

faith in **focus**

Magazine of the
Reformed Churches
of New Zealand

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**“Like a bird that
strays from its
nest is a man
who strays from
his home.”**

Proverbs 27:8

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Editorial

Well, it will soon be holidays again. And, naturally, you'll take a break from church as well. Right?

"Wrong," you say. "How could any Christian think of taking a break from God? You might as well stop breathing altogether because not going to church is the same thing."

Apparently not for many Christians in New Zealand, however. One local church I heard of cuts down its worship services over the summer period from two to one, and that morning service itself is only attended by a third of those who would usually come.

Now you say, "they'd be at the beach of course. You know, at the bach for a month or two."

Again, not so. Most of the folk are still at home. They're simply having a break from church!

"You can't be serious!" you cry out. "Has Christianity come to this?"

Well, yes it has. It really does seem that the whole ideology of catering to people's 'felt needs' that many churches have adopted has left the churches themselves orphaned.

"But that's those other churches! The Reformed churches are different. We take worship and the Lord's day very seriously."

Really? You take a good hard look at how you spend your Lord's day and what you will be doing over the holidays. How much of it isn't actually quite self-serving. You consider your little luxuries, your little break, and where does the Lord get a look in?

You will be quite shocked at how much you have fallen away. It will be much, much more than you think. Just look at what you did this past Sunday!

I have been asked by Patricia van Laar that if anyone would want a list of the sources she used in her Ancient British saints series they can be sent by email. Just drop me a line.

*A Christian man is the most free lord of all,
and is subject to none;
a Christian man is the most dutiful
servant of all,
and is subject to everyone.*

Martin Luther

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not to be considered the official position of the Reformed Churches of NZ unless they expound the Biblical system of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, or reflect the successive Acts of Synod of the Reformed Churches of NZ. On the other hand, care is taken to ensure that articles and opinions do not directly contradict the official position of the Reformed Churches as

The perfect Christmas gift

Bringing in a new world

Hans Voschezang

In a quiet moment sitting in the lounge, having a drink, Tammy found a toy brochure amongst the mail lying on the coffee table. Looking through it, she found a picture of a very beautiful dress doll with four sets of clothes. "Ooooh, look at that, what a beautiful doll." She ran up to her Mum calling out very enthusiastically: "Can I have that beautiful doll Mom, that's what I always wanted, can I, Mum, can I?" Diane was busy in the kitchen cooking that night's dinner. "Not now Tam, I'm busy", she replied.

Oo-oo Mu-hum."

In that unguarded moment Diane added, "Maybe I'll buy that doll for Christmas." Well, that was still three months away; maybe Tammy would have forgotten by then. But Tammy didn't forget. The trouble was, Diane nearly forgot. And now she found herself stuck in the traffic on Christmas Eve of all days when everybody was shopping, so it seemed. Look at that! The traffic lights went from red to green and to red again, and nobody moved. She could kick herself for leaving shopping so late, but she had promised Tammy to buy her this doll. The lights turned green again, and this time she could drive slowly to the shopping mall where she had seen this particular doll in the toy section. She drove through to the parking area, but as could be expected, no parking space. She went around the area and started at the entry point to find a spot where she could park her car. It must have been nearly 20 minutes before she reached the elevator, at times elbowing her way through the crowded alleys. When she arrived at the third floor she walked to the toy section and found the shelves empty. Now what? She couldn't come home without a doll. Diane became very agitated, and upset that there was not one doll left. She walked briskly back to the elevator and back to her car. She tried to get back in the continuous flow of traffic. Diane was thinking frantically where she could try to get this doll. Then she remembered a store on the other side of town. They might have one: it was worth a try. So once more she joined the cue of cars and struggled to keep moving. Angrily she looked on her watch. Nearly two hours wasted. When she arrived at this store, she experienced the same thing. This time the toy section was

on the fourth floor. But she was lucky: they had a few dolls left. She took one and joined the cue at the checkout counter and when it was her turn, Diane asked the shop assistant to gift-wrap her doll. The shop assistant excused herself and said: "I'm sorry Ma'am, we don't gift-wrap presents at this time of year. I can give you some gift-wrap paper so you can wrap it yourself. We are far too busy." By now Diane was so worked up and angry that she paid, snatched her doll and stormed to the elevator, which was about to go down. She put her handbag in between the door to open it again, and forced herself in among a crowded and overfull elevator. The



people frowned at her offensive and impertinent behaviour: she looked around at the people staring at her. Then she snapped and in her anger blurted out: "The one who invented Christmas should be hanged." People stopped talking...silence...then someone at the back timidly said, "They have done that already, Ma'am; the Lord Jesus was nailed to the cross."

A busy time

At this time of year shopping madness affects everyone, so it seems. Retailers

say they get 60% or more of their annual turn-over in the last four weeks of the year. The economy is dependent on our heavy spending in December. But it's not only the retailers who are very busy. At my work, for example, certain customers want their annual machinery repairs and overhaul done at the very last moment, sometimes in the last week just before closing day at Christmas Eve. They demand that we supply them instantly with spare parts: simply a result of simply bad planning. Everything needs to be finalised just before Christmas, and so the pressure is on. We, too, can be so caught up in our little affairs and busy ourselves with trivial things in life that we tend to lose sight of the real meaning of Christmas: the fact that God became man and lived among us to redeem the world of sin and conquer evil. The message of Christmas gets lost and if we don't watch our steps, we forget the wonder of it all. Some two thousand years ago it was also a very busy time for the people in Israel. With a stroke of the pen, Caesar managed to make the world jump at his command. Taxes were the name of the game in the Roman government. So in order to get an accurate count of the population, Caesar ordered everyone to be registered in their hometowns as citizen of the Empire. Everyone was on the move to the place where they were born. Today, we would call this event a logistical nightmare. Registry offices had to be set up and staffed in every little hamlet and village in the known world. In the small town of Bethlehem every lodging place, bed-and-breakfast or Inn had a "No Vacancy" sign on the front door. Joseph became anxious to get a place to stay for the night. Mary, being pregnant, could give birth at any moment from now on. Finally an inn keeper had told him to go around the back to the stable and find a place to sleep among the animals: there was plenty of straw and hay.

Out in the fields

Meanwhile, the shepherds had counted their sheep and locked them away in their pens for the night. They had a bite to eat and prepared themselves for the night. Suddenly the skies ripped open, and an angel of the Lord appeared to them. The glory of the Lord shone around them as he told them that there was born to them this

very day in the city of David a Saviour, and that He is Christ the Lord. Then thousands of angels appeared singing a most beautiful song, *praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favour rests. (Luke 2 vs 14)* The shepherds hurried off to Bethlehem, to check out what the angel had said. It was an improbable story: he had told them that they would find the baby laying in a feeding trough, and that would be the sign that the story was true. They found Mary, Joseph and the baby lying in the trough. They rushed out in to the street again, and in the middle of the night, they told anyone who would listen what was said about this child. *But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. (Luke 2 vs 19)* Mary had grown silent. She had plenty to say in Luke 1, and even included a song. But after she had given birth and listened to what the shepherds had said about her son, she didn't say a word. On this most famous Christmas night she's deep in thought, contemplating maybe what the future would hold for her son. Was Mary trying to make sense of it all, while she pondered these things in her heart? Keep in mind that she was a very young girl, and she had been through a lot in the last nine months. Certainly she hadn't forgotten what Gabriel had told her. Mary remembered well how Gabriel had greeted her like royalty: her son would be great and be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord would give Him the throne of David... Mary had occasion to wonder about all that. Joseph had even tried to divorce her, which shattered her world for a while until a dream calmed him down. Then it was a long succession of morning sickness and all the uncomfortable experiences of pregnancy. When she was nearly full term, Caesar ordered them to travel to Bethlehem to be registered—a five-day walk—in spite of her bulging stomach and swollen ankles. Joseph had searched the town for hours to find a place to stay, but there was no place until now, where they were bunking down in a stable with cows, donkeys and goats. The trauma of it all made Mary go in to labour. This was not the way Mary had pictured things. Gabriel had not mentioned this! Still exhausted from the ordeal of childbirth, Mary's mind took in all the things that were said and tried to piece them together. It was so puzzling and so difficult for her to see the big picture. If the one born of her was to be called: "the Son of the Most High God," as Gabriel had told her, then what was He doing in a stable? Why must His little head snuggle up in this feeding trough? Sometimes, in the Christian life, we too have to stop our busy

activities and think about God's dealings in our lives. We come to the same conclusion: that we don't have all the answers, and that we haven't it all figured out either. Maybe we keep ourselves so busy in order to avoid the harsher realities of life.

A time not exempt from what happens at other times

Christmas is not an easy story to understand. Perhaps that's the reason why we Christians, view tragedy, illness, or bad news as an unwelcome guest at this time of year. All the contradictions that Mary faced motivated her to ponder all these things. If ever there was a person who had bad memories attached to Christmas, it was Mary. For the rest of their life together she would look back and say to Joseph: "Remember that awful night we ended up sleeping in that stable in Bethlehem?" With the benefit of hindsight we call it a "holy night". It almost certainly didn't seem that way to Mary. For her it was a Christmas that brought back hurtful memories. At the end of this year, we too think back on all the things that have happened and we come to the conclusion that this past year has been filled with tragedies. Just a year ago, on December 26, 2004, the tsunami struck the coast of Sumatra as a result of a massive earthquake in the Indian Ocean. The carnage was beyond description: so many lost their lives and livelihood. Lives changed forever. Something similar happened last August and September when several hurricanes slammed into the southern states of America with devastating force. We've read the harrowing stories of what happened in the Superdome in New Orleans: women raped and even a girl of 7 and a boy of 8 in the midst of all this tragedy, left at the mercy of unscrupulous and ruthless gangs; snipers taking potshots at the people who came to rescue them. How quick the world reverted to the mundane. The FBI reported 4,000 bogus websites for Hurricane relief funds. Fraudsters targeting the disaster victims, offering help in searching for missing family members—for a fee. But these events have also brought people together. Stories unfolded of people donating money, clothing and even their own homes to shelter the disaster victims. Christian churches and charity organisations collected more than a billion dollars to alleviate the suffering of thousands. The war drags on in Iraq and the insurgents keep on murdering innocent people, challenging the authorities who try to establish law and order. There is no end in sight to the violence between Palestinians and Israelis, worldwide persecution of

Christians, terrorism, genocide, famine, incurable diseases, devastating earthquakes, increasing lawlessness and the losing battle on drugs...

Bringing in a new world

A new year is dawning, but the problems we face are old ones. When we look around us we wonder: "Is God in control?" Has Christmas made any difference in our world? I believe it has. Christ was born to conquer sin and evil. Some thirty years later, Jesus hung up His carpenter's apron for the last time and walked out of the shop, leaving it all behind. He started His ministry in a very hostile and corrupt world with all its religious rivalry, political intrigue, people oppressed by the Romans and overburdened with high taxes. Three years into His ministry, one of His own disciples betrayed Him. The Jews delivered Him over to the Roman authorities and they crucified Him... At the foot of the cross Mary understood what Simeon had told her about her son when they presented Him in the Temple for His circumcision: *"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." (Luke 2 vs 34b – 35)* Mary witnessed her own son being crucified, but she also understood and accepted that He was her Saviour and Redeemer as well. That's also our Hope for the future. *God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son...* That's the most incredible and precious gift of grace to mankind. Only God could have thought of that! That's the only reason we can look forward to a new year in faith, with confidence and without any reservation that God is in control, no matter what lays ahead of us.

