

faith in  
**focus**

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Growing older, with grace

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## Editorial

Retirement – now you're talking! That's the time that I hang up my boots, sleep in every morning, buy a boat and go fishing, ride a Harley Davidson, go on trips overseas and generally have a nice long holiday for the rest of my life. Yeah, right!!

Personally, I am not much of an authority on retirement. I still have quite a long time to go before considering that matter, and for the moment, am not really contemplating it. For that reason, I'm not going to make any profound assertions about the person looking forward to the "good life" of retirement.

However, the question that I want to ask is – does the Christian ever really retire; do we actually hang up our boots, or, are we just moving from one established life situation into another, and what does that involve? What are the spiritual implications? One thing I am sure of is that we all want to grow older with grace.

I have enlisted the services of three very eminent retired gentlemen who have wisdom drawn from their experiences of retirement. The first two, interestingly enough, without knowing what the other would write about, and having never met, have come to the same conclusions.

Mr Barry James gives a very good answer to his own question about retirement. Mr Wayne and Mrs Joan Brauning team up together to show you what opportunities retirement has brought them. Despite their age, these people are very enthusiastic and busy Christians. Mr Carl Larsen addresses the ways deacons in our churches care for the elderly and what that entails.

Mrs Sally Davey is fascinated by weddings, and presents a case for decent, orderly and reverent wedding ceremonies.

Finally, Mr John van Laar tells us about his first ten years in New Zealand as a young man, far away from his homeland.

Cover image: Mr Wayne Brauning – runs a woodshop class for men and boys (see story).

Photo/image credits: p5 Mr Wayne Brauning; p8 Crestock.com; 14 Robbie Dale / [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

### The Thought of God – Maurice Roberts – p6-7

The art of good thinking is to carry thought to its logical conclusion.... If God be God, then no insoluble problems exist. And if God be *my* God, then no problem of mine is without its appropriate solution. There is in God just exactly what is needed to solve every riddle of life. Such a Being is God that he comprehends in himself all that we could ever need to neutralize all evils, veto all temptations, negative all sorrows and compensate for all losses. More still, there is in God such a supply of competence and wisdom that he is able to transform every ill into good as soon as it touches us. God has, so to say, the 'Midas touch', by which all the Christian's problems turn to gold in his hands. To be told that 'all things work together for good' [Rom 8:28] to us is to have more than a cordial. It is to have the elixir of life.... It must follow from what has been said that the degree of a Christian's peace of mind depends upon his spiritual ability to interpose the thought of God between himself and his anxiety.

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

# Growing older, with grace (1)

## Retirement: really ... ??

### Barry James

“Come on now, what do you think this is – a rest home for elderly gentlemen..?!!” I grunt in token acknowledgement of this remark, snuggle further under the bedclothes, and (some time later!) reach for the mug of tea. My dear wife, while never straying in the direction of venerating years *per se* – and certainly not being retiring by nature – is nonetheless of a kindly disposition. At least she concedes that there is a need for some stimulus ...

I can't remember what I had envisaged formal retirement to be (on the eve of it, some 13 years ago), but I suppose it did include some contented sleep-ins!! No particular plans were made by Anne and me, except that we did look forward to the prospect of settling down in our very own home, having more time for gardening, and – most of all – being back in the midst of our immediate family. In Christian ministry one's 'family' is necessarily quite large, and sometimes very demanding: we were more than ready to relinquish its day-in-and-day-out responsibilities, and move on to a more tranquil scenario. To date – and to our surprise and delight – our 'retirement' has at times been anything but that!

### The world of retirees

In former times, 'retirement' was usually only something that took place for the male/husband 'breadwinner'. For most of his working life he served in the one firm, gradually worked his way up through the ranks, and at the age of 65 was officially farewelled. If his contribution had been really appreciated by the management he was presented with a gold watch! I can recall reading that all this took place with my maternal grandfather. Not infrequently, however, the life-long workhorse, suddenly 'put out to grass', did not find the greener pastures materialising. Work had become an end in itself, there was nothing to replace it, and not a few retirees departed this life within a short space of

entering into their new 'free' status. My grandfather, though, continued to enjoy his landscape painting.

These days it is a very different scene. With two-income families, superannuation levies and contributions, and the prospects of much earlier retirement (or multiple 'retirements', from a series of work-situations), the *economic* factors have come much more into play.

Many couples look forward to becoming 'grey nomads', embarking on repeated (and sometimes extensive) tours at home and abroad. At long last there is the opportunity – and means – to do so, and they happily set about spending their 'children's inheritance' (as they say). Quite often, too – because of welfare arrangements – they invest their savings in larger, well-appointed dwellings, even though their children have long departed

the 'nest'. Retirement is seen as the opportunity to live a cosmopolitan and cushy life.

### The Christian and 'retirement'

I must confess that until I was asked to write on this subject (some years ago) I had never really worked through – from the Scriptures – this matter of 'retirement'. I would gauge that most of us – our thinking and planning moulded by the ever-intruding world (see Rom.12:2) – would not get much beyond following its general stream of thought ... in moderation, of course! Well, then, what should be the *Christian* attitude to the prospect of 'retirement'?

It is interesting to note that the word "retire" – in the sense that we are discussing it – only appears once in the Bible (NIV & NASB versions), in Num.8:25.



Barry and Anne James

In this chapter Moses is brought to deal, by the Lord, with the duties of the Levites – their consecration (vv.6-13), their setting-apart for tabernacle service (vv.14-19), and the acceptance by these servants of the obligations laid upon them (vv.20-22).

There now follows the brief section (vv.24-26) about their ‘retirement’ years, after they reach the age of 50. Here we read: “This applies to the Levites: Men twenty-five years old or more shall come to take part in the work at the Tent of Meeting, but at the age of fifty, they must *retire* from their regular service and work no longer. They may assist their brothers in performing their duties at the Tent of Meeting, but they themselves must not do the work”. From chap. 3 (vv.21ff.) it

we remain on ‘active service’ for Him – there is not even a ‘demobbing’ in glory ... rather, a ‘promotion!’ (see II Tim.2:12a; Rev.7:9-17). It is not difficult to imagine the apostle Paul quickly dismissing the mere notion of any ‘retirement’ from his apostleship. The very epitome of the Lord God’s servants, our Saviour – even though having fully accomplished the life-work given Him to do – continues to serve in His High Priestly capacity, as “he always lives to intercede” for His brethren at the right hand of the Father (Heb.7:25b).

### **The distinctly spiritual aspect**

Perhaps, in our consideration of the matter of ‘retirement’, it is the *spiritual* aspect which escapes our attention. Yes,

“To ‘turn from’ the heavy, demanding nature of our work ... doesn’t mean having the licence to turn into a ‘couch potato’ ... to abandon all work.”

is clear that the giant work-force of the Levites was engaged in “the heavy work of erecting, dismantling and transporting the tabernacle, a job suited to men in the prime of life ...” (so Wenham, in his Tyndale Commentary). This means that the instruction as to working “no longer” related to the *heavy* work: at the age of 50 they were assigned ‘light duties’, with the obligation to “assist” (or ‘serve’) their brothers in the tabernacle (v.26). In this we see that there was no lifting of the requirement to serve – only a *lightening* of that service, in view of the advance of years.

In case one is tempted to think that the (only) relevant application of this section is to the labours of the ordained pastor-preacher(!), let us remind ourselves that the Levites were set apart to serve in place of the “firstborn” of every household (Num.3:12, 8:14, etc.). They were thus to *represent* the service of every Israelite to the Lord! From this we gather two important things: (1) that no matter what vocation/occupation we may be engaged in, we are there to serve the Lord (see Ephes.6:5-9; Rom.12:1); and (2) no matter how long we live,

with the advance of years (and the toll that they can take), we do need – as did the Levites – to ‘turn from’ the heavy, demanding nature of our work: but, that doesn’t mean having the licence to turn into a ‘couch potato’ ... to abandon all work. As we have seen [above] the word ‘retirement’ is not in the Lord’s service manual. But we also need to realise afresh just how *good* it is for us to be engaged in worthwhile labour (see the ‘Creation Ordinance’ of Gen.1:28). Granted, the “toil” amidst burgeoning “thorns and thistles” may eventually get beyond us – as three-score-and more is chalked up – but we can still lend a hand with the smaller weeds. The exhortation “Let us not become weary in doing good” stands for us all ... as does the inviting promise! (Gal.6: 9). The Lord God has not placed any age limit on the keeping of the 4th commandment: the Sabbath “rest” may become all the more inviting with the years, but the other six days of “work” is a requirement which has not been abrogated for those leaving the work-force!

Finally, here, we note that the Preacher (in Ecclesiastes) has something to say

about the ‘seasons’ of our life. In that memorable chap. 3, in which he tells us that “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven” (v.1), we note that there is *no* cessation of “activity”, and that there is *no* mention of any season of ‘retirement’!! In his survey of all the ups and downs of life for those living “under the sun”, all is encompassed within the parameters of “a time to be born and a time to die” (v.2a). In this sweeping appraisal of God’s providential dealings with creature-man, however, we are not left in the grip of an endless, meaningless cycle of events, but given a glimpse of life’s activities as they proceed ‘under the Creator’. We are to see that “He has made everything beautiful in its time” (v.11a): there are delights to explore. “He has also set eternity in the hearts of men ...” (v.11b): under God’s overarching sovereignty, the *eternal* dimensions of what is taking place are there for us to come to grips with. All our deeds ... all our use of time ... will be brought “to judgment” (v.17): we are accountable for how we ‘spend’ *all* our days.

These are sobering truths, yet they also embrace exciting challenges.

