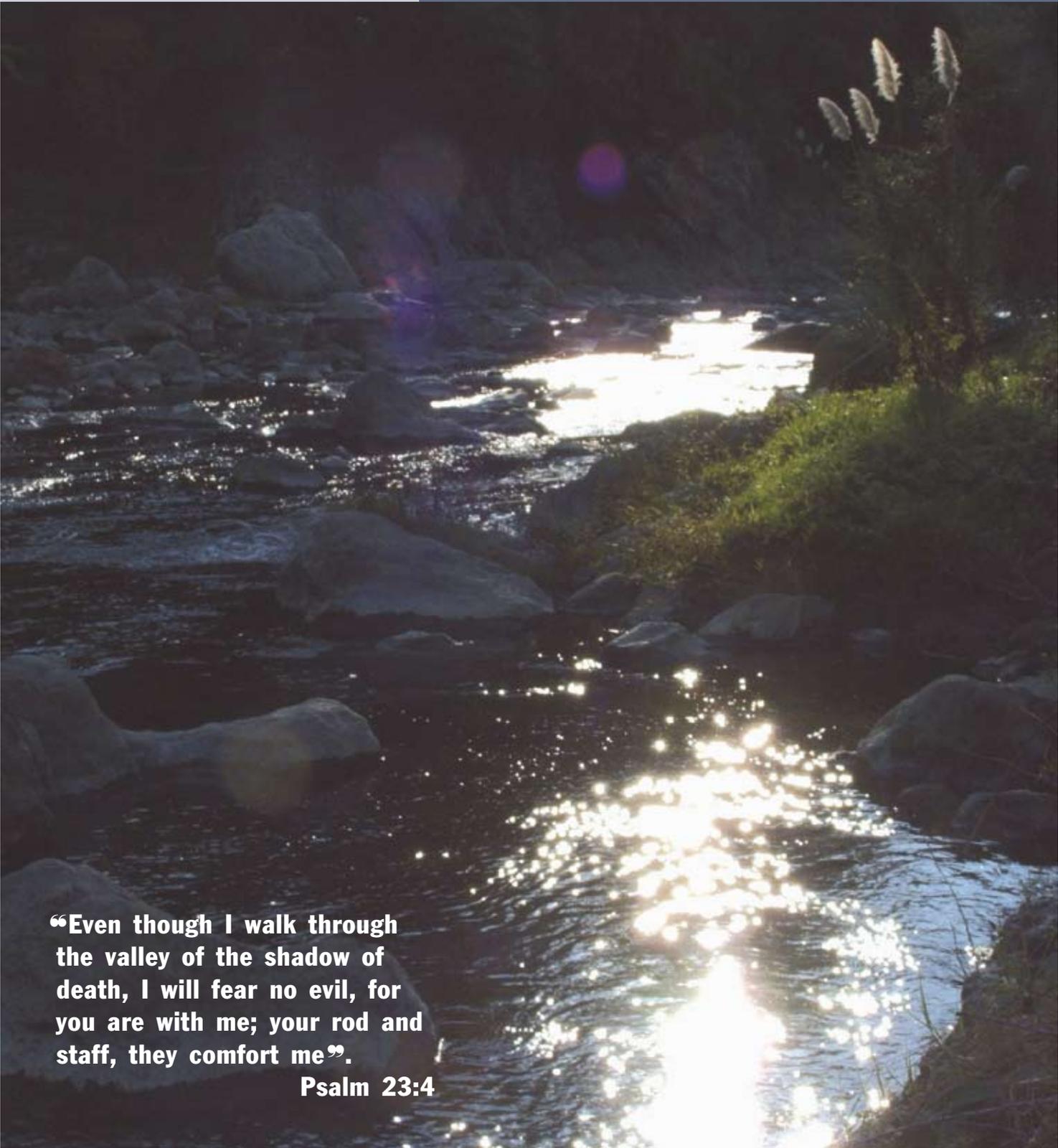


Magazine of the  
Reformed Churches  
of New Zealand

# faith in **focus**

VOLUME 35/7 AUGUST 2008



**“Even though I walk through  
the valley of the shadow of  
death, I will fear no evil, for  
you are with me; your rod and  
staff, they comfort me”.**

**Psalm 23:4**

**CONTENTS**

<b>Climate change</b> The state of the planet	3
<b>Seeker Sensitive failure</b> Preaching and teaching is the faithful way	8
<b>World in focus</b> News from around the world The Reformed Churches of the Netherlands	10
<b>A feminine focus</b> The value of hymns	16
<b>Focus on home</b> Gleanings in focus Mission post in Timaru Family Camp Report	20
<b>Review in focus</b> Sophie Scholl	24
<b>Letter to the Editor</b> A letter writer apologizes	26
<b>Missions in focus</b> Short term mission to Uganda	26

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

**The Editor:**

Sjirk Bajema  
17 Phoenix Place, Papatoetoe,  
Manukau 2025.  
Ph/Fax: +64 9 277 9360  
Email: fnf@rcnz.org.nz  
Reformed Churches Home Page  
<http://www.rcnz.org.nz>

**Copy Deadline:**

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

All correspondence regarding distribution and  
payment of subscriptions to:

**The Secretary:**

Mrs Nicola Wharekawa  
79 McLeod Street  
Upper Hutt  
Email: ricwhare@paradise.net.nz

**Subscription per volume:**

\$40.00 (eleven issues)  
Bulk Rate: \$35.00  
Overseas: \$60.00  
Electronically Mailed (overseas only): \$40

**Production Staff:**

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

**Editorial**

We cannot get away from it. You hear about it over the radio, see it on TV, read it in the newspapers and magazines. Yes, 'Global Warming' is everywhere! The cause trumpeted by Al Gore in his Oscar-winning film, 'An Inconvenient Truth,' that our rising CO2 emissions are responsible for a soon-coming and already present world-wide ecological disaster, has gripped this world. And what do you know? There's a whole new raft of public servants needed to help check our Kyoto compliances. There will be more taxes. And who's going to pay for it?

But don't dare say a discouraging word. And if it be a scientist who happens to raise a fact contrary to the received ideology, he is soon consigned to the nether regions. At the very least, his contribution to any official report is phrased out.

Well, what did one man say: 'If they don't believe in something they'll believe in anything'? And believe me, they believe in this. You see, man can do it! In fact, man has done it! Wow, how important is man!

Am I being too cynical? Surely we wouldn't be having the wool pulled over our eyes to this degree? Read our lead article and think about this for yourself.

And then consider the figures. And I don't mean now the figures in terms of the so-called 'climate change.' The figures, rather, of the increase of public relations and communications people in government departments. One journalist has commented that there are more of these than there are in his newspaper, Radio New Zealand and Television New Zealand combined (Richard Long quoted in "Absolute POWER: The Helen Clark Years," by Ian Wishart, p.128). The government spin-doctors are ever busy doing their master's bidding – and quite willing with ever-increasing salary packages! Often their work has little to do with the real truth, instead it's about twisting the truth to create a favourable public perception. And we all know who's the father of the lie, don't we?

*Put on the full armour of God  
so that you can take your stand against  
the devil's schemes.*

*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,  
but against the rulers, the authorities,  
against the powers of this dark world  
and against the spiritual forces of evil  
in the heavenly realms.*

**Ephesians 6:11-12**

Photo Credits:

Cover – Gary & Liz Bouda

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 Dort, 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.

# Climate Change

## A Christian response

### Peter Abetz

I grew up in a family that was very environmentally conscious – long before it was fashionable. In the 1960s we grew organic strawberries and vegetables, made cottage cheese from our two cows that never saw an antibiotic or any other chemicals. The pastures they grazed on were only treated with organic fertilisers.

When I did my degree in Agricultural Science, we had to present a seminar on a topic of our choice to the whole student body and the whole faculty. When the notice for mine went out entitled, *Does Organic Farming have a Scientific Basis*, my fellow students and some of the faculty thought I was playing a practical joke, and asked me what I was really going to do! I must have argued the case well as I got a very good mark for my seminar!

For my honours project, I researched the nitrate and phosphate loadings of rivers in Tasmania, seeking to determine how much came from agricultural activities. When I worked as a farm advisory officer in the Huon Valley, I actively promoted methods that reduced the amount of farm chemicals which were being used. I wrote the Question & Answer page in the Tasmanian *Organic Growing Magazine* for over 20 years. In our churches I have led camp studies on *A Christian Perspective on the Environment*. (I wrote on it for *Trowel & Sword* back in 1990.)

Why am I telling you all this? Because I want to make it clear that I am passionate about protecting the environment, reducing pollution, minimising the adverse effects of agriculture on the quality of soils and the wider environment. My passion for this arises from the conviction that we are stewards of God's creation, and that for having lived on this earth, we should leave it in better shape than when we were born. I am not only about conserving what there is – I am an advocate for improving the environment!

So no doubt you would expect me to write an article warning you about the pending disaster caused by man-induced global warming (known as Anthropogenic Global Warming or AGW for short). As a scientist with a lifetime track record of environmental concern, you may be shocked by what fol-

lows. But I believe it needs to be said, for the sake of the poor of the world.

As part of my science training, I was taught to be sceptical. To always ask: What is the empirical data? What are the hard facts? Have other scientists been able to replicate the experiments or measurements that gave this data? If there is no empirical, repeatable data, you are moving from the realm of science into the realm of speculation. Speculation has its place, because you can do experiments to see if your speculation is heading in the right direction. But to promote speculations as scientific fact is nothing less than telling lies.

As data becomes available, one can formulate a hypothesis, which accommodates all the known empirical data. But as new data becomes available, one must be willing to revise one's hypothesis, to accommodate the new data. So what are **the hard facts about climate change?**

### Climate has always been changing

Climate has never been static. Evidence indicates that climate changes have generally been gradual, and often cyclical (such as ice ages occurring around every 120,000 years). Sometimes changes have been more sudden, such as the events which snap-froze mammoths in the Arctic some 20,000 years ago, with the grasses and flowers they had consumed, still readily

identifiable in their stomachs today!

The Bible tells us that there was a major change in climate that occurred around the time of the Flood (Gen. 7 and 8). Rain fell as it had never fallen before. After the flood, God made a covenant declaring: *As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease* (Gen. 8:22) – thus indicating that the earth will continue to provide for man's needs.

Then there were the various droughts that the Bible tells us about. The 7 years of plenty in Egypt were followed by 7 years of great drought not only in Egypt, but also in the land of Canaan. (Gen. 41 - 47).

We know that from around 900 to 1300 AD it was 2 - 3C warmer in Europe and North America than it is today (known as the Medieval Warm period – the temperatures peaked around 900 to 1100) which led to the colonising of Greenland and Newfoundland. But the subsequent increasing cold led to the Vikings deserting Greenland by 1400. Archaeologists have excavated Viking house ruins under the current permafrost. Again, this climate change was not caused by man's activities.

We also know that the temperature was lower from 1400-1900 AD – a period known as the *Little Ice Age*. In those days the Thames in London froze over most winters! As the climate cooled, farmers



had to adapt to shorter growing seasons. Again, man's activities were not responsible for the change.

In the period 1940 to 1970 there was a global cooling phase, which led some scientists to claim we were entering into a new ice age. They claimed the cause was that we were draining too many swamps, thus reducing the production of methane, which is a greenhouse gas! One of the current leading advocates of AGW theory, Dr Stephen Schneider, in the 1970's claimed that small particulates (called aerosols) were to blame, and that their effect was orders of magnitude greater than carbon dioxide warming the environment.

No one – not even the global warming alarmists – is claiming that these clearly recorded major changes in climate were caused by human activity. Everyone agrees they were caused by 'natural phenomena'. (Al Gore and his followers find the Mini Ice Age and the Medieval Warm Period a very inconvenient truth, and so either ignore it, or even deny it ever happened!)

#### **The big question:**

If climate has changed so markedly over so many thousands of years, without the influence of man, we must ask the question: Are the current changes in climate (a warming of 0.6C in the past 100 years) due to man's influence, or is it simply the result of the same natural forces which changed the climate in the past?

That is an obvious question, which must be answered. Until we know the answer, we

cannot know whether there is any value in reducing our carbon dioxide emissions.

As Paul Murray commented in the West Australian recently,<sup>1</sup> if you dare to ask such questions, then you are labelled a 'sceptic' which is the next worst thing to being called a paedophile! One CBS reporter has even labelled sceptics of AGW as 'holocaust deniers'! If we are to be good stewards of the earth God has entrusted to us, we must not be afraid to ask the hard questions. We must insist on scientifically verifiable answers. We cannot just accept the media hype at face value.

The media and the spin-doctors assure us that 'the science is settled': Man's carbon dioxide emissions are the cause of global warming. We are told that while there are a few ill-informed scientists refusing to face reality, the 'consensus' among the world's leading scientists is that there is no doubt that man-made carbon dioxide emissions are the cause of the current 'alarming' rate of global warming and climate change.

#### **Consensus is not science**

The very fact that 'consensus' argument is needed, shows that the data available is inadequate to establish the assertion being made.

*Science by consensus* is never good science. If the facts are clear, then a discussion can take place as to what the facts mean. But the facts must first be established. Science works on the basis that you can do experiments in your own

laboratory or take measurements in nature. Others must be able to do the same, and get the same answers. That establishes the facts.

When people claim 'scientific consensus' you know that the data is not yet clear, and that any assertion made is speculation rather than science.

Historically, scientific consensus has all too often been wrong. A few examples: *Scientific American* in 1905 labelled the Wright brothers as *fraudsters* for claiming to have flown with a machine that was heavier than air. The scientific 'consensus' – even 2 years after they had flown – was that it could not be done.

As part of his anti-Jewish campaign, Hitler organised a group of 200 eminent scientists to have a forum which condemned Einstein's theory of relativity  $E = mc^2$ . Asked whether the condemnation of 200 eminent scientists bothered him, Einstein responded: 'It doesn't need 200 scientists to disprove Relativity, it just needs a single fact'.

The first medical doctor who discovered the connection between high salt intake and high blood pressure was struck off the medical register in the US for giving the unjustifiable advice to his heart patients to eat less salt!

In the 1970s the scientific consensus was that we were about to enter a new ice age!

The scientific consensus today is that evolution is a 'fact'. But many eminent scientists do not believe in evolution. Some, such as Michael J Behe, in his book *Darwin's Black Box – the Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, demonstrates that the notion of evolution is inconsistent with the empirical data from biochemical research.

While the media and the AGW proponents do their utmost to silence those who hold a different view, there is no consensus among scientists that the 0.6C warming in the last century has been caused by carbon dioxide emissions. Atmospheric scientists tell us that the water vapour in the atmosphere has 30 times the influence on the earth's temperature, as does the level of carbon dioxide.

It may surprise you that over 4,000 scientists have signed the 'Heidelberg Appeal' including more than 70 Nobel Prize winners. A 1997 Gallup Poll of eminent North American climatologists (who one would have thought understand more about climate than journalists or politicians such as Al Gore!) showed that



83% did not support the claims of AGW. In 1998, the *Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine* issued a petition for signatures by atmospheric scientists saying there is no scientific evidence indicating that greenhouse gases cause global warming. That petition was signed by more than 17,000 scientists and leaders involved in the issue.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately these kinds of things do not make it into the media, because most journalists have adopted the 'cause' of Global Warming and want to 'advance the cause' rather than report objectively on the debate.