For further reading: "But Mary", a meditation by Scott Hoezee

Advertise your
Happenings and
Church events in

faith in
focus

He Dared to be SMALL!

A little boy
played with his toy:
a boat, a real steamer!
and he, a real dreamer!

*I am the captain of this ocean-liner
I sail the seas, not only when it's finer,
I brave the boisterous waves, oh boy!
I dare the stormy winds with 'ship ahoy'!*

An Eastern king
of whom they sing,
Neb conquered many a nation,
is making his oration:

*I built this city: glorious my great power!
I rule this kingdom, growing by the hour.
I added wealth and wisdom, women, wine;
I dare say this, 'Great Babylon is mine!'*

An ordinary man,
no study-fan
is roused to see great visions
through money-making missions:

*I should not slave forever, crawling low;
I have, since all are equal, much to show.
I say, 'You can improve yourself, old mate!'
I challenge one and all: 'Dare to be great!'*

God's only Son,
His Holy One,
Who's Lord of all creation,
B'came Man for our salvation:

*Your Will, O God, I came to do, not mine;
Your Name to magnify, for it to shine.
Your Life to bring that mortal man may live;
Your Love to show when You Your Son did give.*

We dared to be great, HE dared to be small:
It was HIS victory over our fall!

John Goris
Toowoomba, Qld, 1972



World in focus

Congress addresses religious discrimination in Russia

The Institute on Religion and Public Policy is calling on members of the US Senate and House to support H. Con. Res. 190, which expresses the sense of the Congress that the "Russian Federation should fully protect the freedoms of all religious communities without distinction, whether registered or unregistered, as stipulated by the Russian Constitution and international standards."

Violence against minority religious groups, especially those not registered with the government, has increased, and police response has been inconsistent or nonexistent.

Joseph K. Grieboski, President of the Institute on Religion and Public Policy, stated that "This constitutional protection of religious rights for all peoples in Russia must no longer be ignored. All people - irrespective of their national or religious identities - are guaranteed by the Russian Constitution and international covenants to which Russia is a signatory the rights of religious expression, association, property, and speech."

+ Institute on Religion and Public Policy, 1101 15th St., NW Suite 115, Washington, DC 20005 (202) 835-8760

Messianic Jews in Israel harassed

Orthodox Jews have been harassing a Messianic Jewish congregation in the town of Arad in Southern Israel for more than 18 months. The Messianic Jews have

been insulted in public as Nazis, whores, and dirty Christians. Eyewitnesses say the police have turned a blind eye or even sided with the persecutors. An assembly hall has been burnt down. Leaders of the Messianic congregation have written a letter of complaint to the police chief but received no answer.

Since the police and the judicial system seem unable to protect the Messianic Jews they are calling for international solidarity. Three Christian organizations in Germany have pledged their support.

There are approximately 6,000 Messianic Jews in Israel and at least 100,000 throughout the world. Because they believe in the Jesus Christ, Orthodox Jews regard Messianic Jews as apostates.

+ ASSIST News Service, PO Box 2126, Garden Grove, CA 92842-2126

Gay pastor causes scandal in South African church

The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa is battling over whether it can accommodate a gay pastor who had a long-term relationship with a man.

Laurie Gaum, who comes from a prominent family, has been fired as presiding minister of St. Stephen's church in Capetown, South Africa.

A tabloid newspaper story reported that Gaum's gay partner, who by then had ended the relationship, accused him of being promiscuous. The partner, Douw Wessels later committed suicide.

The news of this relationship has divided the Western Cape's conservative Afrikaner community and discussions during church gatherings have shown heated support for, and opposition to, Gaum's dismissal.

Gaum, a graduate of the prestigious Afrikaans university, Stellenbosch, told "Carte Blanche," a South African television program: "I think I've been created gay in the image of God. And this is the church that I am also part of; this is a church where I have as much right to be safe as other people, and I claim this gospel for myself."

The church commission found that Gaum had a gay relationship, but said it has found no evidence of promiscuity. Gaum has until the end of September to appeal his suspension to a regional synod of the Dutch Reformed Church.

+ Dutch Reformed Church Headquarters, POB 4445, Pretoria 0001

Church of Nigeria redefines Anglican communion

In a 15 Sept. press release, the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) announced that it had redefined her relationship with all other Anglican Churches by removing all references to "communion with the see of Canterbury" from her constitution. Those references were replaced with another provision of communion with all Anglican "Churches, Dioceses, and Provinces that hold and maintain the Historic Faith, Doctrine, Sacrament, and Discipline of the one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church" and placed emphasis on the 1662 Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. The changes also allow the Church to create Convocations and Chaplaincies of like-minded faithful outside Nigeria and gives legal backing to the Convocation of Anglican Nigerians in America (CANA) formed "to give worshiping refuge to thousands in the USA who no longer feel welcomed to worship in liberal churches especially with the recent theological innovations encouraging practices which the Nigerians recognize as sin."

The Church of Nigeria, under the leadership of the Most Rev. Peter J. Akinola, D.D., has more than 17 million members.
+ Rev. Mr. Charles A. Collins Jr., 289 Hastings Dr., Goose Creek, SC 29445

Robinson refused communion at continuing church

On Sunday, 18 Sept. V. Gene Robinson, the openly homosexual Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire, made a surprise appearance at All Saints Anglican Church, a parish of the Anglican Church in America located in Concord, New Hampshire, that was formed in large part by members who could not remain in the Episcopal Church following his 2003 consecration. Reports indicate that Robinson entered the church roughly one minute prior to the beginning of the service dressed in the customary purple clerical shirt and pectoral cross and sat in the nave.

He went forward to the rail during Holy Communion but instead received a blessing from the Rev. Canon Dean T. Steward, OSB, the Rector, who made the sign of the cross on Robinson's forehead while blessing him. Robinson, who was not accompanied by his partner, Mark Andrew, spoke briefly with the Canon Steward, and then left.

Reprints of

articles in

Faith in Focus

can be obtained

by contacting

the Editor

The 1928 Book of Common Prayer contains a rubric that states: "If, among those who come to be partakers of the Holy Communion, the Minister shall know any to be an open and notorious evil lier . . . He shall advertise him, that he presume not to come to the Lord's Table, until he have openly declared himself to have truly repented and amended his former evil life, that the Congregation may thereby be satisfied: and that he hath recompensed the parties to whom he hath done wrong, or at least declare himself to be in full purpose so to do, as soon as he conveniently may." Ministers who refuse Communion on those grounds are required to notify their bishops within 14 days.

+ Rev. Mr. Charles A. Collins Jr., 289 Hastings Dr., Goose Creek, SC 29445

Mere Anglicanism

Mere Anglicanism, an event-driven organization that seeks to reform and renew Anglicanism in North America, will hold its first conference at the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul in Charleston, South Carolina, from 19-21 Jan., 2006. The keynote speakers will be Dr. Os Guinness, Senior Fellow of the Trinity Forum, and the Rev. Dr. Stephen Noll, Vice Chancellor and Professor of Biblical Studies of Uganda Christian University.

+ Rev. Mr. Charles A. Collins Jr., 289 Hastings Dr., Goose Creek, SC 29445

JAARS completion ceremony

JAARS will celebrate the completion of the New Testament into Gullah, a dialect indigenous to the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia, on 5 Nov., at the JAARS center in Waxhaw, North Carolina; all are invited.

JAARS is a service-oriented mission dedicated to providing high quality technical support services to Wycliffe Bible Translators and to SIL International.

+ JAARS Inc., PO Box 248, Waxhaw, NC 28173 1 (800) 890-0628

The Confessing Movement issues a proclamation

The Confessing Movement within the United Methodist Church has issued a proclamation welcoming "serious attention to the denomination's unity and the basis of that unity."

In part the document proclaims that unity requires official doctrine, careful teaching of the apostolic faith by the leaders of the church and the maintaining of the denomination's Book of Discipline as a covenant of trust. The document also cites "practices that contribute to disunity,"

including neglect of Scripture, disobedience to the church's doctrinal Standards, claims of new sources of revelation that set aside the authority of Scripture and the tested morality of the church, and "capitulation to lifestyles that are inconsistent with Christian discipleship."

+ United Methodist News Service, PO Box 320, Nashville, TN 37202 Business (615) 742-5400

Licensing laws attacked by Kirks

New licensing regulations, due to be enforced in 2007, will change statutory opening hours and give Scotland's 32 licensing boards greater freedom to allow pubs and clubs to stay open longer. Moderator of the Church of Scotland, The Rev. David Lacy said the Scottish Executive's proposals would lead to more drunkenness and violence. "It's ludicrous to relax the licensing laws when we know alcohol is causing trouble. We should instead be curtailing them."

The moderator's attack is a blow to First Minister Jack McConnell, who is determined to bring Scotland's licensing laws more into line with the European model.

A UN report of two weeks ago claimed Scotland was the most violent country in the developed world and figures by the World Health Organisation also revealed Scotland has the second highest murder rate in Western Europe.

+ The Church of Scotland, 121 George St., Edinburgh, EH2 4YN, Scotland Tel: 0131 225 5722

Filipino pastor killed

The Rev. Raul Domingo, 35, a Filipino pastor and government-reform activist, is the latest victim to be assassinated by alleged military agents. Domingo, a pastor in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), was shot and killed in Puerto Princesa on the island of Palawan, where he led an anti-mining campaign and had publicly demanded an end to government corruption.

So far 33 religious and human rights workers have been murdered in the Philippines this year.

+ United Church of Christ in the Philippines, PO Box 718, Manila Central Post Office 1099, Ermita, Manila (632) 920-6320

"Higher Ground" magazine for hurricane survivors

A member of Orangewood PCA in Orlando, Florida, Judy Nelson, has developed "Higher Ground" as an evangelistic tool for hurricane survivors. Nelson said, "I think it would be a great vehicle for our

churches to use in sharing the Good News along with doing good deeds."

To read more and to order go to: <<http://www.katrinahigherground.com>>. + Orangewood PCA, 1300 West Maitland Blvd., Maitland, FL 32751

Presbyterian church treasurer steals US\$43,000

A former employee of United Presbyterian Church of Ambridge, Pennsylvania, has been charged with stealing more than US\$43,000 from the church. Barbara J. Cheriana, 52, took money she deposited for the church and transferred it to her own account. Church officials contacted police in July after discrepancies were found in the church bank accounts. An independent audit showed that about US\$42,000 that had been deposited between 2002 and this spring, was missing. Court documents said Cheriana admitted that she took money from the church.

