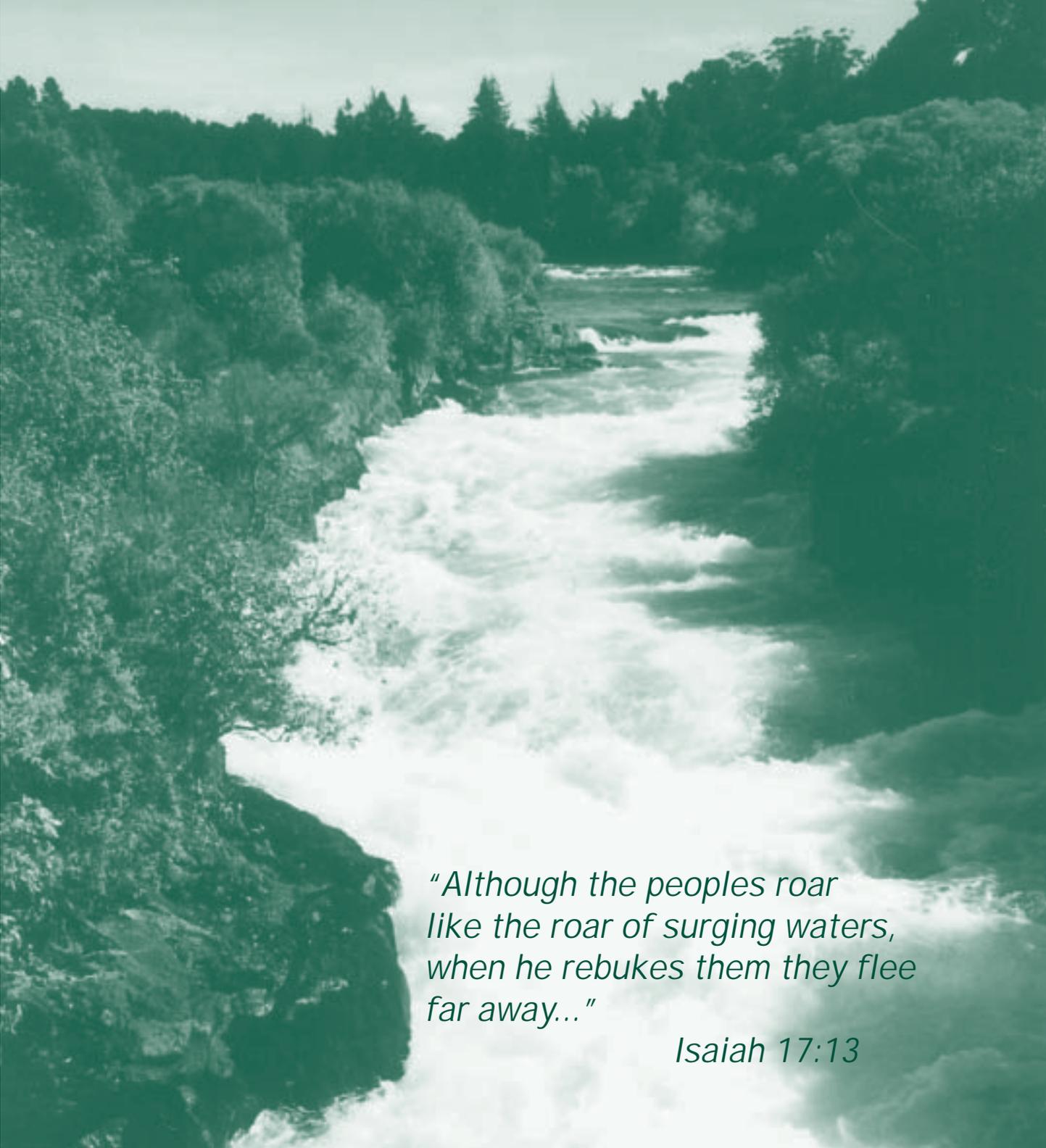


# faith in focus

Magazine of the  
Reformed Churches  
of New Zealand

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*"Although the peoples roar  
like the roar of surging waters,  
when he rebukes them they flee  
far away..."*

*Isaiah 17:13*

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## Editorial

Times have changed. This is not only a cliché, this is a clearly evident fact when we compare the world of 2002 with the world of 1952, or 1902, or any other previous time. And where we see this most of all is in the technological realm, where there are devices for all kinds of things that our grandparents would never have even imagined. But the changes are also evident in our world through our relationships, because, apart from some types of relationships our grandparents would have been terribly shocked about, the relationships within the traditional family unit aren't what they once were, either.

Now, it can be pointed out that things were bound to change because of the way our society has changed. Aside from the technological, though, how many of the personal changes aren't actually those we did have a choice about whether or not to take on? That higher-paid position which meant more hours in the office, both parents working, the amount of pocket money children are given, these are all things about which we made decisions to do. Or did we? I mean, have we really thought them through, or did the short-term gain seem to be what really mattered? I have heard a number of Christians regret the times when they chose the more materially attractive way, because the cost in the long-term was far greater on themselves and their families, especially spiritually.

I believe the most important area to be impacted by the 'short-term' type of mentality, however, is the public worship of the Lord our God. And this is vitally so, for as much as we don't have the right start to our week there, when we have a day and time to especially focus on who the Lord is and what He has done for us, that's how much the rest of our lives will be negatively impacted as well.

There are very few "hell-fire and damnation" sermons nowadays, if any, and, while they may have been somewhat over-done in past eras, that tells us a lot about the kind of way worship has developed. Sin and God's anger appear to have become the exclusive domain of sects and cults.

The sense of entering into the fearful presence of God Himself in worship has become greatly diminished. And so may this issue of Faith in Focus help us to re-focus on this, and the great difference it will and does make to our churches and our lives. As an encouragement along this line, to the first person who writes to me, and informs me he/she does not have a copy of any of the books that Jerry Bridges mentions in his interview with Peter Hastie, I will send a spare copy of A.W. Tozer's, "The Pursuit of God."

*"The heaviest obligation  
lying upon the Christian Church today  
is to purify and elevate her concept of God  
until it is once more worthy of Him...  
In all her prayers and labours,  
this should have first place."*

A.W. Tozer

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

# The fire that burns – clean!

## Considering the conclusion of Hebrews 12

### Sjirk Bajema

When the inspired writer of the letter to the Hebrews wants to impress, in the most serious way, the point of what his twelfth chapter is all about, He says **"God is a consuming fire."** Fire—that state of combustion which has the most devastating effects when the countryside is very dry. Fire—the word we don't like to hear, for when it strikes not only are homes decimated, but lives become devastated—they can even be destroyed!

Fire is a universal symbol of terrifying destruction. Down through history the word "fire" brings us tales of great disaster. The LORD couldn't have used a more vivid imagery.

Yet, it's especially interesting **how** He uses this imagery, for God uses "fire" to picture none other than who **He is Himself!** Moses, in Deuteronomy 4 verse 4, says, *"For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."* And later on Moses describes what this aspect to God's character especially does. As the people of Israel are about to enter into the Promised Land, he declares to God's people, in Deuteronomy 9 verse 3, *"the LORD your God is the one who goes ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them; he will subdue them before you."*

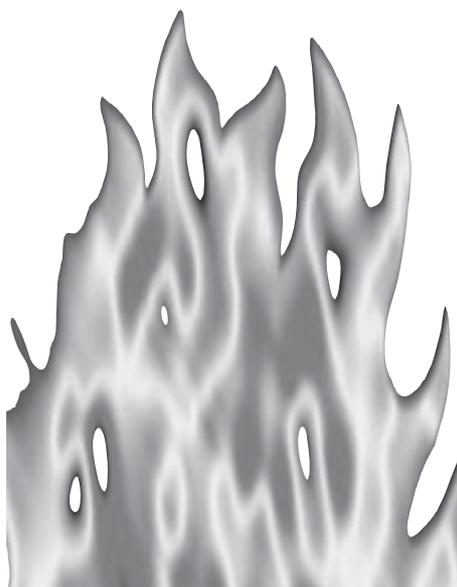
The prophets refer back to this same quality in the LORD. Isaiah chapter 33 verse 14 tells of when, *"The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless."* They who for so long rejected the way of God are now being called to account. And this is how they express their deepest fear: *"Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?"* (v14)

It is the same fear expressed earlier in chapter 12. The LORD God was described as a mountain burning with fire; as darkness, gloom and storm; as a trumpet blast or to a voice like that speaking words, so hard and loud that those listening begged for it to stop, because they just couldn't bear any of it. God's command about His holiness was such that even if an animal touched the mountain where He had His presence then before His people, it had to be stoned. The sight was so frightening that Moses said, *"I am trembling with fear."*

If the Jews reading this letter thought **that**

a sight too awesome to comprehend, however, the author of Hebrews has much more! In verse 22 he says, *"But you have come to **Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.**"* Here is the source of the heat itself! This is where God has His place!

Now, we need to remember that the original readers are those Hebrews brought up under the Old Testament. They were from a background of not being allowed into the foreground in their worship of the LORD. That special meeting could only be through the Holy of Holies, and that through the High Priest. Here, though, they are being told that they are not only able to worship the LORD



direct, through His own Son, Jesus Christ—they are actually in the celestial city of God itself! They are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. So this place is immovable, absolutely firm, eternally stable, always enduring—that certainly can't be anything that mankind has made on this earth!

### Where God has His place!

At the end of this present time, when God judges the world in His perfect righteousness, this kingdom alone will remain. Indeed, nothing else can stand, for this alone is purely the work of His hand!

Those earthly kingdoms were always just that—earthly and sinful and so inadequate. The Psalmist in Psalm 2 makes this very

clear. In verses 10 to 12 he declares, *"Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him."*

But we are those blessed—His people. In the words of an old hymn, *"When through fiery trials your pathway shall lie, My grace all-sufficient shall be your supply; The flame shall not hurt you; I only design Your dross to consume, and your gold to refine. The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose, I will not, I will not desert to his foes, That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake, I'll never, no never, no never forsake!"* (Ps/H 411:1,4,5)

For this Jesus—this One—is God's Son, and this kingdom is His Church, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. And there Christ sits seated upon its throne; He is the Lamb, the Saviour of the world; but now even more than that—He is coming as the Judge of all men.

So knowing that God's great plan for mankind is about to be fulfilled in His Son, what kind of people do we have to be? Or let me put it another way—when Jesus comes, what would you want Him to see? Do you think you would be happy if He found you as you are? When He comes in all the intensity of the white flame of the purest heat, is there any dross on you that would be burned away? As gold which is melted so that any scum on it becomes thrown off, so the Lord will burn off all impurities mixed in with His people.

There is one thing that doesn't receive much coverage from pulpits and magazines and broadcasts of the churches today. That thing is the judgment of believers. It is the judgment of believers which is happening in the text.

For instance, one cannot help but notice that the whole thrust of the verses 14 till 29 is a warning against refusing God. "So," you may say, "isn't that about those who don't believe at all?" But see to whom these words are addressed. It is a letter to Hebrew Christians. It is to those who are part of the Church already.

"So," we could say, "this is a purifying fire." In the same way that God uses our sufferings as believers to further our growing

in holiness, so His fire makes us more like what we are already meant to be. We are, after all, citizens of His Heavenly Kingdom already!

Yet, there's still more. For the nature of the language means that the actions of being thankful to, and worshipping, God, need a definite response on our part. The original Greek doesn't take it for granted, but puts it in a way where **we** have the responsibility to respond. There has to be a fire within us, the fire of God's grace!

### Believers must express His grace!

Notice—His grace. What we have been given isn't our own, but it has to become our own through what we do. That's why chapter 13 follows with a series of concluding exhortations—commands for God's people to follow.

This is also what the apostle Paul says to another congregation, the Corinthians. In his first letter to them, he states, "*For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor.3:11)

Yes, that's true for believer and unbeliever. Then, however, Paul says, "*If any*

*man build on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has build survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.*" (vv12-15)

**That's us!** For not only does God the Son come in His holiness and destroy all those who are not His; Jesus will also fulfil His holy love by burning off all that sin which continues to hang and lay on us!

But why wait until then? How is it that we are not stirred to our very souls now to totally do away with that evil? Why is the gold of faith hidden under the dirty rags of sin, when it should shine its purifying light all around? Then we would be sending the clearest signal about the power of Christ's fire when He comes on the clouds of heaven, because **you** are on fire!

In the same way that the apostle can speak of believers being the aroma of Christ among those being saved and those who are perishing, so we should be the Lord's fire

burning through the tinder of this earth. This fire is the fear of the Lord.

Not the fear of being afraid, because this fear is when you worship and serve God with the reverence and awe in the text.

Now that could never be anything like the consuming fire of God Himself. As Isaiah prophesied, "*The light of Israel will become a fire, their Holy One a flame; in a single day it will burn and consume his thorns and briars.*" (10:17)

Terrifying! There's an anger that's from out of this world! This is the anger expressed as our confessions reflect scripture; the anger from the just judge, the one who cannot stand sin, the One who has to punish the sin of all mankind, and yet the One who pays the price for the sin of His chosen people.

### An illustration

Many years ago a judge in America was called upon to try a prisoner, a man who had been his dear friend in his teenage years. It was a crime for which the penalty was a fine, and a severe fine at that. The judge didn't diminish the fine; there was obviously a clear case against that man, and he fined the prisoner the maximum amount.