### **Some personal ‘findings’**

Generally speaking, adjustment to ‘retirement’ for the family bread-winner is not always easy: the transition can be stressful. The scene of operations is now the ‘home front’. While our wives have long been productively well-occupied in this venue, the change of place (and pace) can be quite unsettling for us refugees from the work-a-day world. If work *has* become an end in itself, there is a danger of ‘retirement’ becoming the same. Cessation of an ordered week can lead to a certain aimlessness, and indolence; in due course, there can be the ‘hanging up your boots’ of any worthwhile contribution, and (especially with the advancing years) an increasing sense of uselessness.

But, as has already been pointed out, there should be no opting-out or fading-out at *any* point in the believer’s life. Once a servant, always a servant! The Lord God does not present us with any ‘gold watch’ to mark the termination of active service in this life: the apostle Paul looked forward to a “crown of righteousness” laid up for him in glory! Sanctification is *not* completed upon any formal ‘retirement’: we are all required to avail ourselves of ‘the means of grace’, no matter how advanced in years we are, and retirees have the wonderful oppor-

tunity of doing just that in increasing measure. Moses – living well beyond ‘four score’ years – has prayed to the everlasting God “Teach us to number our days aright that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Ps.90:12): length of days can become a burden unless they are filled by the Saviour’s “unfailing love” ... unless we know the Lord’s favour upon the (continued!) “work of our hands”.

Dear fellow-retiree, you remain a child of God and need to continue

growing. Throw yourself into renewed Christian service – take every opportunity to build up yourself and the Lord’s people in worship, fellowship and service. Above all, cling to Christ ... dwell upon the Word of life, and know its nourishment ... and, even when the limbs get shaky, seek to “keep in step with the Spirit”. Finally, when scope for the ‘doing’ has diminished, it is the ‘being’ which assumes the greater dimension (see Tit.2:2,3). May we all “still bear

fruit in old age” ... may we all “still say fresh and green” – in the Lord’s strength, by His grace!

*Mr Barry James is a minister emeritus. He has served in congregations of the CRCA and RCNZ. He has provided pulpit supply for the Reformed Church of Christchurch (Cornwall St) and had several tours of duty to Mbale, Uganda, where Barry taught in the Westminster Theological College.*

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## Growing older, with grace (2)

### One man’s way of retiring

#### Wayne F. Brauning

How should a Christian view retirement when there are no clear biblical teachings on it, or examples of it? I find only one place in Scripture describing something that may resemble what we moderns mean by the word *retirement*. Note what is recorded in Numbers 4:46-48: “All those who were listed of the Levites ... from thirty years old to fifty years old, everyone who could come to do the service of ministry and the service of bearing burdens in the tent of meeting, those listed were 8580.” Then in 8:23-25: “And the Lord spoke to Moses saying, ‘This applies to the Levites ... from twenty-five years and upward shall come to do duty in the service of the tent of meeting. And, after the age of fifty years they shall withdraw from the duty of the service and serve no more.’” Verse 26 follows with “‘They minister to their brothers by keeping guard, but they do no service ...’” Here God instructs that the Levites who were over fifty years old were restricted only from doing the heavy work of tabernacle ministry. Even here, no one retires, but the workload is simply redistributed according to the abilities of the workers.

#### My experience

Now, I will leave further investigation and comment on the biblical data about retirement to another brother and try to

illustrate from my own experience how I manage my life and how I view and practice appropriate activities for Christian senior citizens.

For boundaries, we need to see how God set up His created order for all of us. It is well described in Psalm 24:1: “The earth is the LORD’s, and every-

thing in it, the world, and all who live in it ....”

All our activities as God’s image bearers are circumscribed by our relationships; first to God our Creator, then to the physical creation from which our bodies are made and which provides us all we need for sustenance and creative,



Wayne and Joan Brauning

worshipful living, and finally, to other human beings, our neighbours. We must consider these relationships in all stages of life since they are the environment in which we live and serve.

### **A bit about me**

Before I describe how I am living out my latter life, you should know a little bit about me personally. I was born in 1934 on a Nebraska multi-function farm in the middle of the dust bowl years and the Great Depression, with yearly extremes of hot and cold weather. There was no electricity and the only running water was when we ran to get it from the hand pump, sometimes frozen. The point is, life was hard, our central activity was work, work, work. Diversions were almost non-existent. There may have been a few family games of gin rummy and a break every seventh day for worship, family gatherings and some rest. Even on that day there was much necessary work like milking cows. Sowing and harvesting were not done on the first day of the week. I learned to work hard as a young boy, like it or not. This pattern was driven partly by necessity, but also by God's Word, as well as by the culture of the community and church and by my compulsive personality. At church we often sang the song "Work for the night is coming ... " I have worked hard all of my life. It became my bent; it was my training, my sense of call and, as well, my pleasure to see duties and tasks accomplished. So why would you be surprised to find that I am working hard in my later years (retirement?) and believing that is the best way to spend them and be happy in doing so?

In September 2010 I quickly jotted off the following comments to dear friends Paul and Sally Davey. Sally suggested I incorporate them in this article.

### **Dear Sally:**

*I seem to be always busy, perhaps too much so. You requested an article on retirement and my response is "what's that?"*

*I am still moderating our presbytery of eleven churches and in that position have been doing some new things – all turning out well – requiring attendance at more meetings. Just now, Joan and I, along with others, are helping put together the 2nd presbytery newsletter. Then there is preparing the monthly moderator's letter to elders. Four men from our church are busy organising and adver-*

*tising our second preaching workshop for Nov. 12. My woodshop classes with about a dozen men and boys resumes this Thursday evening with a full house expected. I preached twice already this month. I am planning a possible trip to India with my former assistant pastor in January. Joan and I will be going to Williamsport in October to see our son's new home and stay with their youngest son David while the parents go to Texas to visit middle son Andy at Letourneau University. Home repairs and fall yard*

your supposed question.

First, God commands that we do all our work in six days each week so we can rest on the seventh day. The Commandment does not say that we must work, work, work from sunup to sundown each of the six days but only that we get that week's work done in six days so that we can rest and worship on the seventh day. The constant witness of God's Word and church history is that God's people have always worked hard. Christians are not to ignore God's

“We have often told our children, “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop!” It is no different when we are older, and remember, “There is no fool like an old fool.” But the balance of work and rest is important.”

*work are always demanding. Three visits a week to the chiropractor have been a good help for aches and pains. This is the beginning list of my activities.*

Now, months later I can report that my presbytery duties have been lifted and the trip to Europe and India is history. Though the pace has slackened and I am glad, there is always a pile of duties, mostly pleasant, beckoning from my desk or woodshop workbench. This is how I have chosen to arrange my latter years. I am deeply thankful that Joan and I are healthy enough to continue to be quite active, that we work quite well together, and that our financial resources, though limited, permit us to function quite freely in these ways.

### **Why so driven?**

Why, you may ask, why does this man drive himself so much when he could retire to his recliner and relax? As a matter of fact, I do some recliner sitting. There I read and catch up on the latest news and do-it-yourself programs on TV. But let me round out this article by giving a fuller answer to

commands any time in life, from childhood through old age. Of course, God is kind. He knows our needs and remembers that we are dust. So, He gave Israel several weeklong festivals throughout the year for their edification and enjoyment, setting a pattern of activities, even for us New Testament believers, which enrich our relationship with God, His creation and our neighbours. We have often told our children, “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop!” It is no different when we are older, and remember, “There is no fool like an old fool.” But the balance of work and rest is important.

### **Good for us**

Second, it is healthy for body, soul and mind to work. There is satisfaction in it. Though tiring, it can be relaxing and fulfilling. By contrast, lounging around for most of one's time often breeds discontent and dependency and fosters laziness.

Third, God made us to be co-creators with Him. He gave meaningful work to Adam and Eve in the perfect garden. Even in our imperfect state, there is as great a variety in our work in our relationship with

God, the earth and our neighbours. Scripture gives us two guidelines that apply to our life of service. First, Ecclesiastes. 9:10: "Whatever your hand finds to do, **do it with all your might** (emphasis mine) ... " A human corollary to this is "Whatever you do, do it well!" Then there is 1 Corinthians. 10:31: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do it all for the glory of God** (emphasis mine). Another corollary is "It's really not about me!" When we consistently, consciously and thoughtfully carry out our activities by these two principles, we fulfill the purpose for which we were created and quite consistently enjoy life.

Next, there is so much work to be done. This has two parts. First, many tasks are necessary for the maintenance of life: Growing or buying and preparing our food; building and maintaining our homes, churches, neighbourhoods and nation; helping our families and neighbours; bringing bread to the hungry, medicine to the sick and the gospel next door and around the world. Hunger, poverty and brokenness are everywhere in this suffering world and always beckon the Christian's help. Such suffering should bring us to tears and move us to sacrificial service. Let us give ourselves in mercy to those in need.

### **A time for creativity**

Part two involves all kinds of enriching activities such as art, music, aesthetic gardening and home decorating, communicating with others, writing one's biography or holding family reunions. So when grandson David (15) recently asked if he could make a dagger in the shop, (boys this age do these things) I was delighted. In fact, we made two, each very different, and I gave mine to him. What fun! Pleasurable as these times are, they all require work in organising and carrying out. We human beings are "creative" because we are made in the image of our Creator God. Let those creative juices flow in later life when there is more time, more wealth of experience to draw upon and more appreciation of God's goodness in every aspect of life.

