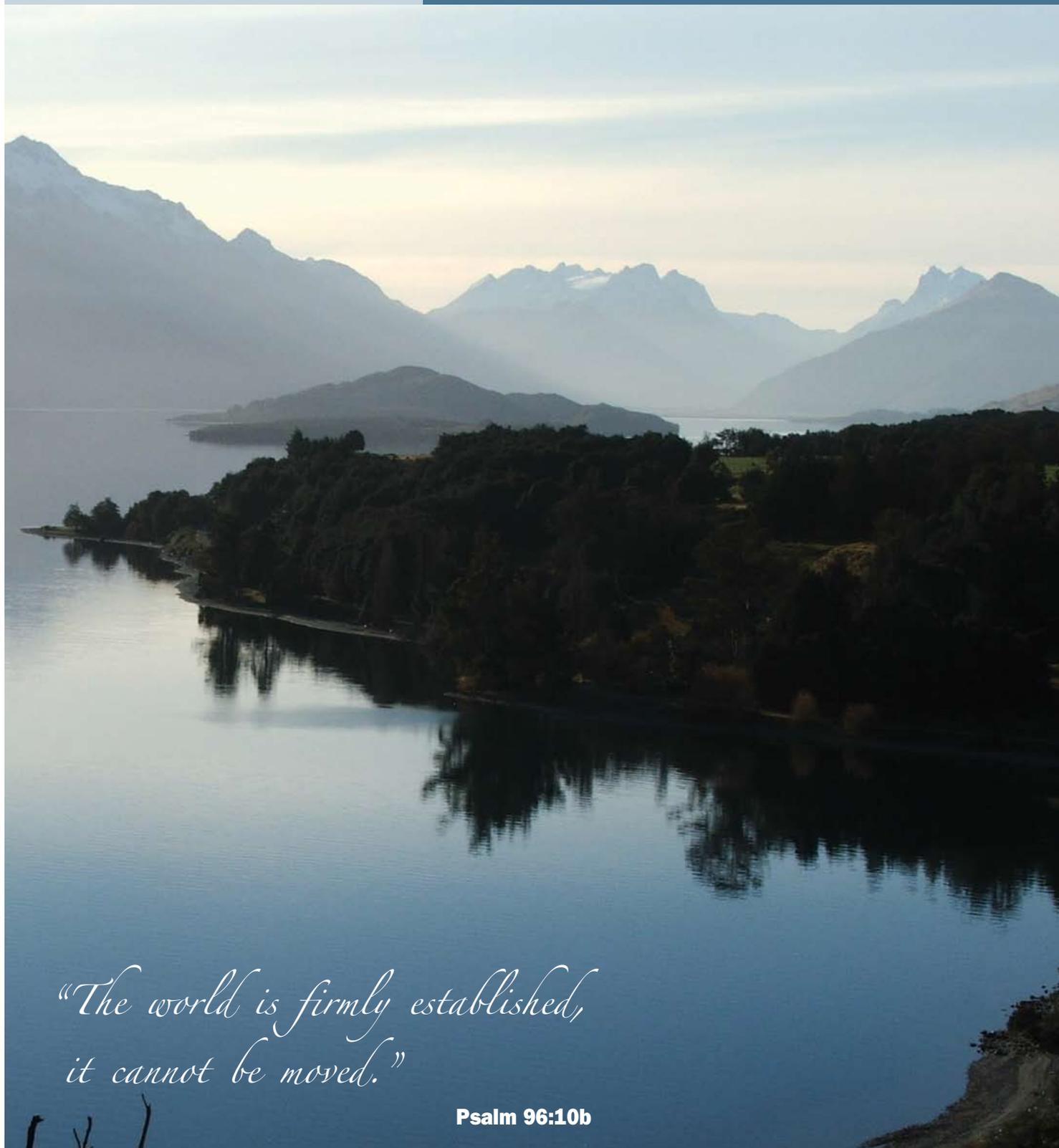


faith in **focus**

Magazine of the
Reformed Churches
of New Zealand

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*"The world is firmly established,
it cannot be moved."*

Psalm 96:10b

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Editorial

How are you going? Quite busy? Or busy but not sure what's exactly going on? And busy in a way you wonder what it is exactly you're doing!

Life can get to be like that. We go through the motions. Then even our closest relationships can become caught up in the tide of everyday life. Things become taken for granted – a bit stagnant even. It's good, then, to specifically lay before the Lord what is happening in all of your life. Make it in the context of praise to Him for all He's done. By reflecting on who He is, and what He has done, will certainly put you in your place.

That's something they sometimes say about those who are somewhat less than good citizens. "I hope they get put in their place!" it is said. Well, may you be put in your place and especially that you know about it!

That's why it's important we have our devotional time with the Lord. This is a time when He particularly challenges us as we have His Word open before us.

And the greatest encouragement to this is the fellowship we have with other believers around God's Word. A healthy personal spiritual walk with the Lord is invariably tied in with commitment to Bible study with others.

Tied in with this close walk with the Lord is attendance at both services on the Lord's Day. This especially shows the place of the Lord in your heart. Because you might feel that one service is fine for you but that's not who it's about. It's the Lord's Day and so all of the day should be set apart for rest and re-creation in Him.

*Let us not give up meeting together,
as some are in the habit of doing,
but let us encourage one another –
and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Hebrews 10:25

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Cover – Taken on the road between Queenstown and Glenorchy, by T & L Smilde
Page 4 – Trudy Osborne

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

Mormons at the door

Using *I Love Mormons* by David L. Rowe, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2005, at your door.

By Christine Farenhorst

Since their beginning in 1830 the Mormons have claimed that they have been the only true church since the time of the Apostles. Never mind if your name was Augustine, Calvin, Luther or Hus – you were misled, you were without truth, and definitely without the authority to preach from the Bible. The members of the Mormon church, or the Latter-Day Saints, steadfastly claim they are the only ones with access to the truth of the Gospel.

You've probably had them come to the door – two clean-cut young men who smile politely and ask if they may speak with you. You possibly guess Jehovah's Witnesses, but they shake their heads and your next guess is Mormons. But now what to do? What to say?

The above book, (although there are a number of them which I would highly recommend for aiding in witnessing to Mormons, and which you will find at the bottom of this review as well), helps to meet situations in which you might find yourself together with some Mormons – whether that is at work, at home or at the door of your church.

Dr Rowe, the author of *I Love Mormons*, grew up in Salt Lake City, Utah. Consequently, he has first-hand experience in dealing with Mormons. Perhaps this experience has moved him to emphasise the fact that he considers Mormons to be not so much a 'cult' as a 'culture.' His initial chapters encourage loving them and appreciating their 'unique ethnic group.' As well, he recounts their history, pointing out that they have a persecution complex, and still consider themselves as an 'exodus' community. He says:

A major and foundational claim I am making right up front is that the Mormon movement is a culture. Certainly at its core is a religion, institutionalized as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and certainly that religious system serves as the wellspring of virtually all else in the culture, but the culture is much, much more than just the standard beliefs and practices of the system.

He goes on to say:

... some of us who studied the Great Commission theology with a bit of precision may have realized Jesus used the word ethne, the root of 'ethnic,' when He commanded us to 'make disciples of all nations' (Matt. 28:19). Yes, our Lord was telling us to 'make disciples of all ethnic groups,' but we did not think of the Mormons this way. Somehow Chinese people groups qualified, as did the Berbers of Morocco, the Sawi of New Guinea, the Jewish in Tel Aviv, the Hutu in Rwanda, and even the various Native American tribes of this continent – but not the Mormons. We did not primarily think of them as one of the ethne, or people groups, at the heart of Jesus' command. We thought of them in terms of orthodoxy and not in terms of ethnicity, depreciated their aberrant beliefs, and did not appreciate their colorful lifeways. We reduced their movement to a cult and did not recognize it as a culture. We thought theologically, not missiologically; we put on our counter-cult hats when we should have put on our missionary hats.

Hitting at the heart

Dr. Rowe's chapter on Mormon theology – on their doctrine – which he extracts from the official, currently-used Latter Day Saints teaching text entitled 'Gospel Principles', is profitable. He covers pre-mortal existence, mortal existence and post-mortal existence. He deals with the issues 'What kind of god is God?', 'What kind of Jesus is Jesus?', 'What really is grace all about?' and 'What kind of revelation from God is authoritative?' Dr. Rowe contends, however, that most Mormons are not about theology. They are heart people and not head people. To impart great doses of knowledge to them about God probably will not bring them, he says, one step closer to accepting Him.

I recall a time when my wife and I, as newlyweds, lived in Denver. This was back when I was young and foolish and no small part of my modus operandi could be explained by my having just graduated from seminary. I could be justly accused of acting like I 'had all

An inoffensive offensive

the answers'. A seminary classmate and I – in collusion with one another in this knowledge-mongering agenda – invited the Mormon missionaries over to my apartment. We got past the polite 'Where are you from?' and 'What's your family like?' talk and offered them hot chocolate that they gratefully accepted and quaffed – something we did well and I'd do again, by the way. And then we laid into them about their bad, unorthodox, heretical theology – God having a body of flesh and bones, the church going into total apostasy, Joseph Smith's claimed prophethood failing to pass the Bible's tests, blah, blah, blah. I'll never forget how calmly and unphasedly they responded by simply 'bearing their testimony' about the Latter Day Saints Church being the true Church and Joseph Smith being a true prophet despite anything we said. Nor will I ever forget my seminary friend's parting words as he shook hands with the missionaries: 'Bye now. I hope to see you again. I'd like to see you in heaven – if you ever get your theology straightened out.'

The time and place

Dr Rowe is not against witnessing to the Mormons, but he cautions about time and place.

As a general rule... we discuss theology with Mormons, humbly and graciously, when God opens the door for it. I'm saying the 'when' becomes a matter of providential timing and the 'how' becomes a matter of serving in love with the gentle respectful, but clear expression of our knowledge. And he cautions about pride.

Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. (I Cor. 8:1) Among other things, our growth in godly (or Christlike) character means knowledge becomes the handmaid en of our love for people... God forbid our knowledge becomes a puffy display of our wit and expertise to our Mormon friends, instead of a means by which we genuinely love them and minister God's grace to them so they can find and know the God of the Bible!



Mormon Temple at Hamilton

The internal issue, then, concerns how we hold the knowledge we have, and this, our spirituality of knowledge, will become the greatest determinant of how we use it in relationships with others. If we hold it masterfully, like a debater all studied up to win the argument, well, we may indeed win the argument, but that's all. Forget about winning the person to Christ. If we hold it patronizingly, like a grade-school grammar teacher drilling people we regard as ignorant until they 'get it right', we'll probably just foster irritation, resentment, and even anger in our listeners. If we hold it ashamedly, though, as timid people who fear offending our Mormon friends by telling the truth of the Bible (especially when we know it might differ from their beliefs), we will be inauthentic to ourselves and unfaithful to our Lord, as well as unhelpful to any who really do need some divine light in their darkness. If, on the other hand, we hold our theological knowledge... humbly, gently, respectfully, lovingly, and graciously, as the Scriptures mentioned before tell us to do, we'll embody a measure of spiritual growth in Christ-likeness and no doubt find ourselves using that knowledge redemptively!

