

faith in focus

Magazine of the
Reformed Churches
of New Zealand

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4.63	6133.07	15.8	16.78	16.94	33.72	32.34	\$970.29
6.50	6169.57	11.9	15.31	17.55	32.87	31.79	\$953.70
0.96	6180.53	2.86	15.06	17.95	33.01	30.95	\$928.44
8.63	6198.26	9.83	14.95	18.31	33.26	30.91	\$927.25
2.44	6240.70	22.6	15.49	18.44	33.93	31.78	\$953.46
1.87	6281.37	18.8	15.19	18.38	33.57	32.81	\$984.22
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Priorities for the Christian in business

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Editorial

If you are a Christian who owns a business, then you should be aware that, firstly, you serve the Lord. According to the book *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were*, by Leland Ryken, the Puritans had a three-fold view of work, where they served the Lord first, then their fellow man and finally, their families. It certainly sounds like a very biblical approach to our work, whether we are employed or self-employed.

Being a Christian in business can mean one of two things. Either you are self-employed or you work for an employer. Regardless of your situation, I expect that you have some priorities that help to govern how you function in your respective role.

One thing that comes to mind is integrity. According to the New Oxford American Dictionary, integrity means: *the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness*. Or, Psalm 15:2, "He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart"; or Psalm 24:4, "He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood, and has not sworn deceitfully".

A Christian who conducts himself in this manner will certainly adorn the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and be an invaluable asset to that business.

Our contributors have written about their priorities and experiences in business and give some real-life insights into how they see and practice their priorities in business. They have also wonderfully complemented one another by giving some real-life stories about real people that the Lord has brought across their path.

Mr Steve Sterne writes about very practical and personal matters when running a business.

Mr Louw Bezuidenhout evaluates business today as an accountant.

Mr Peter Verkerk

Mr Arjen Buter reviews *Crazy Busy*, by Kevin De Young; Mrs Sally Davey reviews *Redeeming the Time: A Christian Approach to Work and Leisure*, by Leland Ryken.

Mrs Sally Davey introduces us to her new column, "Outward Focus".

Mrs Veronica Hoyt, issues a challenge for all women.

Mrs Sophia Sinclair looks at "A peaceful example to celebrate at Waitangi".

Mrs Harriet Haverland keeps us informed with newsworthy items from the churches.

Mr John Witvliet from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship gives 10 reasons why hymnals still have a future.

Mr Peter Kloosterman reports for the Overseas Mission Board on his visit to Papua New Guinea.

Mr David Waldron gives a personal account of his pastoral visit to PNG.

"Biblical orthodoxy without compassion is surely the ugliest thing in the world."

Francis Schaeffer

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.

NB: In line with common publishing practice *Faith in Focus* reserves the right to publish the names of all contributors with their articles, unless compelling reasons are given to the editor for not doing so. This applies to both print and online versions.

Christians in business

Steve Sterne

I first entered business when interest rates were running at close to 20% for a “normal” mortgage, and unemployment topped 10%. The economy was looking shaky after the share market crash of 1987, and I had two children and a wife who was in remission with cancer.

At the time, going into business did not seem a great idea for a number of reasons; but the company that I worked for were anxious for me to return to Auckland, and I felt torn between uprooting the family and heading North, and staying put and looking for an alternative way to put bread on the table. After a few deep breaths we decided to stay where we were and start up a very small pig breeding operation on the little block of land we had purchased on the outskirts of Christchurch.

God’s grace at work

As much as we may dislike the trials of life it can be in these times that we most clearly see the grace of God at work in our lives. Two children had become three and business was going well when my wife fell ill a second time with cancer and was given just months to live. Suddenly my life was full of hospital appointments and household chores. The farm took a distant place in my list of priorities, and without the help of Christian friends and family I cannot imagine how I would have made it through those days. God is able to give and take away at will, but He loves us throughout it all. The tools he uses to change us may feel harsh at times, but in the end we will only see his loving hand at work in our lives and marvel at the grace shown us.

The first and most obvious lesson here is that our destiny rests in the hands of God. We must accept that God alone determines what the future holds, and in the meantime we do our best to serve him in the opportunities he has given us. “Work hard as unto the Lord” applies to the salaried worker and the business person alike. Often you hear

of the person going into business say they “want to be rewarded for what they do”. This is such a poor attitude, for we remain no more than stewards of the things God has given us, whether we work in business or for someone else. If the business succeeds and the rewards are great those rewards do not belong to us to squander on our own interests. They belong to God and our first duty is to use them for his purposes. Take what you need and no more from your business – it does not belong to you. I have seen how other Christian businessmen have modelled this ideal. Their generosity has been a blessing to many and a great witness to their love of Christ. The work of the gospel has often been advanced through the generosity of those who have given liberally. God “owns the cattle on a thousand hills” even though they may have your ear tag on them. So don’t hold back when He asks for them.

There are aspects to the way a Christian will do business that should mark him out from the world. Many of these will be obvious, but lest we ignore the obvious let’s spell them out.

- Tell the truth at all times.

“Jesus paid a high price to redeem us and we should place the same value on others’ lives that He did.”

- Let your love for Christ be known at the first opportunity.
- Pay your bills preferably before the due date. Pay your taxes happily.
- Always make sure your suppliers are making a profit from doing business with you. This does not mean that you have to pay for their inefficiencies.
- Avoid going into business with non-



Steve Sterne



Life on the farm: staff scenes.

Christians. Going into business is much like a marriage, and you do not want to be unequally yoked.

- If you have the opportunity, surround yourself with some other Christians who will help keep you to account.
- We usually have to borrow money to do business, but if you can't sleep easy because of your debt levels, then you are borrowing too much.
- Don't take advantage of others' mistakes. If you are overpaid by mistake, pay it back. It is not your money.
- Be the best supplier that you can. Spare no effort to give good service, supply the best goods, and do so with good grace – never grumbling or keeping an account.
- Deliver on your word.
- Be a good employer.

This last point is for me the most difficult by far. People can be difficult and they will not always play nicely together, but God has called us to interact with people. We can not be fishers of men or disciples of Christ without working

with people. How we interact with our staff and others is more important than how successful we are at our business.

Value others

Jesus paid a high price to redeem us and we should place the same value on others' lives that He did. To have this attitude will change the way you talk to people and deal with the difficulties they bring to your table. It will also mark you out as a follower of Christ rather than just another philanthropist. Christ is the only one who can bring true healing to relationships and we should not hesitate to say so. It may seem odd to suggest this in the context of doing business, but I have never yet had anybody say they do not want me to pray for them.

Books are written about how to deal with people in the work place but I will again only state the obvious.

- Deal only with the truth. If you don't know what the truth is, do not jump to conclusions or make assumptions about what others have done or think.

- Be fair, honest and transparent when speaking with people.
- Pray with your staff when they are going through a rough time, regardless of their beliefs. You don't have to be restricted by their unbelief.
- Be gentle. Even the toughest men can be broken with a gentle word.
- Don't hold a grudge. Inevitably, someone will wrong you, but don't hang on to it.
- Show generosity when you can. It does not have to be big.
- Be interested in others' lives and find out what is important to them.
- Lead by example.

Be smart about the future. We are going to die, so don't invest as if we are going to be here forever. If you have someone who can take over your business after you, then start planning for that eventuality sooner rather than later. Train them to think of ways to use the business for the interests of the kingdom. The next generation may be of greater blessing to others than you.

Accountants – from number crunchers to trusted advisors

Louw Bezuidenhout

Accountants are often regarded as calculator-carrying 'grey' people with limited social skills. Accountants are not expected to be charismatic public speakers or articulate salespeople. They are often the ones that slice and dice budgets and put the lid on any plans to spend money, regardless of the cause. This is not limited to the business world – at many session meetings and AGMs the treasurer (accountant) is often the one that puts the brakes on. There may be truth in this but the accounting profession is rapidly changing.

Most businesses are started by entrepreneurs that sell their technical skills. As businesses grow, owners quickly find themselves in the situation where they spend more time doing managerial and administrative duties instead of applying their technical skills. Owners' lack of managerial, administrative and accounting skills often lead to disaster – from

specialising in something they know, they now have to do things they have very little knowledge of.

Lacking skill

The majority of businesses in New Zealand are too small to employ full-time accountants. Owners often start off by assigning the bookkeeping duties to their spouses. Because of the complexity of financial reporting, compliance and associated bureaucratic processes, spouses are often not equipped to meet the requirements of the Inland Revenue Department, banks and other stakeholders. This often leads to arguments and tension at home which eventually end up in an accountant's office. By transferring the problem to the accountant, peace at home is achieved. In a lot of cases the accountant is then tasked to clear up the mess.

Traditionally accountants were required to perform all bookkeeping and accounting functions. This often involved

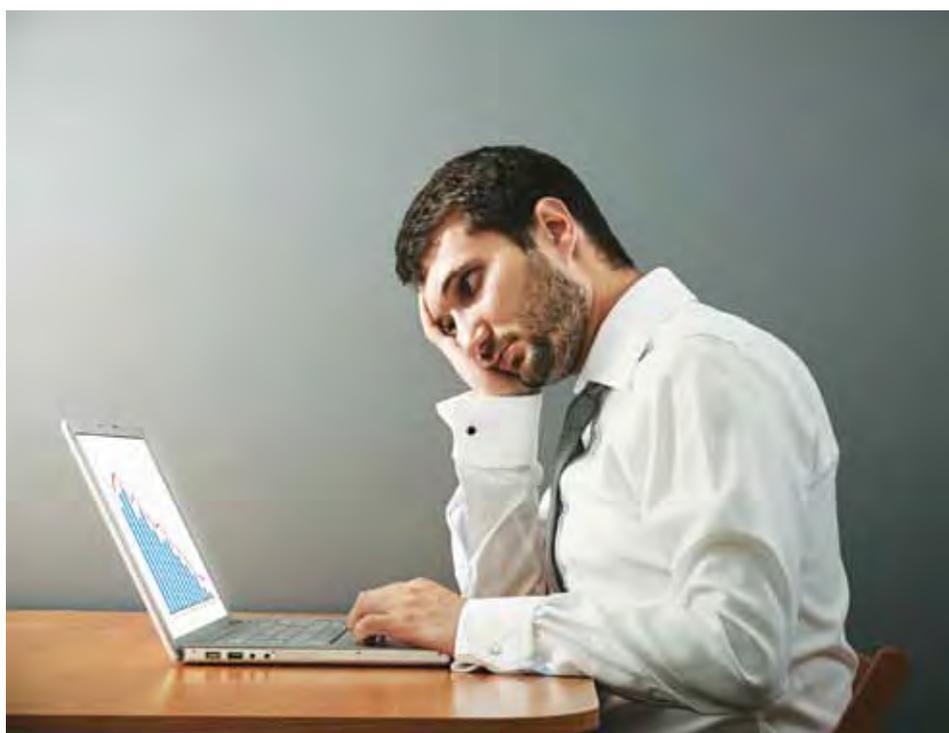
collecting documents from glove boxes, underneath car seats and in hardly-used desk drawers. The accountant then had to put the 'puzzle' together and accurately record transactions – often going back 18 to 24 months.