### **A time of reflection**

I am becoming more and more aware that my earthly end is near. While holding onto family and friends, I plan my estate and funeral. I think about how much I love our own family and God's worldwide family. I love this physical world, its beauty, variety and wonder. Then, I read God's Word in Revelation 21 and 22 and muse over what is coming after my death and what it will be like to be in God's very presence. I fully identify

with Paul when he says in his Philipian letter that he was torn: "I am hard pressed between the two, my desire is to depart and be with Christ, and that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account" (Phil. 1:23-24). As I pray through a long list of family members, friends, pastors and missionaries, I think of how much more I would still like to accomplish – how many more travels, more Bible lessons and sermons, more counselling sessions with needy people. However, I must be cautious lest I indulge in the deception that I am indispensable to the coming of God's Kingdom. With anticipation, I await the day when I will one day exchange all this for the rest that Christ has prepared for me.

In closing, hear John Calvin. He comments on Paul's words later in Philipians, "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Calvin says, "... let Christ be with us, and He will bless our life as well as our death, so that both will be happy and desirable for us."

*Mr Wayne Brauning is a retired minister in the Presbyterian Church of America, living in Coatesville, PA. Some years ago, he spent four months providing pulpit supply at the Reformed Church of Dovedale.*

## A Christian wife, mother, and grandmother in "retirement"

As a wife and mother who worked outside of the home part time for most of our marriage, I'm happy to be "retired" and to have more time for my hobbies and reading, for spending time with grandchildren, for the flexibility to travel – just for more freedom to be a homemaker. Having said that, let me add that I do have several ongoing service activities as well.

One of those is editing and doing most of the writing for our quarterly church newsletter. That entails keeping up with the ministries going on in our church and with the people who lead them. Another is participating in our women's Bible study and sharing whatever wisdom God has given me over the years with younger women. In addition, I help out with the "meals on wheels"

– taking meals to those in need of them – as well as with the annual Vacation Bible School. Then there is the matter of being a helper to my husband with his many activities, especially with computer technology, with which he is somewhat more challenged than I.

Finally, there's the prayer ministry God led me into some years ago when we learned that one of our grandchildren had rejected the faith. Soon I became aware that quite a number of the offspring of godly parents – friends and relatives – had become prodigals as well. As I shared my own prayer burden, they would tell me about theirs, and I began praying through a list of names which (unhappily) has become quite long. Usually, it's just one in a family who has (as Paul Davey would say) "gone off the

rails." Some of these are just names, as I don't know them personally. But I do know how worrying this can be (we had two of ours going their own way for a while), so I pray for the parents also. It's so easy to blame oneself, and who of us can claim to have made no parenting mistakes? But I can encourage them; our children came back, and by God's grace, theirs can also. I also make a point of praying for the many younger children in the church, that they may *not* stray away from the Lord.

I hope this encourages someone to remember that God gives us different gifts and concerns, and there is something for everyone to do, regardless of age.  
*Joan Brauning*

# Growing older, with grace (3)

## The Deacons' care for the elderly

### Carl Larsen

The apostle Paul quotes the OT (Rom 5:15/ Isaiah 52:7) "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Surely that describes the diaconal ministry of Christ's church, as well as the other ministries, for His servants are to be the feet, the hands, the heart and the mouthpiece of the Master. We learn from Acts 6 that the deacon's work is a servant ministry, serving the disadvantaged, looking to the needs of those discriminated against, organising charitable action so that the needy are properly cared for. The apostle Paul urges the believers to carry each others' burdens and to do so responsibly, moving the assisted towards independence, avoiding the creation of greater dependence (Gal 6:2,5).

### Issues with age

For the purpose of this article we need to ask, who are the elderly in need of care? To this we could say, those who have accumulated a certain number of years – and we could even set a particular age. However it is surely more a matter of issues that arise with accumulated years. For one, those difficul-

ties could arise in his seventies or even eighties, while for another they may present themselves in his forties. Well, what issues? Physical or mental health, mobility, social independence, isolation to name some. Some are old before their time. Others cope with advanced years very well. Aging manifests its presence in many guises. In our era of history a few may attain the age of one hundred years and still be active in body or mind or both. But even so there will be deficits. For certain people their contemporary loved ones and friends will almost all have passed on. Their own children likely have predeceased them. There will be a loneliness, fatigue of body, most probably worn and creaking joints and maybe some artificial ones as well. Others, much younger, will be surviving on extensive cocktails of modern therapeutic drugs, or with aids such as for hearing, failing sight, faltering heart or poor mobility. Many of the surviving elderly will be maimed by dementia, Alzheimers or strokes that seriously impair mental and/or social faculties, while others will be affected physically with paralysis, speech impediment or body function control.

Younger relatives and able-bodied

persons will almost always understand a physical disability, *i.e.* a broken limb, more easily than a broken mind, memory or personality.

### Who are we dealing with?

As we relate to the elderly and the sick we must always remember that we are dealing with a **person**, no matter how disabled in body or mind; a person who has a history, who entered this world as a tiny baby, who, as a child, negotiated the years of school, attained adult status and achieved much in life. Every life is interesting, packed with unique experiences, if only we have the time and patience to listen and ask questions. How I now wish I had taken the time to ask questions and to listen to my now-deceased parents while they were still alive, and write down interesting snippets that are now lost forever!

Some families will have to grieve for a relative, maybe an elderly relative, because they are no longer *compos mentis* (of sound mind) even though they physically remain with us.

### Principles for action

There are a number of principles that we ought to keep firmly in mind. Let me mention them now. **A first** we have already alluded to. Every human is made in the image of our Maker, and we, as God's sons and daughters, are to respect them as God's ambassadors in our lives. **A second** is that in our family settings we are called to honour our parents. **A third** is that we are to love our neighbour as we love and look after ourselves. **The fourth** is the golden rule to do to others as we would have others do to us. In these we have a set of principles to guide us in our relationships within the human family – and not just with our seniors – but remember, they do apply there also. However, the primary responsibility for the care of the elderly must surely rest with the family.

But now in the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century how does this work out.? We live in a very mobile society. Families become



en.wikipedia / Boldlochinvar

scattered as a result of travel, because of pursuing suitable work or professional opportunities, or because of emigration or oppression, to mention some factors. This can lead to marriage with a spouse whose roots are in a distant country or place, or to relocation because sons or daughters have moved from home soil. Many in our Reformed Churches in NZ will be painfully aware of the tensions that this can create.

### **Caring for the neglected**

When the apostles, aided by the community of faith, appointed the first deacons (Acts 6) they invested them with the responsibility of caring for a neglected section of that community, the Hellenistic Jewish widows. Is this not then at the core of the diaconal task, to look out for the disadvantaged or neglected, for whatever reason, in our present day church and community? Let us quote then the brief article (10) in our RCNZ Church Order dealing with the office of Deacons:

**Duties of Deacons** The task of the deacons is: to *diligently collect alms and other contributions of charity, to faithfully and diligently distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require* after mutual counsel, to *visit and comfort the distressed*, to *encourage* the congregation to show Christian mercy to those in need at home and abroad, to render an account to the session.

In practical terms what does this mean regarding the frail or perhaps lonely elderly? Not necessarily that the deacons have to take on board the personal care as the primary care giver. But I suggest it does require a duty to be aware of the circumstances and to determine the level and the need and then how best, with the resources of the church, to be of assistance. The person may be in a rest home or a hospital so that health and physical welfare are taken care of; but the need is social and spiritual. It may be that living at home they really need a regular carer to make contact, to assist with shopping, transport to the G.P., supervision of medication, help with correspondence, maintenance of the lawns and garden, and perhaps many other necessities. Who is there within the congregation that is fitted to meet such needs and should be challenged to undertake this task as an ongoing responsibility, or maybe even to take on Enduring Power of Attorney for personal or property care? Such commitments may be only brief because of demise, but may last for years. I know of a case

where this lasted for a considerable time because the elderly person in question lived just beyond the 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday. It may be that the church eldership should be alerted to the inability of the member to attend worship and Lord's Supper; and that there is the need to provide recorded worship services and communion in the home.

### **Special area of spiritual care**

Earlier I mentioned the not infrequent situation where the invalid has lost the power of communication and where the personality appears to have radically changed. This type of health deterioration and indeed many forms of senility and frailty tax the perseverance and

“It has often exercised my mind as to God's purposes in allowing sufferers, many of them elderly, to languish on and on.”

the faithful regular attention of a healthy spouse, son or daughter, or caring friend. These heroic and wonderfully dedicated carers themselves need support, comfort and encouragement. We ought to have great respect for people of such dedication and perseverance. This is an area of very special spiritual care that cries out for the attention of the church. Deacons could assist by arranging for suitable people to give respite to the carers on a regular basis. Even two hours a week could be a tremendous help. While it is not direct care for the elderly it is certainly an indirect form that will impact on how the carer can perform.

It has often exercised my mind as to God's purposes in allowing sufferers, many of them elderly, to languish on and on. The best answer that I am able to put forward is that God allows that trial to test those of us who have a duty of care; who are healthy, able, and have the time to prove our faithfulness in service. To use the apostle's words let us encourage the carers to be steadfast, undeterred, always abounding in their vigilance and care. This too can be a strategically important spiritual ministry of the deacons.

### **Need to know about services**

There are many retirement villages, rest homes, geriatric hospitals, organisations and institutions that exist to give specialised help and care to those who are aging. The current NZ government policy aims to make provision for seniors in their homes as long as practically possible, this through DHBs and their contracted providers. It is well for deacons to be aware of these provisions and of where information can be accessed so as to direct seniors, or most likely their carers, to providers. It could even be possible to have one member of the congregation appointed to advise how to access the various services available.

The RCNZ churches were founded

mainly by immigrants and enlarged their membership from that same source. I would think that in most cases parents have been left behind, if for no other reason than that residency for older folk is not easily gained in NZ. In some cases maintenance may have been sent off shore to assist parents and families. At a support level for parents there will have been a dislocation; or the responsibilities have been left to siblings in the mother country. Is there not a challenge in such situations, whereby such couples could adopt an in-need senior in the expectation that the left-behind parents are being cared for by such an adoption?