+ United Presbyterian Church, 9th and Maplewood, Ambridge, PA 15003 (724) 266-1900

Presbyterian church in Ghana receives gift of 400-year-old bell

Kasseh Presbyterian Church in Ghana will be receiving a gift of a 17th Century Kirk bell which once rang from Logie Coldstone Church, which closed its doors in 1984 and is now a private house. The Minister of Cromar Parish Church, Rev. Lawrie Lennox, explained: "Logie Coldstone is now part of the parish of Cromar, and we felt that, rather than have the bell gather more dust, it should be used in a new church." "That church is in Kasseh in the Big Ada district of Ghana, a country with which the Church of Scotland has long had strong links. The congregation there have indicated they are delighted to receive the bell, which bears the Latin inscription 'Michael Burgerhuis me fecit,' or 'Michael Burgerhuis made me' and the date 1619, when it was cast in the Netherlands. Ramagae Distribution Ltd. are providing the transport of the bell as far as London as a good will gesture."

+ Rev. Lawrie Lennox, 01339 881464 <l.lennox@homecall.co.uk>

Belrusian Evangelical Church pledges to continue services

Pastor Ernst Sabilo has pledged that the Belarusian Evangelical Church he leads in the capital Minsk will continue to meet for worship despite the liquidation of its legal status by the city court on 20 Sept. Belarus's restrictive 2002 religion law bans unregistered religious activity. Sabilo told Forum 18 News Service that "They

could fine us for gathering - but we have no other option." The liquidation came a month after the same court liquidated a Calvinist church. Sabilo spent 13 years in a Soviet prison camp after being convicted in 1951 for "speaking about my religious convictions and the political injustice of Soviet power." Sabilo has tried in vain to re-register his church.

+ *Belarusian Evangelical Reformed Church, Tsnianskaya str 17-17, 220100 Minsk, Belarus <unlit@radivil.belpak.minsk.by>*

Senior citizens complain about heavy hymn books

The Church of Scotland recently introduced its latest hymn book, called CH4, which contains 130 more songs, psalms, and canticles than the previous version and weighs almost 2.2 pounds. The Kirk's senior citizens complain that it is too much of a strain to hold for an hour-long Sunday morning service. The issue has dominated the letters page of the latest issue of the Church of Scotland magazine, *Life and Work*. Rev. Charlie Robertson of Canongate Kirk, secretary of the Revision Hymnary Committee which decided the content of CH4, admitted that he had received comments on the weight of the hymn book. "There have been some people writing to us about it, but I wouldn't call them complaints, just reflection," he said. Robertson that the new hymn book was intended to keep church music in tune with the times and said that CH4 contained 825 items, instead of the earlier 695, because the new edition included worship songs suitable for praise bands and guitars as well as traditional organ music.

+ *Church of Scotland, 121 George St., Edinburgh EH2 4YN*

Christian arrested for converting 11 children in India

On 7 Oct., Sunny John was arrested for "converting young children from poor Hindu families to Christianity." John is in jail in Indore, in the state of Madhya Pradesh. John, an independent worker, runs three schools for children. John was accused of converting 11 children between the ages of five and ten who were residing in his school and children's home.

Indira Iyengar, a member of the State Minorities Commission questioned the arrest, noting that none of the children had converted to Christianity or complained of attempted conversion. "It means that anyone from the Hindu extremist groups can easily make allegations and pressure the police to arrest a member of the Christian minority community,"

Iyengar said. "The administration is cheating the Christian community."

+ *Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0314*

Indonesian woman allowed to start church in prison

Rebekka, one of the three Christian Indonesian women who have been imprisoned after having been convicted of "attempting to coerce children to change their religion" under the Indonesian "Child Protection Act," has been allowed to lead a worship service on Sundays in a small outdoor courtyard area of the prison. About 35 people from her church are allowed to enter the prison each Sunday to participate. One male inmate converted to Christianity and attends the worship service, bringing the Christian inmate population to seven. Rebekka, Eti, and Ratna allowed several Muslim children to attend their Sunday school program only after obtaining verbal consent from the Muslim students' guardians. The three women ran a Sunday school program which was attended by some 100 Christian students in their community. A local Islamic group brought charges against the three for violating the "Child Protection Act." The women have been imprisoned for 140 days. Christian Freedom International is urging the Indonesian government to release the three women.

+ *Christian Freedom International, PO Box 535, Front Royal, VA 22630 1-(800) 323-227*

Spong on stage

The life of John Shelby Spong, the retired revisionist Episcopal Bishop of Newark, will be chronicled in "A Pebble in My Shoe," a play by Colin Cox that opens Sunday in Los Angeles. Spong, who has denied such basic Christian tenets as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection of Jesus as well as denouncing the concept of a God who works miracles and exacts punishment, will attend the opening. Conservative Anglican journalist Dr. David Virtue suggested that instead of the play's given title a more apt name might be "Rocks in My Head - How I Managed to Destroy the Episcopal Church in My Lifetime."

+ *Charles A. Collins, Jr., Christian Observer Correspondent, 289 Hastings Dr., Goose Creek, SC 29445*

International Women in the Church Conference

This conference is called: God's Faithfulness Generation to Generation, and will be held 15-17 Sept., 2006, in Atlanta, Georgia, at the Georgia World Congress Center. Featured speakers will be Joni

Eareckson Tada, Page Benton Brown, and Diane Langberg. Brochures will be mailed out and available soon.

+ *Presbyterian Church in America, Christian Education and Publications, 1700 North Brown Rd., Suite, 102, Lawrenceville, GA 30043-8122 (678) 825-1100*

World Alliance of Reformed Churches cuts costs

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), has approved cost cutting measures which will reduce costs and increase members' involvement. The plans will reduce the size of the core staff at WARC headquarters in Geneva and create networks of members to deal with issues such as economic and environmental justice, theology, mission, and gender justice.

+ *World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 150 Route de Ferney, PO Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2 Switzerland*

Christians protest attacks in Chattisgarh, India

Christians in Chattisgarh, India organized a five-day rally to protest increased attacks on churches in the state. The rally was coordinated by Arun Pannalal of the Church of North India, after violence on 11 Sept. in Raipur in which Hindu extremists destroyed property at one church and struck worshipers in another. The extremists tore the cross off the building of the Teacher Disciples Vineyard church in Jagannath Nagar, Raipur, and threw it into a septic tank. Members of the same Hindu extremist group punched and verbally harassed members of a Christian Evangelist Assembly Full Gospel Church later that same day.

+ *Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0314*

Great Commission Publications celebrates 30 years

This fall marks the 30th anniversary of Great Commission Publications, Inc. (GCP). In 1975, leaders of the Presbyterian Church in America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church joined hands to form this cooperative publishing venture. The OPC had been producing materials since the 1950's, including Vacation Bible School, Trinity Hymnal, and a graded Sunday school curriculum. The array of publications already in place provided a sturdy base for the new endeavour.

Today, almost every PCA and OPC congregation uses some or all of GCP's resources.

+ *Presbyterian Church in America, 1700 N Brown Rd. Suite 105, Lawrenceville, GA 30043 (678) 825-1000*

ICRC 2005

Bruce Hoyt

My trip to the International Conference of Reformed Churches meeting in Pretoria was a wonderful introduction to South Africa. I left Auckland at 7:00 a.m. Monday morning, 10 October, and arrived at 4:10 p.m. Monday evening after a 20-hour trip. The time differential resulted from flying through 11 time zones.

Rev. Ben Fourie, one of the delegates to our Synod in Hamilton, met me at the Johannesburg airport and drove me to his house where I met his family and had a good long sleep. Tuesday morning Ben and I left at 7:00 a.m. to spend the day at the Mukhanyo Theological College where Ben teaches each Tuesday. It is a training centre for pastors and ministerial candidates of churches from poorer black areas.

The ICRC conference itself began Wednesday evening with a prayer service in the Free Reformed Church of Pretoria. This church has a Christian School adjacent to the church. The children were given Thursday, Friday and Monday off so that the conference could use the facilities of both school

and church. Since there were 22 member churches in the ICRC, some of which had four delegates present, in addition to 20 or so observers and visitors, the total number of those attending the conference came to nearly 100.

I was elected as vice-chairman to assist the chairman, Rev. Bort de Graaf of the Christian Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. The secretary was Dr. Peter Naylor from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales, the church with which Rev. Kavanagh will be working. It is the practice of the ICRC to select as vice-chairman one of the delegates from the church which will host the following ICRC. This gives him opportunity to become familiar with the workings of the ICRC and also to be part of the Interim Committee which will plan the following ICRC. On the last day of the conference a unanimous decision was made to request the RCNZ be the host church for ICRC 2009. If we agree, it will be a wonderful opportunity for us to meet delegates from 30 or more churches all around the world who are committed to the Reformed faith.

The five days of the conference were filled

with a variety of matters: introductions from churches present for the first time, lectures from four speakers on various aspects of the topic "The Lordship of Christ", workshops led by the speakers on their topics, advisory committee meetings, meetings between delegates from various churches, and of course talking with delegates from some 30 or so different countries.

A highlight of the meeting was the reception of three new member churches: the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA) who are our sister churches in South Africa, the Reformed Churches of Spain, and the Reformed Churches of the Congo. It was very special to hear about the Reformed Faith taking root in Spain since many of us had no knowledge that there is a Reformed witness in that country. We were informed that several Spanish theologians had contributed to the Reformation during the 16th Century, but the Inquisition was successful in rooting out completely all Reformed presence in Spain until the government in the late 20th Century gave recognition to Protestants in general and to the Reformed Churches of Spain in particular.



Delegates of the member churches of the ICRC

It was amazing to hear of the progress of the Gospel in the Congo, a country troubled for many decades by war and dictatorship. The church there is growing by leaps and bounds. We must uphold our brothers and sisters in that impoverished country as they seek to live in obedience to the Gospel.

The discussion of the application for membership of the GKSA took some time since many delegates were concerned about the decision of their 2003 Synod to admit women to the office of deacon. Furthermore there is a study committee report which has just been released which advocates opening all the offices to women, (i.e. ministers and elders as well as deacons). After much discussion the conference voted to receive the GKSA and also encouraged the GKSA to stand firm on the Scriptures on this issue in which the church in many places is under pressure from the surrounding society to compromise.

On the other hand the ICRC had to make the sad decision to refuse membership to the Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCC). This is a small group of churches in Scotland which resulted from the deposition of several ministers by the Free Church of

Scotland (FCS). The matters behind this split are grievous and complex. For this reason the ICRC had already made the decision that such matters must not be discussed or considered by the ICRC. However, the action of the FCC to go to court against the FCS over church property made it clear that the FCC could not be received as a member church at this time. The ICRC urged the brothers on both sides of this split to resolve their differences in accord with Scripture.

The ICRC also decided against membership of the United Reformed Churches of Myanmar at this time. Although all the delegates were pleased to hear that the Reformed faith is taking root in Myanmar, it was clear to many that the churches there are unstable and still lack the ability to function according to Reformed Church government. As the Reformed churches in Myanmar continue to develop, they were encouraged to continue to send observers to the ICRC meetings in order to maintain contact with churches who may be able to help them.