**Life becomes chaotic for any child whose parents are diagnosed with HIV/Aids. To become orphaned at a young age is very sad. It's worse in India where your livelihood and chance of further education are in jeopardy. THERE IS A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE.**

# Ch.A.O.S.

## *Christian AIDS Orphans Support*

(Adminstrated jointly by the N.D.C. of the RCNZ and W.D.& R.W. of the CRCA.)

This scheme is associated with the CARE community based AIDS development project in Southern India. Ch.A.O.S. seeks to secure village based care for Aids Orphans or near orphans. The program only costs about 25c/day or just \$90.00 per year. Every year, sponsors receive a fact sheet, with a photograph of the sponsored child. The HIV status of many of these children is not known because they have not been tested. Each sponsored child will be followed up by Christian workers and enabled to complete schooling at least to grade 10. **We'd like to challenge every family in the RCNZ to take on the financial**

**responsibility for just one child. If you do participate, you must also be committed to pray for your child.** Many, many children as yet do not have a sponsor. **PLEASE HELP.** You have an opportunity to lessen a child's chaos, and introduce them to the God who cares. Become a Ch.A.O.S. sponsor today. **Contact Leanne (details above) as soon as you can.**

#### **Administrator:**

Mrs Leanne Kuipers  
37b Lochee Road, Riccarton, Christchurch 4  
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Someone who knew that they used to be friends thought he was being quite harsh, while others admired his impartiality. But **all** were totally surprised when that judge himself straight-away went down and paid every cent of the penalty. He had both shown his respect for the law, and his love to the man who had broken it; he passed the sentence, but he paid it himself.

That is exactly what God has done in His own dear Son. He hasn't remitted the punishment—He didn't excuse it as though no wrong were done at all—but He has borne it. His own Son—no-one less than God Himself—has paid the debt which we owe because of our sin.

The fire on Sinai is a thing of the past, but the blazing fire of God's holy, jealous and righteous love will never be extinguished. You know that before His light all your sins

are exposed, and you know what you have to do about them—even now, and especially now!

But how much don't we rejoice that mercifully, in God's refining flames, our sins are completely consumed! What a difference this puts into our worship to the LORD here now and in all the parts of our lives. For that attitude of thankfulness is the alpha and omega—it's the beginning and the end, and everything else that matters in between.

In the words of Cicero, "*A thankful heart is not only the greatest virtue, it is the parent of all other virtues.*" As Asaph in Psalm 50 verse 23 sang in these words of the LORD, "*He who sacrifices thank offerings honours me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God.*"

It is thankfulness which knows its place. It realises it shouldn't have ever have been

possible for us to stand before God's Face. We feel like the seraphim—those angelic beings who covered their faces and their feet with their wings before the LORD. On our own we are most definitely out of place, but in His grace we not only know that awe, but we have reverence.

We are showing, too, the effect of God's fire as it becomes even clearer in the things that we think and say and do.

In the West Australian bush, it often needs a bush fire to make the wildflowers bloom the best. When everything seems so very dead, the most beautiful colours are produced. Don't be afraid of this fire: though it will totally destroy this world, it is actually making you more purely the plan He has for You to be. That new creation is the beautiful object. Can you begin to see it? You're starting to look **like Jesus!**

## The disappearing God

*Jerry Bridges talks to Peter Hastie about the fear of God*

***The Psalmist complains that we have an all-too-human view of God (Psalm 50:21). To what extent are wrong ideas of God at the root of our spiritual problems?***

I think that our basic problem is that we try to scale God down to our size. And because we think God is like us, we do not reverence Him. As a result, we're not scared to disobey Him. This means that for most people in our society today, God is at best peripheral and at worst irrelevant to their lives.

***Do you mean that God has become peripheral even in the lives of Christians?***

Yes. I think it's true of Christians as well. Many believers think that by going to Church on a Sunday morning they somehow pay their dues to God for the coming week. Once they've got that out of the way, they figure that they can do as they please for the rest of the time.

***What does it mean to put God at the centre of your life as opposed to having Him on the periphery?***

I believe that Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 10:31 is one of the best explanations that you will find of it. There the Apostle Paul says: "Therefore, whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God". If you combine that idea with the very first petition of the Lord's Prayer

"Hallowed be your name" (Matthew 6:9), you arrive at the concept that having God at the centre of your life means that you exist to please God by honoring Him. All your thoughts and deeds have to be directed towards that end. There is no idea here that you can live for yourself.

Christians today need to accept the challenge of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which reminds us that our great aim in life is "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever". Obviously, if the aim of our lives is to think, feel and act in a way that recognizes God's absolute authority over us, then He will be at the centre of our lives. Of course, none of us can attain this position in an absolute sense because no Christian has God at the centre of his life every waking moment. There are times when we're driven by other motives. But living for God's glory should be our constant goal.

***To what extent do you think that a lack of the knowledge of God lies at the root of all our problems in the Christian life? Is it a wrong emphasis to focus on practical issues to the exclusion of theology?***

Yes, I have no doubt that it's absolutely the

wrong emphasis. In fact, many churches in America are not focusing on God at all; instead, they're focusing on people's felt needs: how to feel better about oneself, how to raise your children, how to have a happy marriage, how to manage your finances well. Typical church flyers have a disturbingly familiar ring to them: they all focus on man. The message is: "Come to XYZ church and meet new friends, get acquainted with people in your neighbourhood and satisfy all your social needs". There's usually nothing there whatsoever about God. I've got one at home and God is completely missing from it. It's all about satisfying a person's felt needs.



Jerry Bridges

***What impression does that create?***

Well, first of all, it gives the impression that the Church exists for us and not for God. And then, following on from that, it suggests that we have no obligation to God.

Of course, if we give people the idea that God is only useful to meet our needs, then we shouldn't be surprised if they have no sense of respect or reverence for God. Sadly, I think Paul's statement in Romans 3:18: "There is no fear of God before their eyes"

applies not only to unbelievers today but also, to some degree, to people in the church as well. By the way, I'm not suggesting that people who don't fear God are true believers, but they are in the church. And I'm talking about evangelical churches, not just main-line ones.

***If Christianity is essentially a personal relationship with God, why should believers fear Him? Isn't God safe to be around if you are a Christian?***

It all depends. It might be safe to be around a nuclear reactor in some circumstances; but it can be dangerous in others. I don't think we should ever be afraid of God in the sense of being afraid of something wild and unpredictable like a tornado or of a sadistic

has done for us in Christ. When you put these two ideas together, you have an absolutely sovereign Creator of the universe who punishes those who resist Him, and yet loves us and sends His Son to die in our place. Surely that's good reason to fear or reverence Him.

***You've used the word "awe". Awe is a rather flexible word these days. People talk about a film that's "awesome". Surf-board riders talk about waves in the same way. What exactly do you mean by it?***

First, I'd like to point out that we usually profane the word when we use it today. We've got to get back to its real meaning. To be "in awe" of someone means to venerate, honour and esteem them. I've got a book of

"That was an awesome ice-cream", or something like that. When you think about it, that's a terrible misuse of the word.

***You've said that the word "fear" can mean "reverence", "venerate" or "admire". Does the word also suggest "cringing" or "servility"? Do these ideas play any role at all in the biblical idea of fearing God?***

I think that 'cringing' and 'servility' are foreign concepts to the biblical idea of fearing God. I think that what the Bible means when it talks about fearing God is that we don't take God for granted. You must treat God with absolute respect because He is a God who judges sin.

Let me give you an illustration. I know a Christian worker who divorced his wife so that he could chase another woman. Obviously, he had to resign from his organisation. When confronted with his sin, he said: "I know it's wrong, but God will forgive me!" Clearly, this man has no fear or respect for God. He was not afraid of God's discipline in his life.

The apostle Peter talks about Christians having a "Father who judges each man's work impartially", and as a result, "living our lives as strangers here in reverent fear" (1 Peter 1:17). I liken this to my boyhood days when growing up. My dad was very loving, but he wouldn't take any nonsense or disobedience from me. So I had a very healthy fear of him that kept me in line. But it certainly wasn't a servile fear. We had some great times together. Although I had a very healthy respect for my dad, I never cringed or felt that he was going to hurt me or anything like that.

***You speak of the fear of God as though it's one of the hallmarks of the Christian life. But it's not mentioned by Paul as one of the fruits of the Spirit in the believer's life in Galatians 5. How do you explain that?***

It's really not difficult to explain. For example, in Jeremiah 32:38 – 42, God says: "I will give them singleness of heart ... so that they will always fear Me for their own good... I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from Me". So I'd say that anyone who is a genuine believer, who has been born again by the Spirit of God, has at least the seed of this biblical fear of God within him. Therefore, in that sense, the fear that the Lord places in the believer's heart is very much the fruit of the Spirit. Like all the other clusters there in Galatians 5, fruit has to be cultivated. The same holds true for the fear of God. It has to be cultivated as well.



bully who terrorizes his victims. It's not that kind of fear. God is not irrational or malicious. In fact, the passage which I often use to teach the fear of God is Exodus 14:31. There we read that "when the people saw what God had done to the army of Egypt, they feared the Lord and put their trust in Him". So to fear God is to be in awe of God. It means to know God as the sovereign, all-powerful One.

Perhaps a good working-definition of the fear of God is something like this: to truly fear God means to be in awe of God's being and character as well as in awe of what He

synonyms at home. I looked up the word "awe" to see what sort of synonyms and antonyms it had. Interestingly, what caught my attention was one of its antonyms - "to take for granted". Tragically, I think this phrase describes large sections of the Christian community today. Many Christians now take God for granted. Is it any wonder that we're no longer in awe of Him?

So, to get back to your question – yes, I get irritated when I hear the word "awe" used in profane ways. It makes me righteously annoyed every time I hear people use the word perversely. For instance, people will say:

***So is it possible, like Jesus, to delight in fear the Lord?***

Absolutely. That's precisely what Isaiah says about Jesus in chapter 11, verse 3: "He will delight in the fear of the Lord." There Isaiah is speaking of Jesus' humanity; it's a Messianic passage. And Isaiah tells us that as the Spirit of God came down on Him, so He perfectly feared the Lord. We should do the same if we are followers of Jesus.

***Why is it that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom? Why not the love of God?***

Because I believe that the fear of the Lord is the most fundamental attitude that we can have toward God. In fact, in my own prayer life I have several Bible verses that I pray over frequently. I have them in what I call "priority-order". The most important is marked #1, the second #2, and so forth. The one that comes at the top of the list is Psalm 86 : 11: "Give me an undivided heart that I may fear Your Name." Having a deep reverence for God is absolutely fundamental as I read my Bible. I mean, is it ever possible to over-estimate the importance of God? I think the question answers itself. Our responsibility is to remain continually in awe of God. We must reverence Him for who He is and what He has done for us in Christ. Once you have established your respect or reverence for God, then your next priority is to grasp the love of God. That's number two in my mind.

***When Martin Luther expounds the Ten Commandments in his Small Catechism, he begins each answer by saying: "This commandment means that we must fear and love God by...." Is Luther saying the same thing - that fearing God comes before loving Him?***

Okay... let me put it this way. One in four times where the term "fear the Lord" is used in the Bible, it's connected with our obedience. But it's also true that our obedience is motivated by love for God. As Jesus says "He who has My commands and keeps them, he it is who loves Me"(John 14:21). So I would say that it's almost a redundant expression. Of course, I hesitate to say that. I have difficulties sorting that one out myself. But Deuteronomy 10:12 links fear, love and obedience together. Moses says to the Israelites: "What does the Lord ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, and to serve the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul?" He brings those three terms - to fear God, to love Him and to serve Him all

together in the one passage. And the way the terms are used, it's almost as though they are interchangeable expressions.

***To what extent is our failure to fear God the real problem with our society?***

Well, because we don't fear God we have no respect for who He is. That means that we have no respect for His law. People don't care whether they've offended Him. The average person thinks that God should just forgive sin - and that's assuming that the person believes in sin in the first place. For example, it's quite common for sympathy cards in America to carry the message: "Your loved one has gone to a better place." The assumption is that when you die you go to a better place regardless of how you lived. People think like this because they have no fear of the consequences; they no longer believe in the judgment of God. But if God can cast the wicked into hell, then there's a valid place for fear as we traditionally use the word. If God is real and He hates sin, then it's only common-sense to fear the Lord. But, of course, for the person who trusts in the mercy and righteousness of Christ for his salvation, this fear is not a servile or cringing one.

***Do you think, therefore, that the state of morality and crime in a community is directly related to the people's fear of God?***

Well, absolutely! Do you remember the first time that Abraham uses the term "fear of the Lord"? It was when he lied about his wife, Sarah. Abimelech, the king of Gerar, asked him why he did it. Abraham said: "I said to myself, there's no fear of God in this place, so they will take my wife and kill me!" (Genesis 20:11) It was obvious to Abraham that a fear of the Lord is the most powerful restraint against sin.

Paul expresses the same idea in Romans 3. From verse 10 he sets out the tragic nature of man's problem: no one seeks God; all have turned away; and no-one does good. Then finally, he says: "There is no fear of God before their eyes". Paul's conclusion is that as you work your way up the chain of sin you finally come to the root cause - that people have no fear of God.

