

faith in **focus**

Magazine of the
Reformed Churches
of New Zealand

VOLUME 34/1 FEBRUARY 2007



*“Did not one
God create us?”*

Malachi 2:10

CONTENTS**An offer which is not free**

*If it sounds like it's just the thing for you...
A personal interaction*

3

rcnz.org.nz

Our renewed presence on the web

7

World in focus

Nicaragua bans abortions

8

A feminine focus

The feminine virtue of reliability

11

The gates of Jerusalem

The Inspection Gate

13

Focus on home

*Cleanings in focus
Wellington Presbytery*

15

Missions in focus

*Aboriginal mission
Prayer points*

18

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Editorial

I have had the opportunity to travel throughout much of our beautiful country these past twelve months or so. It was a good time to see and be refreshed by God's creation. We are richly blessed through what God has given us in this land.

But also we were able to see and be refreshed by God's re-creation. Though being blessed through General Revelation we also were encouraged and exhorted by his Special Revelation. In different churches aside from our Reformed Churches of New Zealand, there are God's people seeking to be faithful to the Word. I was well reminded that God's church doesn't always have the name 'Reformed,' though those folk were quite positive about being known as that. Through different Calvinistic contacts, whether in New Zealand or overseas, these brethren were a great encouragement. Though they might be small in number and seemingly mixed in denominations with an Arminian history, they are searching the scriptures. Let's be an arm and a leg to them.

The good thing is the Lord is fulfilling His Great Commission. So let's go then and faithfully work where He has placed us and so hasten the Kingdom. Let's meet this new year in His strength and guidance alone.

Elijah said to God:

*I am the only one left,
And now they are trying to kill me too.*

The LORD said to him:

*Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel –
All whose knees have not bowed down to Baal
And all whose mouths have not kissed him.*

1 Kings 19:14,18

Cover photo: A special orchid, by Mrs H. Meinsma

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

An offer which is not free!

If it sounds like it's just the thing for you...

Sjirk Bajema

Many of you would have received a pamphlet in your mailbox promoting the Recovery Version Bible. In what appears as a Christian endeavour to place the scriptures in the hands of unbelievers, you are challenged to unlock the Bible and have your own key to understanding God's Word. It is part of the 'Bibles for New Zealand' project. All well and good, we say, and we ourselves may be tempted to order a copy with its extensive commentary notes.

This is where it pays to read the fine print. Looking at that you will note that these notes – and there are over 9,000 of them – are the work of one man. That man is Witness Lee. Still nothing may click in your mind. How about the name 'The Local Church'? Still nothing?

Background

'The Local Church' was a sectarian group which advocated the teaching in the 1970's and 1980's that there could only be one true church in each city, called 'The Church of ... [that place].' Pentecostal churches in particular felt the impact of this sect as its initial project in an area would be to infiltrate local Pentecostal churches and agitate against the leadership and the teaching, setting up believers against each other. It also attempted to influence believers within Christian schools through their members becoming teachers there (see inserted testimony for one example of this). They have also established themselves on various University campuses under the name, 'Christians on Campus'.

Well, they're back. There has been a bit of re-branding in the process though. The 'Local Church' name has become less prominent, while 'Living Stream Ministry' is more often used. The pushy members have been replaced with a very smooth and attractive advertising promotion of 'The Recovery Version'. But the theology is no different. A good look at the brochure shows this up. For example, they place a footnote there concerning John 3:16 which Witness Lee translates as, 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.' His footnote makes the com-

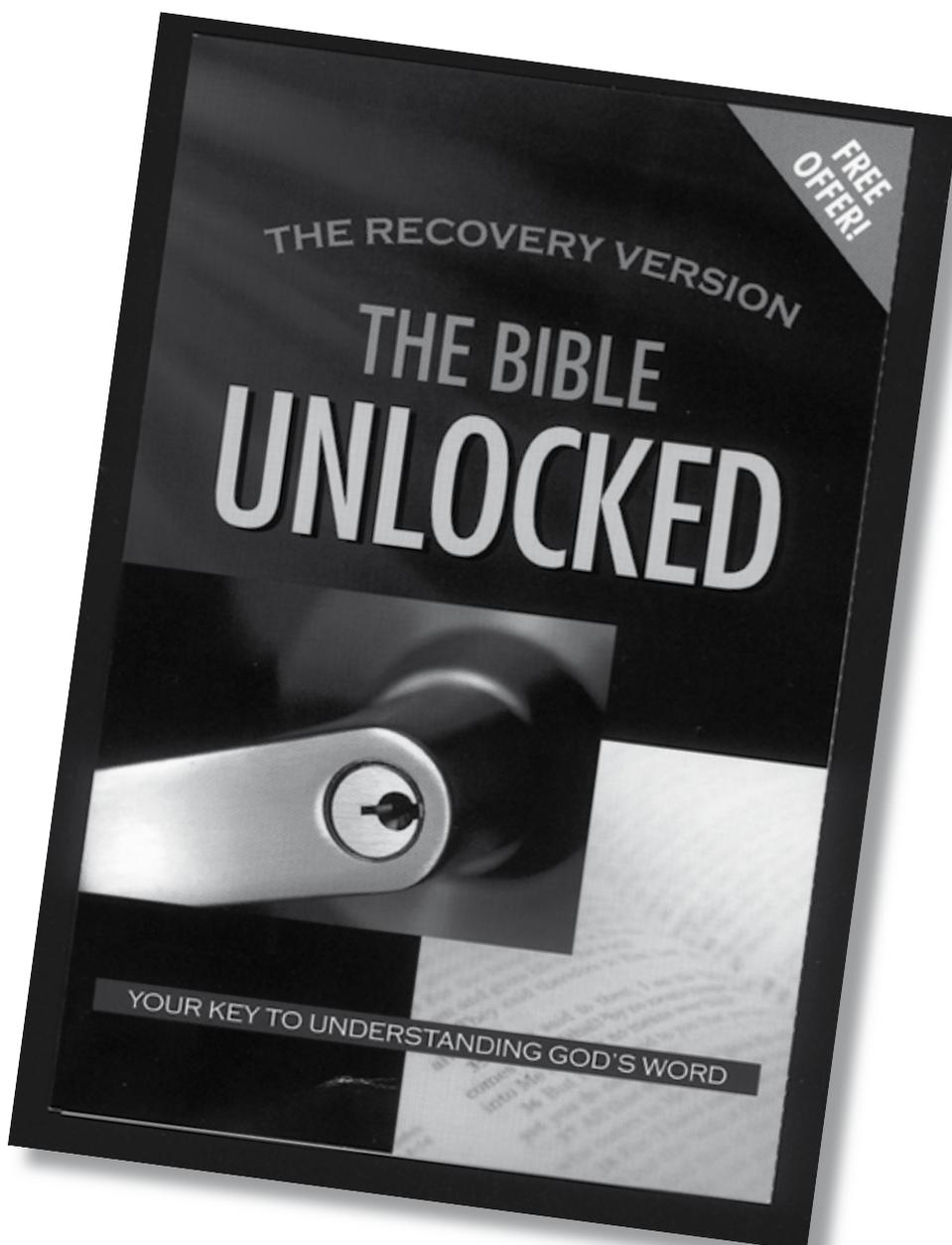
ment that believing 'into' Him is something more than believing Him. For believing Him is acknowledging Jesus as objectively true and real but believing into Him is to receive His life subjectively.

Past impact

With such a perspective you can see how they caused so much damage within churches in the 1970's and 1980's. They were promoting a way of coming to faith that was related to a certain experience and that experience could only be the way of Witness Lee. In one of the small footnotes in the brochure it says of Lee's 'Recovery Version'

that it is *the* way to regain the lost matters of biblical truth, Christian experience, and church practice.

Get the story? The story which has its echo in similar groups. What started off as a pietistic expression of evangelical Christianity under the Chinese mystical Christian leader Watchman Nee became taken over by his disciple, Witness Lee. He subsequently took those teachings exclusively further. Over time Witness Lee first moved from mainland China to Taiwan and in the early 1960's came to California, which formed the ideal base for becoming a world-wide movement. Soon his group found appeal amongst



more than the ethnic Chinese community as a mysticism with a strongly-repetitive chanting style of worship.

In 1991 Witness Lee passed away and the leadership now largely lies within the church in Los Angeles.

The false teachings of this group

For a church which claims to represent authentic biblical Christianity, in its teachings it deviates somewhat from the historical orthodox faith. Several major doctrines have become subverted by The Local Church. They have confused the biblical doctrine of the Trinity, the nature of Jesus Christ, the nature of man, the biblical process of salvation, and the doctrine of the church. Let's see these areas in detail now:

a) 'The Trinity'

The Local Church has an understanding of the Trinity which comes under the general heading of the theological term, 'modalism'. Modalism identifies the Person of the Father with the Person of the Son (and identifies the Person of the Holy Spirit with the Persons of the Father and the Son). The modalist generally describes God as one Nature and one individual Person who projects Himself in three distinct modes or aspects of His Being.

This Witness Lee and The Local Church teach that God was the Father, became the Son, and then became the Holy Spirit (and even that the Holy Spirit is becoming the Church). Witness Lee says, 'the three Persons of the Trinity become the three successive steps in the process of God's economy. In the heavens, where man cannot see Him, God is the Father; when he is expressed among men, He is the Son; and when He comes into men, He is the Spirit. The Father was expressed among men in the Son, and the Son became the Spirit into men. The Father is in the Son and the Son became the Spirit – the three are just one God.' (Compare the Recovery Version's commentary on 2 Corinthians 13:14.)

This view is clearly unscriptural. It presents a changing God, contrary to Malachi 3:6 ('I the LORD do not change') and Hebrews 13:8 ('Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever'). Add to this the Holy Spirit being called the 'eternal Spirit' in Hebrews 9:14. The three Persons of the Trinity are eternally coexistent, and no one of them becomes another Person at any time.

That the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, are distinct Persons is obvious in Scripture. They have separate, though never conflict-

ing, wills (Luke 22:42; 1 Cor.12:11). Jesus is sent by the Father, and He and the Father send the Spirit (John 17:8; 15:26; 16:7; 14:26; 20:21). The Father speaks to the Son using the second-person pronoun 'you': 'You are my beloved Son.' (Luke 3:22). Jesus offered Himself to the Father through the Spirit (Hebrews 9:14). We should remember Jesus' words when He said that He came not to testify of Himself, but of Him who sent Him. (Compare the Recovery Version on Matthew 28:19.)

It is true that The Local Church and Witness Lee say that they somehow believe in the 'three-in-one' God. This is their attempt to fool us. They actually believe in the merging of the Persons of the Trinity. Though they speak of 'the matter of threefoldness, that is the threefold Person,' they believe it is the one Person who has that 'threefoldness.'

b) 'Christ'

We have seen that The Local Church has taken away Christ's unique existence as the beloved of the Father and the sender of the Comforter. He becomes, in Local Church theology, merely one of three aspects of the one Person of God.