In recent times the accountant's work has become easier. Advances in computer technology and software are making basic bookkeeping functions more accessible to individuals with 'little' knowledge of accounting. This enables business owners to do bookkeeping functions in-house. Accountants are now expected to do the advanced accounting and taxation work. Number-crunching and bean-counting are no longer the main activities of accountants in the business environment.

Higher expectations

Business owners are becoming more aware of the need for financial sustainability. Because accountants are increasingly required to do advanced accounting

“Being a Christian accountant involves more than compliance to rules set by a secular professional body.”



“The conduct of the Christian accountant/advisor is determined by Scripture – the command to love and to serve.”

and taxation work, business owners now also expect business advice from their accountants. The focus of accounting services is shifting from producing the numbers to interpreting the numbers in the context of the broader business environment. This requires new skills from accountants and opens up new opportunities. Accountants need to know more than accounting standards and tax legislation. A sound knowledge of all aspects of business is required, something accountants are not necessarily trained for.

Most trusted profession

Recent research done by the ANZ Bank among business owners in New Zealand showed that accountants are regarded as the most trusted advisors by 48% of the business owners – almost twice as high as any other profession. Accountants now have to re-invent themselves to meet the demands of being a ‘trusted’ advisor. Being a ‘trusted’ advisor demands a lot more than preparing financial statements and IRD returns. The shift is from compliance to reliance. The accountant can no longer ‘hide’ behind numbers – he/she is required to become involved in the business.

Being the ‘trusted’ advisor may put the accountant in the following situations:

- A very common instruction to accountants is - ‘Make sure I do not pay tax!’ Another expectation from clients is ‘to get money back from the IRD’. These clients expect to earn more money but are not prepared to pay tax. They do not understand the tax laws and require accountants to find all the ‘loopholes’ in the tax legisla-

tion to save money for them. Scripture teaches “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s”. *Does the accountant adhere to the client’s instructions?*

- Although the role of the accountant is changing to trusted advisor many clients still regard professional services as a ‘necessary evil’. Unlike the services or products of electricians, plumbers and builders who produce tangible products, professional services by accountants and trusted advisors are intangible. Some clients like to pay only for what they can touch and the trusted advisor is often the last person to be paid for services. *Does the trusted advisor do work in the knowledge that payment is unlikely to be made?*
- Accountants are often contacted when their clients are threatened with legal action by the IRD, banks and creditors. By then it is often too late to ‘rescue’ the business. These clients expect accountants to perform miracles and are reluctant to accept that very little can be done. *Does the trusted advisor promise to perform miracles in the full knowledge that it will be an impossible task?*
- Often the ‘medicine’ that is prescribed to fix the business is too hard to swallow. As with other walks of life, people prefer to get advice that is gentle on the ear regardless of whether it is useful or not. *Does the trusted advisor tone advice down to what the client wants to hear (in the hope of getting paid)?*
- Some clients do not follow through on the trusted advisor’s recommendations. When things do not improve the advisor gets the blame. These clients avoid any responsibility. *Does the advisor continue to provide services without seeing any results?*
- Accountants/advisors will often be required to provide advice on matters that they do not necessarily have sufficient knowledge of. *Does the advisor decline to provide advice on these matters?*

The biggest challenge for accountants/advisors is to maintain independence. In the quest to serve it is very easy to become too emotionally involved in the client’s problems. There is a very fine line between professional conduct and helping at all costs. We are commanded to love one another and to carry each other’s burdens and the accountant should always provide services

and advice in this context. This brings emotion into the equation but becoming too emotionally involved can result in a distorted assessment of the situation which eventually may lead to more harm than good.

Accountants are expected to comply with a code of ethics as regulated by the New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants. Being a Christian accountant involves more than compliance to rules set by a secular professional body. The conduct of the Christian accountant/advisor is determined by Scripture – the command to love and to serve.

Opportunity for the gospel

The transition from being the accountant to becoming a trusted advisor opens enormous opportunities for Christian accountants/advisors to let their ‘light shine before men’. Being the trusted advisor provides the opportunity to interact on a more personal level with clients. This opens the door for unbelievers to witness honesty, integrity, wisdom and a difference from the world. Christian conduct will lead to questions and questions will lead to sharing the Gospel with clients. Through his/her conduct the accountant/trusted advisor can be a living witness in an environment where greed and the love of money are often driving forces.

‘The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, (Prov.1:7a). Selling knowledge in the form of advice should always display the fear of the LORD. Therefore advice should be prayerfully considered before it is given.

Mr Louw Bezuidenhout is a business advisor and member of the Reformed Church of Dovedale

“As the soldier follows his general, as the servant follows his master, as the scholar follows his teacher, as the sheep follows its shepherd, just so ought the professing Christian to follow Christ.”

J. C. Ryle

Personal witness in the business world

We are surrounded by needy sinners; and many of our best opportunities to witness to the Saviour come in the course of our daily work. Here is one businessman's account of what he has seen happen in his business world:

Peter Verkerk

My first encounter with serious hostility on the factory floor was from Mark. A huge guy, a martial arts expert who ridiculed me from the moment he found out I was a Christian. Whenever I walked into the cafeteria full of people or walked into his department he would call out mocking comments that everyone could hear. He rubbished the Bible, the Creator and my belief in the Scriptures.

Matthew 5 says "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" so I responded by greeting him respectfully and was always friendly to him. One day he crashed a large consignment and a lot of expensive product fell on the floor. I rushed to help him clean up and salvage what I could. Whenever I walked through his department and saw him struggle with his work I continued to step in and help. His attacks continued but grew less in intensity.

Change of attitude

In the end he beat up a co-worker and as you know, you simply can't get away with doing that.

Facing disciplinary proceedings, to my surprise he asked me to be his support person. He was consequently fired. A few months later he popped into work to show me his little boy. He was extremely friendly and obviously delighted to see me. His previous attacks on the Christian values I had

shared were never mentioned.

My one regret was that I had never used the opportunity to share the gospel with Mark.

The company has grown to almost 500 employees and we have a newly-appointed CEO, a Christian. The work environment and culture is immediately starting to change. His focus is to create a Christian value-based work environment in what is an extremely ungodly environment, without calling it "Christian". How he is achieving this is another story which is quite remarkable.

Challenged to witness

He called me into his office and challenged me to be a witness in the workplace.

He is from a marketing background and advised me of a sales slogan...

"If you want to sell something, don't just tell and sell..."

You will have more success if you show and sell!"

It is the same with Christianity. **Show** your colleagues you really care for them and your motivation to love them is from the love Christ has for you.

This has proved both challenging and very rewarding. Amongst the small group of Christians in our workplace there is constant encouragement, prayer and sharing of particular concerns amongst our work colleagues.

Anton, a supervisor, was the biggest blasphemer and foul mouthed colleague I had to associate with. Sometimes I simply had to walk away because the quality of the conversation was unbearable. He failed to respond to my requests not to use such profanities and I finished making an official complaint against him about his general behaviour. He was suspended on 2 weeks paid leave. The CEO asked me to pray for him.

During his absence I found out he was going through a messy divorce,

custody battle, a mother just diagnosed with cancer and several other areas of conflict in his life.

Two weeks later he returned to work, the CEO called me into his office and asked me to find out where Anton was with God because it was better coming from me. That sent my mind in a spin and after a quick prayer seeking God's help I bumped into Andy in the corridor. The expected hostility never happened and after some small talk I felt God telling me this was no time for beating round the bush. "I hear your life is pretty screwed up," I told him. "I serve an amazing God who can sort it out. Trusting Him with every struggle

“Ridicule and bullying are difficult to deal with, but God is all-wise and trusting Him will reveal amazing timing and turns of events that can be delightfully unexpected.”

and mess in your life will bring peace and joy because God, the Creator of the universe, can fix what is broken through Jesus."

He looked at me with the most tender eyes, which I will never forget. He simply said "I know, and I will trust God".

To cut a long story short, we daily share a passage of Scripture and he shares his deepest struggles. He never fails to attend the weekly Bible study at the local church he attends and has been baptised. This, naturally, has meant I have overheard negative gossip from some of his former friends against him. But for me, he is a joy to be with and to see the love he has for our Saviour.

Prayer of the righteous

It does need to be said that the prayer support of fellow Christians is truly powerful, giving strength and courage. Whenever we as individual Christians within the company witness to a colleague in need, we let our fellow Christians know and they become the prayer support team. It is quite funny how nosey they become, and they want to know how things are progressing.

Sharing the gospel verbally has never been easy for me. However, following the advice of the CEO, I am finding it so much easier being a light where there is so much darkness when it is led by actions which allow the gospel message to follow. (Which it automatically does – it is unavoidable.)

So to conclude, there have been some important lessons learnt:

A hostile argument with the goal of outscoring one's opponent does not further the cause of the gospel. Proverbs 20:3 says: "It is to a man's honour to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel."

Ridicule and bullying are difficult to deal with, but God is all-wise and trusting Him will reveal amazing timing and turns of events that can be delightfully unexpected. Proverbs 20:24 reminds us: "A man's steps are directed by the Lord; How can anyone understand his own way?"

There is no guarantee that you can change the bullying behaviour of every person you have to deal with in the work place. But what we do need to know is that even though we don't always

understand why God allows us to face such difficulties, He does use them for our ultimate good. Maybe He is teaching us patience or to trust Him and put our struggles into His care. Not as a last resort but in the beginning ...

What I do know is that there are a lot of people out there with a big empty void in their lives, and they try to fill it with sex, alcohol etc.

We have the void filled with God's love through Christ and we can be content even in difficult circumstances:

But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God;

I trust God's unfailing love for ever and ever.

I will praise you forever for what you have done;

In your name I will hope, for your name is good. (Psalm 52:8-9)

Mr Peter Verkerk is a Smallgoodsman, is a father of seven and a member of the Bishopdale Reformed Church.

Priorities in business ... a review

Crazy Busy

by Kevin De Young
(Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), 118 pp.
Reviewed by Arjen Buter,
(Dovedale)

Kevin de Young wrote this book for himself as much as he did for me.

In the space of two weeks Mrs Sally Davey asked me twice to review this book for *Faith in Focus*. I have never reviewed books before, let alone written words to be published in a magazine which you, my wider church family, will read. It was the reaction of those around me which made me agree. They nodded, confirming: "yes, yes, Arjen should read this book: the title is just for him". I did not see myself as they do; as crazy busy. Yes, I am a driven person with a high sense of responsibility and obligation: I like to finish my work, and do not like to be late. But this is just the same for many of you, thanks to the "Protestant work ethic".