### The scientific evidence

It may surprise some, but the IPCC reports are first produced by the scientists, and then non-scientific bureaucrats 'rewrite' them. The bureaucrats deleted these two statements from the scientists' 1995 report:

1. *None of the studies cited have shown clear evidence that we can attribute the observed climate changes to increases in green house gases.*

2. *No study to date has positively attributed all or part of the climate change to...man-made causes.* Interestingly suspicious, wouldn't you say? It gives the impression that a political agenda is being driven at the cost of truth.

One of the biggest problems facing anyone trying to determine the truth about environmental issues is that very little of what is published about the environment is actually published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. And some of the prophets of doom about carbon dioxide emissions want to keep it that way. Stephen Schneider, one of the prophets of the ice age in the 1970s, and now a strong advocate of AGW has stated: *...we need to get some broad-based support, to capture the public's imagination. That of course means getting loads of media coverage. So we have to offer up scary scenarios, make simplified, dramatic statements, and make little mention of any doubts we might have.* Schneider effectively admits that the pursuit of truth must be sacrificed on the altar of 'pushing the agenda'! In commenting on this quote in the Federal Parliament, Dr Dennis Jensen, currently the only Ph.D.-qualified scientist in our federal parliament stated: *an honest scientist would never bend the truth to push an agenda.* Sadly, pushing the AGW agenda has become more important to journalists and many scientists, than scientific integrity and pursuit of the truth.

### Global Warming — the evidence and world poverty

Prof. Bjorn Lomborg, a paid-up member of Greenpeace and a professor of statistics in Denmark, wanted to influence his students. He wanted them to see how disastrous the world environmental scene was. So he set assignments for them to do the statistical analysis of some of the data being promoted by the environmental movement. Much to his dismay, he discovered that most of what is presented as 'known facts' is simply assertions made by an individual or the spokesman of an organisation, without any substantiating evidence, and very rarely sourced from peer-reviewed scientific journals. His discoveries led him to write the very readable book: *The Skeptical Environmentalist – Measuring the Real State of the World.* (Cambridge University Press, 1998). It is well worth reading!

David Evans started work in the Greenhouse Office in Canberra in 1999 as a computer modeller. He was convinced that global warming was caused by carbon dioxide emissions. He was highly motivated and excited about his job and developed a program that is widely used for calculating the amount of carbon various tree plantations would take from the atmosphere. It is widely used because it has been shown to be accurate to plus or minus 10%.

But as more evidence has emerged, David says it has becoming more and more difficult to hold to AGW (Anthropogenic Global Warming). He says the facts that are known today simply don't support it.<sup>3</sup>

A major problem facing individuals (and governments!) who want to be informed of the facts, is that when some previously promoted 'fact' is exposed as flawed, the media and much of the environmental movement go merrily on their way propagating the falsehoods. For example, 2005 is still touted as being the hottest year on record in the USA. Steve McIntyre found the data had been incorrectly processed: there was a Y2K error in the computer code. The facts now are that 1934 is the hottest year on record and four of the hottest years in USA are now known to have occurred in the 1930s, and only 3 in the last 10 years. McIntyre was also the person who discovered the errors in Michael Mann's infamous hockey stick graph in the third IPCC report. That false graph was also used in Al Gore's movie *An Inconvenient Truth*.



Have we ever heard Al Gore setting the record straight? Unfortunately not.

Interestingly, a British judge ruled recently<sup>4</sup> that Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* could only be shown to school children if the nine factual errors in it were pointed out beforehand. He found that the 'apocalyptic vision' presented in the film was not an impartial analysis of climate change but part of a politically partisan crusade, and that the film was deliberately alarmist.

So what hard facts are there to support the notion that carbon dioxide emissions are the cause of the small (0.6C) increase in temperature that has been recorded in the past 100 years?

Firstly we need to note that the biggest part of the increase took place in the period 1905 to 1940, which was before the CO<sub>2</sub> levels began to increase significantly.

Repeated calls by 'sceptical' scientists for independent, repeatable observations to support the notion of AGW have failed to produce any evidence. It may surprise you that there is **NO experimental evidence, nor measurements, which have established a link between carbon dioxide emissions and global warming** written in a peer reviewed scientific journal. Indeed, the only measurable, repeatable observations made come from ice core data (which is not always reliable). This data suggests that CO<sub>2</sub> levels lead temperature increases by 800 years; this means that the temperature increase *causes* the increase in CO<sub>2</sub>, not the other way around!

The 'evidence' for AGW is based solely on computer climate models which have been developed. The problem with these models is that they are overly simplistic – they depend on the notion that the way the atmosphere works is like the air in a glass jar. This fails to take into account the many buffering effects in the natural systems that produce our climate. Not one of the models that gives the various doomsday predictions has been able to predict the average world temperature 5 years in advance. When run backwards, they fail to give answers consistent with what we know the climate was like 5, 10 or 20 years ago.

Kevin Trenberth, coordinating lead author of the IPCC 4<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report, admitted the weaknesses inherent in the models used. He stated: *...none of the climate*

states in the models correspond even remotely to the current observed climate. In particular, the state of the oceans, sea ice, and soil moisture has no relationship to the observed state at any recent time in any of the IPCC models. (This quote is not a misprint!)

Even within the IPCC there are many scientists who do not believe that AGW is by any means established. Yuri Israel, the Vice Chairman of the IPCC has stated: *there is no proven link between human activity and global warming.*

### The precautionary principle

But shouldn't we try and reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions just in case they are the cause of global warming? That *sounds* a reasonable argument.

## WELLINGTON PRESBYTERY VOLLEYBALL TOURNAMENT

Saturday 27th September  
Wainuiomata

**IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY  
ENROLLED YOUR TEAM IT'S  
TIME TO DO IT NOW!**

*(8 players per team,  
including 2 reserves and at  
last one female player)*

**No limit to the number of  
teams per church**

**A fundraiser for Hutt Valley  
Christian School**

**This is a great day packed  
full of competition with  
lots of fellowship thrown in  
between games**

**Spectators and enthusiastic  
supporters welcome**

**Let's see if someone  
can take the cup off  
Silverstream Black –  
keep practising Palmerston!**

**Please direct any questions  
to Frances Leibbrandt  
(04)564 3532,  
027 412 7676**



Given the fact that we know that asteroids have hit the earth in times past, and have had a catastrophic impact on climate, should we not also invest in schemes to try and deflect asteroids from hitting the earth?

Whether we like it or not, the world has finite financial resources. The question we need to ask is: Is it justifiable to spend huge sums – billions upon billions – trying to avoid an asteroid strike, when the likelihood of being able to influence the outcome is rather dubious at best? Or should we direct these resources to alleviate poverty and environmental degradation in third world countries? I think most would say: use those resources to alleviate poverty!

Given that the only evidence for AGW comes from overly simplistic computer models, I believe humanity would be far better served if all the money spent on the Bali Climate conference, and the many salaries of CO<sub>2</sub> emission counters, research into the geo-sequestration of Carbon Dioxide, etc were channelled into poverty alleviation and environmental projects in the third world.

So the precautionary principle is not quite as wise a principle as some would have us believe. In fact, as with the consensus argument, the resort to precautionary principle indicates that the evidence is weak. Where we can reduce our emissions without increasing the cost of living (which always affects the poor the most), by all means let's get rid of our SUVs if we don't need them and buy the most energy-efficient fridge and air con system. But most of the advocated strategies cost money. Big money!

Add to this the fact that there are actually known benefits from the increased CO<sub>2</sub> levels in the atmosphere, and it makes the principle look decidedly foolish.

### Benefits of increased carbon dioxide and global warming

For some, to suggest that there could be benefits from increased levels of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere is akin to suggesting there could be benefits from paedophilia. But let's be rational and ask the question!

Dutch horticulturalists have long known that rotting bales of straw in the glasshouse leads to better crops. Scientists have worked out why: It increases the level of carbon dioxide in the air. As the carbon dioxide level increases, not only does their growth increase, but they are also able to withstand drought better. It is interesting to note that

there is substantial evidence that in the days of the dinosaurs the carbon dioxide level was 3000ppm, about 10 times the present level. And it seems the world survived these levels! There is also evidence that forests around the world have increased their growth rates in the past 50 years as the carbon dioxide level has increased.

Various crops have been tested for response to carbon dioxide 'fertilising'. While the results vary, they range from 10 to 100 percent increase in yields. If CO<sub>2</sub> levels were to increase to say 600ppm, most crops would yield between 10 and 20% more. That is certainly a significant benefit that should help to feed the world!

If the CO<sub>2</sub> were to increase the world's temperatures a little more, Northern American, European and Russian homes would need to spend much less on heating. Canadian farmers would have bumper crops. Ships could take a short cut across the arctic from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. (By the way in 1896 a British Admiral reported on the fact that the ice had receded so much that it now seemed possible to make that crossing. And that was before CO<sub>2</sub> levels went up!) Indeed Fred Singer, a retired professor of environmental science, has written a book *Unstoppable Global Warming: Every 1500 years*, which outlines the benefits of global warming.

### Conclusion

The problem with the Global Warming/Climate Change debate is that it has moved from science to the realm of politics, and the political method simply does not produce good science!

It seems that with the rejection of Christianity in the western world, people are looking for another cause. As Ray Evans writes: *Environmentalism has largely superseded Christianity as the religion of the upper classes in Europe and to a lesser extent in the United States ... It is a form of religious belief which fosters a sense of moral superiority in the believer, but which places no importance on telling the truth.*<sup>5</sup>

If a lie is repeated often enough, many people will believe it. Much of what is written about Climate Change (from the Stern report to Evangelical Climate Change Initiative's *Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action*) assumes that AGW is a fact, when at best it is a very dubious hypothesis.

Given the dubious foundation of the hypothesis that the 0.6C increase in world temperatures in the last 100 years is due

to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions produced by man, I find it immoral for Christians and others to call on governments to spend huge sums of money (and we are talking billions upon billions) to try to prevent scenarios which simplistic computer models are predicting. Imagine what a difference such sums invested in the developing world could make to the growing environmental degradation occurring there! It could provide the infrastructure for clean water, sewage treatment, safe garbage disposal, recycling schemes, health care, irrigation schemes etc for the poor. And such investment would pay huge environmental dividends.

### Sea level changes and the poor

The proponents of AGW tell us that for the sake of the poor, many of whom live in low-lying areas, we need to reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions because otherwise the sea level will rise and inundate their land.

If you visit the Australian Museum website, you will find an interesting item<sup>6</sup> about the formation of Sydney Harbour. In summary it says: 18,000 years ago the sea level was 120m lower than today, and the coastline was 15 km further east. This, we are told, was at the height of the last Glacial Period, when sea levels were at their lowest. The present sea level, we are told, has been pretty static for the past 6,000 years. That means that over 12,000 years, the sea level rose by 120 metres. That is an average of 1 metre per century! That makes the possible 15cm in the past 100 years look rather insignificant! As a scientist, I need some convincing that this minute change in sea level is caused by man's activities, as these huge changes in sea level were not caused by man.

### Carbon Neutral – fiction or fact?

No doubt we have all seen cars with stickers attached: 'This Vehicle is Carbon Neutral'. Are such people really making a significant contribution to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions? Most are not. Let me explain:

There are two kinds of 'carbon neutral' programs. One works on the basis of paying a company money. The company uses the funds to buy land and plants trees. As trees grow, they absorb carbon dioxide from the air. Sounds wonderful. But the problem is that when the tree reaches maturity, it actually produces as much CO<sub>2</sub> as it takes out of the air. Once a tree goes into decline, it actually produces *more* CO<sub>2</sub> than it takes out of the air. The only way to make sure that trees actually reduce the overall CO<sub>2</sub> level in the air in the long term

is to harvest the trees when they reach maturity, and make sure that they are not burned, and not allowed to rot. (Rotting also returns the cellulose to CO<sub>2</sub>).

A further problem which is affecting the poor in Africa, is that the Carbon Neutral companies naturally want to buy the land for planting trees as cheaply as they can; and they are increasingly doing this in Africa, pushing subsistence farmers off the land, adding to poverty.

The only genuine Carbon Neutral companies are those who actually use the money to provide (usually third world) people with devices that allow them to produce less CO<sub>2</sub>. One company uses its funds to provide a simple slow combustion stove to African villagers, so that they use only a fraction of the amount of wood to cook their meals to what they used to need when cooking on a little open fire. Others provide local villages with hydroelectric generators, so that they can get electricity without producing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. These kinds of innovations are helping to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and also helping the poor.

### The Kyoto Protocol farce

I have come across many (especially prior to the recent federal election) people who felt that Australia should have signed the Kyoto Protocol. When I have asked them whether they were aware of how it worked, most thought it was simply about agreeing to reduce our carbon dioxide emissions. But that is only a very small part of it. Here is how it works:

Countries that ratified the Kyoto Protocol agreed to reduce their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to their pre-1991 levels by 2012.

Under the terms of Kyoto, developing countries (including Africa, India, Indonesia, China) can continue to increase emissions without any penalty.

For every tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> that a country exceeds its target, it must pay \$25 to a country that has reduced its CO<sub>2</sub> by more than its target. So who are the winners? Mainly the former Soviet satellite states whose economies crumbled with the fall of communism, and whose inefficient and polluting industries closed down because they could not compete on world markets. The fact is that these countries are buying their goods from elsewhere now – probably China – where the pollution per item produced is far higher than it would be in a modern western country.

Those western countries whose economies have prospered and expanded will not meet their targets, and so have to

pay big dollars in 2012. Kevin Rudd said that Australia looks like it might exceed its target by 1%, or 6 million tonnes, so we would have to pay \$150 million to some of these Balkan or other states who have 'credits'.

The problem with Kyoto is that there are no set methods for calculating a country's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It is generally accepted that it is impossible to calculate it any more accurately than plus or minus 10%. World Bank's calculations indicate Australia will exceed its target by 100 million tonnes, but the Greenhouse Office in Canberra says their calculations show only 6 million. The difference in credits we have to pay is going to be either \$150 million or 2.5 billion. Who will decide? Sounds like a lawyers' paradise!

The problem with Kyoto is that we could almost meet our target by simply not clearing any more land. And if we chose to close down our cement industry, and import all cement from Indonesia, we could pat ourselves on the back and say what exemplary world citizens we are in having met our Kyoto protocol obligations. But buying our cement from Indonesia does absolutely nothing for the world CO<sub>2</sub> levels!

If genuine factual evidence emerges to show that CO<sub>2</sub> does indeed cause an increase in world temperatures, then we should look at the consumption of goods and services by a nation, and then work out what the emissions are per capita, and then call on each nation to reduce their consumption (irrespective of where the goods are made!) to a certain per capita level.