However, The Local Church also misinterprets other aspects of Christ. They teach the error that, when the Word of God was incarnated, He 'mingled' His two natures and became neither distinctly man nor distinctly God but a new nature, a mixture of God and man.

This false teaching can be answered by many passages of Scripture, but one is sufficient. The clearest teaching on the two natures of Christ, known as 'the hypostatic union,' is found in Philippians 2:5-7. This clearly teaches that Christ was both man and God, not a strange mixture of the two.

c) 'Mankind'

Lee teaches that 'flesh' is bad in itself. This is known as asceticism and is also related to 'docetic gnosticism.' This is the ancient heresy that Jesus had no flesh, since flesh was bad. Jesus, being good, was pure spirit.

d) 'Sin'

According to The Local Church, the original sin was not a matter of ethics or doing good, but was a matter of choosing to be mingled with either God or Satan. The tree of life represented God or Christ (who is nothing more than the embodiment of the Father). The tree of knowledge represented Satan, with the result of death from mingling Satan with man. Man chose the tree of knowledge (that is one reason why knowledge is put

down in the group), and so became mingled with Satan, also known as Sin.

This doctrine actually takes away the personality of Satan and makes him little more than a force. The Bible clearly teaches that Satan is a person and is distinct from man, even fallen man. In Matthew 4:1-11 Jesus was tempted by Satan (he is even called the tempter), and there is dialogue between them. If both were merely forces they couldn't communicate at all.

The distinction between Satan and fallen man is clearly shown in Revelation 20:10, where Satan is cast into the lake of fire, but not until verse 15 do we find that fallen men are also cast there. This succession of events necessitates a distinction between Satan and unsaved men.

e) 'Salvation'

Lee teaches that in the same way that man fell, he was saved. He fell when Satan mingled with him, and he is saved when God mingled Himself, first in Jesus and then subsequently in each man who becomes a Christian. This goes into their false teaching about the deification of the church, or the church becoming God.

f) 'The Church'

Witness Lee teaches that the church, the Body of Christ, is Christ, and is becoming more and more "full" of God, to the point where eventually the church is God manifest in the flesh, fulfilling God's original intention to 'work Himself into men.' In his own words, 'The Father is in the Son, the Son is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is now in the Body. There are now four in one: the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Body.'

The Bible says that man can never become God or a part of God. There is only one God, who is eternally the same. He will not become one in essence with us. Isaiah 43:10 declares, "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, not will there be one after me.'

Recent actions

It is noted above how their approach nowadays has become less aggressive and more deceptive with its offer from free Testaments from what sounds like the name of a Christian Bible Society. They are still attracting converts and of a type that often share a common psychological denominator: they are those who one would otherwise describe as insecure to some

degree. Within 'The Local Church', though, they are soon trained to present a secure and unified front against the 'organizations of Satan', as Lee has termed all other Christian denominations.

They have also become rather active on the legal front through suing a number of

Religions). Eventually Harvest House won the case, but in the meantime the book has not been reprinted because possible legal ramifications.

Our interaction with them

The apostle warned us not to be involved with

malicious work, we must expose it. Because then you will expose them for what they truly are, as their reaction will certainly tell you!

You cannot be truly obedient to God and join or remain in The Local Church or support the teachings mentioned above. The fact that many immature Christians have been sucked

A personal interaction

In the days of my ministry in the Reformed Church of Canning in Perth, Western Australia (now the Christian Reformed Church of Gosnells), one of the assigned duties of the Reformed ministers was to be on the Teacher Interview Committee of the local confessionally-based Christian school, Rehoboth. This was something that I always found interesting, though sometimes it involved extra work (a school board chairman would be able to concur there!).

In the struggle to find teachers who could grasp the concept of Christian education, it was a delight when a gem would shine out. And that's what we had. In the search for an English teacher for the High School this well-qualified and well-endorsed young woman knew it. I mean, she had read the Westminster Confession of Faith!

Now, each of the Committee was involved in asking different questions. Mine related, naturally, to theology. Well, she was spot on. But something was niggling away at me. The way she looked intensely at the person who asked her the question struck a cord in me. Where had I seen that before? So I looked straight back into her eyes. Not easy

to do given her eye focus. And yet I saw emptiness behind them. It was like the eye pupils were masks covering nothing. Exactly the look I had seen in the Divine Light cultists I'd met back in my University days.

Then I extended my questioning. I followed up on the 'local church' she had said she was a member of. It was a new church in Perth, she said. Interestingly, she herself had come out of town, from Sydney. And she had been involved with the church there.

Following the consideration of all the candidates, the Committee felt very strongly for this young woman. They were very impressed. I and one other member had reservations but we couldn't say anything because we didn't really know anything. We had to concur with the Committee.

That night, though, and the next morning, I recalled what had happened in Palmerston North when this so-called 'local church' had been set up. I remembered some time when I was studying at Massey that there had been trouble in a local Pentecostal church and that this group had been involved. My memory was a bit vague. What I did then was

to contact Adrian van Leen, the Director of Concerned Christian Growth Ministries in Perth. He soon had helpful information in my hands regarding 'The Local Church.' He was also able to tell me more of what they did when a new group began in a new city, which included not only becoming involved in local churches to seek out possible convert, often through divisive action, but also any kind of Christian organisation where there was possible fruit for the movement. Later that day I was able to get copies passed around to the members of the Committee. The following Monday, when the School Board met, the recommendation could be put for a different teacher to be offered that position.

The story didn't quite end there. One of our Committee, who was on the Board, had the task of ringing all the applicants up and letting them know the Board's decision. When he informed her that she had been unsuccessful in her application, she knew who was to blame. "It was that Dutch Reformed minister," she replied quite stridently to him. "You should never have a minister there."

Christian cult researchers publishing material which is any way involved in a negative perception of the group. The latest was against Harvest House Publishers for a book that the well-known John Ankerberg & John Weldon wrote on different sectarian groups (*Encyclopedia of Cults and New*

such people. Paul warns us to 'watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned.' He even goes on to state, 'Keep away from them.' (Romans 16:17.) And that's what we should do. Where we do come across them, however, and see their

into joining this group doesn't mean The Local Church is close to truly biblical, but only that it is a close counterfeit of the truth. Although we cannot and will not pass judgment upon the soul of Local Church members, we can pass judgment on a number of The Local Church teachings, which are not biblical.



GOD DESIRES ALL MEN TO BE SAVED,
AND TO COME TO THE
FULL KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH
1 TIMOTHY 2:4

Home

Statement of Faith

About the Bible

Bible Translation

The Recovery Version

- Brief Explanation

- Sample Page

- Quick Reference

Guide

Subject List:

- New Testament

- Old Testament

Free Online Ordering

FAQ

Links

Contact Us

Administrators Only

BfNZ's Statement of Faith

The Bible is the complete and only divine revelation.

God is eternally one. He is also eternally the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. These three are distinct but not separate.

Christ is both the complete God and the perfect man. He was divinely conceived in the womb of a human virgin, lived a genuine human life on earth, and died a vicarious and all-inclusive death on the cross. After three days He resurrected bodily and had ascended to the heavens. He is now in glory, still fully God and fully man. He will return to reign in the millennium and in eternity.

The Spirit, the third of the Trinity, is also God. All that the Father has and is, is expressed by the Son; and all that the Son has and is, is realized as the Spirit.

Man is unable to fulfill the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory, and thus is in need of God's salvation. Through Christ's death on the cross, which fulfilled all of God's requirements, God forgives, reconciles, and justifies those who believe in Jesus Christ and His work. God regenerates the redeemed with His Spirit that they may become His children possessing His life and nature. The believers enjoy a daily salvation in His Body in this age and the eternal salvation in the coming age and in eternity.

In eternity all of God's redeemed elect will dwell with Him in the New Jerusalem, which is the consummation of God's salvation.

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rcnz.org.nz

Andrew Nugteren

This year marks 10 years since the Reformed Churches of New Zealand have been online citizens. What began as a small project one Sunday during coffee after church, became an official website of our churches at the 1998 Synod and we haven't looked back. And just a few weeks ago, we launched our redesigned website.

But why have a website at all?

A website is one of the ways in which we can provide information about our churches to people not only in New Zealand, but all over the world. This is not just in theory. Many overseas visitors who have worshipped with us in our churches have tracked us down on Al Gore's infamous "information superhighway." They've been able to make contact with us, find our service times, or arrange for someone to meet them. Potential immigrants to New Zealand from our sister churches overseas have also, likewise, been able to make contact with us as they consider their move to our country.

During this time, we've also been able to publish a large number of sermons in our online sermon collection. Many of our own churches have used these to great effect for planning reading services, sometimes working as a church through an entire series of sermons on a particular Bible book. Tens of thousands of people around the world have benefited from the work our ministers have put in - a sermon published online truly is a gift that keeps on giving!

So what does our new website offer?

New looks

The most immediate change you'll notice is in the graphical design. We've redesigned the site to make it more attractive and easier to navigate, with a better menu system that takes advantage of developments in the computer language that webpages are written in. But as they say, you shouldn't just judge a book by its cover. What's inside is important too!

New stuff

We've been busy rewriting some of the ar-

ticles which describe who we are and what we stand for, to make them easier to read and grasp at a glance. We've also added new material, including an overview of the gospel which is intended for non-Christians who may visit our website. And later this year, we hope to add a downloadable video of one of our worship services to help people unfamiliar with our churches get a feel for a typical Reformed Church service.

New sermons

In addition to the written sermons we have had available for many years, we now have a growing number of mp3 audio sermons by our ministers which you can download to listen to on your computer or iPod. You'll also be able to customise the way our sermon collection is displayed, so that you can sort by the sermon text, the date the sermon was added, the minister or even by series if the sermon is part of a larger series of sermons working through a book of the Bible or a confession. You can now also subscribe by email to receive a notification when new sermons are added. Taken together, we're

hoping these changes will make an already useful resource even more useful.

New maps

It's also now much easier than ever to find where our churches are. A map of New Zealand shows the exact location of our churches, with enlargements for Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch to give more detail. If your local church has its own website (as a growing number of our churches now do), we have links to your website. We've also made it so that a representative from each congregation can log in to change their church's details, so if your church changes its service times or postal address you can make those changes directly.

So if you haven't visited our website at www.rcnz.org.nz for a while, now might be a good time to pay a visit.

Andrew Nugteren is our webmaster and a candidate for the ministry, having completed a vicariate with the Reformed Churches of Dunedin and Oamaru.