Finally, the large and growing church in Nigeria, The Church of Christ among the Tiv, had applied for membership, but the two churches it had requested to support its

application had not received their request. This communication breakdown meant they could not be received as a member church at this time, but they were urged to apply in 2009 at the next meeting of the ICRC. This large church was begun through mission work of the Sudan United Mission in 1904, continued by the Dutch Reformed Church Mission, and then later continued by the mission arm of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Dr. Bill Berends was a missionary under the CRC/NA working among the Tiv before he became a professor at the RTC. At present this church has some 230,000 members. If it is received in 2009, it would be one of the two largest churches in the ICRC, the other being the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koshin).

It wasn't all work and discussion. Tuesday we were taken on a tour arranged by the host church. We first visited the Union Buildings (equivalent to our Parliament Buildings). It is a massive stone structure, impressive for both its size and architecture. However, I could not help but wonder how well it would survive the earthquakes we have in New Zealand. We visited the Voortrekker Monument and heard something of the history and struggle of the Boers who sought to establish a place of their own in this spacious land. After a picnic lunch in a beautiful, peaceful park outside Pretoria, the delegates were taken to a flea market where opportunities abounded to spend our cash. That evening our hosts provided a braai (barbeque) by candle-light with entertainment by none other than Rev. Ben Fourie who sang, mostly in Afrikaans, and accompanied himself on the accordion for over 30 minutes while we were enjoying our meal.

On both Sundays I had the opportunity to preach. I first preached through a translator in one of the mission churches of the GKSA near a squatter settlement. Here I saw first hand one of the most striking features of social life in South Africa: the first world and the third world are side by side. The squatter settlements arise almost overnight when large numbers of immigrants come from the surrounding countries seeking work in South Africa. They have no place to live and so they make themselves "houses" from corrugated iron, wooden crates, and even cardboard boxes, 4000 or more all clustered together in the space of a few hectares. Across the street tiny brick houses are being built at taxpayer's expense to house these people and get them out of the squatter settlements. But the progress is slow and the problems are many. AIDS/HIV is prevalent in these settlements. Orphans are many. The Gospel is

PUKEKOHE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL



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(Starting January 2006)

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P O Box 61, Pukekohe.**

little known. But just a few kilometres away are the high rise structures, businesses and impressive homes of wealthy South Africans. Some of these are members of Reformed Churches seeking to spread the Gospel among the poor and assist in the fight against poverty and AIDS/HIV. It was my privilege to preach to 100 or so who had been evangelised from among the poor.

I was also given the opportunity to preach at an evangelistic outreach service aimed at unchurched Afrikaners and then last Sunday evening in Rev. Ben Fourie's own congregation, where sadly a large percentage of the pews were empty.

After the conference Rev. Goris and I were treated royally to a trip through the southern portion of the Kruger National Park and into

the mountains and canyons 5 hours drive east of Pretoria. The portion of South Africa we saw is impressive not only for its vast velds but its wildlife and spectacular scenery. I think that New Zealand is not the only place that must be called God's Own.

Focus on home

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Andrew Reinders

Avondale

With thanksgiving to God we announce the wedding of Mr. Toby Dickens and Miss Karen Kwok on Saturday September 24, at The Falls Hotel, Henderson. We entrust them to the Lord of their lives as they begin this new journey together.

Telephone Directory deliveries: It is tender time again. The Cadet and Calvinette group would like to know if we will have the same level of commitment as in previous years and we would also like input on what groups would like to be involved.

More importantly, we need an organising committee (without that committee this valuable fundraiser will not be proceeding). Please see Sharon Jefferies TODAY or next Sunday with your feedback.

Cards For Sale: The cards made by the oldest Calvinette group will be for sale in the hall after church again this morning for \$1 or \$2. All the money raised will go the New Life Orphanage in India which the Cadets and Calvinettes sponsor.

Bishopdale

Last Wednesday the Lord called home to Himself our sister Wil Romeyn to be in a better place. We give thanks for the posi-

tive way she lived out her faith and that we could testify to this at the funeral yesterday. Our sympathies and thoughts go out to the wider family. May the Lord Jesus grant you comfort through this time. Special thanks to the Rev Michael Flinn for leading the service for us.

Congratulations to Tony & Diane Mulholland on the birth of Alex Peter last Tuesday. He weighed in at 8lb and all is well. Congratulations to first time grand parents Fred & Marguerite Braam.

Bucklands Beach

Senior's Day. The annual 'Senior's Day' is being organised and held here at Bucklands Beach for this year. ALL senior members of the congregation (60+ therefore!) are encouraged to come along and be part of this special day. Date: October 18th. The programme starts at 10.00am (coffee of course!) and ends at 2.30pm. Luncheon is included. Our guest speaker is JANICE REID who will have just returned from Cambodia. She has lots to share. PLEASE MAKE IT A DATE! If you have any old friends or people who you think would enjoy coming along, please INVITE them too!

Christchurch

Our condolences go out to Miep Koelewijn, along with Hetty and Jeremy and other family and friends of Br. Bert Koelewijn, who passed away this past Tuesday and whose funeral was held on Thursday. We join with all of God's people in looking forward to the resurrection that will take place when Jesus Christ returns. And we give thanks to God, whose faithfulness makes certain that all of God's children will live in perfect fellowship with Him forever.

Neighbourhood Family Service. This will be the Sunday morning service immediately following the week of Holiday Bible Club, Sunday 2 October (next Sunday). We have invited people in the neighbourhood, and will be inviting the families of all the children who attend the Holiday Club. The sermon will be related to the themes that have been looked at in the Holiday Club. Please pray that people in the neighbourhood will hear and respond to the gospel, and that this service will also be a way in which they can be made aware of our church. Please bring a plate, enough for your family and visitors, for coffee after the service.

Dovedale

Combined lunch on October 9th presentation Franci Hoyt: Next week we invite you all to some extra fellowship. Please bring a plate to share for a light lunch after the morning worship service. After the meal we can listen to a presentation from Franci. For those of you who do not know: Prior to her marriage to Ben, Franci helped for 3 months on a mission project in Sudan. Please come all and share some of her experiences!

Next Sunday, DV, Richard Snoek will be professing his faith in our midst and we rejoice with him in this.

Coast to Coast. It's now only 33 days to the start of the Reformed Churches Coast to Coast. This will take place from Thursday 10th to Saturday 12th of November. We will be completing the actual course including cycling, running/tramping, and kayaking/rafting. The event will be organized to cater for a range of fitness levels. So far around 20 people have expressed an interest in participating. If you would like more information and would be interested in participating in the challenge, or would like

to help with the support crews, please call Richard van Garderen on 360 2349. Look forward to hearing from you!

Dunedin

Session Notes. It was agreed to show the film, Luther, at a congregational fellowship

evening on Saturday 29 October to mark Reformation Day.

Our prospective vicar, Andrew Nugteren, with wife Lydia and three children are due to arrive on 17 January 2006. The Committee of Management are to make necessary funds available for relocation.

Grace Presbyterian Church. Greetings from the members of the Grace churches in the south. With the invitation to join you for your 50th celebrations, our members felt that they would like to continue the contact which we believe would be to the mutual benefit of both our churches. Our next presbytery meeting is being held on Thursday the 13th in Balclutha, at the Gospel Hall at 7:30. If you were able to come or send a representative they would be most welcome at the meeting. [Grace's Southern Presbytery includes churches at Dunedin, Milton, Owaka, Gore, Wyndham, Invercargill and Tuatapere - HV.]

All ladies welcome to a special ladies' fellowship meeting. Next Thursday 20 October, in the church hall at 7:45 pm, Prasana and Arpana Khaling will be speaking about their work with abandoned girls in North India. They have a home called 'A Little Lighthouse' where they live with and raise the girls in a loving Christian home, giving them an education, a future and a hope. This is a developing work—do come and hear what our brother and sister in Christ have to say and let us be an encouragement to them.

Foxton

Advance Notice: 40/50. The whole congregation as well as other friends and family are invited to a pot-luck dinner / fellowship and fun evening on Saturday, 15th Oct, 6:30pm at the Masonic Hall, Foxton. The occasion will be to celebrate the 'special' birthdays of Henny Dykstra and our Pastor. Br Roy Nugteren has kindly accepted to be the MC for the evening. If you have any skits or other items of interest, then please let Roy know. Please bring a main meal and sweet to share, along with your own crockery and cutlery. Coffee and tea provided.

Advance Notice – Family Night at The Movies: The film "Luther" (about the life of Martin Luther) will be specially screened for us at Cinema 3 in Levin on the 30th November. We have hired one of the cinemas and the whole congregation is invited to come along and enjoy this film with our Catechism classes. The cost will be \$6.00 per person if we have more than 30 people coming. Perhaps you would like to invite a friend or two, please do. More information later on. Please mark this date on your calendar.

Hamilton

Minister Calling: In its effort to find a minister for our congregation the session is consider-

HOMELEIGH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

OUR STORY ...

We like to take the opportunity to introduce to you Homeleigh Christian School, our Covenantal Christian School which the Lord was pleased to establish in 1987 in Masterton.

The Reformed Church in Masterton formed a school association firmly believing that as covenantal people we should do our utmost to educate our children from a Reformed perspective on the grounds of Deuteronomy 6: 5-7; 4:40. God blessed this effort and we were able to establish Homeleigh Christian School.

Homeleigh Christian School has a constitution firmly rooted in the Reformed Confessions of Faith and members of our association have to be also a member of a Reformed Church of New Zealand. The board is elected from this also. We had small beginnings, teaching year 1 – 6, approx. 25 students and 2 teachers, but have had blessed times with teaching year 1 – 10 and 4 teachers. Currently however we are smaller than we've ever been with only 12 students, 1 full time and 1 part time teacher. As you can appreciate, this places a great economical burden the members and parents of the students. This year we have been able to sustain the school through many gifts, pledged and fundraising. For next year, 2006, we are looking to financially secure the future of our school and raise \$25000, 00 - \$30000, 00 to cover the forecasted deficit. Our Home & School committee is confident of raising half of this amount.

The motto of our school is: "For Christ and His Kingdom". Through this means we would like to invite you to help us. We all know that unless the Lord blesses our efforts it will be in vain and for His blessing we pray.

You are able to support us financially via the following means:

- Become a (associate)member of our School Association @ \$400,00 per year and be able to have a real say in the future of the school.
- Gold sponsorship: \$300.00
- Silver sponsorship: \$200.00
- Bronze sponsorship: \$100.00
- Pledges/gifts of any amount
- Move to our area and have your children school at our school (highly recommended).

Receive 2 newsletters p/yr

We appreciate your support and prayers and look forward to hear from you. If you wish any further information about us please contact us.

Christian greetings,

The Board of Homeleigh Christian School

ing to propose to the congregation to call Robert van Wichen, subject to him passing his presbytery examination. Robert is currently serving his vicariate in the Reformed Church of Bishopdale and will be sitting his preliminary examination on Friday 7th October, please remember him and his family, as well as presbytery Christchurch, in your prayers. If Robert passes this examination he will be declared eligible for call. The session has invited Robert and his wife Laurel to come to Hamilton on the weekend of the 16th October. Robert will lead both services and there will be a shared lunch after the morning service during which we can get to know Robert and Laurel a bit. There will also be a meeting with the session on Saturday 15th October. More information will be given closer to the time. We have copies of sermons available for any people who want to read them. Please see one of the session members if you are interested.

