

faith in focus

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of New Zealand

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The Reformed Churches of New Zealand
– our places of worship.

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Editorial

The *Faith in Focus* team pray for the Lord's grace and peace upon you, our readers, for this new year AD2010. We have jumped the hurdle into the next decade of this second millenium. And it's anybody's guess as to what will happen in this year – or even the next 10 years – for that matter.

As time moves on, we see advancements in technology unknown by our fathers before us. Everything is changing – nothing is static.

However, one thing never changes, and that is the need for man to know his God and Saviour in a saving way. We can praise our covenant God for His constant faithfulness and immutability (unchangeableness). The whole of Scripture testifies to that fact from Genesis to Revelation. Great is the Lord, and He is to be praised.

Our first issue this year focuses on the most important part of our service to our God, and that is worship. Our cover shows the places where we as members of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand worship the Lord. The images start with the most northern church (top left) and move down to the most southern (bottom right). Geographically, and moving down each column from the top left, we see the Reformed Church buildings of North Shore; Bucklands Beach; Avondale; Pukekohe; Hukanui; Hamilton; Hastings; Wanganui (Palmerston North); Palmerston North; Foxton; Masterton; Silverstream; Wainuiomata; Wellington; Nelson; Bishopdale; Christchurch; Dovedale; Oamaru; Dunedin.

Many thanks to all those people who sent in pictures of their church buildings.

The lead article, by Pastor Andre Holtslag, looks at "Preparing for worship". It is followed by "Reformed Worship and the Regulative Principle", by Rev Dr Paul N Archbald; "The liturgy of life" by Rev Peter Kloosterman; and "The data projector" by Berwyn Hoyt. I trust you will enjoy reading these interesting perspectives on our service and worship. I have other articles on worship and the church which I hope (space permitting) to publish in future issues. Mrs Sally Davey gives us some insight into the life of Dorothy L Sayers, the writer. Our Books in Focus features a couple of books on the basics of Reformed worship and reforming worship. Finally, we take another look at Botswana, in Missions in Focus.

I hope you enjoy this first issue for AD2010.

Photo Credits:

Page 3 – Reformed Church of Dovedale, by John Holtslag.

The Thought of God – Maurice Roberts – p28

Pride follows our heels more closely than our very shadow. It cannot be beaten away or bribed away. It is a cancer of the soul. It acts like acid upon our graces. It swells us up with ludicrous self-importance. It chokes the life of prayer, stifles our usefulness, and will, if not brutally treated, sap the spiritual life within us almost to death.

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.

Worship (1)

Preparing for worship

Pastor Andre Holtslag

The ideal

After a week that includes regular devotions, the Saturday evening meal is concluded with a time of thinking about the texts for tomorrow's sermons and prayer. We are in bed at a respectable hour and up early on Sunday. Because we want to remind ourselves of, and declare to others, the special importance of gathered worship and the One whom we are worshipping, we dress ourselves in the 'Sunday' clothes that we ironed and laid out last night. After breakfast together, we pray for the work of the minister and that our hearts may be ready to worship. Each of us make sure we have the offering money we organized yesterday, and one of us collects the box of Bibles and hymnbooks that were put by the door, last night, as we leave. We arrive at church in plenty of time to greet those others who are there also and then select a seat. Noting that some visitors are present today, we make a mental note to invite them around after the service, thankful that we purchased some extra bread and got that delicious pot of tomato soup made up yesterday. We make the most of these moments to pray, again, and to look over some of the other readings and songs that we will sing, until we hear the office-bearers arrive and the service begins...

The reality

The movie ends at 11:45pm. We then switch off the T.V. and tidy a few things away before flopping into bed. Eventually, we fall asleep after hearing the car door close as number one son arrives home from that party around 12:30am. At 8:15am, Mum gets up after calculating down to the nearest minute how long it will take to get the children and herself ready for church at 10:00am. Dad sleeps on because "Sunday is the only day I get a chance to sleep in for a bit!" After four attempts, finally all the children are at various stages of breakfast and the mad cycle of showers can begin. After

dressing in whatever is clean (relatively speaking) and handy, the command to "get into the car, we have to go!" is finally obeyed, and Dad emerges from the house still combing his hair and munching on a piece of toast. Today is better than last week because two Bibles were found on the way out the door, and another hymnbook has been found wedged in the car seat. On the way to church, Dad asks Mum if she has any money in her purse, because he has none in his for the offering. Thankfully, a few coins are found in the glove-box. We get to church just in time to dump little Jenny in the crèche, grab a few of the Bibles and hymnbooks set aside for the visitors, quickly squeeze past the elderly couple on the edge of the pew, and hear them point out that we are up to verse 3 of hymn 527. Not bad! This week we only missed the songs before the service and the blessing bit!

Well, it's probably the case that, for most of us, the truth about our preparation for worship rests somewhere in the middle. Some weeks are better than others! Some times, despite our desire

for the 'ideal,' the 'reality' becomes the reality. At other times, though, we do accomplish most or all of something like the 'ideal' and experience the fruits of preparation.

A new concept?

Perhaps though, we need to take one step further back still. For all that has been said thus far depends on whether or not we actually think that it is important to prepare for worship. Perhaps the concept of preparing for worship is somewhat new to us, or something we are getting used to. Perhaps what we would consider preparing for worship does not resemble the 'ideal' that has been laid out above.

Whatever the case maybe, let's spend some time together thinking about the subject of preparing for worship. For, while we must allow each other freedom to work out exactly what it looks like from individual to individual and family to family, clearly, the Bible, our confessions, and practical considerations have much to say to us about this subject, as we shall hopefully see.



Let's begin then by considering what the Bible has to say about preparing for worship.

Exodus 16 tells the familiar story of the sending of manna from heaven. You may recall that God's command was for the Israelites to gather twice as much on the sixth day because none would be sent on the Sabbath Day. Here, to a people that are fresh out of the pagan land of Egypt, God continues to educate them about what it means to be His people. And right at the start, He wants them to see the importance of preparing for the day of worship.

Soon after this episode, we also encounter the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai in **Exodus 19:9-25, and 20:19-20**. Perhaps you might read those passages today, by yourself or as a family, to see again how the Lord prepares them, and calls on them to

until the Sabbath was over. I stationed some of my own men at the gates so that no load could be brought in on the Sabbath day." Here, we see that Nehemiah begins on the evening before the Sabbath to do very practical things that would aid the observance of the day of worship.

Preparation Day

And this practicality in regard to preparation is also seen in the burial of Jesus. **Luke 23:54ff** says, "It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how His body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment. On the first day of the week, very early in the morn-

ing of God's Word is something we are to 'crave.' A sense of longing and hunger ought to fill our hearts as the day and time of worship draws near. **Ecclesiastes 5:1** says, "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong." Here we are warned against the foolish worship of those who give no thought by way of care or preparation to what they are about to do. Instead, we are to 'tread carefully,' to be thoughtful and deliberate about the whole 'business' of worship.

Preparing for worship, then, the Bible reveals, is something that clearly involves more than just the silent prayer before the service! It is about a daily attitude that is heightened on the day before worship, and that involves a number of practical implications for the time that leads up to worship.

And all of this, then, is addressed in the helpful summaries of the teaching of God's Word that are our confessions.

Surveying how they address this topic, we see that the Heidelberg Catechism, for instance, says the following in Lord's Day 38, "... In the second place, that all the days of my life I rest from my evil works, allow the Lord to work in me by His Spirit, and thus begin in this life the everlasting Sabbath." Now, while what is in view here is a daily preparation for eternity, the principle of preparing for worship is apparent. More prescriptively, the Westminster Confession of Faith says this of the Sabbath, "This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, *after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand* (Ch. 21 Art. 8)..." And the Westminster Larger Catechism explores this a little more by saying this of the Sabbath in Q/A 117, "*We are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose and seasonably dispatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.*"

And so, again, we are reminded about the need for planned, deliberate, conscious effort and activity directed towards preparing for the wonder of worship that we are about to engage in.

"Specialness"

Having looked then at the Bible and at the confessions, let's also consider one further point that arises out of daily life. Sunday worship is something we engage in, twice, from week to week. This

“There is nothing on the face of the earth that is more important than the worship of the God who made the heavens and the earth.”

ready themselves, to be in the presence of God. For we see here how He painstakingly warns them in terms of their thoughts, their dress, their attitude, their purity, and the time they must take to be ready to receive His Word. In words that convey the awesome and majestic nature of His visible appearing, we see how God sought to impress upon His people the significance of thinking about whom it was that they were drawing near to worship. And, lest we think that this is relevant only for the Old Testament people of God, **Hebrews 12:28** uses this Mt. Sinai occasion to remind us, as the New Testament people of God, to "be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for 'our God is a consuming fire.'"

For a demonstration, then, of how this concept came to exist in the life of Israel, we can turn also to **Nehemiah 13:19**. There, Nehemiah says, "When evening shadows fell on the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I ordered the doors to be shut and not opened

ing, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb." Here we even see that the day before the Sabbath had come to be known as Preparation Day.

As we continue to see the biblical foundation for the need to prepare for worship, another passage that is helpful is **Matthew 5:23-24**. In these verses we see that failure to prepare, in any way, actually hinders our ability to worship. "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."

But let's also consider some verses that approach this subject in a more indirect manner.

Thoughtful and deliberate

1 Peter 2:2 says, "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation." Here too, we see that the reading and

means that there is a danger that the 'specialness' of worship can wane over time through familiarity. On the other hand, there are events and occasions that occur in life that we all acknowledge require preparation on our part. For example, would any of us turn up to an examination unprepared? Would any of us spend zero time thinking about and planning for the annual winter ski trip, or the trip to the stadium for the big match? Would any of us turn up late to hear a lecture from someone we admire and know will instruct us? Would any of us arrive for a meal with our favourite celebrity or the Prime Minister without having thought for a moment about what we will wear? Knowing that family

or friends will be with us for a birthday celebration tomorrow, wouldn't we all make sure that the pantry and fridge were full so that we could spend time with our guests rather than spend the whole time in the kitchen? Knowing that we leave for our O.E. at 6am tomorrow, wouldn't we all make sure we got in a good night's sleep beforehand? Well, there is nothing on the face of the earth that is more important than the worship of the God who made the heavens and the earth; the One who gave Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be our Saviour; the One who gives us each breath; the One who receives the worship of the angelic host; the One who is "Holy, Holy, Holy ... Lord God Almighty"; the One who

is "worthy to receive glory and honour and power; the One who is God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And it is because of the way that all these things, together, contribute to our preparations for worship, that the Psalmist could say, "I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD (Psalm 122:1)." May our gracious God then, by His Spirit, impress upon each of us the importance, the privilege, and the joy of preparing for worship.

Pastor Andre Holtslag is Minister of the Word and Sacraments in the Reformed Church of Dovedale.

Worship (2)

Reformed Worship and the Regulative Principle

Rev Dr Paul N Archbald

Our churches are of one mind on many matters. To the extent that we do have differences, they tend to lie in the areas of church government and worship. There are differences of opinion about music – should we sing psalms only, or psalms and hymns? Is contemporary music appropriate? Should we allow a band, or stick to the organ or piano? May we have special services on "feast days"? What about candles?

Now I don't propose to deal with all of these issues in this article. What I want to look at is how we deal with such issues. How do we approach such matters as we look for answers? Obviously, we have to look for answers in God's Word. Scripture must be our norm. But how do we use His Word in our investigations? The "regulative principle" – how we use the Scripture to regulate our worship – answers that question.

Historically there have been two main approaches to the regulative principle within Protestant circles. One is more often associated with the Lutheran and Anglican churches. The other, with the

Reformed churches and the Puritans. At the start of the Reformation, Protestant churches had a wonderful opportunity to reconsider many aspects of church-life, government and worship. Luther, on the one hand, tended to opt for minimal change, in order to bring along as many Roman Catholics as he could. He tended to change things only if it were absolutely necessary. If the Scripture clearly and directly prohibited a certain practice, then Luther would agree that that matter should be prohibited by the new Lutheran Church. On the other hand, Calvin took a more radical approach. Every aspect of worship was to be reconsidered. If something could be warranted from Scripture, that practice would be retained. If not, it was jettisoned.

These two approaches gave rise to the two forms of the regulative principle of worship. The "Lutheran-Anglican" form is that something is permissible if the Scripture does not prohibit it. The "Reformed-Puritan" form is that something is not permissible unless the Scripture commands it. The difference between the two approaches is highlighted by

comparing the Lutheran with the Reformed confessions. In the context of debating Roman Catholic practices, the Lutheran Formula of Concord, Article 10, makes allowance for human traditions and ceremonies instituted by men, which are "neither enjoined nor forbidden in the Word of God." By way of contrast, the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 35, Question 96, urges "That we in no way..worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word.