World in focus

First all Pro-Life Radio network

Gearing up for Election Day 2006, NationalPro-LifeRadio.Net will debut as the USA's first all pro-life radio network.

On the program roster is pro-life attorney Stephen Peroutka, who is heard coast-to-coast as host of "Face the Truth;" Fr. Frank Pavone, host of radio and television programs including "Life on the Line" and "Gospel of Life;" Dr Alveda King, niece of the late Martin Luther King, Jr; and Dr. Paul Schenck, Executive Director of National Pro-Life Action Center.

Other program personalities include Mark Crutcher of Life Dynamics; Kimberly Zenarolla, Executive Vice President of the National Pro-Life Action Center; Michael Peroutka of Institute on the Constitution; and Rev. Rob Schenck of Faith and Action.

Day Gardner, president of the National Black Pro-Life Union, anchors the Daily Life News program. This news program also spotlights every major development in the pro-life movement and includes a LifeNews.Com update radio broadcast with Jim Anderson.

+ NationalProLifeRadio.net, 113 2nd St., NE, Washington, DC 20002 (202) 536-2786

Episcopal Parish in suburb of Washington DC dissolves

The members of Christ Our Lord Episcopal Church, a congregation of about 200 in Woodbridge, Virginia, have voted to dissolve the church and end its existence as part of the Diocese of Virginia of The Episcopal Church [USA].

The members of the new congregation will now be called Christ Our Lord Church and will be affiliated with the Anglican Province of Uganda.

The congregation also voted to relinquish to the Diocese the church property because it was titled in the name of the Diocese. Rev. George Beaven, the vicar of the church, submitted his resignation and announced that he would retire from the Episcopal Church.

+ The Anglican Communion Office, St. Andrew's House, 16 Tavistock Crescent, London, England W11 1AP

Governor Bush appoints RTS President for Independent Education

The office of the governor announced recently that Dr Frank James, president of Reformed Theological Seminary Orlando, has been appointed by Florida Governor Jeb Bush to the Commission for Independent Education. James will serve a three-year term beginning 18 October 2006 and ending 30 June 2009.

+ Samuel L. Ferguson, Executive Director, Commission for Independent Education, 325 West Gaines St., Suite 1414, Tallahassee, FL 32399 (850) 245-3200

British Government Faith Schools Quota plan scrapped

British Education Secretary Alan Johnson says plans to force new faith schools in England to select more pupils from other religions are to be scrapped. A voluntary agreement has been reached instead.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), reports the Catholic Church joined with the Church of England in agreeing that up to 25 percent of places should go to pupils from another faith or none, Johnson said.

The plans were introduced in an amendment to the Education and Inspections Bill. The amendment would have enabled local city councils to require new faith schools to select up to 25 percent of their intake from pupils of other faith backgrounds or those with no religious beliefs.

The BBC says its abandonment followed talks with representatives of all the UK's major religious groups.

+ ASSIST News Service, PO Box 609, Lake Forest, CA 92609-0609

Nicaragua bans abortions

On 26 Oct. Nicaragua's National Assembly voted unanimously to approve a new law banning all abortions, the country's La Prensa newspaper reported.

Nicaragua joins El Salvador and Chile as the only countries in the western hemisphere to ban abortion without exception.

Marc Lacey, writing for the New York Times from Mexico City, said that the ban even includes cases of rape and when the life of the mother is in danger. Lacey also added that health officials estimate 32,000 illegal abortions are performed in Nicaragua every year, most of them unsafe.

+ ASSIST News Service, PO Box 609, Lake Forest, CA 92609-0609

Wal-Mart's latest pro-homosexual promotion

A recent Boise State University (BSU) press release reveals that Wal-Mart and 'the Pleasure Boutique' are two of the co-sponsors of this year's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Diversity Week at BSU. The Pleasure Boutique is a company that openly boasts of having the 'largest adult toy section in Idaho,' as well as the state's largest selection of adult movies and DVDs.

Bryan Fischer, executive director of the Idaho Values Alliance says it is 'just bizarre' that a retailer that has traded on a pro-family image in the past 'would join forces with a porn peddler to promote the homosexual agenda.'

+ Idaho Values Alliance, PO Box 44873, Boise, ID 83711

Partial Birth Abortion Act of 2003 goes to Supreme Court

On Wednesday, 8 November, the Supreme Court is considering whether the federal partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003 is constitutional without a health exception for the mother.

One case involves Dr Leroy Carhart, a Nebraska physician who successfully challenged the state's partial-birth abortion ban in 2000, and three other doctors.

They are represented by the Center for Reproductive Rights, which argues that the law will endanger women's lives.

The second case, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, The Golden Gate chapter and the city and county of San Francisco sued to have the law declared unconstitutional.

Attorney General Alberto Gonzales argues in court papers that the law should be upheld because it carries an exception that could preserve the life of a mother. Gonzales argues that an exception for a woman's health is not necessary and that 'partial birth abortion is never medically indicated to preserve the health of the mother.'

It is expected that the court cases will be decided sometime next year.

+ Planned Parenthood Federation of America, 434 West 33rd St., New York, NY 10001 (212) 541-7800
+ Center for Reproductive Rights, 120 Wall St., New York, NY 10005 (917) 637-3600

Interim President for NAE named

Dr Leith Anderson, senior pastor of the Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, which has 5,000 regular attendees, has been named Interim President of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), following the resignation of Dr Ted Haggard. Haggard resigned after news of his admission that he lied to conceal his 'sexual immorality.' According to Associated Press reports, Haggard denied that all of the allegations against him are true but said 'enough of them are that I was appropriately removed' from church leadership.

A NAE press release stated that a 15-member Executive Committee, led by L. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church in America, and NAE board chairman, made the selection during a 3 November conference call.

+ National Association of Evangelicals, Office of the President, 11025 Voyager Parkway, Colorado Springs, CO 80921 (719) 268-8214

Presbyterian pastor takes own life after TV probe

Rev. Mr. Brent Dugan, pastor of Community Presbyterian Church of Ben Avon, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania took his own life after he was the subject of a KDKA-TV investigation into what the station called 'reports of public and illegal

sexual behavior.' KDKA had aired promotions for its scheduled broadcast, but the promotions did not identify Mr. Dugan, referring only to a 'local minister.' Reporter Marty Griffin told viewers the station decided not to air the story because 'we have reason to believe the pastor may be in danger to himself.'

Counselling is being offered to church members, and leaders of the church and the presbytery have worked closely to provide pastoral support and 'encouragement to the congregation at a very tough time,' stated Rev. Mr James Mead, pastor to the Pittsburgh Presbytery.

Mr. Dugan had been pastor of the church since 1988.

+ Community Presbyterian Church of Ben Avon, 7501 Church Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15202 (412) 761-1233
+ KDKA-TV, One Gateway Center, Pittsburgh, PA 15222 (412) 575-2200

Egypt jails Christian convert from Islam

A Muslim sheikh jailed in Egypt for 18 months has declared from his prison cell that he is under arrest for 'Insulting Islam' by becoming Christian. Egypt's secret police transferred Bahaa el-Din Ahmed Hussein el-Akkad, 57, to Wadi el-Natroun Prison last month. He was told he would remain there indefinitely unless he agreed to work as a government informer against other converts to Christianity. According to the prisoner's Cairo attorney, his client remains incarcerated in this desert prison 'only because he has chosen a different belief, to be a Christian.' When courts ordered el-Akkad's release from provisional detention ten weeks ago, State Security Investigation authorities ignored the ruling.

+ Compass Direct News, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0304

Stellenbosch forms first United Church governing body

The oldest congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church have become part of the first combined governing body for the DRC and the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). A combined meeting of the Rings of Stellenbosch in late October met the regulations for both denominations. Six congregations of the DRC and eight from the URCSA participated. This combined regional governing body saw itself as a model for local development on the road towards unification. The DRC and URCSA with two others in South Africa, the Reformed Church of Africa and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, have set a goal of reunification in three years.

On 29 October, the historical meeting was celebrated on Reformation Sunday, with the DRC's Moderator, Coenie Burger, and the URCSA's Vice Moderator, or Assessor, Allan Boesak, leading the service. Boesak is also moderator of the URCSA's regional synod of Capetown.

+ URCSA, Private Bag X1, Belhar, Cape Town, Western Cape, 7507

100 Years in Pakistan

The Associate Reformed Presbyterian (ARP) Synod of Pakistan celebrated its 100th anniversary on 5 November. Rev. Mr Gary Letchworth said the 5th of November was the date for the 'big' celebration, although a number of special activities continue. World Witness Board Chairman Rev. John Dorr, and Moderator-Elect of Synod Rev. Mr Charles Edgar and Mrs Joyce Edgar, are heading the contingent from the ARP General Synod. Both men were to preach during their visit.

+ Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, 1 Cleveland St., Suite 110, Greenville, SC 29601-3646 (864) 232-8297

Missouri State University student reaches settlement with University

Emily Brooker, a graduate of Missouri State University represented by the Alliance Defense Fund, has reached a settlement with the university. Brooker claimed her freedoms of speech and religion had been violated by an assistant professor of social work.

The Kansas City Star reported that the lawsuit alleged that the professor demanded that students sign a letter supporting homosexuals being foster parents. Brooker refused to sign the document, on the grounds that it would have gone against her Christian beliefs.

A grievance filed against Brooker accused her of violating three standards required of students by the School of Social Work: diversity, interpersonal skills, and professional behaviour. Brooker was informed her religious beliefs were at odds with the National Association of Social Workers' code of ethics, and, as a condition for graduation, she was forced to sign a contract requiring her to conform to that code even though she objected to the contract.

+ Alliance Defense Fund, 15333 North Pima Rd., Suite 165, Scottsdale, AZ 85260 TELL-ADF
+ Missouri State University, 901 South National Ave., Springfield, MO 65897 (417) 836-5000

Church of Scotland Moderator fights for Gay marriages

Sheilagh Kesting, who takes over next May as the new moderator of the Church of Scotland has said that one of her priorities will be to fight for the introduction of gay weddings by kirk ministers.

The issue is certain to divide the church whose conservative wing remains hostile to the sanctioning of homosexual relationships.

Kesting, who is a liberal, said she was prepared to lead the church down the road to acceptance.

New figures show that more than 900 gay and lesbian couples have 'married' in Scotland

Calling all country boys and girls to become

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since the Civil Partnership Act came into force last December.

+ *Church of Scotland, Edinburgh: Greyfriars Tolbooth and Highland Kirk, Greyfriars Place, Edinburgh EH1 2QQ*

Home School Legal Defense Association launches new auction website

Due to the fact that eBay, the Internet trading giant, recently announced that it was banning all teacher's textbooks of any sort, including all homeschool supplies, Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) has launched their own auction website for them to exchange books and supplies.