Again, this is also linked to today's idea that there's no such thing as a judgment. I'd say that's pretty much an almost universal belief now. People think that the idea of a judgment is simply a religious device to keep us under the control of the church. They hate the thought that they're accountable to God. That's why the sympathy cards say: "Your friend has gone to a better place."

***Is the fear of God a proper motive to which we can appeal in stimulating Christian growth and ministry?***

Oh, absolutely! Again, to me it's primary and fundamental. We must start with a reverence for who God is. This is why I strongly urge people to read through the whole Bible every year. We need to be constantly saturating our minds in God. You can't think about God in the Old Testament without being struck by His awesome sovereignty and holiness. Think, for example, of how He crushes the Assyrian army in Isaiah 37. He strikes 185,000 of them dead in one night without firing a shot. Now that's awesome. The more you read of biblical history the more you think: "Wow, this God plays for keeps". We need to cultivate this mind-set because this is reality. This is how the real world works; God visits His judgment upon His enemies sooner or later.

Christians need to know this deep in their souls. Even though we know that our sins are forgiven through Jesus Christ and that we are perfectly righteous in Him, we must never forget that we cannot fool around with God. He treats sin seriously. A man I once knew said: "I know that having lustful

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thoughts for women is wrong, but God will forgive me." This man hadn't realized what it means to fear God.

### **How does the fear of God relate to ministry?**

I think the fear of God is closely connected with the glory of God. And, to me, all ministry should have as its focal point the glory of God. Now the Gospel is focused on the glory

of God through His saving acts. God's plan for the nations is to bless them with salvation for the glory of His Name. This plan is embodied in God's promise to Abraham: "Through your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed." (Genesis 12:3) Here God speaks of the blessing of salvation that comes to the nations from the Gospel. But the focus on God's glory is found in a passage like Psalm 22:27 which says: "All the ends of the earth will return to the LORD, and all the families of the earth will bow down before Him." The ultimate aim of this salvation is to bring honour to God.

If you look at the Great Commission, you'll see the same thing. Here Jesus says: "All authority is given to Me, so go and disciple the nations". Basically, what He is saying is this: "Therefore, go and bring people under my authority so that they may be blessed with salvation." To evangelize people and disciple them so that they receive salvation is to bring people under the authority of Jesus Christ. In other words, unless a person fears the Lord, how can he possibly lead another to salvation when salvation itself can only be received by placing oneself under the authority of Jesus Christ? That means fearing the Lord, surely.

### **Many Christians struggle with besetting sin. Can a knowledge of the fear of God get them out of the cycle of repetitive habits of sin?**

Well, first of all, I would say that the thing that's going to help a person get out of a cycle of repetitive sin is the knowledge that their sin has been dealt with by Christ on the cross. They need to understand that God no longer counts their sin against them. In fact, in Psalm 130:3,4 the Psalmist says: "If you, Lord, kept a record of sin, then who

could stand? But there is forgiveness with You that You may be feared." It's certainly a terrifying thought to think that God may keep an accurate record of our sins. Because He is holy He could do that. But because He's also gracious He freely forgives us through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. And when I see that God has forgiven my sin through the death and resurrection of Christ, then this puts me in awe of Him. I think it's important not to separate those two components that I started with: The fear of who God is and the awe of what He has done for us in Christ. We cannot separate those two.

If, for example, in the area of besetting sin, we just focused on the first one, then the person tends to see God as his judge and he is reduced to a servile fear. But if he sees that God is not only his judge but also his saviour, then his fear is not really servile; it's a fear that has love intermingled with it. You cannot deal with the power of sin as long as you are faced with just the guilt of it. So when a person comes to me to ask for help with besetting sin, the first thing I try to do is to help them see that God has already dealt with their guilt. This frees them up from it so they no longer see God as their judge. Instead, they see Him as their heavenly Father who is for them. Then they realize that God is there to help and empower them to deal with it.

Only then do I begin talking about the practical steps that they can take such as memorizing Scripture, prayer and setting up a system of personal accountability.

### **Calvin speaks of the dread and wonder which believers experience in God's presence in both Old and New Testaments. Should we experience the same thing? Is this a paradigm for true Christian experience in every age of the church?**

I believe it is. I think it's a paradigm of the Christian life throughout the Scriptures. We see this more vividly in some people than in others. For example, this attitude is very prominent in Moses after God appears to him in Midian. We also see it in Joshua, Gideon, Ezekiel and Isaiah. But we also

recognize it in Peter, Paul and John. So it's definitely a paradigm for the believer. But today, sadly, we don't see this type of spirituality very often. I would say that a Christian who genuinely exhibits the fear of God is in a small minority, even in the church.

### **Isn't it rather extraordinary that only fifteen years ago when the Toronto blessing was popular laughter was identified as the sign of the Spirit's presence? Now you're saying fear? What's going on here?**

My own view is that the Christian community has lost any notion of the fear of God.

### **Is that because we have lost God?**

I think that's certainly true. Christians today are living in a world today where God is intellectually remote. But we are also spiritually remote from God because we are not studying His Word, nor are we spending enough time devoted purely to God. So it shouldn't surprise us that very few Christians seem to have an appreciation for the overwhelming majesty of God.

### **If fear is such an essential part of our spiritual experience, how do we cultivate that 'awe-struck' attitude that Bible says we ought to have?**

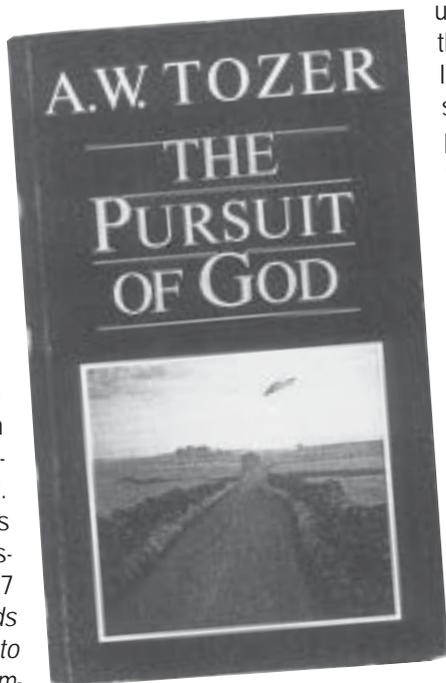
Well, I would suggest three things. First of all, I think we should pray like the Psalmist who asked the Lord: "Give me an undivided heart that I may fear Your Name." (Psalm 86:11) and then claim the promise of Jeremiah 32:40 where God says: "I will inspire them to fear Me." Say to the Lord: "O God, You have put this fear in my heart. Please cause it to grow." Ask the Lord to help you to grow in reverence.

Second, I think that we need to read the Old Testament frequently if we want to grow in the fear of God. Even if we can't participate first-hand in God's great acts of power like the parting of the Red Sea, we can still relive them by sharing in the original story. They took place in time and space. They were real events and we can share in them.

Third, another profitable course would be to read some great books on the nature of God. Here I am thinking of AW Tozer's *The Pursuit of GOD* and *The Idea of the Holy*. Another good book is *The Holiness of God* by RC Sproul. Sproul's great strength is that he has devoted his whole ministry to emphasizing the holiness and awesomeness of God.

### **Have those particular books had a profound effect on your life?**

Yes, although the book that has had the most



impact on my life and which I would love to recommend is one that I can't because it's so difficult to read. I'm referring to *The Existence & Attributes of God* by the Puritan, Stephen Charnock. Unfortunately, no one is reading this sort of stuff today. You really have to be a die-hard fan of the Puritans to digest it. His chapter on the holiness of God, for instance, is a hundred pages. And this book has left a greater impact on me than almost any other. I guess the other book that has helped me to grow in the fear of God is AW Pink's book, *The Sovereignty of God*. These are the sort of books that drive people to their knees.

### **Is it difficult to grow in the fear and love of God?**

It's not easy because it involves struggle and determination. Sadly, many Christians don't seem to be ready for it because they are not interested in hard work. They're just not motivated. Most Christians have a baseline for their Christianity which includes regular attendance at worship services and avoidance of any scandalous sins and being a nice, decent sort of people. All they want is stay above the baseline. However, they're not interested or willing to pay the price to grow. They're more interested in the football and the golf and the how their shares are doing in the market - these kind of things.

Go to your average, after-service fellowship and listen for the topics of conversation: it's the weather, it's sports, it's business, it's how your children are doing; these kinds of things.

One day I decided I would see what would happen if I asked questions about a man's spiritual growth. So I said to him: "What's God been teaching you lately?" And he looked at me with a shocked expression. He said: "No one's asked me that question before!" He simply didn't know how to answer it. So we have this baseline and we're just not interested in going beyond it.

### **What sort of positive effects does the fear of God have on the life of a believer?**

First of all, it will increase the person's reverence for God; it causes the person to realise something of the majesty and transcendence of God. Further, when you couple that with the love of God in Christ for us this will result in a gratefulness to God. When you are reverent and grateful, you'll be asking the question: "OK, Lord, what do You want me to do?"

I think we see this in the Isaiah 6 passage; the vision that Isaiah saw in the Temple. There he sees the holiness of God.

He hears the seraphim crying out: "Holy, Holy, Holy!" He is overcome by the majesty of God. Then he becomes aware of his sinfulness. After that he experiences forgiveness. The angel says to him: "Your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for." Then he hears God say: "Whom shall I send and who will go for Us?" Isaiah doesn't say: "Lord, go where and do what?" He just says: "Here am I, send me!"

I think that's the approach we have to take. I think that today we want to get people into some form of ministry so quickly that we don't take people through the steps of who God is and what He's done for them in Christ. So consequently, when we make the appeal to serve God in any way - whether it's in being a steward of the congregational finances or teaching a Sunday School class or caring for homeless people, most Christians are not up to it because they're lacking this deep-rooted motivation.

Again, we take the cross for granted instead of being absolutely amazed by it. I mean, we sing the hymn: "Amazing

love...and can it be... that Thou my God shouldst die for me..." and we're moved by it emotionally. But it stops there. The thought of the cross doesn't inspire us to lay down our lives in humble service. So I think that pastors, teachers, and other Christian leaders ought to be presenting the high and holy God who has loved us in His Son. And then, as a consequence of that, people will respond.

*(Jerry Bridges is a highly respected author and Bible-teacher, who has written a number of well-known books such as The Pursuit of Holiness, The Practice of Godliness, True Fellowship, Trusting God, Transforming Grace and The Joy of Fearing God. He has a close association with the ministry of The Navigators and lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA. Peter Hastie is the Themes Editor for The Australian Presbyterian magazine, austpres@bigpond.com. This article is reproduced with permission.)*

## A feminine focus

# Joyce Lewes: Faithful unto DEATH

**Sally Davey**

*(This is the first in a series of articles depicting the lives of Christian women who through the centuries have faced suffering and difficulty. Our aim is to learn lessons from their lives; to be taught by their patience, their wisdom, their hope and their faithfulness.)*

In the middle of the sixteenth century, though England was enduring the fiery trials of Catholic Queen Mary's reign, God's Word continued to do its saving work in men and women's hearts. For many of them, this work led to the path of a martyr's death.

In a small village in Warwickshire, not far from present-day Birmingham, there lived a woman named Joyce Lewes. She had come from a socially prominent family, and was in fact closely related to several of England's nobility. Joyce had been brought up in every

comfort and luxury her father's wealth could buy—she loved elegant clothes, and all the entertainments enjoyed by people of her class. She was married first to a man named Sir George Appleby, but sadly he was killed (at the young age of 34) in battle near Edinburgh. Joyce was left with two sons. Some time later (we don't know how much later) she married again, to a well-to-do gentleman named Thomas Lewes, who lived at Mancetter, a little village near Atherstone, in Warwickshire.

We know very few details of Joyce's life, or of her relationship with her second husband. As is so often the case, all we have are the details that led to her particular death. But the details we do have suggest some rather unusual—and important—truths about life as a Christian woman, and ones we can easily apply to our own lives today. Joyce had spent all of her life up to the 1550s as a part of local parish churches. During

King Edward's reign (1547-53) Protestant changes had been made to the worship and teaching of the churches; but under Mary, who came to the throne on 1553, ruthless reversals to Roman Catholicism were increasingly imposed. Depending on the convictions and calibre of local parish clergy, Joyce may have seen obvious changes in the liturgy and teaching in Sunday services—or very few. She appears to have been more preoccupied with fashion and entertainment in her youth than with the more weighty

been doing wrong? She decided to learn more. In her spiritual struggles over this matter, she was greatly helped by a very godly neighbour, Mr Robert Glover, who, we are told, led a devoted Christian life, and suffered a great deal himself for the cause of the gospel. Mr Glover spent a lot of time explaining the Scriptures to Joyce, and helping her understand why the Roman Catholic mass, with its idea of transubstantiation, and the repeating of Christ's sacrifice, was wholly wrong. He also

eventually, in a towering rage, he forced her to go. But when the priest came down the aisle to sprinkle the people with holy water, she couldn't prevent herself turning her back as he came by. This was just the kind of action that was not tolerated in this tense situation, especially when it was done in front of the whole parish, and by the most prominent lady of the neighbourhood. So Joyce was denounced to the bishop of the diocese on the charge of despising holy water.