*This article was originally published in the June 2008 'Trowel & Sword', with whom we have a reciprocal arrangement. The Rev Peter Abetz is the minister of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Perth, Western Australia.*

### Footnotes

- 1 West Australian, June 12, 2007 p 16
- 2 <http://www.capmag.com/article.asp?ID=4674> accessed 4/1/2008
- 3 watch part of an interesting lecture he gave at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTUDWy6T050&watch\\_response](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTUDWy6T050&watch_response)
- 4 Inconvenient Errors The Australian 12/10/2007
- 5 Nine Facts about Climate change by Ray Evans, quoted in Greenhouse sceptics to congregate, The Age 28/02/2007
- 6 <http://www.austmus.gov.au/exhibitions/catching/sealevels.htm> accessed 4/1/2008

# Seeker-Sensitive failure

## Preaching and teaching is the faithful way

**Rodney Kleyn**

By their own admission, and according to their own studies, the 'seeker-sensitive,' 'emerging church,' mega-churches of modern day America have failed. Under the title 'Seeking but not Finding,' World Magazine, December 1, 2007, published the following story.

Willow Creek Church in suburban Chicago has been the epicenter of the 'seeker' movement for three decades. During that time, Willow Creek has grown from start-up to around 20,000 in regular attendance. The influential Willow Creek Association has taught its 12,000 member churches — including many that do not share the mother church's evangelical theology — how to grow.

That's why founder Bill Hybels' recent confession that the church's brand of ministry has been a 'mistake' came as a shock to the evangelical world's system.

The confession came in the wake of a book published by Willow Creek. "Reveal: Where Are You?" was co-written by Willow Creek Executive Pastor Greg Hawkins and Callie Parkinson, who leads Willow Creek's Reveal ministry. Reveal, and the book that bears the ministry's name, promote the results of a multi-year study on the state of the American church.

The study suggests what many critics have said for years: Most churches are not doing a good job of true disciple-building.

'We made a mistake,' Hybels said at Willow Creek's annual Leadership Summit, where the results of the survey were presented. 'When people crossed the line of faith and become Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become 'self feeders.' We should have gotten people, taught people, how to read their Bible between service, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own.'

Hybels' words have been reported on several blog sites (including townhall.com). According to Callie Parkinson, the online

conversations have generated a flood of inquiries to Willow Creek and a response by Hawkins on the Reveal website. Parkinson told WORLD that the Reveal study would result in a 'broadening of the movement. There's been a breakthrough in our understanding.' But she reiterated that Willow Creek remains not just 'seeker-focused. We are seeker-obsessed.'

### A relevant critique

Many evaluations of and reactions to this study are available from the internet and from a variety of magazines. Some justify what the mega-churches have done. Others try to discredit the study. Others praise Hybel for his 'confession' and apparent resolve to change. But, perhaps the

criticizes the idea of church, worship, or the gospel as 'product,' and lost sinners as 'consumers.' People, he said, 'are not consumers who need to be satisfied. They're sinners who need to be justified. Preaching is not a technology. It is a means of grace.'

The problems go beyond Willow Creek: Parkinson said the study included 30 churches that 'were not all Willow Creek clones. The findings in the study are true of all churches.' Horton agrees with that: 'The state of the church in America today is poor, and it's a condition that you can't blame on Willow Creek alone. It's increasingly difficult to swim against the tide of materialism, consumerism, and narcissism in the culture.'

This whole study demonstrates several things.

First, it shows that church growth is not to be measured primarily by numbers. The strength of the New Testament Church is not in her size but is in the gospel and truth that she possesses. The Word of God is the power of the Church. The Reveal study reveals that the most satisfied members were those who were part of smaller groups who actually studied the Scriptures together. In these small groups they were getting something that they were not getting in the worship

services.

Second, it tells what does not work in church growth. Willow Creek, and the other mainline mega-churches, are all about innovations in worship and having a host of programs for people to be a part of. The message is, 'Get involved, and you'll feel better about yourself. Your religion will help you, by you doing something.' What is this, but a salvation based on the merit of man? And it bears no real fruit, no spiritual growth.

Third, it shows the need for the Church today to return to the age-old practice of preaching and teaching from the Word of God. This is what churches need. This needs to be the central element in worship. This is the work that the Church is given



best evaluation comes

from Prof. Michael Horton of Westminster Seminary in California. The article in World continues,

That means, according to Michael Horton, a professor at Westminster Seminary California, that American evangelicalism is likely to see 'more of the same' from Willow Creek. 'In the 'seeker' view, evangelism and outreach are spiritual technologies that must be made more efficient,' Horton said. 'Having a survey tell you that you need to add 'discipleship' to the list of technologies that we're trying to make more efficient doesn't solve the fundamental problem.'

Is the use of surveys as a replacement for true spiritual discernment among evangelical church leaders at the core of the problem facing the modern church? Horton

to do. If members are to be 'involved,' their involvement must first be that they sit under biblical preaching.

So, are they learning these lessons? An Ohio radio commentator, quoted by the Baptist Press, summarised the seeker-sensitive movement this way:

*The size of the crowd rather than the depth of the heart determined success. If the crowd was large then surely God was blessing the ministry. Churches were built by demographic studies, professional strategists, marketing research, meeting 'felt needs' and sermons consistent with these techniques. We were told that preaching was out, relevance was in. Doctrine didn't matter nearly as much as innovation. If it wasn't 'cutting edge' and consumer friendly it was doomed. The mention of sin, salvation and sanctification were taboo and replaced by Starbucks, strategy and sensitivity.*

#### A lesson learned?

Are they learning? It maybe sounds like they are, but maybe not. Greg Hawkins, Willow Creek's Executive Pastor, summarised the 'new direction' of the church this way (wordpress.com).

Our dream is that we fundamentally change the way we do church. That we take out a clean sheet of paper and we rethink all of our old assumptions. Replace it with new insights. Insights that are informed by research and rooted in Scripture. Our dream is really to discover what God is doing and how he's asking us to transform this planet.

Can we expect something different, a new direction? The answer is, 'No.' The reason, nothing really has changed and there are two things here that show this.

First, the premise is wrong. They are still 'seeker-sensitive' and not biblical in their method. They may be acknowledging some failure, and that the Bible has some things to say about the nature and method of church outreach and growth, but they are still letting the "consumer" determine the direction to the church.

Second, there is a basic misunderstanding of the reason for the existence of the church. God doesn't ask the Church to 'transform this plane' but to preach the gospel of the cross to sinners, in the power of the Spirit. The Church exists to keep alive the name and witness of God in a world that is perishing, so that men and women may be saved from that destruction and that the name of God may be honored also in the earth.

The lesson for us is to continue in what we have. The lesson is to love what we have and to be thankful for it. The Church does not need the innovations. The Church needs the pure preaching of the gospel of Christ.

#### Countering this direction

This has application especially in the area of ministering to the youth in the Church. In the Reformed Church world the emphasis has not been so much on church growth from the outside and on church size, but on maintaining what we have. That fits with our covenant perspective on church growth. You might say that the mega-church mentality has not come into Reformed circles, but its methods have. We see Reformed Churches, in an effort to keep the youth, adopting many of the same innovations in worship and programs for their youth that you find in the 'emerging church' movement. And, just as Willow Creek has discovered, so

Reformed churches are discovering: this is not working. The youth are not spiritually alive, and the youth are not committed any more to the Church. Again, the message is, the Church needs preaching and teaching. The youth of the Church need instruction. They need catechism. They need to hear the sermons. They need to be incorporated, not segregated. They, as sinners, need the means of grace as much as any other. Without it, they will die spiritually.

'For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God' (1 Corinthians 1:18).

*This was originally published in 'The Standard Bearer', the magazine of the Protestant Reformed Churches in North America. The Rev Rodney Kleyn is pastor of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.*



## RTC Preaching Conference

Thursday 25 & Friday 26 September 2008

# preaching Hebrews ...a better way

*In this majestic epistle  
everything seems to be better*

**a better hope <  
a better covenant <  
better sacrifices <  
a better country <  
a better resurrection <**



Guest Speaker  
**Rev Michael Raiter**  
Principal, Bible College of Victoria

### Reformed Theological College

*Teaching and Life to the Glory of God*  
125 Pigdons Road, Warrn Ponds Victoria 3216  
03 5244 2955  
www.rtc.vic.edu.au

## World in focus

### Eritrean Authorities jail 34 more Christians in house church raid

Eritrean security police cracked down on more Christians again last week, arresting 34 evangelicals gathered for prayer and fellowship in a local home in Keren.

The police raid on 28 May targeted members of the Berhane Hiwet (Light of Life) Church in Keren, Eritrea's third largest city, 124 miles northwest of the capital, Asmara.

All 24 men and 10 women present were taken to prison, with their children left behind.

The Keren raid was the second round of arrests last week in Eritrea, where the oppressive regime has outlawed all independent Protestant churches since 2002, closing their buildings and banning gatherings in private homes.

Worshippers caught disobeying the blanket restrictions are arrested and tortured for weeks, months or even years. They are never allowed legal counsel or brought to trial.

The new arrests followed a spate of unconfirmed reports that began circulating throughout the capital of Asmara last week, indicating that several leading Protestant pastors jailed for four years without charges may soon face trial for treason.

Full Gospel Church leaders Dr. Kifle Gebremeskel and Haile Naizghi and Pastor Tesfatsion Hagos of the Rema Evangelical Church have been imprisoned since May 2004. Their exact whereabouts remain unknown, with their families and church members refused any access to them.

The government recognises only the Eritrean Orthodox, Catholic and Lutheran churches as legal religions, in addition to the traditional Islam practiced by half of the population.

+ *Compass Direct News Service, Post Office Box 27250, Santa Ana California 92799, 949-862-0304, info@compassdirect.org*

### Douwe Visser is WARC's New Theology Secretary

Dutch theologian and pastor Douwe Visser, 54, is the new Executive Secretary for Theology and Ecumenical Engagement for the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). He joins the Geneva secretariat on 2 June 2008.

Visser replaces Odair Pedroso Mateus who left WARC for a position at the World Council of Churches (WCC) in May 2007. Visser is a minister in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands at Rotterdam-Overschie and the former president of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC).

WARC and REC have agreed to merge in 2010 to form the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). Visser resigned as president of REC to join the WARC staff team.

+ *World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 150 route de Ferney, Post Office Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland, +41 22 791 6240, warc@warc.ch*

### Persecution persists in Vietnam despite some helpful signs

Vietnam's Christian history dates back to the 16th century, but still struggles over freedom of religion. Despite some recent positive steps with national decrees supporting religious freedoms as well as the government recognising some denominations and churches, difficulties persist. Security officials put believers under close surveillance, exert pressure to sign pledges to abandon the Christian faith, impose arbitrary fines of up to half-a-year's wages, confiscate properties and arrest those found meeting for worship and prayer. Believers from ethnic groups such as the Montagnards and Hmong especially suffer such treatment and imprisonment. Please pray for the Vietnamese Church amidst these challenging circumstances to express love, wisdom and vigilance to those in authority and to the communities which it faithfully serves.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | No. 482 | Wed 11 Jun 2008*

### Free Church of Scotland General Assembly Moderator's address

The Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland, the Rev Kenneth M. Ferguson, has chosen the theme of holiness for his Address to the General Assembly.

Ferguson says: 'There are many who would describe holiness as a bleak kind of doctrine: an unattractive, outdated, discouraging concept that is in essence, either a series of prohibitions against sin, or a framework of legalistic rules, so that those who claim success in living this way invariably adopt a 'holier than thou', intolerant attitude to others.'

But Ferguson insists that such attitudes are not the result of true holiness but of a judgmental, legalistic lifestyle like that of the Pharisees, whom our Lord condemned for their hypocrisy. 'Holiness on the other hand is not hypocritical but beautiful — it beautifies a person's life because God Himself is the Author of it. His gracious presence and blessing adorn His people's lives. Those who are most holy are most Christ-like.'

In the pursuit of such Biblical holiness Ferguson recommends the Shorter Catechism and quotes the philosopher John Stuart Mill, who said in his essay *On Liberty*: 'The Shorter Catechism and study of the Bible have sharpened the wits of Scotsmen, as to make them stand foremost in the ranks of mental philosophy', and adds 'Maybe it is time for our Nation to re-discover the treasure that is the Westminster Shorter Catechism!'

Ferguson quotes the Anglican writer, John Stott, who said that we, Christ's followers, are sent into the world as His witnesses, 'In order to penetrate other people's worlds, as He penetrated ours; the world of their think-

ing, their misunderstandings of the Gospel, the world of their feeling, their pain, and the world of their living.'

Yet, this involvement with the world is to be undertaken, says Mr. Ferguson, while at the same time maintaining untarnished the standards of Jesus Christ, and not compromising our own Christian integrity. In fact, He says 'True holiness is a Christ-likeness that is lived out in the real world.'

+ *Free Church of Scotland, 15 North Bank Street, The Mound, Edinburgh, EH1 2LS, Scotland, 0131 226 5286, catherine@freechurchofscotland.org.uk*

### Law change would threaten religious education in Russia

The Law on Religion in Russia currently allows everybody to receive religious education in accordance with their preference, and that religious organisations have the right to set up educational religious institutions. However, in mid-April 2008 a bill to amend the Law on Religion was proposed, focusing mainly on the registration of religious organisations and their educational activities. One requirement would be that a religious organisation running a teaching program would first have to register it and a new registration would be needed if it were changed at all. If such an amendment is adopted it could create a huge problem for the churches in Russia and also put the issue of their registered status under threat. Please pray that the churches will continue to have full liberty to teach the truths of the Christian faith.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | No. 481 | Wed 04 Jun 2008*

### Baghdad Presbyterian Church Council

The following is a letter, edited for clarity, from Yousif Al-Saka, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Churches in Iraq: Please distribute this message to all brothers and sisters in churches which have an interest in the Baghdad Presbyterian Church.

'We are pleased to inform our brothers in all of the churches that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Baghdad convened on the morning of Friday 30 May 2008 in accordance with the church constitution in order to elect a new church council for two year terms.

'The election was carried out in a brotherly democratic manner. The required reports were presented by the outgoing president of the council, and by the cashier — concerning church accounts, which is reviewed by a legal auditor assigned for this purpose. The reports were discussed and approved.

'The church council election results were announced:

- 1- Elder Yousif J. Al-Saka  
President of Church Council
- 2- Elder Mazin D. Kaia  
Vice President of Church Council

- 3- Elder Jalal Salomy  
Cashier of the Church
- 4- Elder Kasi Kabas  
Council secretary

'Additionally, five brothers were elected as Church Council members.

'Elder Yousif Al-Saka remained in his post as General Secretary of the Presbyterian Churches in Iraq, which is headquartered in the Church of Baghdad.

'We thank the Lord for this arrangement, as we believe that any management in the church is from the Lord and by His direction. Pray with us that the Lord may keep these brothers safe and give them strength and power in their work for the service of the Church. Amen.'

+ *Yousif Al-Saka, General Secretary, Presbyterian Churches in Iraq*

### Three Churches demand drastic action from South African Government

Three Reformed churches in South Africa have sent a strong letter to their government, declaring that South Africa was in a crisis that required drastic action from the government. They cited several areas that were driving South Africans citizens to despair and fear, including violence, crime and corruption, shortcomings in security and infrastructure, racism, agriculture and food provision, and the Zimbabwe crisis.

The three churches declared that innocent people in the land were living in fear and that rape, child molestation and large-scale corruption were becoming daily occurrences. Most people had the perception that the land was taking rapid strides backwards. They noted the country was losing many persons with necessary social skills to emigration.

