

faith in **focus**

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Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, Jesus said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

Mark 6:31-32

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Photo credit:

Picture taken from Finlay Park Family Camp
2003-2004

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Editorial

This issue is the first Faith in Focus that is produced in this new year. This is because of the summer break and various publishing deadlines. That's why we have a report on the Family Camp in this issue, because it's the first possible issue it could appear in. (I'm also hoping this will be followed by a report on the National Youth Camp!)

The Family Camp was where we were this year. I was privileged to conduct the two Sunday worship services and the evening devotions while the Rev. Gary Milne lead the morning studies. As you'll read in the report, it was blessed time of fellowship, well-organised, well-fed!, and well attended. The mix of ages was good, helping it to live up to its name. As someone said to me, "Of all the Camps our denomination has this should be the most important because families are what should matter most of all in our churches." Indeed, families are the foundation of our covenant communities.

If you haven't been to a Family Camp before I would definitely encourage you to come. And if you haven't been for a while, take the time to renew old friendships and make some new ones.

Amongst all the great things that happened at this Family Camp, one incident particularly stands out in my memory. It happened just as we were about to have lunch. The Resident Manager had been working on fixing the dish-washing machines. His little foster boy had been with him when he began doing that. But then when he was finishing that job the child was noticed missing. Quickly the whole Camp went into action, conducting first a quick search of the immediate vicinity, and then regrouping and being assigned to search more extensively. The rest went on with their lunch preparing themselves to relieve those searching if necessary. The food was kept ready for them.

After an hour or so the little boy was found having apparently hidden in the house (which had been searched quite thoroughly). While the comment was made that we ought to have a safety warden system in place for the future and perhaps this would be useful, the marvellous thing was how well the whole group banded together in this single purpose. It was as good as any emergency response team I've experienced before! And what joy when the boy was found! As many parents will know, that's a relief all of its own.

It really gives you an insight into how our Father in heaven and the heavenly hosts feel when a sinner repents. I thought: If we were determined to find that little boy imagine what God is doing for us right now through His Son, our Lord and Saviour?

“The salvation of a single soul is more important than the production or preservation of all the epics and tragedies in the world.”

C. S. Lewis

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

The New Perspective

A recent development in evangelical theology?

Michael Flinn

You may be wondering why I am writing on what has come to be known as the “new perspective” on the writings of Paul. There are a number of reasons. First, this is not so much a specific doctrine. It is more like a movement that has effected many churches around the world, including evangelical and conservative churches. If you have not encountered it yet, it is likely that you soon will and it would be helpful for you to know something of it. Second, what is at stake in this new teaching is nothing short of the gospel message itself. How a person is saved and on what basis he or she is saved is of crucial significance for all believers and for the world at large. As we shall see, if the “new perspective” is correct, as evangelicals we shall have to rethink the gospel message. In fact, the Church, especially since the Reformation, has been “getting it wrong” for hundreds of years. These are bold claims and before we embrace them, we need to put them to the test of Scripture. Third, and following on from this, if the “the new perspective” is fundamentally incorrect, it presents a serious threat to the gospel once for all delivered to the saints. Given Paul’s own very strong warnings against distortion of the gospel in Galatians 1:6-9, this is something that we have to take very seriously.

One other introductory point: In this article, I will be presenting the argument of the NP writers as faithfully as I can. Let me point out in advance that I do not necessarily agree with all that is said here. In the next lecture we will come back and evaluate the claims of the “new perspective”. It is then that my own views will become clearer.

Background: The view of the Reformers on “Justification”

N.T. Wright, one of the writers of the New Perspective school, once said, I think somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that Luther was opposed to the law, Calvin was in favour of it and everyone else has been writing footnotes since.

As I say, I think that remark was somewhat tongue-in-cheek but certainly Martin Luther and John Calvin, as figures in the 16th century Reformation in Europe, have exercised giant influence right down to the present day, especially upon the Protestant world. Both of them held very strongly that the only way sinful people can obtain righteous standing before a holy God was through faith in Christ. And they contrasted

faith in Christ with works of righteousness. In other words, when it came to the issue of salvation—the question of how we can be saved—both Luther and Calvin stressed very strongly that we are not saved by means of righteous deeds that we perform. In fact, it is impossible for us to earn salvation by our lives. They said that salvation was a gift of God and righteousness was also a gift of God received by means of faith.

The process that Martin Luther went through in coming to this position is well known. Luther entered a monastery of the Augustinian order in 1505. This was his first opportunity of possessing a Bible and he began to study it very diligently. He gave special attention to the books of Galatians and Romans and to the writings of Augustine, one of the early church fathers. During the period of his studies, he became more and more aware of his personal sinfulness and he tried to deal with this by going through the accepted procedures of confession and penance and prayer and self-denial. But the

medieval theology, justice had become a question of the scale of merits outweighing the scale of demerits. And Luther was not prepared to accept that he had a pure heart or that the accepted theory of righteousness was correct.