Ladies Retreat. By now you should have received a little leaflet in your pigeon hole regarding our ladies retreat. Don't hesitate, come along for a time of fellowship and encouragement. It is to be held in Hamilton this year, so if you would like to attend only on the Saturday, please feel free to do so. On Saturday morning we'll have a guest speaker, Jaqui Hart and on Saturday night we will finish with a Rainbow dinner. All information is in the leaflet. Please fill it in and leave it in Caroline van't Wout or Carina Wassenaar's pigeon hole by Sunday 9 October.

Hastings

Cadets and Calvinettes. This coming Thursday, 6th October is our 'Ocean Night.' We will start at 6pm with fish and chips at church, a parade and a fishy DVD to watch. We will finish at the normal time of 9pm. Come dressed up in your sea related theme and have some fishy fun!! There will be prizes for the best dressed and imaginative person. As we need to know how many parcels of fish and chips to order, we would like you to inform your child's counsellor whether your child is attending or not.

Celebration. Tony and Francine de Vos would like to invite everyone to share in morning tea next Sunday (the 16th) to celebrate Tony's 80th birthday. Would ladies please bring a plate.

Youth Groupers get ready to ride! In anticipation of our Spring Bike Ride we would like to encourage you all to get ready! Dust off your

bikes, or start greasing up to your mates for a bike to borrow if you don't have one. As for yourselves, you'll need to start doing daily 1km training rides..... just kidding! This should be a leisurely and fun bike ride, so we hope to see you all there on Saturday the 29th of October. More details to follow...The Groovy Group Committee

Mangere

Pastoral. At this last Wednesday's Session meeting, we again had a number of our young adults come before Session desiring to publicly profess their faith. So the elders questioned Andrew Bajema, Davy Kerkhoven, Jeremy Posthuma and Michael Posthuma together as to their knowledge and then separately as to their personal faith. We were pleased to hear of where they stood with the Lord and how they want to continue in worshipping and serving Him as communicant members of Christ's Church. And so we look forward, with thankfulness, to their testifying of that faith in the morning worship service of the 23rd of October 2005.

North Shore

Street Team. Planning is well under way for the Street Team event, planned for Saturday 8th October (2 weeks' time). Please keep this day free, so that you can come along and add to the day – those who are unable to come for the morning, why not come for the sausage sizzle at lunch time (12.30 pm)? We'd love to see as many of you as possible, so that, together, we can let folk in our neighbourhood know about the Reformed Church and (if God allows) what we believe.

We are privileged to have in our pulpit again this morning the Rev. Prof. Joey Pipa, a minister in the Presbyterian Church of America and president and professor of Historical and Systematic Theology in Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in South Carolina, here for the NZ Conference on Reformation Theology. Joey will be preaching at Covenant Presbyterian Church this evening and on Tuesday he will be addressing the Reformed Pastors Fellowship at Grace Theological College before flying to Christchurch for the next leg of the Conference. A warm welcome to you Joey and we trust you have enjoyed your stay with us this weekend.

Street Team profiles. We thought we'd share with you some of our experiences at last at last Saturday's Street Team event – please pray for those with whom we had contact.

Some of our people spent the morning working for a lady who has throat cancer, and was recently widowed. This lady had great difficulty showing us the work that needed doing around her yard because she is currently undergoing chemotherapy and was very tired. We made no promises, but she would really appreciate it if somebody could take her up to Puhoi every so often to visit the place where her husband was buried. If you can help in this, please see Berwyn or Nathaniel about it. We also helped one lady about whom we know very little except that she is not strong enough for some of her gardening. Another, who is laid up in a wheel chair, had to look out her living room window all day at a heap of overgrown grass which we were able to pull out for her. Finally, we helped get under control the garden of a new bachelor moving into the area. We were able to have interesting discussions with his Roman Catholic parents. We will be able to follow up with most of these contacts in the future to show them the Love of Jesus in deed – and possibly even in Word.

Palmerston North

Operation Friendship. Everyone is invited to a meeting with Michael and Freda Simkin (née Howells) on Monday 19th September, at Kingston Street Chapel, at 7.30pm. The meeting will be discussing the plans for 2006 for helping international students make contact with the churches in our city. This will be an opportunity to become involved in the organisation of Operation Friendship in Palmerston North, or just come along to find out more about the scheme. CK Mrs Miriam Hook.

We offer our condolences to Peter Hook, Carol and the rest of the family on the loss of a wife and mother. The Lord took Miriam home on Wednesday 21 Sept, and we too rejoice that she has entered into the joy of the Lord. The funeral will take place at this church building, with afternoon tea available in the hall at the rear following the committal.

Wedding - Nathan & Melissa. We would like to advise the congregation that Nathan & Melissa plan to marry (DV) at Harmony House on Saturday the 15 October at 1.00pm. All members of the congregation are invited to attend and after the ceremony light refreshments will be provided, which will give us all the opportunity for fellowship & to congratulate Nathan & Melissa. Those ladies who are willing to provide a plate for

afternoon tea, please contact Hester Bryant, phone 06-362-7675, thank you. Dennis & Willi Bryant

Session is glad to be able to announce that Leah Dykstra and Freddy Minnée were both interviewed for profession of faith and that session approved their requests. Dates for the profession of faith are to be announced.

Pukekohe

Rachel Kaijser met with the session to discuss her desire to profess her faith. She gave a good account of her love for the Lord and her commitment to his church. The session was very happy to grant her request and she will profess her faith, DV, on Sunday 16 October in the morning service.

Something to think about: In my reading this week I came across these quotations that are worth pondering and practicing. JH.

“Feed your faith and your doubts will starve to death.”

“Live in such a way that those who know you but don’t know God will come to know God because they know you.”

“Sorrow looks back, worry looks around, and faith looks up.”

Men’s outing: We have received a challenge from the Mangere Reformed Church to a game of PAINT BALL. This challenge will take place on the 29th of October at 2pm at Beachlands. Please see Wayne for further details if you are interested.

Wellington

Visiting Preacher. This morning we welcome into our pulpit, the Rev Charles Jansz, of the Reformed Church of Sri Lanka. He is in Wellington for an Asia and Pacific conference of the United Bible Societies. May the Lord

grant rich blessing on his ministry of the Word in our midst.

Corporate Prayer Time. Following the afternoon service we shall have a time of corporate prayer. The usual service will be shorter to make room for this prayer time. Those who wish to leave before the prayer time starts, may do so. However, it is appreciated if you stay.

Brooklyn Festival. As you all may be aware this is coming up at the end of November. There will be a meeting to discuss the above for all HOME C committee members, youth group and any others willing to help after the morning service on Sunday 30th October in the upstairs hall. Hope to see you all there. Fiona (Home C Committee)

A letter from the Kavanaghs



In November we will be going to England, where I have received a call to serve as assistant minister in Chelmsford Presbyterian Church, in Essex. People have commented

that we are going home—both Julie and I having grown up in England. But we have been here in New Zealand for a quarter of a century, nearly half our lives. We married

here. I entered the ministry of the RCNZ. So it’s not quite going home, as New Zealand is also a home to us.

The church I am going to serve in is part of a denomination called the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales. It was formed in 1995, and all the churches are church plants, and relatively small. There are nine of them altogether, and a very new church planting enterprise has just started in Solihull, Birmingham. Why the need for a new denomination in England? The paragraph below, written by Rev Brian Norton of the Durham Presbyterian Church, starts to give the answer. It is taken from the Presbyterian Network, of Spring 2002, written to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the founding of the denomination:

It’s fifteen years since the Presbyterian Association in England (PAE) was formed in 1987. It arose after the London Presbyterian Conference in November 1986. The PAE at first organised an interim presbytery and out of that the presbytery of the EPCEW (Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales) was formed in 1995. Why was there a need for such a thing? The Westminster Confession, as a summary of biblical teaching, was formulated in England out of another Assembly



reintroduce it from Scotland in the 19th century had died out in the mid-20th century. But a Presbyterian Association was formed later in the 20th century, and help was sought from the Mission to the World of the Presbyterian Church of America. Some of the EPCWE churches have been planted by these American mission workers. Others have grown from groups of interested individuals. There are three Welsh churches, which have their roots in Welsh Calvinistic Methodism.

The EPCWE churches are ICRC member churches, and the RCNZ shares sister churches in the OPC and the GKNLib. The EPCWE has a web site, the address being: <http://www.epcew.org.uk/>. You can contact us on our New Zealand email address: kavanagh@xtra.co.nz. We should have a permanent address to write to in the new year. It has been a privilege to serve in the RCNZ, and we have made many friends here. It will not be easy to leave, and we will take many good memories with us. We ask you to pray for us, as we will for you.



that met in London three hundred and fifty years ago. Yet Confessional Presbyterianism was almost extinct in England by the 1970s. After such decline could the plant Ecclesia presbyteria grow again? Can a Presbyterian Church really flourish in the soil of England? The ground had, as it were, been burnt over. England had come to think of Presbyterianism as

a Scottish export. As far as evangelicals in both Wales and England were concerned, denominations themselves had become discredited. Why such decline? What had happened?

Presbyterianism had died out in England in the 18th Century, due to theological liberalism in the churches. An attempt to

Chris and Julie Kavanagh

CHRISTCHURCH PRESBYTERY: SHORT REPORT FOR 7-8 OCTOBER 2005

Moderator: Rev Hans Vaatstra. Vice Moderator: Elder Fred Braam.

On Friday evening of the 7 October delegates from the churches along with Rev. Paul Archbald, representing the Wellington Presbytery, and Rev Dirk van Garderen, representing the Auckland Presbytery, were able to give thanks for the successful preliminary examination of Vicar Robert van Wichen. Robert preached from Joshua 1:6-9 which was set by Rev. Dirk van Garderen. Rev. Ralph Adams conducted the New Testament exam from Romans 8:12-27, Rev. Michael Flinn the Old Testament exam from Zechariah 5, and Rev. Hans Vaatstra conducted the Dogmatics exam. A good number of visitors from the Christchurch churches also attended. Robert is now eligible for call within the churches of the RCNZ and the CRCA.

Delegates assembled again on Saturday morning to complete the remaining business on the agenda. Dovedale will present a paper at the next meeting in order to work on some rules and/or

guidelines with respect to any applications made to Presbytery for funding. Audited accounts of the last national youth convention will be tabled at the next meeting. Church visitations have been completed with reports outstanding for two visits. These will be discussed at the next meeting. Presbytery considered an overture from the Reformed Church of Christchurch with respect to the way church visitation was conducted. It was agreed that church visitations will in future be done using the Wellington Presbytery model. The appointments schedule and the church visitation schedule will be reviewed and confirmed at the first Presbytery meeting of each year. The programme of deputation work for the Hagoorts during February 2006 was confirmed. It was also noted that Rev. Alan & Odette Douma are in PNG to see whether or not they are able to serve our churches as missionaries there.