The letter said that the failure of South Africa President Mbeki to take a clear standpoint in the Zimbabwe crisis against the immoral and undemocratic conduct of the ruling party, and its accompanying violation of human rights, created the impression that this could also happen in South Africa.

The Dutch Reformed Church (NGK), the Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa (NHKA) and the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA) were the signatories of the letter.

+ *The Reformed Ecumenical Council, 2050 Breton Road Southeast, Suite 102, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546, 616-949-2910, rvh@recweb.org*

### Government attacks Anglicans in Harare

Rev Dr Nolbert Kunonga is a pro-Mugabe activist who has been implicated in extreme violence against Opposition supporters. In 2007 the Anglican Church dismissed him from his post as Bishop of Harare. In January 2008 they charged him with schism and replaced him with Bishop Sebastian Bukara, who has recently become a principal spokesman for Zimbabwe's civil opposition. Harare's High Court

upheld the Church's right to dismiss Kunonga, but ruled that Kunonga and Bukara share the Cathedral. Mugabe's police then violently seized Harare's Anglican properties. On Sunday mornings the police admit Kunonga's few supporters while beating any other Anglicans who dare come near. Harare's numerous Anglicans then started worshipping outdoors. But in mid-May the government extended the ban on public gatherings to include prayer meetings. As violence escalates, meeting is becoming increasingly dangerous. Please pray for the Church in Zimbabwe.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | No. 484 | Wed 25 Jun 2008*

### Tribunal quashes ex-pastor's right to free speech

Deborah Gyapong reports that an Alberta Human Rights Commission panel has ordered a former Christian youth pastor to apologise in the pages of the Red Deer Advocate for a 2002 letter to the editor he wrote opposing homosexual activism.

In a 30 May decision, AHRC panelist Lori Andreachuk also ordered Stephen Boissoin, 41, to request *The Advocate* to publish her judgment against him.

She has also imposed a lifetime ban on ever speaking or writing 'disparagingly' about homosexuals — in the media, on the Internet, in speaking engagements or in emails. She also ordered him to take down any 'disparaging' remarks from his website.

Catholic Civil Rights League president Phil Horgan compared the forced apology to a 're-education program' one might find in a totalitarian state. He called Andreachuk's decision 'highly problematic,' 'intrusive' and 'frankly unworkable.'

Boissoin stands by every word he wrote, even though he has been branded a hater on the front pages of his local paper and said he has been refused the opportunity to effectively rebut accusations against him.

'I will never apologize,' Boissoin said. 'The only way I will pay the money is if it prevents me from appealing.'

Boissoin has been left penniless by the six-year legal battle.

+ *Western Catholic Reporter, 8421-101 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T6A 0L1, Canada, 780-465-8030, wcr@wcr.ab.ca*

### SBC elects Johnny Hunt President

Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church in Woodstock, Georgia, was elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) 12 June on the first ballot.

Hunt was nominated by Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Baptist Church in Pensacola, Florida. Traylor said he was nominating Hunt because of his 'heart for the nations' and his 'heart for the next generation.' Hunt will unite the convention and 'forge a hopeful future' focused on the Gospel and connected to local churches, Traylor said.

Traylor's assessment of Hunt's ability to unite the SBC and to focus on the Gospel is not a unanimous one within and without Baptist circles.

Hunt for several years has been on the forefront of widespread efforts within the SBC to condemn Reformed doctrines of grace and to marginalise Reformed Baptist pastors and congregations in the SBC.

At a Pastor's Conference sermon preceding the 2005 SBC annual meeting, Hunt ridiculed the biblical doctrine of election and indulged in compound logical fallacy by setting up the straw man of a false dichotomy between election and Christ's command in Matthew chapter 28 to preach the Gospel to everyone. Additional examples of Hunt's and others' campaign against Reformed doctrine can be found through key word searches at the Alpha & Omega Ministries Blog.

+ *Southern Baptist Convention, 901 Commerce Street, Nashville, Tennessee 37203-3699, 615-244-2355*

+ *The Baptist Press, 901 Commerce Street, Nashville, Tennessee 37203-3699, bpress@sbc.net*

+ *Alpha & Omega Ministries, 3805 North 12th Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85014, 602-264-7223, Email*

+ *Locusts and Wild Honey, 6028 Lakeshore Road, Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi 39520, elbourne@lakeshorebaptist.net*

### Persecution spurs debate in Algeria

The Algerian government has been appeasing Islamists since early 2008 by implementing its 2006 'Presidential Order Concerning Religion' and repressing Christian worship and practice. Habiba Kouider (35) was charged with 'practising non-Muslim religious rites without a licence' after police found Bibles in her handbag on 29 March. Her case is so controversial that on 27 May the court postponed its verdict. On 1 June police harangued Habiba in the street for two hours. Then on 3 June, four Algerian Christians got suspended jail sentences and fines for 'attempting to shake the faith of Muslims'. The government asserts that religious liberty is part of a foreign conspiracy to colonise Algeria. But many Algerians are not buying that and voices for liberty and justice are being raised in Algeria. Please pray for Algeria and its Church in this time of trial and debate.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | No. 483 | Wed 18 Jun 2008*

Advertise your Happenings  
and Church events in



## World in focus (continued)

### The General Synod of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (May 27-31, 2008)

*Dirk J. van Garderen*

There are times when being bilingual is helpful. Attending the triennial general synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt) (GKV) was a case in point. The synod meets over a period of several months on Fridays and Saturdays, but sets one week aside as 'Foreign Delegates Week' when representatives from sister churches around the world are invited to attend. To the credit of our Dutch brethren, much of the meeting was conducted in English (with Dutch translation provided via Powerpoint) but, when it came to debate or in-depth discussion, Dutch became necessary. It was a privilege and distinct advantage to be able to follow the debate in both languages!

This article and those still to come will report impressions gained while at that synod, and during talks and interviews with various individuals both in their homes and

churches. I must stress from the outset that my thoughts are a little like those of a tourist visiting another country. You take a single picture at one moment of time. While such a picture may tell a story, it is a very limited one.

The General Synod took place at Zwolle (Zuid). We 30 foreign delegates stayed at a vacation place called Fredesheim, about 5kms outside Steenwijk. Going to and from the synod therefore involved a 40km bus journey. Long days (8.00am till 11.00pm) awaited us.

The GKV's synodical deputies for relations with churches abroad (Deputaten Betrekkingen Buitenlandse Kerken — BBK) were our hosts. They were wonderful in making sure that we lacked no good thing. We were treated with all kinds of Dutch goodies. The coffee and nibbles were superb, as were the Dutch-style meals. Most striking for me was the availability of wine and beer during the main meal and at the end of the day! A lasting impression is the frequency of coffee breaks that demanded extreme self-control.

#### The foreign delegates and churches

Apologies notwithstanding, many countries were represented. These included Scotland, Ireland, Spain, Kenya, South Africa, India, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States and Venezuela.

We also heard of a growing bond being formed with (Reformed) churches in a number of other European countries such as Wales, England, Russia, Austria, France and Portugal. Churches in the Congo, Uganda, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan and Brazil are also part of the family. There are even more countries with contacts both directly and via the work of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

I mention this list in order to highlight that, in my view, the GKV is very conscious of its past isolation from the wider, worldwide Church, both in the Netherlands and beyond its own borders. As a response to the belief in the catholicity (universal) nature of the church and the call the Lord himself makes for unity (John 17.11,20), GKV is actively seeking to create and maintain genuine sister bonds. Two reasons were cited over and over again: we need to hear of your experiences, perspective and input and we want to make available what we have learned and what we have.

While GKV has many sisters, some are much more involved than others. What struck me was that the three closest sisters were denominations that had begun as migrant (daughter) churches in South Africa, Australia and Canada/USA. These are churches in a category of their own. The contact is longstanding and intense in every



*Rev Dirk van Garderen at the General Synod of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands*

sense of the word. This was voiced on the floor of synod through frequent sharp and critical exchanges of view and concerns. As an observer from a somewhat different tradition, I was left wondering whether the threatening tone of some exchanges had any positive value at all.

The other European sisters at synod were, in the main, tiny, marginalised and struggling to survive. There is little evidence of growth or impact on the larger communities in which they live. My impression is that while there is much genuine love for the Lord and piety, the future for these churches is not bright.

The picture beyond Europe, outside of those churches planted by Dutch migration, is often different. The presence of a strong and active Korean (koshin) delegation indicates a huge reformed/presbyterian presence in that country. Reports from countries such as Kenya and India were also focused on rapid and impressive growth. It reinforced my growing conviction that the Christian faith is already centred much more on countries in Africa and Asia (Korea, China and India come to mind) than in Europe. The possibility of a country like China having a 40% Christian population by 2050 is real. The challenge here is for GKV and churches such as ours to meet, see, hear and embrace the Reformed faith lived and expressed outside Dutch/European settings. That will take not always be easy or smooth sailing, if only because it is often difficult for us to separate our perception of the Gospel and more especially how we worship from our traditions and culture.

It strikes me as a pity that these rare opportunities to experience and get insight into what is happening in other churches around the world are ones that very few of us have. It leaves us the poorer! I do not know the solution to this except to point out that in 2009 we in New Zealand are going to be given a unique opportunity. The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) will be meeting in Christchurch. Many delegates I spoke to look forward to being there. Find out more about this conference and, if you possibly can, try and be there for a few sessions.

### **The GKV and ecclesiastical on the home front**

Readers with a special interest in church life in the Netherlands will know that there are many different reformed denominations in that land. The GKV itself was the result of a major secession that took place in the

1940s. The Liberated Churches suffered yet another split in the 1960s when a major faction broke away from it and formed a denomination 'buiten verband' – outside of the federation. In recent years, yet another group broke away.

What struck me is that in the past two decades, the GKV has had a growing desire to heal the rift and seek reunification with these churches. This has called for serious self-examination and a willingness to confess its own guilt as well as a desire to do whatever it takes to build bridges.

No bridge is considered more important than the one between the GKV and the 'buiten verbanders' (the denomination that now calls itself *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken – NGK*). Significant numbers of leaders and members in both denominations are very much open to seeking to come together. The problem is that the NGK has taken a somewhat different route in its practice and relation to the confessions. There are a small minority of office-bearers in that denomination who, as I understand it, have not felt able to sign their agreement to the doctrines contained in the Three Forms of Unity (Belgic, Heidelberg and Canons of Dordt) but who have nevertheless been ordained as elders. Furthermore, in recent years the NGK has allowed women to be ordained into all three of the offices (minister, elder and deacon). It is by no means true that all or even the majority of churches in that denomination have made use of this option.

The central issue in discussion between the GKV and NGK has focused on the necessity of signifying agreement with the confession (subscription). The GKV will not compromise on this requirement for its own office bearers, but the question becomes whether or not this is sufficient reason for discussion between these churches to end. The deputies of GKV suggest that it is not. They point to a growing understanding and appreciation between them and the committee of the NGK. This has resulted in the formulation of an *Interim Statement Concerning the Discussion between in the DKE and CCS Regarding the Binding of Confessions*<sup>1</sup>. The bottom line in this statement is that while there are still differences in the manner in which these two denominations handle the confession, they also recognise that they stand on the same foundation — that of Scripture as it is echoed in the Reformed Confession(s). On that basis, the committees believe that further discussion concerning specific issues arising from this confession can take

and must place. As is to be expected, not all of the GKV deputies agree with this interim statement and a minority report has also been tabled.

The discussions I heard had input from the deputies, synodical delegates and a number of the sister churches. The Dutch style of debating is rather different from ours in the English speaking tradition. The debate moves in 'rounds'. The first 'round' allows for general discussion, concerns and questions on the report or specific points that it raises. Speakers may speak for or against the recommendations. The deputies who have the last say in answering questions note the input, respond to the views and concerns raised. In the second round of discussions suggestions and amendments will be considered. The discussion I heard was only at this first level and therefore no decisions were made.

It is difficult to predict the outcome with any certainty. My impression is that, concerns and criticism notwithstanding, the GKV will not stop talking and seeking closer ties and even unity with the NGK. There is already increasing closeness between various congregations in a number of regions. Furthermore, I saw evidence of various streams within each denomination and where, in a local area, these streams run parallel, moves towards greater unity are inevitable.

### **Men and women in the church**

By far the most discussed and, in the opinion of many, controversial issue currently facing the GKV concerns the role of women and men within the church. Everyone I met has a strongly held opinion.

The issue has lived in GKV for some time. Hence the Synod of 2005 (Amersfoort) gave the deputies a very specific mandate:

1. By means of a problem analysis method, based on empirical research involving the Theological University (Kampen), to clarify the questions and problems that are being raised in the church concerning the role of 'women in the church'.
2. To formulate an approach to this subject that enables us to arrive at a Scripturally-based response to the issues (questions) and problems that arise as a result of this investigation.<sup>2</sup>

What happened is summarised in the report that points out that the investigation was conducted among some 2,500 members and 70 ministers. The results

*Continued on page 16*

# Reformed Churches of

## Papua New Guinea Missions Project

### Background

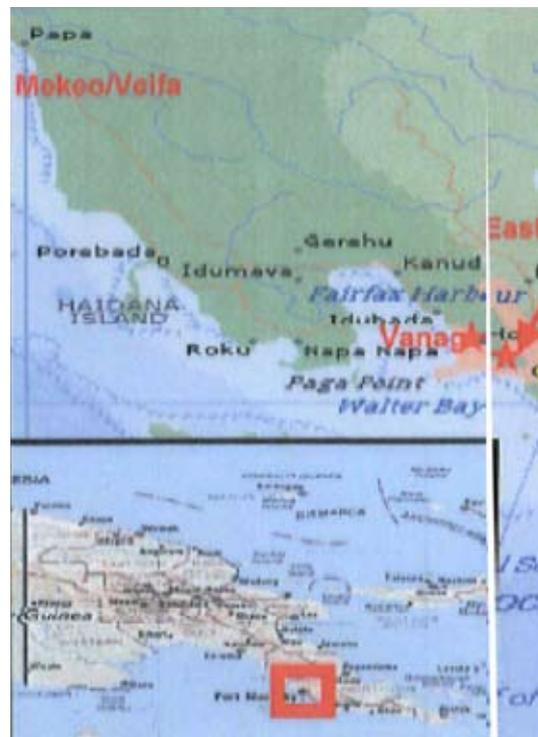
In keeping with its mandate to seek out and develop mission opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region, Synod 2002 approved a proposal from the OMB to become involved in mission work in PNG.

Currently, we are partnering with the Reformed Churches of PNG in cooperation with the Canadian Reformed Churches. Their missionary, Rev Stephen 't Hart has been faithfully labouring in PNG for nine years. From a small group of 13 people

there has been strong growth and there are now 9 churches in PNG.

Stephen is now teaching at the new Reformed Churches Bible College with the aim of equipping leaders and other members of the churches in order to strengthen the local churches. Lord willing, indigenous pastors and men will go out in church planting ministries within PNG.

Wayne VanderHeide, a teacher, is also teaching at the Reformed Churches Bible



College alongside Rev 't Hart. Both men are also involved in the local churches.

Our own NZ missionaries, Wally and Jeannette Hagoort, manage the Mapang Missionary Home that offers accommodation to missionaries and others who are travelling through Port Moresby. In addition, they are involved in and assist (through catechism teaching, literary classes etc) church plants in and around Port Moresby.