Meanwhile, during the period from 1512-1517, Luther’s fame grew as he lectured on the Psalms, Hebrews, Romans and Galatians as a professor of theology at the University of Wittenburg. It was during this period that his studies of these books, especially the latter two, led him to reject the idea of a person meriting salvation by means of his works. In fact, Luther understood that the Judaism of Paul’s day was similar in many respects to the medieval theology of salvation just described. Luther saw parallels between them—especially the teaching of the Pharisees—and the prevailing view of the church of his day. He understood that he was following in the footsteps of the apostle Paul in rejecting the teaching of righteousness based on works. Luther was



more he worked at this, the more effort he put in, the more troubled he became in his heart and he would not accept the assurances of his confessors that his deep-rooted sense of guilt was purely emotional or the product of a warped sensitivity.

To get an idea of why Luther was so troubled in his conscience, less than a century before, the Netherlands painter Roger Van Der Weyden had produced a great work called *The Last Judgment*. A detail of this shows Michael the Archangel weighing souls and it is a vivid illustration of the mediaeval view of justice under which Luther was labouring. Michael is remote from the scales that he holds. He is disinterested, like modern figures of a blindfolded “justice”. In the pans of the scales, one soul is weighed down, his sins too heavy. Another is elevated, his credits sufficient. In this aspect of

actually staggered that Paul should have spoken of God’s righteousness as good news [read Romans 1:17]. He had always understood that divine righteousness should be identified as a severe judge. And how could a standard of infinite perfection be anything other than a nightmare for guilty sinners? But as the book of Romans unfolds, Paul speaks of Abraham’s faith being credited to him as righteousness so that as we believe in God and trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ, we are pronounced righteous by God. For Luther, this was a profound revelation. It was like the throwing off of a yoke of slavery and when he nailed his theses to the door of the church in Wittenburg in 1517, the bell reverberated right throughout Europe and it is still sounding in many churches around the world today.

The "New Perspective" — early signals

All this has been called into question in recent times by what has come to be known as the New Perspective. This movement was signalled by a Lutheran biblical scholar by the name of Krister Stendahl, who wrote a significant essay dealing with the subject of justification in 1961. According to Stendahl, it is extremely problematic to seek for a common universal human experience which can transcend the ages. We cannot take the "introspective conscience" of the modern Western world into a kind of interpretive common denominator between the modern west and the ancient east, and then read ancient texts, such as Paul's writings, in that light.

What is needed by way of corrective, according to Stendahl, is "a fresh look at the Pauline writings themselves. Paul 'never urges Jews to find in Christ the answer to the anguish of a plagued conscience.' In fact, when he speaks of the universal reality of sin, in passages like Romans 3, [read], he is not speaking in individual and psychological categories. He is speaking corporately. His concern is to show how it is that Jew and Gentile, as distinct ethnic groups, fit into salvation-history respectively. The actual transgressions in Israel—as a people, not in each and every individual—show that the Jews are not better than the Gentiles." Thus salvation is now found in Christ, not law, "an avenue which is equally open to Jews and Gentiles, since it is not based on the Law, in which the very distinction between the two rests."

In Stendahl's opinion, for centuries the West has wrongly surmised that the biblical writers were grappling with problems which no doubt are ours, but which never entered their consciences. And it is high time that all those churches in the Reformation tradition that have understood Paul in this way should continue reforming and take a fresh look at the biblical writings, but not through the glasses of Luther's troubled conscience or our own, for that matter.

E. P. Sanders: "Paul & Palestinian Judaism" — 1977

As one writer has put it, if Krister Stendahl's essay in 1961 was the small cloud on the horizon the size of a man's hand, the storm broke in 1977 with the publication of a book by E. P. Sanders called *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. Sanders was a colleague of N.T. Wright at Oxford University, but is now a professor at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. It was the work of Sanders in particular that led to the expression "the New Perspective" on Paul. Writers both

inside and outside the New Perspective school openly speak of "the Sanders revolution," so that should give you some insight into how significant his work has been.

What Sanders did was to go back and try to sketch a broad canvas of what Palestinian Judaism was like in the days of the New Testament writers. To do this he consulted the Dead Sea Scrolls, the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, together with the writings of the rabbis. And his conclusion was that the Judaism of Paul's day was not, as had been regularly supposed, a religion of legalistic works-righteousness at all. And to view it as such, particularly since the Reformation through the eyes of Martin Luther, was to do great violence to Judaism and consequently to the New Testament writings themselves. Speaking of the significance of Sanders' work, James D. G. Dunn, another of the NP writers, says: "If Stendahl cracked the mold of *twentieth-century reconstructions of Paul's theological context*, by showing how much it had been determined by Luther's quest for a gracious God, Sanders had broken it altogether by showing how different these reconstructions are from what we know of first-century Judaism from other sources."