Commanded or warranted?

The use of the word "commanded" has occasioned much controversy over the centuries. It seems to indicate a very narrow, proof-texting approach. If we can only do that which is explicitly commanded in the Bible, much of what the Reformers did in worship would be ruled out. Where, for example, is the explicit command for the vatum and salutation at the start of a worship service, or the express command that there must be an offering during the service?

However, the Reformers did not mean the word "command" in that narrow way. Calvin, who does express

the principle in terms of what is “commanded,” also speaks more generally about that which is not “derived” from the Scripture, not “according to His will,” not “regulated by the rule of His Word,” not “sanctioned by His Word” (Confession of Faith, Art. 17; Harmony of the Gospels, Matt. 15:9; Commentary on Isaiah, 29:13; The Necessity of Reforming the Church, p. 198). What the Reformers were opposing was human invention, the commandments of men. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1:6) makes it clear that we know God’s will – His command, as opposed to the commandments of men – not only from that which is “expressly set

inferential argument. Both parties in the debates about music, about feast days, and so on, can continue to adhere to the Reformed-Puritan regulative principle while debating each other’s inferential arguments.

It is also worth keeping in mind that the more steps there are in an inferential argument, the more danger there is in man intruding his own, human reasoning. Like the theological professor who came up with a multi-step exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:12 to “prove” that it teaches that women ought to be ordained as ministers! The WCF talks about good and necessary inference. God is not a God of confusion. What He intends us

question because of that, better restrict it to public worship. That, I suspect, is how some folk reason.

I want to suggest, however, that the whole-life view is the correct one. Scripture certainly indicates that the principle applies to worship in the narrow sense. The classic proof-text is Leviticus 10:1-7. Aaron’s sons were killed by the Lord for inventing some new detail of worship, something to do with fire – “strange fire.” Both the Reformers and the Reformed Confessions therefore explain the second commandment as a prohibition against worshipping in any other way than the Lord has commanded in His Word (Lord’s Day 35, Question 96; WCF 21:1, as indicated by the proof texts from the Decalogue). Calvin also applies 1 Samuel 15:22 and Isaiah 29:13 in this way (Confession of Faith, Art. 17; Commentary on Isaiah).

“If we can agree that only God can tell us how He wants us to live and worship, that it is not up to the imagination of man, we have made a good start.”

down in Scripture,” but also by “good and necessary consequences...deduced from Scripture.” The Reformed-Puritan formulation was calling for the rejection of all worship practices that were not warranted in any way by God’s Word.

Much of the hostility to the Reformed-Puritan formulation comes, I suspect, when there is a particular practice some want to bring into the church. Those who do not want to see that change demand to know where the Scripture commands it. If no proof-text can be produced, the accusation is made that the regulative principle is being attacked. Those who want to see the change brought in therefore feel that they have to reject the principle altogether, in order to get what they want. The proper solution would be for both parties to accept that the principle is sound, and if there are no direct Scripture passages that settle the matter, then look at “good and necessary consequence.” If there is no indirect argument to warrant the new practice either, then it should indeed be rejected. Most of the issues we argue about in our churches are probably in that category of

to do and not do in worship and life should be evident to the common believer, at least somewhere in Scripture. Inferential argumentation should be clear, not obscure.

Does the Regulative Principle apply to all of life?

There has also been some debate about whether the regulative principle applies only to worship services, or more broadly to all of life. The Christian is, after all, called to worship God in every area of life. Many who adhere to the stricter, Reformed-Puritan formulation reject the idea that the principle applies outside the worship service. Perhaps they feel that this broader application will somehow be used to weaken the principle. After all, it does seem at first sight to be rather restrictive if, in all of life, we have to reject that which Scripture does not command – especially if we take a proof-texting approach. From the moment I get out of bed in the morning, I am doing things that are not expressly commanded in the Scripture – eating breakfast cereal, drinking coffee, and so on. If the principle can be called into

Spiritual polity

In addition, Calvin applies the principle to church polity. The church should be governed by the “order” Christ “established” (French Confession, Art. 29). The church should not depart from “that which was ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ” (Art. 32). The Belgic Confession, in the section on church polity, describes the true church as known by the fact that in it “all things are managed according to the pure Word of God” (Art. 29). Article 30 refers to the true church being “governed by that spiritual polity which our Lord has taught us in His Word,” and Art. 32 warns against departing from “those things which Christ, our only Master, has instituted.” This, too, is the language of the Reformed-Puritan regulative principle.

When it comes to the general area of ethics, we find much the same story. In Matthew 15:9, the Lord Jesus warns about the Pharisees’ tendency to “teach as doctrines the precepts of men.” He illustrated the point by referring to their attempts to avoid the force of the fifth commandment. In his commentary on the passage, Calvin writes, “God wishes to be worshipped according to His will alone. He will not at all permit new forms of worship to be invented. Therefore, as soon as men allow themselves to wander outside God’s law, all their effort and care in worshipping Him will only bring them greater judgement, since religion is profaned by such figments” (Harmony of the Gospels, Matthew 15:9). The Heidelberg introduces the section on the 10 Commandments (Lord’s Day

33, Question 91) with a similar thought: "What do we do that is good? Only that which...conforms to God's law..."

Pleasing to the Lord

In Romans 14:23, the apostle Paul asserts that "whatever is not from faith is sin." In the context, he's talking about "indifferent matters" such as eating meat and drinking wine. More is required – even in these matters – than simply saying that the Scripture has no express prohibition, so we can do what we like. Whatever we do, we should be convinced that it is pleasing to the Lord. Not just neutral or of no interest to Him, but pleasing. The only way we know what is pleasing to the Lord is from His Word. "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). The regulative principle applies to public worship, church polity, ethics, indeed to all of life. There is no neutral area where the Lord has no interest. Every matter is either approved or forbidden, directly or indirectly. "Indifferent matters," like eating meat or drinking wine, involve situations where the Lord approves more than one option, not matters where He simply chooses to ignore that area of life.

Why is it, then, that the area of worship has been singled out for the bulk of the attention when it comes to the regulative principle? I would suggest it is because the Scripture has so much to say about worship, both directly and by "good and necessary consequence." That is not surprising, for public worship is a

vital matter in the life of the believer. The first four commandments have very much to do with the matter and manner of our worship. I have counted around 15 principles of worship. Worship should be Christ-centred, Word-based, "dialogical" (God speaking to us, we responding to Him), spiritual, sober, reverential, orderly, fitting, edifying, sincere – to mention a few of the principles. The more principles that bear upon a certain area of life, the less room there is for innovation. Public worship is one of the most regulated activities in which we engage. It has fewer options, a smaller area of "indifference." Correspondingly, there is a great danger of human invention, the "commands of men" – what Calvin and others have referred to as "will-worship." Matters such as eating and drinking, by way of contrast, are relatively loosely regulated, leaving a greater number of options: coffee or tea, steak or chicken or stuffed mushrooms?

Variation and divergence

One of the implications of this approach to the regulative principle is that one would expect our churches to have a similar style of worship. If we all accept the Reformed-Puritan formulation, and agree on the rather considerable list of regulating principles and commands, variation should be minor. However, variation, even divergence, will likely increase if some of us opt for the "Lutheran-Anglican" formulation; if we disagree on the basic regulations that

pertain to worship; or, if we simply do not bother to think before we act. Worship practice is often changed before it is carefully considered. It is considered, perhaps, after it is challenged – in which case there is a great danger of self-justification replacing the careful study of God's Word.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that we commit ourselves to a careful consideration before making changes in worship. Let us follow Calvin's approach: if in doubt, throw it out. For if he who doubts is condemned if he eats (Rom. 14:23), how much more he who doubts if he worships! At the same time, let us not be too quick to judge our brother on these issues – especially where we are dealing with convictions that have a long history within the Reformed churches. If we can agree that only God can tell us how He wants us to live and worship, that it is not up to the imagination of man, we have made a good start. If we disagree on some of the inferences some of us draw from the Scripture, in areas where our forefathers have also disagreed, let us not disrespect one another on that account. Rather, let us "strive to be of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose" (Philippians 2:2).

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Worship (3)

The liturgy of life

Rev. Peter Kloosterman

What is the liturgy of life? By this I am suggesting that Christians must recover the comprehensive view of living life before the face of God. The church must diligently call her members to view life as an opportunity to work out the Word proclaimed from the pulpit each Sunday. Like Moses' face radiated the glory of God when he came down the mountain,

our lives must radiate the reality of our worship service: that God each Lord's Day announces the glory of the gospel to His covenant people.

To revive the liturgy of life, we must restore and maintain the centrality of the church's worship. In doing this there are two prominent errors to avoid. The first is thinking that worship is exclusively a "church" activity. The second is thinking that everyone is a church-to-himself.

These errors are not as foreign as they may appear. If you listen closely to the conversations of others and examine your own conscience, you will hear these ideas portrayed in a variety of ways.

Cold formalism

Those who think that worship is restricted to a "church" activity mean that they can meet God on Sundays and live how they please the remaining days of

the week. This ultimately is the root of hypocrisy which leads to cold formalism. It stems from the idea that God is served formally. That is, as long as I have the proper formula of 1 + 6, I have my relationship with God nailed down. One day is for God. The other six are mine. This makes Sunday and the gathering of God's people a disjunction of the week. Like a toothache that comes and goes, the day of worship is something to be endured rather than a source of joy and delight. For many, even the consecration of an entire day as God's holy day has been reduced to an hour of worship. In this way the disruption in the commerce of life can be minimised. This distortion is excused this way; "We've given God what He wants; now we can get on with life."

The second error is intensely individualistic. The church-in-worship is not God gathering His people, but a gathering of godly people. Christians are not members of one body, but members with their own body. It lays stress on the informal and exalts the individual and his/her gifts. Corporate worship is something the members agree to do all together so that I can serve the Lord better. It is the means to the greater end of my salvation. This looks at worship through utilitarian eyes. If it's useful and beneficial I will attend. The church's worship is merely a stepping-stone. Where and how I worship depends on what benefits me and what helps me serve the Lord. The Christian life is like a battery. Worship, rather than focusing on God as the source of my spiritual strength, becomes the place where I have my batteries recharged. For some this means the church of yesteryear is obsolete, we need new models and new methods. This fits well with the consumerism of our society. It tends toward audience-tailored worship rather than God-centered, God-focused and Word-dependent worship.

A view of God and life

To avoid these two errors, we need to connect the corporate worship of the church to the private life of the individual. How do we do this? The most significant connection that we can make is recognising that the liturgy of corporate worship reflects both a view of God and a view of life as members of His body. My intention in this article is not to offer a full biblical defense for worship.¹ Rather, being fully convinced of the Biblical character and necessity of reformed worship, I offer these re-

flections as a means to help Christians integrate worship with weekly life and vice versa.

To do this some definitions are necessary. The first term that requires a definition is corporate worship. Corporate worship is when God's covenant people officially assemble to reflect back to Him the radiance of His worth. There are some elements of this definition which require further comment. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary* the term "worship" comes from the Old English "weorthscipe" or "worth-ship". We are called to assemble as God's people to praise and honour Him for His worth. 1 Chronicles 16:8-36 resounds with the summons for this activity. What



God's people must recognise is that in Him they live and move and have their being (Acts 17:28). Their entire life is a reflection of God's sovereign care as He preserves and protects them from week to week. The loving and caring God of the Bible is the only One worth our worship. We must reflect His worth. That is worship. In worship the focus must shift from "me" to "Him". We are to reflect the radiance of God's glory. What is amazing in this context is the privilege that God affords to His people because He does not need our worship (Acts 17:25), yet He invites/calls His people to gather for this purpose.

Worship is covenantal

How does this invitation come? It comes from God's word through the overseers or elders of the congregation. This is what makes corporate worship an official activity. Similarly it is the assembly of God's people. There is a covenantal relationship between those worshipping and the God who is worshipped. This

helps to understand the role that each party (God and His people) plays in the actions of worship. These actions are best understood as a conversation or a dialogue between the two parties. In this dialogue God is present and speaks by His Word through an ordained servant and His people respond to His Word.

The components of worship are what we call the liturgy. This is the second term that requires a definition. Liturgy is a term used in the OT to refer to the work of the priests in connection with the tabernacle and temple. With the Reformational emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, this term came to be associated with the worship of the church. Thus we can say that the liturgy of the church is the work which God and His people perform in corporate worship. This has direct implications for the order of worship.