There are many opportunities for extending the work in PNG, but the missionaries are limited in their time. Understandably, they are eagerly awaiting the arrival of the Doumas to progress the work that the Lord has begun.

*The team in Papua New Guinea (back row) Rev. and Mrs 't Hart, the Van der Heides and the Hagoorts (front)*

# New Zealand



## The Doumas

Rev Alan and Mrs Douma are not unfamiliar to us in the RCNZ. Alan served the Reformed Churches of Foxton and Christchurch from 1989-2001.

Since that time he has been serving as minister in Tivoli, Queensland, Australia.

The Doumas have three children: Alana, Scott and Aleysha, who will continue working, studying and living in Australia in 2009 when Rev and Mrs Douma move to PNG.

In 2005, at the invitation of the OMB, the Doumas visited PNG for a time of orientation to consider whether they were willing and able to work there in a missionary capacity. Since this visit, the Reformed Church of Hastings extended a call to Rev Douma to serve as a missionary in PNG. The call was accepted subject to Alan sustaining a colloquium doctum in NZ, which he did at a presbytery meeting in March 2008.

Plans are now underway to prepare for the Doumas to take up this work in January 2009, DV.

## OMB/Hastings Roles

The Reformed Church of Hastings, which extended the call to Rev Douma, will take responsibility for the care and spiritual oversight of the Doumas while they are serving as missionaries in PNG.

The work they undertake on the field in PNG will be under the supervision of the OMB.

The Reformed Churches of New Zealand will support the Doumas by synodical quotas, freewill offerings and donations.



*Rev Alan and Mrs Douma*

## How You Can Help

While the Doumas will not be leaving to take up their work in PNG until January 2009, this year will be one of preparation for them.

- Pray that the Lord would equip them through the training undertaken.
- Pray that they would be able to learn the language to be able to communicate the gospel effectively.
- Pray that the Lord would make the way clear for them to take up the call.
- Pray that the funds required would be collected.
- Please consider prayerfully how you may be able to support any appeals for funds for this project.

It is budgeted that \$165,000.00 is needed to be raised this year to settle the Doumas in PNG.

*Continued from page 13*

provide an insight into the opinions that one encounters in the GKV in 2007.

Key results:

1. Women are involved in our churches in all kinds of ways and areas.
2. About half of the church members are in favour of female deacons.
3. A minority is in favour female elders or ministers;
4. The opinions of church members are correlated to their level of education and age;
5. There is a difference of opinion and ambivalence/uncertainty<sup>3</sup> of Biblical givens regarding (role and place of) men and women (in the church).

The committee also investigated various studies and decisions made by closely related Bible-believing (mainly reformed) churches.

The result of this huge study is that the deputies (in a majority report) suggest a 'double track' for the future. 1) A thorough study of the issue not so much by the theologians and experts, but by the church as a whole. The belief is that the members themselves need to study and discover/seek God's authoritative, biblical instruction on this issue. What the empirical study reveals is that while people have opinions, there is not always evidence of thorough bible study on which such opinions are based. 2) At the same time, there is a need to come to some concrete (even if

temporary) agreements on a course of action. This should include specific guidance on how women can become more involved in all areas of church life. My own thinking is that there will likely be a strong push towards the deaconess – a non-authoritative calling that may or may not involve a form of ordination.

Note well, I witnessed only the 'first round' of discussion. Clearly opinions were strongly divided. What was especially telling is that the vast majority of foreign delegates who spoke on this subject expressed great alarm over what they perceive is happening. Many expressed a sense of 'dèjà vu' – seeing strong parallels with what happened in the GKN (synodical) during the 1960s and in the CRCNA in subsequent decades. The daughter churches (Australia and Canada in particular) expressed not only alarm, but sounded the warning that moving in this direction may well jeopardise the sister-relationship. The pressure is very real. I await the outcome of this synod with great interest.

#### **The RCNZ and GKV**

I listened to and learned much from the foreign delegates week at synod. It was, I believe, difficult and ill-advised to address the GKV from an RCNZ perspective on these issues. Their current struggles and ours here in NZ do indeed coincide at many points. We share the same confessional heritage to say the least. But, the history, setting and context of GKV is very different from ours. We do not have a history of divisions as they have. Their

pains and challenges are not the same as ours. Unlike the GKV, we in NZ have virtually no other denominations within NZ that share or appreciate our confessional foundations. The ordination of women into any of the offices is not an issue that we have chosen to face or study at this time. While we might have strong opinions as individuals, our churches have not made an official pronouncement on the subject because, to date, we find ourselves satisfied with the status quo. But we can learn from GKV and whatever conclusions we draw from what their findings and decisions may well help shape ours.

I found being at the synod both a privilege and a huge, often daunting responsibility. I am thankful for the opportunity and hope that it may in turn help us as churches as well.

*Rev. D. van Garderen is the minister of the Reformed-Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach and serves as a member of our InterChurch Relations Committee*

1 DKE: deputaten kerkelijke eenheid (the deputies from GKV). CCS: Commissie voor Contact and Samenspreking (deputies from NGK)

2 I have formulated the mandate a little different from the English translation offered by the deputies. I believe it expresses it more clearly and consistently with the original Dutch. (For those interested, this material is easily obtainable on the GKV website.)

3 The Dutch phrase is difficult to translate. It reads, 'er is verschil van mening en verlegenheid omtrent

## **Feminine focus**

# Historic Hymns and their context: Prudentius

**Sally Davey**

I love the good hymns of the Christian faith. Not because I'm a musical expert (I'm not – though I do enjoy the music). Rather, it's

because our hymns enable us to sing the wonderful truths about God back to God, in praise that comes from our hearts. Good hymns teach us many things, and they impress these things on our minds and our hearts through frequent use. They have been a great blessing to me since my earliest days; and I know they will be to the end of my life. They have helped teach me the truth, they have encouraged me when I've been anxious, and they have helped me see that true, vibrant faith in God has lived in the hearts of Christians right back through the centuries. Yes, singing the tried-and-true hymns of earlier years has connected me with the whole

church of Christ throughout the ages, and I'm thankful for it.

Of course, there has been a lot of controversy about what we sing in worship over the past few decades, and that has caused many Christians to study the subject by going back to the Scriptures and to Church history. Ours is not the first age to have a struggle over music in worship. Reading about this has encouraged me greatly, and has only helped increase my appreciation of good hymns. Some of you have told me that you also find learning about the history and context of good hymns helps you appreciate them. So that is my excuse for writing some more on the subject in this

column! I hope you will find another few articles on hymns and hymn writers useful to you and your children. My purpose in the articles that follow is to show the links between the state of the church in different periods of history, and the quality of the hymns that were written in them.

Christians who express doubts about the quality of contemporary praise choruses frequently hear, by way of reply, that their taste is prejudiced in favour of the old and obscure. 'Oh, you never like anything unless it's at least a hundred years old.' 'Yes, we know you prefer classical music – Bach and Beethoven and all that sort of stuff – but why should you inflict it on us in church? It's all a matter of taste, and I just happen to like simpler, more up-to-date, praisey things. I always feel good when I sing those.' Probably you have had this kind of conversation if you are at all interested in what we sing in worship. Perhaps you have even said these kinds of things yourself. But perhaps you have also wondered whether the point at issue is *really* one of old or new at all.

### **Biblical revival and hymn-writing**

I have frequently wondered this, and have often suspected that there are important reasons why hymns of certain periods in Church history seem more honouring to God, and more appropriate to his worship, than many of those written in the last few decades. Being interested in the hymns we sing, as well as in the history of the church, I have tried to broaden my understanding by reading on the subject. My conclusion is that good hymns were written in periods of history when the Christian church was at its most faithful. These are the periods when the Scriptures were most read and understood, and when the desire of God's people is to please him rather than themselves. These have been periods when sin was recognised, true theology upheld, and Christians had a hunger for living righteous lives. Consequently, the poetry and music that have gone into the hymns of these periods have been biblical, reverent, and in tune with the themes of salvation as found in God's Word. And these are the hymns that have stood the test of time: they are in the churches' hymnals still.

But what of the low points in church history? The same principle applies. Some periods were characterised by reckless neglect of biblical truth, a careless slide into sin among leaders and people alike. The hymns produced in such times also reflect their age. Such hymns are frequently

characterised by weak or wrong doctrine, a focus on subjective experience, or a distorted under-emphasis or over-emphasis on aspects of the Gospel. One could turn to the Church of the Middle Ages to find such music; or to the Church in much of the western world in the late nineteenth century. In the Middle Ages worship had become an extravaganza of elaborate musical performances by choirs and priests. Congregations were reduced to audiences who watched and listened to what they did not understand. The words, in Latin, were those of the Roman Catholic mass, and reflected the theology of medieval Catholicism. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, much of the Christian church in the West had been affected by pietistic subjectivism in various forms. In Britain and the United States, for instance, the 'Holiness' movement stressed inner emotional surrender to God. It encouraged Christians to seek God in their feelings and experiences, rather than through study of the Scriptures. Unsurprisingly, we find the hymns written in this period are subjective, sentimental and very much lacking in objective biblical content. They aim to move the emotions, rather than to instruct. (Think, for instance, of the much-loved and often-sung '*In the Garden*,' written by C. Austin Miles in 1912. Its story is one of imagined, overly sentimental and subjective experience.) Not all the hymns written in earlier times are good, because not all periods of church history have been good. That is not to say that there has not been good music written in those periods, but generally, there is little written for use in worship that is good for worship.

### **Church life in the hymnbook**

I love the fact that the church today is able to sing the best of the hymns of the entire sweep of church history. I grew up with the Anglican Church's *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, which (in its earlier editions) included hymns from the early church up to the mid-nineteenth century, when it was compiled. It was wonderful being able to learn them by singing them frequently, getting to know them so well I could sing them by heart. They delight me still. Our own *Psalter Hymnal* contains hymns from the same range of periods in church history – have a look next time you sing from it. We sing, every Sunday and sometimes during the week as well, hymns written by Christians over a 1500-plus year period, and are blessed in many ways by this. What are some of the ways?

Firstly, these hymns enlarge our understanding of the Christian life. They were written by believers living in entirely different circumstances than ours. Some faced open physical persecution. Others lived in situations where the wider culture paid respect to the teaching of the Bible, and the distinctions between wider society and the church community were much less than in our day. Each hymn writer faced different challenges to his faith. Some faced trials from without. Others struggled with the burden of their sin. Some endured terrible trials of bereavement or other loss. Others grappled with doubts about the faith. The hymns faithful believers wrote, if they are also good poetry, will edify us as we sing them. We can join our hearts with them as our minds reflect on the fact that we, too, share trials and burdens. We know sin, and salvation, just as they did. This happens as it does today when we meet Christians whose culture or life experiences are far removed from our own. Though our life stories may be different, our basic understanding of God's grace is the same – and we enjoy fellowship with them. So it is with the Christian hymn writers of the past – we fellowship with them in their songs. This is part of what we might call the 'communion of saints'; oneness of heart and mind with the faithful believers of all times and places. To acknowledge this is healthy. It prevents us becoming arrogant and complacent about any spiritual strengths we might claim as ours today. It helps us to see that our generation is not more 'special' than any other. There are heights of blessing enjoyed by believers of the past that we have not yet seen; and there are sufferings and difficulties with which we have not yet had to contend, but we can learn from those who have had them. What they have written in their hymns records this for us; and we can sing with them.

### **Christian doctrine in the hymnbook**

Secondly, hymns teach us the important truths of the faith. Paul states this clearly in Colossians 3:16: '*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*' (NASB) There is a connection between singing hymns and teaching one another, and we often find this as we sing the hymns of the faithful. For one thing, some hymns were written specifically to teach truth in times when error threatened

the church. It is useful to sing truth, as the tune helps embed the words in our minds more effectively. Music aids memory. You can see this with small children, who are able to learn quite long and complicated hymns if they sing them often. You can also see it with elderly Christians, even when their memory is failing in all sorts of other ways. When they hear the tune of a familiar hymn, they can often remember many of the words. And what an encouragement that must be to them! Here is Dr Don Carson's story, as recounted to an Australian interviewer:

'... My mother died of Alzheimer's disease, over nine years. Nine or ten months before she died, you'd get a small flicker from the eyes or squeeze of the hand if you held up pictures of her grandchildren. Six months before she died, if you sang an old hymn like 'Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine,' you'd get a squeeze. Or a quote from the King James Version that she'd been brought up on. That was about the last thing that produced any response in her. The most deeply embedded memories in that decaying brain were the old hymns and memorised Scripture. There is something worrying to me about a generation that sings choruses that won't last more than five years. There's not much memorisation of Scripture, and there's not much memorisation of doctrinally profound hymns. I want to see that reborn. Nobody's going to die remembering 'He's a great big wonderful God.'<sup>1</sup>

What do we want to remember when we're in a rest home in the days of our infirmity? Surely it is truth about God! Let's make sure the hymns we get to know best through frequent singing are the one that most edify our souls! Teach them to your children too, so that they will 'remember their creator in the days of their youth,\` – and on into old age.

### Confessional hymnody

Sometimes Christians have written hymns that teach truth as summarised in the confessions and catechisms of the church. Mrs Cecil Frances Alexander, writer of 'There is a Green Hill Far Away' and 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' did just this – for the children of her Sunday School classes. Samuel Stone (writer of 'The Church's One Foundation') did this too. Martin Luther and Horatio Bonar were others. These hymn writers had the whole orb of biblical truth in mind, and they wrote a variety of hymns dealing with different parts of the whole. At other times, however, the church was

grappling with a particular heresy, and Christians wrote hymns that stressed the truth against that heresy. Their aim was to help imprint right thinking on Christians' minds, for the good of the whole church.