The experience of growing up with Mormons

Although this book covers a number of aspects which are also written on extensively in other books dealing with Mormons, Dr Rowe

has an edge on many of the experts in that he grew up in a Mormon neighbourhood. They were his neighbours, he has interacted with them for years, and he truly seems to love them very much. He comments on their uniqueness.

Don't stereotype. Don't assume you know what your LDS friends believe. Ask them! Mormon culture (and community), although it looks monolithic, is considerably diverse in lifestyle and in belief. Not every Mormon accepts everything in standard Mormonism. Some Mormons don't believe humans are cut out to become gods and goddesses. More common in my own experience are those Mormons who simply don't care about that doctrine even if it is official LDS teaching; they cavalierly relegate it to some fuzzy afterlife issue not worthy of their attention now, since all they really want to do is get through this life with some success, respect, godliness and moral uprightness. Many like part of the theological package and not other parts, so they have a pick-and-choose, designer Mormonism. A friend of ours was for years a well-loved, respected teacher in the LDS release-time education program. He accepted assignments to teach the Bible and the Book of Mormon, but never the Doctrine and Covenants (a more distinctively unorthodox part of LDS Scriptures) because he simply did not believe much of its teaching. Some Mormons don't

care about doctrine, period! They are in the LDS Church because of its health practices (keeps the kids off drugs, for example), family attachments, or other reasons... The bottom line is this: find out where your particular friends are in their awareness and attitude towards standard LDS teachings and Biblical teachings, find out what really motivates them, and go from there... pray...act gently and wisely.

Going back to those two nice young men who come to your door and who are not ashamed of the fact that they are missionaries from the LDS Church, it is Dr Rowe's suggestion that you ask them in and make them feel very much at home. In fact he suggests that you become the most hospitable place they've been to all year.

My own style is to invite them in and offer them refreshments they'll enjoy, like lemonade or hot chocolate and perhaps some cookies. Then I try as soon and as much as possible to put things on a personal footing, asking permission to know their first names as we get acquainted, (Elder Christianson is so cold and stiff), and moving through the introductory personal information with real interest as we exchange backgrounds with one another. I try to show more interest than most people they'll meet, finding out about their families, hobbies, favourite movies or books, girlfriends, and so on. At this point I may even express admiration for their commitment to spend two years in this kind of disciplined activity when so many of their generation get into drugs and other non-constructive living patterns.

Then I sit back and prepare to listen to their prepared presentation – and listen with respect, for this is a part of loving them. At this point, theological, doctrinal issues will arise from them, although the issues will be dressed in sales-presentation language. First I want to actively listen, showing genuine interest and asking questions to clarify and see how much their teachings connect with them as persons, doing my level best to avoid an attacking tone. I might ask such questions as 'Are the LDS prophets believed to be just like the Old Testament ones?' and 'How often do they give prophecies?' and, 'Tell me, Hyrum, do you find it hard or easy to keep all the commandments of Jesus? Do you ever feel like you're not making it?' Then I simply respond with calmness and clarity, and without any defensiveness, when they ask their scripted questions to draw me in. Sometimes I tell a story or ask a return question of them.

Responding to their doctrinal issues will

drive you, as it has me, to your knees and to the Scriptures, which is really not a bad thing for us... A discussion will go on for a while before they come to the end of their program for that session. There are five basic lessons in the series... Thus the twosome will hope to visit your home at least five times – if you're responsive and willing to continue. Be aware that their program goal is not to teach but to baptize... our commitment is simple: we meet with them all we can, love them all we can, respect them all we can, and express our relationship with Christ all we can, as long as God gives us an open door.

Mistakes to avoid

Dr Rowe advises on mistakes to avoid in evangelism – preaching, taunting, dilettantism and avoidance of issues. A friend of Dr Rowe's, a Marvin Anderson, has had many encounters with Mormon missionaries. One of the current favourite questions they like to confront people with is 'Are Mormons Christians?' It is supposed to show the refusal of many other kinds of Christians to accept Mormons as Christians, fortifying, no doubt, the persecution complex of the Mormons. Marvin Anderson fielded this question very well. He referred his two young missionaries to priesthood authority,

one of the basic Mormon doctrines.

'As I understand it, we both believe Paul the apostle said in Romans 8:9 that if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he or she does not belong to Christ. In other words, he or she is not a Christian. But the LSD doctrine says the only way I can get the Spirit of Christ into my life is to be baptized and have 'the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Ghost.' Both acts must be performed by a Mormon with priesthood authority, or they don't have any divine power and aren't valid. Do I understand that correctly?'

'Yes,' the missionary answered.

Then Marv raised his rabbinic question: 'Then it would seem to me, my friends, that if you believe the LDS Church's doctrine on this, you'd have to believe I am not a Christian, since I've never had that done to me. Is that your belief?' Dr Rowe continues:

'Of course this approach turns the tables and may leave our Mormon friends on the hot seat, but that's not where we want them left. Nor does Marv. Rather, we want our friends to become prepared, open and a bit curious about the main issue we'll want to talk about next. We may then suggest, 'Why don't we look together at some more of the statements of Jesus and the apostles about what a Christian is

and how one becomes a Christian?'

This kind of engaging and informed witness, driven by love, will leave an indelible, divine mark.

Altogether a most interesting volume which offers much insight into Mormon culture (although, mind you, being a culture does not in any way make Mormonism less of a cult). Practical discussion on how to make an impact on the Latter Day Saints makes it easy-to-read and a welcome addition to both church and home libraries.

This article was taken from 'Christian Renewal' with whom we have a reciprocal arrangement.

Other suggested readings on Mormons:

1. The Gospel According to Joseph Smith, – a Christian Response to Mormon Teaching, by Ethan E. Harris, P & R Publishing, 2001.
2. The Kingdom of the Cults (revised) by Walter Martin, edited by Hank Hanegraaff, Bethany House Publishers, 1997.
3. The Changing World of Mormonism, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Moody Press, 1980.
4. Counterfeits at Your Door by James Bjornstad, Regal Books, Ventura California, 1979, reprinted in 1985.
5. The Chaos of the Cults, (revised) by Jan Karel Van Baalen, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1962.

World in focus

World Reformed Communion

An extended Executive Committee of the Reformed Ecumenical Council approved 'in principle (on behalf of the REC and subject to further development and detailed description) the initiative of the joint REC/World Alliance of Reformed Churches committee to move toward the formation of a new ecumenical organisation.' The committee also accepted the proposed title, World Reformed Communion, for the new body to be founded by the members of the Reformed Ecumenical Council and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Fourteen persons from twelve REC member churches in ten countries gathered here to make this crucial decision on behalf of the REC. The WARC General Secretary, Setri Nyomi, was also present for most of the meeting.

The decision came midway through a four-day meeting, March 6-9, 2007. The participants called it a 'Consensus Statement,' and it was fully accepted by all participants. The key to its acceptance by

all was the inclusion of some ideas crucial to the identity of the REC.

+ REC Secretariat, 2050 Breton Rd, SE, Suite 102, Grand Rapids, MI USA 49546

Gay activists trespassing at Covenant

According to published reports, officers charged four gay activists at Covenant College. The group arrested 2 April in Dade County, Georgia, informed campus administrators months ago they would be visiting as representatives of Soulforce, a Lynchburg-based organization sponsoring a bus tour of colleges to challenge policies they contend discriminate against homosexuals.

Brad Voyles, dean of students at Covenant, said the Soulforce group had earlier refused a campus offer of meetings with student leaders, administrators and faculty in a designated room. Administrators refused to allow the group members to 'roam campus and meet with anyone of

their choosing,' according to a February 8 statement on the college website.

Voyles said Covenant students spoke to the group on Monday at the edge of the campus and 'they were warned if they trespassed they would be arrested.'

The Covenant College website says its policy is 'clear as it relates to a student's sexual conduct. When students enroll at Covenant, they voluntarily sign the Biblically-based Standards of Conduct, agreeing to abstain from 'sexual sins (such as premarital sex, adultery, homosexual behavior and the use or possession of obscene or pornographic material.)' We remain firmly committed to our Biblically-based standards of sexuality.'

+ Covenant College 14049 Scenic Highway Lookout Mountain, GA 30750-9901
+ Soulforce Inc., PO Box 3195, Lynchburg, VA 24503

New French Protestant Leader

The Rev. Claude Baty of the Union of Free Evangelical Churches in France has

been elected as the new president of the Protestant Federation of France (FPF), succeeding the Rev. Jean-Arnold de Clermont, who has held the post since 1999. Baty, aged 59, is seen as representing a middle way between the historic Lutheran and Reformed churches to which most French Protestants belong, and the charismatic and Pentecostal groups currently growing in France, particularly among migrant communities.

+ Ecumenical News International, PO Box 2100, CH - 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

Pastor Condemned to Four Years in Uzbek Gulag

An Uzbek criminal court has sentenced Christian pastor Dmitry Shestakov to four years in a prison colony for alleged 'illegal' religious activities. Judge M. Tulanov of the Andijan Criminal Court handed down the harsh verdict against Shestakov on Friday (March 9), nearly three weeks after his trial began in the Ferghana Valley region of eastern Uzbekistan. Yesterday one of the nation's leading evangelical pastors said Shestakov's unexpected conviction could have 'grave consequences' for Prot-

estant Christians in Uzbekistan. 'Perhaps it already has,' the pastor told *Compass*, saying that over the past weekend, many more incidents had been initiated against Christians in a number of places across the country.

+ *Compass Direct News*, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana CA 92799-7250

CRC Appoints Advancement Director

The Christian Reformed Church in North America has appointed Peter M. Harkema as director of denominational advancement, effective July 2007. This is a new position, responsible for developing and implementing a denomination-wide fundraising effort in support of the agencies and educational institutions of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC).

+ *Christian Reformed Church in North America*, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave., SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560 (616) 241-1691

One Building - Three Congregations

How does a church reach out to the people in its community, especially when that population is increasingly diverse? Cove-

nant Presbyterian Church in San Diego, California, is pursuing a unique approach in answering that question. Senior Pastor Dave Fenska says, 'Communities like North Park, where our church is located, are mosaics of diversity. Africans, Asians, South Americans and Eastern Europeans live side by side. Their children attend the same schools. They eat in the same restaurants. They shop at the same grocery stores. Why shouldn't they worship in the same churches?' Covenant's response has been to become a 'multi-cultural fellowship.'