The order of worship is what is normally printed in bulletins. The order of worship is a schedule of events. It's the description of God's dialogue with His people with each party doing their part. It is the liturgical appointments between the parties. To better understand our order of worship, it is helpful to recognise the overarching structure of this conversation. The liturgy of God's people can be broken down into several components: a service of praise; confession; petition; Word; and gratitude.

Here is a brief description of these components.

Praise

We are urged by the inspired Psalmist "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name" (Ps. 100:4). The service of praise is how we enter worship. The gracious character of God's call to converse with Him in worship should fill our hearts with praise.

Confession

There are two types of confession employed in our services. The confession of sin and the confession of faith. The confession of sin comes after the reading of God's law. God's law is holy, righteous and good (Rms. 7:12). It is a reflection of who God is and how God's people are to live. It convicts as well as it directs our life of sanctification. Thus a confession of our own sinfulness is an appropriate response to God's law. God's people who live in the light of His holy law are penitent people. We live by grace received through faith which causes us

to cling to God's promise that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9). The confession of sin is also a confession of faith. By confessing our sins before God we believe that He will wash us and cleanse us from our sins. That's the gospel. This gospel is summarized in the teaching of the Apostles' creed. This is the Church's historic confession. A confession that is to be believed in the heart and proceed from the mouth of every Christian (cf. Rms. 10:9).

Prayer

The service of prayer is almost a mini-liturgy in itself. There is adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. Typically, the prayer is offered by the minister. He is not praying by himself, however. He is praying on behalf of the congregation. It is for this reason that he should use collective language. That is, he should pray as if the congregation were speaking using we, rather than I. (e.g. We pray that You..., Not I pray that You...).

Word

The service of the word is best understood as the work of God's people hearing the word in faith. Listening with a believing heart to the word is an act of worship. It is the way that we reflect the radiance of God's worth. It is the source of spiritual life and growth for the Christian (Rms. 10:14-17). It is the way that the Holy Spirit takes the imperishable seed of the gospel and plants it in the hearts of God's people (cf. Mt. 13:23; 1 Peter 1:23-25). This is the pinnacle of worship. It is the time when God's people are brought into the most intimate conversation with God and have opened up to them the mystery of His will through the person and work of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:9,10, 13).

Gratitude

The service of gratitude is the response of God's people to His present work of redemption through the proclamation of the word. We respond primarily by offering ourselves as living sacrifices (Rms. 12:1). We also offer gifts of gratitude that we may support the work of the ministry of the word and share the burdens of fellow Christians (1 Cor. 9:12).

Worship with understanding

These five components should be reflected in every order of worship. One

question remains, how does this affect the daily life of a church member? It is fundamental that we recognise what we are doing in corporate worship in order to avoid the hypocrisy of formalism and the arbitrariness of individualism. We must have a reason for all that we do in worship. John Calvin warns that if we worship God in any way without knowing why, we are engaged in superstition. For this reason I have attempted to outline the main reasons why our worship is the way it is. The best way to overcome the formalism of worship is to understand what we are doing and why. The liturgy is not a formality but must be recognised as the reflection of our intimate relationship with a Sovereign God. The liturgy is the service of God's people under the direction and oversight of the elders. This also avoids making the worship of

A call to examination

How do we incorporate the liturgy of the church in personal lives? Self-consciously examining our lives to see if they reflect these elements. This is the way Christians can show that they have been in the presence of the Lord: by showing with their life the components of praise, confession, prayer, the Word, and thanksgiving. From the greatest endeavors to the most menial, these are an opportunity to reflect the truth that a Christian lives for the service of God. His daily life flows from his worship. That's the liturgy of life.

Family devotions is another time when Christians reflect the worship of the church. These are times that we must recover in order to restore families to the high calling of God's service. The dinner table is a wonderful training ground for the church pew. Do our conversations

“Calvin warns that if we worship God in any way without knowing why, we are engaged in superstition.”

the church arbitrary (i.e. it's just what we feel like for the week. Or perhaps based on surveys and suggestions of what people want we adopt a type of worship that will affect them). Worship is the arena where we pursue the glory of God above all else. This is not arbitrary but must be regulated by what God teaches in His word.

Finally, we must push to put the liturgy of our corporate worship into the extended service of our private lives. Our lives as individuals are to flow out of the reality of our membership in the body of Christ. Here is the wonder of knowing what liturgy is all about. We can reflect the radiance of God's worth through the week when we make the components of worship the display of our daily lives. This is how we are called to live as Christians. Our lives are to reflect the components of praise, confession, prayer, word and gratitude. No worship is complete without these components, and no life is complete without them either.

about the daily activities of life reflect our desire to serve the Lord in these concrete ways? Do we speak about the various components of life lived before God? Here is a link that we should establish or recover. This will promote the family's spiritual growth and restore the delight in attending the worship of God. May God help us to maintain the honour of His worship in our liturgy, and may our hearts be quickened to reflect this liturgy in our lives.

Rev Peter Kloosterman is Minister of the Word and Sacraments in the Reformed Church of Masterton.

Endnote

1 If the reader is interested some helpful resources are: G. Van Dooren. *The Beauty of Reformed Liturgy*. Winnipeg: Premier, 1992; or K. Deddens. *Where Everything Points to Him*. Translated by Theodore Plantinga. Pella, IA.: Inheritance Publications., 1993.

Worship (4)

The data projector

Berwyn Hoyt

The data projector is gaining traction in worship in our churches. So much so that some are concerned about this trend. Indeed, I'm told that the *Letters to Keith* label the projector as the "sure and infallible mark of the false church!" Well, if that's the case there aren't too many true ones left! Putting humour aside, the concern remains. Just where are we heading with the ever increasing use of the data projector in our worship services? What are the long-term effects? Will it build the Lord's Church, or will it weaken it? Let's look at some reasons for and against its use.

As long as a data projector is only assisting an element of worship, it's reasonable to say there can be no objection in principle. So we're going to have to look at how well it actually helps our various elements of worship: praying, preaching, singing, offering, etc.

Let's have some evidence

I have been privileged to worship with my family quite often in various different Reformed churches that use a data projector, and I have noted some positive benefits of a projector:

- Singing from a projector screen makes you look up and sing out, avoiding the head-in-book look. Up-and-out is a good pose for singing. Your voice sings out well and your face is directed out from yourself. Admittedly, even a book can be held up and out – as any choir director will tell you. This body language is also good to cultivate to help overcome the insular "personal space" we sometimes develop in worship.
- Seeing words on a screen is easier than looking them up in a book. Plus, you don't have to take a hymnal to church.
- Reading along with a form for the Lord's Supper can be done without carrying to church an extra book of forms and confessions.
- Sermon points can be printed on the

screen to help keep the congregation on track with what is being said. This is an easier place than in the bulletin.

- For some passages a map projected on the screen could make it easier for the listener to follow the text's journey and to put the passage in context.

But a wise man once said that the first to state his case seem right until the other comes and examines him. So let's look at some practical drawbacks:

- The paperless worship service simply hasn't arrived for all worshippers. It can be difficult for short children to

means the music starts into the next verse when folk don't yet have the words. On paper, people usually read ahead by half a line so that they're ready to sing. This extra half line is a lost luxury with data projectors, and in my experience it doesn't help our confidence in singing. Merely a small, awkward distraction ... but a very common one.

- You might argue that a better singing pose with a data projector will improve singing, but my observation with perhaps only one exception has been that the singing is actually worse in churches that only sing with a data



see the screen. (Yes, standing on pews may help, but I speak from experience when I say that some children have trouble focussing when there is nothing between them and the words ... let alone 35 fascinating people! And you can point your child to line 5 in a hymnal, but not on a screen.) I have also seen elderly folk who need their own close-up copy. So we probably still need to own one or two hymnals per family. And that's ok, but if we're tempted to skimp, our young and helpless may be the ones to suffer.

- Even the most able "projector director" typically misses a cue about once per service in my experience. This

projector. Why? Well, I could list my theories, but they may distract you. My point is that empirically, the projector doesn't actually seem to help.

- It is virtually impossible to print the music on the projector screen large enough to also read the words. Unsurprisingly, it's the musical folk who notice most. A small minority perhaps ... but a serious factor. Serious because it is often those same folk who sing best and who help teach us the new songs. In fact, one accompanist who is fairly neutral on the issue of technology, recently made a revealing point in my hearing. She said that the congregation's ignorance of the

correct tune and rhythm is becoming a practical and serious reality since they got their data projector.

- But it's not just the musical folk, either. Many people miss the "ups and downs".
- Possible downward spiral: we begin by discouraging our musical folk in worship, our musical accuracy deteriorates, we stop buying new hymn books, so don't sing at home or mid-week gatherings and our children don't learn the music so well. Our musical children have no hymn book to pick up for playing or singing, so find a musical outlet unrelated to worship. We'll introduce too many new songs and lose our older folk right away. Perhaps two generations, and we've lost our church music. Dire? It's happening all over town. Home-churches don't sing, and mega-churches get others to sing for them.
- Abuses of the technology do not have to be a factor but, almost without exception, they are. The following are typical and display a very poor understanding of biblical worship:
 1. displays of (sometimes animated) adverts before the service. Often they are adverts for a good cause or for church activities, but they do not help us focus on God or prepare for worship.
 2. displaying the children we are sponsoring during the special collection. This tempts us to give money based purely on an emotional, visual appeal – rife in modern adverts, but a very tacky and wrong primary motivation to give (if it feels good, do it). More importantly, it inappropriately detracts from the glory of God for whom we're primarily collecting.

The easy life

We're in an off-the-shelf, pre-packaged, fast-food culture ... or at least, we were before the economic downturn clipped our budgets. I think this is relevant to our use of projectors. Look back and review the benefits of having a data projector that we talked about above. They all centre on the ease of singing, reading, preaching (listening), etc. And fair enough, too: technology brings us ease in a lot of ways. Right?

Right. But in worship, it's a wrong outcome. Consider this. The Lord has not given us many rules and strictures in Christianity – such laws were a tutor in Old Testament times to lead us to

Christ. Furthermore, he's given us the "foolishness" of preaching as the means to grow. And preaching simply isn't intended to be as pre-packaged as the Sunday night news.

Why has God done this? Why did he not feed us our religion a little more easily? If it were a little more dynamic, wouldn't we at least find our evening services full? And God is almighty: surely he could have done it that way. There may be several answers, but one is given in Proverbs 25:

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.

The Lord wants us to work things out for ourselves: to discover his created wonders and marvel. The same is true in worship. We are there to hear him speak to us and he wants us to use the old grey matter. No "vegging out" when it comes to worship. He wants us to work for our knowledge. He wants us engaged.

One drawback of the ease of data projectors is precisely the thing we thought was a benefit, namely, that we don't take our hymnals to church. In fact, some of us don't even own one any more. A worse tragedy is when we attend worship without a Bible – because it's all on the projector, anyway. I'm not making it up: I've seen it! And listening to a sermon without a Bible ... well ... poor.

(Regarding books, I have to admit that we have been getting more heavily laden recently: we've got to take to church our *Psalter Hymnal*, our *Bible*, our local supplementary hymnal, our *Sing to the Lord*, and if we're really good, our book of *Forms and Confessions*. Honestly! I really do hope the new Hymnal will have us back to just itself and a Bible.)

But one benefit of having to take our hymnals to church to look up songs is, in a word, ownership. When we own the hymnal and get familiar with it, we are more inclined to look it up at home. Teaching our children to look up songs in worship might distract us for a time, but we're setting invaluable patterns of involvement in worship.

To take another example from our list, the same argument can be used about maps. Is it to be projected maps or back-of-Bible maps? Becoming familiar with using the ones in the back of your Bible is valuable: you take the tool home with you! And, of course, sermon outlines in a bulletin are quite ready for your own notes, whereas an outline on

the big screen is ... well, rather difficult to write on.

Folks, we're losing the power to concentrate. If we keep dumbing worship down, we'll dumb *us* down. Simple as that.

Sound a bit dire?

Well, I (honestly) began with the desire to consider the evidence fairly. Yet the longer I look, the lower the scales seem to tip against this particular aspect of technology. And I doubt you can accuse me of being a technophobe: technical is my job, and it is a job I love!

Yes, it all begins to sound rather dire. But take a look beyond the Reformed churches, and inquire about their projector experiments. I have found that a lot of church music and a real litany of elderly folk lie fallen along the way.

Dear brothers and sisters, Scripture makes no rule here. But what does it say?

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise. (Eph. 5:15)

My advice? Develop a good understanding of biblical worship, and think well about the benefits and the impact of technology to the essence of worship, and not just our ease. Then consider the role of projectors carefully: a worship service may not be the best place.