Writer Kevin De Young has a lot of

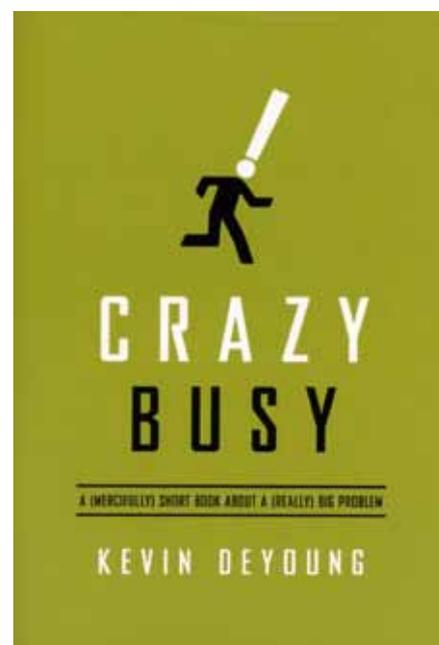
good things to say. In his book he is drawing from other writers, the Word of God and life experience. On 118 A 5-sized pages Kevin addresses in readable language many areas where he himself and we fellow-Christians may be trapped, areas where we think we are serving God, but where in reality we are creating idols.

The book has ten chapters, each of which describes a situation where you and I might recognise ourselves sinning, while thinking we are actively serving through our home, our work or the church. A short summary of common areas where we do God no favour:

- "Here, There and Gone"... We are busy with everything, actually not finishing anything and damaging people around us, drawing the Lord and His church with it.
- "The Killer Ps"... Our pride: we may think the church or the Lord cannot do without us.
- "The Terror of Total Obligation"... We do not dare to say no, thus reducing

the effectiveness of all our activities, ending up with inevitably poor results.

- "Mission Creep"... You cannot serve others without setting priorities.



- “A Cruel Kindergarchy”... We need to stop freaking out about our kids.
- “Deep Calls to Deep”... Social media and other screens demand too much of our time.
- “Rhythms and Blues”... plan work, and rest!
- And then in the last 2 chapters the writer brings the book to a climax: De Young shows us that we should embrace the burden of business and gives some sound advice on ways of keeping our priorities right.

I do not want to further summarise the book for you – please read it for yourself. It will take 10 evenings of 20-40 minutes’ reading, or a summer’s afternoon in the garden. De Young will open himself up to you concerning his own sinfulness in putting too much emphasis on work – not the work itself, but the sinful effects of it on your relationship to the Lord. He will help you see that man is created to serve the Lord in all aspects of life, including work – which includes discipling nations, parenting children and bearing burdens. Reading this book may be eye-opening to those of us who are over-programming our lives, whether it is through work, serving in the church, child raising etc.. You may recognise yourself a lot, whatever your calling or profession.

De Young’s analysis of the order of events in Luke 10 summarises the message of the book. Jesus calls his apostles to work; He sends his apostles out on 72 evangelistic journeys, which are very successful trips (vs 18). After this Jesus teaches the story that we know as the Good Samaritan, then Luke tells us about the meal at the house of Lazarus. Yes, we should do our work with love and service, do lots of it and with all our talents serve our neighbour; but our first priority is to be like Mary, and sit at Jesus’s feet and learn.

Kevin De Young does not give us a 5-point plan for how we should improve our lives (in the short term). At the risk of being labelled a legalist, he calls us to change/improve one thing in our life: start the day with personal devotion. For most of us this will result in better planning and prioritising of our time, because if we don’t there will be no space for such a priority.

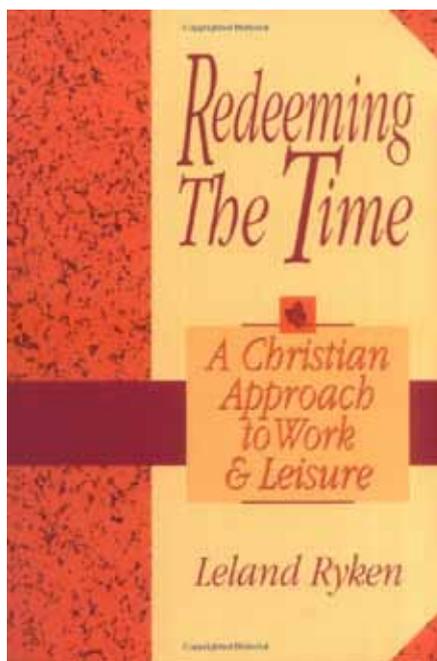
In the same breath the writer wants us to know that it is not wrong to be tired, it is not wrong to go through seasons of complete chaos. What is wrong – or more strongly, heartbreak-

ingly foolish and wonderfully avoidable – is to live a life with more craziness than we want, because we have less Jesus than we need.

Redeeming the Time: A Christian Approach to Work and Leisure

by Leland Ryken
(Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1995).
292pp.

Reviewed by Sally Davey



I love this book: in fact, it is one of the best I have read in the past couple of years. Like the many other books Leland Ryken has written, it is well-informed, interesting, carefully thought-through and gracious. This man, for many years a professor of English at Wheaton College (one of the United States’ premier Christian colleges), has spent a lifetime thinking, writing and teaching about the Bible and its effects on English-speaking culture. What he has to say is always worth reading; and this book is no exception.

Its subject is the roles of work and leisure in the western world; and the ways in which, historically and in the present, we have gotten them out of kilter when set against the biblical ideal. My hunch is that it would do a lot of us a lot of good to read, inwardly digest and act upon the suggestions of this book. I am nowhere near as busy as many people I know; and yet it was very helpful for me to think more than I ever have about the purposes of work and the creative value of *high-quality* leisure in the economy of God. Perhaps

few people are more time-frazzled than those running their own businesses; thus it is probably appropriate that a review of this book should appear in an issue on business priorities.

“Christians”, begins Ryken, “have their own version of the contemporary crisis in work and leisure. They feel guilty about their work and they feel guilty about their leisure. They do not understand either of them very well.”(p.9) He comments that the silence of the church on both work and leisure (lack of preaching, lack of study on the issue) has resulted in the church imitating the world. As a consequence, there are workaholics in the pews as there are in the world; there are Christians in the church with a poor work ethic as there are elsewhere in society. He summarises: “we worship our work, work at our play, and play at our worship.”(p.12). Nicely put!

Part One of his book introduces the themes of time, work and leisure. It could be called a sociological study of the role each of these plays in our lives. Part Two explores some of the problems we have with them. (I should add here that throughout the book Ryken employs a pattern of alternating treatments of work and leisure, chapter by chapter). In Part Three he undertakes a historical survey of the ways the church has either failed to teach, or helpfully taught, a truly Christian approach to both work and leisure. Part Four examines the “Inadequate Solutions” of both contemporary secular thinking, and of the contemporary church, in regard to the problems of work and leisure. (He discovered in the course of his research that one survey found ninety percent of churchgoers had never heard a sermon on everyday work issues, whereas in the Reformation and Puritan eras, work was one of the most frequent sermon topics). The final part, Part Five, is headed “Recovering the Lost Keys” and deals with what the Bible says about work and leisure. Since this offers hope (and solutions) you will be glad to know it is the longest section by far!

This is a satisfying and thoughtful approach to the problems many of us have with work and leisure. Part of our difficulty is that we overvalue work; we lack boundaries to our acquisitiveness; and we settle for poor-quality leisure activities. Our lives could look a lot more God-honouringly productive and creatively satisfying than they do. Ryken’s book provides a hopeful peek into just such a future.

Outward Focus

Sally Davey

God's people have always lived "among the nations" – that is, among people who do not know Him or love Him. As a result, we are oddities as far as the world is concerned. Sometimes this tempts us to turn inward, pull the curtains, shut out the world and content ourselves with each other's company. While none of us would deny the importance of looking after each other, that is not the end of our responsibilities in this life. God has put us in this world for other purposes: we need to look outwards.

In doing that, though, we'd be silly to forget the hostility that our alien status provokes. Such hostility has ancient roots: ever since Cain got angry at Abel and killed his brother, true believers have frequently attracted jealousy and anger. Nothing much has changed in the centuries since Jesus warned his disciples that the world would always hate us¹. And there is more. It will even try to drag us under and take us with it into sin if it can. So, if we want to live wisely and conduct ourselves well in this world we need to be forewarned and forearmed. We should not be surprised by the way the world is – God's Word is there to alert us.²

We cannot escape being in it, though, because it is where God has called us to be. But to live in this world well,

we need to understand it. We need to see the thinking of our times for what it is, and to look for the ways the Bible exposes its folly and answers its questions. We need to recognize the particular forms of rebellion our age exhibits, and to consider the ways we should resist them, living instead in ways that convey submission to Christ. As Paul wrote, we are to "... be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom [we] shine as lights in the world..." (Philippians 2:15)

To put it simply, the main reason we need to look outward is because God wants us to be a blessing to the nations. We are meant to shine light into a dark world. Everyone around us who does not know Him needs to know Him, and God has placed us in the world so that He can use us to draw the world to Himself. It always encourages me to remember that this calling of ours is part and parcel of being in Abraham's family. God told Abraham that all peoples of the world would be blessed through him³ – and He carries on blessing the world through us, Abraham's spiritual descendants. While it is true that not many Gentiles were added to the family in Old Testament times, everything changed with the Lord Jesus Christ. And since the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the gospel has been going out to the ends of the

earth. To take it, God has used businessmen, travellers, colonists and missionaries; neighbours, workmates and friends – ordinary people like you and me. Our task has always been to look outward, at the many opportunities there are to love people and draw them in, pointing them to the great Saviour who can rescue them from sin.

A New Column

So that brings us to "Outward Focus", the new column for our magazine. Its aim is simple: to help stimulate outward-looking; to help us understand our world better, and to be a greater blessing to it. It will include three kinds of articles.

First, there will be articles that investigate the world we live in today – both here in New Zealand and in western culture generally. What makes our world tick? What has made our society think the way it does today; and where is it headed? How does understanding it better help us to live as more consistent Christians? How does it help us avoid conforming to the world, in our thinking and manner of life⁴? How does it help us see God's purposes, and appreciate his wisdom more? How does it help us answer the questions of those blinded by sin, and point people to the truth?

Secondly, there will be articles on ways to take the gospel more effectively to the lost around us. Jesus once told his disciples: "Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest" – the point being that they were missing an opportunity right under their noses! Jesus' words come in the wake of his conversation with the Samaritan woman in John Chapter 4. She had gone from her well and had been telling all her neighbours about what Jesus had done for her. They were now coming looking for him, and the disciples had walked right past them. Could it be that we are missing seeing the ways people are stumbling around in search of the truth, seeking someone to save them from their troubles?

Finally, there will be articles sharing the stories of Christians in other parts of the world. I've often noticed how keen the apostle Paul was to hear news



of the believers in the early churches. That's also true of us, isn't it? We find it encouraging to hear how God is working through brothers and sisters in other places. Not just through official reports, but through the personal stories of what they're doing, and what fruit they are seeing from their labours.

Looking outward in their direction helps us realize we are not alone. Sometimes it also gives us good ideas, and helps us care more about those who don't yet know the Saviour⁵.

This new column will be starting next month. We hope it will provide interesting reading, useful food for thought,

and encouragement to take the gospel with us wherever we go.