Three years ago, Covenant brought onto its pastoral staff Anwar Mangisto, a native of Sudan, and began an Arabic worship service on Sunday evening. Anwar has a two-year seminary degree, and is interested in pursuing EPC ordination. For the past year and a half, the Presbytery of the West has provided funding to help pay for Anwar's pastoral ministry and support, for which Dave said, 'We are very grateful.'

Maranatha Ethiopian Church will begin meeting in Covenant's facilities on Palm Sunday. As Dave puts it, they are not coming to Covenant 'as tenants, but as partners for the Gospel.' Melaku Me-

  <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; letter-spacing: 0.5em;">preachingthekingdom</p>	
<p>Gospel preachers don't only preach the good news of individual salvation</p> <p>They preach the good news of the Kingdom</p> <p><i>This year's conference will explore the rich themes of the Kingdom and will show preachers how they can strengthen their ministry of the Word by preaching the Kingdom.</i></p> <p><i>When Jesus first came his Kingdom came in power, when he comes again, his Kingdom will come in glory</i></p>	<p>Thurs 27 & Fri 28</p> <p>September</p> <p>Reformed Theological College</p> <p>125 Pigdons Road Waurnd Ponds Victoria 3216</p> <p>T: 03 5244 2955 E: admin@rtc.vic.edu.au</p>
<p>Reformed Theological College</p> <p>Preaching Workshop 2007</p>	

kuria, who enjoys a connection with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Sudan, is the pastor of Maranatha. This church, after sixteen years of moving from place to place in San Diego, will now be able to call Covenant home.

Two other people groups in the community for which Dave is praying are Cambodians and Hispanics.

+ *Covenant Presbyterian Church, 2930 Howard Avenue, San Diego, CA 92104*

Biography of James Kennedy

Mary Lou Davis has produced *The Truth that Transformed Me*, the biography of Presbyterian Church in America pastor D. James Kennedy. This inside account chronicles the story of the man God used to launch Evangelism Explosion and who is pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Readers will see Dr Kennedy from a lonely boy who grew up in a troubled home to a musician and award-winning dancer, and finally to his dramatic encounter with the Gospel and call to ministry.

+ *Christian Education and Publications, 1700 North Brown Road, Suite 102, Lawrenceville, GA 30043 (800) 283-1357*

Rapid drop in Britain's churchgoers

The number of people in Britain going to church is falling rapidly and only one in 10

adults attends church weekly even though 53 percent of adults or 26.2 million people in the United Kingdom identify themselves as Christian. A survey, 'Churchgoing in the UK Today,' by Christian relief and development agency Tearfund, said this reflects a drop of 20 percent in weekly church attendance from a similar survey conducted six years ago. The survey shows that 7.6 million adults go to church each month. One in four (12.6 million) attend at least once a year.

+ *Ecumenical News International, PO Box 2100, CH - 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland*

Episcopal bishop switches sides

A retired Oklahoma bishop charged with violating church law resigned this week from the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church and has been accepted into the Anglican Diocese of Argentina. The Episcopal Church is the American branch of the worldwide Anglican communion. The Rt Rev. William J. Cox, 86, is a casualty of the growing rift in the Episcopal Church over Biblical authority and the ordination of gay clergy. Cox, who lives in Tulsa, was facing an Episcopal church trial on charges that he violated church law by ordaining two Anglican priests and a deacon in Kansas without the permission of the bishop of the Diocese of Kansas, among other charges. The resignation leaves the status of the

trial in question. Cox said if the trial is held, he will not participate.

The Rev. Jan Nunley of the Episcopal News Service said the policy of the national church is not to comment on ecclesiastical trials.

Last week, Cox was accepted as a retired assistant bishop in the Anglican Diocese of Argentina, Province of the Southern Cone. That diocese, and some in Africa, have been accepting ecclesiastical authority over American churches and individuals leaving the Episcopal denomination over the consecration of a gay bishop.

+ *David Virtue <VirtueOnline.org>*

Death of Dr. Meredith G. Kline

Dr Meredith G. Kline passed away on Friday night, April 13, 2007. He was 74 years old. For over half a century, Dr Meredith G. Kline, an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, served as a professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary (in Philadelphia), Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and Westminster Seminary California. He received his B.D. and Th.M. degrees from Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia) and his Ph.D. degree in Assyriology and Egyptology from Dropsie College.

+ *Dr. John P. Elliot, Editor, Christian Observer, Presbyterians-Week@ChristianObserver.org*

A feminine focus

Morning and Evening – Hymns of John Keble

Sally Davey

How many times have you sung *Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear* at an evening service? This has to be one of the loveliest of evening hymns in the hymnals of the English-speaking world. Not surprisingly, it was written by one of England's best poets in one of the most intense and creative periods of hymn-writing in the history of the English church.

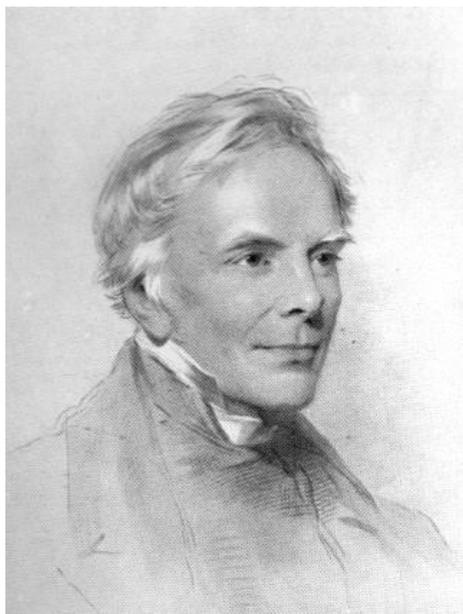
John Keble, the writer of this hymn, was an extraordinarily gifted man. He was born in 1792, the son of a long-serv-

ing clergyman in the parish of Fairford, in Gloucestershire. Like many clergy, his father was well-educated, and he decided to teach his son at home rather than send him away to school. John was so capable a student that he gained an open scholarship to Corpus Christi College at Oxford University at the age of fifteen. He finished his B.A. studies when only eighteen, gaining a double first in both Classics and Mathematics. His academic progress continued to be brilliant; but it was his desire to serve God with all his talents – and so he was ordained to the ministry five years later,

in 1815 (the year of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo).

His gift in poetry

At first he helped his father in his large and scattered country parish; but a few years later Keble was appointed curate of East Leach and Burthorpe. It was during this period of curacy that he wrote a number of the poems that later became famous as hymns. (Poetry, in fact, was one of Keble's great loves). One of these poems was written on November 25th 1820, inspired by the same text that moved Henry Lyte to write *Abide with Me*: Luke 24:29. We know parts of this poem as the hymn *Sun of my soul*. It was to become one of his best-known and most-loved hymns. Keble was an extraordinarily productive poet during these early years – so much so that his father and a number of his



John Keble (1792-1866)

friends begged him to publish a collection of them for the benefit of the whole church. He finally agreed, and in 1827, when he was 35 years old, *The Christian Year* was published.

The Christian Year was an amazing success. Its popularity is perhaps hard for us to understand today – we simply couldn't imagine a book of religious poetry becoming a best-seller! But in 19th century England (and beyond) it was. It became a household item in many a home. It went through 95 editions in his own lifetime, and another 13 came out in the year after his death. Some of its poems were memorised by those who loved them (Cecil Frances Alexander, writer of *Once in Royal David's City*, knew all of them by heart). Once, when evangelical politician William Wilberforce and his four sons went on holiday together, they decided that each would bring a favourite book to read aloud to the rest. To their astonishment they found that every one of them had brought *The Christian Year*! However, Keble himself was always very diffident about this collection of his poems. To the end of his life he was uncomfortable when anyone mentioned it in his presence. To his close friends he seemed saddened, or dissatisfied with it. Those who knew him well did not put this down to a lack in the quality of the poetry; rather, they believed, it was due to the intensely personal way the poetry reveals the writer's heart. Knowing this, Keble feared that those who loved the poems would think too well of him. He believed the picture revealed in the poetry was more spiritual than he was; and not true enough of him. As one close friend wrote, 'Praise was at all times really

painful to him.'¹ Perhaps this is true of all authors of books on spiritual subjects: a Christian writer believes, truly, what he writes – though, being a sinful creature, he does not always consistently live what he writes.

Following the church's liturgy

Keble's purpose in *The Christian Year* was to encourage serious, earnest and heart-felt practical Christian living. He was a devoted Anglican, and loved the Prayer Book that Thomas Cranmer had written in the sixteenth century at the time of the Reformation and which had served the Church of England so well ever since. He wanted his book of poetry to encourage Christians in their faith in a way that was 'in close harmony with, and in constant reference to, our liturgy.'² In other words, he wanted to help his readers meditate in a godly way on all the themes of the Christian year as they were addressed, suc-

*Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear,
It is not night if Thou be near:
O may no earth-born cloud arise
To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes.*

*When the soft dews of kindly sleep
My wearied eyelids gently steep,
Be my last thought, how sweet to rest
For ever on my Saviour's breast.*

*Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without Thee I cannot live;
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without Thee I dare not die.*

*If some poor wand'ring child of Thine
Have spurn'd to-day the voice Divine,
Now, LORD, the gracious work begin;
Let him no more lie down in sin.*

*Watch by the sick; enrich the poor
With blessings from Thy boundless store;
Be every mourner's sleep to-night
Like infant's slumbers, pure and light.*

*Come near and bless us when we wake,
Ere through the world our way we take;
Till in the ocean of Thy love
We lose ourselves in Heav'n above*

cessively, in the Prayer Book. (In our context it would be a bit like someone writing a series of poems that dealt with the themes of each Lord's Day in the Heidelberg Catechism.) So he included a poem for each Sunday of the year, poems for special festival days of the Anglican church, and one for morning prayer and evening prayer. The Church of England has a written service for morning and for evening; with prayers, Scripture readings and Psalms to be used in each service of worship. These are the standard services for Sunday, and have sometimes been used daily in parish churches. Keble's two poems for morning and evening include the verses that have become perhaps his best-known hymns: *New every morning* and *Sun of my soul*. These are the two we will look more closely at later.

Keble was not to remain long as a country curate. In 1831 his prowess as a poet was recognised by his election as Professor of Poetry at Oxford University. He held this office with great distinction for nine years. During this time he became embroiled in the beginnings of a huge controversy in the Church of England. It all began in 1833, when Parliament passed legislation reducing the number of bishoprics in the (Anglican) Church of Ireland. In response, Keble preached a sermon entitled 'National Apostasy' from the university pulpit at Oxford. He was protesting against what he perceived as an unwarranted infringement on the part of the civil authority on the sphere that rightly belonged to the Church. His sermon sparked a controversy that led to a number of like-minded clergy (including John Henry Newman, Edward Pusey and Richard Froude) waging a war of tracts against those whom they believed threatened the spiritual authority of the church. It led, in the end, to the development of a set of doctrines that emphasised the sacraments, an intercessory role of the clergy in individual believers' lives, and an emphasis on beauty and ceremony in worship that was quite unbiblical. Some, like Newman, even became Roman Catholics as a logical conclusion of their thinking.