HSLDA has already signed up more than 1,500 registered users.

Anyone can sell materials on this site. You can sell through auctions, multiple item auctions, bartering, and fixed price sales. And if you have a lot to sell, you can upload the auction listings in bulk, said HSLDA President J. Michael Smith. Smith also stated that since the project is being offered as a member benefit, only HSLDA members will be allowed to buy.

+ *Home School Legal Defense Association, PO Box 3000, Purcellville, Va 20134-9000 (540) 338-5600*

Many Presbyterian congregations in Taiwan have no resident pastors

Statistics gathered from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) show that over 270 congregations have no resident pastoral leadership. The report indicated that in 2005 the number of members and adherents of the PCT increased by 3.63 percent. This included 5,129 baptisms during that year.

But of the 1,204 PCT congregations nationwide, more than 200 were found to be without resident pastoral leadership, and other ministers were listed as 'available for assignment.'

Facing the problem of congregations without pastors, and pastors without churches, the PCT evangelism committee has been enlisting the aid of retired clergy through the board of pensions. A 'bulletin board' service to match available retired pastors with vacant churches has been set up. Ministers in specialised agencies are also made available for pastoral care functions at the congregational level through the 'bulletin board.'

+ *Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 3, Lane 269, Roosevelt Rd., Sec. 3, Taipei, 106 Taiwan*

National Council of Churches calls for ban on cloning

The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) General Assembly has called for a worldwide ban on human cloning.

On 8 November, at a plenary session, the assembly also called on the US Congress to create a National Science Advisory Board for Bio-

defense to oversee and regulate governmental and private development of biological weapons in this country.

It also called on governments, research institutions and scientific agencies to convene an international forum to explore ways to diminish the threat that biological weapons pose around the world.

+ *Presbyterian Church (USA), 100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202 (888) 728-7228*

Six believers attacked in India

During a village council meeting on 9 November to address threats against Christians in a village in Chhattisgarh state, a local politician and his associates attacked six believers, including a pregnant woman.

According to local sources, the incident took place in Bamhni village, in Bastar district. Puran Patel, who has strong connections with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the state, has subjected Christians in the village to harassment and humiliation for more than a year.

Pastor Pramod Paul of the local Brethren Assembly said, 'The believers in Bamhni have been terrorized by Patel for the past year...He has threatened me, too, and warned me to keep away from the village.'

+ *Compass Direct News, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0303*

Vietnamese government manual outlines plans to subdue Protestants

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), has learned about an internal Vietnamese government training manual, which CSW reported outlines a plan 'to resolutely subdue the abnormally rapid and spontaneous development of the Protestant religion.'

According to CSW, the manual, entitled 'Training Document: Concerning the Task of the Protestant Religion in the Northern Mountainous Region,' appears to have been issued by a Vietnamese government department, the Central Bureau of Religious Affairs.

CSW stated the document acknowledges 'spiritual need for a portion of our people.' However, CSW commented that it 'betrays a deep antagonism in the official attitude towards Protestantism. It creates a vast loophole whereby local authorities are empowered to arbitrate on the legitimacy of congregations, and to force newer Protestant Christians to renounce their faith.'

+ *Christian Solidarity Worldwide, PO Box 99, New Malden, Surrey K3 3YF, United Kingdom*

Brown University suspends Reformed University Fellowship

Brown University located in Providence, Rhode Island, has not publicly explained why it suspended the Reformed University Fellowship, which is allied with the conservative Presbyterian Church in America, as an official student group, except to say the group failed to follow

university guidelines.

The fellowship's leaders acknowledge they can't prove their conflict is a religious or cultural clash, but they are suspicious and are trying to get Brown to offer a more detailed explanation.

Brown spokesman, Michael Chapman, said the fellowship had violated guidelines governing campus religious groups but did not say how.

Another Brown spokeswoman sent an eight-page document listing rules that apply to outside religious leaders who want to minister at Brown. The document lays out a long list of rules that both Brown and outside group leaders must adhere to, including a ban on harassment or proselytising.

+ *Brown University, Providence, RI 02912 (401) 863-1000*

Vietnamese churches learn of registrations indirectly

Vietnamese authorities advised the US Embassy in Hanoi that 18 Vietnamese churches had been registered while not informing the churches themselves. Observers believe this is an indication that the country has stepped up efforts to convince the US of improvements in its religious freedom record as two key US decisions approach.

The US will soon decide whether to include Vietnam among the list of worst violators of religious freedom, and a vote in Congress on a permanent normal trading relationship is also imminent.

+ *Compass Direct News, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0304*

Evangelical Theological Society adopts Statement on Inerrancy

On 16 November the members of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), adopted the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy to clarify the organization's position on Scripture.

By adopting the Chicago Statement it aims to allow the organisation to exclude members or potential members who hold aberrant theological positions, such as 'open theism,' that undermine Biblical inerrancy.

At the ETS' 58th annual meeting the members voted 171 (90 percent) to 19 to adopt the resolution put forth by the organisation's executive committee in 2004 and approved by the membership at the 2005 meeting. At this year's meeting, members voted to add the statement to the bylaws to give a clearer definition of the phrase 'inerrancy of Scripture' as used in the ETS statement of faith.

The issue of inerrancy started before the 2003 annual meeting in Atlanta when ETS members voted against revoking the membership of two theologians who hold to open theism, or the 'openness of God,' a position which argues that God does not know perfectly what will happen in the future.

The two theologians, Clark Pinnock and John Sanders, prevailed mainly because ETS members could not agree on a precise definition of the term 'inerrancy' in the organisation's statement of faith.

Roger Nicole, ETS founder, who brought the charges against Pinnock and Sanders, said at the 2004 meeting that adoption of the Chicago Statement would set forth precisely what the charter members of ETS intended when they

included the term 'inerrancy' in their statement of faith.

+ *Evangelical Theological Society, Dr. James A. Borland, 200 Russell Woods Dr., Lynchburg, VA 24502 (434) 237-6309*

A feminine focus

The feminine virtue of reliability

Sally Davey

How important, to you, is a friend you can trust? One you can be sure will always listen, help, and even — at times — offer the kind of rebuke that from most others would be offensive. One you would hope would be at your bedside should you be rushed to hospital, or the first to come to your house if bad news struck. I think all of us realise that such a friend is one of God's greatest gifts to us. This is why, in part, we value marriage so much. We have, in a husband, a totally reliable friend — one who will always be with us, through thick and thin, who will love us, encourage us, bear us up in trials and who will, we hope, try his best to understand how we feel. This was surely in Archbishop Cranmer's mind when he wrote (back in the 1540s) the famous Prayer Book vow: 'I [the man] take thee... to my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth [make my promise].' Many of us see these as deeply romantic words — and they certainly are! But they are romantic because they promise a love intended for adversity; a love that will persevere come what may; a love that is true, strong, and completely, utterly, reliable. No wonder

divorce is such a tragedy. This love has failed.

A part of true love

But faithfulness and reliability apply to all our human relationships because they are an intrinsic part of love. If we love, we are dependable. This is inescapable. It is this kind of quality that characterises the kinds of relationships depicted in the fiction of the nineteenth century — the literature I have often alluded to in these articles. We sometimes see it in a man who loves the heroine — seemingly hopelessly — while she fails to see his true worth. Finally, because of some act of self-sacrifice on his part in her time of need, she realises this man is a worthy suitor, and returns his love. This is how faithfulness looks, and behaves, in romantic love.

Then think of the story of Ruth, in the Old Testament. It is also in every way a story of faithful love. The widow Naomi, having lost her husband and two sons, is so discouraged she wants to rename herself Mara ('Bitter'). But her Gentile daughter-in-law, Ruth, clings to her. Ruth prefers to leave her own people and everything familiar rather than leave Naomi, whom she has come to love, alone and forsaken. She travels to Israel with Naomi and lives the life of a pauper with her, working hard to glean fallen grain from harvest fields. Then, showing similarly faithful love, Naomi's kinsman, Boaz, redeems both Elimelech's land and the widow Ruth

herself, acting to preserve the lineage and possessions of his relative. He even commends Ruth for her faithfulness, praising her for coming to him rather than to a younger (and presumably more desirable) man. But overarching the story is the clear theme that faithful love is a picture of God's love for us, His people. Boaz's redemption is a picture of God's redemption of us in Christ, and Ruth's steadfast love for Naomi models the constancy with which we as believers must love our Saviour. Ruth's declaration to Naomi is deservedly famous — it is one of the great statements of love in the Scriptures:

'Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.' (Ruth 1:16-17).

This really is faithfulness. Ruth is going to be completely reliable to her mother-in-law.

This quality in our day

What is your experience of the reliability of our generation? No doubt we all have our stories to tell, but I am sure many of them will have something in common. In an age where personal satisfaction, short-term gain and 'my' comfort and pleasure are many people's strongest motivators, reliability frequently comes a poor second to the call of self. This is obvious in the workplace. Businesses rely on staff to exist, and we are now in a time when the pool of potential employees is relatively small. This has come home to us recently on our farm, where we are short of staff like many of our neighbours, who now employ people from Germany, Kazakhstan, Chile, the Philippines and everywhere in between. In the past three months two people agreed to begin work with us, but changed their minds before they started when something that looked better came up. We were tempted to think we were better off without their help, if this was an indication of their reliability. (Still, we grumpy



old baby boomers have more than our share of faults as well!)

Of course, part of the problem is the situation of almost-full employment and the smallness of the current cohort of younger workers, but some of the blame must also go to the character of Generation Y, so-called – that group of people born between around the mid-1970s and the end of the century. Recent articles in newspapers have advised employers that they will have to be creative if they are to attract — and keep — their younger staff. What do they have to do? Provide excitement, flexibility in work hours; offer regular opportunities for retraining, new directions, rapid promotion and frequent redeployment to avoid boredom. This, we are told, is what Generation Yers demand. It sounds as if these young people are a bit spoiled, doesn't it? The law of supply and demand is working in their favour at the moment. Well, market economics are one thing, but biblical values are sometimes another. Even if you can afford to demand all kinds of concessions, even indulgences, from your employer because he has few other options if you choose to leave, God requires respect, honest and willing service and a certain degree of constancy from you as an employee. After all, in ultimate terms, you are working for your employer 'as unto God.' He is the One to whom you are really answerable when you serve your employer. And of course the reverse is also true. When times are tough, jobs scarce and the pool of labour is big,

we employers must show faithfulness to employees who serve us well. We have a Master in heaven who we ourselves serve, and who sees all we do.