The Bishop sent a messenger to Mancetter summoning Joyce to appear before him to answer these charges. However, the first person he met when he arrived at the house was George Lewes, and although he was a very decided Roman Catholic, and not at all tolerant of his wife's views on religious questions, his pride was touched when he read the summons. So he told the messenger angrily that he had better take it back, or be made to eat it! Afraid to return with it, the man did not know what to do—but when George Lewes held a dagger to his chest, he did return.

However, Joyce and her husband were finally compelled to come before the bishop. George apologised and was exonerated, but Joyce told the bishop, clearly but respectfully, that she believed she had not offended God or His laws by refusing the holy water. The bishop was very annoyed, but because she was a prominent lady, he gave her another chance, provided her husband paid a hundred pounds as guarantee that he would bring her back again in a month. This he did, and they returned home.



*Joyce's friends encourage her.*

matter of where her soul stood with God. Even at the beginning of Mary's reign, when the Catholic mass was reintroduced, she went along to church each Sunday and partook, as all the others in her parish did.

### **A godly influence**

However, all this changed in 1555, when Joyce heard of the martyrdom of a godly minister, Laurence Saunders, who was burnt at the stake in Coventry, only twelve miles from her home. It seems that at first she was simply moved by curiosity to discover why this man had been put to death for his beliefs. But the interesting thing is that the people she turned to for information were those she knew to be earnest about their faith, and of Protestant convictions. What Joyce learned was that Laurence Saunders had refused to participate in the mass—and this began to nag at her conscience. What if he was right? What if, all her life, she had

pointed out the superstition in many other Roman Catholic teachings and practices, things that Joyce had been led to believe were necessary for salvation. This good neighbour also helped her see the worldliness of her own life, and encouraged her to put aside some of her focus on possessions and lavish entertainment. She really began to be conscious of her sin, and long to put it away. Her love for God and His Word grew.

### **Standing up for her convictions**

Of course, in these troubled times, it counted a great deal what you believed about things like the mass. It could cause you serious trouble, and even lead to your death. Joyce came to the conviction, in the end, that the mass was entirely wrong. Because of this, she stayed away from the services in the parish church. This led to serious friction between her and her husband, and

### **Her persecution**

Joyce prayed earnestly, and went also from time to time to visit Robert Glover, who urged her to do nothing to draw attention to herself, or to win any kind of reputation for herself. This kind Christian even went to George Lewes and begged him not to take his wife back to the bishop—to forfeit the hundred pounds rather than expose her to the danger of being put to death. However, by this time George was so angry and determined that he would not hear of it. It seems any remaining love for his wife had been eaten up by his anger. He took her back to the bishop. She was even more certain in her convictions before the bishop this time than the first, even though this time death was threatened.

To begin with, Joyce was put in a filthy, stinking prison. A maid that was taken to keep her company couldn't stay there—she kept fainting from the smell. Joyce was also

frequently questioned about her beliefs by priests—a persecution that she endured without wavering. Of course, she was condemned to death by fire, and was handed over to the Sheriff to carry out the sentence. But he couldn't bring himself to do it, and so kept putting it off until his term of office had expired. However, the next Sheriff was willing. When the time to die came near, Joyce called for some of her friends, and asked them how she should behave at the end, so that God would be glorified, and His people encouraged and strengthened in their faith. She told them she wasn't afraid to die herself. On the evening before she was due to die, two priests were sent to hear her confession—but she refused their offers, and told them she had already confessed to Christ, and that she did not think the cause for which she was about to die was a sin at all. Instead, she thanked God, with a joyful heart, that He was allowing her to suffer for His Word

### To die is gain

At eight o' clock in the morning the Sheriff came, and in a very rough and abrupt way told her that she had an hour to live. A friend who was standing by said to Joyce, "Mistress Lewes, you have great cause to thank God, who will so speedily take you out of this world, and make you worthy to be a witness of His truth, and bear record unto Christ, that He is the only Saviour." And she told the Sheriff she was glad that God would make her worthy to die. Joyce had to walk a long way from the prison to the stake that had been set up for her in Litchfield. The crowd was very large, but included many who sympathised with her Protestant beliefs. Joyce prayed aloud three times, earnestly asking God to rid England of the sacrifice of the mass, and from Catholicism. Many in the crowd risked their own lives by shouting "Amen!" and by drinking with her from a cup that had been given her. (One of the priests present was writing down names). Foxe, who is the main source on Joyce's life, said that it was truly remarkable how calm she was as they chained her to the stake, and how she was cheerful, patient, and did not even lose the colour in her face. Many who saw her began to have their eyes opened, and to lament the cruelty of the Roman Catholics. God was merciful—she died very quickly when the fire was lit.

### A strength not of our own

What can we learn from this faithful servant of Christ? At first, her story seems so remarkable that it is hard to imagine how

there could be anything in common between her life and ours. How was she able to remain so steadfast in her convictions, even when her husband was so angry and so against her? She was even deliberately handed over to the agent of her death by her own husband! How did she find the clarity of mind to give such answers to the bishop when her own life was on the line? How did she, a polite and well-brought up woman, endure the stinking prison, and the rough unkindness of the Sheriff? How did she manage to stand the shame of walking to the fire prepared for her so publicly, for such a long distance, and through a huge crowd? The answer is that God preserved her. He has promised to keep His own ones safe until the end, no matter what fiery trials they may have to endure. This is how, through the ages, men and women have been able to share Christ's sufferings and not waver. Joyce's life, like many others, shows us that even ordinary women may be given this strength. And for us? We may not be called to suffer torture and death for Christ; but whatever our difficulty (and all Christians will have *some* difficulty) we can be sure that He will be faithful, and keep us faithful to Him.

### Don't shrink back

A second, and most important lesson, is that we should not assume that the sufferings and troubles of the Christian life will turn men and women *away* from the cross. On the contrary, Joyce was first attracted to the gospel by what she learned of the martyr's death of Laurence Saunders. Clearly, she began to ask herself: if this man was prepared to die for his convictions, then surely they must have been very serious and clear convictions? She felt compelled to know more, lest her own beliefs were wrong. So often, I think, we act as if it will "turn people off" to hear or see what troubles a Christian may have to go through for being a Christian. Do we shrink from letting people see that family members laugh at us for believing? Are we embarrassed that our incomes are lower, and our homes more modest than those who give themselves whole-heartedly to the pursuit of wealth, with little thought to family priorities and no thought at all to the service of God? And yet, these "sufferings" are *nothing* in comparison with the price that Laurence Saunders and Joyce Lewes paid. No, it was the patient, Christlike witness of others who were enduring suffering that proved the powerful attractant for Joyce. Remember, too, that her witness at her death led many to question whether the Catholics were right. But we do, of course, need to

take heed to our demeanour in our sufferings, as Joyce did. A self-pitying, discouraged and complaining air will, quite rightly, lead people to wonder whether our Saviour is any real Saviour at all.

### The help of friends

Thirdly, we see clearly that the help of friends was critical in Joyce's life and witness. She came to faith through the help of that kind-hearted neighbour, Robert Glover. He recognised that this woman really wanted to know what had motivated Laurence Saunders. He took a great deal of time to explain carefully why the mass was so wrong, and what else was so distorted about Roman Catholic teaching and practice. It takes a long time to satisfy someone who has grown up with a certain set of teachings, and has taken them for granted for most of her life. And remember, there was risk for Mr Glover. By talking with Joyce, it was possible he was exposing his own (dangerous) position in regard to the mass. He even intervened in a more "risky" way—by pleading with her husband not to take her back to the bishop—the step that would doubtless lead to her death. Then there were the friends who visited Joyce in prison, easing her loneliness, talking with her about the Lord, and encouraging her in the truth of her position. There were friends with her when the Sheriff came to take her off to the fire; and friends with her as she was chained to the stake. Many brave friends even showed their support of her publicly by drinking of the same cup as she died, while their names were written down by a hostile priest. Don't you think these practical gestures of oneness with her would have encouraged Joyce immensely? The way God has made us, we need the help of others in every step of our walk of faith. We need others to show us the Light for our path; we need others to keep us steady on our way, especially when we falter; and we need others to cheer us when our end is near. Of course, our Lord is with us all the way, most nearly and dearly; but He also uses His other children to comfort the suffering one. We can all be His servants in this.

### Just like you?

So after all, who was Joyce Lewes? What she endured makes her seem remarkable—those dangerous times certainly made remarkable demands on those who believed. But in her heart? Joyce Lewes was an ordinary Christian woman, just like you and me. Take heart from this—ordinary Christian women trust an extraordinary God.

# Homes in gardens

## *Part of the series on Senior Living Options*

Not all want to be under the same roof as their children. This month we look at three different families who, after consultation with the older folk and younger folk together, took similar measures in the housing of the elderly parents. It tells of an unmarried son who was happy to live in his own place, of a widowed mother, and of an old couple who had a big, old house in big, rambling grounds, and also had a daughter with a big, young family. They decided to kill two birds with one stone, as it were.

### **Looking for something smaller**

In the first case, Piet and Bep were looking for something smaller. Bep had always been most hospitable, and many a boarder has lived in her home, but as we get older and all of our own children have gone, we no longer want the extra work and this tie, nor should it be expected of the elderly. While they lived in the big, family home, it did seem to be taken for granted that this elderly couple would provide a roof for anyone in need. Purchasing a smaller house appeased Bep's conscience in the matter, and others no longer expected it of her!

They bought a house with two bedrooms (one for visiting family or guests, let it be emphasised) plus study/bedroom in the same suburb where they had always lived,

in a more convenient street. No huge rooms to keep clean and warm, no car left below on the road, no hill to climb, no room for boarders! All they needed for comfortable living, as well as a patch of garden large enough to grow all their vegetable needs. In front of the house was a large section where their unmarried son, who had been living in his own home for years, was able to build a new one for himself. Now his parents can keep an eye on him, and he can keep an eye on them! Spies, eh?

The advantages of this arrangement are obvious. No agent's fees for land for the second house, less rates, security, close contact and yet complete independence. It would be easy enough, too, to install a two-way alarm system from one residence to the other, in case of emergencies. In any case, with push button telephones, it is easy to reach one or other of their children, as long as their phones aren't all engaged by teenagers at the same time! In absences from home, the likelihood of successful burglaries is diminished: burglar alarms in both properties would alert the other to such an event. Piet and Bep live no further from shops than before, no further from church, have buses in the street, can live the same life as before, but have rid themselves of the larger home which housed them and five

children, and are rid of the insecurity of comparative isolation from friends and family. All this has been done while they are still young enough to make all decisions and oversee all details, and young enough to cope easily with the change of residence. The houses are both full-sized, with adjoined garages between. Bep wonders whether, in the case of their son getting married, it would be better to have a dividing fence—but if there were children, there would be no big play area for them except in front of the garages. Still, as we say, "Cross that bridge when you meet it."

### **A unit attached**

A second family built a unit in front of their house for a widowed mother. She looked after herself well in this, and when the family were overseas for a period, the Lord provided a Christian family at just the right time for the right length of time to 'house-sit' in the family home. This family undertook to keep an eye on the mother. She has now reached the stage where after several falls, some in the middle of the night, nursing-home care is needed. She is happy in the one found for her, and her unit is available and is large enough to house students who have come from other parts to study. An advertisement in church bulletins has resulted in three or four flatting together in the good-sized accommodation.

### **The family attached**

This old couple was in a slightly different situation. John and Trudy did not have to move away at all. Their house had grounds enough to build for themselves a good-sized cottage in the front garden. (It has three bedrooms.) Daughter, husband and family moved into the big house. There was still a large playing area, room for swings and slides or games on the lawn. To use a cliché, John and Trudy have grown old together gracefully. They have just celebrated a sixtieth wedding anniversary, and have lived happily and independently in the cottage, but under the watchful eye of their daughter for more than twelve years. As grandparents, they have been able to enjoy seeing their grandchildren grow up close at hand, and the next generation who visit their daughter, now a grandmother herself, see their great-grandparents too. One Christmas, so many



came that the lawn was full of tents!

Trudy has been an active, unashamed Christian who has found many opportunities of service. She became a Christian after marriage, when imprisoned in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp. She prayed for John for many years before he, in remarkable circumstances, committed himself to the Lord. He was over sixty, and Trudy, nine years younger, thought it would be wonderful even to have a year or two together as Christians. The Lord has given them, so far, thirty-two! What is more, John, now in his nineties, is still to be seen out on his bicycle, a bit of a worry for Trudy. They continue together in the joy the Lord gives, and their length of years has been a gift and a blessing—a time to experience together the threefold bond of Christian marriage, God, husband and wife.

### Keeping the family together

So, here are three examples of an arrangement that will attract some, worthy

of consideration. A 'granny flat' is a convenient way of reference, although that term is in this country sometimes applied to portable, somewhat temporary accommodation that can be sold for removal later. The separate granny flat idea has some advantages over a 'one roof' home. Easier to plan, more private, suitable to put with an already existing house, it may be your solution—a solution for those who want to look after themselves and cook their own meals, and yet want the comfort of knowing that help is immediately at hand. Being in the same house or grounds as child and grandchildren is a guard, too, against loneliness when one partner loses the other. One could visualise that in some cases, if found necessary, 'granny' and teenagers could do a swap, and granny come into the more intense care of the 'nearly middle-aged young ones' in the house, while the teenagers would enjoy spreading themselves out in their own haunt! But only as needed,

and not forced. Let the old ones enjoy their cottages as long as possible.

