from the September Newsletter, I'm happy to share four men at New Plymouth prison enrolled in the studies, one of whom is doing very well.

I had a query from a Chaplain asking for information about CBI and it's impact on the prisoners for a presentation he was giving at his church.

I received the following letter from another Chaplain: "Many thanks for the DVD that arrived a few days ago. I have viewed it and found it hugely impressive. I look forward to sharing

it with the men. We are one of the prisons to be double bunked so clearly our numbers will increase over 2010 and no doubt more men will want to do the CBI studies. Thank you for your excellent ministry."

An Assistant Chaplain, doing the CBI studies shares: "Thank you **all** so **very very** much for your wonderful work. I **know** how much you have encouraged and taught me and I know how **very** much you are doing for (prisoners) here. I have gained so much understanding by being part of this Course and to be able to share this with prisoners ... I pray that more and more prisoners become part of this awesome Course. God bless you all."

In November one student shared that he had asked permission to lead church services over Dec/Jan he had planned these out to include prayer, song, Scripture reading, teaching and sharing from the men. He asked permission to use CBI material for Scripture reading/teaching.

May you all be encouraged to know that in whatever way you support this

ministry your efforts are not in vain. The Lord is at work in the lives of prisoners and using CBI as an instrument to disciple and transform the prisoners, many of whom in turn share what they learn with their families, with Corrections Officers and with fellow prisoners. In several cases CBI students are actively leading Bible Study groups in the prison. The seeds of God's Word are being sown and in the Lord's hands will produce a bountiful crop. What an amazing and powerful God we serve.

The following answer was given by a student answering a question in Lesson 2: "The Bible contains the mind of God, the condition of man, the way of salvation, the judgment of sinners and the happiness of believers. Its teachings are holy, its laws are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are unchangeable. We read it to be wise, believe it to be saved and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct us, food to support us and comfort to cheer us. Jesus Christ is its grand subject."

Another student shares: "For a two day period I stopped praying and reading

the Bible recently. I became noticeably restless, agitated and lacked inner peace and comfort and happiness. Once I got over myself, confessed, and started praying and reading Scriptures again I regained my peace, purpose and comfort. So I realize now how important it is in staying close to God. I learnt my lesson. Praise God!"

"CBI, thank you. Words cannot express how thankful I am for your lessons which have helped me grow in faith, knowledge, understanding and belief in our Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thank you CBI I feel more alive and free than I have ever been in the stages of my life. Praise the Lord. Thank you once again CBI."

"We cannot experience salvation without repenting because repentance is changing the mind, which changes the attitude which changes the actions, plus God demands that sinners repent."

If you would like further information about the CBI ministry you can contact us on [cbi.nz@xtra.co.nz](mailto:cbi.nz@xtra.co.nz) or write to Crossroad Bible Institute, P.O. Box 11005 HASTINGS 4158.

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## Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir

We have been rejoicing in the new FiF ever since it's appearance, but especially want to respond in a positive way to Br. Hoyt's article (Febr 2010) on the infamous OHP or data projector, sneaked into some of our churches with piano, soloists with mikes, guitars and other aids to make our congregational singing, indeed not better, but almost superfluous. (We actually thought the use of an OHP had been banned by Presb. or Synod ?)

All we need now, and the technology is there, to have everything on an enormous wide white screen, giving announcements, scripture, text, creed, confession, profession, youth club BBQ's – do away with the printed bulletin (save cost) and leave the pastor to do the preaching, however, help the members to concentrate by listing his main points on the screen, makes it easier too to guess the time of the Amen.

Furthermore, we provide the minister with a pushbutton which will start the electronic organ at the appropriate time

(no need to depend on a fallible human organist) to play a short (short as possible and to the point) prelude, the request for all to get up, (those who are able), then this to be followed by 2/3/4 dare I say 5/6 stanzas and a very brief postlude – text on the screen of course, followed with the request to sit down again. Does away with the organist as well, his salary to go into the OHP fund.