A quality missing in friendships today

And what, then, of friendships in this sort of world? It seems they are somewhat expendable as well. The idea of being friends for life, for the long haul, on black days as well as in fun times, is no longer part and parcel of friendship. According to one psychologist, who writes a regular column for a popular women's magazine, one needs to reassess one's friendships regularly, and have an occasional cleanout of friends who no longer satisfy. 'Not all friendships are for life,' John Aiken writes. 'Here's how to separate the duds from the diamonds.'" He urges that 'when resentment or a sense of emotional distance starts to surface, it's time to consider cleaning out your friendship closet.' He tells the story of one young woman who went through her cellphone, highlighting the names of her 'supposed friends.' She stopped calling them to see what would happen, and didn't hear from many of them again. This told Jessica who to dump. In general terms, though, who are those who should be 'let go?' This what Aiken advises. Those who give you these impressions: 'You're not good to be with' or 'You're not there for me' or 'You're using me.' Of course, Aiken elaborates, and gives some plausible reasons for the dumping; but

the kind of young woman he pictures is cool, detached and treats friendship almost as a commodity, rather than as a relationship in which a friend serves and loves the other regardless of ups and downs.¹

A biblical quality needed every day

But young women do have better advice available. We all have better advice available, for all our relationships. It is in the Scriptures. We all need friends who will prove reliable in the good times and the bad times of life, and it is worth asking — what does it take to be that kind of friend? Two things in particular occur to me. The first is that, to be an anchor for our friends when they are being tossed around by rough seas, we need to be firmly grounded ourselves. Light-weight anchors do not have much traction in rough seas; and women who do not have a firm grasp of the resources available to us in the Scriptures are not going to be much help to friends in spiritual need. So we need to work at that, equipping ourselves for the rainy days that will be ahead — both for ourselves and for others. Good friends have answers ready to hand, and will prove reliable in the hour of need.

Secondly, we need to be stable and unruffled, not changeable and moody. We should not blow hot and cold in our friendships, feeling enthusiastic and gushy one day, but cool and unwilling to talk the next. Love is not irritable or resentful (1 Corinthians 13:5), and is quite capable of forgiving slights, covering sin, and overlooking small hurts that can be forgotten by next week. It is mature enough to realise that 'I am no less a sinner than my friend, and how she feels today (though it might seem distinctly out of sorts) is probably no guide to how she will be tomorrow, or next week.' As with all aspects of Christian living, our ability to be a good friend is greatly improved by a habit of reflecting on God's unchanging character rather than our mood of the moment. This will make us reliable.

Reliability in the closest relationships

Faithfulness, constancy and reliability are, of course, right at the heart of what it takes to make a good marriage. These are necessary, to be sure, if you are going to live, through thick and thin, with only the one sinner throughout the rest of your life. We all know what the world makes of the problem of living with a sinner. When the going gets tough the tough — get going. That is, they leave the person they just can't stand the sight of any more. These days, in the world of Generation Y, revolving

relationships have reached an extreme. This has led to an appalling degree of sexual promiscuity among young New Zealanders. One Gen Y'er, interviewed for an article on her age group's habits of life, commented that she 'believes this generation whips the free-love generation [of the 1960s] for sheer volume of sexual partners. I've got many, many friends who have slept with well over 50 people. I think it's more socially acceptable to have had a lot of partners as long as you're clean and safe. I know people who are well over 100. That's a lot of people to have slept with.'² It certainly is. Sadly, habits like that gained before marriage are hard to break after marriage. We have seen the reality of this, among both young people — and older people. I'm sure you have, too.

But reliability in marriage encompasses more than sexual faithfulness. It means being a faithful friend, as constant as a friend may be in any other relationship, in sickness and in health; in joy and in pain. It means being genuinely interested in your

husband's career, friends, family, personal interests, and most importantly, walk with God. Do you want the best, the most spiritually useful future for your husband? That might mean supporting him in choices that are a denial of fun or pleasure now, in favour of time spent reading, attending instructive church meetings, allowing him to visit needy people or share the gospel, or correcting your children. It means persevering through troubled times; struggling together through difficult issues to reach a biblical solution. One dear lady told me this story not so long ago, doubtless reflecting on the kinds of difficulties most of us have experienced from time to time. About twenty years ago the two of them were visiting their daughter-in-law and their very first grandchild in hospital. Walking out together, my friend's husband said to her, 'Dear, good things come to those who hang in there.' Touchingly, she told me this story not long after their golden wedding anniversary. God had kept them constant, and their blessings were many.

Is this what's in you?

Think about it... are you reliable? Are you a good friend? How do we know what a good friend is? We know because God has been a good friend to us. It was He who first loved us, when we were dead in our sin; and it is He who loves us still, in spite of our ongoing, sinful fickleness. Two proverbs, not far from each other in Scripture, tell us what this friendship means:

*A friend loves at all times,
And a brother is born for adversity.
(17:17)*

*A man of many companions may come
to ruin,
But there is a friend who sticks closer
than a brother. (18:24)*

Is this you?

¹ John Aiken, "On the Couch," *Next*, August 2006, p. 89

² Keri Welham, "Generation Y Living for Today," *The Press*, 29 May 2004

The gates of Jerusalem

The Inspection Gate

Patricia van Laar

Acts 17:31 "He (God) has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the Man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

Today's gate completes the circle of gates visited in our trip around the walls of Jerusalem, a gate that is linked by the wall to the Northeast corner, and this then turns westward and significantly links on to the Sheep Gate, where we began our journey. The name of this last gate is one that is not always translated. In the AV it keeps the name Miphkad, meaning number (Oxford Concordance), while RSV uses the fuller Hammiphkad. Elsewhere it is variously translated the Muster Gate, the Judgment Gate or the Inspection Gate. All these conjure up the picture of a large gathering of people. Mustering, which we in Australasia use most often to describe gathering together sheep or cattle from every corner of a property, but which originally referred to soldiers assembled for inspection. Judgment, like a full courtroom sitting for a trial. Inspection,

reminding us of the Trooping of the Colours before the monarch, or of the assembling of troops for the disciplinary inspection of uniforms, arms, deportment, punctuality and general bearing. Each raises in our minds the portrait of Israelites assembling at this very gate for a variety of purposes; judging, legal transactions, giving instructions, preparing for battle.

The final gate

How appropriate it is to the devotional aspect of this series, that the final gate is the Gate of Judgment or Inspection. The final assembly of mankind in this age, the consummation of history, will be the global gathering of Judgment. We have been considering the gates as they teach us things concerning our Saviour and our salvation, and have seen in the gates, the ordered, logical unfolding of God's purposes. Beyond human comprehension is the planning and fulfillment of each little detail of God's workings, both in creation and in history. Also beyond comprehension is the perfection of inspiration with which God moved his human servants to write his Divine book, orderly and

complete, every jot and tittle!

The quotation at the top, from Acts, declares this consummation of the present age, anticipated by both Old and New Testament. It takes us to the *Day of the Lord*, to the final eschatological visitation of Emmanuel, God with us, the day of Inspection by the King of kings. So this gate belongs to an event still to come. The prophets foresaw it. Amos and Joel both speak of it as a dreadful day of destruction and darkness. Zephaniah gives dire warning of the Day on which God "has decided to assemble the nations". The New Testament has much to say, both words of encouragement and words of warning. But is a day of fear, but it is also to be a day of singing and salvation. Zechariah, in chapter 14, tells of "that day when the Lord will be King over the whole earth". Visible to all, for "every eye shall see Him."

The IVF Dictionary in its section on eschatology suggests, "The Day of consummation is necessary to bring the fullness of the eschatological blessings now experienced in part. The events attending the Second Coming of Christ do not represent something new. What Christ accomplished by His

death and resurrection will be brought to consummation by His coming to glory. We live between the two, between the First and Second Comings. There is much work to be done between the two.”

This meditation, however, is not to be a treatise on eschatology or an account of eschatological opinions. It is better not to be dogmatic about the latter, anyway. Some proclaim to know exactly how the events surrounding the end are to occur. They have even produced films to portray what will happen. How unwise. There were many surprises in the fulfillment of His First Coming, and all I would dare to predict dogmatically, apart

from its certainty, is that there will be many surprises at His Second. Instead of dwelling on the whens and hows, let us think about Him who is the judge, and about our own preparedness for that great Day.

The Judge

We have already met the glorious One at the Gates of the King of kings, the Horse Gate. We were also reminded of the Second Coming at the East Gate. Take another look at the passages that were listed in these; Hebrews 1:1-3, Revelation 1:12-17 and 19:11-16, and Matthew 24:27, 30 – 31. While reading an article such as this, there may be the tempta-

tion to skip looking references up, but great blessing comes with taking the time to do so. Yet our puny minds cannot really contemplate what He is. We cannot imagine even from these vivid descriptions, what the reality will be. The extreme limit of human words cannot express the magnificence of the Judge of the Inspection Gate. We are hampered by the inadequacies of human speech and by the inadequacy of our knowledge. “Eyes have not seen nor ears heard, neither has entered the heart of man...” So God tells us.

How puny are my own words

The certainty of Judgment Day

One thing the Bible assures us of: ‘He who is coming will come, and will not delay.’ (Heb. 10:37) We may doubt it, and say, “Where is the promise of His Coming?” The message of the Judgment Gate is: Do not doubt; it is Certainty. This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way... As lightning comes from the east and shines to the west... The Son of Man will appear in glory with all the angels... Every eye will see Him...

All nations will be gathered – at His Inspection Gate.