Elder Fred Braam

A feminine focus

Talk to Yourself

Martyn Lloyd-Jones's

Spiritual Depression

Sally Davey

This book is by a pastor who knew how to help people with their personal struggles. Discouragement, worry, vain regrets, a general sense of despondency in a Christian's life... Lloyd Jones saw it all. But do you know what he did with people in these situations? He didn't send them to a counselor for a series of sessions. He didn't get them to see their doctor "in case they were clinically depressed." (Actually, he was a trained medical specialist himself). He didn't suggest anything of the kind. His prescription was quite simple: the Word of God, believed, applied and absorbed. Understand what God has said, and tell it to yourself. Yes: talk to yourself. Take yourself in hand, examine your heart, apply a scriptural diagnosis, and say to yourself, quite forcibly if necessary, these things are true. Your spiritual depression will be replaced by faith, and your demeanour, instead of being drawn and troubled, will become calm and composed. This, writes Lloyd-Jones, is the way a Christian ought to be, if she is to reflect her calling.

The author

Perhaps this book—and its author—are familiar to you. I hope they are! But if not (and certainly, his earthly labours ended 20 years ago) let me introduce him to you. Martyn Lloyd-Jones is one of the best-known preachers of the mid-late twentieth century. He was a Welshman, and as a promising young doctor, had embarked on a professional career as a Harley St physician. But a growing impression that he was treating people only to enable them to carry on in their sin became a strong call to the ministry of the gos-

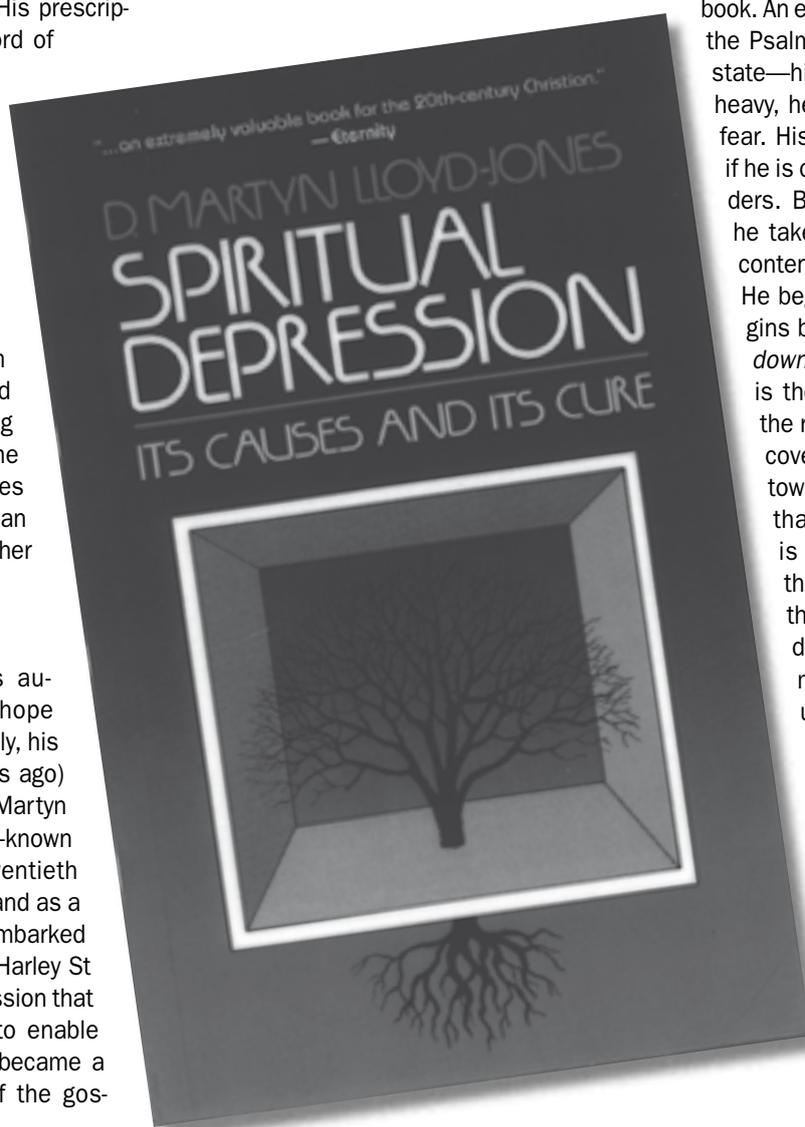
pel—and Lloyd-Jones became a preacher. He first served in small Welsh communities, and then in the late 1930s received a call to the famous Westminster Chapel in London, where he became Assistant Pastor. Right through the Blitz on London during World War Two, Lloyd-Jones preached in the expositional style he became famous for. After the War he and others, young Anglican clergy including James Packer, founded the Banner of Truth Trust and the Westminster Conference which, together, were responsible for a great revival of interest in the

Puritan preachers of the 17th century and their writings. The name Lloyd-Jones became synonymous with sound, Calvinist theology and preaching that profoundly moved hearts in devotion to God. He was greatly interested in the salvation of souls and in Christians' walk with their God.

Spiritual Depression, like Lloyd-Jones's other books, is a series of sermons he preached in Westminster Chapel. Each chapter is an exposition of a text of Scripture that deals with the troubles of the heart. He believed that the preached Word was the best cure for the soul; and that most Christians' troubles could be dealt with by close attention to faithful preaching. (As a minister he was not one for lengthy, repeated counseling sessions.)

The approach

The first chapter in the book encapsulates the approach found in the rest of the book. An exposition of Psalm 42, it shows the Psalmist beginning in a depressed state—his soul is downcast. His soul is heavy, he is in a state of distress and fear. His face (countenance) looks as if he is carrying the world on his shoulders. But he does a sensible thing: he takes himself in hand. He is not content to lie down and pity himself. He begins to *talk to himself*. He begins by asking himself *why he is so downcast*. Asking ourselves what is the cause of our depression in the right way to start. If we can uncover the causes, we are halfway toward the solution (you can see that Lloyd-Jones, the physician, is saying—first diagnose, and then prescribe). Now, of course, there may be many reasons for discouragement. Our temperament is one: and God has made us all differently. Some are extroverts, seldom troubled by inner anxieties. Others are more introverted, reflective, and more easily troubled by things. These latter are more inclined to spiritual depression. But before you conclude that makes them more prone to sin, it is important to remember, Lloyd-Jones warns, that such people have often been



used by God for His more mighty purposes. Include among them Luther, Calvin, the Apostle Paul, almost certainly David, and Moses. They are also more sensitive to conviction of sin—a distinctive advantage for their spiritual growth. The important thing is, we need to know ourselves so that we can recognise what our weaknesses are: what to guard against, how to understand our weaknesses, how to repent, and pray for grace to change when needed. Then again, physical factors may make us more prone to depression: chronic pain and sleeplessness perhaps chief among them. But then, above all, it is the devil who is behind all causes of our spiritual depression. He wants us to become discouraged; to lose heart; and he will use our temperaments and our physical troubles to bring this about. Ultimately, though, all such depression is wrong: there is something lacking in such a state, and Lloyd-Jones tells us that is unbelief. The Psalmist had “forgotten God, so that his faith and his belief in God and in God’s power, and his relationship to God, were not what they ought to be... the final and ultimate cause is just sheer unbelief.” We know this because the resolution he recommends to himself is that he “*hope in God*”, for then he will again praise Him. God, his salvation, is our great cause for hope, for relief in trouble, and ultimately for a restoration of joy. And, as Lloyd-Jones applies this to us:

“The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul: ‘*Why art thou cast down*’ – what business have you to be disquieted? You must turn on yourself, upbraid yourself, condemn yourself, exhort yourself, and say to yourself: ‘*Hope thou in God*’—instead of muttering in this depressed, unhappy way. And then you must go on to remind yourself of God, Who God is, and what God is and what God has done, and what God has pledged Himself to do. Then having done that, end on this great note: defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and the whole world, and say with this man: ‘*I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance, who is also the health of my countenance and my God.*’”

Of course, discouragement may be due to a lack of grace in the heart; or saying it another way, no grace at all if the discouraged person is not a Christian and has no changed heart. Lloyd-Jones is right to warn his congregation—and his readers—of this possibility. We are right to consider this. We may have been in the church all our lives,

and yet not have experienced saving grace. This, after all, was the position of those Jews about whom Paul wrote in Romans Chapter 2. It is no good resting on our baptism or our years of church attendance, catechism instruction or participation in church activities. They are nothing if we have not trusted solely in Christ; and it is no wonder we should become depressed about spiritual matters if we have no grace. This is a first consideration—and a vital one.

The reasons

But what do we do, then, if we have passed through these initial chapters, and learned about the general matter of spiritual depression? Perhaps we have asked our soul why we are downcast, and have discovered a specific reason why. What follows are a number of chapters dealing with specific reasons for discouragement. Perhaps you are worried that, in the past, you have committed that one, awful, unforgivable sin. Perhaps you have general, less specific, vain regrets over your past failures, and are unable to put them behind you. Satan is continually condemning you, trying to convince that your case is hopeless; that you are useless, un-

profitable, and even no servant of God at all. For these kinds of reasons for depression, Lloyd-Jones takes us to Scripture, corrects our thinking and gives us the encouragement needed to press on, put those things behind us, and begin a new life of spiritual usefulness, free from the regrets of the past. Perhaps you have fears for the future, or are a slave to the ups and downs of your feelings. There are two sermons that point us to Scripture to help us deal with those. In them we are shown what to say to our trembling souls; how to talk ourselves into trust, rock-solid confidence in God’s truth, and contented peace of mind. Perhaps you may find yourself tempted by what you later realise is false teaching? Often we are not aware of this happening; but one of the fruits of it may be a loss of true joy, loss of the zest we once had as we studied the Scriptures and found them to be true. We become dragged down into controversy, into false emphases or neglect of important correcting doctrine. We no longer have peace of mind when facing trials. Lloyd-Jones deals with this condition, and with that common condition of the middle years—weariness in well-doing. In fact, this book about covers all the bases

IN TOUCH

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when it comes to the causes of despondency in the Christian life. Whatever the cause of our condition, we will find something to help us in this book.

The focus

So what particular use might this book be to us, in our context? Well, it seems to me that it is a *good* book, a model for the kind of thing we should be doing when we face any kind of trial. Instead of looking inward, and feeling sorry for ourselves, we should turn to God's truth, in the Scriptures, for the general principles and specific instruction that deals with our kind of trial. This is the way out, this is the way forward, the way to solving our problem, seeing its purpose and gaining real, useful spiritual lessons from it. Instead of rushing off to five friends and telling our story in such a way that they give us nothing but sympathetic warm fuzzies, we need to strengthen our resolve, and exhort ourselves into obedient, courageous action. We need to galvanise our wills for purposeful, committed war on sin. We need to teach ourselves

to become loyal and trusting children of our heavenly Father, who loves us.