Seriously, we have no OHP, everybody on arrival (except those who bring their own Bibles and PsHs) is handed a PsH (grey or black) and the weekly bulletin - we all have in our pews sufficient Bibles, the little black/gold books "Forms and Confessions" – should we sing one or two songs from another source (SttL or Youthclub Songs) we will find these in our bulletin or on a separate sheet, called a handout, (which has nothing to do with the offerings).

Another very important matter we have to mention is – for everyone to hear and clearly understand the announcements, to find the Scripture Readings and to follow the preaching, – that everyone

involved in these liturgical tasks, should project their voices sufficiently while addressing the congregation clearly, not their belly, not their notes, book or Bible or even the microphone, foremost address the old person in the back pew, and he/she will rejoice and realize he/she belongs too.

Most obviously, as already mentioned, we should always give the congregation sufficient time to look up the Scripture or Confession passages, yes even the older somewhat shaky members. They too would like to find Hosea and or Jude – that's why we also always announce the correct page of the readings in the Pew-Bible.

We do not need an OHP either for members with poor eyesight – we have large PRINT books available – for slightly deaf hearers we have no need of an OHP either, provided we PROCLAIM what we read or say !

Yours in Christ .

**A&A Snoek**

## Missions in focus

Janice Reid

In May 2009, MIF provided a profile of Tim and Zara Woo, members of Dunedin congregation sent to the mission-field in partnership with SIM New Zealand. The Woos have spent almost two years in Zambia, with their main task that of assisting the Theological College of Central Africa (TCCA) in Ndola, Copperbelt Province. Lord willing, they expect to return to New Zealand next month, to seek the Lord's will for their future.

# Theological College of Central Africa (TCCA)

## Timothy and Zara Woo

TCCA is the only interdenominational theological college in Zambia. It has six fulltime academic staff and about 40 students. Since its inception in 1982 TCCA has been offering a four-year Bachelor of Theology programme and a three-year Diploma of Theology programme. There are majors available in pastoral ministry, education and missions. The programmes of TCCA are accredited by ACTEA (Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa).

Timothy is the Librarian at TCCA. TCCA's library has 16,000 volumes of books and 50 journal titles. It is one of the better-resourced theological libraries in this region outside South Africa.

Before we came to Zambia in 2008, Timothy had worked in libraries in Hong Kong, Singapore and New Zealand for 28 years, but this is the first time that he has worked in a library in the majority ("developing") world. The experience is completely different and there are many lessons and challenges to be learnt and faced. Below are some observations in the context of Zambia:

1. Books and other printed materials are still the main form of media communication. Not many people can

afford to have computers which are very expensive. Even more expensive is an internet connection. A so-called broadband wireless internet connection may cost 10 times more than what one would pay in New Zealand, and it is not very fast.

2. Even so, it is not easy to obtain books in Zambia – especially good Christian materials. Ndola is the third largest cities in Zambia but apart from several small bookstores selling mostly school and college level textbooks, there are no other bookstores where one may get general reading materials. There is also a run-down Christian bookstore selling mostly second hand books.

3. Books are expensive in Zambia. Most books are imported and postage is becoming more and more expensive. Unless people can find a way to source cheap reading materials outside Zambia, books will remain a luxury to most Zambians.

4. There is no national library in Zambia; the public library system is next to nonexistent; most schools, except the private, international, mission and catholic schools, have no library at all. Universities and other tertiary institutions have better libraries but they suffer from neglect and lack of funding and most of them struggle to try to provide a service to the users.

5. What libraries do exist have a hard time updating their resources. Many of them rely on donations from the western world. While these can boost the number of books in the collection, many such donations are not useful, as the books are old and often contain obsolete information.

6. Apart from books, journals are also very important in an academic institution. The case with journals is even more depressing than books. Journals are getting very expensive and many of them cost hundreds of dollars per year per title. Individual researchers may afford to subscribe at most one or two on their own. Most libraries will only afford to subscribe to a few titles and users will miss out on many of them which are essential to their work.

7. Many research resources are now available electronically, but the cost (and limitations of internet access) also puts these out of reach for most libraries here.