Notes

- 1 Luke 21:17
- 2 See Romans 1:18-32
- 3 Genesis 12:3
- 4 Romans 12:2
- 5 Hebrews 10:24

Feminine focus

Veronica Hoyt

Calling all women: a New Year's challenge

I know that each year is a Year of our Lord; every day is a gift from him for which to give thanks. Yet, some years, when I get around to the annual Christmas letter, there doesn't seem all that much on which to report. Upon reflection, the year seemed just a little ho hum. 2013, however, was not one of those years. Amongst other things, I went to no less than two conferences for women, in Sydney. A focus of the first was how older women can minister to younger women (as per Paul's teaching in Titus 2). The second was more general, but I did attend one elective on how to implement a Titus 2 model of ministry in the local church.

The main focus in this Titus 2 model is for women to be reading the Bible together, to encourage each other to know Christ and to live lives shaped by him. Let me explain.

Wearing the Gospel

Titus 2:3-5 is well-known as the passage that speaks about women helping other women, often (but not always) younger than ourselves, to love their husbands and families, and so on. I've heard of a middle-aged lady with grownup kids popping in and helping a young mum fold the washing, or make the beds, or just working alongside her for a bit. Of others who invite young mums into their homes to teach them skills – sewing, cooking, gardening, etc. Many of our churches arrange meals rosters for mums of new babies. Others have helped mums

of busy families establish better schedules, or are good listeners to those with troubles of one kind or another. There are many ways to get alongside and help someone, and these are great examples of the communion of saints at work.

I wonder, however, whether this view of Titus 2, while not incorrect, can be a little narrow. If we see these verses as being primarily about running a household we've missed Paul's point. All that we've done is apply it in a very culturally specific way that fits in with the lives of some of us in NZ. The Bible is larger than that and we need to understand its broad application first.

Titus 2:3-5 is not in the first place a "to do" list, as in older women must do this and younger women are to do that. Instead, it highlights a way of life where healthy instruction produces healthy living. Paul's instructions about these two groupings within the church are to be seen within a wider context of Titus, which is largely about the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus. It's about helping other people to change. It encourages them to adorn the gospel (to wear it) in their day-to-day living, to stay on track, so that others may see the beauty of Christ.

The rationale, then, behind the instructions to the various genders and age groups within the church is the Lord Jesus. In 2:11, Paul writes about Jesus: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." He is the ultimate expression of God's grace.

It is this "grace" that trains us to say "no" to ungodliness and, instead, to live "self-controlled, upright and godly lives" (2:12). That is, to be "eager to do what is good" (2:14).

This puts Titus 2:3 into context when it says that older women are to "teach what is good." So, what is good? Pri-

“It's impossible to overstate how important the Bible is. They are the very words of God, described in Ephesians 6 as the sword of the Spirit, and breathed out by God himself.”

marily, this is about knowing the Lord Jesus (2:11-15). It is to understand "sound doctrine" (2:1) about the God we serve and the grace we experience day by day because of what Jesus has done for us. Titus 2 is certainly a great example of how this works out practically in our lives, but it is more than that. Older women should thus do far more than just teaching younger women how to cope with toddlers, or how to stretch the family budget. They are to teach younger women about "the grace of God that brings salvation" (2:11).

In other words, women are to teach each other the Scriptures.

Why the Bible?

I don't know about you but the women I feel closest to in my church are those with whom I've read the Bible and prayed with. Sharing these activities develops a special bond. That's why each of the ladies in my Bible study group is very dear to me. That's also the case with those I've read the Bible with on an individual level. Activities such as these are weekly highlights of growing together in understanding of all that is good.

It's impossible to overstate how important the Bible is. They are the very words of God, described in Ephesians 6

as the sword of the Spirit, and breathed out by God himself. It is the best source of training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). Hebrews 4:12 says that "the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing the division of soul and spirit." In *Desiring God*, John Piper writes that

when Satan huffs and puffs and tries to blow out the flame of our joy [found in our faith and hope in Jesus], we have an endless supply of kindling in the Word of God. Even on days when every cinder in our soul feels cold, if we crawl to the Word of God and cry out for ears to hear, the cold ashes will be lifted and the tiny spark of life will be found. For "the law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul." (144)¹

The Bible should thus be more than just the backdrop of (or the reason) why women help each other in the church, as they work out Titus 2. Rather, teaching it to each other forms part of Paul's instructions in this famous chapter, and should thus be in the foreground of our relationships. Of course, there are many ways to do this. However, I have a suggestion to make.

2014's Challenge

My challenge for the year is to find a Bible-reading-buddy. That is, get together with someone else for the purpose of reading and praying together. Do this for an hour once a week.

Who might this person be? That's entirely up to you. The point is to just get started. It could be your mum or your sister. It could be someone you know who is going through a hard time – someone who has recently lost a baby in a miscarriage, or experienced the death of a parent, or going through a hard time because of a wayward child. Sure, buy them flowers, but what, in the end, is more precious than reading together the words of eternal hope found in the Bible? Is there someone new at church (from elsewhere in NZ, or perhaps from overseas, or a new Christian)? Befriend her as you read the Bible together. Maybe you know someone who has morning sickness (all day!). She, too, needs to keep looking up to Jesus – even when she spends most of the day peering down into the toilet bowl. Read the Bible together to remind each other of this reality! Do you have a neighbour who needs to know Jesus? Ask her if you can read about him together. Do you know a working lady who can't get to the morning ladies' Bible studies? Meet up with her in her lunch break, and read together. Maybe you've been chatting with a mum at the school gate. Or you know a student living away from her family. Reach out and help her grow in these formative years over a cup of coffee and God's Word. Really, the list is as big as the people you know and the vision you have for spending time with others in this way.

Does this sound daunting? Pray about it. Ask God to help you find someone. And then ask her something like, "would you like to get together to read the Bible with me?" It's really not all that complicated.

The point is: find someone and get started. Don't be shy, but motivated by the rich reward promised (2:13).

A Few Tips

So, now that you have someone to meet up with, what's next? Find a book in the Bible that both of you agree on (if this is your first time, choose a book that's not too hard). When you read the Bible together, there are various things you can do. I've found the following approach to be helpful:

1 Brief catch-up and prayer asking God

Wellington Ladies Presbyterial

March 15, 2014

Hosted by the Reformed Church of Masterton

37 Herbert Street

The day will begin with morning tea at 9:30am.

"Back to Basics"

Growing gratitude by identifying what the Lord has given us. Together we will learn to appreciate the extravagant goodness of daily life.

"Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment." 1Tim 6:6

The speaker of the day is Carissa Fairbrother. She is a financial advisor who is enthusiastic about helping people live within their means. There will also be time to enjoy a few "basic pleasures" during the afternoon sessions.

Friday night, March 14, is an optional opportunity for fellowship; there will be a sit down dinner accompanied by local musicians. Come enjoy some time together at the Ten O'clock Cookie Bakery & Cafe. There is a cost for the dinner. Billets or a motel are available for those interested. Please contact Janneke Stolte at jjestolte@hotmail.com before March 1 for reservations.

to open our eyes as we read his word (note to self: remember to keep the chat brief).

- 2 Read the passage (either in its entirety or stopping-and-starting).
- 3 As you read, look for three things for brief discussion:
 - a) those things that stand out (some call this a “light-bulb moment”);
 - b) questions that arise that you can help each other with; and
 - c) how this passage might apply to you personally.
- 4 Pray together as you respond to God about what he has just said to you, and also pray for each other.

The point is not, however, to have a perfect ‘structure’ but simply to get together and read, learn, and grow as you understand more and more what the Lord has to tell you in the passage you’re reading.²

Of course, the challenge is to simply get started. Once you get going, however, don’t stop. When you complete a Bible

book, you could stick with your partner and start another Bible book. Or, you could both agree to find someone else, perhaps branching out to a situation more challenging – maybe someone you don’t know as well. This last challenge is especially to those who are already reading the Bible one-to-one, or have done so in the past.

Are you in a position to do more? A challenge for you might be to read the Bible with a variety of women, perhaps at differing stages of Christian maturity. For example, you may read with one woman who doesn’t yet know the Lord Jesus (thus sharing the gospel with her), or you may read with someone who is serving in some area in the church (a Sunday school teacher, for example), or as a way to connect with someone who is new at church.

Are you already a leader in some way (of a Bible study group, for example)? Use your leadership position to encourage your ladies – and, of course, lead by example.

Rise to the Challenge!

A final word from the Word: We’re told in 1 Peter to “crave pure spiritual milk” (that is, the Bible). Let’s rise to the challenge this year and drink it together as women, “so that by it you may grow up [mature] in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good” (1 Peter 2:2).

1 This chapter from which this quote comes (chapter five, entitled “Scripture”) of *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (rev. edition, 2012) is a very helpful exposition on why reading the Bible is so vital for believers.

2 If you’re looking for resources (and perhaps church librarians could think about this, too), I recommend: *One to One Bible Reading: A Simple Guide for Every Christian* by David Helm, and also resources from The Good Book Company such as *One2One* by Andrew Cornes, or *The Word: One to One* by William Taylor. A useful article is: “The Swedish Method” at <http://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/2009/01/the-swedish-method/>

A peaceful example to celebrate at Waitangi

Sophia Sinclair

Every year our newspapers and screens are full of provocative headlines marking our national day. Journalists are poised to write about this year’s new controversy. Armchair commentators and talkback radio listeners cry ‘foul’ every chance they get. On one day each year New Zealand gets ugly, and boy do we do it well. Is there anything positive from our history that we can truly celebrate on Waitangi Day?

I believe the Treaty of Waitangi marks an important moment in our shared heritage. It marks a moment when our ancestors came together to find a workable solution for political and social unrest. A wave of settlers arrived in New Zealand in the late 1830s bringing with them a strong pioneer spirit and greed for land. Without significant restrictions and legislation general disorder began to escalate

and land grabbing got out of hand. A solution was required to protect the rights and interests of the growing number of British settlers and the indigenous Maori people. The Treaty of Waitangi was established as a way of moving forward as a nation.

I am inspired by reading stories of the lives of the early missionaries who took part in the Treaty process. This may sound odd, especially as translation of the Treaty (carried out by these missionaries) is such a contentious issue. However, I believe there is a lot we can learn from the men and women who gave their lives to serve and share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Church Missionary Society missionary Henry Williams was born in England. At just 14 he joined the British Royal Navy where he became a midshipman and fought during the Napoleonic wars. After 10 years of service Henry retired,

and went on to meet and marry his wife Marianne Coldham. The influence of Henry’s close friend and brother-in-law Edward Marsh led Henry to seek ordination and become a missionary.

Henry and Marianne arrived in New Zealand in 1823, and were soon joined by Henry’s brother, William Williams, and his wife Jane. Based at the mission station in Paihia, the brothers were quick to focus on learning the Maori language. Their dedication and hard work resulted in the publication of several passages of scripture to be used for ministry in New Zealand. Their translation work was continued with the arrival of William Colenso in 1834. By 1838 the entire New Testament and Prayer Book had been translated and printed.

Henry Williams recognised the need for people to be at peace with God. This was a great motivator for his study of Maori language and culture. Henry and

William were leaders in training other missionaries to learn Te Reo comprehensively in order to enhance the effectiveness of their preaching and ministry to local people. Henry's friendship and love of the Maori people he worked with were evident. On several occasions he is recorded to have stepped in to calm conflict before warring tribes could come to blows. His labours to preserve the peace were well known.