A warning against rejecting His grace

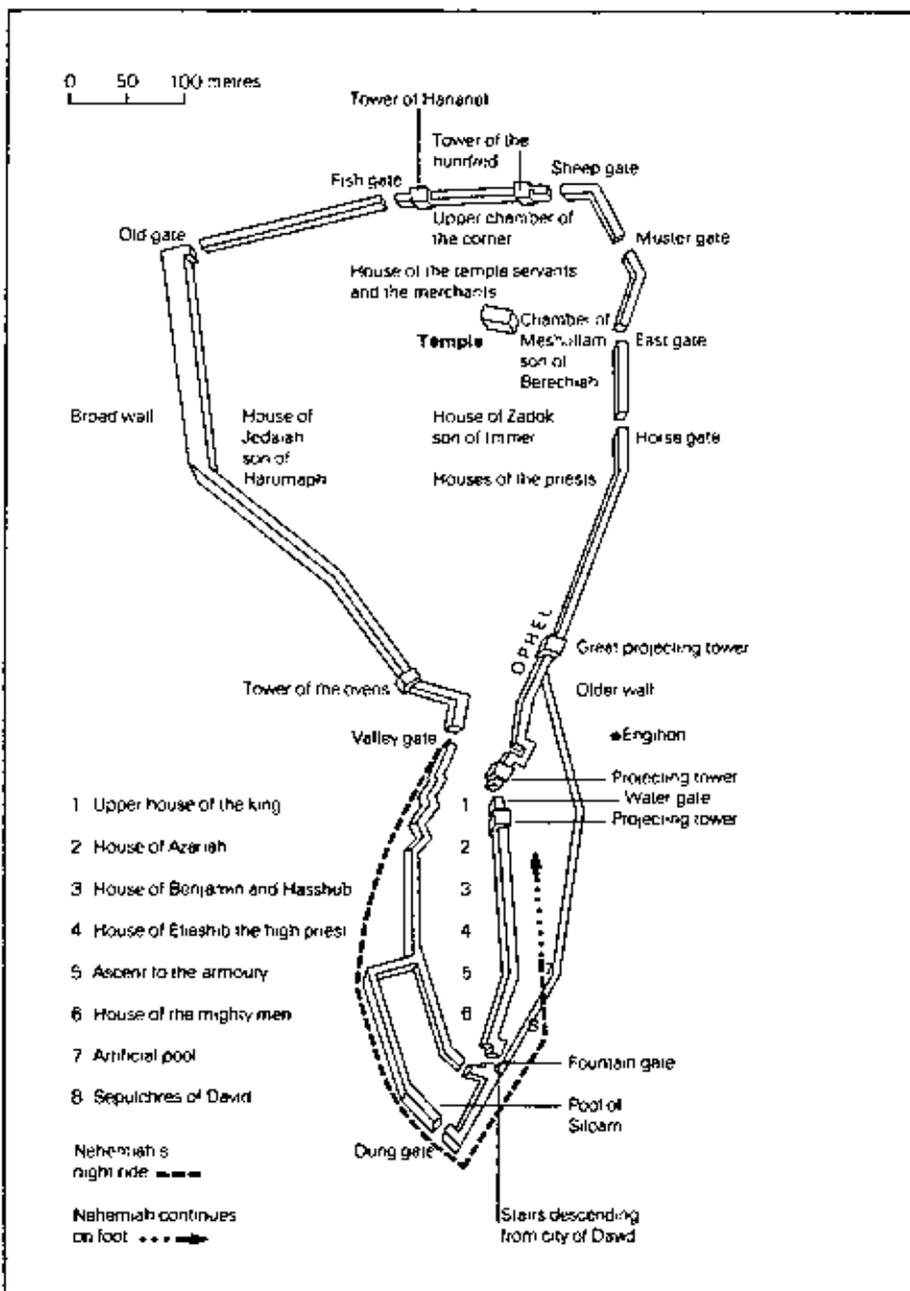
Heb. 10:26, “If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment, and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled under foot, and who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.”

“Light enough has been given us to make faith rational and unbelief without excuse.” (Charles Bridges)

What of those who have never heard?

This must be left to the judge. A huge deliberation that we can only leave for God to resolve. This statement may seem glib, and a wriggle to escape a difficulty. “But God has not promised to answer every question. He has not chosen to reveal everything to us. Some things are concealed both for our own good, and as His right, maintaining His sovereignty.” (Bridges)

And, we are assured, – “Shall not the Judge of the earth do right?” For us, the pertinent question and challenge is - Are we doing as much as we can and should do, to enable these others to hear?



Nehemiah's Jerusalem (after Aharoni and Avi-Yonah). The site names are derived from Ne. 3:1-32, proceeding anti-clockwise from the Sheep Gate at the NE Corner. Taken from Derek Kidner's Commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah, IVP.

What of those who have received Him?

There is no judgement of sin for those who belong to Him. Sin was removed, taken away, wiped out, as far as the east is from the west. Like a thick cloud, blotted out. At Calvary. Yet for these, there will be judgement. Our judgement will be for reward. It will reveal whether we have built with gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay and stubble. A man's worthless works will be burnt, although he himself will be saved. Let's heed how we build.

"Reward is an index of LIVING FAITH, which results from our salvation, not salvation a reward for our works. It is not a claim upon God," wrote a saint of God. Scripture does speak of reward, in whatever form God has ordained. We should not be slothful servants who lose the reward.

Yet nor should we work with the reward in mind. Surely our service is to be simply for joy and for the love of Him who first loved us, who died for us, but whom death could not hold. As the resurrection is our surety that these things will be, so should the resurrection be manifest in all the lives of those who have received life through His death. For, to live is Christ.

The Day of Judgment will cause us to sing for joy in our Saviour.

*Day of Judgment! Day of wonders!
Hark the trumpet's awful sound,
Louder than a thousand thunders,*

*Shakes the vast creation round. How
the summons Will the sinner's heart
confound!*

*See the Judge, our nature wearing,
Clothed in majesty divine; You who
long for his appearing*

*Then shall say, This God is mine!
Gracious Saviour, Own me in that day
as Thine.*

At His call the dead awaken, Rise to life from earth and sea; All the powers of nature shaken by His looks, Prepare to flee. Godless sinner, What will then become of thee?

But to those who have confessed, Loved and served the Lord below, He will say, Come near, ye blessed, See the Kingdom I bestow. YOU FOREVER SHALL MY LOVE AND GLORY KNOW.

(John Newton, 1774)

And the circuit brings us back to the

Sheep Gate, for without that gate, there would be nothing.

Rev. 5: 5,6 "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals. Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the centre of the throne.... (v.9 ff) "And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seven seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and nation. You have made them to be a Kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on earth...."

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise... To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power forever and ever."

Even so, Come, Lord Jesus

Focus on home**Andrew Reinders****Gleanings from our bulletins...****Avondale**

New Member: Attila Mathe and his son Roland have been worshipping with us for some time. After receiving the necessary documentation, Session is pleased to welcome Attila as a communicant member and Roland as a baptised member. If you haven't already done so, make yourself known to Attila and Roland.

Evangelism: If you haven't been out with the evangelism team yet but have been wondering what it's all about and been thinking about coming, Saturday 28 Oct. could be the night for you. We will be meeting in the church at 7.30 pm. for explanation and an evangelism DVD before prayer and heading out to Queen Street. This is a great opportunity for you to see how it's done with the freedom to choose your own level of participation. You may be more comfortable observing,

or you may like to try handing out tracts, joining in a conversation, or even go 'one to one' on your own. Our experience is that most people find that 2 or 3 outings are all it takes to get the hang of it. Any questions see Reuben, Tjeerd, Josh, or Sharon.

Bishopdale

Pastoral. We can rejoice with Henk and Ans Bosma on their 45th wedding anniversary. The Lord has been good to you.

Buckland's Beach

This Friday Jordan Huizinga and Robert Hewitt will be officially married at a ceremony that will be conducted at Cornwall Park. Warmest congratulations to this couple and also to the Huizinga and Hewitt families! May the Lord uphold, keep strong and bless this union in every way. Our pastor will be officiating at this wedding.

From the Session. Last Tuesday five young people who have expressed a heartfelt desire to profess their faith and love for the Lord Jesus publicly met with the elders. It proved to be a good meeting and the session is therefore pleased to announce that Marcus Mulder, Karoline Premkumar, Alan Strayton, Tertia Tempelhof and Marjoree Wimmers will publicly profess their faith during the morning

service of November 5th, 2006. We praise God for his covenant faithfulness and that, in his strength and for his glory, these young people now submit themselves to his Lordship in and through Jesus Christ their saviour.

Wedding Announcement. Congregation, Paul Bosman Reyneke and Nicola Patricia Milne have indicated their desire to be united in Christian marriage. They want to seal their life together in the name of the Lord and in this presence of His people and to continue it to His glory. If there are no lawful objections, the ceremony will take place during a special worship service at the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach on Saturday, 11th November at 2.30pm. Paul and Nicola and their families invite you to join with them in this service.

From Session. We have had several applications for membership of our fellowship of late. After due process the session is pleased to welcome into the life and fellowship of our church Johan and Rosina Van der Merwe. This brother and sister were formerly members of the Reformed Church of Hamilton. Johan is currently working on Waiheke Island (451 Seaview Road, Onetangi, Waiheke Island). Rosina is still working in Cambridge during the week and comes home on weekends. They are currently able to worship here

once or twice a month. Justin and Ingrid Geldart - who have been worshipping with us for the past couple of months. They come to us after having been members of a Reformed Baptist Church. Justin and Ingrid are expecting to become parents in the very near future. Ronel Schodt. - Ronel and her husband Carl have formerly lived in Zimbabwe and came here about 3 years ago. They are new parents (meet daughter Hayley). We will meet them more formally at a special service planned for December 17th.

Christchurch

Things coming up soon. 65+ 65+ All people 65 and older are invited to a light meal, coffee and dessert evening. We are also planning to show some videos of the big flood of 1953 in Holland (this video is in the Dutch language only). Maybe some people have a story to tell about that time and/or a DVD about Holland which can be heard in English as well. The date set for Saturday 9 December from 5.30 pm onwards. Are you interested in coming? Or do you have some questions to ask? Please let us know how many are coming so we can cater for them. We hope to see you all there. RSVP by Friday 1 December 2006. Hans Lebbink

Dovedale

Pastoral. Nathan Watson has expressed his desire to publicly profess his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Following an interview with Nathan at Wednesday night's meeting, the Elders agreed to this request with joy and this Public Profession of Faith will take place (DV) on Sunday 5 November during the morning service.

Book recommendation: When older youths or adults in a church have questions on Reformed theology, where do they go? To their busy pastor? To a lengthy book on dogmatics? Often searches for answers become too daunting to pursue. But not any more. With the publication of *Doctrine according to Godliness*, the average reader, late teens through senior citizens, members in the pew or office-bearers, will have exactly the tool they need to get information quickly. Here is a book to read, buy, keep, and use for a lifetime. Even those who are sure they know their doctrines from A-Z may be surprised at all the new insights they are sure to gain from it. *Doctrine according to Godliness* by Rev. Ronald Hanko. Available from the library, and a very good read!

Pastoral. Our warmest congratulations to Antony and Angie Willemse who were blessed on Sunday (5 November) with the birth of a healthy baby boy (John). Mother and son are doing well and returned home on Thursday. Praise the Lord!

Dunedin

Pastoral Notes. We rejoice with Melanie and James Ure and the Balchin family at the safe arrival, on Thursday 2 November, of a healthy baby boy, Christopher Mark Ure. Mother and child are both well, thanks be to God.

St Andrews Rest Home Service. Our church is scheduled to minister to the residents at St An-

draws Rest Home today. The service will be held at 2:00 pm in the chapel at 8 Easther Crescent, Kew. Please come along and help out with the singing if you can.

Foxton

Point to ponder: We have no relationships that come close to the relationship we are called on to have with God. With God, one side is perfect. The other, our side, is clinging on by prayer, asking 'forgive me; please let grace cover my sins.' We can hold that relationship with God only because He's reaching over and holding us up to His level, not because we can ever reach to His level.