8. Partly because of the difficulties of getting good reading materials and partly because of the influence of TV (TV can be found in most homes and they are turned on most of the time during the day), there is no longer a reading culture especially among the younger generation. Even if there are books, they don't read them.



Timothy Woo the librarian at the Theological College of Central Africa.



Zara (left) and Tim (right) with a faculty member at the graduation last December.

In a nutshell, the gap between the “have” and “have not” in accessibility to information continues to increase. However there are encouraging signs that make us feel cautiously optimistic about the future of provision of information in Zambia:

1. Most book and journal publishers have schemes to help the majority world, especially in the fields of physical sciences and health sciences. These are mostly in the form of big discounts and reduced rates in subscriptions.

2. A number of publicly-funded organisations and institutions in the West have helped negotiating consortia deals with electronic resource providers so that those resources can be available to the majority world at a much discounted rate.

3. Many organisations have book donation schemes and containers of books have been donated to various organisations in Zambia. As said earlier, many of those books would be obsolete but they will still be useful in general reading and for children and these will help in reviving the lost reading culture in the younger generation.

To put all these in the context of TCCA, the main challenges for Timothy is to ensure the adequacy of the library’s resources and help TCCA to maintain a high standard of theological education and training that the churches need from their dedicated leaders. This is easier said than done. The number of new theological books and journals being published are increasing at an astronomical rate. It is extremely dif-

ficult for TCCA to maintain an up-to-date collection with the resources that we have. We rely heavily on Langham Literature and a few book publishers and suppliers to send us books at a discount between 35%-60%. Langham Literature sends books to us freight free, but not others.

We are also hoping to get funding to subscribe to some electronic databases through a Zambian consortium and if this happens, staff and students will be able to access the full-text articles of hundreds of theological journals. Also, with the updated library system Timothy is working on, users will be able to access free E-journals and other Christian resources through the library catalogue. We hope to see these developments materialised in the coming 1-2 years.

Beyond the library...

It is also a big challenge to support the graduates of TCCA who are serving in all corners of Zambia, some outside Zambia in other African nations. Also, many pastors in Ndola and around Ndola need support, and indirectly, their church members as well.

There is a lack of good Christian materials available in Zambia. Since the end of November 2009 we have been running a fund raising book sale for TCCA. We got some donations and we used the money to purchase very cheap Bibles, Christian books and Christian cards. We sold them to Christians and they are very enthusiastic about it. Most of the materials were snapped up quickly and the word spread and we even got pastors from Congo coming to

buy things from us. So while TCCA is getting some extra money to supplement the budget, Christians are getting good, solid materials at a reasonable price. No doubt some Christians will still find the books and Bibles expensive, but at least this is a very small start and we hope that people can benefit from what we have done.

So there is a clear need in providing good Christian materials to Christians in Zambia. Without good materials, pastors find it more difficult to preach good sermons to church members – and without sound teaching, church members will not be able to grow spiritually. Over 80% of Zambians profess to be Christians but many of them may not be true disciples of Christ. Not many people could afford to buy books and that’s why in Zambia we need good libraries that can provide Christian materials so that people may read them and their life may be changed. Sadly, such libraries are virtually nonexistent. Please remember Zambian churches and Christians in your prayers!

### Orphanage

Zara did not have a specific role assigned to her before coming to Zambia. That turned out to be very good, allowing her time to find her feet and get settled in the new environment. Meanwhile she explored the opportunities of ministries in the community. She visited several orphanages and before long began regularly going to one where she could help children with cerebral palsy. She helped to engage the children in activities and games that stimulate the coordination of the limbs and the use of the brain. She has also learned some exercise and techniques by observing a visiting Australian physiotherapist.

*Continued in the May issue.*

### **Planning a mission trip? Let us pray for you!**

If you or somebody you know is planning a mission trip – short or long – please let us know. We want to pray for those on mission trips overseas, but we cannot pray if we don’t know that you’re going! Deadline for submission of articles to Faith in Focus is 6 weeks before the month the magazine comes to your church. If you would like our congregations to pray for you on your mission trip, send details to Janice at [reid4radio@gmail.com](mailto:reid4radio@gmail.com).