The projector may not be the mark of the false church, but let's not make it the mark of a foolish one!

WELLINGTON LADIES PRESBYTERIAL

**SATURDAY,
20 MARCH 2010, DV**

**at the Silverstream
Reformed Church**

**Guest Speaker:
Pastor Andre Holtslag**

Please mark your calendars!

2009 medical studies link abortion link abortion and breast cancer

Two 2009 medical studies show statistically significant links between having an abortion and later developing breast cancer. Chinese Researcher Peng Xing and his colleagues in a northeast China study found a seventeen percent increased breast cancer risk for all subtypes combined among women that had induced abortions. A Turkish study earlier in 2009 showed a sixty-six percent increase in the risk of getting breast cancer for women that had abortions. Both studies show that, when honest research is conducted outside the control of the U.S. National Cancer Institute and other western governmental agencies or organisations tethered to abortion ideology and politics, the truth emerges that abortion raises the risk of contacting breast cancer.

Karen Malec, president of the Coalition on Abortion/Breast Cancer, comments: "The Chinese and the Turkish studies are relevant considering the debate over government-funded abortion through healthcare reform. Government-funded abortion means more dead American women from breast cancer."

+ *Coalition on Abortion/Breast Cancer*
+ *National Cancer Institute*

Lithuania fights back against EU Resolution favouring homosexual propaganda

(WASHINGTON, DC – C-FAM) The fight over homosexual propaganda in schools taking place between the Lithuanian and European Parliaments escalated this week with the Lithuanian Parliament (Siemas) calling on its government to file suit against the Europeans in the Court of Justice of the European Union (EU). The argument began with passage of a Lithuanian "Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information" which prohibits promotion of "homosexual, bisexual, polygamous relations" among children under the age of 18.

By *Austin Ruse*

Amnesty International pushes "gay marriage" down under

(NEW YORK – C-FAM) Activist organisation Amnesty International is putting its weight behind an Australian bill seeking to legalise "same-sex marriage" in that

country, claiming that "internationally recognised" non-discrimination norms dictate such a result. In a submission to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee of Australia's Senate, Amnesty's Australian affiliate contends that laws limiting the right to marry to opposite-sex couples amounts to "arbitrary discrimination" in contravention of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

By *Piero Tozzi*

Council of Europe debates "gay" adoption and gender re-assignment

(NEW YORK – C-FAM) Next week in Europe, a committee of human rights "experts" will discuss a draft recommendation on measures to "combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity to ensure respect for human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and to promote tolerance towards them." Proponents claim there is a need for "specific action" because homosexuals are still subjected to "homophobia, transphobia and other forms of intolerance and discrimination."

+ *Samantha Singson*

Maine churches threatened with loss of tax exemption for supporting 3 November 2009 vote to overturn legislative marriage redefinition

Churches in Maine that supported efforts resulting in voters on 3 November 2009 overturning the state law passed earlier in 2009 that redefined marriage are now targets of an active campaign by those in favour of sustaining the new law to report the churches to the Internal Revenue Service for supposed violations of the churches' tax exempt status.

The Alliance Defense Fund is offering free legal assistance to any churches that become IRS targets as a result of what the ADF calls "baseless scare tactics."

+ *Alliance Defense Fund*

Bayly Blog Writer analyzes the common Christian college dilemma between academic freedom and scriptural fidelity

Bayly Blog writer Tim Bayly, in a 4 November 2009 article titled "Christianity Left Behind.," discusses the current dilemmas being faced by several Christian

Colleges including Calvin College and Wheaton College between scriptural fidelity and the culture "moving toward the normalisation of sodomy," the result of which "is the silencing of Scripture's denunciation of sodomy as an abomination before the Lord." Bayly points out that this cultural shift has only happened after "abominations such as fornication, unbiblical divorce and remarriage, and adultery have already been normalised."

Bayly continues: "There's no conviction of sin going on – none at all. Instead, we're busy balancing compassion and doctrine. [T]he denial of Scripture formerly reserved for mainline liberals has made much progress among evangelicals. Most evangelicals are liberals, now, although they're lulled to sleep by weekly rest stops in pews where they hear reassuring talk of being "born again" and having "a personal relationship with Jesus." There's no doctrine, though; no membership and submission to elders, no fencing the Lord's Table, no preaching, no repentance; and thus, no Christian faith."

Bayly reviews the ongoing discussions, procedures, and controversies in evangelical denominations and their affiliated institutions of higher education, focusing upon Calvin College faculty's formal objection to the trustee's earlier reminder of the prohibition of advocacy for homosexuality and same-sex marriage, concluding:

"Yes, yes; always more discussion. No firings. No terminations. No repudiation of tenure. Only more discussions. While our precious children are being led to Hell – the place where discussions of abominations have no end."

+ *Bayly Blog*

Hope College Professor characterizes the RCA as suffering "The Mournful Sounds of Implosion"

In the November 2009 issue of *Perspectives*, "A Journal of Reformed Thought," published by the Reformed Church in America (RCA), Hope College Professor of Sociology Donald A. Luidens writes in an essay called "The Mournful Sounds of Implosion," about what Professor Luidens considers to be the ongoing collapse of the RCA denomination.

Professor Luidens presents six items

of concern for consideration, including Identity Dissolution, Ideological Messiness, Theological Muddiness, Numerological Numbness, Congregational Particularism, and Financial Failures, concluding:

"A great deal of energy and a lot of human and financial resources are being expended in an effort to preserve the life of the RCA. [M]any of us have an abiding love for all that this ship of faith has borne over the centuries. But it is time to begin to think of what is coming in its wake. [T]here are patterns beyond our individual control that are compressing the RCA in ways which spell its impending demise. The denominational craft has carried us far, but its time is up. It has sprung debilitating leaks which can no longer be plugged. It is time to look for a new vehicle, or collation of vehicles, to move the church faithfully and compellingly into the 21st century."

+ *Reformed Church in America*

Bryan, Texas, Planned Parenthood Director becomes pro-life and quits PP after viewing ultrasound of abortion

Bryan, Texas, Planned Parenthood Director Abby Johnson viewed an ultrasound of an abortion, and was soon sitting at her desk, crying, and realising that she could no longer work where unborn children were being killed. While wondering where to go, she looked out her office window across the street to the Coalition for Life (CFL) office where people were outside praying. Johnson got into her car, drove to the CFL office, and crying, introduced herself and told the surprised CFL people what had happened.

Johnson is currently making the rounds of national media interviews, explaining why she is now a pro-life supporter.

+ *KBTX-TV/DT Channel 3*

YouTube film of suction abortion surpasses one million viewings

A video placed on YouTube in March 2008 by Father Frank Pavone of Priests for Life that uses fetal models and actual abortion instruments to depict a suction abortion has surpassed one million viewings.

Pavone comments: "This is a reason to rejoice, because one of the biggest problems we have regarding abortion is that it's hidden. Thanks to videos like this, people who think they are pro-choice become fervently pro-life. We receive testimonies literally every

day about such conversions. We invite others to spread these videos."

The suction video can be viewed at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBOAPleF1t0>

+ *Christian News Wire*

December 2009 Reformation Voice available online

The December 2009 issue of Reformation Voice is available online at <http://hra.witnesstoday.org/RVDecember2009.pdf>.

Reformation Voice is a publication of the Heidelberg Reformation Association, whose purpose is to assist Reformed churches of the Heidelberg tradition to rediscover, preserve and celebrate their Reformed convictions and heritage through mutual fellowship, worship, prayer, work, counsel, and teaching.

+ *Heidelberg Reformation Association*

Muslims attack Christian service in Uganda

Reports from the Voice of the Martyrs Canada and Compass Direct inform us about a recent new violence outburst against Christians in Uganda, Namasuba, just outside the capital city of Kampala. On November 1, 2009 40 Muslims armed with machetes and clubs attacked the World Possessor's Church International in Namasuba while believers were holding a worship service. Some Christians were able to escape, others have been severely beaten. Local residents intervened and helped the Christians against their attackers, Police eventually arrived but no arrests have been performed. Pastor Henry Zaake states that since the attack they have been receiving a lot of threats from the Muslims. Many of the Church members are too fearful to return to regular church attendance.

+ *WEA Religious Liberty – Nov 15, 2009*

Christian martyred in Somalia

Recent events in Somalia remind us again of the severe persecution that our brothers and sisters face in that country. The 23-years-old Mumin Abdikarim Yusuf, was discovered dead on the morning of November 14, 2009 in Mogadishu's Yaqshid district in Somalia. Members of the Islamic extremist group al Shabaab have executed the young Christian. Yusuf was accused of trying to convert a 15-year-old Muslim to Christianity. The militants also have accused the family members of Yusuf of failing to report his conversion to Christianity. The underground Christians, who were associated

with Yusuf, have relocated themselves for their safety.

+ *WEA Religious Liberty – Dec 1, 2009*

Christian ladies jailed for their faith in Iran released

Our prayers on behalf of the two Christian ladies – Maryam (27) and Marzieh (30), imprisoned in Iran for their faith, have been answered! Maryam and Marzieh were released from Evin prison after 9 months imprisonment on Wednesday, November 18, 2009 at 3:30pm, without bail. The full update can be found at the Open Doors website, given below. According to a Compass Direct source, the ladies' release was due to "international pressure", as well as the inability of the Iranian government to proceed with the case. It is still unknown whether the release of the ladies is unconditional. They could face charges of 'proselytising' and 'apostasy'. They still need our prayers.

+ *WEA Religious Liberty – Dec 1, 2009*

JOB OPPORTUNITY

PRIMARY SCHOOL HEADMASTER/TEACHER

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

The Reformed Christian school association is a recently formed association set up to provide Christian education to our covenant children in Silverstream (New Zealand). Our aim is to develop a biblically consistent world and life view in our students based on the Reformed faith. We believe this Reformed faith to be the most accurate expression of biblical Christianity.

As this is a new school we require both a Teaching Principal and Teacher for students from years 1-8.

Applicants must be committed to the Reformed faith and to Christian education. This is an exciting opportunity to be part of a new school, and we look forward to your application. If you have any questions or would like more information please do not hesitate to contact us. Please forward your C.V. with 3 referees to:

Contact details:

Roger Posthuma

Email: rampost@slingshot.co.nz

Ph +64 4 5297100

Dorothy L. Sayers 1893-1957: **The Sorrow of Wisdom and the Laughter of Fools¹**

(This is the first in a series of articles on Christian women writers)

Dorothy L. Sayers was a contemporary of my grandmothers; and for much of their lives, hers was a household name. She was a best-selling author of murder mysteries, one of the most popular types of fiction in their day. This was the post-World War One era; and readers wanted distraction from the horrors of what had gone on in the trenches: an intellectual game such as detective fiction diverted the mind. You could study the clues, guess “whodunit” and that was it. As Sayers put it at the height of her career,

“Life is often a hopeless muddle, to the meaning of which [people] can find no clue; and it is a great relief to get away from it for a time into a world where they can exercise their wits over a neat problem, in the assurance that there is only one answer, and that one a satisfying one.”²

One of my grandmothers claimed that such “neat problems” were her best bedtime reading. She had plenty of authors to choose from: it was the age of Agatha Christie and other great crime writers. Sayers shared their skills, but she had a number of unique qualities. For one thing, she was a highly intelligent woman – Oxford-educated, and with a rapier-sharp mind. In conversation her penetrating insight, her wit and her power of repartee were impressive. In debate she was formidable. She was also a student of literature and languages: her translation of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* is still widely respected. But none of this would have made her any more than a clever, mid-twentieth century English writer. It was her Christian faith and her clear grasp of doctrine that transformed even her detective fiction; and made it satisfying for a wide readership even eighty years later. Because she was a Christian, and wrote as a Christian writer, she was not merely a clever woman; she

was a wise one. And this wisdom was gained through some serious sorrow.

The making of a writer

Dorothy was a daughter of the vicarage; she was the only child of mild, scholarly, and relatively older parents. Because of this she enjoyed opportunities for education and the cultivation of her mind which were rare for girls of her generation. She was a precocious, vivacious girl and unusually gifted with a combination of intellect and forthright speech. Her father, Henry, was a quiet, but conscientious clergyman who visited his people faithfully. (He was the model for a number of clergymen his daughter later sympathetically portrayed). Dorothy had great respect and affection for her parents, even while she was aware of some of their limitations.