### **Deacons as executors**

In our early years of church ministry, when our children were very young and we were far flung from close family, in our wills we appointed deacons to be the executors. Spinsters, bachelors, childless widows and widowers may consider this as an option in their wills.

When young, most of us consider ourselves immune to death. When maturity makes us more realistic about our mortality we then wish to slip away painlessly in our sleep and to die within hours of

our spouse. All would prefer to end our days spared from the ravages of disease, strokes or heart attacks. But the reality is mostly different. All God's children would surely wish to die with a beautiful graciousness. They do indeed die in grace. But often God's children, in old age, are overwhelmed by health/medical conditions that hide that graciousness that has previously been so beautifully expressed. Let us not neglect our elderly. Let us lovingly respect, care and give them our time and honour them. When they are

sheep of Christ's flock let us treat them as trophies of God's amazing grace who shine as stars in God's universe, even if now that brilliance is somewhat hidden by cloud.

*Mr Carl Larsen is a minister emeritus of the denomination. He worshipped with the denomination as early as the institution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach, studied at the RTC Geelong, served the RCA in Aboriginal mission work in Western*

*Australia in an unordained capacity 1963-65, ordained as RCA minister of the Word 1965 serving in NSW (Newcastle/Gosford 65-71), RCNZ (72-77 Tokoroa/Kerepehi, 78-87 Dunedin) and several terms as elder at Bucklands Beach while also filling the role of Chaplain at the Howick Baptist Home and Hospital (87-99). He is a member of the National Diaconate Committee. With his wife Joyce they have 5 daughters and 11 grandchildren.*

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## World in focus

### **EPC representatives present for creation of Association of Reformed Churches of Kazakhstan**

Representatives of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) on 8-9 May 2011 at the Altyn Kargaly in Almaty, Kazakhstan, participated in the creation by six churches of the Association of Reformed Churches of Kazakhstan (ARCK).

A 1995 church plant by EPC World Outreach was the beginning of evangelising, discipling, and organising efforts to the groups that would become ARCK churches.

+ *Evangelical Presbyterian Church*

### **Californians arrested for reading Bible at Department of Motor Vehicles Office**

A 29 April 2011 article by Becky Yeh on OneNewsNow.com titled "Illegal to Read Bible in Public?" reports that three men from Calvary Chapel of Hemet in Hemet, California, met recently in front of a closed regional Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) office where Mark Mackey began reading from the Bible aloud. A security guard ordered Mackey to stop reading the Bible aloud. Ten minutes later, a California Highway Patrol (CHP) officer arrived, snatched the Bible from Mackey's hands, and arrested him.

The other two men asked the CHP officer who arrested Mackey what law had been broken. The CHP officer answered by asking the two men if they too were preaching, then the other two men were arrested by another CHP officer.

Robert Tyler, an attorney with Advocates for Faith and Freedom (AFF) says

the arrests were a direct violation of the First Amendment, saying: "What's disturbing about this case in particular is that a person with a badge and a gun, who has been trained by some of the finest police forces here in California, [thinks] that it is appropriate to arrest somebody because they are reading the Bible aloud in public, on public property."

All three men were released, and no criminal charges have been filed. AFF says the three men cannot be charged for "impeding an open business" because the DMV regional office was closed at the time and the men were standing at fifty feet or more from the entrance. AFF has filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of Mackey and his friends.

+ *American Family Association*

### **Connecticut legislature's proposed "bathroom bill" deconstructs gender and facilitates sexual predators**

The Family Institute of Connecticut (FIC) reported 27 April 2011 that the Judiciary Committee of the Connecticut House of Representatives has approved HB 6599, "An Act Concerning Discrimination", nicknamed the "Bathroom Bill", which designates gender identity as a protected class.

The FIC warns about dangers of the legislation where "a man who is a sexual predator could claim to be "transgendered" and enter a women's public bathroom", and "that your son or daughter would be exposed to teachers in their schools who on one day will be a man and the next day could decide to be a woman."

The FIC says of the legislation "that

court-ordered same-sex "marriage" is just the first step in a campaign to force children in our public schools to be exposed to "alternative lifestyles" even if their parents disapprove", and that "this legislation shows the hubris of those who see "gender" as something to be changed at will, of those who are trying to deconstruct the most basic of natural categories – male and female."

+ *Family Institute of Connecticut*

### **UK organisations and members from scientific, religious, and secular groups equate Biblical creationism with "flat-earthism and alchemy"**

Ekklesia announced 16 May 2011 that organisations and members from scientific, religious, and secular groups have issued a letter calling upon Great Britain's Department for Education for clarity in the guidance on the teaching of 'creationism', saying that schools should not be letting beliefs that reject modern scientific method be taught as scientific, in much the same way as flat-earthism and alchemy would never be presented in schools as scientific 'alternatives'.

+ *Ekklesia*

### **Presbyterian and Reformed responses to aftermath of deadly tornadoes**

In the aftermath of the recent spate of deadly and devastating tornadoes in the eastern U.S., several relief efforts have been undertaken by Presbyterian and Reformed denominations including:

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) on 21 April 2011 sent a Rapid Response Team (RRT) to North Carolina to assist with recovery

from the massive tornado outbreak in the southern U.S. that occurred the previous week.

The RRT was based in Sanford, North Carolina, about sixty miles southwest of Raleigh, working out of a United Methodist Church there. The CRWRC expanded its relief efforts in the southeast U.S. after the 25-27 April 2011 outbreak of more than 250 tornadoes. Donations to CRWRC can be made at: The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)'s Mission to North America is teaming with several Alabama churches including Oak Mountain Church and Briarwood Presbyterian Church, both of Birmingham, Alabama.

+ *Christian Reformed Church in North America*

### **Dutch Reformed Church expresses concern over South African pastor who said that the African National Congress, Congress of South African Trade Unions, and the South African Communist Party are the Trinity, and that Jesus was a Communist**

A 4 May 2011 article by Sapa in the Times Live titled "Church Concerned by Remarks on Zuma, Trinity" reports that the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) released a statement expressing concern over a pastor's remarks at a rally for South Africa President Jacob Zuma, where the pastor said that the African National Congress (ANC), Congress of South African Trade Unions (CSATU), and the South African Communist Party (SACP) are the Trinity, and that Jesus was a Communist.

DRC spokesman Ben Du Toit wrote: "While acknowledging our own history in this regard, as well as the same errors we have committed in the past, it is with a growing sense of concern that we as the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) take note of the public remarks clergy as well as political figures have recently made, claiming God's support for their political party. The latest incident in this regard, in which a pastor ceremoniously anointed president Zuma and misused Rom 13 in an irresponsible way to forcefully compel voters to support the ANC, really oversteps the boundaries of responsible theology, the responsible use of the Bible, as well as the responsible lobbying of support for the political party in question. Should political leaders fail to publicly announce their opposition of these practices in the build-up towards the municipal elections, the DRC will have no choice but to use its communication structures as effectively as possible to

advise voters to rather support political parties that do not misuse religion to further their own cause."

+ *Times Live*

### **Vienna [Virginia] Presbyterian Church ignored insurance company directives to stop admitting liability for sexual misconduct of former youth worker**

An 11 May 2011 article in The Daily Mail titled "Fury as Insurance Company Tells Church: 'Don't Admit Abuse – You'll Have to Pay Compensation'" reports that after the session of Vienna Presbyterian Church (Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)) in Vienna, Virginia, in March 2011 began apologising to church members for failure to prevent the sexual abuse of underage girls by former student ministries director Eric DeVries between 2001 and 2005, the church's insurance company GuideOne sent the church a letter stating: "Do not make any statements, orally, in writing or in any manner, to acknowledge, admit to or apologise for anything that may be evidence of or interpreted as (a suggestion that) the actions of Vienna Presbyterian Church caused or contributed to any damages arising from the intentional acts/abuse/misconduct."

The church sent out the next day a letter of apology to church members, and Pastor Peter James the following Sunday preached about the scandal saying: "We won't hide behind lawyers. Jesus said the truth will set us free," and addressed the women abused by DeVries saying: "We, as church leaders, were part of the harm in failing to extend the compassion and mercy that you needed. Some of you felt uncared for, neglected and even blamed in this church. I am truly sorry. I regret the harm this neglect has caused you."

The church has refused to invoke a two-year statute of limitations or question the sexual background of the abused women. Ruling Elder Peter Sparber commented: "The directions from the insurance company and its lawyer were clear and possibly correct from a legal perspective. They did their job, but as elders, we had to do ours. We still have lots of work cleaning up the mess created by Eric DeVries, but not following their legal advice was a good start."

+ *Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)*

### **Mentally ill Pakistani man arrested for blasphemy in bid to keep Muslim clerics from killing him**

Compass Direct News reported 6 May

2011 that a mentally ill man from Chichawatni, Sahiwal district, Pakistan, was arrested by and jailed by police for "injuring religious feelings" under Pakistan's blasphemy laws, after the man used abusive language against the prophet Muhammad as people were coming out of the Canal Mosque after prayer. The man has suffered mental illness for the past six or seven years typified by fits of unprovoked rage, where he uses abusive language and lacks concern for food and clothing.

A large number of Muslim clerics then gathered outside of the man's family's house and demanded that he be turned over to them so that they could "do justice" by killing him. A neighbour suggested the family call the police and have the man taken into custody before the Muslim clerics killed him. When the clerics saw the man being put into a police van, they rushed toward the van and tried to take hold of the man. The clerics continued chasing after the vehicle as it carried the man away.