One of the best examples of such a time is the fourth century, which began with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, and saw the ending of state persecution of the church. It was also, however, a time when fundamental disputes about important doctrines arose — and the church had to deal with a number of heresies. Early in this century a church leader from Alexandria named Arius began to emphasize the unity of the Godhead so strongly that

he reduced Christ, the Son of God, to a subordinate status. Christ, he taught, was the first-created being of the Father; and being created, was not equal with him. The logical implication was that Christ was not God; and this is what Arius and his followers taught. Huge controversy, especially in the eastern church, followed; and in response the Emperor Constantine called a council at Nicaea in 325. The Council of Nicaea ruled against Arius's teachings, but dissension and confusion was to continue right across the Christian world for many decades to come. One courageous defender of biblical truth, Athanasius, was exiled five times because he opposed the church for

## "Of the Father's Love Begotten"

*Of the Father's love begotten  
Ere the worlds began to be,  
He is Alpha and Omega,  
He the source, the ending He,  
Of the things that are, that have  
been,  
And that future years shall see,  
Evermore and evermore.*

*At his Word the worlds were framed;  
He commanded: it was done:  
Heav'n and earth and depths of  
ocean  
In their threefold order one;  
All that grows beneath the shining  
Of the moon and burning sun,  
Evermore and evermore.*

*He is found in human fashion,  
Death and sorrow here to know,  
That the race of Adam's children,  
Doom'd by Law to endless woe,  
May not henceforth die and perish  
In the dreadful gulf below,  
Evermore and evermore.*

*O that Birth for ever blessed!  
When the Virgin, full of grace,  
By the Holy Ghost conceiving,  
Bare the Saviour of our race.  
And the babe, the world's Redeemer,  
First reveal'd His sacred face,  
Evermore and evermore.*

*This is He Whom seers in old time  
Chanted of with one accord;  
Whom the voices of the prophets  
Promised in their faithful word;*

*Now He shines, the long-expected;  
Let creation praise its LORD,  
Evermore and evermore.*

*O ye heights of Heav'n, adore Him,  
Angel-hosts, His praises sing;  
All dominions, bow before Him,  
And extol our God and King;  
Let no tongue on earth be silent,  
Every voice in concert ring,  
Evermore and evermore.*

*Righteous Judge of souls departed,  
Righteous King of them that live,  
On the Father's throne exalted  
None in might with Thee may strive;  
Who at last in vengeance coming  
Sinners from Thy face shalt drive,  
Evermore and evermore.*

*Thee let old men, Thee let young  
men,  
Thee let boys in chorus sing;  
Matrons, virgins, little maidens,  
With glad voices answering;  
Let their guileless songs re-echo,  
And the heart its praises bring,  
Evermore and evermore.*

*Christ, to Thee, with God the Father,  
And, O Holy Ghost to Thee,  
Hymn and chant with high thanksgiv-  
ing,  
And unwearied praises be,  
Honour, glory, and dominion,  
And eternal victory,  
Evermore and evermore.*

capitulating to Arianism. The controversy continued, and was only resolved, finally, after careful discussion over time by theologians who went back to the Scriptures and chose more helpful terminology to define more carefully what the Bible teaches about Christ's divinity. Church leaders settled this by clear decisions made at the Council of Constantinople in 381. Sadly, however, it took a lot longer for ordinary Christians to give up their faulty Arian thinking.

Part of the problem was that Arians composed simple ditties with catchy tunes, so that their teaching was spread quickly by the undiscerning Christians who sang them in the streets. At first the church leaders responded with a crackdown on all hymn-singing. However, this did not work. The singing did not stop, and the heresy continued to spread. But another trend helped address the problem. This was the writing of hymns that taught the biblical truth about Christ — his divinity. It was in the fourth century that churches began to sing the *Gloria* — in one of its forms translated into the words we know so well: 'Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.' This formula, reciting praise to all three Persons of the Trinity, has been sung for centuries by Anglicans at the end of every Psalm. We, of course, use it as an end-of-service doxology. Probably the best-known hymn-writer of this period was Ambrose, the great bishop of Milan who so influenced the young Augustine. Ambrose wrote hymns that he taught his congregation to sing, and they proved extremely popular for centuries after, serving as a model for other Latin hymns. One of his contemporaries, who also wrote hymns, was the poet, Prudentius.

### An early church hymn-writer

Aurelius Prudentius Clemens (his full name) was born in 348 in the Spanish north-east province of Tarraconensis. His early life saw the fiercest raging of the battle over Arianism in the church. He came from a good Roman provincial family, who saw that he had a good education. He was trained in grammar, rhetoric, law and legal practice, which prepared him well for imperial administration. He entered the service of the state and rose to the highest level. He ultimately served twice as governor in provinces in Italy, Spain or Gaul (France) — the remaining records do not tell us exactly where, although we know that he spent a period towards the end of his

career in the imperial court at Rome. He was also a master of the Latin language, and by 402 he was writing poetry. By all accounts, he was one of the great Latin poets of the later imperial period; and one commentator calls him 'A Christian poet of the first order.'<sup>2</sup> But at the age of 57 he seems to have made a firm decision to devote the rest of his life to spiritual service to God, and retired to a monastery. He lived there very sparingly, fasting during the day and abstaining from meat. His main occupation was writing poetry and hymns. (To put Prudentius in a contemporary perspective, imagine him as a senior civil servant with a good education in literature and languages who decides, in his fifties, to devote himself to full-time



John Mason Neale

Christian service by using his writing skills. He sells his city home and goes and lives more simply in the country, reading, writing and doing what he can to help other Christians develop a better understanding of the God of the Scriptures through hymn-writing and other creative works). Prudentius would have become familiar with some of Ambrose's hymns during the period of his administrative career that he spent in and around Rome, and certainly, some of his own hymns reflect Ambrose's influence. According to church historian Kenneth Scott Latourette, Prudentius's hymns were, however, 'a new type of hymn, having more warmth and glow than those of Ambrose', and intended by him for personal and domestic use rather than for use in worship.<sup>3</sup>

One of Prudentius's most famous works, still sung today, is the plainsong hymn, 'Of the Father's love begotten'. It is a good example of those written to counter Arianism by emphasizing Christ's divinity. It looks back to the decisions of the Council at Nicaea, and teaches what had been finally accepted once and for all at the Council of Constantinople in 381. Prudentius's hymn speaks of Jesus' full divinity, of the fact that he is co-equal with the Father. It also emphasises his full humanity, telling of his birth as a baby. In short, every line teaches us about the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, in his divine and human nature. Those who sing it remind themselves (and their hearers) that Christ is co-eternal with the Father (verse 1); that through Him all things were made (verse 2; John 1:3); that he came in human form to redeem his people (verse 3); that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (verse 4; also the Apostles' Creed); that he is the one the prophets foresaw (verse 5); that all in heaven and on earth shall bow before him (verse 6; Philippians 2:10-11); that he will judge all men (verse 7; John 5:22); that all people are to praise him (verse 8; Psalm 148); and that we are to sing praises to Christ, together with the Father and the Spirit (verse 9). So many aspects of the biblical teaching about God the Son are in this hymn! It helped to instill the truth in the minds and hearts of Christians in Prudentius's day; and serves to show us how hymns of this type never lose their value to the church. Both his words and the tune they are sung to<sup>4</sup> still edify 21<sup>st</sup>-century believers .

### The gift of translation

But Prudentius's words would still be in Latin, forgotten by the Church and unavailable for us today, had it not been for the skills and passion of a nineteenth-century Anglican vicar. John Mason Neale (1818-66), the great hymn translator, was a Cambridge-educated scholar who had come under the influence of the Oxford, or High Church movement, during his years as an undergraduate. Part of the driving-force of this movement was the desire to rediscover the teaching and practices of the early Church, and to restore more dignified, reverent worship to the Church of the day. In Neale it took the form of zeal for church architecture, as well as for the hymns of the early church. He (and a few others) loved the old Latin hymns, and lamented the fact that the Reformers had

discarded the use of these when removing medieval Catholic excesses from Protestant worship. Neale was a serious appreciator of good poetry, and had a good eye for hymns that were well-written, with solid theological content. While his High Church convictions do not make Neale himself a model of good teaching, it is nevertheless interesting that he, like John Keble and John Henry Newman, wrote good hymns that they have bequeathed to the church.

Neale believed English-speaking Christians needed better hymns for worship. By the mid-nineteenth century, apart from metrical psalms (which were of varying quality), the English church had the hymns of Isaac Watts (which Neale disliked), and those of Charles Wesley and John Newton. Newton's hymns, Neale believed, were not good poetry; though he liked Wesley's, admiring their warmth and considerable depth. What he

really wanted was the recovery of the Latin hymns for the English churches of his day. So he decided to make good translations of the early Latin (and some Greek) hymns. *'Of the Father's love begotten'* is one of his most famous translations. Among others are *'All glory, laud and honour'*, *'Christ is made the sure foundation'*, *'Come, ye faithful, raise the anthem'*, *'The day of resurrection'*, *'A great and mighty wonder'*, *'Jerusalem the golden'*, *'O come, O come, Emmanuel'*, *'The royal banners forward go'*, and *'Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle'*. Where possible, as with *'Of the Father's love begotten'*, he retained the original meter. He also wrote his own original hymns; of which the Boxing Day hymn, *'Good King Wenceslas'*, is probably the best-known.

Neale knew what he was about: he understood poetry, and he wanted the Church to be able to sing the best from earlier

days. He had an evangelical upbringing, and perhaps this accounts for his appreciation of hymns which express deep joy in the Gospel (such as Wesley's). He and others had long admired the simplicity, vigour and strong heart of the good Latin hymns. He thought the Church should be able to sing them again. I think he was right.

#### (Endnotes)

- 1 "Is the Church a House of Worship? An Interview with Don Carson, Research Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School", Tony Payne, *The Briefing*, Matthias Media, Issue #232, 2000.
- 2 Matthew Bunson, "Prudentius," *Encyclopedia of the Roman Empire* (Facts on File), p. 350.
- 3 Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity, Volume I: to A.D. 1500* (HarperCollins, San Francisco, 1975), p. 208.
- 4 The hymn is sung to a 12<sup>th</sup> century plainsong melody (See *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, No. 56)

## Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

# Gleanings from our bulletins...

### Avondale

Family prayer & praise items: At 2.30pm on Saturday (7.30 this morning our time) in Minnesota, Thomas and Kari exchanged their wedding vows and began their married life. We are thankful that the Lord has brought them together and we pray that He will bless them richly and keep them close to Him.

Opportunity to serve. Due to internal movement, a unique and rare opportunity has arisen to show off your impeccable washing and ironing skills. The responsibilities of this autonomous role are to launder the Lord's Supper table cloths after their monthly use. The successful candidate(s) will have strong acumen for hygiene and have excellent time management skills to ensure that the table cloths are cleaned well in advance before the next Lord's supper. Apply within or see any member of the Board of Management.

Family prayer & praise items: Congratula-

tions to Phillip and Jane Ploeg who this week became the parents of a daughter, Charlotte Mary. We thank God for this gift of new life and we ask for wisdom and strength as they seek to raise her in His name.

### Bishopdale

Pastoral notes. Last Sunday, the congregation voted in favour of extending a call to Reinier Noppers. A letter of call was sent out this week. We would encourage you all to write to Reinier and Trudy and their children, Caleb, 18 (studying at Wintec), Rachel, 15 (year 11), Leon, 11 (year 7) and Eliza, 9 (year 5). Letters and cards can be sent to 129 Mardon Road, Enderley, Hamilton. E-mails can be sent to [rtoppers@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rtoppers@xtra.co.nz). Even a few lines encouraging them to come would be helpful.

Jake Couprie will start working full-time in the church in mid to late June. Last Sunday, the congregation also voted in favour of supporting Jake financially. The whole situation will be reviewed by the Session later in the year. Please encourage Jake and Thelmarie; the next few months will involve much change and may prove stressful for them.

Pastoral. Next Sunday morning, Lord willing, Suzy Braam and Tim McCracken will publicly profess their faith in God.

### Bucklands Beach

Pastoral. Our thoughts are very much with the Munroe family. Br Mark's mother (Mrs Goodenough) was buried this past Wednesday. At the same time Carol's mother (Mrs Flinn) remains frail. May the Lord's strength provide encouragement, comfort and, above all, hope.

### Christchurch

Pastoral. We want to share our sympathy with Jaap van der Goot and Jannie and Jouke van der Woude as the Lord took home Willy, who has been dealing with cancer for some time. Please remember him in your prayers as he deals with this tremendous change in his life and may be other adjustments he may have to make; taking into account his eyesight. We would also like to express our appreciation to the Rev Jim Klazinga who came up from Timaru to lead the service.

From Pastor John. Today it's my pleasure and delight to be leading you in worship... again! (I did that once before back in 1991). It's my practice week by week to make available for your edification an outline of my exposition of the Word. I've asked Ed, the man in charge of the photocopying, to make available sufficient copies. If you missed out, let him (or me) know. If you collect these outlines week by week you'll

have a valuable study resource on the first part of the Sermon on the Mount. Perhaps your Bible Study group may want to go through some of the discussion starters at some future date. It is also my practice to make available a Kids' Worksheet. Parents will need to monitor whether or not they are a useful tool in your particular family. Some parents find them a hindrance and others a help – your call! I've certainly been well and truly welcomed and have already come to feel very much at home here among my Christian brothers and sisters. The 'speculaasjes' in the pantry helped...! With a Session Meeting on Wednesday evening and the Congregational Meeting on Thursday evening I've certainly had to hit the ground running. We also had a very good turn out for the first Pastor's Bible Study. More sadly, I've also attended already my first funeral. Before the funeral of our sister, Willy van der Goot, it was encouraging for me to visit Jaap and to witness his quiet trust in the Lord despite the huge loss that Willy's death is for him. The funeral last Friday was a time of great encouragement for all of us who attended. May the Lord be very near to Jaap and also to Willy's sister, Janny, and brother-in-law, Jouke. Finally, I'd also like to let you know that I'm more comfortable on a first-name basis with those who are adults in the church. If you're not comfortable with that, how about 'Pastor John' ☺ ...? If you're really still very Dutch I can cope with 'Dominee'...! John Westendorp

Our congratulations are extended to Mieke van der Schaaf. Today she is with her children in Auckland. There the Israeli ambassador is making a presentation to her for work that her family did in hiding Jews during the Second World War. Folk honoured in this way are recognised in the Jewish community as "the righteous among the nations". Of course the van der Schaafs, and many like them, simply did these things as an expression of our duty to show Christian hospitality. Nevertheless it's nice to receive some recognition for something that at the time endangered one's very life.

### Hamilton

Pastoral: Congratulations to Paul & Ansie Nieuwoudt on the birth of another son. Daniel was born in the early hours of Wednesday morning. Both Ansie and Daniel are doing well for which we give thanks.

Pastoral: On Thursday, around 1pm, the Lord called home to himself his faithful

servant, Bert Esselbrugge. We are thankful for Bert's unwavering testimony to faith in Jesus Christ and also grateful that, in the end, the family were not faced with the difficult decision of what to do with life support. Please remember Willy and the wider family in your prayers at this time. A celebration service for Bert's life will be held here at 1.30pm on Tuesday, 10 June. This will be followed by the burial at Newstead cemetery, followed by afternoon tea here at the church. Could church families please bring a plate for afternoon tea.

Pastoral: We rejoice with Hayden & Jess Bosgra with the safe delivery of Elliot Mark Bosgra (8lb 13oz) at 1.06am on Thursday morning. Praise God for the precious gift of new life!

Congratulations to Gre Bosgra who turned 85 on Wednesday (and to her family!) We thank God for keeping you through many years and pray that He will continue to watch over and keep you.

Wedding banns: Evert Grul and Rebekah Brunton have signified their desire to be united in marriage in this church on 28 June 2008. If there are no lawful objections, the ceremony will take place on that date.

### Hukanui

Pastoral: Congratulations to Bart and Tinneke Gysbertsen with the birth of Emily Jane on Tuesday. Praise God for the gift of a healthy daughter, and of course a sister as well! and we pray that God may continue to guide you as you lead the family He has given you.

### Mangere

Pastoral. Last week the announcement was made that I have accepted the call to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia's congregation in Narre Warren, Melbourne. We plan, D.V., to go there at the end of this year and commence there at the beginning of next year. We are very thankful to the Lord for the ten years that we have been enabled to serve here and have been richly blessed in this. Betty-Ann was able to come home this past week, for which we're very thankful. We pray now for her continued recovery and patience considering her overall health.

Pastoral: A week ago Tony de Graaf passed away to be with the Lord following what has been diagnosed to be an epileptic attack. Many of us will know Tony from when he worshipped with us some seven years ago and through other connections. He has been a member of the Tamaki Reformed

Baptist Church. We pray for his wife Keetha and the two children, Jerome and Saskia, and his mother, sisters, wider family, and friends. We don't mourn as those without hope, though, for Tony is now with his Lord and Saviour.