Until her mid-teens she was educated at home with a governess, helped from time to time by her father. By then she was fluent in Latin, French and German. She was sent to boarding school to finish her schooling; then won a scholarship in modern languages to Somerville College in Oxford. This college (established in the 19th century for women), and Oxford itself, were the most defining part of Dorothy’s education. She thrived in the exhilarating atmosphere. From her parents she had learned to believe the Christian faith: from Oxford she learned how to examine the facts, and how to articulate a clear, well-reasoned argument. Oxford never dimmed her faith – it simply taught her intellectual honesty and verbal clarity.

The First World War broke out while Dorothy was at Oxford. It had the most profound effect on her generation. The University was virtually emptied of men; many of whom lost their lives in France. (Vast plaques listing their names adorn the entrances of most Oxford College chapels). Many of those who returned were maimed physically or mentally by what they had undergone in the trenches. Her novels feature men who



The young Dorothy Sayers

suffer trauma as a result of the War.

Dorothy excelled academically, gaining the equivalent of a first-class degree in modern languages. What to do after this was a difficult question. She wanted to be self-supporting, and tried teaching but did not enjoy it much, returning to Oxford to work for the publisher, Basil Blackwell. This was much more congenial, and reunited her with her beloved Oxford. In addition, she wrote poetry, some of which Blackwell published.

From foolishness to wisdom

During these years Dorothy had a number of romantic interests. They were not all suitable. Perhaps it is not surprising that an exuberant, precociously intelligent girl should take flirtatious risks; and that is what she did. At the same time as she was fending off a serious young clergyman, she was swooning over an invalided ex-officer, who (temporarily) returned her attentions. Dorothy wrote reckless letters home to her parents about their developing friendship. It came to an end, and Dorothy decided to take up residence in London; eventually finding employment writing advertising copy for the well-known agency, Benson’s. Living in Bloomsbury, she situated herself in the heart of London’s literary world. Here she wrote her first detective novel, *Whose Body?*, and here she met many similarly aspiring young authors.

Among them was John Curno, the son of Russian émigré parents. Dorothy fell, head over reckless heels, in love with him. He was fatally attractive to a girl of Dorothy’s kind: brooding, fond of “high ideals” and deep themes, writing highly intellectual works but finding little success in publishing them. She saw him as a sensitive soul that she could nourish with her more robust and energetic zest for life.

What she did not easily see was that he was self-absorbed, demanding; and that he took advantage of her. He claimed to believe in free love – that marriage was a trap, etc. This ultimately led to the end of the relationship – which wounded her badly. Almost immediately, she formed another causal relationship, with a man she cared little for other than physically. It was a foolish, costly mistake. Dorothy became pregnant. Her boyfriend wanted nothing to do with the child – and she wanted nothing more to do with him.

This moment in 1924 was a decisive crisis in her life. Alone, in London, she wrote later, she cried herself to sleep for months on end. She was convinced she could not tell her parents. By then they were well on in years; and Dorothy thought the news would kill them. Till the end of their days they were unaware they had a grandchild. Dorothy managed to keep working at Benson's until a few weeks before the birth, then went to a nursing home, had her little boy and put him in the care of a cousin who, with her mother, fostered babies for an income. They basically brought young Anthony up, while Dorothy paid for his care through her work, supplemented by income from her writings.

It was a devastating blow for a young woman; and hit her with force. True, she had been acting carelessly. Her behaviour, and its consequences, most certainly changed her life. She maintained ever after that sin was the Christian teaching most definitely real to her. She never doubted the need for a Saviour. This was central to her view of life; and in many ways God used this tragedy for good. Certainly, her writing from the mid-1920s developed more seriousness, depth and conviction. But her trials were not yet over. In 1925 she married Oswald Ather-ton Fleming, a divorcee who had suffered badly from the gas attacks in France. He was a moderately successful journalist, and a good cook. Before they married he had told Dorothy he was willing to have her son to live with them; but afterwards refused. This was a huge disappointment; and because of this and Fleming's declining health, theirs was not a very happy marriage. It seemed that as her career grew steadily more successful, his began to fail; and as his health worsened, he became increasingly dependent on her income, which irked him.

The transformation of her writing

Sayers had already launched on her career as a writer of detective fiction

by the time she met Curno. She had chosen this genre because she was hard up: such books sold well, and they suited her type of intelligence. To her detective hero, Lord Peter Wimsey, she gave all the wealth, charm, and opportunities in life she herself would have liked. But to begin with, Wimsey was a rather shallow character. Solving murders were simply a "hobby" for him. A game. The big questions of life did not trouble him much.

But by the end of the 1920s – four novels further on – Peter has begun to develop. And with him, have his writer's explorations of questions such as truth and justice. In *Unnatural Death* (1927) Peter's investigations seem to have provoked the murderer to kill several other people, and he worries about whether he should have "meddled". Asking the advice of a clergyman, he is told "... do what you think is right, according to the laws which we have been brought up to respect. Leave the consequences to God. And try to think charitably, even of wicked people. You know what I mean. Bring the offender to justice, but remember that if we all got justice, you and I wouldn't escape either."³ Peter is beginning by this stage to suffer personal moral anxiety, both about crime and about the moral state of the criminal he helps bring to justice. He is still an aristocratic dandy talking endless "piffle" (affected in part to make murder suspects think him harmless); but by the end of the 1920s he is about to begin a more thorough transformation at the hands of Miss Harriet Vane, Sayers's heroine – who is an only thinly-veiled disguise for herself.

In *Strong Poison* (1930), Lord Peter first meets murder-mystery-writer Harriet; saving her from the gallows when she is falsely accused of murdering her lover. Harriet's situation is almost an exact replica of Dorothy's in 1924, save that John Curno was not poisoned, and Harriet does not have a baby. Peter falls in love with Harriet, but she is too traumatised by her experience to contemplate falling in love with anyone. The failure of his charms is an unusual state of affairs for the experienced Lord Peter, but he continues to pursue Harriet with increasing patience, understanding, and humility through two more novels (*Have His Carcase* and *Gaudy Night*) before she finally accepts him. These novels are far more than love stories or detective thrillers. They deal with such themes as the dangers of possessive love (it can destroy

a person's moral judgment); and the rival claims of academic life and marriage for an intelligent woman. Sayers skillfully makes Peter the more love-worthy as his human weaknesses are revealed; and by the end of *Gaudy Night* (1936) he is presented as a highly-intelligent and mature man, with the sensitivity required to solve a complex psychological mystery in a women's college. There is good reason for Harriet Vane to finally and completely "go up like straw" in love with Peter. From cardboard-cutout of a figure, he has become Harriet's complete equal – and she, despite her feelings of inferiority, his.

Sayers's final completed novel, *Bus-man's Honeymoon*, is the story of Peter and Harriet's wedding, honeymoon and first months of marriage. It is a murder mystery like the others; but it is also one of the most appealing treatments of happy marriage I have ever read. Dorothy Sayers always insisted that neither Peter nor Harriet were Christians, but their view of how an intelligent man and woman ought to live together in marriage is moving; and conveys good lessons. Their story indicates that that mature happiness (a new start) is possible when people sincerely repent of past sins. These two, Peter and Harriet, love each other passionately; but in a deep and intelligent way. There is mutual respect for each other's considerable gifts and calling; they refuse to manipulate each other for their own ends; and they are able to work together to achieve common good: in this instance the solution of a murder case and the resolution of its consequences. Peter is a sensitive man whose experience of shell-shock



Dorothy L. Sayers the writer



Peter and Harriet, as played in a 1990s theatre production of "Busman's Honeymoon".

has only been worsened by the burden of responsibility he feels towards those he has helped bring to justice. At the conclusion of this last book, at the hour of the murderer's execution, he shares his anguish with Harriet, who is able to comfort him.

Other Christian writings

Sayers ceased writing fiction as her world edged towards war with Hitler's Germany. Increasingly, she was being asked to speak and to write on subjects that related to the war and its threat to British society; and to explain what the Christian faith had to say to the ordinary person of her day. This is the genesis of some of her most famous essays; which are statements of faith revealing her formidable intellect, her grasp of Christian doctrine, and her considerable powers of reasoning. She became part of a group

including C.S. Lewis, T.S. Eliot and other writers, whose talents were engaged in exploring the ways the Christian faith provided the answers needed for rebuilding society after the war. This change of direction is sketched out by Lord Peter, whom she had write to Harriet in 1940, while in occupied Europe on a secret mission for the Foreign Office:

"You are a writer – there is something you must tell the people, but it is difficult to express. You must find the words.

Tell them, this is a battle of a new kind, and it is they who have to fight it, and they must do it themselves and alone. They must not continually ask for leadership – they must lead themselves. This is a war against submission to leadership, and we might quite easily win it in the field and yet lose it in our own country.

I have seen the eyes of the men who ask for leadership, and they are the eyes of slaves. The new kind of leaders are not like the old...

It's not enough to rouse up the government to do this and that. You must rouse up the people. You must make them understand that their salvation is in themselves and in each separate man and woman among them... They must not look to the State for guidance – they must learn to guide the State...

I can't very well tell you just how and why this conviction has been forced upon me, but I have never felt

more certain of anything."⁴

She also wrote religious dramas – with the aim of making the gospel stories, and other epic tales dealing with the big ethical questions of life, fresh and alive for modern audiences. I admire her efforts to bring Christian truth alive for a readership long misled by stories of a "gentle Jesus, meek and mild" – no strong Saviour or Judge of the World. But I am convinced she took the wrong path in putting modern, extra-biblical conversation of her own invention into the mouths of Jesus and the disciples. Her creative works of this type, though mild by today's standards, stand at the beginning of a long and slippery slope.

Dorothy L. Sayers was a versatile writer with considerable intellectual powers and an impressive grasp of Christian doctrine. But she was also a woman who had felt, personally, the scars of sin and the redeeming work of the Saviour. Her life and her work bear testimony that God can bring good – even beauty – out of the wreckage of our lives.

(Endnotes)

- 1 See Ecclesiastes 7:3-4
- 2 Quoted by David Coomes in *Dorothy Sayers: A Careless Rage for Life* (Iion, Oxford, 1992, p. 124)
- 3 Dorothy Sayers, *Unnatural Death* (Victor Gollancz, London, 1927; 1936), pp. 229-30
- 4 "The Wimsey Papers", as quoted by Barbara Reynolds in *Dorothy L. Sayers: Her Life and Soul* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1993), p. 298

Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Avondale

Announcements: Baptism: This morning Saskia Smilde and Isobel Heeringa, will receive the sign and seal of baptism. We commit the parents, Tjeerd & Louise and Matt & Ilse to the Lord and pray that God will grant wisdom and patience as they seek to lead their little ones to Him. Welcome to the extended families who have come to join in this celebration.

Bishopdale

Pastoral. Lord willing, Anthony van den

Engel and Nicole Huls will marry on Friday, 4 December. The service will be at St John's Anglican Church, Latimer Square at 12:30.

Pastoral. Jean Dalley was eagerly anticipating going to be with her Lord, and on Friday her anticipation ended when the Lord called her home. We rejoice that Jean is now in glory, yet we also grieve the loss with Peter and Margaret and the rest of the family. May the Lord strengthen and comfort you through this trial. The funeral service will be held here on Wednesday at 11:00am. The graveside service will be held out at Oxford at 2:00pm.

We are delighted that Ruth Capill has expressed a desire to profess her faith. Ruth will profess her faith on 13 De-

ember in the afternoon service and we will gladly welcome her into the full privileges and responsibilities of church membership.

Bucklands Beach

This morning's service: This morning we celebrate God's amazing grace as we witness the baptism of Sarah Anne Marais, Frank and Jenny's youngest daughter. Sarah Anne thus receives the sign and seal of God's covenant and is received in Christ's church.

Korean brothers and sisters. Elder David Cho has raised the possibility and potential need for a Korean speaking homegroup that could meet regularly for fellowship and prayer. While the study material would be in English,

discussion, etc., would be in Korean. Br David would like to know if there are those who would like to be a part of this Korean speaking group and is looking for an indication of interest. If you want to know more, please speak to him!

Christchurch

Pastoral. When writing these notes (Thursday), we still have to gather (Friday) for the burial of brother Keith Van Kessel, and afterwards for a service of praise to God, remembering, and thanksgiving for his life. It was a shock to all of us, hearing of his death on Monday night, while he had still worshipped with the congregation on Sunday. Even though Keith was not a young man and was bothered by health problems, his passing was still so sudden. Only a few hours earlier he, Lia, Tissy and Monu had enjoyed lunch with the Verkerk Snrs. All of us are reminded again of the frailty and brevity of life, and at the same time we are reminded of the wonderful fact that in Christ we are more than conquerors (Romans 8). We commend Lia, his children Nellie, William, Hetty, his sister Ans and others in the wider family circle to the love and care of God. That love and care comes also very much through the people of God, and we are reminded of what the apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 7, where it's obvious that he went through a very difficult time. Then he writes: "But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus," So God comforts through a brother in the Lord, coming alongside. What excellent opportunity we have to bring comfort to those who grieve!