His pastoral ministry

But Keble, while sympathising with some of the fundamentals of these friends, stopped short of some of their excesses. In the later 1830s he returned to the pastoral ministry and settled in the parish of Hursley, where he served his congregation for over thirty years. For many in what became known as the High Church party (those who emphasised the role of the clergy, the sacraments, etc) Keble was the great model of what a country

clergyman should be like: a quiet, hard-working, dignified, deeply spiritual man who served his people and conducted worship in a reverent and beautiful manner. Among his congregation was Charlotte Yonge, the author of immensely popular novels that depicted High church family life. She regarded herself as an illustrator or an exponent of the movement in novel form, and it is without doubt that her beloved pastor, John Keble, was the model for many of her clergyman characters. Keble did not marry until he was 44 (shortly after he went to Hursley). His wife, Charlotte Clarke, was an invalid most of her life, but she did all she could to help him in his parish work. He was indeed very hard-working. He led daily church services, he catechised all the older children; and on Wednesdays and Fridays children who attended day-schools came to the church to be instructed by him. He also prepared the young people individually for confirmation (we call that profession of faith). If the young people were unable to come to the church during the day, he would visit them at home in the evening. He taught them from the Scriptures (basically doing Bible study with them) and gave each candidate for confirmation a Bible from his own funds. He was a constant and regular visitor of his people in their homes. It is not hard to see why many saw him as a model pastor!

His two most well-known hymns

And what of the two poems that he wrote for morning and evening devotions? Let us take a closer look at them, or at least, those verses of them that became well-known hymns. You will find them printed along with this article. The morning hymn, *New every morning is the love*, deals with God's mercies, which are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-3). The very fact that we wake, and can get up and begin our day, proves that He loves us and keeps us safe. In the second stanza Keble's words remind us that God's daily mercies are many: they include safety from danger, His forgiveness of our recent sins, and the blessings of meditating on God and our future rest in heaven. The third and fourth verses deal with the routine tasks we do every day – and our attitude to them. This has particular relevance to those of us who are homemakers – and to many others of us who sometimes find our work tiresome, boring or frustrating. It makes all the difference, Keble writes, which way we view our work. If our minds 'be set to hallow' our labours – that is, treat them as God-given work, as our calling in life, and therefore worthwhile and special in His sight – then we

*New every morning is the love
Our wakening and uprising prove;
Through sleep and darkness safely
brought,
Restored to life, and power, and thought.*

*New mercies, each returning day,
Hover around us while we pray;
New perils past, new sins forgiven,
New thoughts of GOD, new hopes of
Heav'n*

*If on our daily course our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still, of countless price,
GOD will provide for sacrifice.*

*The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we need to ask,
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer GOD.*

*Only, O LORD, in Thy dear love
Fit us for perfect rest above;
And help us, this and every day,
To live more nearly as we pray.*

will find joy and purpose in that work. And God will reward us *for* it and *in* it. We shall be found to be good and faithful servants when we come before Him in heaven. Our sacrifices, our denial of ourselves, will be blessed by God. They will bring us closer to Him as part of His sanctifying work in us. Rejoice in such work! In the final stanza these reflections on beginning the day are rounded off by a reminder that each day contains opportunities for being equipped more perfectly for an eternity in heaven. God is working out His purposes out in us, each day of our lives; and it should be our prayer that we might live every day in ways more pleasing to Him. This, through His boundless love, is possible! This is an excellent hymn with which to begin your day.. Why not sing it with your morning devotions?

Keble's evening hymn *Sun of my soul* is, I think, a really beautiful song of love to Christ. Its main focus is the great blessings we enjoy because we have Christ as our Saviour – blessings that enable us to sleep, in peace. Have you ever had trouble sleeping?

Have you ever lain in your bed, distracted by worries, afraid of dying, perhaps? Have you ever been so burdened by sin that your mind will not shut down? Have you sometimes tossed and turned, troubled by the spiritual state of a loved one – perhaps a grown-up child – who has turned his back on Christ, and all he learned at church? Then this hymn is for you. Keble's words in the first four stanzas remind us of the truths that comfort and encourage all who have such cares. These words, as we sing them, imprint in our hearts the reasons why we can sleep in peace.

Stanzas five, six and seven of this hymn as it appears in our own *Psalter Hymnal* (No. 472) are actually taken from a hymn written by Bishop Thomas Ken in the seventeenth century. Ken was a brave man who stood out for moral uprightness at the court of William of Orange (he was Princess Mary's English chaplain there), and who once defied King Charles II by refusing to have Charles's mistress stay in his house. He was a keen poet, like Keble; and it was Ken's *Poems for the Holy Days and Festivals of the Church* that suggested to Keble the idea of arranging poems in the form of *The Christian Year*. In stanza six we pray, with Ken, that our rest will refresh and strengthen us for God's service in the morning. Have you ever prayed that simple, yet important prayer? In Ken's stanza seven we have a doxology of praise to all three persons of God. It is reminiscent of the last verse of Psalm 150, which commands that 'everything that has breath' praise God. And why? Because all blessings flow from Him. We often sing this hymn in evening worship; and that is so appropriate. Corporately, we can remind each other of the reasons we have to rejoice in Christ as the day comes to a close. But have you ever thought of singing it as you pray last thing at night; as you prepare to go to bed? Singing such reminders to yourself may give you the peaceful night's sleep that so often eludes you. Singing such a prayer is a wonderful antidote to anxious thoughts (Philippians 4:6-9).

We can give thanks for the words of John Keble. We may not agree with all of his theology or view of the church; but these simple yet well-crafted hymns are full of devotional truth and consistent with the Scriptures. They have served God's people well.

Endnotes

- 1 Coleridge, *A Memoir of the Rev. John Keble*, p. 163
- 2 Preface to *The Christian Year*.

Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Avondale

Evangelism Team: We will be going into Queen Street next Saturday, 14 April and meeting in the basement at 7.30 pm for prayer before we head out. If you haven't been out with us yet, we look forward to introducing you to an exciting evening, either participating or simply observing. Reuben Ploeg.

Andre Holtslag: After prayerful consideration, the Vicariate Committee has decided to place Andre in Pukekohe where he will work with Rev John Haverland. Andre is expected to commence his vicariate in July.

Family prayer & praise items: We give thanks to the Lord with and for Sr Tineke Heeringa, who in this past week reached the grand age of 80! May the Lord continue to keep and surround you with His love.

Bishopdale

Pastoral. It is our privilege to have had Pieter and Annette Huyssteen and their daughter Caroleen here for the past week, and many of you have had the opportunity to meet them and get to know them better. After the morning service next week, we will have a short congregational meeting at which we will vote on whether to call Pieter van Huyssteen as a second minister here. If you cannot be at the congregational meeting, please obtain a proxy vote from Jim Nugteren. This must be handed and signed to one of the elders before next Sunday. Please give this matter prayerful consideration over the coming week.

We want a photo of you: Session believes that there are many advantages in having a photo archive of all members and regular visitors. It is intended that the new church directory will include family photos. Today and for the next two Sundays, Donald Bangma, Simon Couprie, and Jake Couprie will be taking as many family/individual photos as possible. Please assist them by having all your family present when you have your

photos taken.

Pastoral: It is our joy to celebrate our 25th anniversary as a church. Over that time we have had times of joy and sorrow. We have laughed together and cried together. But even though our lives haven't always been easy (sometimes even filled with pain), we can definitely say, "God is good". As we reminisce together, old memories are rekindled and we are reminded of the many things for which we can give thanks to God. At this afternoon's thanksgiving service we will have the opportunity to do exactly that. It will be our privilege to have Reverends Dirk van Garderen and John Haverland leading us in worship.

Pastoral: We can rejoice with Steven and Angela MacDonald on the birth of a healthy baby boy. Samuel Connor was born on Thursday 19th April and weighed in at 9lb 3oz. Lord willing, Sam will be baptised on 20 May 2007.

Christchurch

Pastoral. A special welcome to everyone worshipping with us on this Easter Sunday. While the term 'Easter' itself has a questionable origin (it is thought to come from the name of an ancient pagan goddess of

spring and fertility, 'Eostre'), that which we celebrate today, the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is not at all questionable, but is part of the most beautiful and significant event that has ever taken place in history. We thank God for the victory over death achieved by Jesus Christ, and we pray that we may continue to show that we are raised with Christ to new life.

You may have noticed already that today's bulletin looks a bit different. At the bottom of this page, you'll find a little section that you can cut out, with suggested items to pray about for each day. The hope is that we can build one another up and foster mutual support and encouragement as we pray for one another. If you have any specific prayer needs that you would like included in the weekly calendar, please let Pastor Jim or Jessica Gough (bulletin typist) know. The flip side of the prayer calendar contains some suggested short daily Bible readings. The idea is not to replace your regular daily Bible reading, but to supplement it with passages that relate to the sermon that was preached on the previous Sunday or the sermon that will be preached on the following Sunday. If you have difficulty sticking to a regular Bible reading program, hopefully the suggested Bible passages will be a good place to start.

Thank you

We would like to thank all the people from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand who have sent us cards, flowers, words of sympathy and comfort, at the passing away of our dearly beloved wife and mother:

Elisabeth Gorter.

We mourn, but not as if there was no hope. We acknowledge and confess that our lives are in God's hands and when the hour of death draws near, He will take us up and give us a home for eternity.

Elisabeth was born on the 12th of March 1921 at Zwagerveen, the Netherlands. She died suddenly on the 26th of February 2007 in Christchurch.

On Friday the 2nd of March we committed her body to the earth at Lincoln cemetery, (*aan de schoot der aarde toevertrouwd*); until that day....., that only the Lord knows of.

The same day a memorial service was held at the Reformed Church of Christchurch Rev. Jim Klazinga was the officiating pastor and he gave a message on the text (which Mum had chosen several months before):

"In my Father's house are many mansions." (John 14:2.)

A large number of people came to the service to provide support and comfort and to those who attended we are very thankful.

Wiebe, Eke, Anneke, Maaike and Helen.

The clerk received an email from a terminally ill gentleman wishing to give \$19.5M (US) to our church. The deacons have not included this windfall in the budget since the source of the funds is dubious (that is to say, the email is a known scam).

Dovedale

Wedding Banns: If there are no lawful objections, the wedding of Richard Snoek and Judith Verheij will take place in Masterton on Saturday 14th April. We rejoice with Richard and Judith pray for the Lord's blessings upon their marriage.