Pastoral: This past Wednesday we had the funeral service for our Sr Liz Bloemendal in our church. The coroner has ruled that she died from a sudden heart attack on the Wednesday before, the 4<sup>th</sup> of June. While we rejoice for Liz, for to be with Christ is better by far, we yet mourn her loss from her family and amongst us. We pray for God's comfort to her children, grandchildren, wider family and friends.

Pastoral. Our congregation experienced our second death within two weeks as the Lord called to Himself our Sr Stien van Noordt on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> of June. We held the burial and thanksgiving service this past Thursday. While we thank the Lord for the life of a dear sister in the Lord and beloved mother and Oma, we rejoice for her. She had been very frail physically and mentally, especially since suffering the severe stroke last October. Her suffering is at an end and she is with the Lord she loves.

### Palmerston North

Let's have Coffee every Sunday!! Yes, we all seem to agree that we love the fellowship so much, let's perk up a brew every week. We all will need to keep a keener eye on the coffee morning roster in the Bulletin from now on as our names will each come up a bit more often. But it is definitely going to be worth it! Everyone who is able is also encouraged to bring along something to snack on. We'll keep such goodies on the serving counter so that they are more available to our adult and senior members. The Deacons.

Session Meeting of 5 June 2008. Session agreed to proceed with calling John Rogers as minister of Word and Sacraments in Wanganui. Voting in our congregations will take place, Lord willing, Sunday 22 June.

Announcements. Congratulations again to Al and Sonja van Seventer on the safe arrival of Ellamae Hope.

The Kavanaghs send their love to the congregation! They get the bulletin and enjoy keeping up with the news this way. Recently, John Goris stayed over with them, and took a service at their church. Also, Wally and Jeanette Hagoort were in England recently and did a presentation at the church. It's a small world!

## Pukekohe

This Tuesday evening, at 7:30pm at the church, we have invited three of our community's leaders to speak to us. Noel Surrey; the community constable, Jill Dean; of the Family Support centre, and Haydn and Adrienne Rive; of the Salvation Army, will speak on the needs in our community that are their specific focus. Through this, we hope to be better informed as to ways in which we might be able to participate as individuals and as a congregation within our community. This meeting will be held in place of the weekly Bible studies (including the Thursday evening meeting). Would you also keep this meeting in your prayers and ask the Lord to bless us as we seek to serve Him.

Rev Reinier Noppers has received a call from the Christian Reformed Church of Perth, WA. He and his wife have been in Perth this past week to meet the congregation and to visit his father who was having surgery. He has also received calls from the Reformed Churches of Nelson and Bishopdale.

## The Timaru work

### Jim Klazinga

*The following is a revised transcript of a report on the Reformed church planting work in Timaru, presented by Jim Klazinga at the 2008 Annual General Meeting of the Reformed Church of Oamaru, held on Wednesday, 18 June.*

I'd like to begin this report by taking this opportunity, on behalf of myself and my family, to personally express our thanks to you, our brothers and sisters in the Reformed Church of Oamaru. Your encouragement and support has meant a lot to us. And even though as members of this church, we have not been able to worship with you as often as would normally be desirable, you have nevertheless made us feel welcome and given us a real sense that this is in fact our church home. Please know that you have our heartfelt appreciation.

I don't say these things to butter you up. Nor do I say this here and now just because it's a convenient opportunity to do so. The thing is, as we reflect on the beginnings of a Reformed church-plant in Timaru, it's important to emphasise (and I believe I can speak on behalf of the Millers as well) that we do not see ourselves as a small

isolated group off on our own, doing our own thing, trying to get a Reformed church started there just so that we don't always have to drive all the way down here. That's not what it's ultimately about. Rather, we have a strong sense that we are part of this church community, and what we are doing, we do with you, for the glory of God and for our mutual benefit. Our conviction is that a Reformed church starting up in Timaru will not detract from the Oamaru congregation, but will help build up and strengthen her .

### The pattern for church

Allow me to suggest one concrete way this can happen in the immediate future. Starting up a new church gives us the opportunity to remind ourselves and reflect upon the biblical and Reformed confessional understanding of what the church is, what she is called to be, what she is called to do, and how this can be lived out in our local situation. Andrew and I hope to continue meeting together for prayer and discussion on all of this. And we hope to involve other interested men from Timaru. We anticipate making use of a book by Dr Philip Ryken, senior minister of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, U.S.A., entitled, *City on a Hill: Reclaiming the Biblical Pattern for the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The two of us would appreciate it if we could also be part of a men's group discussing this same book down here in Oamaru. As men from both towns reflect together on the biblical pattern for the church, and what this means for both new churches and older churches, leadership for both Oamaru and Timaru can be strengthened. If you are interested in this, and I hope that all the men of this congregation will be interested, please let Andrew or myself know.

Well, having emphasised that the work in Timaru is something we are doing together for the building up of Reformed churches in both our communities, I'd like to share with you some of what has been taking place in Timaru.

As you are aware, we have had two worship services so far. Our first service was held at 4 pm on 11 May in the West End Hall, a building owned by the city, located on the grounds of a city park. We initially set out 65 chairs, but as people arrived, it became clear we needed more. We estimate that there may have been around 80 people present. Mind you, aside from our family and the Millers, there were only a few local people there. But it was wonderful

to see so many folks from other Reformed churches drive in to be with us and support us. Five of the six South Island RCNZ congregations were represented, with the largest contingent coming from the Cornwall Street congregation in Christchurch. Also in attendance were Linda and John Bayne, wife and son of Rev David Bayne, pastor of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ashburton; and, for 15 minutes at least, Rev Grant Philips, pastor of the Marchwiell Reformed Baptist Church in Timaru (he had to leave in order to attend his own church's service at 4.30 pm).

Friends from Christchurch, Dave & Jenny Fazakerley, helped us set up beforehand. Elly Haverland from Christchurch played the piano, Andrew Miller welcomed everyone, and I led the service, preaching on Ephesians 2:18,19, with the sermon entitled, 'Foreigners No Longer.'

Most people there were able to stay afterward for a potluck meal. The spirit seemed quite positive, and the fellowship was a real blessing.

### More local folk

Our second service was held at 4 pm on 8 June. We met again in the West End Hall. My wife Julie played the piano (her first time playing in a church service), our son Josh again controlled the data projector, and I led the service, preaching the first sermon in a series on the attributes of God, as listed in Belgic Confession Article 1, with the text being Deuteronomy 4:35. (With so many churches today being rather man-centred, my hope is that we can start things off with the focus on God, on worshipping Him for who He is and what He has done.)

We had a lot fewer people in attendance, but this time we had more local folk. In fact, out of the 22 people present, only one was from out of town: June Mahoney from Christchurch. Not that we wouldn't welcome worshippers from out of town. We've had a number of people from outside Timaru express their desire to worship with us in the future, and we would be happy to see them. But we realise that if we are to become a viable church, we have to have more local people involved.

From Timaru, we had Julie and myself, Andrew and Katrina, and our combined 10 children; Hermann and Evie and Heather, three members of a local Presbyterian church who attend the Bible study that the Millers and ourselves participate in; and four people who've expressed the desire to be part of the church being planted,

and who all happen to be originally from South Africa: Corrie and Orcilla Schutte, Orcilla's mother, Mrs. Paul, and Orcilla's second cousin, Arno van Staden. By the way, Arno has recently moved here from South Africa, and he hopes to be joined by his wife Maritza in late July. Please pray for their safe reunion and their settling into their new home and country. Also from this family, Corrie and Orcilla have a married daughter living in Pleasant Point who has expressed a desire to come to our church.

At our second service there was once again a positive spirit among those attending. Everyone was able to stay afterward for refreshments, and the fellowship was uplifting and enjoyable.

**Future planning**

Regarding future services, we hope to have another service on the second Sunday, July 13. Then in August, we hope to begin having afternoon services on both the second and fourth Sundays of the month.

We recently sent a note to a local Presbyterian church, letting them know we would be interested in hiring the use of an extra church building they own. We would be willing to discuss various possibilities, such as renting the facilities only for the times we have services, or maybe renting some space on a full-time basis, which would allow us to set up a church office and have some space to use for activities during the week. We have yet to hear what their inclinations are.

We have put ads in the local newspaper for both services, and we delivered some flyers for the first service. We can't say these were successful in bringing people to the services, but we do hope to continue with them. However, our prime focus will have to be on developing relationships with the hope that, by God's grace, some will come to faith or be renewed in their faith, and become part of our fellowship.

As for developing other aspects of this ministry, I can let you know that July's Dunedin / Oamaru Session meeting is going to be held in Oamaru. I have been asked to take part in this meeting, and I anticipate that discussions will be held on the future direction of the ministry in Timaru. If you have any thoughts on these matters, feel free to discuss them personally with myself or one of your elders.

Thank you for allowing me to present this report. Please continue to pray for the developing Reformed church in Timaru, and don't hesitate to ask us how it's go-

ing. Feel free to give us suggestions as to how we can support one another and build one another up, for the praise of God, the advancement of the kingdom, and the further proclamation of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Report Family Camp 2007/08**

**Introduction**

Family Camp 2007/08 was held from 27 December 2007 to 3 January 2008 at Finlay Park, Lake Karapiro. It was attended by around 200 people: numbers varied between 195 and 210 over the week as a few families only attended part of the camp due to other commitments.

The Auckland Presbytery Family Camp committee was responsible for running Family Camp 2007/08. The committee members were Helen Wassenaar, Rinze Gjaltema, Henk and Jackie Hemmes, Janine Grul, Yvonne Thompson and Johan Swanepoel.

**Camp theme and studies**

The Auckland Presbytery indicated early in 2007 to the committee that Rev Sjirk Bajema would be available as a study leader at the Family Camp. The early notification was appreciated as it gave the minister and committee sufficient time to discuss and deliberate on a theme for the camp. The book of Esther was studied in the morning with "For such a time as this" being the theme. The studies were interesting and useful, with discussion focusing on application of the learning from the passage in our own lives today.

With the many vacant churches and shortage of ministers it was decided not to invite a second minister for evening devotions, but to invite guest speakers

on evangelism or mission work. We were thankful to the following speakers who addressed us and provided interesting perspectives and food for thought for each and every one present:

- David and Jenny Waldron on their mission work among the Aboriginal people in northern Australia.
- Ralph Van Dalen spoke about his recent trip to Pakistan.
- Reuben Ploeg, Henri Pennings and a few others involved in the beach mission outreach in Raglan.

The services on Sunday were held in the new barn at Finlay Park and were ably taken by David Waldron and Andre Holtslag. The collections taken during the services were for supporting the work of Kamran Nazir (in Pakistan) and Wally and Janette Hagoort (in Papua New Guinea). See financial report for details.

A prayer meeting was held every morning at 7am and was attended by a handful of regulars and a few extras on some mornings.

**General overview**

The Bible programme for children was run by Henk and Jackie Hemmes, together with Lynda Kamphuis and Carla Hemmes and plenty of willing helpers. The children's programme was based on the book of Esther, and the film produced by the Hamilton Christian School was used for telling the story. After singing and the study, lovely crafts were made by the children with the assistance, under supervision, of a few patient adult and teenage helpers.

To the camp cooks, Nicole and Peter Bos, our appreciation for all your hard work. Cooking for 200 people on a restricted budget is definitely not a walk in the park. The food was always tasty and there was plenty to eat. There is a group of young people who surely know how many dirty dishes and cutlery a group of 200 can

**INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT**

INCOME		EXPENSES	
Bank balance as at 16.3.07	\$5,613.22	Food	\$7,610.68
Camp fees	\$22,725.44	Finlay park	\$17,668.10
Offerings	\$1,325.00	Childrens prog	\$231.20
Interest	\$31.37	W&j hagoort	\$680.00
Food sales	\$181.40	Kamran nazir	\$645.00
		Misc. Expenses	\$80.00
		Refund of deposit	\$50.00
		Admin.	\$45.00
	\$29,876.43		\$27,009.98
<b>Left in the bank</b>	<b>\$2,866.45</b>		



generate – the dishwashing crew always tackled the dishes with enthusiasm and surely had heaps of fun as well! Thanks, guys, for your service and positive attitude to get the job done.

The sports committee, fishing competition, kayaking and other adventure activities kept us busy in the afternoons and made sure we burnt up the extra calories accumulated in the dining hall. That, combined with the warm weather resulted in a good trade in ice blocks and chilled soft drinks in the tuck shop – which was enthusiastically managed by a group of young people.

The swimming pool was very popular and provided welcome relief from the heat. The manager and staff at Finlay Park were also extremely helpful and accommodating to ensure everybody's camp experience was as good as possible. There were a few glow-worm trips and they also ran two adventure games.

On New Year's Eve we had a barn dance hosted by Peter Brunton, which was thoroughly enjoyed by young and old. What some of us lack in rhythm and dancing skills, we made up for with sheer enthusiasm and enjoyment! On the last evening of camp we had the traditional camp concert, where we were entertained with drama, music, singing, skits, storytelling and personification of a few camp characters.

#### Financials

The objective of the committee was to keep the camp as affordable as possible. Early in 2007 the Auckland Presbytery Family Camp bank account had a balance of around \$5,600 and it was decided to keep the camp fees the same as the 2005 camp by sponsoring any shortfall from the funds with the bank account. The balance of the bank account after camp is \$2,685. Refer to Appendix A for the details of income and expenditure.

#### Going forward

On the last night of camp, a discussion was held about the future of family camp. The general feeling was that Family Camp is a wonderful and unique time of getting together with other families for a time of rest, fun and fellowship, and an important event on our church calendar. People felt strongly that we should continue with an annual family camp. Although the cost of hiring a camp facility may be escalating and perhaps result in an increase in camp fees, this should not be the main driver of our decision to attend — as the true value of the camp lies in the fellowship with other Christian families.

A good number of families from the Wellington Presbytery put their hands up to be involved in organising Family Camp 2008/09. The chairman of the 2008/09 organising committee is Al van Seventer. It was agreed that Finlay Park was a good venue for Family Camp and the new committee would meet with the Finlay Park manager to book the facility for Family Camp 2008/09.

#### Conclusion

As camp managers, we were time and

time again totally blown away by people's positive attitude to serving and helping out. Often quietly and in the background, people would simply get on with things to make sure they were done. And whenever there was a call for volunteers to help out or give a hand, there was always somebody stepping up to get the job done.

To anybody reading this report who has not been to Family Camp before, we would highly recommend that you keep an eye out for information about Family Camp 2008/09 and make sure that you give it a go. Although it makes for a very busy week, we thoroughly enjoyed being camp managers for Family Camp 2007/08.

Blessing in Christ,

*Johan and Heslia Swanepoel*

---

## Auckland Presbytery (June 27, 2008) Short Report

The Rev Michael Willemse of Hamilton led the opening devotions and afterwards proceeded to chair the meeting for the first time.

The questions listed in Art 47 of the Church Order were answered by the delegates representing Bucklands Beach, Mangere and the North Shore.