The separate house is more expensive to set up than being under one roof. Weighed against this is the possibility of renting it out later, as in the second case above, or of it being used by the teenagers when they want to try their wings, and Mum and Dad are not too keen to see them fly far from the nest.

The N.I.V. translation of Psalm 68:6 is, "*The Lord sets the lonely in families.*" This has been interpreted in two ways. One interpretation is that those who are the only Christians in their family are lonely, and yet are set in an unbelieving family as a witness. The other interpretation is that though we are all solitary beings (solitary is the A.V. translation), yet God sets us in families for our social benefit and well being. God sets us, individuals though we are, in families to help and care for each other.

These three stories have illustrated yet another way of fulfilling this task.

## World news

### Hakka Presbytery expands in Taiwan

Pentecost Sunday in Miao-li saw the opening worship service of Chia-en Presbyterian Church, a Hakka language congregation. This church start is the first for the recently organized Hakka District of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT). The act brings the total of PCT congregations to 1,216. The significance of its being a Hakka church lies in the resistance of the Hakka to evangelization. Chia-en Presbyterian Church is without a resident minister.

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### Paul Lindstrom

Home Schooling pioneer and reformer, Dr. Paul Lindstrom, passed away May 22, 2002, after suffering from liver cancer. Pastor Paul was 62 years old and is survived by his wife, two sons, two daughters, and 17 grandchildren. Lindstrom had served the Church of Christian Liberty near Chicago for 38 years.

After graduating from the University of Illinois and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Pastor Paul taught in the Chicago public schools, earning a Doctor of Education degree in 1965. Subsequently, Dr. Paul Lindstrom launched Christian Liberty Academy in 1968. This internationally acclaimed Christian day school now has nearly 1,000 on-campus

students. In 1969, he began organising the home schooling movement. For over 33 years Pastor Paul helped start Christian schools around the world, including in Moscow and Tokyo. He served as a spokesman for parental choice and educational freedom at government hearings, presented expert testimony in court cases, and was widely interviewed by all major news networks in print and on radio and TV.

The Christian Liberty Academy School System (CLASS) founded by Pastor Paul has over 35,000 students worldwide. Christian Liberty Press provides high quality Christian books to schools, churches, and families in every continent.

Dr. Ken Talbot, President of Whitefield Seminary, conducted the funeral service.  
+ Church of Christian Liberty, 502 W. Euclid Ave.,  
Arlington Heights, IL, 60004

### 2002 National Geographic Bee

Four of the ten finalists in the National Geographic Bee this year were home schooled, and two of them are reformed evangelical Christians. Furthermore, of the 50 states and 5 territories represented at the National Geographic Bee, 12 were home schooled; and most of these are evangelical Christians. The winner of the National Geographic Bee, Calvin McCarter, is home schooled and uses the Puritans' Home School Curriculum ([www.puritans.net](http://www.puritans.net)). The Puritans' Home School Curriculum has been developed

to be consistent with the doctrines of the original Westminster Standards and Three Forms of Unity.

+ J. Parnell McCarter, *The Puritans' Home School Curriculum* ([www.puritans.net](http://www.puritans.net)), 6408 Wrenwood, Jenison, Michigan 49428 [jparnellm@usxchange.net](mailto:jparnellm@usxchange.net)

### PP and National Abortion Federation caught harboring paedophiles

For the past 9 months Life Dynamics has compiled evidence that American abortion clinics and family planning organisations are knowingly violating state and federal laws that require them to report the sexual abuse of children. The investigation was conducted by a team of investigators and researchers at the Texas-based pro-life organisation led by founder and president, Mark Crutcher.

The problem Life Dynamics uncovered is much more widespread than they had anticipated when the project began. Today, among girls 15 and younger who get pregnant, at least 60 percent are impregnated by adult men. In fact, the data shows that a junior high school girl is now more likely to become pregnant by a grown man than by a boy near her own age. Life Dynamics conducted extensive research into this issue and has assembled a mountain of evidence showing that a primary contributing factor is the cover-up being perpetrated by Planned Parenthood and the National Abortion Federation.

Crutcher says Life Dynamics plans to

educate the public about this widespread illegal concealment of child sexual abuse, while also educating victims about their legal rights. Ultimately, Crutcher says, they intend to see those individuals and organisations that are responsible for this criminal failure to report child sexual abuse hauled into court and held accountable.

+ *Crosswalk News* <http://news.crosswalk.com>

## Kidnapped pastor freed in Colombia

Guerrillas snatched Juan Carlos Villegas on his way back from a baptismal service near Medellin, Colombia, on April 28. A few days later, they sent a demand to Family Christian Church that they hand over US\$25,000, or their assistant pastor would be killed.

On May 9, Family Christian's head pastor gave the rebel National Liberation Army's (ELN) "Commander Alex" a Bible in exchange for the hostage they'd kept for 12 days. "There was no need to pay a peso for my freedom," Villegas told *Compass*.

On Sunday, April 28, a busload of believers left Family Christian Church in Medellin's Bello Antiochia suburb to attend a service at a church member's ranch in Barbosa, a village 24 miles away. Villegas, 26, drove the church's pickup truck in a convoy to the ranch, where he helped baptise 50 people in a

stream. The bus left the ranch at 3:30 p.m. Villegas and 10 church members boarded the truck to leave 30 minutes later. A few yards down the unpaved road, Villegas came upon another vehicle.

Five guerrillas armed with machine guns jumped out of their vehicle and forced the pickup's passengers to get out. They told Villegas and church elder Nelson Gutierrez to get back in the truck. Three guerrillas got in the truck with the two men and told Villegas to drive, leaving the other church members behind.

When the road ended, they continued on foot up a mountain for an hour until the guerrillas, with Villegas and Gutierrez, came upon more people. "That was where they identified themselves as part of the ELN," Villegas said.

They asked Villegas who he and Gutierrez were. "When I told them that I was a pastor, they kept me as a hostage but decided to free my disciple," he said of Gutierrez, a textile factory worker. Gutierrez had brought his Bible from the truck. Before leaving, he gave it to Villegas.

Six guerrillas continued farther up the mountain with Villegas until 8 p.m, when they arrived at a camp with eight more guerrillas. "We want to use you to get ransom," a guerrilla told him. "If we run into the army or paramilitaries, the first one we'll kill is you."

"I was terrified—really praying, doing spiritual warfare, rebuking all spirits of death," Villegas said. But Villegas also said that the guerrillas were interested in what he had to say. He spoke about his faith, and only one refused to listen. "Sometimes when I was reading the Bible to myself, they would ask me to read aloud so that they could all hear," he said. He read to the guerrillas long passages from the Bible, including many from the four Gospels.

+ *Compass Direct*, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0314  
[compassdirect@earthlink.net](mailto:compassdirect@earthlink.net) [www.compassdirect.org](http://www.compassdirect.org)

## Uzbekistan Christians go underground

A decade after the Soviet empire collapsed, Christian communities in some former Soviet republics are still at risk of eradication by their governments. *Keston News Service* reports Uzbekistan Christians meet underground to avoid government apprehension.

Elsewhere, there are reports of harsh treatment of Christians throughout the former Soviet Union, including detention and torture of pastors. *KNS* said that about 50 members of a Protestant congregation in the town of Muinak, situated in Uzbekistan's autonomous republic of Karakalpakstan, are harassed by the local authorities. They are forced to hold meetings secretly in the nearby desert as their pastor, Salavat Seregabaev, is under surveillance. The police and national security

service records visitors to his home.

The town's mayor, Jarylkan Tursunbekov, warned Mr. Seregabaev two months ago in a letter that an unregistered Christian congregation was not permitted. "We will not allow any Christian agitation in Muinak," he told *KNS*. The news agency quoted Mayor Tursunbekov as saying that in view of the difficult social conditions in Muinak, Christian activity is not acceptable.

Muinak is seen as one of the poorest regions in Central Asia and a symbol of one of the 20th century's greatest ecological disasters. Thirty years ago it was a major port on the Aral Sea, but as a result of lower water levels, it now is over 60 miles from the shore. Most of the town was involved in the fishing industry and is now unemployed, due to the drying up of the sea.

*KNS* said that persecution also continues in neighboring Kazakhstan, where police tied a local Protestant to a chair and threatened to cut out his tongue unless he denied Christ. He was sent for forced treatment in a psychiatric hospital and was released only after international protests.

+ *Keston Institute*, 38 St Aldates, Oxford, OX1 1BN, UK; [keston.institute@keston.org](mailto:keston.institute@keston.org)

## Christ edges out Sophia in Presbyterian Church (USA)

A six-page paper on the lordship of Christ and the salvific work of a sovereign God was unanimously approved by the Assembly Committee on Confessions and Christology (ACCC) on June 17. The committee scuttled attempts to have it adopt more succinct Christological statements for study in the church and to issue an "authoritative interpretation" of the denomination's first ordination vow.

Jane Adams Spahr, widely regarded as the One Voice of Sophia in the Presbyterian Church (USA), told a breakfast audience on June 18 about the many times she has encountered Sophia and heard her many voices. "Meeting Sophia is like hearing the 'swish' sound of the basketball through the net," she said. "No 'still small voice.' The sound is big, yet soft like the 'swish.'"

Spahr said that, when she "first met Sophia," she "felt known, like knowing God in a deeper way; and in that knowing, I felt free, alive, ready to be me in a whole new way."

Spahr stated, "I am stunned by a Presbyterian church so wrapped up now in the lordship of Jesus Christ that we forget how many ways, traditions and cultures God comes to us," she told her audience of more than 600. "But Sophia shows up, crying out to a church that is rule-led rather than Spirit-fed. It is Sophia's voice we hear crying, 'I am the wisdom of God who created you. You cannot confine me. I am the breath of the power of God.'"

+ *Presbyterian News*, 100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202-1E1396

## TEACHER VACANCY

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

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

## Bible League attacked in India

One of the Bible League's key ministry partners in India is in hiding, fearing violent treatment from authorities and Hindu extremists. Two other Christians associated with the Bible League have already been jailed. The official has been accused of raping and kidnapping the niece of an influential Hindu man—a patently false charge. Additionally, the man and his colleagues are being falsely accused of forcing conversions, bribing new converts, and speaking against the Hindu gods.

Bible League staff in Western India have been training more than 200 Indian Christians to establish new churches in that region's previously unreached villages. According to the All India Christian Council (AICC), there is an attack against Christian workers or churches every 36 hours somewhere in India.

+ *The Bible League, PO Box 28000, Chicago, IL 60628-20*

## Eastern Lightning lets go

China Gospel Fellowship leaders have been freed after their kidnapping ordeal. The 34 senior leaders of the mainstream Chinese house church movement were abducted on April 16 by false brethren who turned out to be operatives of the Satanic cult, Eastern Lightning.

China Gospel Fellowship members and

other onlookers feared for the lives of those kidnapped, because the cult is focused on subverting the church of Christ and employs bribery, sex, intimidation, blackmail, poison, beatings, torture, and murder to gain converts and to maintain its grip on them.

However, "Good news!" says a statement dated June 19, on the CGF website, at [www.chinaforjesus.com](http://www.chinaforjesus.com): "Concerning the kidnap of 34 China Gospel Fellowship coworkers by the Eastern Lightning Cult on April 16, we want to express our thankfulness to God here, that with His sustaining, with many overseas brothers and sisters' fervent prayers and intercessions in tears before God, and also with the [intervention] of the police, all of the kidnaped coworkers have been gradually released. However, a few of them are not doing well physically because of the drugs given to them. Please pray for them."

"All returned co-workers know deeply that they have been through a spiritual battle. Although they were tempted, enticed and threatened in every way, they have been able to hold fast to their faith in the Lord, to overcome the temptations and enticements by faith, and to refuse the heresies of 'the female Christ.' Consequently, the EL conspiracy to undermine and destroy the church has ended in utter failure.

Paul Hattaway, of Asia Harvest, commented, "Judging from past experiences of June 26, 2002 Christians who have fallen

into the hands of the Eastern Lightning cult, the fact that all 34 leaders are safe is nothing short of a great miracle."

In an unusual turn for house church-state relations in China, the CGF appealed to Chinese government authorities (as well as to God) to rescue the kidnap victims. Evidently the police were effective: In mid-May, CGF said they feared more publicity would place those leaders "still kidnapped" at greater risk, and in the end they said the leaders had been released "gradually."

+ *China Gospel Fellowship, www.chinaforjesus.com; Asia Harvest, www.asiaharvest.org/newsalerts.htm; Christian Solidarity Worldwide, www.csw.org.uk/latestnews.asp?item*

## Oregon develops duty to die

In the five years since Oregon approved a plan for physician-assisted suicide, public opinion has shifted radically. At the time of legalisation, only 12 percent of those selecting the option suggested fear of burdening loved ones as the motivation. Today the figure stands at 63 percent. According to Burke Balch, director of medical ethics for the National Right to Life Committee, "What we're seeing is that over time this right of assisted suicide, which was sold as a matter of personal choice, becomes more and more a matter of vulnerable people thinking they have a duty to die and get out of the way."