Farewell from the Flinns: Tina and I would like to thank you all for the time we have been able to spend here in Christchurch for the last nine years. It has been a great privilege for us to have been involved in another church planting work and to see the congregation grow to the point where it is now. A special thanks to you for the wonderful farewell evening last Friday, which was organised at such short notice. We have brought your beautiful gifts to show any who were not able to be there on Friday. We look forward to keeping up with the news via the bulletin. We know that the Lord will continue to bless you in the months ahead and we will continue to pray for you. Please pray for us too with the new challenges ahead in Palmerston North. Our home address will be 2 Christian Place, PN (phone 06 354 5678) and I'll be having an office in the church (ph [I think] 06 354 5590). Our email addresses will remain the same: Flinn.Michael@gmail.com and Tina.Flinn@gmail.com. Every blessing, Michael and Tina Flinn (and Jessica!).

More new life: Fred and Sandy Hoekstra delight in the birth of Rachel Grace Hoekstra. The Hoekstra's still live at Chertsey-Kyle road, RD Ashburton.

Wedding announcement: Lord willing, Simone Couprie and Nathaniel Petterson will marry on 21 April 2007 at 10am at the Reformed Church of Cornwall Street, St Albans (unless there are lawful objections). They warmly invite everyone to celebrate this special occasion with them and to join them for morning tea afterwards.

Pastoral: Entering into our place of worship, it is most important that we all are aware of the noise that can be generated by conversation etc. and how this affects ours and others preparation for worship. Many value this time to still their hearts before the Lord in prayer. Please be mindful of this having consideration for others and approaching our God with reverence and awe.

Dunedin

Pastoral notes. It is with joy that we are able to announce that Kirk Jurgens has requested to make his Profession of Faith. If there are no lawful objections this will take place on Sunday 29 April in the morning service.

Foxton

Calling of a Minister: As announced last week, Session presents to the congregation the single nomination of vicar Br Pieter van Huyssteen for your prayerful consideration to be our next Pastor. The voting will take place today after the morning service. Session has determined that we require at least 75% in favour before a call is extended. Signed proxy votes will be acceptable.

Report Session Meeting Monday 26th March 2007. Four young people have requested to do their public Profession of Faith and came to meet with the elders. They are Ricky Dykstra and Cindy Harwood and Jesse van Echten & Melissa vandeWaardt. After ample discussion with them as to their motives, Session is pleased and thankful to the Lord to announce to have granted their request. Their Profession of faith and Baptism for Cindy will take place DV on Sunday 15th April 2007 in the afternoon service. The Lord is good indeed.

Hamilton

Ladies Retreat is being planned for 26/27 October 2007. This will be held at Karakiriki Christian Camp again (they have such good food here!) Please register your interest with Carina Wassenaar (854-5583), so we can start some planning. We will have more information and costs closer to the time.

Pastoral: On Wednesday evening, the elders unanimously agreed to a request for membership from the du Plessis family. André, Era, their daughter Alge and grandson, Luan, are originally from South Africa but have now made their home here in the Waikato. We pray that you will soon feel at home amongst us and that we may bring blessing to each other and glory to God.

Meditation:- This year the Easter convention focused on the Christian family. Family was the first social institution put in place by God. The first and second chapters of the Bible speak of marriage (Gen1:27ff;2:18ff) and God's plan for children to issue from this. The family is the basic unit of the church and of society. It is in the family that children learn right values, submission to authority, a good work ethic, respect for their elders, love and care for others, sacrifice for the

common good and a host of other things which determine how they will live their lives. The fundamental responsibility for all of these things lies with parents – not with the church, Christian School, Catechism teacher etc. It is solid Christian families, which should determine the values of the society we live in – not the other way around! If we as Christian parents fail in the home, no amount of good we do elsewhere can make up for it. But when Christian fathers and mothers take this responsibility seriously and seek, with God's help and the support of their church community, to raise children who love God and His ways there is potential, in God's providence, to radically transform all of society! May God bless us as we seek to raise covenant children who will be good soldiers in His army and greatly used by Him for good. And may He give us the grace to live what we teach and to speak passionately about it to those who follow in our footsteps (Deut6:4-9).-MW

Pastoral: This morning Jordan Green will formally join this church by making public profession of faith. We rejoice in your testimony of God's work in your life, Jordan, and we are thankful for the part you already play in congregational life. We pray that God will bless you as you continue in your spiritual walk with Him.

Hastings

Youth group activities. This Saturday, 31st we will be doing a pamphlet drop for the Missions Committee. Please be at the church at 5pm. Afterwards we will be having fish'n'chips and dessert, then watching a movie on the big screen. Please bring along \$3 for dinner and also some money for our sponsor child.

The young at heart club. To everyone sixty years and older. On April the 27th at 10am we will start "The young at heart club". Come to the church for a time of fellowship, games etc. and a nice cup of coffee. We can have a talk about what day suits most for future meetings. We hope to see you on the 27th of April.

Variety evening. Attention all talent out there! We are planning to have a variety evening on Saturday 19th of May and would love to have your input! Whether you can play music, make us laugh or showcase a talent - we would love to hear from you. There will be a list at the back of the hall for you to put your name on if you would like to contribute to the evening. We will also be doing some singing together so if anyone has some fa-

avourite songs – maybe some that you sing in your bible studies or others – please also put these on the list at the back of the hall and we will try to include some during the evening. We plan to start the evening at 6.45pm with a shared dessert and finish with coffee. It will be held in the church so no need to worry about the weather! More details will follow closer to the date. – The Social Club.

Mangere

Women's Pesbyterial: The Women's Presbyterial will be held on Saturday 5th May in the Pukekohe Reformed Church, (2 Victoria Street). The day will begin at 10am and conclude at approximately 2.30pm. Our guest speaker for the morning is Sue Bracefield, who has written and taught a course on Women in the Bible at Grace Theological College. The topic she will be speaking on is "The 'Righteous' bad girls of Genesis", specifically looking at Lot's daughters and Tamar. Morning tea and lunch are provided. In the afternoon we will be learning how to do a craft - it will be hands on, not just a demonstration. We would love to see as many of you as possible. Harriet Haverland.

Pastoral. It is also ANZAC Day on Wednesday. This public holiday remembers those who have given their lives for our nation in past conflicts. It is in remembering their sacrifice that we learn to be thankful for what we have today. While it is through warfare they have had to do this - with all its injuring, killing, and destruction - it was a warfare that is an extension of the authority we believe God has entrusted to the state (Romans 13:1-7). It is interesting to note that some of the main proponents for repealing Section 59 of the Crimes Act will be openly associating themselves with ANZAC day and the sacrifices that were made. Sacrifices that were made to punish "naughty" nations who had broken treaties and international agreements. Sacrifices that were made in the ultimate belief that those nations would be corrected in this way and peaceful order restored. Anyone who knows history will recall the abject failure which trying to negotiate with Adolph Hitler was. He needed a much firmer hand.

Nelson

From the Pastor. This morning we're privileged to witness the baptism of not just one covenant child but two. Perhaps this is a first for Nelson, but be that as it may, we recognize this occasion as a wonderful blessing

from God our Father, and a sign of His eternal covenant promise in our Lord Jesus, to be a God and a Father to us His people, from the very old, right down to the very young. The sacrament will be administered to Sarah Michelle Reitsma, (daughter of Jesse and Wendy) and Joseph Martin van Niekerk (son of Stefan and Ronel).

I read this week: "Among the apostles, the one absolutely stunning success was Judas, and the one thoroughly groveling failure was Peter. Judas was a success in the ways that most impress us: he was successful both financially and politically. He cleverly arranged to control the money of the apostolic band; he skillfully manipulated the political forces of the day to accomplish his goal. And Peter was a failure in ways that we most dread: he was impotent in a crisis and socially inept. At the arrest of Jesus he collapsed, a hapless, blustering coward; in the most critical situations of his life with Jesus, the confession on the road to Caesarea Philippi and the vision on the Mount of transfiguration, he said the most embarrassingly inappropriate things. He was not the companion we would want with us in time of danger, and he was not the kind of person we would feel comfortable with at a social occasion. "Time, of course, has reversed our judgments on the two men. Judas is now a byword for betrayal, and Peter is one of the most honored names in the church and in the world. Judas is a villain; Peter is a saint. Yet the world continues to chase after the successes of Judas, financial wealth and political power, and to defend itself against the failures of Peter, impotence and ineptness." (Eugene Peterson) R.A.

North Shore

Wedding banns. Jan Steenkamp and Lerina de Waal have requested marriage. Session is pleased to agree to this. Indeed, we wish them the Lord's blessing and all the best in every way in the years ahead. Unless we receive lawful objections, the wedding will take place in this Church on Saturday, 14th April at 3 pm.

Items of interest from Session meeting held Thursday evening. After the General Meeting the elders had a brief Pastoral Meeting to consider three applications for membership. These came from Jack & Renate Slothouber from the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa; Lisette Fourie with her daughter, Bianca, from the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa; and Ridwan Rahadi & Rini Sulaiman (Indonesian couples do not have a common surname) and their two daughters Josephine & Seraphim from the Reformed

Evangelical Church in Indonesia. All these families have been worshipping with us for some months now and we welcome them heartily into membership in this congregation. We pray that you all will find a real spiritual home among us and be both blessed and a blessing in the years ahead.

News & Announcements. At the Pastoral Meeting on Thursday night we received a request from Ivan & May Turner to be accepted as members. Ivan has been worshipping with us for many years and we were talking about him professing his faith about three years ago. But then he met May! And he wanted to profess his faith together with his wife and they have been working towards that over the past year or so. As a Session we are very thankful to the Lord for bringing Ivan & May to this point and unless anyone has any objections to them professing their faith in this Church, they will do so on Sunday, 6 May in the morning Service.

Silverstream

Pastoral Notes . Br. & Sr. Fransen have received confirmation that Alex will need a transplant some time in the next two years. While this does alleviate the uncertainty for the family, they will need our prayers. We pray that the Lord will grant the Fransens peace of mind as they trust in Him.

90th Birthday Celebrations. The Landkroon family thank and praise the Lord for giving Annie, our Mum and Oma, 90 years. To commemorate this wonderful occasion we would like to celebrate with the whole congregation and friends with a Open Home from 2.30pm till 5pm at Landkroon's, 40 Blue Mountains Rd, Silverstream on Saturday, 7th April.

Library News. A word of encouragement to you all, young and old, men and women to take the time to see the array of excellent books/videos etc we have in the library. The resources there continue to grow in number and we know how worthwhile and beneficial these are. One particular new addition to the library is "Letters from the Bay of Islands" by Marianne Williams. This excellent personal account of trials and triumphs when the gospel first came to this beautiful land is a huge testimony to the faith and courage of the missionaries and their families. The book is a compilation of the letters Marianne wrote to her family back in England. They give much detail of day by day hardships, but also the Lord's faithfulness to Marianne, her husband Henry and their children. This book can be found on the new Books shelf, along with many other brand new books purchased

some time ago which as yet have not been touched. In Him, the Librarians.