By 1839 he had successfully set up mission stations at Tauranga, the East Cape and Otaki. This success was overshadowed by the mounting tension between the Maori people and European forces. Henry was often used as a mediator between British military forces and Maori tribal leaders, leading to his involvement in the translation and signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840.

His actions and words make it clear that Henry's true motivation for supporting the Treaty was a desire for recognition of Maori rights to land and protection from the Queen, and for peace between Maori and European people. Many Maori chiefs were won by Henry Williams' godly character and signed the Treaty in good faith that the European government would be the same. I believe he would be disappointed with how godless

men have used their power and influence to distort the Treaty. In his book, *Bible and Treaty: Missionaries among the Maori – a new perspective*, author Keith Newman sums up what followed in the years to come:

Greedy men, hungry for cheap land and temporal power, betrayed and delayed the proposed partnership plan outlined in both the Bible and the Treaty of Waitangi – mocking humanitarian promises, undermining the missionary influence and misinterpreting science with a borrowed bias from the era of slavery.

Even in his death in 1867, Henry's desire for peace prevailed. Two warring tribes were preparing for battle when they heard he had died. A truce was announced and both chiefs came forward to carry and bury their great friend. When the tribes met on the battlefield they read some of the Maori New Testament, knelt in prayer together and made their peace in honour of the example of Henry Williams.

As we come together each year to commemorate the Treaty of Waitangi let us reflect on our past, and learn from it. Let us be men and women of peace, laying aside our biases to con-

sider the concerns and needs of others before our own. Let us commit again to journey with one another toward reconciliation and understanding. Like Henry Williams, may our motivation be one of selfless love for others, a desire to be at peace with each other, and a desire for all people to be at peace with God.



Sophia Sinclair is a writer with a background in theatre, English literature and journalism. Sophia has been serving as the Communications Officer for the New Zealand Church Missionary Society since 2009, and is thankful for the opportunity to promote God's mission around New Zealand. Sophia is married to Andrew and they live in Christchurch.

Focus on home

Harriet Haverland

Gleanings ...

BY THE GLEANINGS TEAM:

Odette De Kock – Auckland
Presbytery

Yvonne Walraven – Wellington
Presbytery

Frances Watson – Christchurch
Presbytery

Collated and Edited by **Harriet Haverland**

MISSIONS

Ant and Petra Lagas and their children plan to return to New Zealand from the Solomon Islands early March 2014. Ant has been training a local man to take

over his role as the manager of Bethesda.

Wellington: Susan Larsen was granted an extension of her present assignment with AVID (the Australian volunteer aid organisation that has supported her for the past 4 years) for another six months, so up until June 2014.

Pukekohe: Midwife on a Mission; as part of her final months of midwifery training, Mrs Sarah Bosgra was able to go to the Shiphrah Birthing Home in the Philippines, situated in the Rizal province just out of urban Manila, for a midwifery internship from mid November to mid December 2013. Shiphrah was established by two American missionary midwives who aim to provide safe, dignified birthing experiences for poor Filipino women. It is a beautiful service-based ministry and one that makes a huge difference to the physical and spiritual wellbeing of Filipino fami-

lies. One of the ways the work is funded is by offering paid 'apprenticeships' for international student midwives.

Rina Pijker is travelling to the (French) Republic of Congo to volunteer with the Mercy Ship Organisation. As a ward nurse working aboard the Africa Mercy my main duties will be pre and post operative care of children and adults. I flew out on the 27th November to meet the Africa Mercy in the Congo and will be returning early February 2014.

MINISTERS AND CHURCH WORKERS

Julian & Melinda Dykman will be in Bishopdale as of early 2014. Bishopdale applied to the CRCA vicariate committee to host one of the two vicars available (Stephen Coleman and Julian Dykman). Bishopdale gives thanks to the Lord for His gracious provision and for this op-

portunity to help train a minister of the gospel.

Rev. David Waldron, pastor of the Reformed Church of Hastings, accepted a call from the Reformed Church of Christchurch. He had also received a call from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach.

Rev. Dirk van Garderen, although officially retired, is continuing to preach in Bucklands Beach while they search for a new minister.

Rev. Leo de Vos concluded his service in Wainuiomata early December 2013 and arrived in Hukanui DV mid January. The farewell service was held on December 1st after which there was a dinner and a farewell ceremony.

Rev. Dick & Mrs Mary Wynja returned to the U.S. late November 2013 after their three months of service in Hastings.

Rev. Craig van Echten and **Miss Annette Brinke** will marry DV on January 25th 2014 in Australind, WA.

Rev. Michael Flinn had stents inserted into two arteries near his heart after suffering a heart attack. Praise God for modern medical care! We pray Rev. Flinn makes a full recovery.

Rev. Tim & Mrs Georgette Rott are expecting to return to the U.S.A. in April 2014 after three years of service in Christchurch.

CHURCH BUILDINGS

Pukekohe: The new church building is progressing rapidly and Lord willing will be completed in February 2014.

North Shore: The congregation hopes to begin a building extension to develop the downstairs area in March 2014.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EVANGELISM

Bishopdale: We will be singing carols in the park. We encourage you to come and join in and make this a truly memorable occasion. Please also pray that God would use this to bring people to him. A sausage sizzle will be held and other refreshments served afterwards. If you could bring some baking along this would be much appreciated.

Bishopdale: Carwash in the Carpark is a great outreach opportunity, but there are just a couple of things we'd like some help with to make it a success. Car washers! Talkers! If you're not keen on washing cars, we'd really love to have some people available just to talk to the people that come, while their cars are being washed. Having Christmas just around the corner provides a great opportunity to just have a chat about why

Christmas is important and we'd really value your time to help us do that. No need to be an experienced evangelist or anything, just have a chat!

Hamilton and Hukanui Home Mission: Volunteers from the churches in Hamilton distributed 370 copies of the DVD "180movie" at local high schools. This DVD has a very strong pro-life message and has the ability to turn people from pro-choice to pro-life. It also has a very good Gospel presentation. Pray that all those who received a copy will watch it and be affected by it in a positive way. The movie can be seen online at www.180movie.com

Hamilton and Hukanui Home Mission: A six-month letterbox drop focused on "biblical creation" targeting the residents of homes located around the church premises will commence Lord willing early this year. The campaign involves



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delivering CMI (Creation Ministry International) tracts and booklets to each of the residences every fortnight. The formal campaign will conclude with a CMI 'creation evening' at the end of June with Mr Robert Hunt from the CMI as speaker, plus a creation book stall operating. Invitations to attend church services and the CMI creation evening are part of the letterbox drop.

Buckland's Beach: The LABS (Language Assisted Bible Studies) programme came to a close for 2013 with an 'end-of-year' international dinner. The Lord is good. The programme is set to continue next year.

Dovedale: Our annual Community Christmas Carols evening will be held on

the front lawn of church. We're planning on having some free entertainment for kids beforehand, starting at 4pm with a bouncy castle and face painting, followed by a free sausage sizzle dinner and then the carol singing. Dessert will be served in the hall following the carols. We'd love it if you could come. Bring some friends, too! Please bring your own lawn chair/picnic blanket (and extras if you have them) as well as a dessert.

North Shore: We continue to be encouraged by people coming to LABS, most of whom are Christians. A total of 26 people had been to the course in 2013 but not everyone returned. Next year we are planning to run an extra class. Please pray that God will provide in this ministry.

North Shore: Mainly music had a really good year, the Lord is gracious. We reached capacity during the year and it was necessary to start a waiting list. What a wonderful opportunity for evangelism.

CAMPS & CONFERENCES

Cadets and GEMS Camp: January 11th to 18th

Auckland Women's Presbyterial: March 15th at the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach

Hamilton Easter Convention: April 18th to 19th

CLASSES & COURSES

School of Theology: January 17th to 20th at the Reformed Church of Palmerston North, open to all and for everyone who wishes to deepen their understanding of Scripture. The themes are: Knowing God; Eschatology and Understanding the Book of Revelation.

RTC distance learning: The RTC Distance programme is a great way to participate in some of the units by the RTC from home. All units are fully ACT accredited and students can work towards the completion of a Graduate Diploma of Divinity (which can be completed in distance mode). Otherwise our online units help students to complete the first part of a theological degree at home before coming to the RTC to complete their awards.

**Office Bearer Training Course at Bish-
opdale:** Several years ago we ran an office bearers training course for prospective and current elders and deacons. We are running this course again. All males with an aspiration to serve the Lord in this capacity are welcome.

Persecution Update

On the Gospel Coalition website, Joe Carter posted the following points concerning the persecution of Christians around the world: Christians are the single most widely persecuted religious group in the world today. With the exception of four official state-controlled churches in Pyongyang, Christians in North Korea face the risk of detention in the prison camps, severe torture and, in some cases, execution for practicing their religious beliefs. North Koreans suspected of having contact with South Korean or other foreign missionaries in China, and those caught in possession of a Bible, have been known to be executed. In Syria, Christians are increasingly becoming the target of violent attacks. Catholic and Orthodox groups in Syria say the anti-government rebels have committed "awful acts" against Christians, including beheadings, rapes and murders of pregnant women. A special 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syria's Christians' conducted by the World Watch unit of Open Doors International from June 2013 warned that Syrian Christians are the victims of "disproportionate violence and abuse." They warned further that Christian women in Syria are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse. In August 2013, Egypt faced what has been called the worst anti-Christian violence in seven centuries: 38 churches were destroyed, 23 vandalized; 58 homes were burned and looted and 85 shops, 16 pharmacies and 3 hotels were demolished; 6 Christians were killed in the violence and 7 were kidnapped. The bloodiest attack on Christians in Pakistan's history occurred in September 2013. Two suicide bombers exploded shrapnel laden vests outside All Saints' Church in the old city of Peshawar. Choir members and children attending Sunday school were among 81 people killed. The attack left 120 people wounded, with 10 of them in critical condition. During an attack on a shopping mall in Nairobi in September, Islamic terrorists asked people for the name of Muhammad's mother or to recite a verse from the Quran in order to identify non-Muslims. One of the terrorists announced, "We have come to kill you Christians and Kenyans because you have been killing our women and children in Somalia. Any Muslims can go." Four Christians in Iran will get 80 lashes each this month for drinking wine during a communion service. Ahmed Shaheed, UN special rapporteur on human rights in Iran, said that it is common practice for Christians to be punished for violating theocratic laws. In the UN report Shaheed wrote: 'At least 20 Christians were in custody in July 2013. In addition, violations of the rights of Christians, particularly those belonging to evangelical Protestant groups, many of whom are converts, who proselytize to and serve Iranian Christians of Muslim background, continue to be reported.' An average of 100 Christians around the world are killed each month for their faith.

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FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

North Shore: The garage sale was a great success with record sales reached. We look forward to doing it again next year.

Avondale: The kindly and congregation hosted a gala to raise their profile in the local community and to raise funds to plant an orchard.