Hastings

From the Pastor. This morning we rejoice with Adriaan and Marilee Smith as they bring André Johann for baptism. How thankful we may be that God has included our children within the sphere of His gracious dealings with us as His people. When Jesus rebuked his disciples because they forbade the little children from being brought to him, it taught us that we must do all in our power to bring our children to Christ. This means firstly that we must love the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind. Secondly, we must live in humble obedience to His commandments in our homes, in public and as the church of Christ. It is in that context that we may teach our children the things of God. Finally we must ensure that the very atmosphere of our homes is one where Christ reigns. (cf. Deut 6:4-9) That means our actions, our words, and our very attitudes must conform more and more to the perfect pattern Christ gave us. How does your home life measure up? In what kind of atmosphere are your children growing? Is the church of Christ which is His body the object of your love? What attitudes do you communicate to your children about your brothers and sisters in Christ? Is your public life one that shows a humble submission to the will of God?

From the Social Committee. Church Picnic – This year the date has been set for December 9th at Eskdale Park (watch for the balloon at the turn off.) It should be a fun afternoon for everyone! Bring along some afternoon tea and a drink and salad for dinner plus your own cups, cutlery etc. BBQ meat and bread provided.

Hukanui

Have you ever stopped to consider what the covenant of God is really all about? It is an everlasting covenant: which means it goes on for ever and ever; it is a covenant that belongs to the generations, that includes the generations, and it is a covenant founded upon the power, might and grace of God, which means it cannot be annulled, broken, or in any way cancelled. That is also the covenant which God has made with us, and our children: it is based on this covenant that we may face the future with confidence, and upon which we may build our lives and that of our children. Hence Naomi this morning receives the sign and seal of the covenant, the water of baptism, as an indication and guarantee that she belongs

to God. Let us pray for and encourage Henri & Isolde as they seek to raise Naomi and all their children to know and love Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Hi everyone! Let's have a meeting :) Sunday 29th of October at the Pennings house, 164 Gordonton Road after the morning service (please bring something for lunch). Ph. 07 853 3103 Everyone who wants be part of this year's Beach mission please give me a ring or come to the Meeting. We are planning to go to Raglan again. We are able to use the hall at the United Church again and they have asked us to lead the Sunday morning Church service! What a great opportunity! We plan to set up a marquee at the beach and to do activities from there. We want to do crafts for the kids, games, provide cool water, suntan lotion and canoeing, to name a few things. We will be working with the Surfside Christian Life Church at Raglan. They are getting a team together to specially focus on the teenagers. We will be there to do a lot of one to one witnessing with the holiday makers. Holiday is a great time to talk with people because they are relaxed and have the time. Look forward to hearing from you or seeing you at the meeting. PS. the date's will be 27th Dec. 2-1-07 God Bless. Henri Pennings

Mangere

Pastoral. This past Wednesday evening was our Bible Study night. As I often do, I went to pick up Br Ypke Posthumus so that we could go together. Arriving at the unit, though, I soon realised that things did not look as they usually do. There was no response to my knocking, and the neighbours confirmed that there had been no response to their knocking either. After checking around the unit and seeing his closed bedroom curtain, I rang the police and was told to wait for officers to come. Nearly two hours later they came and we were able to gain entry to the unit where Ypke's body was in his bed. It seems he had gone to sleep and passed away. The next day the Coroner's office conducted an autopsy and gave the verdict that he had died of a heart attack. We mourn the loss of our brother while also knowing he is in a far better place. In the meantime his sister Hilly and her husband Albert have come over to manage his affairs. A Thanksgiving Service is planned for Wednesday at 2.30pm at our church. We commend Ypke's family and friends to the Lord in prayer – and that especially includes his church family.

Masterton

Sunday School: We continue to covet your prayers for the Sunday School that is running every Sunday. To date we have not had a large number of children from the community, but it is still a blessing to be able to teach those that do come. Please pray that the Lord may add children to our number, but also that we may be able to get into contact with the parents of the children and present the Gospel to them also. Above all pray that the Spirit may prepare hearts that are receptive to the Word. The Sunday School Team.

Nelson

We also rejoice with Paul and Karla Burton on the birth of another son, Joshua, at 7:34 pm last Sunday.

North Shore

The Da Vinci Code – true or false? 28 November 2006, 7.30 - 9.00 pm held here at the church. Thanks to the popular novel *The Da Vinci Code*, written by Dan Brown, church history has now become topical. Millions of people have learned about the council of Nicea and Mary Magdalene. Unfortunately, Dan Brown's version is completely wrong. This has inspired Pieter van Huyssteen to compose a presentation about the true history of the early church. Having presented this at Phlair Bible College, he will now give all of us the opportunity to hear more about this history, even more intriguing than Dan Brown's work of fiction. Please all come and take this opportunity to invite neighbours and friends along, particularly those who are impressed with the book. Pieter will be able to put them (and us) on the right track!

Palmerston North

Congratulations to Kees and Miep Visser on 50 years of marriage! We rejoice with you and thank Him for the many years he has given you together!

Pukekohe

Combined youth group event at Avondale: We are having a combined FEAR FACTOR night for all the local Reformed Church Youth Groups. This is going to be held this Saturday, 28 October. As this event is going to be quite big, if everyone could please bring along a gold coin that would help a lot with costs. Bring along old clothes (because its probably going to get messy), and a strong stomach is a must! Meet at the Reformed Church of Avondale at 7:30pm, Saturday, 28 October. Please let one of the committee know TODAY if you are planning to go, as the Avondale committee MUST know numbers.

Membership: We welcome Mrs Maylene Kemm as a member of the church and we trust you will be blessed by the fellowship and worship of God's people in this congregation, and that you will benefit others with the use of your gifts.

Wainuiomata

Profession of Faith & Lord's Supper. The Session rejoices in the Lord to be able to present the following names of those who will make public profession of their faith They are: James Bartlett, David De Vries, Anna De Vries, David Durant, Esther Durant, Azariah Vlaanderen, Hannah Van Maastricht, and Seth Zorn. If there are no lawful objections the profession will take place on Sunday, November the 26th during the morning service.

Wellington

Invitation for our ladies. The women of Grace Presbyterian Church are having a one-day conference (presbyterial) to which our ladies are cordially invited. It is called Women in the Church Confer-

ence. It will be held on Saturday, 4th November, D.V in the Wesley Hall from 10am till 4.30pm. Details in the foyer. Contact Rachel Ah Yong, by 1 November, 2006.

Youth Group: Study and puppets. It's that time of the year again...the Brooklyn Festival! And that means it's time for the youth to help with the puppet show once more. Che Fu once said, 'many hands make light work, going solo might turn good to so-so', and we agree. Everyone needs to get involved this year. On Sunday 19 Nov, there will be a shared lunch at the church after the morning service. After lunch David Holtslag will be leading a study, then we will do some puppeteering practice. Bring a plate, a Bible and strong wrists to operate the puppets. See you there! Tim Sterne.

WELLINGTON PRESBYTERY REPORT FOR FAITH IN FOCUS

Wellington Presbytery met on Friday evening, the 3rd November 2006, at Wainuiomata. Rev. Leo de Vos was chairman and opened the meeting by prayer and after giving a short devotion on Pro. 16:32 & 2 Pet. 1:5-8, we joined together in singing Ps. 1 from the Psalter hymnal.

The chairman welcomed all present including the Synodical delegates from Auckland Presbytery, Rev. John Rogers, and from Christchurch Presbytery, Rev. Hans Vaatstra. A special welcome was also extended to Rev. Barry James, who was attending the proceedings.

Credentials were received from all the churches and all delegates stood to indicate their agreement with the doctrinal standards of the RCNZ.

The Presbytery then went into closed session to consider giving concurrence to Palmerston North Session's acquiescing to Rev. G. Milne's resignation from the Wanganui preaching post as well as from the RCNZ. After a lengthy discussion, Presbytery along with the Synodical delegates concurred with Palmerston North's action. A motion was passed stating that Gary Milne is no longer a minister of the word and sacraments within the RCNZ.

The CO Art. 47 questions were answered by the Reformed churches of Foxton, Palmerston North, and Wellington and Rev. Bruce Hoyt led in prayer for these churches.

Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true and correct record after a minor correction. Matters arising from the minutes included notification that auditors have been appointed to audit the Presbytery's financial records.

Both inward and outward correspondence was received by common consent with a number of

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Saturday 17th March 2007**

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**Reformed Church of Masterton
(Homeleigh, 37 Herbert Street)**

Morning tea at 10:00 AM

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items being added as late correspondence.

Quite some correspondence was received concerning the way a previous decision had been made by the Presbytery concerning the replacement of Br Jonathan Vandenberg from Australia. After some discussion it was agreed that a letter drafted by Rev. Bruce Hoyt be accepted and passed on to Br Jonathan Vandenberg as a further explanation of why this decision was made.

There was no Church Visitation report received since the last Presbytery meeting.

Rev. Archbald reported on minutes received from other Presbyteries and Classes and noted that Classis Queensland have agreed to trial a permanent Moderamen for twelve months, and that Classis W.A. had discussed a concern that not all churches seem to place preaching and home visitation on a high priority.

Our treasurer reported on the financial situation of the Presbytery with no immediate concerns.

Rev. Zuidema reported that Vicar Andrew Nugteren will now be leading the studies at the NYC in 2007. He will be following the previous speaker's outline for the studies. Rev. Zuidema also reported on why the costs of the previously-arranged speaker were somewhat high, and the Presbytery asked that the WRYC be more watchful about these costs in the future.

Elder Anton Meister reported for the OMB, and that they still need \$50,000.00 to replenish funds already sent to PNG for the Reformed Training centre as well as funds for a permanent worker in the field. He also reported that Rev. Barry and Mrs Anne James will be doing some more work in Uganda in the New Year and that later in the year

Rev. John and Mrs Sheryl Rogers are planning to assist with that work.

The Reformed Church of Silverstream moved that Rev. Leo de Vos be appointed as a Synodical examiner and counsellor to replace Br Gary Milne.

The next meeting is to be held on the 2nd March with Palmerston North being the convening church.

Words of thanks and appreciation were expressed to Rev. Jan Lion-Cachet who is returning to Sth Africa after accepting a call there, and also to Rev. J. Goris who is retiring from the ministry at the end of this year. Rev. Bruce Hoyt closed the meeting in prayer and we all sang PH 473, "Till we meet again."

Reporter: **Rev John Zuidema.**

Missions in focus

Janice Reid

Aboriginal Outreach

David and Jenny Waldron and their family are members of the Reformed Church of Palmerston North in New Zealand and have been serving as short-term workers with Australian Indigenous Ministries (AIM) in Alice Springs. They were relieving Norm and Lola Wall (a missionary couple who have served the Lord for 20 years at the AIM church in Alice Springs) whilst the Walls took a well-earned break with family in Darwin. The Waldrons then travelled throughout the Northern Territory visiting AIM mission outposts.