+ *National Right to Life Committee, 512 10th St. NW Washington, DC 20004 (202) 626-8800*

# Media bias in stem cell debate

**Bill Muehlenberg**

The 60 Minutes debate on stem cell research (Sunday March 17 on Australian television) was a perfect example of how to conduct a debate—perfect, that is, if you want to push an agenda, instead of the truth. The debate revealed much more about how biased media outlets skew a debate than it did the intricacies of the debate about stem cells.

The "debate" centered around whether stem cells should be obtained from embryos (in which process the embryo is destroyed) in order to possibly produce cures for various diseases such as Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's disease. That was at the core of the way the 15 minute segment was presented: do we want to find cures for these tragic diseases, or do we not? If we do, then surely we should all favour embryonic stem cell research. But this is a false dilemma. The issue is not: do you want to cure disease? The issue is: what source of stem cells shall we use? That is, there is a third option, namely adult stem cells. They seem to be able to perform all the functions of embryonic stem cells, but with these three major advantages:

1) They do not require the destruction of an embryo;



- 2) They avoid the problem of immunological rejection; and
- 3) They already have a proven track record in treating patients, whereas embryonic stem cells do not.

But not once during the entire discussion was this option mentioned. Surely it would have been mentioned to the reporters, but it must have been left on the cutting room floor. Thus a genuine debate (embryonic stem cells versus adult stem cells) was displaced by a non-debate: should we cure diseases?

Again, no one is arguing that we should not seek to cure diseases. It is simply inaccurate and unnecessary to argue for some kind of a trade-off: cure disease or save embryos. All agree that diseases may well be treated by stem cells, but the question is: what source of stem cells should be used?

### Deliberate omission

This deliberate omission was also seen in the show's email vote-line, which took place before the show was aired. The question featured on its web site was as follows: "Should stem cell research be banned?" After a few people contacted the site and complained about the misleading nature of the question, it was changed to a more objective: "Should embryonic stem cell research be banned?" (But of course, even this question is deceptive, if background information about the benefits of adult stem cells is not supplied.)

Thus the 60 Minutes debate was disingenuous at best, and downright deceptive at worst, in its presentation of the debate. But wait, there's more. The whole episode was a perfect example of how portions of the media manipulate images, twist facts, and distort information to achieve their own ends.

The way in which the debate was advertised beforehand is a case in point. The gist of the ads was that the debate was a clash between Superman and the Catholic Church. That is, wheelchair-bound actor Christopher Reeve (who played Superman) was to debate Catholic bio-ethicist Dr Nick Tonti-Filippini.

Mr Reeve, of course, is now a quadriplegic, ever since a fall from a horse seven years ago. He has become a keen advocate of embryonic stem cell research. (Indeed, actors and celebrities, over and above scientists and other experts, tend to feature in these debates, with undue impact on public policy. Michael J. Fox, actor, and a Parkinson's disease sufferer, is another example.)

To help swing a debate, another key tactic is to appeal to emotion. Further, if you can pitch the "good guy" in a caring and compassionate light, with plenty of emotional appeals, while portraying the "bad guy" as a cold, rationalistic character, you can easily win over many in the debate.

That was clearly a ploy in this debate. Wheelchair-bound Reeves is of course to be pitied, and we all would like to see him set free. But Dr Tonti-Filippini was portrayed as the ogre, who seemed indifferent to his plight, and concerned instead about arguing abstract philosophical and ethical points.

### A related trick

Indeed, this leads to another trick of the media: playing the sectarian card. The whole debate was pitched as an uncaring Catholic church, with its outdated and obtuse moral platitudes, versus genuine human need. For example, not once, but twice, Dr Tonti-Filippini was shown walking into, and kneeling in, a Catholic church.

Thus the debate was presented as the old reactionary Catholic

church versus the rest of the community. But a related trick was used: make the debate appear to be one between archaic religion and progressive science. Thus you had Catholic ethicists not only pitted against suffering celebrities, but you had them pined against scientists like embryonic stem-cell advocate Dr Alan Trounson of the Monash Institute of Reproduction and Development.

Now while Dr Tonti-Filippini is just as capable a debater on the scientific and academic levels as Dr Trounson, 60 Minutes portrayed him as a religious fundamentalist standing in the way of science and enlightenment. Or, as Mr Reeves kept saying, he is part of the "lunatic fringe". (In this, Mr Reeves resorted to name-calling instead of rational argument, just as the other week Melbourne IVF specialist Dr John McBain resorted to calling his opponents the "local Taliban" and "Catholic conservatives".)

The bias of the program could be seen in other ways. For example, a week later, in its mailbag section, 60 Minutes had a chance to redeem itself. A number of people sent in letters, pointing out the above information.

Yet when the feedback section aired, it featured three letters: all supporting embryonic stem cell research! Thus, the blackout of information continued.

Suffice it to say, then, that proper debates are often few and far between in the media. Obviously, 60 Minutes is not the only program guilty of such unbalanced and prejudiced reporting. But it demonstrates that on complex moral and social issues, much of the media already has its mind made up on where it stands, and such a bias can readily be discerned in its programming.

*Bill Muehlenberg is the National Vice President of the Australian Family Association. He is currently finishing his PhD at Deakin University. This article is taken from 'Life News', a publication of Life Ministries, Western Australia, (ph. 0061-8 9344 7396)*

## Conference on Reformational Theology

A small and enthusiastic group have arranged for Dr. Joseph Pipa to come to New Zealand to be the main speaker at a Reformational Conference in October of this year. We, the undersigned, want to commend this conference to you and urge you to attend. We do so because of the importance of the subject being addressed - that is, the key principles and slogans of the Reformation - and because of the calibre and experience of the main speaker.

Both of us have come to know and appreciate Dr. Pipa from our time at Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California, where we pursued the Doctor of Ministry programme (D.Min.). John Haverland began that programme in 1994 and Murray Capill in 1998. Dr. Pipa was the director of that programme, having taken it over from Dr. Jay Adams, its founder. The Westminster D.Min. programme was devoted to preaching and aimed to encourage better preachers and promote good preaching. Dr. Pipa is passionately committed to this task.

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A graduate of the Reformed Theological Seminary he has served as the pastor of two congregations, one in Mississippi (1970-1977) and the other in Texas (1979-1990). Between these two ministries he was a writer for the Great Commission Publications for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. He completed his doctoral studies through Westminster Theological Seminary in 1985 with a thesis on William Perkins and the development of Puritan preaching. In 1990 he began teaching at Westminster Theological Seminary at the Master's level as well as directing the D.Min. programme. In addition to these duties at Westminster he was the co-pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Escondido, a congregation that began as a church planting work under his leadership. One can see from all this that he is both well qualified and energetic in the work of the gospel.

Dr. Pipa's lectures and sermons are well structured, carefully organised and display the fruit of much preparation and background knowledge. As part of the D.Min. programme we sat under his lecture series on "A Theology Of Preaching". These lectures, which provided a strong theological basis for biblical preaching, greatly strengthened us in our convictions regarding preaching, and helped us to understand more clearly the unique place of preaching in the purposes of God. Dr Pipa stressed not only the need for faithful exposition, but also effective application and total dependence on the Holy Spirit. Both of us also had the benefit of having him supervise our respective theses.

Dr. Pipa is a man of piety and prayer, providing a lovely example of godly living for the members of his congregation and his students and encouraging believers in earnest prayer for the church.

One should not think, however, that he is a reclusive scholar who is most at home in a library full of old books. Not at all! He keeps fit and well with a run each day and plays a mean game of table tennis. We both have memories of vigorous games of table tennis in the student cafeteria during lecture breaks!

Dr. Pipa is married to Cissy, a gracious and hospitable lady, who will accompany him on the conference tour of New Zealand, D.V. They now live in South Carolina where Dr. Pipa is the President of Greenville Theological Seminary.

We are looking forward to meeting Dr. and Mrs Pipa once again and as churches we are privileged to have them coming to New Zealand. Be sure you attend these conferences in Auckland, Wellington or Christchurch - they will be stimulating and spiritually profitable.

**Murray Capill and John Haverland**

## New Zealand Conference on Reformation Theology

# Faith for *all* Times

*An important event to be held in three centres*

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Exploring the Riches of the "Solus" of the Reformation.

This is the inaugural conference on Reformation Theology. Our aim is to present the important truths of Scripture, which were rediscovered at the time of the Reformation and which are in danger again of being neglected in our own day. We will explain why it is so important, for the salvation of the lost, that we understand that we can only be saved by **Christ alone**, through **faith alone** by **grace alone**. We will also study the importance of sourcing all our knowledge of God's will in **Scripture alone**. Each lecture will demonstrate that these reformational truths must be understood and taught by the Church today.

### SPEAKERS



#### Dr. JOSEPH PIPA

Dr. Pipa is President of Greenville Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. He has served as Professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary. An accomplished and frequent Conference speaker, Dr Pipa is also the author of several books including *The Lord's Day*, *William Perkins and the Development of Puritan Preaching*, *The Root and the Branch*. Joey is married to Cissy and they have two children.

Dr. MICHAEL FLINN  
Rev. JOHN ROGERS

Dr. JOHN HAVERLAND  
Dr. PAUL ARCHBALD

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**\$5.00 DISCOUNT IF YOU REGISTER BEFORE 10 SEPTEMBER**  
*Morning and afternoon Tea/Coffee provided, but meals not catered for.*

### Venues and Times

**CHRISTCHURCH** – Reformed Church of Bishopdale, 90 Highsted Rd, Christchurch. Pastors' and Church Leaders' seminar begins at 1.00pm and the full conference 3.30pm on Friday the 18th October 2002.

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

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

**New Zealand Conference on Reformation Theology**  
P.O. Box 31334, Lower Hutt  
Phone (06) 344-4291  
Fax (06) 344-4291  
Email: gmlne@xtra.co.nz  
[www.reformedconference.org.nz](http://www.reformedconference.org.nz)

**Local contacts.**  
Auckland Ph. D. Hoek  
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## Our churches in focus

### REFORMED CHURCH OF DOVEDALE

## OUR FIRST CHURCH CAMP

The **Oxford Dictionary** gives a definition for **church** as a *body of Christians* and for a **camp** as *place where troops are trained*. So what better time or place is there to spend a handful of hours further equipping ourselves spiritually for one of the great tasks that our God has set before us upholding the truth and opposing error?

There are three important elements to a church camp:

- The teaching material and speaker, in this case via a video tape series.
- The people attending—and their motivation for being there.
- The location.

For this particular camp I'm biased, as for twelve years, I lived only a few kilometres from Glenroy Lodge. Elder Richard Vannoort's district, with Andy van Ameyde as chief orchestrator, went to great lengths to put together a well organised and spiritually enriching camp for those of the congregation who could attend.

The title of the video series, which is based on the book, *"How Now Shall We Live?"* was authored by the Americans, Chuck Colson and Nancy Pearcey. The series is designed to better equip Christians to understand the great issues being debated in the world today.

We started by learning what the term "worldview" meant; both the Christian worldview and the way in which the world understands. Your beliefs form your worldview, with which you can answer fundamental questions that have been asked since the beginning of time. Three questions that make up every worldview are:

1. Where do we come from?
2. What has gone wrong?
3. How can it be fixed?

*Christians* are the only ones who comprehend a sensible and reasonable worldview, who offer the truth and therefore the hope that evades so many of our society today. This is through having the answer to the above three questions. Creation provides the answer to the first, the Fall the second and Redemption the third.



Understanding our own Christian worldview gives us the tools and therefore the skills to:

- counter false claims your child may learn in the classroom
- bring your faith into the workplace
- critique what you hear in the media
- understand what's wrong with popular culture
- evangelise your neighbours over the back fence
- argue for Christian principles in the political arena.

Time only permitted us to watch a portion of the series, but has left us eager to view the remainder. Approximately forty-five of us responded to the invitation to attend Dovedale's first camp. Certainly not the last, as in a rash moment I remember volunteering my husband and myself for the privilege of being the organisers next year. (We are secretly hoping that our accomplished caterers, Jim and Helen Nugteren, will return also.) As for the location; Glenroy is situated 68km from Christchurch, tucked into the hills at the foot of the Southern Alps. The facilities are excellent, made even better by the very recent building of a wonderful block of en suite family rooms. The children played safely on bikes and on the waterslide. Adults also, as Andy van Ameyde had the nerve to tell us

he was aerodynamically designed to travel down the slide at speed! At one point, John van Garderen had difficulty retaining his poise when his four-legged chair became three, much to the enjoyment of the assembled campers, though most importantly, he managed to retain his coffee! The fact that we had most favourable weather on the Friday and Saturday greatly contributed to the success.

The church camp is a vital and living element of church life. It provides for us all further opportunities for quality study, fine fellowship and new friendships, and many wonderful memories to reflect on. Dovedale will look forward to this event on its church calendar.

### HAMILTON

Greetings to one and all from Hamilton.