While the Muslim clerics were chasing after the police vehicle, three families closely related to the mentally ill man fled their homes and remain in hiding.

+ *Compass Direct News Service*

### **Syrian Christians being attacked by protesting revolutionary Islamists**

International Christian Concern reported 4 May 2011 that Christians in Syria are being forced by Islamists seeking the overthrow of Syrian President Assad to join in the protests against the Assad government or to flee Syria.

A Christian leader in Syria commented: "If Muslim Salafis gain political influence, they will make sure that there will be no trace of Christianity in Syria."

+ *International Christian Concern*

### **Muslim Salafis Attack Coptic Christians in Embaba, Egypt, on 7 May 2011, killing twelve and injuring 232**

The Assyrian International News Agency reported 8 May 2011 that a mob of 3000 Muslim Salafis staged a fourteen hour attack on Coptic Christians in Embaba, Egypt, on 7 May 2011, killing twelve and injuring 232. The Muslims fired guns and rifles, and hurled Molotov cocktails at Coptic churches, houses, and businesses. Rooftop snipers picked off members of the church of Saint Mina as they exited a church congregation meeting.

+ *Assyrian International News Agency*

### **Muslims in Nigeria Attack Kurum, Nigeria, 4 May 2011, killing four in Christian pastor's family and twelve others**

Compass Direct News reported 10 May 2011 that Muslim extremists began an attack on Kurum, Nigeria, on 4 May 2011, killing sixteen, looting houses, and setting twenty Christian homes on fire.

The wife and three of the four children of Church of Christ In Nigeria Pastor James Musa Rike were murdered by the Muslims when the Muslims attacked at midnight, invading the pastor's home. The Muslims shot Pastor Rike's wife and two of his four children as they tried to escape their home, then disemboweled Mrs. Rike with a machete. Pastor Rike's thirteen-year old daughter was then disemboweled with a machete after the Muslims told her "see how your Jesus will save you." As she lay dying, the thirteen-year old told her father that she responded to the Muslims by telling them that Jesus had already saved her, and that by killing her they would only be making it possible for her to be with Him.

Among the dead were one man, three women, and twelve children.

+ *Compass Direct News Service*

### **Charges against Christians in Bangladesh**

Compass Direct News Service (CDNS) reports about a positive development in a case against six volunteer health care workers in Damurhuda, Chuadanga district, northwest of Bangladesh's capital city of Dhaka who were charged in March 2011 with "hurting religious feelings" after area Muslims objected to distribution of Christian literature at a health camp. The six local volunteers were working with a Japanese volunteer doctor, who offered Christian leaflets and Bibles to patients, telling patients they were under no obligation to take them. The Christians were arrested under Section 54 of the penal code, according to which a special power is granted to police to arrest anyone on any suspicion. The police prosecuted them under section 295-A of the penal code for hurting religious sensibilities. But as no investigation report was submitted by the police within 15 days of the beginning of prosecution, the Christians were released at a hearing held on the 10th of April. According to a pastor from northwest Bangladesh, cited by CDNS, "This incident of harassment is a grim reminder of how vulnerable the Christians here are in Muslim-majority society, though

rights of religious freedom and freedom of expression by minorities are ensured in our constitution," Mridha said.

*WEA Religious Liberty – May 2011*

### **Religious freedom in Uzbekistan**

Recent reports from Forum 18 News Service reveals about a new wave of raids and confiscations against religious organisations in Uzbekistan. Forum 18 has learned that Uzbekistan's NSS secret police and other officials have carried out two raids on an officially registered Baptist church in the capital Tashkent and confiscated over 50,000 Christian books, a large quantity of printing and office equipment, and a sum of money personally belonging to one person. In addition, three of the church leaders and the caretaker were given fines ranging between 50 and 100 times the minimum monthly salary. The described incident further proves the harshening of official actions against the possession and supply of religious literature. According to an interviewed Baptist, cited by Forum 18, "The authorities are interested in having small pocket-size churches and religious organisations, which will stay quiet and not have much religious activity."

*WEA Religious Liberty – May 2011*

### **Continuous attacks against Christians in Egypt**

Compass Direct News Service (CDNS) reports about the increasingly vulnerable situation of Christians in Egypt as the chaos in the country and the whole region of North Africa grows. On the 7th of May members of a conservative Muslim movement "Salafis" attacked two churches and surrounding Christian-owned homes and businesses in Imbaba, one of the least deprived districts in Cairo. At least 12 people were killed and more than 200 were wounded in the attacks against the Virgin Mary and St. Mina Churches. The attacks started after a false rumor spread that a Coptic woman who allegedly converted to Islam was being held in St. Mina church against her will. CDNS reports that the described attacks were most serious of a string of attacks and threats made by "Salafis" against Coptic Christians since the fall of the Hosni Mubarak regime earlier this year. According to some Copts this movement is trying to incite violence between the Muslim majority and the Coptic minority, which is 7 to 10 percent of Egypt's population of 83 million.

*WEA Religious Liberty – May 2011*

### **Religious freedom restricted in Laos**

The Research and Analysis Report of the WEA Religious Liberty Commission (RLC) from April 25th, which most of you have already probably reviewed, gives us a thorough analysis of the current situation of religious freedom in Laos. According to the analysis, persecution of Christians, mostly from ethnic minority Protestant groups, which includes expulsion from village, forced relocation, pressure to renounce faith, detention and arrest, destruction of livestock and crop and closure of churches, is routine in provincial areas, especially in the provinces of Bolikhamxai, Houaphan, Salavan, Luanprabang, Attapeu, Oudamsai and Luang Namtha. Protestant Christianity in general, and the Hmong Christian community in particular, is seen by sections of the Lao society and the authorities as an American or imperialist "import" into the country and a threat to the communist rule. Concrete recent incidents, as well as statistics from various international resources have been used in the analysis report for demonstrating the tense situation in the country.

*WEA Religious Liberty – May 2011*

### **Christians arrested for proselytising and blasphemy in Algeria**

Voice of the Martyrs, Canada (VOM) reports that on the 14th of April two Christian men were arrested in Oran, Algeria for sharing the Christian faith with their neighbours on charges of proselytising and blasphemy. If the law introduced in 2006 – requiring religious services to obtain a government permit to worship – would be applied in their case, it may result in a five-year imprisonment and a fine of 100,000 Algerian dinars (\$1,337 CAD). Krime, one of the two arrested, was known to hold weekly prayer services at his home. According to the VOM the court hearing, initially scheduled for April 27, was postponed to a later date.

*WEA Religious Liberty – May 2011*

### **Armed attacks against Christians in Colombia**

According to the latest news of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) there have been serial deadly attacks on Christians in Colombia. On May 2nd Pastor Gualberto Nieves and a fourteen-year-old girl were assassinated by the FARC Colombian guerrillas (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) after the guerrillas attacked

**Continued on p18**

That fascinating subject...

# Weddings

Entire magazines are devoted to them. Whole industries thrive on them. Little girls dream of them, big girls look forward to them, and older women look back on them with a fondness that seems hard-wired into the feminine psyche. Women love weddings. It's a thrill to receive an invitation, and we anticipate the day for months. There's nothing like the moment we first glimpse the bride as she appears at the door of the church, then watch her walk up the aisle on her father's arm. Most of us don't even need to be a relative for tears to well up at the sight of bridal radiance and fatherly pride.

What is it about weddings that fascinates us so much? Why does everyone, even unbelievers cynical about the possibility of happiness in marriage, love a wedding? My hunch is that what stirs us is the deeply, truly romantic act of two people committing themselves to love each other, and remain true to each other, as long as they both shall live. That's what is so moving. Even hardened, life-scarred cynics seem to hope, each time, that it's still possible. Christians have special reason for hope. Every marriage ought to be a picture of the relationship the church has with Christ; and God gives us his grace to make it happen, every day. It's the way God has made us – everyone longs to have that sort of committed, loving relationship – and it thrills us to see it taking shape in someone's life.

A couple of weeks ago I did what I'm pretty sure almost all of you did: I curled up in an easy chair in front of a television and watched the royal wedding. (Indeed, I confess it, I also bought the *Australian Women's Weekly* royal wedding collector's special edition and the BBC DVD as well...) I was, as you might expect, greatly looking forward to it. And in

no way did it disappoint. There were a great many reasons why I wanted to see it, perhaps the first being that as a subject of Her Majesty's, I felt privileged to be able to witness the wedding of a future king of the Commonwealth. Along with two billion other viewers, we were treated to a very intimate sight of the proceedings. Much of it was as clear as it would have been from the seat of the Queen herself. And what a spectacle ... As the Americans find themselves admitting, "There's no one who can do ceremony like the British." The attention to detail, the faultless "performance" of everyone, from the Blues and Royals and Household Cavalry, to the coachmen, the florists, the clergy, the Royal family and the Middleton family, no one put a foot wrong in what was a truly splendid occasion. Neither did the wedding guests disappoint: everyone was dressed, as was appropriate, to the nines. It really was a memorable – an historic – occasion, one worth staying up to all hours for.