Men's Social Event. I am planning on organising an indoor ten pin bowling event on Friday April 27th from 7:30pm or so. All those interested (sorry ladies, blokes only for this one) please contact me so I can book in the appropriate number of lanes. Don't be shy! Richard Wharekawa

To Our Senior Brothers and Sisters. On Monday 16 April a day out has been organised by the deacons for our senior members. We are planning to go in van der Werff's bus to a garden and have a hot lunch. The cost for the entry to the garden and lunch will be \$18.00. Interested in a great day of fellowship? Ring Cor and Bep van der Leek or John Leenders before 11 April. More information will follow in next week's bulletin.

Session Notes. Covenant Baptism: During this morning's worship service we have the privilege of witnessing the baptism of Alex Kleinjan. We rejoice with Anthony and Lola Kleinjan, and family, and pray that they may uphold the vows they make today. Session agreed to baptize young Alex on the ground that members of households under the authority & guardianship of a believing head of the household were to be circumcised in the OT (Gen. 17:12-13).

Wainuiomata

Wedding announcement. Sander Veenstra and Rachel De Vries have signified their desire to be united in marriage in this church on April 21. If there are no lawful objections the ceremony will take place on that date. (Yes, please pray for Sander and Rachel during this busy and exciting time in their lives. The above announcement is taken from our Church Order. Pastor LdV).

Food for thought. Did you know, that 39 years ago, on the 20th of April 1968, our original church was officially opened by the Rev. H Hoving, after 2 years of voluntary work by a small band of local workers, assisted often by members from Wellington and Silverstream? Silverstream presented us with a King James pulpit bible and Dr Budge, representing the Wainuiomata Christian Fellowship, presented us with his own copy of the Westminster Confession, printed in 1770 and signed by several ministers from Scottish churches. Now, nearly 40 years later, what a joy it was to enter our church last Sunday, with beautiful new carpet and additional chapel, all nicely finished, thanks to another faithful group of people, with the help of the next generation. I will repeat here what Mr Hoving wrote

in the bulletin at the first opening: "May He prosper this house so that it may be used for the preaching and teaching of His Word; for the Scriptural administration of the Sacraments; for a house of Prayer; for a place where sinners receive comfort and assurance; where man may be converted to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; where His praise may be sung. His Kingdom build, His glory revealed and His will obeyed" Praise and Glory be to our gracious Lord and Saviour after all those years. What made me put pen to paper (fingers to laptop) was the yearly task of supplying the latest membership figures for the new yearbook of our churches. There again we may rejoice in His faithfulness, when we could record 10 of our young people having done confession of faith and committing their lives to serving the Lord, bringing our membership to 86 confessing members and 58 baptised members. This is purely internal growth and we should be thankful for this, but I will add a remark which was made after our first opening of the early church; We are very good in swinging hammers and building, but now, with the Lord's help, can we share the rich heritage, given to us in the Word of God with those around us, who are still in darkness. At present, our evangelism committee is looking at ways of reaching out, but this is not a committee job only, but for all of us, to proclaim the Gospel also in our fair valley, to give Honour and Glory to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Your Archivist, JV

From the Bartlett's. Last Friday was the anniversary of Anna's brain surgery! We are delighted to share with you her progress. She recovered well after the operation, only spending 5 days in the Ward and another 5 at the accommodation provided through the Cancer Society. Then it was resting at home for the following 12 weeks. The major setback with brain surgery is fatigue and she had to learn to pace herself as she recovered. Then it was back to work teaching the first three levels at Silverstream Christian School. The Board, Staff and parents at the school were great, allowing her to take off the odd day here and there to catch her breath. After six months she was given permission to slowly reduce the medication and wean herself off all the pills. She needed to wait for the first six months before doing this as the scar tissue left after the operation could have triggered seizures as well as the original tumor! Thankfully this proved negative and since January she is off ALL medication! As she reduced her meds her energy levels have grown in direct

proportion! We had forgotten what an energetic young woman she used to be and are constantly surprised at the many things she can fit into her week now. She has celebrated her first anniversary with a tramp in the Tararua Ranges. With her first year after surgery being free of seizures she is now asking for her Neurologist's approval for her to begin driving again! She has not driven for three years and can't wait to be totally independent again and has bought another car in anticipation. At the end of May she will be flying up to Auckland again to go through all the tests she had before the operation. Although they made a video of the op we have not received it yet so that will be a priority at that appointment! We do thank the Lord regularly for His healing mercies for Anna and we wish to thank you all for your prayers on her behalf. We have so appreciated your support to us as we struggled through the lead up to the operation, etc. It has such a blessing to have you as our friends. The Bartlett Family

50th Wedding Anniversary. Jos & Willy Verbokkem celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary on Wednesday 25th April. After the worship service next Sunday we will have a cake with the morning tea. We would love you all to join us to commemorate this significant milestone. Above all, we praise God from whom all blessings flow. The family.

Wellington

Church Family. We congratulate Richard and Rebecca, and their families, on their wedding which was celebrated yesterday! May the Lord be with you as you begin married life together.

Session Notes. One of the important goals session has set for 2007 is to work on our relationships with the other churches in the Presbytery. We decided that one way we'd like to work towards this is to regularly pray for the needs of the other congregations during our worship services - this afternoon we begin by praying for the needs of the Wainuiomata congregation. We also encourage you to pray for these churches in your own prayers.

Photo Directory. Have you ever wondered the name of the person sitting in front of you or behind you? Perhaps you've never been introduced to them. Perhaps you've been introduced, but forgotten their name and have found it awkward to ask again. Or maybe you've seen a name on the church address list, but haven't had a clue which face goes with the name. Just hold on...

help (a congregational photo directory) is on the way! In what began at the potluck dinner last night, over the next few weeks Jocelyn Moore will be taking photos to include in the directory. So smile, say cheese, and help our visitors and new members get to know you better!

Fan the Flames

From Paul to Timothy.....

*"I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. **For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline**".*

Fan the Flames - a fitting name for a conference that certainly did that for us!

Held at the Reformed Theological College in Geelong in March this year, the conference was held out of deep concern regarding the great shortage of people preparing for full-

time ministry and also to encourage people already thinking in this direction.

Twenty-one people attended the conference. NZ was outdone by the Aussies ten to eleven. Around half of these were under 25.

Our three days were packed with seminars, practical instruction (such as preparing a Bible study), devotions, prayer, Sunday worship, and interviews. In between we managed to take a few walks around the area, and also eat some delicious meals courtesy of the resident chef and at the professors' homes.

We were greatly blessed by this conference. The seminars provided plenty of banter and fun but also moments of quiet and deep reflection.

Three main benefits

There were three main areas of benefit for us personally that come to mind.

Firstly, it gave us a better appreciation of the work of the RTC, the lecturers (who are very 'real' and approachable), the zeal that they have for our churches and the desperate need to spread the Gospel to the lost in our nations and overseas.

Secondly, we were greatly inspired and encouraged in our own personal walk with our Lord, determined to 'run the race' with renewed vigour.

Lastly, the conference helped us to work

out where and how the Lord would have us serve.

One seminar that impacted us in this way particularly, was given by Murray Capill. He began with the 'call.' He explained that the 'call' was first to be a Christian in whatever situation God has placed you — whether you be a plumber, mother, student, or minister. The specific 'call' to be a minister of the Gospel is not mystical and can be logically worked through. If you have evidence of:

- 1) the gifts (perhaps not fully developed)
- 2) a growing sense of the Lord's leading (it won't go away)
- 3) the confirmation of the Church

These would then equal a good reason to 'step forward in faith.'

Another seminar ended with the lecturer stating he had just talked for one hour, and that in that past hour in Australia and NZ twenty people had died. Around 8% of those go to a church of some type or another. So in that past hour around 18 people had just gone to an eternal death. Lord of harvest, send forth reapers!

We also went through what a pastor is: a preacher/teacher, carer/counsellor, evangelist/discipler, and a leader/trainer. As well as these, a priority must be his own fellowship with God and personal spiritual growth; and of course there are always the phone, e-mails, letters, and general paperwork. We were given a 55-hour week in which to divide these aspects of ministry. It certainly gave us a new appreciation of the workload of our ministers!

Another memorable time was our Sunday lunch at Bill and Henny Berends' place. It was not the fattened calf, but the fattened goat that graced our lunch plates! After 17 years in Nigeria they wanted to give us a taste of mission life (literally). We were just thankful they couldn't get hold of a gorilla or hippo.

Fan the Flames was not just for those considering fulltime gospel ministry but for any Christian considering God's direction in their life. We would strongly encourage anyone seeking where and how God would have them serve to attend this conference.

A challenge to the local congregations of the RCNZ:

Carefully consider the members in your congregations and examine their gifts. Are there any whom you could see as future pastors, missionaries, evangelists, elders, deacons, youth workers? Could they benefit from some dedicated fulltime study in God's Word? The benefit to the church of Christ



and to God's glory would be eternal.

Could you consider setting aside funds in your next budget to send someone for one, two or more years? We regularly hear words such as 'needy', 'deeply concerned', 'crisis', 'desperate need', 'critical' in relation to the shortage of those entering ministry.

Can we be more proactive in seeking and sending?

Romans 10.14-15

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And

how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?

In Christ,

Al and Sonja van Seventer

Missions in focus

Janice Reid

My 'scouting' trip to the Orthodox Presbyterian Uganda Mission

Hamjambo wote. My name is Andrew Dickson. I am a member of the Hamilton congregation and am in the final throes of studying for a Masters of Religious Education at Grace Theological College. Prior to this I worked in Tanzania from 1996 to 2004.

I visited Uganda earlier this year (2nd–31st January) to meet the Rev. Philip Proctor and see his work at Knox Theological College (KTC) in Mbale. Prior to this we had spent September to December 2006 emailing the possibility of my working long-term with the mission. I first read of the work in the September 2006 *Faith in Focus* mission trip report written by Rev. John De Hoog. I had contacted Phil after reading of the need for a missionary deacon and in about November last year, informed session of my desire to visit Uganda and learn more about the work. I was thrilled to go in January with their blessing and prayers.

This is a shortened version of the report I gave Hamilton session, about my visit.

A quick flyby: OPUM

In Mbale:

The mission's main concern at present is preaching and teaching, with the aim of training up pastors, elders and deacons who will oversee their local churches faithfully. Students from any denomination may study at KTC but the majority come from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Uganda. The OPCU is a young church of 12 congregations in the Mbale area that split away from the mainline Presbyterian denomination for various understandable reasons I won't cover here.

There are many practical diaconal needs and opportunities that the close relationship with the OPCU presents to the OPUM but the mission is understaffed and unable to address these in any significant way at present. Rev. Philip & Mrs Meredith Proctor and family are the only permanent missionaries in Mbale just now, and even without pressing diaconal concerns, they have a heavy workload: Phil preaches every Sunday at the Mbale OPCU and teaches at Knox Theological College during the week. Meredith is Phil's faithful 2IC and home-schools their children. She is also a good friend and support to many other women.