As Lloyd-Jones reminds us, there are far too many dejected, miserable-looking Christians to be seen around us these days. Perhaps you might even admit that you are one of this number. I know I have been at times. But we need to remember that miserable Christians are very poor witnesses to the God who saves His people, who loved them so much He sacrificed His only Son for them. Do you ever wonder why the world takes so little account of the church? Have you ever wonder why we are so often despised—or pitied? Take thought, then, for the effect of our countenances upon the watching world. Heed this dear pastor's admonition, and honour your Father in heaven. In the words of our Lord Jesus,

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16).

Talk to yourself!

***if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed."* (Gal.1: 8,9)**

The dialogue has been done (the reformation) and the Catholic Church has answered (Trent). None of those anathemas pronounced against the 'protestant' church has been revoked. Even on-going solemn admonition and rebuke has not brought change in the official teachings of this 'church'.

She is willfully apostate and should be recognised as such. Protestants should, according to apostolic precedent ***"not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."***(Gal.2: 5).

Second, like Rev. Zuidema, (F&F Aug.2005) your correspondents state that reformed doctrine does not save, but Christ alone. How do they know? Did they learn it from scripture? Can they learn it anywhere else not derived from scripture? But what if the scripture teaching they had was wrong? How would they know that? From scripture I guess. The point of this semantic circle is to expose the false dichotomy – you cannot set faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from the revelation of Christ. When Our Lord Jesus said "I am the truth" and "this is the work of God, to believe him whom he has sent" he was physically present before those to whom he was speaking. He is not now. He was then the physical manifestation of truth attested by his words and works in fulfillment of (OT) scripture, but that is not the case now. We behold him through the eyes of faith. We come to know Christ (to believe Him) by believing what scripture teaches ***about*** him. If we do believe, we know thereby that the Holy Spirit has been at work in us, attesting to the truth of the Spirit inspired word. **There is no direct 'relationship' with Christ apart from the word of, and work of, the Holy Spirit.**

True doctrine is scripture doctrine; all of scripture is doctrine for all of scripture is authoritative, everlasting and true. And scripture itself tells us that doctrine does save: *"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."* (1Tim.4: 16). Granted, in context this refers to salvation in a wider sense, that is, it includes preservation in the faith through adherence to the truth (at least for Timothy) yet since this same apostle has said "faith comes by hearing and hearing by

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

In response to certain points raised by Aaron Stewart, Hans Snoek and Lynton Baird in the October issue of the Faith and Focus:

First, Rev. Milne's article 'What was the Reformation about?' was addressing an evident lack in evangelical "eulogies" of "any awareness that there is a vast difference between the pope's "gospel" and the gospel of scripture." Your correspondents evidence this same lack, not because they are unaware of doctrinal error in Catholic dogma (they claim otherwise), but because either, they do not want to acknowledge that the difference is vast enough to base judgements on, or their awareness of Catholic doctrinal error is superficial. Yes, we may engage in "earnest, serious debate, and even solemn admonition and rebuke" but, so they say, "You most definitely should not imply that he [the pope] is not a Christian."

That pope is the paramount officeholder in the Catholic church, a church that does not (it cannot) exhibit the marks of the true church – it cannot faithfully preach, since church tradition is accorded equal status with scripture – it cannot faithfully exercise church discipline because it's rule for judging life and conduct is not the scripture alone – it cannot faithfully administer the sacraments

since it admits an extra five church 'rites' as sacrament; it holds that the real presence of (the ascended) Christ is physical; and it holds that its baptism is regenerative.

The pope, by assuming his office, affirms all the tradition, symbolism, superstition, and false teaching that the Catholic Church is built on. In fact the office of pope is in itself a denial of the gospel – it displaces Christ as the head of his church, as the supreme judge of all men and institutions, and also arrogates to itself the role of God the Holy Spirit in guiding the church in the way of truth.

Catholics (and certainly the pope himself) believe that the pope is: *"the infallible ruler, the founder of dogmas, the author of and the judge of councils; the universal ruler of truth, the arbiter of the world, the supreme judge of heaven and earth, the judge of all, being judged by no one, God himself on earth."*¹

The catholic church as an institution judged by its dogma is also a graceless, loveless tyrant which "tests God by putting a yoke on the necks of the disciples which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear" Acts 15:10 (hierarchical church government, ruling the conscience by imposing hierarchically derived doctrines, requiring a regimen of works).

What should our response be? ***"But even***

the word of God”, those who heard Timothy may well have been saved (brought to faith) as well as sustained in faith through those same doctrines. The point is – both pure gospel and pure doctrine are necessary unto salvation.

But the question remains, are the reformed creeds and confessions ‘doctrines of men’ or do they contain the doctrines of scripture?

Rev. Zuidema states in his letter (and I believe him) that he “is not trying to drive a wedge between our doctrines/ confessions and scripture”. He states further “On the contrary we believe that our creeds and confessions are a faithful summary of what scripture teaches.” And then, without trying to, he creates a wedge size crevice between our confessions and scripture – “if we are to infer that our doctrines can save people, then we have become Roman Catholic, perhaps not in practice but certainly in words. For then we are saying that our precious reformational solos of “Christ alone” and “Scripture alone” is not sufficient, but Christ or scripture **and** our reformed system of doctrine are necessary to be saved.” This is an incorrect, unwarranted and damaging conclusion:

(a) Incorrect because his conclusion (that if reformation doctrine were able to save it would make ‘Christ alone’ or ‘scripture alone’ insufficient) is the result (I hope) of meager reflection. Our reformed system of doctrine does not **add** to scripture. It is built on the TRUTHS of scripture and therefore could well be, if attended by the effectual inward work of the Holy Spirit of God, instrumental in salvation because of the scripture truth in it. There is scriptural warrant for this assertion - the Apostle Paul “reasoned” with the Jews from the scriptures (Acts 17:2,17; 18:4,19), our doctrines are also ‘reasoning from scripture’. Paul’s sermon on Mars hill contained **not one** scripture quotation – but it contained TRUTH and was effective unto salvation (17:34). We are not apostles, but their truth remains in scripture along with Moses and the Prophets, scripture need only be accurately handled in order to convey a message with the potential to save should the Holy Spirit apply it (Lk.16:31) – if this is not so then Rev. Zuidema is wasting his time climbing the pulpit each week. This cannot be said of Catholic doctrines because, being judged against **scripture** they are clearly erroneous at best, heretical and blasphemous at worst.

There is no way that this claim makes anyone Catholic, rather it makes them bible believing Christians (those in union with

Christ through that faith which believes him by believing **his** word alone – not the pope’s).

(b) Unwarranted because he has already stated that he believes our creeds and confessions **are** a faithful summary of scripture teaching. If so they reflect the truth of scripture in so far as their formulations are faithful to scripture; not exhaustively to be sure, but certainly with sufficient clarity and accuracy to be readily identifiable with scripture truth. They are understood to be subordinate standards, that is, they are subject always to scrutiny on the basis of what scripture itself teaches. If this were not so we could not legitimately claim to be ‘reformed’ - “sola scriptura”- this is not the case with Catholicism. Reformed doctrine is based on scripture and judged by scripture alone; it presents no challenge to scripture and no displacement of scripture; this is not the case with Catholicism.

(c) Damaging because his view appar-

ently holds that the respective doctrines of various denominations are all ‘doctrines of men’ even if they are a “faithful summary” of what scripture teaches. If faithful, they remain the doctrines of scripture – only where they are unfaithful **and yet insisted upon** are they the ‘doctrines of men’. Reformed doctrine holds that the individual conscience, like its creeds and confessions is always subject to **scripture** – this is not the case with the Catholic Church. This failure to see the pivotal role of scripture in reformed doctrine (and perhaps also soteriology?) constitutes the wedge sized crevice between reformed doctrine and scripture doctrine.

(d) Damaging **especially because of the reckless use of the term ‘Christ alone saves’**. This inadequate sloganeering misrepresents reformation doctrines by ‘compartmentalising’ the atonement as if it could stand alone apart from all those things which work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called ones

*Behold, Your God!**

What did they hear
when in the silent night
the darkness fled
as heav’n came near, so bright?

What did they think
when they were strangely stirred
to face the facts
and check out what they’d heard?

What did they do
when darkness reigned once more,
what did they do?
They went, those shepherds poor!

What did they see
when they in silence stared
those shepherds awed,
what did they see and share?

They saw their God!

*John Goris
Wellington, 2005
* Isaiah 40:9c*

according to His purpose. This superficial and incomplete 'gospel' reinforces an all too prevalent 'relational experientialism' (my term) or 'piety' (Schleiermacher's term) which eschews doctrine, authority, and absolutes in favor of immediate personal religious sense. It is akin to that repugnant and shallow motto 'no creed but Christ'. It suggests an anthropocentric, subjective, individualistic, emotional 'piety' bounded and governed only by the religious 'sense' and not by the word and Spirit of God – for the purposes of God. Compare this to the sovereign, covenantal, kingdom perspective that marks out reformed believers, not as individuals with religious needs, but as those dead to self and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Who are, by his merits, a chosen **race**, a royal **priesthood**, a holy **nation**, a **people** peculiar (of distinction) to God.

(e) Damaging also because the refusal to judge institutions which by their doctrines show themselves to be obvious enemies of the gospel of grace and thereby of Christ, has about it the air of 'hypothetical universalism' (Amyraldianism), which in turn has been the smell of Arminianism in our reformed circles for too long. Even though Saul (later the Apostle Paul) was saved, the Jews still continued to persecute the church of Jesus Christ. Hypothetical universalism contradicts the very word of God with its proposition that even the reprobate (those chosen to damnation) might repent and believe. Paul was clearly not reprobate, because he was chosen by God for salvation and marked out by Him as an apostle. We pray that the pope might similarly be converted to Christ from Catholicism – but we know that the apostate Catholic church will continue to oppose the

gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus because it considers itself the very kingdom which is Christ's – if you are in it you are in Christ - out of it you are 'separated brethren' i.e. lost sheep to be reclaimed.

Back to scripture gentlemen! Semper Reformanda!

John Haakma,
Wanganui.

Editor's Note: Correspondence relating to the Rev. G. Milne's article in the June 2005 'Faith in Focus' and any responses to that, is now brought to a close.

1 From the New York Catechism, in 'Roman Catholicism' Loraine Boettner, P&R, 1962, p127.

Children in focus



Sonshine

Korner



A FAKE CHRISTMAS:

Read: John 3:14-21

"How pretty!" breathed Jessie as she stood at the rope barricade and stared in wonder at the shiny balls, the glittering stars, the miniature angels, and the sparkling snow on a Christmas tree at the mall.

"We can get snow like that to put on our tree," said Rodney, her older brother.

"We can?" asked Jessie. "How? Why doesn't it melt?"

"You just buy it," said Rodney. "It comes in a spray can, and you just spray it on."

"It looks so real," said Jessie, sounding disappointed. After a moment, she asked, "Who are all the presents under the tree for?"

"They're not real presents," said Rodney. "They're just empty boxes wrapped to look like presents, just part of the decorations. They're supposed to get people in the mood to buy Christmas presents."

Jessie could hardly believe that the beautifully wrapped boxes were empty. She wanted to reach over the barricade, pick one up, and shake it.

Back home, Jessie and Rodney told Mum about the tree. "The snow looked so real," said Jessie, "and the presents did, too. Are they really just empty boxes?"