The last few times I have sent in one of these articles something has happened soon after that has made me wish I had waited a bit and wouldn't you know, it happened again after the last one! At our AGM last year we learned that an estate developer was interested in buying our Hukanui Church and grounds and would build a new one for us not too far away. Well, that involved a lot of preparatory work in the way of meetings, plans, etc. However, the whole thing fell

through—not our fault—the developer didn't get resource consent, but we are not downhearted (much) as we still have our church building (getting crowded) and section and it's been a great learning curve. Who knows, something may come up again when we may need this know-how! And progress is being made towards Hukanui becoming independent, which they hope will eventuate towards the end of this year. Since June last year, we have had separate elders; in November, Hukanui started having second services; and in April this year, finances were arranged separately. Even our church directory is in two parts this year. It is still all GO. We at Aberdeen miss having the Hukanui people with us for the evening services and I think they also miss having fellowship with us, but there's nothing stopping any of us from joining "the other lot" for a service from time to time. And we do still have combined meetings. Any 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month there is a combined Prayer, Praise and Fellowship evening. Women's Fellowship and Women's Bible study meetings and children's holiday programmes are combined, and when a series such as *Growing Kids God's Way* is held or a speaker such as Adrian Bates comes to talk on the creation/evolution issue, then we all get together.

This Easter we again had our convention, this time led by Pastor Stephen Rees of the Grace Baptist Church at Stockport, England. He spoke on "Expository Teaching" from chapters 1 & 2 in Philippians.

One weekend in November the ladies of the church hived off on their own (called a retreat) to a local camp, and found it very stimulating and spiritually uplifting. The main topic was "Friendship and relationships through Christ". Now the elders think it a good idea to do the same! Same place. Different topic: "The calling of the church – what would the Lord have us to do?" They also attended a 2-day conference for elders in the Auckland Presbytery in June/July last year.

Rev Barry James came in July to tell us about his mission work in Africa.

In May many of the women went to Bucklands Beach to the Auckland Presbyterial, where they heard Prof Bill Berends speak on "having and developing a Christian approach to making moral decisions. How do you determine whether a choice you make is according to God's will? What is right and wrong, good or evil?" Great also to catch up with old and new friends.

There has been a youth service at Hukanui and a Cadet/Calvinette service at Aberdeen.

(See, sharing things evenly.)

Last time, I mentioned Aberdeen learning a new hymn each month. This still continues. As well, we in Aberdeen now take it in turns (alphabetically, so that we all get a turn) to choose a hymn to be sung immediately prior to the morning service. We have been doing this for a bit over a year now and we are up to the Ls—I was going to say we are about half way through, but with all the Vs in the congregation (like yours?) I don't think we can be yet.

Aberdeen has changed the starting time of their morning services and so now both meetings start the morning services at 10.30. For the second service Hukanui stays with 7pm all year round, whereas Aberdeen changes with the winter time change to 5pm. Take note if you are visiting.

In September-October, we again had the pleasure of having Rev and Mrs Hoving here to look after us while our usual shepherd and his wife went tripping around the world, returning safely and refreshed and ready to take up the reins again.

We have had several families join us this year. From different parts of South Africa come Anthony and Luanda Young and their two girls, Leandri and Carla; Cor and Mariaan Bezuidenhout and their two girls, Lene and Mari; Johan and Anneline van Zyl with Hentie and Erasmus; Pieter and Santjie van Zyl with Leoni and Melanie; and Pieter and Janna van Rensburg with Hanre and Ilana.

Lya and Wally Haveman and their family have returned to us from Tasmania via Ireland. Vikki Cave has come back from North Shore, Sebastian Vos comes from Avondale,

## MANGERE

Greetings from South Auckland. Time seems to fly, and it is nearly a year ago since you heard from us. We may look back (and hopefully ahead) to a blessed and fruitful year. The Lord added to our number two people by adult baptism (Debra Christensen and Joseph Lennon), and one by infant baptism (Emma Alexander, baby-daughter of Brett and Saskia).

We were also happy to welcome back Jan and Marion Bloemendal, making "De drie gebroeders" (the three brothers) complete. I am sure their father, if he was still with us, would rejoice greatly.

We have had quite a few sick people lately, but they are all picking up again so that our fellowship-meetings ("Faith Forum" for our young adults, Adult Bible Study, Senior's Fellowship and catechism classes) are well attended.

The outreach of the church is mainly operating via the Cadets and Calvinettes and our Christian school, where many young people from outside the church are taking part.

It remains for me to tell you that it was decided that we are going back to the blue hymnal, while awaiting the new hymnal the Synod has promised it will compile. Something to look forward to.

## Ina Kraay



*Reformed Church of Mangere*

Janny de Graaf from Manurewa, Anthony Lagas from Hastings, Annette and Dick Kleinjan and Marinus and Richard from Masterton, and from here in Hamilton Margaret and Mary-Ann Hoekstra and Christine and Neil Shewan.

During the year we have said farewell to Christine and Hans Schipper and family who left us for greener pastures near Gore, Willem van Kooten who went to be with family in Hastings, Helen Williams to Foxton, Christina Flinn to North Shore and Mandy and Mark van der Pyl and family now in Bishopdale, Christchurch. Our loss, other folk's gain.

Another gain for us has been the profession of faith of Tim van der Pyl and Richard van den Engel. Richard and Ilda Drent have also decided they would like to spend the rest of their lives together and have become engaged—we wish them every happiness for their future together.

Seven babies (one in Oz) have arrived to give us all pleasure—Stephen, son of Luanda and Anthony Young; Alexander, son of Wanda and Gerrit van Eijk; Seth, son of Rachel and John Haakma; Amy, daughter of Kristina and Arend de Jong; Rachele, daughter of Jessica and Ross Darlington; Zachary, son of Janice

and Walter van den Engel; and Levi; son of Isolde and Henri Pennings. All doing well.

The future weddings I mentioned last time have now taken place as planned—Christina Loef and Nathaniel Flinn, and Maria Klinkhamer and Jason Farmer. As well, Geri Jones and Paul Pomerey have tied the knot, as have also Helen Brooks and Trevor Williams and Lisa Voschezang and Jon Stephens. God's blessing on you all.

Wedding anniversaries have also been celebrated. Ria and Roel Hagoort have been married 50 years, Marian and Tony van der Pyl and Adry and Cor Feyter for 40 years, Carine and Dirk Drent, Helen and Ed Haakma and Judy and Ian Haisley for 25 years. Congratulations to all.

There have been very welcome visitors from overseas in our midst over the past year, some staying a short time and others longer. And of course we have had some of our number doing the same in reverse, also

for varying lengths of time. Great to see the visitors and to see our own folk all return in good health.

We have had more than our fair share of visits to the hospital and doctor but thanks be to God all have recovered, some to varying degrees. These past few months Reinier Noppers has suffered a medical complaint with dire side effects from his initial medication. He is not allowed to drive for a year (or more), but Trudy is proving to be an excellent helpmeet and the trusty bike has been brought into service again. We pray that the Lord will be with Reinier and Trudy and give healing so that they may continue to serve Him to their full capacity.

Perhaps by the time you hear from us again you will have been notified that our congregation has doubled itself, and there will then be two of us in Hamilton.

In the meantime, God bless you all.

**Melva Versteeg**

## From the D.A.'s Office

# Archives as an Outreach?

There have been suggestions that holding Archives, and being involved with them can be a very inward looking activity, and in many ways I agree. There is of course much value in understanding our roots, our history and the blessings that God has provided along the way, both for us, and for future generations, and that is indeed the main focus of the Archives. But don't we also need to be involved in the great commission, and help to win others for Christ, in all that we do? Can that apply to the Archives as well?

Yes, definitely! There is an opportunity for the Archives to have a role to play in outreach, especially in the future, and YOU can do your part in that right now. How? Let me explain.

In New Zealand, and in many overseas countries it is comparatively easy to search birth, death and marriage records through the state. The difficulty for family historians often lies in the linking between countries when families and individuals have emigrated, then married, changed names etc. Increasingly family historians are turning to church records held in archives from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to fill the gaps of those who emigrated to New Zealand at that time. This brings those who are not necessarily

Christians today into contact with the church, and the faith of their forefathers.

We have a similar opportunity. It is highly likely that the churches' records being collected now, will become a valuable research source for family historians in 50-100 years from now, when they are researching the families of those who came to New Zealand from Holland in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Searching our Archives will allow them to come face to face with the faith of their forebears. Providing we, as a church, remain faithful to the Lord, then there will be opportunities for the Archivists in those days to witness to these family researchers. Isn't this another good reason for keeping church records and archives?

However it can go much further than that. We can spread the net even wider. If we now collect information regarding Dutch people in New Zealand in general, then in the future, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand could be viewed as the place to go for all research into the Dutch in New Zealand, irrespective of whether they were members of the RCNZ or not, thus opening up even more possibilities for the gospel.

For that to happen, we need to start collecting information now. One of the best

## Family Camp Photographs

Dear Family Campers, There is a CD available with 255 photos of the last Family Camp, 2001-2002

You will also get a screensaver and a digital photo album of these photos. The photos are in folders for you to save, share and print.

If you are interested or would like to have more information please contact:

**Hetty van der Werff**

**121a Johnsons Rd**

**Whitemans Valley**

**Upper Hutt**

**email:**

**vanderwerff@paradise.net.nz**

sources of information is the local newspaper, both large circulation dailies and the weekly community newspapers. If you receive a newspaper regularly in your home, then you may be able to help. I am looking for a team of volunteers from up and down the country, to take 5 minutes each day, or each week, to clip items from their local newspaper that have some reference to Dutch people in New Zealand. The main item of interest is the death notices, which provide invaluable information regarding family members, but there are also other articles worthy of collecting. In this way a database

of information can be built up to help the archives become an outreach tool in the future.

So, if you receive a newspaper regularly, and would be prepared to spend a small amount of time clipping items from it, after you are finished reading it, I would love to hear from you. If you are interested, please drop me a line, and let me know which paper(s) you receive, and I will provide you with more information regarding what we need to collect.

*Thanks for your help!*

**Synodical Archivist**  
**Roy Nugteren**  
**42 Bancroft Terrace**  
**Newlands**  
**Wellington**  
**Ph: (04) 478 6406**  
**Mobile: (025) 396 872**  
**E-Mail: [archives@reformed-churches.org.nz](mailto:archives@reformed-churches.org.nz)**

## Synod 2002



On the back page of the June issue of Faith in Focus you will have seen the wonderful photo of the Synodical delegates. There were a few new faces, especially ministers, who have recently come to New Zealand from overseas. Here is a list of them, so you can identify them on the photo (from left to right):

**Back Row:** Dr Henk Stoker (GKSA); Graeme Posthuma; Eric Meinsma; Rev Dr Michael Flinn; David Baird; Roy de Vries; Willem van der Werff

**4<sup>th</sup> Row:** Vicar Nigel Cunningham; Brent Mills; Rev Chris Kavanagh; Rev Ralph Adams; Rev John Goris; Wim Stolte; Henk Bouwman; Jan Dykstra; Rev James Cho; Rev David Groenenboom (CRCA); Andre Jongepier; Johan Janssen; Rev Dries Beukes (Hevermede SA)

**3<sup>rd</sup> Row:** Rev Jim Klazinga; Pieter van Huyssteen; Leen van Vliet; Rev Leo de Vos; Dick Holtslag; Roel Voschezang; Len van Burgel (FRCA); Roel Dykstra; Peter de Reus; Rob Moot; John Koolaard; Jim van Rensburg

**2<sup>nd</sup> Row:** Rev Hans Vaastra; Theo Grul; Jos Bosma; Rev Dirk van Garderen; Rev Reinier Noppers; Tinus Spies; Andrew Nugteren; Dr Willie Botha (DRC SA); Rev John Rogers; Rev Bert Veldman (FRCA)

**Front Row:** Rev Dr Paul Archbald; Rev Geoff Van Schie (CRCA); Rev Dale Piers; Prof Bill Berends (RTC); Rev Dr John Haverland; Rev Bill Wiersma; Rev Bruce Hoyt; Walter Walraven; Rev Sjirk Bajema; Prof Henk de Waard (RTC); Cobus van der Walt

**Absent:** Rev Ed Rademaker; Rev Gary Milne

# Missions in focus

## Decisions, decisions...

Synod is over and gone. But the decisions made there will have an influence in our lives—both corporately, as the body of Christ, and in many cases individually—for the next three years, and from there on into the future. What decisions were made regarding the missions focus of our churches? Several. Let's have a look at some.

- Supporting SPROUT: Synod asked the OMB to encourage SPROUT as they work to promote missions awareness and involvement on the part of young people in our churches.
- Co-operation with other churches: Synod encouraged the OMB to "investigate all possible openings for missionary service through the existing missions and agencies of ICRC and sister churches." In this way service may be possible for

men or women, ordained or un-ordained, short- or long-term, in countries where our own denomination has no existing mission involvement.

- Papua New Guinea: it was decided that our churches should engage in mission work in Papua New Guinea, in co-operation with the Canadian Reformed Churches, and subject to further planning and information. (Note: Rev Stephen 't Hart, who visited NZ last year, is serving in PNG with CanRC. See MIF July/August 2001)
- The RCNZ Missions Policy Handbook has been accepted and will be published and circulated more widely throughout the churches.
- Home Mission: the Home Mission and Church Extension Committees have been divided into two independent committees. The Home Mission Committee has been assigned the task of evaluating and sharing evangelism resources, and investigating means of spreading the gospel within New Zealand. They are also instructed to

encourage the churches in their task of home mission and evangelism.