Sanders argued that keeping the law within Judaism always functioned within a covenantal scheme. In the covenant with Israel, God had taken the initiative and so always grace preceded the law. The covenant was God's gracious gift to his people. And the Jews kept the law out of gratitude rather than out of the intention or desire to earn salvation. Sanders coined the expression covenantal nomism—from the Greek *nomos*, meaning law—to express this. The Jews did not keep the law in order to get into the covenant people but to stay in. Being "in" the covenant was first and foremost God's gracious gift and law-keeping (righteousness) was simply the appropriate response to God's grace and the means by which God's people remained in covenant with him.

According to Sanders, Judaism was and is a valid form of religion. Paul's argument was not with Judaism as such. It was merely that Paul, having found salvation in Christianity, was forced to conclude that Judaism was not enough. In this respect, Sanders spoke of Paul's thought running not from plight to solution but from solution to plight. In other words, Paul did not have a major problem or crisis with Judaism and then find in Christianity the solution (as did Luther with the medieval theology of justification), but he found salvation (the

solution) in Christianity, and therefore was forced to re-evaluate his commitment to Judaism.

The net effect of all this was that the Protestant view of justification, which had been expressed so powerfully during the Reformation by people like Luther and Calvin, was fundamentally flawed. It was, to put it bluntly, wrong-headed. Luther got it wrong. And all Protestant evangelicals who have been trying to convince people of the plight of their own personal sin and guilt before a holy God and of their need to express faith in Christ as the solution to their plight, have got it wrong as well. That is simply not what Paul was talking about when he said that we are not saved by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.

N.T. Wright — "What St. Paul Really Said" — 1997

At this point I want to introduce you to the view of N.T. Wright, one of the most prolific modern authors within the NP school. It won't be possible to interact here with all that he says, and I couldn't do that even if I wanted to because there are just too many books and articles in print. But we'll confine ourselves to the basic argument expressed in a book entitled "What St. Paul Really Said", published in 1997. Wright himself disagrees with Sanders on some points, and, by his own admission, wants to go much further than him on others, but on the whole, Wright is appreciative of Sanders' work. In his own words, "there is no doubt that [Sanders] has towered over the last quarter of the century, much as Schweitzer and Bultmann did over the first half." So as far as he is concerned, Sanders has had a powerful and lasting effect upon the scholarly world.

Wright begins by sketching a picture of what Saul of Tarsus was like before he was converted and came to be known to the world as Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ. In Philippians 3:6, Paul describes himself as "in terms of zeal, a persecutor of the church" and in Galatians 1:13,14 he says that he "ravaged the church of God and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my kinsmen, being exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers."

This is the autobiographical material that we have from Paul himself and Wright correctly says that we must give Paul's own words due weight. He then goes on to describe the two major schools of Pharisaic thought in the first century. It is well known that there was a more moderate school, known as the school of Hillel and a more extreme school, known as the school of Shammai. In terms of political aspirations, the more moderate school had a live-and-let-live policy with regard to Herod the Great,



his successors and also to the Romans. They did not like foreign interference, they would much rather that it was not there, but they were prepared to put their heads down and get on with life, so to speak. The more extreme school, the school of Shammai, had a very different perspective. They were revolutionary in their thinking and were quite prepared to take up arms for Israel's cause. Now Wright deduces from Paul's own statements that he was a member of the second, much more radical school. Here is what he says: *"A word of contemporary relevance at this point, with due caution about the danger of anachronism. If you want to see roughly what Shammaite Pharisaism was all about, look at the philosophy which inspired Yigal Amir to shoot Yitzhak Rabin in Tel Aviv on 4 November 1995. Amir was described as a 'law student'. This didn't mean he was training to be a solicitor or barrister in the Western sense, but that he was a student of Torah. And, as came through very clearly in all the news reports, he believed, with the backing of some senior rabbis in Israel and in America, that Rabin was a traitor, that he had sold out to the pagans, because he was prepared for the sake of peace to trade one of the greatest ancestral symbols, namely land.*

When I saw Amir's face on the front page of the London Times, and read the report, I realized with a shock that I was looking at a twentieth-century version of Saul of Tarsus..."

Wright goes on to explain, drawing on information in the Dead Sea Scrolls, that Saul of Tarsus believed passionately the promises of Daniel 2,7,9, involving the establishment of the messianic kingdom, had not yet been fulfilled but soon would be. Isaiah's vision of comfort, peace, and prosperity in Isaiah 40-55 had not yet been realised. Israel was still in exile and the real return for God's people was about to happen.