ACTIVITIES

South Island Ladies Fellowship: To the ladies of the South Island Reformed Churches: We would be delighted if you would save Saturday 1 March 2014 for the next South Island Ladies' Fellowship. Lord willing, this is to be held in Oamaru, classic Victorian town and world capital of Steam Punk.

Palmerston North: Senior Citizen's Christmas Afternoon has been planned. Please invite your elderly friends and neighbours. Everyone is welcome to attend to join in with the singing and fellowship and mingle with the guests.

Auckland Presbytery report – November 2013

After a welcome to delegates and visitors, Pastor John Rogers conducted opening devotions on behalf of the convening church (North Shore). Pastor Michael Willemse was appointed Moderator and Pastor John Haverland Vice-Moderator. The main items of interest were:

- Appreciation was expressed for the presentations at the recent Men's Study Day at the North Shore. The Men's Study Day for 2014 will be organised by the Reformed Church of Hamilton.
- It was decided that the Auckland Presbytery By-Laws would be published on the RCNZ website as per the suggestion of the Church Order Committee.
- Church Visitation Reports for all congregations were received and a little 'mutual admonition' given in regard to a couple of matters arising.
- Pastor Dirk van Garderen reported from the National Diaconate Committee, mainly regarding upcoming special offerings for the Henry Murray School for the Deaf in Zimbabwe, and in response to the recent typhoon in the Philippines.
- John Haverland reported on behalf of Mr John Kaijser that there are a

number of new members on the Regional Youth Committee, things continue to go well and regular meetings are held. John Kaijser is happy to continue for another year as Presbytery Youth Liaison and was thus re-appointed, with thanks.

- On behalf of the Overseas Mission Board, Dirk van Garderen reported on Pastor Peter Kloosterman's visit to the Auckland Presbytery churches in September. The meetings went well but were not very well attended.
- Mr John Voschezang expressed appreciation for the help received by Hukanui during their vacancy, esp. from Michael Willemse and the Hamilton elders in leading worship services, and reported that they envisage the installation of Pastor Leo de Vos taking place in early February, 2014.
- Also with hearty thanks and appreciation, Mr Pieter van der Wel was reappointed as Stated Clerk for the Presbytery for 2014.

John Rogers

Wellington Presbytery Report – November 2013

The Wellington Presbytery met on Saturday 2 November 2013 in the lovely new building of the Reformed Church of Palmerston North. The moderator was Pastor Leo de Vos.

A summary of the meeting follows.

Youth Liaison Report: Since the Youth Committee had not met, there was nothing to report to Presbytery. However, in the light of Leo de Vos's imminent departure from this Presbytery, Mr Carl van der Meulen was appointed as Presbytery's new liaison with the Youth Committee.

OMB Liaison Report: Pastor Peter Kloosterman presented a written report of the visit which he, Mr John Kloeg and Pastor David Waldron, as delegates of the OMB, paid to Papua New Guinea. The purpose of this visit was to attend the second On-Field Reformed Ministries Conference, a conference organised by the missionaries in PNG, and attended by delegates from the three mission boards that are affiliated with Reformed Ministries.

Reports were heard on the status of the Reformed Churches of PNG and the work done by the Reformed Churches Bible College.

The missionaries witnessed how the Lord continues to show His goodness. Yet, they also realise that PNG is a country decimated by false religions, sects and syncretism. One of the struggles in the PNG churches is the attraction of western wealth and western influence. This hinders the advance of God's kingdom, because missionaries are received for their gifts rather than for the gospel.

The delegates' interviews with the missionaries were experienced as mutually encouraging. They reported that it was a time to listen and learn the struggles faced on the field, but also to see and hear how the Lord has sustained and equipped the Douma's and the Hagoort's for their called tasks.

Work in Mbale, Uganda: Pastor Paul Archbald, spent three weeks in Mbale, during August-September and reported on the work at the Knox Theological College (KTC), which is run by the OPC. There were 18 students of whom 16 took the exam and 11 passed.

The churches seem to be growing – especially in Mbale town. The congregation has outgrown the building it rented, so they now worship in the mission grounds where Pastor Eric Tuininga and his family live. They meet in the open-air as they are currently saving for their own land and building.

Eric Tuininga seems to be doing a fine job in running the KTC as well as with his involvement in the Mbale-town congregation. He is fast-learning the main local language and gets alongside the local people and OPCU pastors.

Since the Reformed Church of Silverstream got involved in this ministry, nearly twenty years ago, they have constantly seen how the Lord has blessed the church in Mbale. These church members meet many times per week and they have acquired a solid knowledge of the Catechism.

Pastor Flinn led the Presbytery meeting in prayer for the work of our Lord in Mbale.

Appointments of Synodical Examiners: Peter Kloosterman agreed to continue for another term and Pastor Hans Vaatstra was appointed by common consent to replace Leo de Vos.

Pulpit Supply Roster for Vacant Churches: Presbytery instructed the clerk to draw up a pulpit supply roster for the Reformed Churches of Wellington and Wainuiomata in such a way that the visiting minister would serve the one congregation in the morning, and the other

congregation in the afternoon.

Release of Leo de Vos: Presbytery endorsed the letter of release presented by the Session of the Reformed Church of Wainuiomata and gladly accepted the offer of Pastor (emeritus) Goris to be the Counsellor for Wainuiomata. Paul Archbald led the Presbytery meeting in a prayer of thanksgiving for the work of Leo de Vos during his time in the Wellington Presbytery.

Palmerston North, very enthusiastically, informed the meeting of their planned School of Theology in January 2014.

The meeting was concluded with prayer at 2.45pm.

Pieter van Huyssteen

Overseas Mission Board Short Report – November 2013

A special welcome was extended to Mr John Voschezang who attended as representative for Hukanui Reformed Church, the sending church for Mr Wally and Mrs Sjannette Hagoort. John's presence was mutually helpful in that we were able to work out leave entitlements and repatriation to New Zealand for the Hagoorts. They plan to leave the field early 2015 after ten years of service in PNG.

With the 28th RCNZ Synod scheduled for September 2014 the chairman assigned synodical reports to various OMB

members for our mission workers, the work of the OMB in general, the financial report and budgets and the revised Missions Policy Handbook.

Work on the Missions Policy Handbook was finalised at this meeting. Thanks were expressed to Mr John Koolaard for having undertaken the bulk of the work in revising the handbook.

The Board agreed to a request from Reformed Ministries Team (RMT) to find someone with the necessary skills to organise builders from our churches to help construct a new manse next to the Ekoro church building which has been shifted out of the village closer to the main road. The OMB accepted there is a pressing need for Nawai, the candidate minister at Ekoro to have a suitable place of accommodation for his family and a place for him to work in peace.

A request for funds to construct security fences around two garden blocks owned by the Reformed Churches Bible College (RCBC) was agreed to by the board. The total cost of the fencing would be equally divided by the three contributing denominations to Reformed Missions in PNG, i.e. Canadian Reformed, Free Reformed in Australia and the RCNZ. This new project will be presented to our congregations as a 'fund-raiser' by the treasurer.

The RMT have recognised the need for a compound manager to manage

7 July 1933 – 20 November 2013

"But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us"

Romans 8:37

At the age of 80 years, at God's appointed time, the Lord has taken to Himself

JOHAN LAMBERS

Much loved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather

We are thankful to God to all He gave us through him and that he is now free from suffering and confusion.

Tietsia Lambers (nee Regeling)

Norman & Ann

Cameron
Gabrielle
Rhys

Raymond & Rebeca

Caitlin
Timothy
Lucia

Harry & Juliet

Tracey & Derek van der Werff
Lucy, Ruby
Kirsty & David van Delden
Lisa & Grant Bosveld:
Leah, Judah
Brendan (dec)
Eleanor & Jesse
Alistair

Jantina & David Leenders

Michelle & Rowan Archbald
Carl & Stacey

Wendy & John Snoeijer

May we take this opportunity to THANK YOU all so much for your support during Johan's illness and passing on into glory. We truly experienced the hand of a loving Father so much in your care, words of comfort and encouragement, visits and prayers.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord, Is the death of His godly ones."

Psalms 116:15

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<http://www.rcnz.org.nz>

the RCBC properties and grounds, assist with administration and do some teaching. Ideally the position would be suited to someone who has served as an elder and is able to teach the work and role

of office bearers to others at the RCBC and church groups. To have such a man on the college premises would free up the ordained missionaries to concentrate on their primary calling of teaching and

preaching. The board gave 'in principle' agreement to the concept and await a detailed job description recognising that such a position will need Synod approval.

Hans Vaatstra

Ten reasons why hymnals have a future

John D. Witvliet

The function of hymnals in the life of the church has changed dramatically over the past thirty years. Many congregations rarely use them. Thousands of Christians seldom, if ever, open one.

Many congregations do use hymnals every week, in both public worship and in church education and pastoral care. Still others are rediscovering the value of hymnals, reintroducing their selective use alongside other ways of presenting songs.

Hymnals make several valuable contributions to Christian life today, in dynamic interaction with all the other ways we access and project music and information. Further, a hymnal is a valuable resource for all kinds of Christians, as well as congregational leaders, whether or not their congregation uses a hymnal in worship.

Here are ten reasons why:

1. Hymnals are especially well suited to good group singing of many kinds of songs (though not all)

Hymnals are well suited to singing contemplative songs, where it is helpful to sing with bowed head, while seated or kneeling.

Hymnals are especially useful for singing in harmony.

Hymnals are ideal for texts that are more linear – texts that unfold an argument or tell a story in several stanzas. When we sing those kinds of texts from a screen, we can't see the whole thing at once, and it's very easy to lose track of where the song is going. (The same can be said for reading the Bible while seeing only one verse at time.)

2. Hymnals are portable

Hymnals can travel easily into Sunday school rooms, summer camps, hospital

rooms, family rooms, and more. Many congregations that no longer use hymnals or songbooks for worship are realising that they – without intending to – no longer sing together in places that lack projection equipment. Or, they end up singing only a very narrow range of songs that the congregation may know from memory. This means that they sing less (or not at all) in Bible study groups, in council or staff meetings, or at other gatherings.

3. Hymnals are splendid for home piano or keyboard devotional playing

For thousands of believers over the past century or more, including my own grandfather, some of the sweetest hours of prayer have happened at the family piano or keyboard. A devotional tour of the hymnal might begin with a favourite song, but then veer off into uncharted territory – rather like a spiritual off-road vehicle.

True enough, a few people can do this by ear, without a book. True enough, you can print some songs off the Internet, though it costs much more to print 900 songs at home than to buy a hymnal with the same number of selections.

4. Hymnals are an efficient one-stop worship planning resource

With a hymnal, a pastor can swiftly thumb through a varied but well edited cluster of at least ten songs for Easter, or morning prayer, or lament, for example. You could find the same ten songs on the Internet, but that would take twenty clicks or more – after you waded through a dizzying variety of other options with no guarantee of their musical or theological integrity. While a hymnal need not be the only worship planning resource, it is one indispensable resource.