Challenges & Opportunities:

- Finding a suitable missionary deacon (other staff needed too)
- Diaconal ministry support of local pastors/KTC students and their families and congregations in income-generating activities through the work of the missionary deacon
- Increasing student intake and graduate numbers for KTC without dropping standards
- Raising support for, and building, the Knox Theological College campus
- Partnering with suitable people and/or organisations to develop cooperative vocational training programs
- Developing more mutually beneficial ministry ties between Mbale and Nakale missions
- Faithfully proclaiming the gospel to the ex-pat community of Mbale as well as the Ugandans

In Nakale:

In this region, the OPUM seeks to evangelise the Karamojong tribe; serve the sick via the medical clinic ministry; provide pastoral care of the mission and clinic staff and their families; and grow crops to support the local food supply of church and staff members and to train locals in more effective farming methods.

Rev. Albert & Mrs Laurie Tricarico and family, and Rev. Dave and Mrs Sunshine Okken and family are key mission staff in Nakale. Al & Dave share the preaching and teaching ministry (using a translator) and are working at translating various resources e.g. catechisms, into Karamojong.

Nakale is also blessed with deacons: Bob & Martha Wright and family, and Craig & Kris Eldeen, serve in this location. Bob and Craig construct and maintain mission buildings; do vehicle maintenance and repair; well drilling; provide some diaconal assistance to church members; and are developing a cropping farm. They also train local staff in such work. Kris supervises the medical clinic. Ed Wright is a keen young American engineering graduate who is in Nakale for three months, helping where needed as he investigates his talents and calling.

The missionaries' children are ably taught by Donna Smith, Amy De Wit and Chrissy Schicktzanz. Teachers have been sent out from congregations in the OPC (USA) or associated home or foreign churches, e.g. Scotland, and so far such teachers stay for anywhere between 1-3yrs.

Challenges & Opportunities:

The main challenge in Nakale is to train up local men who can minister as elders in the two churches started so far. This is proving difficult due to the cultural habits of the Karamojong, and also because of the instability in the area due to cattle raiding and the resulting violent conflicts between them and Kenyan tribes. Ugandan Army

Units have been deployed in the area and they subdue the levels of local banditry by 1) their restraining presence and, 2) by military engagement. But cattle-raiding, armed robbery, vehicle hijacks and other violent incidents still occur too frequently.

There is much opportunity for showing the love of Christ by way of the practical medical ministry, which treats on average 220-260 out-patients per 6 day week, and in providing spiritual counsel and hope to those affected by the aforementioned violence. There is also much possible by way of the missionary deacons expanding their training of locals in various practical skills. But this needs to be done very carefully lest everyone finish up being dependent upon the OPC mission or its projects for their work and income. That would not be a good long-term solution to the present situation.

Main Trip Objectives

I went to Uganda with several clearly-defined objectives. First and foremost, I wanted to meet the Rev. Phil Proctor in person, so I could get to know him — including his personal style and character, strengths and weaknesses, etc. I hoped he would help me to gain a greater understanding of the working environment in Mbale, together with the daily pressures and challenges of life in Uganda.

A second objective was to meet the other OPUM missionaries and the Ugandan leaders involved in the work. I also hoped I might have an opportunity to meet Mr Mark

Bube, General Secretary of the OPC (USA) Overseas Missions Board, who was due to visit Mbale in January. And last but certainly not least, I wanted to experience the conditions in Mbale for myself.

What did I find?

1) Phil Proctor & family

I found Phil to be a thoughtful, intelligent man who also has a useful sense of humour. I enjoyed watching him evaluating student sermons and found him to be a passionate, enthusiastic and animated teacher who has a good rapport with students.

Phil was busy but we got enough time together so that I now have a good understanding of 1) the history, both good and bad, of the OPUM so far, 2) the present work and challenges, 3) the direction Phil wants to head, and why.

It was also important for him to know more about my time in Tanzania and what I believe about mission work in Africa as a result. We agreed on the most important of these and this was encouraging.

Phil and his wife Meredith are a friendly, fun couple

who are serious about knowing and serving the Lord and training up their kids to do likewise. They enjoy good relationships with Ugandans, their fellow OPUM missionaries and other ex-pats.

2) The other OPUM missionaries

I saw little of these people until my 3rd week when Pastors Dave Okken and Al Tricarico were with Phil teaching at their church officers' training seminar held the day before the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Uganda AGM in Mbale. Very helpful to my understanding of the whole scene to see how people interacted during the Saturday AGM, especially during sensitive issues. Dave, Al and I then drove 2.5hrs north to their OPUM base at Nakale, Karamoja District. Things are wilder up there and I'm not talking wildlife. Sadly that has been shot out by local and border-hopping hit-and-run gangs from Kenya having tit-for-tat clashes over cattle-raiding, etc. Thankfully the only armed men we met

were Ugandan Army patrols who struggle to keep the situation under control.

At Nakale I enjoyed attending the Sunday services these American brothers led. First was at 7am in a neighbouring village followed by two (10am & 4pm) in the mission church, which is a tin roof on poles over a raised concrete floor. Perfect for conditions there. As was the pizza baked in Craig & Kris's homemade outdoor wood-fuelled pizza

oven later that evening. Mmm, sooo good! Next morning I stayed around the medical clinic talking to staff, then in the afternoon blatted about on Bob's pikipiki for a look further afield. Everyone else was busy shutting down the mission for the coming exodus of us 'wazungu' (whiteys) to the annual OPUM Kampala retreat. I left with the Tricarico family early next day.

The retreat was held at a recreation centre, and this was an ideal opportunity to finally meet all the OPUM Yankees and Hillbillies together in one place. I had a good day thrashing them at tennis and pool (OK, so it was a 51% win ratio to NZ) before the officers meetings next day. I was invited to observe these meetings and they were long, formal meetings run smoothly in a friendly and personal manner, despite the full agenda. These guys take leadership

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



Phil & Meredith Proctor, missionary couple in Mbale

and stewardship seriously and aren't shy of asking for clarity on any issue.

After lunch the wives and teachers joined us, and the officers shared a summary of the earlier decisions. That was followed by working through every person's situation and praying for each person specifically. Good team fellowship. After that we men discussed my time in Uganda so we would be on the same page regarding my thoughts about the work. It was good to seriously

discuss with them all how we think I might fit in the team if the Lord so wills.

This article will continue in next month's Missions in Focus. At that time, you will hear more about the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Uganda, conditions in Uganda (culture, environment, living conditions), and you'll find the answer to a pressing question: "What does a missionary deacon DO?!"

Letters to the editor

Missing the point

Dear Sir,

In response to an article from Peter Mahoney in *Faith in Focus* (March 2007) over, 'crisis in the RCNZ,' we are very disappointed.

He writes that the future of the RCNZ looks a bit bleak, also, why are we short of ministers? Why are we losing ministers at an alarming rate?

His answer; 'Lost back to their home countries; that we call men from around the world is a little naive, and concentrate in NZ.'

We do not desire to go over all the points raised but to address the main thrust of his article. At the end of his article he says that it has to come from the members. We think that Peter has perhaps lost sight of the teaching of scripture.

We read in Matthew 9:38, *Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.*

Calvin writes of this text; 'As no man will himself become a sincere and faithful Minister of the gospel, and as none discharge in a proper manner the office of teacher but those whom the Lord raises up and endows with the gifts of His Spirit, whenever we observe a scarcity of pastors, we must raise our eyes to Him to afford the remedy. There never was greater necessity for offering this prayer than during the fearful desolation of the church which we now see every where around us.'

John Piper writes: 'There is only one possible answer: God has willed that His miraculous work of harvesting be preceded by prayer. He loves to bless the world. But even more, He loves to bless the world in answer to prayer.'

Matthew Henry writes: 'Christ is the Lord

of harvest. Let us pray that many may be raised up and sent forth, who will labour in bringing souls to Christ. It is a sign that God is about some special mercy upon a people, when He stirs them up to pray for it. And commissions given to labourers in answer to prayer, are most likely to be successful.'

Robertson's Word pictures: 'Prayer is the remedy offered by Jesus in this crisis for a larger ministerial supply. How seldom do we hear prayers for more preachers. Sometimes God literally has to push or force a man into the ministry who resist his known duty.'

So we see that prayer is the most important, personally at home, but surely in the worship service when the congregation assembles and we pray together. When we pray sincerely, compelled out of necessity, from the heart, God will surely hear and answer at His time and in His way.

The last point is, the ministers from other countries; read Mark 16:15, 'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation.' Thus not only in Galilee or NZ, but world wide, all countries. We can call ministers from all over the globe, because it is a calling process.

*On behalf of the Bible Study Group,
Wairarapa South (Masterton).*

Bart Gysbertsen

Dear Sir,

I would like to add a few thoughts about the crisis which Peter Mahoney has alerted us to in his letter to the editor (Volume 34/2 March 2007). I thank the brother for seeing a serious issue and for his willingness to address it and to provide solutions.

As a minister who has come to New Zea-

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land from overseas, I believe that the brother is correct that the Reformed Churches of New Zealand should be training New Zealanders for ministry here. Yet, for the last 50 plus years we have not been training enough men for ministry and quite a few who have been trained have not lasted the distance. I came to New Zealand because brothers called me to come over and help. I certainly did not come to take the place of a native New Zealander!

I think the matter is so serious that it bears further study by our churches and broader assemblies. To contribute to this process I would add a few thoughts to what brother Mahoney has already stated.

1) Do we approve the right men? I find a tendency in our churches to believe that a robust, reformed orthodoxy makes a man a minister. But is this true? While the Scriptures never minimise sound doctrine, neither do the Scriptures minimise a sound, well-balanced character. In fact, the words of 1 Timothy 3 place great emphasis on one's lifestyle and wisdom of character as a basic requirement for holding office. I suggest that we take a closer look at the Scriptures ensuring that 1 Timothy 3 qualifications abound in

the men we are approving for ministry. Read 1 Timothy 3 again! Orthodoxy which has not formed a man into a patient, kind, long-suffering, forgiving character is a specious type of orthodoxy!

2) I find that the method which our Synod seems to require for Church Visitation might create more problems than it solves. We have a list of around a hundred canned questions which every Church Visitor is required to ask and which every church is required to answer. Instead of allowing the ministers and elders to probe using their own wisdom and experience they are asking questions like: how many worship services do you have? Does the Session meet regularly? Imagine a doctor asking, "how many legs do you have?" Or "do you have 10 fingers on your hands?" What you need is a doctor who can probe and diagnose your pain before the disease becomes incurable. Perhaps this is why our church visits rarely seem to touch upon the symptoms of the struggles a pastor may be having with his congregation, session or own ministry, or with the frustrations a Session may be having with its minister. Is this formal and legal approach to church visitation helping or hurting the ministry in the RCNZ?