Now, I'm well aware that we're sure we know all about weddings in our circles – that because of our good theology, our strong covenantal understanding and our healthy appreciation of family life – we have weddings and everything relating to

them down to a "T". We know what we're about and we do it well. But sometimes I wonder. The problem is not poor theology, it's that we don't always make the right connections between our theology and what we do, in practical terms, on our wedding days. Watching the royal wedding highlighted some of those mismatches for me. The participants at that wedding may not all have believed the theology of that order of service, but the connections between the theology and what was done were, for the most part, right. (It was a reminder for me that a written liturgy can retain, long after belief has gone, words and forms that con-



Highly recommended



Duke and Duchess of Cambridge waving to the crowd at the Mall shortly after the marriage.  
 Robbie Dale / en.wikipedia.org

tinue to remind those hearing them of the truth. It can also help prevent the proliferation of “cute” innovations like candle-lighting rituals and the like.) Now, I’m not suggesting that we try and ape Westminster Abbey. None of us have aisles that take three and half minutes to walk up. Neither do we (or should we) have altars with priceless gold ornaments on them; or archbishops with golden robes or angelic-faced choirs that can sing *Ubi caritas et amor*. And none of us, surely, could think of affording a dress created by Sarah Burton of Alexander McQueen (though wasn’t it gorgeous?). Neither is the problem that we’re not Anglican, and this was an Anglican service. No, the problem has to do with our understanding of dignity, decorum, and ceremony. And good theology should produce good ceremony.

It would be very easy for us loftily to dismiss the Windsor-Middleton wedding as simply unbelievers wearing a cloak of tradition. Didn’t William and Catherine live together before they were married? How can we call their wedding a “Christian” one? Well, despite their prior behaviour, it is nevertheless true that, whatever they and/or the Archbishop, Dean and Bishop of London do or do not believe in their heart of hearts, the service as read and spoken was completely in accord with Scripture. Their marriage service, as written by Cranmer, was a very honourable and true one; and I want to argue that many aspects of the ceremony other than the words

were very decent, orderly, reverent and worthy of imitation. The tone of their service is one that may be repeated on the simplest and humblest level. A poor Christian couple marrying, let’s say, in a simple church shelter in Malawi, can do what William and Catherine did, to good effect.

What are some of the ingredients that made this such a good wedding ceremony? First, it was saturated with Scripture. The Anglican order of service begins with a preamble defining the purposes of marriage. They are drawn from Scrip-

ture. Secondly, there was much prayer – a number of people have mentioned this to me. Anglican services are full of prayer – brief prayers, but shaped by biblical phrasing. Scripture was also read; and it was a text particularly suited to a young couple who will bear the responsibilities of royalty. Romans 12:1-2 teaches us to present ourselves as a living sacrifice in service to God. Verses 9-18 teach us some of the specifics of that service: extending hospitality, blessing those who persecute us, not being haughty but associating with the lowly, living peaceably, so far as is possible, with all. Much of the rest of the service concerned the biblical teaching on love,

and the importance of the solemn vows that William and Catherine had made at the beginning of the service.

So far, you might say, all is just what we would do. What was so special about *that* wedding service? The special things were what some might regard as little things. Let me explain. Firstly, there was recognition of proper family priorities. The bride was leaving her father’s family and joining her husband’s. Catherine’s father accompanied her up the aisle; and it was he who gave her hand in marriage to Prince William. It was not a matter of parents blessing the match. Her father, in biblical fashion, was exercising his proper care and loving responsibility. Secondly, the bride and her father led the procession into the church. They were the “main item”, so to speak. (Yes, I know they were led in by clergy here – and that is a debatable theological issue). But they were not preceded by a slow, languid procession of bridesmaids giving the impression of a fashion parade. The purpose of bridesmaids is to bring up the rear, to take care of the bride’s veil and train, to help her with her flowers, and so on. (We seem to have forgotten that these days). And thirdly, the congregation did not need any ungainly “prompt” or patronising request to stand at the entrance of the bride and her father. The striking up of the wedding march and the movement of the first few people to their feet are all it takes for everyone to arise.

Thirdly, the whole ceremony was solemn and graceful – and again, that

“Good theology should produce good ceremony.”

had nothing to do with Westminster Abbey atmosphere. It is entirely repeatable in the humblest of circumstances. Did you notice there was no embarrassing kissing after the vows? No raucous hooting and laughing? No clapping? Solemnity and grace in no way preclude joy. Puzzled by the modern habit of kissing, hooting and clapping, I once asked my mother if she remembered when it began. She thought for a moment. “It certainly wasn’t done when we got married in the 1950s,” she said. “I think, perhaps, it might have come in in the late 1960s or 70s.” We discussed it, and came to the conclusion that it may have become the fashion in imi-

tation of Hollywood – movie weddings seem to major on close-ups of “the first kiss” – so perhaps that was it. It certainly has no biblical or Prayer Book warrant. True, there has come to be a tradition of Buckingham Palace balcony kisses – but that was a 1981 innovation of Princess Diana, who at times was something of an exhibitionist. It did not occur during this wedding service.

Fourthly and finally, there was the matter of dress. Not the bride’s dress – of which, no doubt, many things will continue to be written – but the guests’. I’m not suggesting that *haute couture* is what was so commendable about the guests’ attire – that is unaffordable. No, it was the standard – their best. William and Catherine were noteworthy in inviting many ordinary people from the community to their wedding – neighbours, workmates, even the needy from the charities they support. There were people there in wheelchairs. But all, unmistakably, had their best clothes on. People should, for weddings. People always used to. People in many coun-

tries much poorer than ours do. Look at what they do for African weddings. They wear their best. On what assumption did Jesus base his spiritual analogy about the wedding garment in Matthew 22? That you wear your best, most special outfit to a wedding. What do we find these days? A trend toward casual, even downright slovenly clothes. Many are the brides and parents of brides I’ve heard lamenting at the sloppy dress of their guests. I sympathise. They’ve gone to great trouble to arrange a very special day for the occasion of a family wedding; and it is an honour to be invited. It’s an insult, then, to turn up in jeans or casual clothes, or immodest sundresses. You don’t have a suit? Why not hire one for the occasion? I’ve been shocked to see people arrive in gardening clothes for a wedding; people who most certainly own better clothes. What are they trying to say? I’m so cool I’m going to shock those stuffy people by showing I don’t need to dress up? Of course we shouldn’t overdo it in some kind of silly, fancy-dress stunt, and thereby mock the event in another

way. We dress respectfully and properly, in decent, formal attire. And this is what the guests at Westminster Abbey did, for the most part (leaving aside Princess Beatrice’s rather foolish Philip Treacy hat and David Beckham’s foppishly-worn Ralph Lauren morning suit. Spending lots of money doesn’t necessarily make you respectful.) To put it in a nutshell, a threadbare suit is more appropriate wedding attire than designer jeans.

The point I’m trying to make in these reflections is that we need to take what we do at weddings seriously, because our theology of weddings is serious. Weddings are solemn and joyful occasions, and what we do, solemnly and joyfully, should reflect everything we earnestly believe about marriage. So they should contain a lot of Scripture. They should contain a lot of prayer. They should be respectfully treated; we should do honour to the bride, groom and their parents; and we should behave and dress accordingly.

## Summer School of Theology

### Part three

The recent School of Theology held in Palmerston North on 20-22 and 24 January was not just a spiritual feast and a great experience of edifying fellowship and singing, it was simply a joy to be a part of the organisation!

Honestly, this has been the most gratifying conference-type activity I’ve ever been involved with organising (and Barbara and I have done quite a few, locally, nationally and internationally, since our first one in 1987). What made it so unique in my experience is that nothing was too much trouble for anyone ... all it ever took was a request, and volunteers took over the task, and it was done! Believe it or not, there was not a single committee meeting! Oh, maybe there was one a long time ago to sort out speakers and topics but none after that. Emails, phone calls and a wonderfully enthusiastic volunteer spirit did the rest.

One person came up with a do-list: daily clean-up, sound system, recording options, registration duties, catering and

kitchen duties (with a sub-set of two barbecue dinners as special fellowship times), book stall, etc. He just assigned various people to the various tasks and left them to it. Now, in the Lord’s provi-

dence, He ensured the right people were in the right spot. And if anyone anywhere was not sure about something, he or she was unafraid to ask.

The supreme example seemed to be



A healthy stack of registration booklets for the Summer School of Theology.

the young lady in charge of catering and the kitchen. She could put a roster under people's noses and twist their arms in such a way that they were thrilled to help out and would argue the point if you suggested they did not personally volunteer to be involved. She also bought up goods in bulk at amazing bargains and pulled in free produce from her network of contacts, so that the conference could cater for feeding 100 people (about 80 actually attended) for three morning teas, three afternoon teas, one supper, two barbecue dinners and three lunches, all included in the registration fee!

But other examples abound. The fellow in charge of barbecues only

needed to get three: he got four plus all the chefs to go with them. Printed publicity was designed by one or two gifted persons, handed to another who loves printing stuff and given to another for distribution. The honoraria offered to the speakers were universally declined with expressions of how much they enjoyed the opportunity to speak on their favourite topics plus the earnest desire to see such monies used to seed next year's School of Theology.

Surprisingly to the organisers, there was a lot less coming and going of people wanting to attend one series of talks but not another [than expected?]: most attendees stayed for the lot. People were a bit tired by the end, but not washed

out or too overloaded. The main thought expressed toward the end was, "What a blessing! We've got to do this again!"

The spiritual and scholarly gifts for such a venture are in evidence. The organisational expertise is in place. The material and personal volunteer resources are in abundance. And the Lord appears to have blessed Palmerston North with just the right combination of these and other factors to cause us to say with confidence that, Lord willing, there will be another School of Theology in Palmerston North in 2012. So do plan this into your schedule for next year and keep your eyes peeled for more details in due course.