Wedding Bans. Jason Donk and Christine Alberts have signified their desire to be united in marriage in this church on Saturday 21 November 2009. If there are no lawful objections, the ceremony will take place at 1.00 pm on that date.

Pastoral. The result of the voting last week was to extend a call to Vicar Andre Scheepers

to be the minister of the Word and Sacraments in this church. The congregation are encouraged to be in contact with Andre as he prayerfully weighs this call with the other three calls he has received.

Dovedale

Pastoral Notes. Today, we rejoice with Br. Ben and Sr. Franci Hoyt as we wit-

ness the baptism of their daughter, Esther Michelle. As we shall see throughout the service today, baptism contains within it many blessings and obligations. May the Lord enable each of us to live up to our baptism, and bless Br. and Sr. Hoyt as they seek to raise Esther in the path of joyous and grateful obedience.

Dunedin

Pastoral Notes. We have been saddened this past week by the promotion to glory of our beloved brother Jan Weegenaar. Jan died on Tuesday night at Radius Fulton Home where he had been cared for over the last two months. A service of thanksgiving was due to be held on Saturday. Our prayers and Christian sympathy are with Henny and the wider family as they come to terms with the loss of a husband, father and opa.

Pastoral Notes. Two weeks ago Helena de Reus and Rachel van Dyk met with the Dunedin elders regarding the possibility of making their professions of faith. Session then, at its last meeting, gladly agreed to their requests. It is planned that their professions of faith will take place on Sunday 29 November, for Rachel in Dunedin and Helena in Oamaru.

Hamilton

Wedding banns – David Galuszka and Nikki ten Hove have signified their desire to be united in Christian marriage in the Reformed Church of Hamilton on Friday, 11 December. If there are no lawful objections, the ceremony will take place that day (DV).

Pastoral and matters for prayer. Next Sunday, Michael van den Engel will profess his faith during the morning service. Michael met with the elders early in November and we were encouraged to hear his testimony to the Lord's work in his life.

Hastings

Sale of church property at 903 Florence Street. The church building has been marketed over the past few months and there has been some interest from potential buyers, but no offers to date. The size of our congregation continues to grow, mainly through migration of families and individuals from other Reformed churches. Limitations on space at 903 Florence Street are becoming increasingly acute as our numbers increase. With this in view, the Management Committee have recommended that we attempt to sell the church property by auction in mid-December. Session have endorsed

this recommendation. An auction requires genuinely interested purchasers to commit to making a binding offer on a specified day. The usual procedure is that a sale is unconditional on the "fall of the hammer". However, as a church, we must gain congregational approval before selling or purchasing any church property. In light of this, the auction is to be conducted with the condition that any offer made is subject to congregational approval. The plan is therefore to have a congregational meeting shortly after the auction – if an offer was made. At this meeting a sale price for 903 Florence Street would be presented, together with a purchase price for the Howard Street property and the details of borrowing required. In light of this complete picture, the congregation would then re-consider making any pledges necessary and then vote on whether or not to proceed with a sale and purchase. Session have appointed the following team to manage this process: Steve Gulliksen, Ed Saathof and Dan van Seventer. Please be in prayer for these matters.

Wedding notice. Alwin de Vries and Melissa Koster would like to extend an open invitation to all church members to witness them uniting in marriage. This will take place, Lord willing, on the 28th of November 2009 at 11.30 am in Frimley Park. If the weather is unsuitable the ceremony will then be held at the Reformed Church of Hastings. Please park on Frimley Road and follow the signs. Those with children please come prepared with rugs as they may be required for seating. – Alwin & Mel

80th birthday celebration. It is with thanks to the Lord that Jeen de Vries can celebrate his 80th birthday this week. Next Sunday after the service please join with Jeen and the family to celebrate and enjoy some fellowship together around birthday cake and coffee.

Professions of Faith. Alan de Vries and Naomi Waldron intend to publicly profess their faith during the morning service on 13th December, if there are no lawful objections.

Hukanui

Notices. From the Session: Today we rejoice with Michael & Paula Salisbury professing their faith publicly in this morning's worship service. All praise and glory to our Heavenly Father.

Congratulations to Sarah and Sebastiaan Vos on the birth of a son early Thursday morning weighing 8lb 10oz. As we went

to print all was going well, and he was still to be named.

Nelson

Anniversary invite: We are pleased to announce with praise to the Lord that our parents Abraham and Antonia VanderBurg are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary on Sunday the 1st of November 2009. Friends are invited to share a luncheon gathering with family and friends at the Presbyterian Church 42 Muritai St Tahuna 12pm till 2pm.

North Shore

Wedding banns. As announced last Sunday, we have the pleasure of posting wedding banns for James Button and Zani van der Merwe whose request to marry we as session approved quite some months ago. Lord willing and failing any lawful objections, the wedding will take place next Saturday in the Reformed Church of Hamilton. We wish James & Zani all the very best for many years of happiness together. They plan to settle on the North Shore, which we're also pleased about!

Profession of Faith. Session is very pleased to announce that on 6th December, Lord willing, the following young people will profess their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour: Marissa Breytenbach, Victoria Brunton, Alicia Posthuma, Andrew Posthuma, Anneke Steenkamp. The elders have met with them all recently, as also Letritia Spies, and were thankful to report to Session that they found in all a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ and heartfelt desire to serve him. Letritia will be in South Africa on 6th December, so her profession of faith will be held probably in the new year. If anyone believes they have a lawful objection to any of these young people professing their faith, please see your elder. Let us rejoice in the Lord that he so wonderfully continues to work among both our own children and others from outside the Church altogether, as we have witnessed again lately. Surely, the Lord is good to Israel!

Palmerston North

Announcements. We rejoice with Marietje Jochem in her 95th birthday celebrations! This is a wonderful milestone. Praise him from whom all blessings flow!

Pukekohe

We give thanks with Ilse Breytenbach who was blessed with a healthy daughter,

Chelsea. Weighing 8lb 6oz. last Thursday. Mother and Daughter are both well. Chelsea was delivered by caesarean section. At the time of writing they were in Hamilton hospital but hope to transfer to Thames hospital.

Congratulations to Lydia and Nathan Walraven on the birth of their daughter, Addison Yvonne, born last Saturday 21 November. May the Lord Bless and guide you as you bring up this precious gift from Him.

Silverstream

Pastoral Notes. We give thanks that both of the recent additions to our covenant family are doing well. Amelia de Vries is gaining weight, though she is still not quite ready to be taken out to meet the public. And Mason Knol is also doing very well. Let us continue to pray for the other expectant mothers. Sr. Shaline Koster is next up, if things go as anticipated. The congregation may look forward to a cluster of baptisms over the next couple of months – Lord willing.

Covenant Baptism. Today, in the afternoon service, we have the privilege of witnessing the baptism of Amelia Diane de Vries, daughter of Jason and Malien de Vries. May the Lord bless the vows that you make today, and give you grace and wisdom as you bring up Amelia in the fear and nurture of the Lord.

Session is pleased to announce that 3 young people sustained their examination for profession of faith last Tuesday: Ali den Harder; Shari Walraven; and Edwin Knol. We thank the Lord for the good account these young people gave of their faith, both as to doctrine and life. Barring any lawful objections, and Lord willing, the three will profess their faith during the morning service on December 20. If there are any objections, these should be conveyed in writing to the elders as soon as possible. Please pray for the other young people of our congregation, as there are some others who hope to profess their faith early in the new year.

Wainuiomata

Receiving Errol and Dasslin. This afternoon Errol and Dasslin Baird will be received as full members of our congregation. Let us pray that we can be a blessing to them and that they can also be a blessing to us as we grow together in the Lord.

Table Tennis Competition at Community Centre. On Saturday, 14th November the

youth group will be hosting a table tennis competition at the Community Centre, from 7.30 – 10pm. We will be advertising this to local Wainui youth, aged 15 and older. Please invite your friends along and bring some food to share for supper. There is no cost for this event, and there will be prizes!

Profession of Faith. The Session announces with joy that John Kleinjan has expressed a desire to profess his faith in Jesus Christ before the congregation. If there are no lawful objections, John will make this profession on December 20 in the morning worship service.

Happy Birthday. A special congratulations to Joop who celebrates his 80th birthday today – what a milestone! May God continue to give you all His strength and grace in your lives, and may you continue to experience His blessings in the year ahead.

Wellington

And now she is 80. After the service we would like to invite you to share a birthday cake, to celebrate Mrs. Sjoerdje (Beppe) Heeringa's 80th birthday. The family Heeringa.

Report of the Auckland Presbytery Meeting held at Pukekohe on 4 December 2009

The Rev. Michael Willemse opened the meeting by reading from 2 Corinthians 4:1-12 and leading us in prayer. The Rev. John Rogers was appointed as the moderator. A special welcome was given to the three Mangere elders (trustees) and to Craig van Echten, who had just arrived in Auckland after graduating from the RTC and will be taking up a vicariate in Bucklands Beach in the new year.

Hamilton asked for a discussion about a presbytery-initiated church planting work in the Auckland region. The Hamilton session was asked to write up their ideas and circulate these to the other sessions for consideration in the New Year.

It was agreed to place the matter of devotional leaders at camps (especially Auckland Cadets' Camp and the Family Camp) on the agenda for every February meeting of the Presbytery so that suitable men can be appointed well in advance

to lead the studies and devotions.

The presbytery concurred with the Mangere elders / trustees that the money raised from the sale of their church manse be forwarded to the Church Extension Committee at this time to be available for use by the other Reformed churches of New Zealand. They would also request that these funds remain available for the next seven years for a possible church planting work in South Auckland. Most of the Mangere members have joined with one of the neighbouring churches and have made a smooth transition. The elders are following up the remaining members.

Questions from Article 47 of the Church Order were put to the delegates from Avondale and the North Shore. The Avondale delegates reported that Immanuel Christian School had applied for integration but this had been declined. They also expressed appreciation for the diligent work of congregational members and requested prayer that they might find a pastor.

The North Shore congregation actively support a few overseas mission works and have voted in principle to begin a home mission work on the Hibiscus Coast. Six people have recently professed faith. The church has appreciated the ministry of vicar Andre Scheepers. The delegates expressed thanks for a number of unbelievers who, through various means, had come to faith in Jesus Christ over the past few years.

The Bucklands Beach session informed the Presbytery that Luke Scheepers (a son of Andre and Sue Scheepers) has felt a call to the ministry and has been endorsed as a suitable candidate for training by them. Rev John Haverland was asked to visit Luke, with an elder from a neighbouring church, with a view to granting him the concurrence of the presbytery.

The Rev. Dirk van Garderen reported on the work of the National Diaconate Committee. He noted that Jair and Laurretta Duinkerke will be going to the Solomon Islands early in 2010 and will be commissioned to this work by Bucklands Beach.

Ministers of the Presbytery continue to preach in the Avondale and Hukanui congregations while these churches are without a pastor.

The Presbytery endorsed the recommendation of the North Shore session that, upon sustaining his second exam, vicar Andre Scheepers be installed as a minister in one of our RCNZ churches,

on the grounds that he has been already been ordained as a minister in the Church of England in South Africa, an Anglican church in South Africa that seeks sincerely to uphold the Thirty-nine Articles of the Christian Religion.

The Rev. John Haverland closed the meeting with prayer at 10.15 pm.

Reporter: The Rev. John Haverland

Report on Wellington Presbytery Meeting 6 November, 2009

1. Our chairman, the Rev. David Waldron, opened the meeting with prayer and a short exposition from Habakkuk 3. He encouraged us to remember that though things in our church can look dim at times, our joy is always in the Lord.

2. Three congregations answered questions from Church Orderrticle 47. Foxton reported that members are enthusiastically working with Bible in Schools. Wellington has sent Susan Larson to work in missions and nursing in the Solomon Islands. Palmerston North also answered the questions affirmatively. They expressed their appreciation for our ongoing pulpit supply to Wanganui. Each of these congregations was prayed for by one of the Presbytery delegates.

3. Minutes from the RCNZ Presbyteries and CRCA Classes were scrutinised and presented to the Presbytery. Some concern was raised about what appears to be a weakening of reformed teaching and practice in various CRCA congregations.

4. The Presbytery heard a very positive presentation from the Overseas Mission Board liaison, the Rev. Peter Kloosterman. The work in Papua New Guinea continues, and we are thankful that the house has been completed for the Doumas to settle into. Though our financial resources were largely depleted on the house, this will soon pay for itself as housing is extremely expensive in PNG. Janice Reid recently had surgery on her knee, but will resume teaching radio ministry in Singapore. Andrew Dickson is much appreciated by the OPC for his work in Uganda.