Alice Springs is the regional centre for a vast area covering outlying outback Aboriginal communities and cattle stations. It is quite a transient town, with Aboriginal people coming in from outlying rural communities periodically for hospital treatment or supplies and many trades people working here for a few years before moving on. This is a dry, dusty place where the local Todd river is a desiccated strip of sand most of the time (we had hoped to see the Todd 'run' at least once - but there was insufficient rainfall during our stay). In other ways Alice is anything but dry. 'Grog' is a huge problem with a population of around 28,000 people supporting 78 liquor outlets.

Many of the Aboriginal people in Alice

Springs are away from their home communities, having come to Alice Springs for prolonged medical treatment. Diabetes and kidney failure are frighteningly common in the Aboriginal population with many being effectively exiled here in town because of their need for frequent dialysis treatment. These conditions are often compounded in the camp communities by drunkenness, violence and poor nutrition. At times it was hard to believe that we were still in Australia.

Sunday mornings start with an 80km bus trip around town picking up church members from the suburbs and also the outlying Aboriginal 'camp' communities. The church is predominantly Aboriginal,

with more than five different indigenous languages represented in the congregation. There is a morning service at 10:30 a.m. and an evening meeting at 6:30 p.m. On the Sunday afternoon an evangelistic meeting is held at an alcohol rehabilitation centre in town. There is a mid-week evening meeting at church, a ladies' Bible study, Bible-in-schools at a local Aboriginal college, and ongoing outreach to Aboriginal families who camp on the church block.

To the Jews I am a Jew

We have been using 'iconographs' to illustrate biblical truth to the Indigenous people here, who are very much visual/pictorial



Jenny with Ladies Group in Alice Springs

learners. Traditionally they are used to drawing pictures in the red sand with a stick or a finger. An iconograph signifies a person by a semi-circular mark representing the indentation made when someone sits on the ground. These pictures can be used to communicate complex theological concepts in a form that the Aboriginal people can readily relate to and remember.

We taught 'religious instruction' classes at Yirara College during our stay in 'The Alice'. This is a Christian boarding school for post-primary Aboriginal students from remote communities within the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. Most of the students speak English as a second or third language. The main languages and dialects spoken at the school are Aranda, Walpiri, Luritja, Pitjantjatjara, Anmatyere, Alyawarra and Kriol. We have been teaching songs and scripture memory, giving a devotion and praying with the students; all in our first language, English!

A gospel meeting

We were also invited by one of the congregation to hold a meeting out at their Aboriginal camp on the outskirts of town. There are about 20 of these camp communities around Alice; usually comprising 10-20 concrete houses which have been built by the government for a people who have lived out in the open country for generations. Consequently the buildings are little lived in, but people sleep, sit and eat outside; usually round a fire (even during winter when night-time temperatures can drop to zero degrees). There are often burnt-out cars with smashed windows strewn around the houses, together with piles of rubbish, innumerable dogs and small children with runny noses. These are generally sad places where the brutal clash of whitefella and blackfella cultures is painful to behold.

It was a great privilege to be asked to bring the gospel into such a place. We sat on the ground with flies and dogs swirling around us. Some people lay on a mattress, others listened from a distance, as we prayed, sang and spoke of our Lord. One of the Christians from the camp spoke of the current spate of violence, drunkenness and distress in the camps, and we prayed; especially for the women and children who suffer so much. It brings to mind the prophecy of Isaiah (61:1-3), which was fulfilled in Christ (Luke 4:18-19), who came to people like these (and also to people like us) in order to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted and to proclaim freedom to the captives. We believe, together

with other Christians here who are far more knowledgeable than ourselves regarding Indigenous issues, that no amount of government programmes or funding will fix the problems faced by Aboriginal communities. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ, brought by His followers who genuinely, and sacrificially, care both for His people and for all others made in God's image, can bring the healing which is so desperately needed here.

A ministry trip

We were also privileged to make a ministry trip up the Sandover highway to the Utopia Aboriginal lands, North East of Alice Springs. We had been invited by an Indigenous Christian couple, Alan and Jane, who live in the community of Ampilatwatja (pronounced 'Umbluderwich'). We bought a couple of kangaroo tails (a delicacy in these parts) from the mini-mart across the road from the church and headed off in a 10 seater 4WD Toyota Landcruiser, which a family in Alice had graciously lent us for the journey. 100km from town we left the hard seal and continued for another 200km on the rough corrugations and red dust of the Sandover 'highway'.

After dinner we went round to Alan and Jane's place and sat on the ground under the stars round a fire. Alan very happily accepted our gift of the kangaroo tails, wrapped them in the tin foil which we had brought for the purpose and buried them in the embers. After we had sat, talked and sang for a while, the tails were ready. After peeling off the outer layer of skin and chopping the tail into sections we tucked in! A white meat, a little stringy and quite fatty in places, the taste was good (no, it wasn't like chicken!). David closed the evening in prayer and we went back to our accommodation; quite dusty and smoky, smelling of kangaroo and looking quite Aboriginal.

The next day we went to 'Soapy Bore Community', an Aboriginal settlement about 60kms away. It has no shop, a 3-room school, one public solar-powered phone and a church in the middle of about ten concrete blockhouses. The church is a small square patch of vibrant green grass; in stark contrast to the red dust around it, shaded on one side by a row of trees and on the other by a 6mx6m tin shed which has no walls on the side facing the grass. Inside this building are two amplifiers, 4 electric guitars, a Casio electric keyboard and a microphone. There are no pews, no doors, no carpark. No problem!

We spent the day sitting with Christian brothers and sisters on the dry earth in the

shade of the trees. We swapped Indigenous worship songs (Maori for Alyawarr), David sat with the men and talked about the Scriptures, Jenny sat with the women and also taught the children using chalkboard drawings. The effect of the gospel in Soapy Bore was clear; here were quiet, gentle people who loved their Lord. There was no evidence of violence or 'grog'. The most dangerous aspect of town was being bitten by the dogs or a donkey who roamed freely.

The church service was to start at 5pm, but one 'mob' from a nearby community had been held up, so we all waited; watching the sun go down; eventually starting at around 7pm. Time is pretty flexible here and church starts when everyone arrives. Jamie, the local pastor opened in prayer, which was followed by singing. The skill with which the

MIF prayer notes

Pray for **Fred and Tineke Frericks** in Pakistan as they help at the hospital and school in Sahiwal. Both hospital and school are part of the ministry of the ARPC(USA). Pray for safety, wisdom, and strength to serve the people there.

Leo and Heidi Hendrikse are in Romania for 4.5 months, helping to run a dairy farm that was set up in conjunction with the Hungarian Reformed Churches and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee. Profits from the farm go to support a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre. Pray for the Hendrikses as they serve those in need. Pray also for health and strength to cope with the extremely cold climate.

Janice Reid gives thanks for training opportunities over the past month, and asks you to pray for those who produce the radio programmes on the Christian stations she helps. Pray especially for listeners as they hear the message of Life. Janice hopes to travel to Cambodia this month for another training trip, and also to New Zealand to spend some time with her mother. Pray for safe travel.

Wally and Jeannette Hagoort give thanks for the progress made among Reformed believers in Papua New Guinea. Pray for the establishment and growth of the Leadership Training Centre in Port Moresby. Pray also for Hagoorts themselves as they return to NZ for a short visit this month.



David and Calvin at Ampilatwatja



Naomi and Vashti with children at Soapy Bore Community

people played their instruments was impressive. Jenny sat with the women on one side of the patch of green grass, some children sat round a fire off to one side, and David stayed with the men who sat on the ground, or on upturned oil or flour drums in a separate group. We were asked to 'share' with the people and we sang a couple of songs before David preached. Once the sermon was over, Calvin (another Christian brother from Ampilatwatja) explained the message in Alywarr, as many of the people there did not understand English well. There was then more singing, all in Alywarr and accompanied by electric guitars in country and western style. We didn't understand the words, but it was a great privilege to be able to be with these believers, worshipping under the stars. The service finished around 9:00pm. We were then faced with an hour's journey in

the dark along the Sandover Highway back to Ampilatwatja. Hitting something when driving in the dark is a very high probability; kangaroo or cattle or even a camel. Jamie, the pastor, prayed for our safety and a clean road. And it was!

Jenny enjoyed taking the weekly Ladies Meeting and getting to know the increasing number who came. The ladies all loved singing God's praises; the meetings started and finished with song. The meetings were held outside as the church was very cold and hard to heat. All the ladies meetings were challenging and encouraging. They looked at Psalm 42, Mark 4, and Romans 12 and dealt with some interesting and difficult issues, including rejection. Many of these ladies have experienced much rejection, not just in their families but also as an Indigenous race over many generations.

Severe social problems

It is very hard for Aboriginal Christians to be steadfast in their faith when they live in communities which are often characterised by family violence, shattered relationships, drunkenness, gambling and pagan superstitions. Humanly speaking, how many 'whitefellas' would stay true to the Lord in these situations? These believers, who are often young in the Lord, need both prayer support and ongoing discipleship from mature Christians who can show them by example and through preaching and teaching the way to live for Christ.

Christianity is seen by many indigenous peoples as 'whitefella religion' and there is a great need to teach by word and action that God has created all men in His image and that He has chosen His people from amongst every 'tribe and language and people and nation'. The diversity of tongues here is incredible; reflecting what was (only 200 years ago) a sparsely populated land where family groups were separated by vast distances which could only be covered on foot.

There is a pressing need in Aboriginal Australia, particularly for 'team partners' (tent-makers) who can work within indigenous communities in areas such as health, IT and education. In addition to short-term workers like the Waldrons, people are needed who can make a long-term commitment to building relationships with the native peoples of Australia and who can provide a model of consistent Christian living. Believers in indigenous communities are asking AIM for gospel ministry, but the 'workers are few'. As you read this article, ask yourself if you could serve the Lord by responding to the invitation to bring light where there is much darkness.

After their time in 'The Alice', the Waldrons travelled north to visit AIM missionaries in Elliot, Katherine, Darwin, Booraloola and Mt Isa, before heading south back to Geelong for the RTC graduation ceremony in mid-November. At time of writing, they had recently relocated to New Zealand where David expected to begin a vicariate in Hastings at the start of 2007.

Planning a mission trip? Let us pray for you!

If you or somebody you know is planning a mission trip—short or long—please let us know. We want to pray for those on mission trips overseas, but we cannot pray if we don't know that you're going! Deadline for submission of articles to Faith in Focus is 6 weeks before the month of publication; so, for September, information should be sent before the 15th of July. If you would like our congregations to pray for you on your mission trip, send details to Janice at reid4radio@ihug.co.nz.