3) Do we encourage young men with some evidence of having good gifts for teaching and preaching to go into the ministry? I recall being encouraged as a reluctant, insecure, young man by a faithful, loving pastor to develop my gifts. Without this pastor's kind words, I do not think I would have considered myself able to study for the ministry. Let's do all we can to encourage our young men to consider preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ! Let's also be sure that all the funds necessary are available for their training. Does the increasing size of our pension fund say anything about our priorities here? And let us make sure that when the Lord gifts and trains a man to preach, that we value our ministers of the Word! Notice how 1 Timothy 5:17 speaks to this issue: Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." (1 Timothy 5:17-18). Here the Scriptures make it plain that honoring the minister includes providing a generous income for him and his family. I wonder how many of us have ever connected verses 17 and 18 here? They do belong together! While the ministry surely requires personal self-sacrifice, have we not at times discouraged young men from pursuing this calling because other callings will make providing for their families so much easier?

4) As ministers it is true that when problems arise in the church we are often tempted to grow weary in the struggle. Battle fatigue can easily set in and Satan seems masterful at tempting us to discouragement just when our load seems unbearable. This is also the time when we are easily provoked by words or actions of others. But instead of getting our feathers ruffled so easily or putting the blame on elders or others, we need to go back to the Lord on our knees. We need to ask for sufficient grace to fulfil the wonderful callings Christ gave us in the first place. We need to do all we can to encourage the wise, sacrificial helpers God has placed beside us—the office-bearers. We also need to be honest with our elders. If we are not coping, let's discuss it at our elders meetings. Perhaps we should explore ways to make our times of mutual censure less formal and more heartfelt. And what a blessing when such heart-felt discussions lead to the minister and elders bringing their needs to the throne of grace.

Pastor Leo de Vos
Reformed Church of Wainuiomata.



Subscriptions to the IN TOUCH magazine are available. This is an opportunity for those interested who do not have access to or have joined a Cadet and Calvinette Club (Cadets and Calvinettes will continue to be supplied through their clubs). The costs is \$15 per year for four issues.

This is a Reformed Churches of New Zealand children's magazine especially written for 8 - 15 year olds.

It is filled with stories, photographs, puzzles, Bibles studies, Cadet & Calvinette Club news, competitions, poetry, crafts, cooking and Camp News.

If you would like to receive IN TOUCH please forward your \$NZ15 (or \$AU15), with your details, to the **National Board Secretary N.Z.C.C.C. & C., 4 Phoenix Lane, Papanui, Christchurch.** (Make cheques out to N.Z.C.C.C. & C.)



New Zealand's contribution to C.A.R.E. India:

The clinic at Chennai

For the past six years our churches have been making regular contributions towards the C.A.R.E. ministry in Tamil Nadu, South India. I was sent to India on behalf of the National Diaconate Committee to discover how our gifts are being used.

Our remittance is sent quarterly to the office of the *Vocational Training and Rehabilitation Centre (VTRC)* in Madurai. This body oversees and administers a number of educational and diaconal projects including C.A.R.E. International contributions for C.A.R.E. come mainly from Australia (Christian Reformed Churches of Australia and TEAR Australia) and New Zealand (our denomination). Our share is about 10% of C.A.R.E. income.

What I discovered was that the funds we send are forwarded (without any administration costs!) to the clinic based in Chennai (Madras), the major city of Tamil Nadu. The VTRC office retains nothing. The C.A.R.E. workers in that office are there in a voluntary, non-paid capacity. An example of this is the national administrator for C.A.R.E., the Rev. Samuel Raman, a retired Church of South India (CSI) minister. At the time I was there he was preparing to go on a six month visit to his children in Canada and Rosy, the wife of Mr Paulus Samuel, was about to take over – again as a non-paid worker.

Upon discovering that we in New Zealand are virtually the sole contributors to the work in Chennai, I became keen to find out everything I could about it. However, this keenness was tinged with a sense of apprehension. I was told that the Chennai clinic's vision and ministry was somewhat different from the others, much more daring and at the cutting edge. Chennai is attempting to pioneer work that operates at a different level from that in the other centres. Chennai wants to work at the top of the cliff rather than the bottom, ambulance end.

Paulus Samuel explained that the work at Chennai is under the visionary leadership of Dr Chanthi. She is a well-qualified psychiatrist who has been involved with C.A.R.E. since its earliest days in Madurai. Her focus in Chennai today is on sex-workers and, as the ministry develops, their children. In other words, she ministers to and is working among prostitutes!! When he saw my initial reaction, Paulus said, 'Go there, listen to her story and her vision.'

I confess to feeling ambivalent about this. Although the Lord Jesus Himself was often accused of being associated with this sector of the population in his day, my experience of this industry is non-existent. How would I feel in meeting such women? Would I be able to cope, even learn from and be challenged by them?

Unaware of the Chennai/New Zealand link while planning my itinerary in New Zealand, I now realised Chennai hardly featured in it. As I had planned things only Wednesday, 6th December, would be available, and then only a few hours! However, as it turned out, these few hours were able to be extended and became the *absolute highlight of my visit to India!*

Let me tell you the story in some detail. I do so in the hope that you will be as challenged and inspired as I was.

Meeting Dr Chanthi and her husband, Mr Davida

Mr Daniel Prem Kumar, a member of our congregation at Bucklands Beach, was visiting family and friends in Madurai at the same time I was there. He had previously volunteered to accompany me on a fact-finding trip to a group of village churches in Andhra Pradesh in the Vijayawada region. To go there we would need to fly to Chennai and take an overnight 'sleeper' train (departure 11.30pm arrival 6.30am!). We were scheduled to fly into Chennai at about 4.00pm on Sunday afternoon. On discussing this, we decided that we would see if Dr. Chanthi could spend a few hours with us while we were in transit.

Easier said than done. We found out that Dr. Chanthi, her husband and three sons had been away for the weekend leading seminars on family enrichment at a Christian retreat. Furthermore, her husband would be addressing a special, once-per-year church service at the Hindustan Bible Institute at 6.30pm. Their day was already packed. Yet graciously she suggested that, if we came to the service, we could meet each other briefly.

We did, and became part of a special carol service. A huge (60+ voice) choir and 12-piece orchestra provided the music. The highlight for me was several excerpts from Handel's *Messiah*. The auditorium was overflowing with something like 400 people in attendance. Chanthi's husband, Mr

Davida, was eventually introduced as one of the most senior civil administrators in Tamil Nadu (Indian Administrative Service). He is above and before all else a Christian and has a reputation for honesty, integrity and straight dealing. His influence is huge. He spoke from the heart and challenged us to live with integrity for Christ in the public as well as the private arenas of life.

Immediately after the service, we were introduced. I soon sensed apprehension as Mr Davida spoke about his wife's work. I was a little puzzled until, some time later, I discovered that there had been a rumour that I had come from New Zealand because we were considering cutting off our support. Three days later, in a much more comfortable setting, Dr Chanthi told us that and her assistant, Mrs Arthi, had shared and prayed about this. They had pledged that, even if their New Zealand funding stopped, they would nevertheless continue this ministry! God would somehow provide.

We spoke for a good hour and as we did

MIF prayer notes

Wally & Jeannette Hagoort need our prayers as they cope with the multi-faceted challenges of mission work in Papua New Guinea. Pray for Jeannette as she manages Mapang Guest House, teaches guitar to ladies at church, and runs literacy classes. Pray for Wally as he preaches regularly in the local Reformed congregation, and oversees many important aspects of the growing Reformed Leadership Training Centre.

At time of writing, **Janice Reid** is in New Zealand with her mother, who suffered a severe stroke on Easter Sunday. Mrs Reid's needs are such that she cannot be cared for at home, and Janice has remained in NZ to help her mother make the transition to rest-home care. Please pray for Janice as she uses this time in-country to focus on developing resources for her new radio drama workshop. She hopes to return to Bali next month to train radio announcers and station managers; pray that her mother's condition would make this possible.



Dr Shanthi, C.A.R.E. Chennai clinic leader.



Mrs Arthi, Dr Shanthi's co-worker at Chennai.



Outside of the clinic at Chennai

1. Address the source of the spread of HIV

The *source* of HIV infection in India is mainly via sex-workers. HIV-positive sex workers are common. To put it bluntly, sex is cheap and India's huge truck-driving population alone provides a clientele that numbers millions. When travelling India's roads, the outstanding impression is the endless convoys of trucks – usually small 3-4 tonne affairs that invariably have two drivers and an assistant on board. These trucks travel slowly (average about 20-25 kms per hour I would guess) and are therefore on the road for days at a time. Overnight truck stops are many and

so reservations fell away! Eventually, inconvenience notwithstanding, Daniel and I were loaded into their already overloaded SUV vehicle and driven to Chennai's railway station. Only later did I realise that this act of spontaneous generosity added at least an extra hour to their journey home.

Chanthi's vision

Chanthi, her husband, and Mr Paulus Samuel are among those involved with the Indian government in addressing India's HIV/AIDS crisis. Their perspective and input is helping to shape that country's policy. They have an excellent overview and insight into the present situation.

Daniel and I learned that much has happened since the time HIV/AIDS began to spread in India in the early 1990s. Nowadays, although the crisis is by no means over, the HIV-positive population in India is relatively static and the government is well able to provide current treatment options (Anti Retroviral Treatment – A.R.T.) to all who need it. However, note well, A.R.T. is **not** a cure! What it does is slow down or even stop HIV from turning into AIDS. At least the crisis is being somewhat controlled.

What this means is that it is now possible to think beyond dealing with HIV as a crisis or emergency. It is possible to start thinking about and developing a strategy that begins to address causes as well as effects. Dr. Chanthi believes that C.A.R.E. can now also begin to consider doing pioneering work in the area source as well as effect.

As a result she is exploring, testing and developing a ministry at the source level in two directions:

huge. Many of the families and widows I met were from among this truck-driver population.

Dr. Chanthi's vision is to minister among these sex-workers. She believes that they can and must be reached. Her approach is refreshing. She is convinced that ministry to them must begin with their hearts. First they preach gospel and then, with Christ's help, great patience, love and support, rebuild and re-establish their lives in Christ. Dr. Chanthi is committed to counselling these prostitutes in the name of Christ – with all of the challenges and setbacks that come with it. Her conviction is that unless Christ enters into and renews their lives, nothing of any significance will happen. Preaching Christ and counselling in His name drives her ministry.

2. Prevention is better than cure

Because of her involvement with these women, Dr Chanthi and her co-workers became aware of the obvious – many prostitutes are themselves the daughters of prostitutes! By becoming involved with the prostitutes, opportunities to help with these children become a real option. Shouldn't we be proclaiming and demonstrating Jesus at that point as well?

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After hearing Dr Chanthi's passionate description of the vision and becoming aware of her commitment to it, I couldn't help asking myself: *How would you implement such a vision? Does it work?*

Chanthi promised to let Daniel and me see this when visiting her clinic on the coming Wednesday. We looked forward to it.

Dirk J van Garderen