5. The Rev. Andrew Nugteren, our youth liaison, reported that the youth camp is shaping up well. The Rev. John Zuidema will be leading the studies, while Rev. & Mrs Bruce Hoyt will also be attending. The Presbytery thanked

Andrew for his work as youth liaison; Mr Bill Wierenga was voted in as our new liaison.

6. A discussion was held regarding the idea of a Presbytery area home for the impaired.

A motion passed to request sessions to present names of persons who could form a committee to work on this.

7. The Rev. Bruce Hoyt was officially released from serving in our Presbytery as he has accepted the call to serve in Oamaru. Our chairman also expressed words of appreciation for Mr Hoyt's years of service among churches of the Wellington Presbytery.

8. The meeting was adjourned and the chairman closed in prayer.

*Sometimes our workload is lightened with a bit of humour. When someone was speaking about Wanganui, he reminded us that they still spell it without the "h". When Pastor de Vos suggested we might be a bit more sensitive to our NZ culture and include the "h", Pastor Archbald suggested that this would mean we also put an "h" in Whainuiomata!

Short Report of the Christchurch Presbytery Meeting on 20-21 November 2009

The delegates gathered at the Reformed Church of Bishopdale on Friday evening for the final examination of Vicar Andrew de Vries. With thankfulness to the Lord and much rejoicing his sermon on Revelation 19:11-21 and oral examination were both sustained with the concurrence of synodical examiners, the Reverend Dirk van Garderen and Bruce Hoyt.

On Saturday morning the moderator, the Reverend Robert van Wichen, opened with a reading from 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 and an exhortation to trust wholeheartedly in the Lord, as Paul did, especially in the face of difficulties and hardship in the Christian life.

Points of interest from the minutes of other presbyteries and CRCA classes were heard. A report was received from the Overseas Mission Board liaison.

Reports were heard from the Christchurch and Dunedin congregations as to calling prospects and interim supply. The Reverend Keith Warren is currently serving short-term in Christchurch and

the Reverend Martin Geluk in Dunedin, both of whom are much appreciated. A call to the Reverend Jim Klazinga to serve in the Timaru church plant has been declined in favour of his accepting a call to the Brisbane PCEA. However, after the acceptance of a call to work in Oamaru by the Reverend Bruce Hoyt, his arrival there is looked forward to with

excitement and thankfulness.

Church visitation reports for Dovedale, Bishopdale and Nelson were presented.

Bishopdale reported on a very successful meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

In time to come the gathering on this occasion may become known as

the meeting of the slender agenda. The highlight was undoubtedly the competent way in which Andrew de Vries negotiated his examination and the anticipation of his addition to the presbytery's ministerial corps. The opportunity for mutual encouragement and fellowship amongst the church representatives was greatly beneficial as well.

Letter to the Editor

Br Dirk van Garderen has written quite an extensive letter regarding the lessons that are to be learned from the closure of the Mangere congregation (*Faith in Focus*, Nov. 2009)

In his letter Dirk comes to the conclusion that the reason for Mangere's closure was because it failed to make an impact in its community. So it is said that Mangere didn't adapt itself appropriately to the changing character of the community around it. And apparently that is the case with most of the Reformed Churches in New Zealand!

This, unfortunately, is a type of historical revisionism. It takes the focus away from what actually happened in Mangere through an aspersion cast over much of the denomination. It's the kind of view which has led to some Reformed and Presbyterian churches taking on quite a pragmatic approach to local mission and to end up following something akin to the popular 'Willow-Creek' seeker-sensitive model.

A different reason

What Dirk writes is also at odds with at least some of what has been stated as contributing to Mangere's closure. The Mangere Session and Auckland Presbytery acknowledged its share in

Letters to the editor are most welcome. They should refer to an issue the magazine has recently published. Their language should be temperate, and they may not charge anyone with an offence. They should be brief, and they may be condensed by the editor. The opinions expressed are those of the writer, and not necessarily of the editorial team of *Faith in Focus*.

this (*Faith in Focus*, Oct 2009), through inadequate notice and consultation. While the Presbytery Report says that it doesn't believe anything would have changed if it had been done correctly, we won't ever know, will we?

In connection with his comment on the membership, I also believe Br Dirk needs to be corrected. It was not a clear majority that voted to close the church. A number abstained at that point. If all the votes were counted together there was not a majority at that point to close the church.

The heart of the matter

I further believe that Mangere being a vacant church **was** a very strong factor in its closure. Indeed, I believe if I had continued on ministering in Mangere this discussion would not have been happening – but the process to relocation would have continued.

Mangere was not a "dwindling" church. There were young people professing their faith, getting married, and having children. They did not live in Mangere itself, true, which was exactly why we were seeking a more central location. We considered cases where other churches had done the same. It was very doable, and, with the Lord's blessing, it would also have drawn in others of like mind. That there were older members in the congregation is also true, but I have not met a more godly and supportive group of "retired" Christians anywhere else. I grieve that they became displaced spiritually as a result of what has happened.

What else could the Lord be pleased with in a congregation? Oh, that they live in the same village, within five minutes' walking distance of each other? That has never been the case in the RCNZ, especially being in a country and a time that has become increas-

ingly hardened against the gospel.

This is why I especially miss in Br Dirk's letter the lack of a specifically scriptural approach in this – something Br John Goris alludes to. Br Goris has a very pertinent scriptural example – and it speaks of quite a different focus than Dirk's. A focus which is brought out in much scriptural depth and wisdom in a gem of a book by John Benton, *The Big Picture for Small Churches – and Big Ones Too!*

How others deal with it

By further way of showing my point, let me share with you how a Presbytery dealt with a congregation consisting of only 13 full adult members, with an offering of less than \$400 a week and with no local elders or minister. It comes from a report written by our PCEA denominational delegate to the recent Reformed Presbyterian Annual Presbytery Meeting:

One matter on their agenda gave me great cause for encouragement. It showed the positive part a Presbytery can play in the life of a local congregation. That matter concerned McKinnon. As can be seen above, the numbers at McKinnon are small. It has been a larger church but has diminished over recent years. Now, that could well be a situation where a denomination would move to close such a work. It is no longer financially self-supporting and its whole session consists of assessor elders (thus elders provided by Geelong). Rather than practice economic rationalism, though, the Presbytery, after having appointed a Commission Committee to look into this congregation, proposed that the work continue there

because of the need to have a witness to Christ in that area. To help facilitate this, the elders were being sent to a Harry Reeder's 'Embers to Flames' conference, which especially addresses revitalizing small churches, and they encouraged all in the congregation to read the book of the same title. Together with this there would be encouragement and help provided through short-term mission teams, continued pulpit-supply of the once a Sunday, combined with Bible study and visitation in the area. To me, this was positive. It sought to

keep this congregation going, rather than close a work down and try to transfer to assets elsewhere. How much wouldn't the wider Church of Christ benefit from such a vision? And from what I understand the revitalization course recommended has been a tremendous blessing in America. The Rev. Ken Smith from the RPCNA was able to speak of similar instances within their churches.

Food for thought, isn't it? This particular candle-stand of Christ's could still be shining in South Auckland, albeit in a different location. Sure, it would be

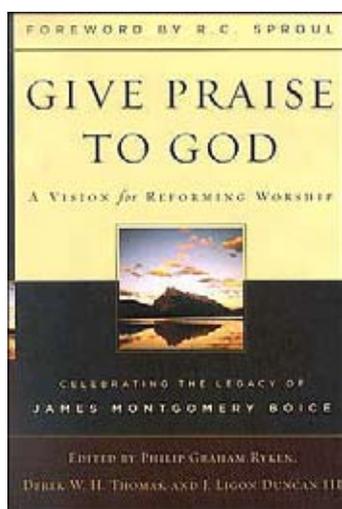
hard work. But didn't the Lord Himself show us the way to look to His Father through all this? Weren't our founding fathers blessed in this?

Yours, also with genuine Christian concern,

Sjirk Bajema.

The opinions expressed in this letter are those of the writer, and not of the editorial team of *Faith in Focus*. This is the last correspondence to be published on this subject. The matter is now closed. (Ed.)

Books in focus



Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship

edited by Philip Graham Ryken, Derek W.H. Thomas and J. Ligon Duncan III. (P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ, 2003)

Reviewed by Sally Davey

Sometimes it seems (from the point of view of church history, at least), that confusion and error in the church of Christ can have good outcomes. This is especially the case when the trouble is so bad that faithful and honest men turn to God's Word to find answers. In the course of investigating the roots of the error they come up with clearer answers on the matter than the church had possessed before. This was certainly what happened at the time of the early church when the deity of Christ was questioned: a better understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity was the out-

come. The Reformers, when pressed by all manner of error, found lasting help in the Scriptures with respect to questions of biblical authority, the sacraments, and the worship of the church.

In similar fashion, the entertainment, man-centredness and disrespect of God that has been found all over the world in Christian worship in the past twenty or thirty years or so has led to a thorough re-examination of worship by Reformed and Presbyterian ministers in the United States. They have done some very helpful work, studying both the Continental Reformed and the Puritan/Presbyterian roots of worship; as well as going back to Scripture itself. This, I am sure, will be to the great good of the church in the future.

Some of this helpful work that has gone on in the past ten to fifteen years is represented in the chapters of *Give Praise to God*; which is a collection of longish essays published in honour of the ministry of the late James Montgomery Boice, pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. This church has enjoyed a worthy reputation for God-honouring worship. Boice himself was one of those who were concerned about the degeneration of Christian worship; and the chapters of this book lay out a diagnosis and a prescription for the malady. The prognosis for churches depends on how readers will respond to the findings of its authors.

The book is divided into four parts. In the first, J. Ligon Duncan, Derek Thomas and Edmund Clowney deal, in four separate chapters, with the biblical teaching

on worship. Duncan asks "Does God Care How We Worship?", and lays out foundations for biblically directed worship. Derek Thomas responds to recent criticism of the regulative principle, and Clowney discusses the ways corporate worship is a means of grace.

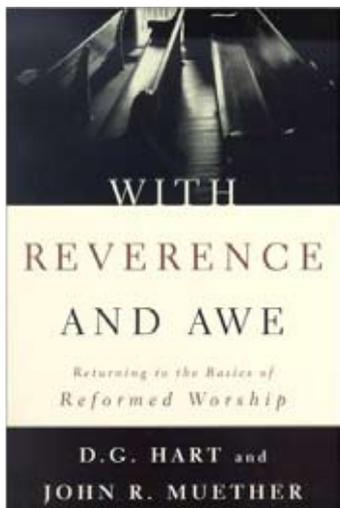
Perhaps the central section of the book is the second part, which includes chapters on the elements of biblical worship. R. Albert Mohler writes on expository preaching (the centre of Christian worship); Mark Dever on evangelistic expository preaching; Marion Clark on baptism; Richard Phillips on the Lord's Supper; Paul Jones (organist at Tenth Presbyterian) on hymnody in a post-hymnody world; and Terry Johnson on psalm-singing. But the chapter I found most interesting of all was Terry Johnson's and Ligon Duncan's on "Reading and Praying the Bible in Corporate Worship". This element of worship is often underplayed or disregarded; Bible reading being frequently confined to the text for the sermon.

Part Three deals with preparation for worship; and here we find Donald S. Whitney (who wrote the challenging *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*) writing on private worship; Duncan and Johnson contributing on family worship; William Edgar on "Worship in All of Life"; and Robert Godfrey, President of Westminster Seminary in California, has a fascinating chapter on "Worship and the Emotions".

A needed re-examination of the history of worship is found in Part Four of this book. The historical overview provided helps isolate the root of today's problems;

and also to correct some misunderstandings about what various teachers in the past actually said and meant. There are chapters by Nick R. Needham on "Worship through the Ages"; one by Hughes Oliphant Old (an authority on the history of worship) on Calvin's theology of worship; and a closing chapter by Michael Horton on "Challenges and Opportunities for Ministry Today".

If you don't yet have this book in your church's library, might I suggest it would be a really useful addition? Are you looking for a gift for your minister? Are you looking for better understanding on this subject for yourself? This book would be an excellent resource on your bookshelf at home, for everyone in your household to consult. It is a book for every adult reader: not technical, it is interestingly-written; and both pastoral and persuasive.



***With Reverence and Awe;
Returning to the Basics of
Reformed Worship***

by D.G. Hart and John R. Muether,
(P & R Publishing Company, 2002).