5. Hymnals make it relatively easy to stumble on and fall in love with good music you never thought you would like

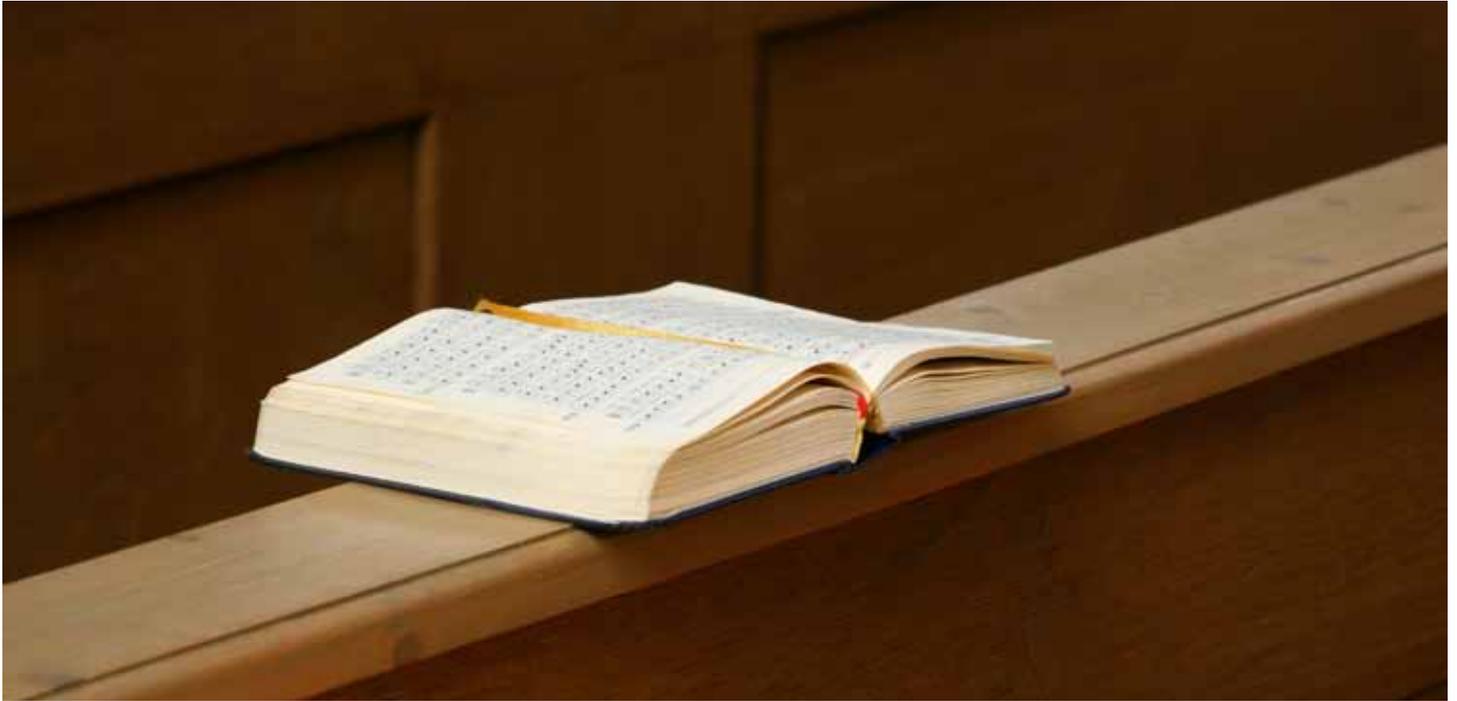
One stunning result of the 1987 Psalter Hymnal was the number of Anglo congregations that fell in love with the black gospel hymn "Lead Me, Guide Me," and the number of history-resisting congregations that found "If You But Trust in God to Guide You" to be a source of blessing in times of tragedy. Now, it is very possible to experience crossover songs on the internet, or through other sources. But, in general, the internet tends to feed us more of what we like. It pulls toward homogenisation. Today's hymnals, with their musical diversity, are designed to help us meet, discover, and come to love a wide variety of music.

6. Well-designed hymnals offer a vision of a balanced thematic diet

Any hymnal worth its salt needs songs for both praise and lament, for both Christmas and Jesus' baptism, for both Thanksgiving Day and New Year's Day, for both morning and evening prayer, and texts for probably a hundred other key themes. One of the main goals for any hymnal is to give people access to a balanced musical diet, full of all the right kinds of proteins and carbohydrates to sustain the life of faith.

As several leading advocates of contemporary music have recently pointed out, the contemporary worship industry is not well organised to promote this balanced worship diet. The top two hundred songs in the CCLI list are simply the two hundred most-sung songs. There is no mechanism built into such a list to ensure thematic balance (though we need not blame the CCLI list for not doing what it can't possibly do!)

Every congregation, whether it uses hymnals or not, needs a tool for imag-



ining a balanced diet. The best hymnals turn out to be very useful resources. For this reason, I am grateful for a number of contemporary songwriters I know who regularly look at hymnals to remind them of the kinds of songs that they need to be writing to fill in the gaps of the church's repertoire – songs that may never become greatest hits, but that may be used, like powerful yeast, to transform the imagination of large segments of the church.

I realise that congregations who use hymnals may not themselves have a balanced diet. They may choose only a narrow range of what appears in the book. But just as a good reference book in nearly any field (medicine, for example) opens up our eyes to a full range of learning, so too a hymnal offers a vision of the breadth of the church's song.

7. Hymnals help connect songs with elements of worship

Many hymnals include selections that integrate music with a variety of prayers, liturgies, and other acts of worship. Indeed, some of the best music in worship doesn't stand on its own; it helps a congregation sing its way through the telling of a biblical story or pray through the prayers of the people. In contrast, the CCLI list and the larger worship industry are best at delivering ready-packaged songs that stand on their own. They are not well equipped (at least for now) to generate ways to integrate music and congregational prayer, or music and Lord's Supper liturgies.

8. Hymnals give people access to a "cultural memory bank" that many desperately want

I have been struck of late by the number of emerging churches that want to meet in old cathedrals ("Give me a building with a memory," one pastor said). While some are fleeing from oppressive histories, many spiritual nomads are longing for a sense of history. It's hard to think of a more poignant and accessible way of engaging history than by singing the songs used by Christians across the centuries.

9. Hymnals can be appealing to seekers

To be sure, for some seekers, a hymnal could well be a barrier to the faith – too foreign and incomprehensible on first reading. To other seekers, a hymnal could be appealing as a proof that the community takes its faith seriously, invests in enduring art forms, and is willing to encounter difficult texts and themes. Hymnal lovers need to honestly realise how hymnals can be a barrier for some people, and hymnal detractors need to realise that they can be a gift and attraction for others.

10. A hymnal can be a surprisingly effective catechism tool for both brand-new and lifelong Christians

Hymnals offer pithy, memorable, poetic answers to a host of questions that people have about the Christian faith. They summarise vast, sweeping biblical themes in the space of a single page, often with remarkable nuance. Even if a congregation doesn't sing "In Christ

Alone," that text is a fine way to introduce people to the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. It is a powerful tool for learning about the faith for people at every stage of their faith journey.

In summary, hymnals are a good resource, not the only good resource. And they may not even be the best single resource for every one of these functions. But for overall value, it's pretty hard to beat a single book that does so many things at once:

- provides a comprehensive reference resource for finding songs and one technological mode of presenting songs;
- functions as a musical collection and a worship book, with prayers and liturgies for congregational use;
- presents a single-volume snap-shot of the diversity of the church throughout time and space, a kind of working experiment in the "catholicity" or "universality" of the church; and
- acts as a single source for strengthening devotional, pastoral care, educational, and liturgical ministries, making it possible to integrate these dimensions of the Christian life.

This article is featured in the June 2013 issue of Reformed Worship magazine and was taken from the website Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. Abridged.

Visit to Papua New Guinea

John Kloeg and I arrived in PNG on Wednesday, 10 October, and remained there for 2 weeks. We were welcomed at the airport by Pastor Alan Douma and the pervasive humidity and heat of PNG. Our purpose for going to PNG was to represent the Overseas Mission Board at the On-field Reformed Ministries Conference. The three mission boards that are affiliated with Reformed Ministries and are supporting the work of the Reformed Churches in PNG sent delegates to the conference. The other delegates would arrive through the remainder of the week from Canada (2 delegates) and from Australia (2 delegates). We joined Pastor David Waldron, who had arrived a week earlier, and spent time with the Doumas and the Hagoorts. John and I were also tasked with reviewing the work in PNG and interviewing the Doumas and the Hagoorts on behalf of the OMB.

The conference was organised by the

missionaries in PNG. There are seven who are called to serve as missionaries or mission workers in PNG. Four are in the Port Moresby area: Pastor Alan and Mrs Odette Douma, Mr Wally and Mrs Sjanette Hagoort from the RCNZ; Pastor Henry and Mrs Rita Versteeg, Pastor Cornelis and Mrs Greta Kleyn from the Canadian Reformed Churches; and 3 in the Lae area: Pastor Ian and Mrs Nadia Wildeboer, Pastor Tim and Mrs Francine Sikkema, Mr Chris and Mrs Nicole Steenhof from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. The Steenhofs and Nadia Wildeboer were unable to attend the conference due to prior commitments and sick children.

This was the second time an on-field conference was held. It proved, once again, to be very beneficial for the represented boards and also for the missionaries. It was a time when reports were heard on the status of the Reformed Churches of PNG and the work of the Reformed Churches' Bible College. The missionaries were able to relate the blessings of the Lord in this work and also the trials that they face in assisting the churches. The planting of Reformed churches is very difficult and has been greatly hampered and deviously resisted by the people in PNG. The Lord continues to show His goodness, but the missionaries also realise that this is a country that has been decimated by false religions, sects and syncretism. One of the struggles in the churches of PNG is the attraction of western wealth and western influence. This hinders the advance of God's kingdom because missionaries are received for their gifts rather than for the gospel. The health and wealth message is prominent in PNG.

At the conference we heard the missionaries share their love for and desire to teach the whole counsel of God's Word, and the ways this is difficult in a culture saturated with false teachers and mis-directed missions. This is one reason why the Bible College is so important. It strives to train indigenous pastors to preach the gospel in its entirety and to

minister the Word of God to their brothers and sisters in the Lord. With joy we heard of the graduates who are now candidate ministers, and also of others who are concluding the diploma program and may be called to further service in the churches. It was a heartening discussion to see how the Lord has blessed these efforts to help the Reformed Churches of PNG become self-governing, self-propagating and self-supporting. The work is not easy but there was mutual encouragement for faithfulness to the Lord and waiting upon Him to bless this work. We were all duly encouraged to pray and support this work before the throne of grace.

The Boards also discussed their visions and involvement in the work in PNG. The delegates were able to discuss the different ways that their boards run and the different means that they have to support the work. This was a helpful discussion, in that we could talk openly about our differences, but also realise the harmony we have. We are united in our goal of helping the Reformed Churches of PNG strive to be independent in their service of the Lord while they remain faithful to Him and live dependently on Him.