## Focus on home

Harriet Haverland

# Gleanings from our bulletins...

### QUOTABLE "QUOTES"

"Our time on earth is but a small parenthesis in eternity." *Sir Thomas Browne*

"Anyone who thinks he can live the Christian life himself is just proclaiming that he is not a Christian." *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

"God save us from living in comfort while sinners are sinking into hell!" *Charles Spurgeon*

"Yahweh is thus the covenant name for God. I am the one who keeps promise. I am the one who is always faithful. I am the one who is there for my people. I am the one who is here for you. I am the one who acts on your behalf. In giving His name, God promises His covenant presence to His people." *Michael D. Williams*

### BIRTHS

**Alexander, Matilda Rose** – a daughter born to Brett and Saskia – 8 May (Avondale)

**De Vries, Lydia Grace** – a daughter born to Jason and Rachel – 16 April (Christchurch)

**Eldershaw, Cahal** – a son born to Duncan and Ilona – 7 May (Hastings)

**Knol, Oliver Willem** – a son born to Jos and Lauren Knol – 12 May (Silverstream)

**Moelker, Lydia Grace** – a daughter born to Peter and Lisa – 10 May (Avondale)

**Van Maanen, Saskia Ella** – a daughter born to Jason and Claire – 9 May (Christchurch)

### PROFESSION OF FAITH

**Dovedale:** Laura Holtslag, Leon Van-noort

**Dunedin:** Rose Lark, Esther O'Neill, Sarah Storm

### WEDDINGS

4 June – Esme ter Veen and Samuel Moala married in Avondale

### FROM THE PASTOR

**Nelson: Daniel Wilson**

Down through history people have sought to separate human existence into that which is spiritual and that which is not. Today many people are more than comfortable with you or me having a personal, individual and private faith in Jesus Christ, providing we do not suggest that Christ has a claim on all people and every single part of all that exists. Should we then quietly retreat into private religious activity behind the closed doors of our homes and church building? Does

the Lord Jesus Christ have relevance and importance to the universe around us; to the atoms from which the page or screen upon which you read these words are constructed; to this spinning shaking earth; to the nebulae and galaxies far out in space? We find clear answers to these deep questions in the Word of God. Christ is the means by which the whole universe came into existence. Christ is the sustaining power for the continued holding together of everything. Christ is the purpose for absolutely everybody and everything existing. How then can Christ be excluded from any part of our lives?

### MINISTERS AND CHURCH WORKERS

**Christchurch Reformed Churches:** All three churches are considering a request from a combined deacons meeting to employ a part time earthquake relief coordinator to help manage requests for assistance, seek opportunities and organise volunteers and paid workers where appropriate. The employment will be until the end of 2011 and will cost approximately \$8000 which will be paid out of the earth quake relief fund.

**Buckland's Beach:** The Auckland Presbytery met at Buckland's Beach on Friday, May 13 to examine Br Craig van Echten and determine his readiness to be declared a candidate for ministry. Craig preached a sermon on Mark 7.24-30

as well as undergoing oral examination on a passage from the Old Testament, a passage from the New Testament and on an area of Systematic Theology (Christology). He sustained his examination for the ministry and was declared eligible for call.

**Palmerston North:** We have heard that Rev. Nathan Ketchen has answered our call to come and serve as a second minister. Rev. Ketchen is married to Melissa (who was a Bryant and came from the PN congregation and studied at Greenville Presbyterian Theological College along with Rev. Daniel Wilson's wife, Raewyn). They have 3 children. Rev. Ketchen comes from the OPC denomination where he served in Long Island, New York. He will undergo a colloquium doctum to be held later this year. May the Lord bless their plans to come over and join us in NZ.

**Pukekohe:** The church members voted overwhelmingly in favour of a motion from the Session to apply to have Jan-Erik Stolte serve here as a Vicar. The Deputies for Students for the Ministry have agreed to place Jan Erik Stolte in our church for his vicariate, which will begin around the end of July. Pukekohe was the only church to apply. Do pray for the Stolte family as they come to the end of their time in the United States and as they prepare to move back to New Zealand. Pray also that their vicariate with us will be of blessing to them and to our congregation.

## WEBSITES

**Hastings:** Have you checked out our website lately? Big changes have taken place and it has a whole new look! Audio files of sermons are on there, our church calendar – including sermon outlines, articles that Pastor David has written, and now our bulletins are on there too. The bulletins are included in a Members only area for privacy purposes. We are hoping to further develop this member's only area as well as make the sermons page searchable.

## CHURCH BUILDINGS

**Pukekohe:** After an extensive and wide-ranging discussion on the church building plans the members voted by a large majority to continue with the preparation of plans to build a new church facility in two stages on this present site in line with the concept plans already presented. The building committee will now prepare the plans for building consent

and call for tenders for stage 1. After that the Session will call another congregational meeting to approve beginning construction.

## EVANGELISM

**Hukanui:** Please remember that our Evangelistic Service is permanently rostered for the 4th Sunday of each month ad infinitum and therefore I ask several things of you all: 1) Always pray for this service that God will help me to preach under the anointing of an evangelist, 2) Please invite and bring along the unsaved.

## PRISON MINISTRY

**Christchurch:** From June onwards on Sundays, the Prison services will begin again. After the Earthquake these services were stopped so we can thank the Lord that these resume.

**Crossroads Bible Institute** is looking for more instructors. If you have a heart for prison ministry to help those who are seeking, that would be great. Peggy Landkroon will be visiting a number of Churches in the South Island to give training. It takes approximately three hours. After your training you may spend 1-2 hours monthly or weekly or as many hours as you wish. It is a wonderful opportunity to help this needy area. Peggy Landkroon will be visiting a number of Churches in the South Island to give instruction.

## DENOMINATIONAL

**Easter Youth Camp:** The camp in Karariki went very well. It was well attended by 110 young people as well as some day visitors. The committee, headed up by Mr and Mrs Jeremy and Louise Posthuma, did a fine job of organising it. The young people were attentive during the studies and the services led by Rev. John Haverland and they had profitable discussions in their groups.

**GIFT FROM THE P.R.C.** – Since the PRC (Presbyterian Reformed Church Incorporated) has had to close their doors here in Auckland, a number of their members have been worshipping with us (Avondale), some of whom have recently been received into our fellowship as professing members. The members of the PRC have determined to contribute all their funds to the Reformed Church of Avondale and have requested that \$1,000 be set aside for the purchase of books and Bibles when required, with a

further \$9,000 to go towards mission and evangelism at the church's discretion. On behalf of the congregation Session has gratefully received this gift.

## ACTS OF SERVICE:

**Avondale:** As part of the Avondale Reformed Youth Group's 'Act of Service', we'd like to offer up our services to the parents of our congregation by looking after your children on Saturday from 9.30am to 12.00pm.

**Bishopdale:** Our church through the deacons has been supporting the Dallington Community Hub and we have been able to show them what a caring Church community is capable of. The Hub was set up after the Earthquake as there was a real need in the area. A lot of the residents in the Dallington area are elderly and/or poor and have had their homes and properties badly affected. The Hub is aimed at helping these people rebuild their lives.

We need 12 people to deliver flyers advertising the Hub in the Dallington area. This is a great witness to the

## Correction

In the "Big wriggles" article by Mr Graeme Zuidema in the May 2011 issue of *Faith in Focus* (vol.38/4), were two instances when question marks appeared in the text, and they clearly should not have been there. This occurred in the third column at the top of p24.

This is how the text appeared:  
... when calamity comes. Therefore, I am convinced it is imperative that you carefully study?? God's Word prior to these events happening and return to it?? when you are going through them....

The correct text is as follows:  
... when calamity comes. *Therefore, I am convinced it is imperative that you carefully study God's Word prior to these events happening and return to it when you are going through them....*

The editor unreservedly apologises to Mr Zuidema for any embarrassment caused to him. **Ed**

people that are involved in the running of the hub.

**Bishopdale:** In the early hours of the morning our Church has been supplying hot drinks, soup and baking to the military and police staffing the CBD cordon. This work has been happening since a few days after the earthquake in February. Most of the cordon personnel are in Christchurch on a two week stint from other parts of the country. The latest "lot" are territorial soldiers ... people with other jobs. It is a very tedious job, made more pleasant in the cold wee small hours by a cheery word of encouragement (from us). This is a great opportunity to be a Christian witness. We start at Bishopdale Church at 3 am and it takes about 3 hours to complete the delivery run around the CBD cordon.

**Christchurch:** A letterbox drop to the neighbourhood around Cornwall St is being worked on. It was felt helpful to inform the residents that we are still here and that if they have any needs we would be willing to help where possible. A short devotional and tract from the Bible Society is being considered to be sent out with this.

**Dovedale:** Musicians are urgently needed to go on a roster to assist with the music at The Chapel of The Holy Family Templeton. We hold weekly Sunday services for people with intellectual disabilities who come to us from the greater Christchurch area. The services are from 11am until approximately 11:30am. You don't have to be a virtuoso to fill this role and you would only be required to play once a month at the most.

**Hamilton/Hukanui:** We'll be having another cook-a-thon event to help stock the churches' freezers with emergency meals for those who may need it. Keep an eye out for more details, but it'll probably be more-or-less the same as our last cook-a-thon day.

## CLASSES & COURSES

**Avondale:** Have you ever wondered what the pastor actually does? Is being an elder or deacon all about attending meetings? What is the biblical definition of an elder? What is the work of the deacon? How should a congregation relate to its leadership? When nominating a man for office, what should I be looking for? Has the Lord given me the desire to serve Him in leadership

in the church? Is the Lord calling me to prepare myself to serve as an elder or deacon in the church? How would I know? These, and many more questions, will be looked at in the next term of Adult Education.

**Bishopdale:** We will be commencing a new members class for those interested in becoming members of the Church. We plan to have 3 sessions, covering the distinctives of the Reformed faith, Christian discipleship, and the expectations and responsibilities of church members.