Mum nodded. "Do you realize that for people who don't know the real reason for Christmas, all of the celebrating they do can be just as empty as those phony presents?" she asked thoughtfully.

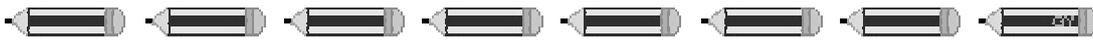
"The real reason for Christmas?" asked Jessie. "You mean they don't know it's

Jesus' birthday? I thought everybody knew that!"

"Some don't," said Mum. "Others know it's His birthday, but they don't realize who He is. They don't understand that God gave His Son Jesus to be our Savior, and that He offers us the free gift of eternal life. That's what we really celebrate at Christmas."

MEMORY VERSE: "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23b

HOW ABOUT YOU? Do you celebrate the real reason for Christmas? God gave His best present when He sent Jesus to be your Savior. He offers the gift of eternal life. It isn't a fake. It doesn't wear out or get old, and you can't outgrow it, it's freely given by grace.



A Fake Christmas Word Find:

Find the words from the list below hidden in the puzzle. They are in all directions.

**FAESNECNIKNARFSTABLE
 FUCHRISTFJNNLPVIRGIN
 LGBIRTHS SE O LICPVMM
 OUEGDLT UM IIHPMAY
 CSCAAF ESEZ TWSCR
 KTAMI SESK ADRYR
 TUEG ESJIFD VOOH
 SSP EIHWDG LOW
 OW NRLREYLF AG
 HA RCJEMPRO OS
 YD ONEUPIHHOG SJ
 LD UGDVEPRSEL OO
 NL YOJTAERGBLRG NU
 EI KDSKSKOEALD OR
 VN WZTOOINIRAEGFS FN
 AG HALJNFNDNUHKCA GE
 EL RONFEKIGNWOXBT OY
 HF EEAG DZ
 LQ LMYO EQ
 MANGERN SMGOODTIDINGS
 ROIVASMEHELHTEBDEXAT**

- | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|-----------|------------|
| ANGELS | GABRIEL | JOSEPH | SAVIOR |
| AUGUSTUS | GIFTS | JOURNEY | SHEPHERDS |
| BETHLEHEM | GLORY | KING | SON OF GOD |
| BIRTH | GOLD | LORD | STABLE |
| CHRIST | GOOD TIDINGS | MAGI | STAR |
| DECREE | GOODWILL | MANGER | SWADDLING |
| DONKEY | GREAT JOY | MARY | TAXED |
| EMMANUEL | HEAVENLY HOST | MYRRH | VIRGIN |
| FLOCK | INN KEEPER | PEACE | WISE MEN |
| FRANKINCENSE | JESUS | SALVATION | WORSHIP |



Mission in focus

Janice Reid

Reformed Outreach in Cambodia

Cambodia is a poverty-stricken country of more than 13 million souls. The CIA World Factbook reports that the GDP is \$1,900 US per capita; but this figure is skewed because the vast majority of the wealth is in the hands of only a few. Many of the country's wealthy people are corrupt: taking bribes, controlling the illegal land-grabbing that disenfranchises the poor, and even participating in such wickedness as child



trafficking, which robs people of much more than their inheritance.

In Cambodia, more than two hundred thousand garment factory workers subsist on a wage of around \$45 US per month. Government doctors who work in the countryside receive a ridiculous \$20 US per month—try living on that! But the slums of the cities are home to the poorest of the poor: people who must hunt through garbage for their daily food; who have no sanitation, no clean water, no medical care....

A young country – on more ways than one

Cambodia is also a young country, in spite of its thousand-year history. The Factbook reports that 60% of Cambodians are under 20 years of age. But schools are too few and are under-equipped: there can be up to 90 students in a class; and many children do not even get to school at all: the schools are too far away or their parents are too poor. Some schools lack even basic facilities, like water or toilets; teacher resources are a ridiculous luxury, hardly even dreamed of. A sombre aside is that the Cambodian government recently modified school textbooks, making it impossible for children to learn the truth about the Khmer Rouge years and the dark history of their own country. Could this sow the seeds of a repeat performance in time to come?

As well as being historically dark, Cambodia is spiritually dark: the World Factbook claims that 95% of the population embraces Theravada Buddhism. Looking more closely, Buddhism's power was weakened by the brutal regime of the Khmer Rouge, in the late 1970s ("Buddha couldn't save us, so why should we trust in him?"). But, even in the two years I've been in the country, this false religion has enjoyed an upswell in popularity. There are more monks on the street than when I first arrived; they wear bright new robes; temples seem to have plenty of money for their construction projects, and for shiny new paint. False religion is, almost literally, taking the food out of the mouths of its followers.

But Buddhism isn't the only, or even the main, religion in this country. Bizarre regional mixtures of traditional religion produce a mutant version of Buddhism that would probably shock Gotama (Buddha) himself, if he ever saw it! A recent newspaper carried a long article about a fisherman-turned-priest right near my house in Takhmao. He rakes in the dollars by he claiming that he can heal people in mystical ways if only they pay him enough money. His 'victims' come from all over the country to pray to him, and beg his assistance.

The extreme poverty

Poverty, false health beliefs, lack of resources and other problems, make Cambodia one of the worst places in the world to have children: around one in 10 babies die at or soon after birth, and up to one in three children die under the age of five: many from preventable illnesses⁽¹⁾. These awful conditions—which we in the West can scarcely imagine—are the stuff of normal, daily life for millions of Cambodians. It's not surprising, then, that since the country has opened up to foreign influence, Christian organisations have flooded into the country, and concentrate much of their work on aid and development projects as a method of paving the way for the Gospel.

This provision of aid money can cause serious problems, as some people join the church and profess faith in Christ, but in fact they are no more than 'rice Christians'—mouthing the right words in exchange for the goods that keep them alive. But even with this, the number of true believers is growing. I heard an estimate recently that approximately 20% more believers join the church



Women in a Cambodian market place

every year; if true, this means that leadership training is of prime importance...to disciple and equip new believers, to provide solid preaching, and to protect the faithful from syncretism (mixing false religious beliefs in with their Christian faith, through lack of understanding). However, in spite of this dire need, there is very little Reformed work being done in Cambodia.

A few Reformed

Little...but some. Navy Chann is a Cambodian returnee—she was a refugee who migrated to Canada in the 1970s, joined a Reformed church, and has returned with her husband to set up a branch of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC). Navy and her colleague, Kennedy Cruz (a Filipino expatriate) are the sole (official) representatives of the Reformed faith in this country.

CRWRC, because of its size, is unable to undertake major assistance programmes within Cambodia. So they partner with other organisations to provide assistance with development and transformation initiatives

in Cambodian villages. They work with the Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia (EFC) to learn about the needs of the Cambodian church, and to provide strategic and planning

assistance. They assist Christian non-government organisations (NGOs) by providing leadership, technical, and capacity-building assistance where required. One example



Children at a Cambodian Sunday School



Children dancing at a Cambodian orphanage

of this assistance is the help they're giving to Chet Thor.

Chet Thor is a unique organisation, staffed by Cambodian village women. It has been very successful in working with the most vulnerable families and helping them with counselling, social, financial and technical support that enables them to make simple and achievable goals towards self-reliance. CRWRC is helping Chet Thor to develop its financial sustainability plan and to build the capacity and capability of community groups and associations with which it works. Chet Thor works in 24 villages, 5 communes, one province...but with help from CRWRC it has recently introduced the Community Organising process in two new villages.

CRWRC has recently established the Community Transformation Institute (CTI), which offers courses in community

transformation and organisational development. The primary aim of the institute is to provide capacity building support to Cambodian civil society organisations in general, and to the Christian development community in particular. To achieve this, they partner with the Asian School of Development and Cross-Cultural Studies.

CRWRC Cambodia is doing its best with limited personnel and resources; but they are hoping for more. They would love to see more missionaries involved in Reformed outreach in this very needy nation. As Navy Chann says, "It is a very crucial time; Cambodia needs holistic approaches to community development, to heal the wounded heart and physical scars that its people carry with them even now." Please pray for the growth of Reformed outreach in Cambodia.

MIF prayer notes

1) Walter and Jeannette Hagoort continue busy in their ministry in Papua New Guinea. Please pray for wisdom for the Reformed Ministries team as they consider next steps in the development of the Leadership Training Centre. Pray also for Jeannette as she runs the Mapang Guest House. Pray for safety for all members of the team as they move about in Port Moresby, which is known as one of the most dangerous cities in the world. Pray also for safety for members of the Hagoorts' family who will be visiting them, Lord willing, over Christmas.

2) Janice Reid is in New Zealand, completing her deputation meetings around the country and continuing the application process as she joins HCJB World Radio, to serve as trainer for their South East Asia region. Janice will continue some work for RTS, but will fit it around HCJB commitments. Please pray for clarity as Janice deals with visa applications, language study arrangements and other things required for residence in Indonesia.

3) Jared Berends and Heidi Posthuma continue teaching English in two restricted countries of Asia. Pray for safety as they do their work, and especially that they would be sensitive to opportunities which arise, and which will enable them to share their faith with people around them.

1) Source: World Health Organisation, <http:who.int>

Family Camp 2005/2006

Monday 26 December – Monday 2 January

Devotional Leaders:

Leo de Vos –

"Setting our affections and minds on the things above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God"

Ralph Adams –

"A walk through Philipians"

Come along and revive your body and spirit

Enrolments are available at your Church

Fee re-structure

At the last camp the committee discussed the fairness of the camp fees on all families. It was decided that the way the camp fees were structured was not fair on everyone and, that due to the fact that the three previous camps had run at a loss, also did not meet the true running cost of the camp.

Along with this, Finlay Park has, over the last few years, increased its fees and this has had a big impact on the cost of the camp.

Finlay Park has quoted \$10-11 per person/per night (depending on numbers) this year. This means that each person over 2 will cost \$70-77 just on accommodation, not including food or activities.

The committee has also decided to add a surcharge for cabins. This was done to be fair on those that stayed in a tent, either by choice or because there were no cabins left. The allocation of the cabins is left up to the accommodation person.

The fees for the 2005/2006 family camp are as follows: With Early bird Discount for registration and deposit before 2 December 2005.

Under 2	Free
3-6	\$ 70.00
7-10	\$ 90.00
11-14	\$110.00
15 +	\$130.00

Without Early bird Discount (registration/deposit after 2 December 2005)

Under 2	Free
3-6	\$ 80.00
7-10	\$100.00
11-14	\$120.00
15 +	\$140.00

A maximum cost of \$800.00 per family applies (a family being those that normally live in the same house) to the above fees but excludes the cabin surcharge.

Surcharge for Cabins

Above Dining Room	\$30.00 for week
Coronation St	\$50.00 for week
Ensuite Cabins	\$75.00 for week
Chapel cabins	\$60.00 for week

While this is a big change in the fee structure it is a better reflection of the true cost and is fairer on everyone. It should also be noted that the youth camp this year is at the same place and their fees are **\$170.00 – \$180.00** per person as are the national cadet camp fees.