Besides the harmony experienced at the conference, other highlights of the trip were the opportunities to meet the students at the RCBC and to visit the Reformed Churches in the Port Moresby area. The first Sunday of our stay, John, David Waldron and I went with the Doumas to Veifa'a. This is a drive of three hours one way that Alan Douma makes every three weeks in order to support the Reformed Church group in that area. The Sunday that we visited David Waldron preached and I led the catechism instruction for the congregation. We also had the privilege of observing the election of candidate elders. This was a milestone for the congregation and represents one of the initial steps toward their move to becoming an established church. These leaders were chosen to study and prepare for service

Knots Untied – J.C.Ryle Pg.161

This is the only Church which is *certain to endure* unto the end. Its members may be persecuted, oppressed, imprisoned, beaten, beheaded, burned. – But the true Church is never altogether extinguished. It rises again from its afflictions. – It lives on through fire and water. – When crushed in one hand, it springs up in another. The Pharaohs, the Herods, the Neros, the Julians, the Diocletians, the bloody Marys, the Charles the Ninths have laboured in vain to put down this Church. They slay their thousands, and then pass away and go to their own place. The true Church outlives them all, and sees them buried each in his turn. It is an anvil that has broken many a hammer in this world, and will break many a hammer still. It is a bush which is often burning, and yet is not consumed.

as elders within the church. They must prove themselves worthy candidates before being installed into the office. This system has developed because of the many different struggles they have with accountability of church office-bearers. There are many social incentives for attaining church office in PNG. The development of candidacy is designed to address motives as well as offering opportunity for instruction in responsibility to the Lord in the office. On this Sunday the other delegates to the conference attended other Reformed church groups in Port Moresby.

During the week, we were served a fellowship meal by the students of RCBC. This was a real treat. They were excited to share with us some of their foods that were traditionally prepared,

and it was a meal enjoyed by all. The candidate ministers, Nawai Renagi and Aisi Kosa, were invited along with the church leaders. We also had a Bible study presented at 9 Mile church by Aisi Kosa on Wednesday. On Saturday we took an hour and a half drive to the Sogeri Plateau where there are two groups meeting for worship: Berogoro and Ekoro. Ekoro is where Nawai has been called as a candidate minister. We met with Nawai and also some of the members of the Berogoro church. Once again they served us graciously with a meal for lunch. Lastly, on Sunday we attended a service led by brother Wally Hagoort at East Beroko. This is a settlement in Port Moresby proper. We were greeted warmly by the congregation and had a time of fellowship after the

morning service. In the places we visited there was appreciation expressed for the assistance offered by the missionaries. We also gained insight into the life of God's people and the struggle that His people face in serving Him faithfully.

Our interviews with the missionaries were also something that we trust were mutually encouraging. It was a time to listen and learn about the struggles faced on the field, but also to see and hear how the Lord has sustained and equipped both the Dumas and Hagoorts for the task to which He has called them. It was a blessing to hear how the Lord is working through the missionaries and among His people in PNG.

In Christ's Service,
Peter Kloosterman

A Pastoral visit to PNG

David Waldron

It was a joy and a privilege to be able to be in Papua New Guinea for a two-week period in October 2013, visiting with the missionaries, students and all five Reformed church groups in the Port Moresby area. I was also able to get to know the delegates from the Free Reformed Church of Australia and the Canadian Reformed Churches. Participation in the tri-annual on-field Reformed Ministries and Overseas Missions Boards conference gave a helpful insight both into the challenges of the work in PNG and also the distinct characteristics of the three mission boards which are involved in the work of Reformed Ministries in the Port Moresby and Lae areas.

I found both Pastor Alan and Odette Douma to be in good heart. It is very clear that Pastor Alan is much loved by

the students he teaches and the churches he ministers to in PNG. The work of teaching at the Bible College, visiting the churches to preach, teach and pastor, in addition to maintaining and developing the College at 14 Mile certainly keeps him busy. It was encouraging to see Alan's gracious leadership as he chaired the on-field conference. Experiencing Alan and Odette's hospitality was a joy.

I was also able to stay at Mapang Missionary Home for a few nights and spend time with Wally and Sjannette Hagoort. They have been greatly used of the Lord in the earlier stages of the development of the work here; especially in East Boroko. Wally and Sjannette have faithfully served at Mapang for many years, but now they are ready to leave the field in January 2014. They plan to return to PNG later in the year, finally exiting the work early in 2015.



Alan Douma



Odette Douma with some local ladies



The Reformed Churches Bible College (RCBC) is acknowledged by all the missionaries, both at 14 Mile, on the outskirts of Port Moresby (the Dumas, Versteegs, Kleyns) and in Lae (Wildeboers and Sikkemas) to be foundational for the development of self-supporting, self-governing, self-sustaining churches. So far two candidate ministers have graduated (Aisi Kosa who is currently at 9-mile and Nawai Renagi who is currently at Ekoro). This year four more men are due to graduate, of whom it is hoped that two will become candidate ministers. The other two men are likely to sit a classis examination in order to become candidate elders and/or evangelists with a licence to preach. In this way the knowledge and understanding which they have obtained at RCBC is able to be used for the benefit of the PNG churches in a commissioned role.

The concept of a candidate minister is essentially identical to our RCNZ vicariate. The supervising minister is currently a missionary assigned to guide and support the candidate. Great wisdom is required on the part of the missionary in order to support the candidate minister with sufficient involvement by working 'alongside' without seeking to function in a patriarchal role.

Most indigenous people in PNG have some church background. In earlier colonial days the country was divided up by denomination. Some areas remain predominantly Catholic and others Lutheran. There are Pentecostal churches, Brethren and others. The Seventh Day Adventists are particularly active in PNG at present. In general, women outnumber men in the ratio of about 3 to 1 in the PNG churches.

The Churches

Beregoro – The background of many in this small congregation is Lutheran; for these people their future is uncertain due to land ownership and lease issues. Those who attend the Reformed church do not own the land on which their village is built, nor do they own the areas which they cultivate for their food. The land owners are progressively bringing in restrictions on their use of the land. This pressure may well mean that the community will need to relocate in the future.

Ekoro – This is a small group of believers who started under Elder Sumari and later Pastor Stephen 't'Hart ministered there as their first missionary/pastor. They have recently moved their church building from up the valley to a location next to the main road. This allows freedom for people from other tribes to attend and to be part of the church. They have also dismantled the church manse with a view to re-erecting it at the new church site. The congregation is currently being served by Candidate Minister Nawai, under the supervision of Pastor Henry Versteeg.

East Boroko – There is a solid group of 20-25 adults and children who attend this church, which is located in one of the settlement areas of Port Moresby. East Boroko plans to

host a 'Meri Bung' (like a Ladies Presbyterian) meeting for all the church groups next year and also intends to extend the church building and to build a manse. In this area, people do not have secure title to the land and whilst there is water, there is no sewage system.

Veifa'a – The background of the Veifa'a congregation is Roman Catholic. Whilst helping to translate the New Testament into the Mekeo language they came to the conclusion that the teachings of the Roman Catholic church did not match up with the Bible. At a great cost to their families they joined a Pentecostal church through contact with one of their relatives. However, after a time they came to the conclusion that the Pentecostals had an unbiblical emphasis on the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and that (coupled with some pastoral issues) led them to look for another spiritual home. Their SIL translator encouraged them to make contact with Stephen t'Hart, and so in 2006 this fellowship group joined



Alan with a candidate.



Wally and some of the guys.



The church group at Veifa'a.

the Reformed Churches of PNG. This church grouping had 65 members, but now has around 20-25 in number. The congregation in Veifa'a are a committed group and have sent a number of men to the Bible College, including Isidore and Tony, who are due to graduate this year. On the Lord's Day when we visited this congregation, the first office-bearer elections were held and three men were voted in as elders: Br. Allan Apini, Br. Alphonse Magaiva and Br. Francis Aoe.

9 Mile – This is the officially instituted church. They were instituted in Port Moresby in 1986 with some 100 members and some seven office bearers. Most of these were West Papuan Refugees who brought the Reformed Faith with them from West Papua. They requested help from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. The numbers here have dropped significantly from the time when the West Papuans had a falling out over "freedom matters".

The congregation is starting to regrow as an indigenous PNG congregation. At 9 Mile there is a physical structure with land and buildings in place, but the group of people who attend there is very small, with many being in irregular attendance. However, the leaders are optimistic about the future of the congregation through the marketplace outreach work of Pastor Cornelius Kleyn and the presence of Candidate Minister Aisa Kosa.

Reformed Ministries Plans

The overall approach of Reformed Ministries is to build a structure for a Reformed church federation under a Reformed PNG church order, and to train up local pastors in preaching and teaching. The prayer is that the Lord would bless these efforts and enable the growing, maturing and further establishment of the Reformed Churches in PNG. The plan is that the developing PNG congregations will use the Reformed confessions in either English or Tok Pisin. In as far as is possible the intent is that the PNG churches will eventually govern their own Bible College, work towards having national lecturers and send out national missionaries to establish more Reformed Churches in new areas. The missionaries see this as being a long-term goal which in their view may take 40+ years.

The Mission Boards

The Australian mission work is under the direct oversight of the Free Reformed Church of Armadale in Western Australia. This church has sent the Wildeboers and the Sikkemas to Lae, together with two mission workers. The Mission Board

reports directly to the Armadale session. There are 6 supporting churches who are able to nominate members for the board. In addition there are 4 co-operating churches. The Board recognises the importance of the Bible College for the goal of having instituted churches in PNG.

The Canadian mission work is under the direct oversight of the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church in Toronto. Their focus is the ministry of the Word and the establishment of Reformed Churches with the Reformed Churches Bible College serving this aim. They have two missionaries on the field at present (Pastors Henry Versteeg and Cornelius Kleyn) serving as Pastors and lecturers. Their aim is to have national pastors open new fields in PNG. The Toronto church is the sending church, like the Australian model, the Mission Board reports to the Toronto Session. In addition there are 13 supporting churches.

The New Zealand work is under the direct oversight of the Overseas Missions Board, a synodically appointed body working on behalf of the RCNZ denomination. The Reformed Church of Hastings is the sending church for the Doumas and have spiritual oversight for Pastor Alan and his wife Odette.

The On-field Conference

The last on-field conference was held 3 years ago in 2010. The aim of the 2013 conference was "To clarify and develop our relationships as Mission Boards and missionaries and to process and clarify policies which will guide the work we are doing together in PNG". The conference was very helpful in strengthening the bonds of fellowship and co-operation between the Australian, Canadian and New Zealand Reformed Churches who are working together in PNG.

Summary

I am very thankful, firstly to our Lord and also to the Hastings Session for being sent on this trip to visit with the Doumas and also to attend the on-field conference. It was a joy to see Pastor Alan and Odette in their calling on the field and to gain a first-hand understanding of the challenges inherent in ministering the Reformed gospel in PNG. I was surprised at how small and struggling the churches were and how many people in PNG had some church background and gospel awareness. Coming back to New Zealand I found myself asking the question: "if we are prepared to do so much for so long for so few in a land so far away in order to assist in the planting of Reformed churches are we also willing to do at least as much in our own country where the need is at least as great?"



A gathering of missionary staff at Kiwi Haus.