It's clear from looking over these points that our church leaders and administrators are looking to the fields, which are "white unto harvest" (John 4:35). Do pray for them, and for those in SPROUT, the OMB, and the Home Mission Committee who have willingly taken on the responsibility of representing the cause of mission to the rest of us. Pray also that the Lord would raise up many from our midst to work as His labourers in the harvest-field (Luke 10:2).

## MIF Prayer Notes

The **Overseas Mission Board** has a lot of work to do, after the decisions made at Synod. Pray for strength and wisdom for Board members as they explore the possibilities for people from our congregations to serve in Papua New Guinea and/or other Reformed mission fields.

**SPROUT** held a Vacation Bible School at Homeleigh Christian School in Masterton during the July holidays. Pray for the children who attended, that the Lord would continue to work in their hearts and bring them to the point of saving faith. Pray for God's blessing on SPROUT members, and everyone else in our churches who takes the time to explain the Gospel message to children who have not heard it before. Pray for Bible-in-school teachers who do this work so faithfully during term-time.

**Rev Stephen and Dorinda 't Hart** continue their Kingdom work in Ekorovo, Papua New Guinea. Pray for safety for the 't Harts and their three small daughters. Pray that the Lord would guide their steps in ministry, and give them patience as they eagerly await His timing for the provision of other missionary staff to help with many areas of ministry in and around Port Moresby.

The new **Home Mission Committee** also needs our prayers. With a mandate to promote evangelism throughout the churches, Committee members will be busy gathering information and deciding how best they can fulfil this task.

The **National Diaconate Committee** gives praise to the Lord for His blessings and benefits to us! The committee reports: "The 2001 Christmas appeal pledged to the C.A.R.E. India programme has yielded a wonderful, just under \$19,000." This has enabled the committee to support that work

*Calling all country boys and girls to become*

# NETWORKERS



*If you have always wanted to be a Cadet or Calvinette but live too far away from a club, we would love to hear from you!*

**NETWORKERS** is for children aged 9-15 years old, and you would be a correspondence member with the closest club, able to attend camps and any club functions that you could make.

Your counsellor and cadre would be your correspondent friends and leader.

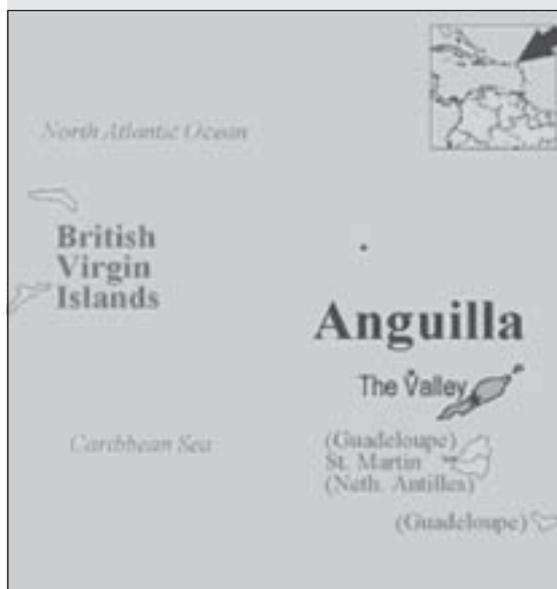
**INTERESTED?**

*Then write to me –*  
**Cr Betty-Ann Bajema, 17 Phoenix Place, Papatoetoe, Auckland**

among sufferers of HIV/Aids and associated family and fellow suffers etc. to the level of \$5,000 quarterly throughout the year of 2002—as was their objective. The committee notes: "Our every communication from Paulus Samuel who directs this work pleads for our prayers on behalf of the work that they do. Let us not give up on our faithful giving to such causes of mercy and Christian compassion, but even more importantly let us continue to pray for strength, compassion and faithful stewardship on the part of the Lord's servants in their work at the coal face." The NDC also asks for prayer as it continues to fulfil its mandate in the search and investigation of worthy causes for support in the service of our dear Saviour.

**Janice Reid** is on deputation around NZ this month; please pray for safe travel and effective reporting about her work for the Far East Broadcasting Company. Janice has recently been appointed Manager of the Hands On Training Project, which provides basic training resources to all radio announcers in all FEBC fields. Pray for wisdom as Janice reviews and revises the training materials, and co-ordinates training in various countries. She also asks prayer for the upcoming workshop in Myanmar (Burma). Firm Foundations will be a significant component of the week-long training. Pray for financial provision for this workshop, and give thanks for the funds raised so far.

## Country profile: Anguilla



Anguilla is an island of just 91 square kilometres, the most northerly of the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean. 95.6% of the population of approximately 9,000 is Afro-Caribbean, with just 3.6% being Euro-American. Anguilla is a British dependent territory, and has tourism as virtually the only industry. 91% of people claim to be Christian, with the three largest groups being Anglican, Methodist and Seventh-Day Adventist. 5.47% of the population follow traditional spiritist religion.

### Pray for Anguilla:

1. Anguilla is a remnant of a bygone era as a little colonial outpost. There is religion, but without much vision for evangelism, committed discipleship or taking the gospel to other parts of the world. There are four missionaries from other countries serving in Anguilla; none from Anguilla in other parts of the world.
2. Pray that Christ's followers may function effectively as His body.

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## "A child was bored in the service!"

### Geoff Thomas

An elder preceded the minister into the pulpit and then came to the front and addressed the congregation. "Last week ... a child was bored in the service." A gasp went through the congregation. Men looked at their feet, women cried quietly, and children went white. "The church officers are meeting with the minister during the week and will announce our conclusions next Sunday. In the meantime we want to apologise to that child and his parents and all the other children," the elder concluded before leaving the pulpit. The ashen-faced preacher came to the pulpit, and in a trembling voice began the service...

This imaginary scenario is not very far from the prevailing ecclesiastical situation today in which many consider the worst sin

a church can commit is to bore children. The background to the churches' determination to make their worship boredom-free zones is an era of rampant materialism which the western world has never experienced before.

### Where's the work?

For example, at parties today each child who comes expects to go home with a party bag full of goodies. Parents spend ridiculous sums of money on clothes, toys and other fripperies for their children. Almost every boy and girl has more than they can possibly enjoy. Nobody can imagine that they are happier for this glut... We have lost any idea that austerity—not unremitting poverty, but a decent restraint—might actually be of benefit to children. It is not easy for the body of Christ to preach self-denial and cross-bearing in the midst of a frenzied spending

spree. We no longer expect children to endure boredom for a second. In our infancy we bounced balls, fed the rabbits, made a model with Meccano, and watched the ascent and descent of a yo-yo.

We also read books. Our meals were pretty predictable, and a visit to the local park was an event. Today visits to the zoo, bouncy castles, jumping on a trampoline are routine necessities. Daily playgroups and day-nurseries fill every vacant minute with watching videos, learning how to play with computers, and bouncing on the soft-play. Everything is wound up to a pitch of noisy razzmatazz...

A.N. Wilson has written, "Pascal said that all human trouble stemmed from our inability to sit quietly in one room. If he was right, then we have serious trouble ahead, with an extraordinarily restless, vacuous generation

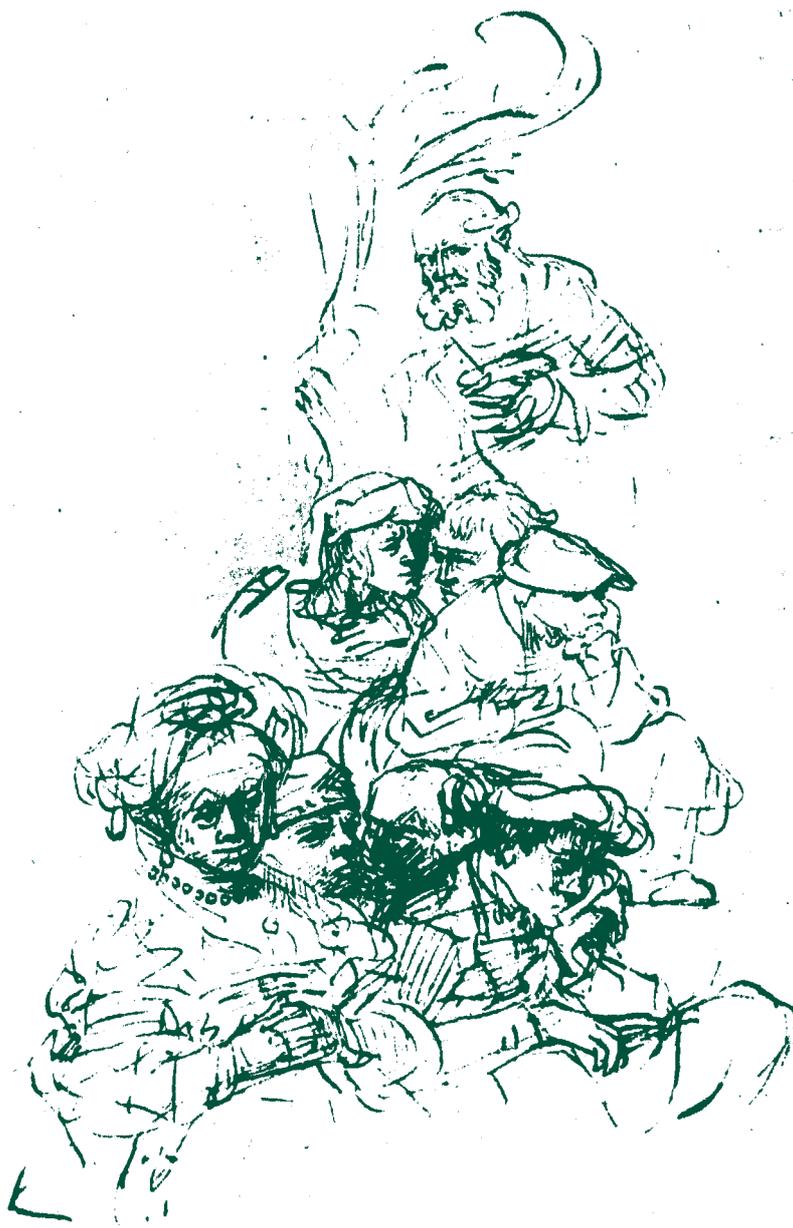
of human individuals waiting to take over the world. The lesson of how to be bored must be learnt if the child is to grow up sane, and this is for two reasons.

"First, boredom is what most human lives consist of. Few jobs are interesting all of the time; and when retirement age has been reached, the long days of emptiness cannot possibly be entirely devoid of tedium. Learning how to cope with these periods of vacancy can actually reduce, or eliminate their boringness. A human being who has only grown up with the notion that he or she must be stimulated all the time will never be able to assuage ennui in the way that we grown-ups do—by walks, gardening, crosswords, or the inner life.

"And this is the second and greater reason for hoping that a child will learn how to cope with an eventless afternoon. Out of what feels like boredom comes the capacity to be inward. Unless you have been bored, an essential part of your imagination will never have been allowed to grow. Stories, poetry, prayer and mathematics, all activities which have stretched the human race... have developed out of its capacity to live with boredom."

But into the morning services all over the land come children carrying bags, and in their bags they have colouring books, pencil boxes, toys, small computers, reading books, etc. This is because there is no Sunday School going on at the same time as the sermon, and it would be an unthinkable disaster if children were to be bored. These families never bring their children to the evening service for the same reason...

We are speaking of churches where there is the power of God in the ministry. There is relevance, application, affection for the congregation, illustration and the presence of the Spirit upon the Word. Men and women are being converted and sanctified. The children are always spoken to, and the whole service is over in 75 minutes. Yet still, during



those services, the children are encouraged to be stimulated by anything other than the message being preached to them. Where there are enough bored families, a great change takes place. Sunday mornings are designated on notice boards, "Family Worship," and everything is done in a lively manner with the children in mind. The focus is no longer on what pleases Almighty God. The tunes are lively, accompanied by a band.

#### Lots of play

There are all kinds of visual stimuli, overhead projectors, choreography and drama spots. Laughter registers the successfulness of the service. Many people take part, and the role of the minister is to be master of ceremonies. Every item is brief, and before the short sermon the children are taken out—even up to 16 years of age—to have

their own classes of Sunday School elsewhere. They are taken away from the man whom God has called, given authority and teaching gifts to, and they are taken to people who base what they say on books written by other people. There is no likelihood of a man of the Word being called to the pastorate in such congregations. They are doomed to a future of superficial religion. But children are unregenerate. They do not know God. There is a natural enmity in their hearts against him. Their boredom is not principally caused by their immaturity but because of their hearts of stone. This is to be combatted by the loving lives of their parents, regular family devotions in which they become familiar with the teaching of the Bible, the language of prayer, and confrontation with their need to be born again. Their parents' love, respect and enthusiasm for the church services, the pastor and his preaching will be contagious. They will admire and hear the one to whom their parents pay such attention. But where the parents themselves are bored—or just one parent—then there

is little hope for the children becoming gripped with the most exciting message in the world—the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### Living out the word

When children have been taught to sit still at home and hear the word of God read each day, and listen to parents coming with thanksgiving and petition to a heavenly Father who cares and provides every good thing the children experience, then they sweetly learn to be still during a sermon on Sunday morning, and to cry from their childish hearts to the Lord for help to worship and serve Him, the living God.

*(This is taken from The Banner Of Truth magazine.)*