**Hamilton/Hukanui:** The Cambridge Home Fellowship has begun and will run fortnightly.

It would be great if people that live in the area come along and support this new work. If you have friends and associates who are looking for a good Bible study send them this way. We hope to start with the Book of James and Rev. Scheepers has committed himself to this for at least the first year.

## ACTIVITIES

**Hamilton:** Cadets and Calvinettes would like to advise you that they intend to have a Garage Sale in the spring with funds raised going towards helping children get to National Camp in Wellington – January 2012.

**Hastings:** The social committee have planned a games morning during the school holidays for children aged 5-13. There will be some fun activities, relays, sports etc. and morning tea will be provided.

**North Shore:** Music! Comedy! Puppetry! Hula Hoops! Stocking covered faces! Last year's Talent Quest was great and it was fantastic to see the talent that we have in our congregation – not to mention the food we shared! If you didn't make it last year – make sure you book it in this year! The Talent Quest will be hosted by your marvellous youth group. We will also have another pot luck dessert and will serve tea and coffee.

**Wainuiomata:** Our church hopes to have a Gala at the end of this year to raise money towards finishing off our church buildings. To that end we ask that you please keep all your unwanted "treasures" of any shape or size so we can sell it at our gala.

## World in focus, continued from p12

a rural home of some members of Pastor Gualberto's Seventh Day Adventist Church in Arauca. CSW reports that "Illegal armed groups including the FARC guerrillas make these attacks frequently, targeting pastors and Christians, forcing them to stop preaching, harassing them, causing them to disappear and murdering them."

*WEA Religious Liberty – May 2011*

## Controversial new hungarian pro-life constitution signed into law

NEW YORK, May 5 (C-FAM) Last week, Hungarian President Pal Schmitt signed a controversial new constitution into law that includes a provision for the protection of unborn life "from conception" and the definition of marriage as between a man and a woman.

While the new constitution easily passed in the Hungarian Parliament by the governing majority, it was without any participation from the smaller opposition party who walked out before the vote. The Council of Europe, UN staff and non-governmental organisations are also questioning the legitimacy of the new constitution as controversy continues to rage over both the content and the process by which the constitution was passed.

*By Samantha Singson*

## Christian churches file court papers today in fight over sodomy in Belize

BELIZE CITY, MAY 13 (C-FAM) A lawsuit backed by powerful international lawyers and pressure groups has placed the poor Central American country of Belize in the cross-hairs of an international battle over homosexuality.

On one side of the battle stand three groups of international lawyers. On the other side is the government of Belize and a consortium of Christian churches who have hired high-powered legal talent who are expected to file papers in court today.

*C-FAM Staff*

# The first ten years

## Evert Jan (John) van Laar

Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1952. I leaned against the railing of the Sibajak, gazing in amazement at houses on the hills of Wellington. How could they be built on such steep sites? The first thing I must do was to go up those mountains and find out!

Here I was, at the end of the world, among a people of an unknown quantity, an unknown language, an unknown history; what was I thinking of? With the prayerful support of my parents for my physical, moral and spiritual well-being, and glad to leave the post-war conditions and restrictions of the Netherlands, I intended to work the compulsory two years for the New Zealand government, saving enough to go on to Canada where I would settle. Little did I know that exactly ten years later to the day, I would become engaged to an enthusiastic and positive Christian from this unknown people, and would never set foot on Canadian soil.

Strangers in a strange land, there were many adjustments to make. Foreigners were unusual in those days, and there was a certain amount of resentment. Travelling on a bus with my friends one day, naturally we were talking in our own tongue, when a rude man in front of us turned and shouted, "Speak English! You're in an English speaking country now."

This lack of language did have its problems. Going by train from Trentham into Wellington each day, I would buy a newspaper and open it up, holding it in front of my face and staring at it intently. No, I could not yet understand it, but it saved me from the embarrassment of a fellow passenger attempting to hold a conversation with me. Language also had a funny side. Ben (from the ship), saw a news item headline a few days after our arrival. It read, "King Suddan's Death." "Who is King Suddan?" he wondered. "I wonder if he's from one of the Middle East countries?" It was two or three days before he realised that what it really said was "King's Sudden Death," and there was now a new young queen on the throne.

After a period in the Trentham immigrant camp, I and some fellow migrants found a home to rent in

Khandallah, a move of significance in my life. Out walking with one of my flat mates, we came upon a Scout Hall in Wadestown. We were invited in by a Scotsman there, to take a look round, and not long afterwards I took my place as a cub leader. Those cubs gladly undertook to improve my English, without any fear on my part, of being introduced to the unacceptable bad language that some adults occasionally tried to trick me into! And through them I experienced real Kiwi hospitality. Every Monday evening I was invited by a different family for dinner. One couple finally became my "New Zealand parents," opening their home to me. They were sticklers for correctly spoken English. My "mother", a teacher, showed me how to produce that tricky 'th'. I also found a wonderful welcome and fellowship in the local Presbyterian Church. The people of this area were well-spoken and educated, the best type of New Zealander, not at all rude, and several of those boys grew up as prominent citizens – a doctor who became a NZ medical spokesman, another the chancellor of a university, a third the NZ Trade Commissioner to Australia and others of high positions of authority. How blessed I was to have all this in my introductory time. These cubs still come to visit, and welcome me as a friend today.

Some time later, I was approached to

see if I would support the start of the Reformed Church in Wellington. Some of the Sibajak friends were to be active in this, and the father of the Dijkstra family, it was suggested, was open to a call as first minister. Although happy with my friends in the New Zealand church, the chance to participate in Dutch language services attracted me, as also the fellowship of my own countrymen. From the ship were Joop Huizinga, who later married Mr Dijkstra's daughter Grace (Grietje), Ben Meinders, Magda Bos (later Koolaard), Harman Dijkstra and Al Boekholt. So it was that I joined in this venture, taking part in the celebrations of Mr Dijkstra's first wedding after licensing in New Zealand; a double one, Ben and Willi Meinders, and Arie and Jeanette de Vries. We met in the Congregational Church before the purchase or building of our own church centres in the Wellington Presbytery.

Very important members of the congregation were the only already-married couple to arrive in New Zealand about that time – Piet and Bep Wierenga. These two stalwarts were such a blessing to members of the congregation, especially while we remained single. Their house was always open, for coffee and cake, for a shoulder to cry on, for a bed to sleep in, and later for a baby-sitting home for our children when we had to be away, or when they



*The Sibajak. Many immigrants came from the Netherlands on this ship. It was sold to Hong Kong for scrap in 1959.*



*Back row: (L to R) (with glasses): unknown; head poking behind bride: Ben Meinders (groom); Bert Braaksma, Anno Roggema; Harman Dijkstra  
Middle row: Hilja (Dijkstra) Reitsma; Willy Meinders (bride); Rev. Eeuwe Dijkstra; Jeanette de Vries (bride) Arie de Vries (groom)  
Front row: John van Laar; Jeen de Vries, Joop Huizinga, Grietje (Dijkstra) Huizinga.*

as teenagers needed board, and they also gave faithful service in the church itself. Fifty years on and they still have an open home. They deserve a medal. Thank you, and thank God for you, Bep and Piet.

Another, well-known to everyone who attended the National Family Camps at New Year, was Jaap van Selm, for many years available as camp quartermaster.

During my time at the P&T, as a saddler, canvas and leather worker, sewing postal bags and other Post Office needs, I was privileged to prepare the cars used for the first Royal Tour of Queen Elizabeth in 1953/54. This involved maintaining the upholstery and replacing the perished hoods on the two Daimlers used for royal transport throughout the country, and the making of a cushion for the Queen to sit on, to be better seen by her subjects. (In my last year before retirement in 1981, I also manufactured sheepskin covers for the Queen's, Prince Philip's and the pilot's seats in the plane used to carry the royals from city to city.) I felt honoured to be asked to do this work in my new land.

When my two years' work for the Government was up, instead of going to Canada, I set up my own business in Wellington. But my heart was in Holland, so I decided in 1956 to return

and find myself a Dutch wife. I didn't bargain on having the worst crossing of the Tasman in living memory. It made news in the regional papers. For the first night the *Monawai* hove to, drifting down the coast from Auckland, and we nearly returned to NZ, to Wellington! The great majority of passengers were in their cabins suffering indescribable agonies, but four who managed to make it on the deck unaffected by the conditions, and sticking all the next day to their deckchairs looking at the sea, at the sky, at the sea ... were four young people, an English girl who was a friend of mine and a South Island brother and sister. Such was fate. The sister I soon realised was a Christian, so we had (according to her trip book) some good theological discussions, but it took us six more years to decide to marry!

At home I did not find the elusive Dutch wife, and realised that I loved my new country too much to stay in Holland, so back I went after eighteen months to seek my fortune there again.

It was another year before the young New Zealander and her brother came home to Christchurch. We met occasionally on her visits to a Wellington aunt; I had written that I wanted to keep in 'tough' with her. But at last I took a trip to South Island, hoping for a welcome from her and her family.

I thank God that there was no anti-foreign prejudice in that home, and I was made welcome as a prospective son-in-law.

Since then we have been blessed by the faithful biblical preaching that both of us had grown up with; she in her New Zealand home church and I in my Dutch one, and now in our no longer 'immigrant' church, week by week, again sitting side by side (but not in deck chairs!) for nearly fifty years. Life has had its ups and downs, but God is faithful. To him be the praise, the honour and the glory.

## SPECIAL REQUEST

**Did you immigrate to New Zealand in the 1950s? Have you got a story to tell about why you came to NZ and what you found, and the life you experienced? Then why don't you let the rest of the readers hear about your story. I am sure there are many anecdotes, humorous or serious, which would be interesting for the readers. I look forward to hearing from you. Just remember to try to keep your story to about 1400 words.**