**Reviewed by Andy van Ameyde,
Reformed Church of Dovedale.**

Are you one of many believers from the Reformed tradition who look "over the fence" at the "green, green grass" of the wider evangelical church and wonder and wish that our church was just a bit more with it? Let's just loosen up a little and not present so many of those "barriers" to folk like me who are "simple" Christians, and who want to be seen as "more normal" so I can bring my neighbor along to church? Then this is the book for you ... it's not replete with complex theology, it doesn't have a staunch "I am right and you are wrong, we are Reformed" attitude. This

book contains a very simple and logical argument for the "who, what, when and how" of worship.

It is challenging to summarise a book that is so easy to read, and yet every sentence, paragraph and chapter is packed with relevant challenges and insight about worship.

So what is the basic message of the book? If you are a Christian who comes from a Reformational heritage then you will agree with the statement that "God is Sovereign" over salvation. We were dead in trespasses and sin and it is only by God's grace that we are saved ! Yes, we all agree with that! But then as a logical consequence, it must follow that if God is sovereign (in salvation) then He is also sovereign in worship! Yes, worship in the wider sense as we carry out our calling during six days of the week, but also more particularly in worship in the specific sense as we meet with him on the Sabbath day. It is this latter aspect that is the focus of this book.

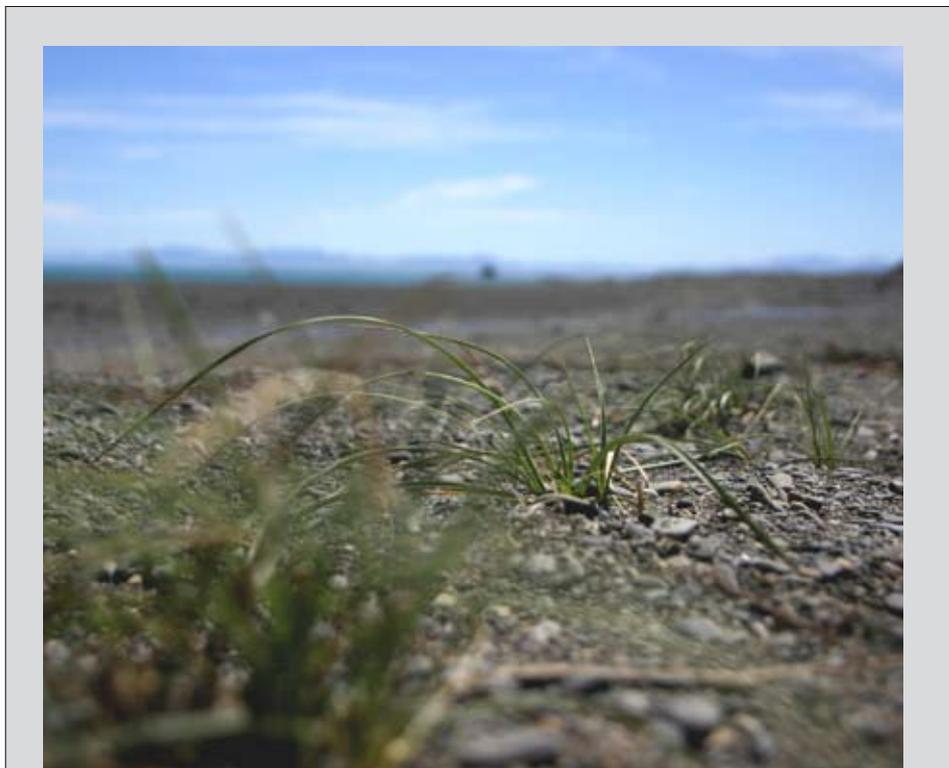
The authors discuss this logic and draw it out by reminding us of the Regulative Principle; which teaches us about God's sovereignty in worship - ie we should only worship in ways that

God prescribes. They provide a timely reminder to us who live in post-confessional and anti-denominational times, that theology and worship cannot be separated. One cannot separate belief from practice. They make relevant and insightful reference to a number of the key confessional standards of the Reformational churches to helpfully remind us of the links between sound theology and God-glorifying worship.

The authors also tackle the issue of song in worship, but sensibly leave this to the end of the book, so that an analysis of what seems to arouse the passions most is given a sound and biblical framework for evaluation.

The book will have wide appeal in Reformational circles. It has a wide potential audience and could be used just as usefully by the eldership of the church as they seek to lead their church in God-honoring worship as it could in mid-week fellowship study, catechism class or youth group study.

So be bold and don't just take my word on this ... dare to be a Berean ... test what these authors are saying, and examine the Scriptures to see if what they say is true!



"The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever". Is 40:8

Photo: Carl Leenders

Missions in Focus

Janice Reid

Another look at Botswana

Botswana. The world's 45th largest country, coming after Ukraine, with a relatively small population estimated to be just under two million¹. Its main industry is mining, and the country is quite flat – those two facts mean the roads are quite well-developed, and there's a reasonably reliable cellphone network throughout the country. National parks make up almost two-thirds of the country's land-mass.

Botswana was a British protectorate, but became an independent member of the Commonwealth in 1966. At that time, it was one of the most impoverished countries in Africa, but today it is home to a relatively stable political system and a growing economy².

Many individuals in the government of Botswana have declared themselves to be Christians, and have encouraged Christian activities in the community. Sometimes the government has gifted land to Christian and missionary projects, to help those in need. It was one such mission-station that Marlene van Tonder (North Shore) visited two years ago, and she recently talked with MIF columnist Janice Reid – reflecting on her time there, and thinking how her short term visit had influenced her decision to seek longer-term service on the mission-field.

The mission station, at Motopi, is about 90km from Maun (Botswana's third-largest city). The station is supported by five Reformed congregations in South Africa, and teams from those churches travel to Motopi from time to time to help with building projects, and occasionally to provide assistance or programs to help the children the station reaches out to.

The couple who run the station on a permanent basis, the Cronjés, are quite elderly. So part of Marlene's plan in going to Motopi was to provide practical help for the Cronjés; another part was

to develop a 2-year Sunday school curriculum for the youngest children who attend church at the mission station.

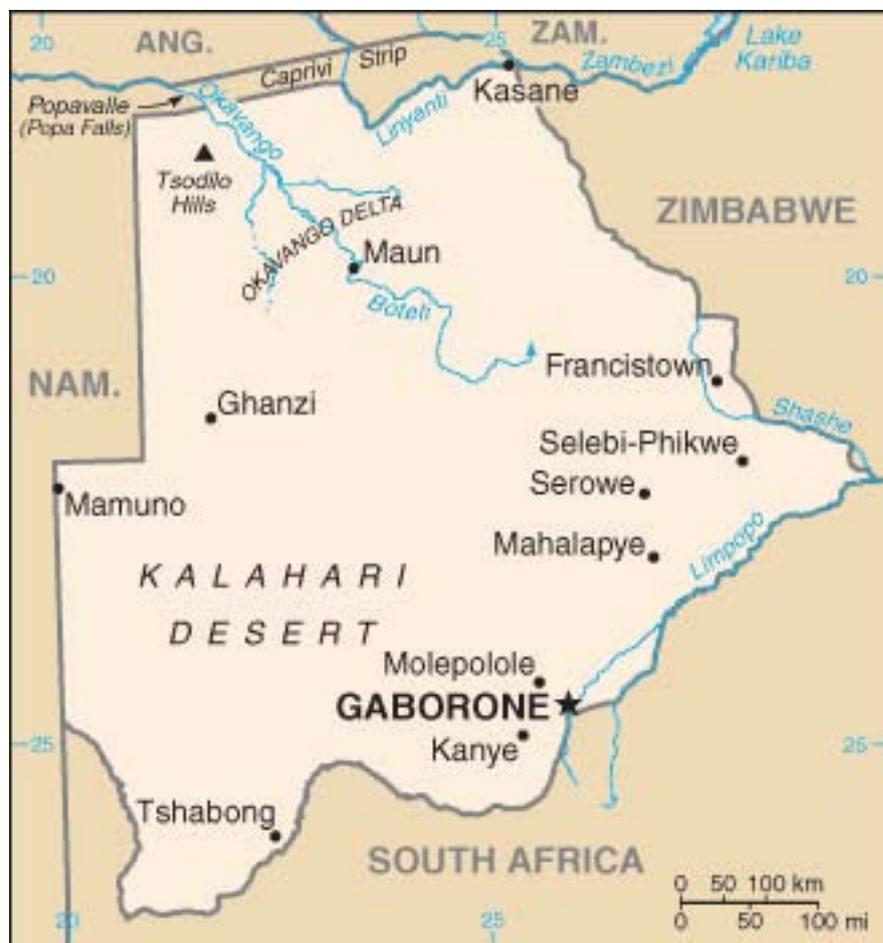
This, far from being insignificant, is a vital work: the congregation at that church consists of perhaps 100 people – only a handful of whom are adults. Marlene realised that nothing was being done for the younger children – who had no formal education at all – so she worked hard to develop a plan for simple Bible education based on the context in which the children live. She wanted to provide educational activities for children who had no skills or resources in the way of cutting, pasting or reading. Marlene says she wrote the materials "in a way that anybody can just pick them up and use them, because even the adults don't have experience with teaching." Marlene also spent time with the local children and young people: playing games with them, listening to (and telling) stories, and learning about the local culture.

Marlene recounted some stories from her time at Motopi:

The men from the community, she said,

generally don't want to be involved with the building projects, but they want their kids to get the food the church provides; hence the large number of children. The children who attend church regularly get fed first, and then others are fed. Adults don't get fed, apart from one man who had epilepsy and had burned himself severely one time so he's not allowed to make fire anymore. The outreach is to those who are disadvantaged in ways that are beyond their control. One girl had horribly scarred hands, and Marlene asked how it had happened. The child had taken a piece of meat from her mother's plate, so the mother tied her hands together, put a plastic bag in her hands, and then set fire to the bag.

One young boy wanted to learn, and asked Marlene if she would teach him. He could have gone to the state school for no cost, but the grandfather wouldn't let him go. Dorette Cronjé went to his grandfather and asked if the old man would send the boy to school, but the granddad instead sent the boy away to the cattle station where he would work



1 CIA World Factbook.

2 Wikipedia, Botswana.

and could not be pressured to receive an education.

The average life expectancy of Botswana is about 35 years (set in 2006). Children have no value in that society; their function is to be quiet and to work. There is welfare, but the money goes straight to drink so it's not usually used to feed the family. There is no work in the villages, so many of the men go out to work the cattle so even if the father is still part of the family, he's not at home with the children. Children and mothers stay in town where the schools are, and fathers are itinerant and only come home occasionally.

Marlene was hoping to stay in Botswana for nine months, but soon after she arrived the government changed immigration rules, to restrict the number of refugees trying to enter from Zimbabwe. In the end she was only able to stay three months; after that, she went to South Africa and stayed with her aunt for a couple of months, where she met a gardener who was able to translate her Sunday school curriculum into Tswana, the language spoken in Motopi.

Looking back on her time in Botswana, Marlene believes strongly in the necessity and effectiveness of mission-work. As a result, she hopes to continue her involvement with missions, and she is currently spending a year in Tanzania, working in a secondary school and teaching Bible, English and geography.

Reflecting on her time at Motopi, Marlene says, "I used to think short term missions were really good, but now I've seen that longer terms are better, because you can actually make an impact on people's lives, rather than just coming and going. I think that going for 3-6 months is a more accurate experience, rather than going with a group for only a few weeks. I also

think from the perspective of growing in God, a long trip is better because you learn to rely on Him, whereas in a group you rely on the group members. But after you've been there for a while your own resources tend to run low, so you have to rely on God." I still think there is place for short term missions, but more for specific projects.

It's obvious there were plenty of positives about her time in Botswana. But what about the negatives? Marlene thinks about what was worst: "Seeing girls I'd made friends with, with tears in their eyes as I left. Botswana don't show emotion, so to have them love me and show it was really hard. I almost felt that I'd cheated them, because I'd come into their lives and was leaving. Coming back to NZ was strange because it had felt like nothing had changed, but

of course it had. I didn't have a huge chance to talk about my experiences or process them, and I found that really hard. The main thing: have people lined up who will let you spill your guts once in a while. Because it is different; I'd changed in ways I didn't even realise, until I'd been back for some time, and I had to come to terms with that ... and talking helped. Coming back in and finding where you fit. When you come back, you don't have a job, all the church activities are going on without you, and you don't belong anywhere all of a sudden."

Marlene's final thought? "I think there's a mission field at our doorstep, rather than just somewhere else in the world. And it's not really all that different, especially with the culture we live in today."



Planning a mission trip? Let us pray for you!

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