- Bucklands Beach reported that they are preparing and looking forward to the coming of their vicar, Mr Daniel Wilson, in September. The session is recommending that Mr Andre Scheepers be placed in our churches as a vicar. The Language Assisted Bible Studies continue to be blessed with a number of new converts now attending a (Language Assisted) pre-communion class.
- Mangere is preparing for the departure of their pastor, the Rev Sjirk Bajema, later this year. They have had a special focus on outreach in the past six months which has helped to bring the fellowship closer together and strengthen it.
- The North Shore fellowship reported on their involvement in overseas mission through the Rogers' work in Uganda. They also highlighted a growing number of visitors attending the morning services. These include a number of Korean and South African families as well as Kiwi young people.
- Reports on the annual church visitations to Avondale and Hamilton were also received.

The Auckland ministers and wives are organising the triennial conference which will be at Forest Lakes, May 4-9<sup>th</sup> 2009. The Rev Frank van Dalen will be the main speaker.

Presbytery endorsed the recommendation of the session of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach that Mr. André Scheepers be recommended to the vicariate committee for consideration to serve a vicariate in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

*Dirk van Garderen*

## Letter to the Editor

*Dear Editor,*

The November 2007 edition of *Faith in Focus* featured a letter that I submitted to you circa August 2007.

I would like to withdraw the statements that I made in that letter (I realise that I cannot *physically* withdraw the letter that I wrote — and any damage done cannot be undone.)

After considerable reflection, I believe that many of the statements that I made were made in the wrong spirit. It does not matter whether my statements were right or wrong ...the fact that they were made in such a bigoted way shows that I was being quite unchristian.

So, for the unchristian attitude that I displayed, I would publicly like to ask that my statements be withdrawn in their entirety. Since the letter (and my views) were of a public and published nature, I would also like to publicly ask for the forgiveness of any that may have been hurt by my statements. My hope is that they will show themselves to be better Christians than I have been, by willingly and freely forgiving me for my own lapse in an attitude of humility and Christian edification.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

*Justin Geldart*

---

### Letters to the Editor can be sent to:

Sjirk Bajema  
17 Phoenix Place, Papatoetoe,  
Manukau 2025.  
Email: fnf@rcnz.org.nz

---

## Review in focus

### DVD Review: *Sophie Scholl* (In German, with English subtitles), *Reviewed by Rob Vosslamber*



In many ways the Nazi regime epitomises evil: its militarism, death camps, wholesale persecution of minorities, and almost total loss of freedom of thought send shivers down our freedom-loving spines. The question may be asked, though, why there was so little resistance to Hitler. Despite the deprivations of war and the loss of freedom, how could he and his henchmen continue to rule, almost to the bitter end, with so little internal opposition?

Yet some Germans did resist. Of such, the group known as the *White Rose* is justly remembered with admiration. This group comprised five University of Munich students along with their philosophy professor, who recognised the futility and moral bankruptcy of the Nazi regime, and that the lethargy of the German populace had to be broken. Adopting peaceful tactics, the group published six leaflets and distributed these in several German cities between June 1942 and February 1943.

Members of the *White Rose* had witnessed the atrocities of the war, both on the battlefield in the East, and against the Jews and including the mentally handicapped at home, and sensed that the reversal of fortune that the German army had suffered at Stalingrad would eventually lead to Germany's defeat. As they wrote in their last leaflet in 1943:

#### **Fellow fighters in the resistance!**

Shaken and broken, our people behold

the loss of the men of Stalingrad. Three hundred and thirty thousand German men have been senselessly and irresponsibly driven to death and destruction by the inspired strategy of our World War I Private First Class. Führer, we thank you!

#### **The leaflet concluded:**

Our people stand ready to rebel against the National Socialist enslavement of Europe in a fervent new breakthrough of freedom and honour.

While distributing the sixth leaflet at their university, brother and sister Hans and Sophie Scholl were arrested. After several days of interrogation, and a show trial before the People's Court, they were guillotined.

#### **The movie**

The movie *Sophie Scholl* focusses on Sophie's last six days: from the delivery of the final leaflet at the University and her arrest, through her interrogation, trial, and execution. The acting is superb. The sets are sparse: the main focus is on the interaction between Sophie and her Gestapo interrogator, Hans Mohr. Although necessarily impressionistic, the script appears to be historically accurate. And unlike many movies, this film primarily stimulates the mind, and not the feelings: there are no torture scenes, but rather an intense clash of worldviews.

Scholl's Christian convictions are evident throughout. For example, during her interrogation she counters Mohr's assertions that the lives of mentally handicapped are not worth living, by stating that 'no-one, regardless of circumstances, can pass divine judgment. No-one knows how much wisdom



*A scene from the Sophie Scholl movie*



Hans Scholl, Sophie Scholl & Christoph Probst

can come from suffering. Every life is precious.' She continues, 'What I say has to do with reality — with decency, morals and God,' evoking from Mohr the impassioned outburst, 'God doesn't exist!'

Scholl clearly indicates the radical divide between her worldview and that of the regime: To Mohr's assertion that without law there can be no order, Scholl responds, 'the law you're referring to protected free speech before the Nazis came to power in 1933. Someone who speaks freely now is imprisoned or put to death. Is that order?' When Mohr continues by asking 'What can we rely on if not the law', she replies, 'On your conscience.' For Mohr this is incomprehensible nonsense.

Freedom of thought is clearly a sticking point for Mohr, as it is for any totalitarian. Mohr seeks to trap Scholl by suggesting that, as a Protestant, the church also requires devotion if you doubt. Scholl's response is apt: 'People attend church voluntarily. Hitler and the Nazis give us no choice.'

The distinction between Scholl's and Mohr's worldviews is further highlighted by Scholl's statement to him that 'You have the wrong worldview, not me', and accentuated by Mohr's Judas-like washing of his hands at the completion of Sophie's interrogation.

### Implications

Extreme situations can highlight common issues in bold relief. This video motivates reflection. Let's consider three areas.

Firstly, in the light of Romans 13, in what circumstances may a Christian resist authority? And how might such resistance be effected? This has been a major issue in Christian ethics, and will always remain so: when must we render to Caesar, and when to God? When must we obey God rather than man?

That there are no easy answers to these questions is obvious: 2,000 years on there is still no Christian consensus on such matters. Yet we must consider such

things. And it is better to do so while we have the freedom to do it. Would we have refused to support Hitler, even though he restored law and order, fixed unemployment, and brought about a degree of prosperity and national pride that had been shattered by Germany's defeat in World War I? If so, on what basis? And how?

Secondly, if we were challenged, would our faith sustain us? The faith of the Scholl family is poignantly depicted in the film. At their final meeting, Sophie's mother tearfully comments, 'You'll never come through our door again', to which Sophie calmly replies, 'We'll meet in eternity.' When her mother responded, 'Don't forget, Sophie — Jesus', Sophie continues, 'Yes, mother — but you neither.' Would we have such simple faith, such simple trust in God's promises, even in the face of death?

But thirdly, do we not each face the danger of becoming little dictators ourselves? How can we overcome our sinful desires to be like God and lord it over others? What can we do to prevent even

our desire to bless others and lead them in the way of truth from devolving into some form of tyranny? How can we avoid becoming little Mohrs ourselves when given the opportunity to exercise authority over others? As parents, as church office-bearers, as teachers, do we examine ourselves to see that we are motivated only by the love of God, and use only the sword of the Spirit in our interactions with others? How do we respond and react to those who differ from us?

### Conclusion

This is an inspiring video, and highly recommended for viewing by all aged in their teens and upwards. It is also a challenging video. The blurb on the cover rather unfortunately tells us that this gripping true story 'challenges you to gauge your own courage.' Rather, may it challenge us to examine ourselves and our faith and trust in God. And may it make us think, long after watching it.

## Missions in focus

by Janice Reid

# Coming back, moving on

*Amy DeWit hails from the Bethel Presbyterian Church of the OPC in Wheaton, Illinois. She is 25 years old and recently returned from Uganda, where she spent three years in the Karamoja region teaching missionary children. Amy spoke with Janice Reid about her experience in returning to the United States, and moving on with life after missions.*

to do it long term, but I'd only had short-term mission experience. Before I went long-term, I wanted to see it first-hand, and see what missionaries do. Then I wanted to come back to the States and get more experience as a teacher.

**Q:** What short-term trips have you had?

**A:** There's a short-term trip that an OPC missionary does in Tijuana, Mexico. It's a sort of classic youth mission trip: two weeks long, doing a lot of construction and labour, with some evangelism involved in that. And during high school I did some weekend trips into Chicago, working with a church group to help people in their community. I also went to Eastern Europe two different times, as a band member. We toured Hungarian Reformed churches, and played concerts for them. When we were there, we stayed with families and visited with missionaries, and it had a big impact on me. I also spent three weeks one summer in Japan, working with a missionary there. We did English camps, and had evangelistic coffee shops in the evenings.

**Q:** How would you describe your call to mission work?

**Q:** How did you make the decision to come back when you did?

**A:** I had committed to go for one year, but hoped to go for two, but then I added on one more. When I decided to stay for the third year, I knew it would be my last. I felt called to the mission field and wanted

**A:** One of the primary things is that the Lord has given me a love for other cultures, for people. The main thing is the desire to serve the Lord, to share the Gospel with people for God's glory.

**Q:** When you were in Uganda, what kind of teaching did you do?

**A:** I taught missionary children in a sort of home-school set-up. The mothers were also teaching them, but the children were different ages, and they needed somebody to help them keep on track with their grade-level of study.

**Q:** How much interaction did you have with Ugandans?

**A:** By the end of my time, I spent most of the afternoons with local people. I spent time with people who worked at the clinic, and a couple of afternoons a week I led Bible studies in the village.

**Q:** As it was coming time for you to leave, how did you deal with that? How did you process it in terms of your relationships with people there?

**A:** I tried to ignore the fact, and just enjoy the times I had with the people. But, I was in an impoverished area, and the people had come to assume that when white people come, they will leave eventually and give away your stuff. So as the time came for me to leave, the local people were constantly reminding me that I was leaving and asking if I would give them this or that thing. I tried not to focus too much on leaving, because that would have stopped me enjoying the time I had there, and focusing on my work...but the local people kept reminding me!

**Q:** And, coming back to the US, can you describe your experience?

**A:** Well, my sister had a baby the day after I got back, so I was really looking forward to it. So in a way, I was jolted into a new and exciting experience. My sister also graduated from high school, so that was exciting and positive. I'd describe my first month back almost as a honeymoon of enjoying time with family, and catching up with them. I had some culture shock, but it didn't really hit me that much at first. I lived with my parents for my first year, then I took some youth from the church down to Tijuana again, so that was really helpful. And the next month I started teaching at a Christian high school, so it sort of hit me that this is where I live, now. It was hard to get used to teaching

American children in America again, where they're surrounded by so many things and have such lovely lives, and yet they're so discontent. I struggle with that, and found it hard to be compassionate with my students, because my heart was still very much in a place where people have so much less. And interacting with people on a daily basis who would complain about things I was glad to have, it was hard for me to bite my tongue and not tell them what I really felt.



Amy DeWit

**Q:** What did you do to get you through the difficult times?

**A:** I started to get involved in a lot of different things, trying to find that one thing the Lord had called me back for. I figured if He had called me back, it was for a reason. I agreed to be a youth leader for the church...I started a Bible study...I became volleyball coach. The Lord hadn't really shut the doors in Uganda — I could have stayed there, but I was sure I was supposed to come back to the US. I found it hard to be back, so I used all my energy searching for the thing the Lord had brought me back for. But I tried to keep my heart in Uganda by keeping in touch with people back there.

**Q:** Did you find that hard, was there a tension between the two things?

**A:** Mmhm, I did. I couldn't be in two places at once, and eventually I had to accept the fact that this is where I am right now.

**Q:** So what are you moving on with, now?

**A:** One of the reasons I came back is to get my Master of Education. In order to keep my teacher certificate, I have to keep doing continuing education, so if I have my

Master's I can stay away longer in between trips back. But I do plan long term to go back overseas. What I'm trying to do here is support myself, make a living, but also try in whatever way I can, to prepare to go overseas again.

**Q:** Would you go with an OPC-established mission?

**A:** I would like to. The few that I've seen closely, I appreciate their perspective on missions, their focus on bringing the Gospel. It's easy to join a variety of organisations, and although you can bring the Gospel to people, it's important to have an established church work that you can refer people to. But I'm also open to other options.

**Q:** Do you have any thoughts or advice to give other people about coming back from the mission field and moving into the future?

**A:** I guess I would say that you need to serve the Lord wherever you are. Whatever you do, do it with all your might, as serving the Lord rather than men. Even if I'm doing some small everyday things here, I can glorify Him by doing that. If He's called me to be here and not in Uganda, I can still serve Him here. I don't know how the Lord is using me here or even why He's brought me back, but I know He's called me to serve Him in the moments. One of the best pieces of advice somebody gave me is, 'When you're in America, be an American. Don't try to be a Ugandan.' You need to accept where you are and not be frustrated with the culture; you can't try to be the person you were somewhere else, when you're living here.

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

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

*Join us in July 2009, for this historic tour and conference:*

# THE CALVIN QUINCENTENARY

*In Paris, Strasbourg, Bern and  
at Geneva's St. Pierre Cathedral*

The CALVIN QUINCENTENARY is an international and interdenominational commemoration of the work of John Calvin (b. 1509). This celebration combines history, spirituality, and culture to recall appropriately the life and work of the Reformer.

Our Sponsors cordially invite you to this extraordinary, once-in-a-lifetime tour and conference. In addition to admission to all conference events, the Calvin500 Tour includes: Top-quality lodging, full breakfast daily, panoramic tours of Parisian churches and museums, excursions to Noyon (Calvin's birthplace), Orleans, Reims, Strasbourg, and Bern. In Geneva you will enjoy a cruise on the lake, sermons in Calvin's own church, and fellowship with a host of internationally-acclaimed scholars and pastors (below) and your friends.

PLAN NOW! RESERVE THE JUNE 30, 2009-JULY 10, 2009 DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR, AND REGISTER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, *SINCE SPACE WILL BE LIMITED.*

## *CALVIN500 Speakers:*

Joel Beeke • Henri Blocher • Bryan Chapell • Iain D. Campbell • R. Scott Clark  
Ted Donnelly • Ligon Duncan • William Edgar • Sinclair Ferguson • Richard Gamble  
Robert Godfrey • Darryl Hart • Michael Haykin • Martin Holdt • Terry L. Johnson  
Hywel R. Jones • Douglas Kelly • Robert Kingdon • Anthony Lane • Steven Lawson  
Peter Lillback • William McComish • Bruce McCormack • James McGoldrick  
Andrew McGowan • Hughes O. Old • Philip Ryken • Herman Selderhuis • Derek Thomas  
Geoffrey Thomas • Carl Trueman • John Witte, Jr.

## *CALVIN500 Sponsors:*

American Swiss Foundation • Covenant Seminary • Erskine Theological Seminary  
Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary • Invisible Hand Foundation • Midway  
Presbyterian Church • Mid-America Reformed Seminary • Presbyterian & Reformed  
Publishing Co. • Reformed Presbyterian Seminary • Reformed Theological Seminary  
Westminster Seminary • Westminster Seminary California



**GO ONLINE FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER:**

**WWW.CALVIN500.ORG or WWW.REGONLINE.COM/CALVIN500**