Saul, like a great many Jews of his day, read the Jewish Bible not least as a story in search of an ending; and he conceived of his own task as being to bring that ending about. The story ran like this. Israel had been called to be the covenant people of the creator God, to be the light that would lighten the dark world, the people through whom God would undo the sin of Adam and its effects. But Israel had become sinful, and as a result had gone into exile, away from her own land. Although she had returned geographically from her exile, the real exilic condition was not yet finished. The promises had not been fulfilled. The Temple had not been rebuilt. The Messiah had not yet come. The pagans had not yet been reduced to submission, nor had they begun to make pilgrimages to Zion to learn Torah.

Saul, as a Shammaite, and the revolutionaries in general, were eager to bring

these prophecies to fulfilment by their zeal for Torah. They would not sit around and take matters into their own hands. They were looking forward to the time when God would judge the nations and vindicate his people. This was what "justification" meant in this context. It would be a great international law court scene with Israel winning.

A comment

I cannot resist making some comment at this point. Paul himself speaks of having studied under Gamaliel in Acts 22:3 and that it is known that Gamaliel was a member of the school of Hillel, the more moderate school. But according to Wright, it simply cannot be the case that Saul was a Hillelite before his conversion — unless all the evidence of his persecuting activity was later fabrication. I should also point out that this view of Paul before his conversion that is presented by N.T. Wright is highly speculative. Given that first century Judaism was NOT a seamless garment, that there were differences of opinion even among the Pharisees as a body, not to mention the extreme political aspirations of the Qumran sect, one should be wary of asserting with such boldness what Saul of Tarsus thought about the nature of the Messiah's work and the future of his own people. Especially when this picture is not

drawn from, or even substantiated by, the apostle's own writings. Surely the question whether Saul was more mainstream in his thinking (whatever that might mean) or more closely aligned with the apocalyptic expectations of those who gathered and stored the Dead Sea Scrolls can only be established conclusively from his own writings, and not from secondary sources.

However, moving on, Wright observes that this picture of Saul was very different from the one he was taught when he grew up. He had assumed that for Saul, the point of life was to go to heaven when you die, and that the way to go to heaven was by strictly adhering to the moral code of God's law — that Paul was interested in pulling himself up by his own moral boot-straps, so to speak. He says: *"I now believe that this is both radically anachronistic (this view was not invented in Saul's day) and culturally out of line (it is not the Jewish way of thinking). To this extent, I am convinced, Ed Sanders is right: we have misjudged early Judaism, especially Pharisaism, if we have thought of it as an early version of Pelagianism."*

But for Saul, all this changed when he was confronted by the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. Saul was forced to see that God had done for Jesus of Nazareth, in the middle of time, what he said he would

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do for Israel at the end of time. The death and resurrection of Jesus meant that the time of fulfilment had come, and if this was so, then the time for the incorporation of the Gentiles in the covenant had also come. And this is what Paul means by the term "gospel". He does NOT mean by this how individuals get saved from their sin. He means the fulfilment of the promises in the Old Testament and the incorporation of the Gentile nations into the church. The gospel message becomes the authoritative proclamation that Jesus has come at it is through this message that the Holy Spirit changes people's hearts and the church grows.

Likewise the concept of the "righteousness of God" must also be reconsidered. Ever since Luther, people have thought of the "righteousness" of God in ethical terms. It was the status people had upon expressing faith in Christ after hearing the gospel. But for Wright, God's righteousness is His covenant faithfulness which involves the vindication of his people and his plan of salvation for the world. The Lord's righteousness always remains His own, and is never conferred upon the believer.

Still further, the idea of "justification" must also be rethought. According to Wright, discussions of what justification meant got off the wrong foot at the time of Augustine and stayed there ever since. The Church has seen this term as relating to the question of how sinful men and women can be reconciled to a holy God. Throughout, constant appeals are made to the writings and statements of the apostle Paul. But, says Wright: *"If it is true that Paul meant by 'justification' something which is significantly different from what subsequent debate has meant, then this appeal to him is consistently flawed, maybe even invalidated altogether."*

If we are to understand Paul himself, and perhaps to provide a Pauline critique of current would-be biblical theology and agendas, it is therefore vital and, I believe, urgent, that we ask whether such texts have in fact been misused. The answer to that question, I suggest, is an emphatic Yes."

The 'new' definition of justification

So what then should we understand by the term "justification"? It is: *"The covenant declaration, which will be issued on the last day, in which the true people of God will be vindicated and those who insist on worshipping false gods will be shown to be in the wrong..."*

This declaration, this verdict, is ultimately to be made at the end of history. Through Jesus, however, God has done in the middle of history what he had been expected to do—and, indeed, will still do—at the end; so that the declaration, the verdict, can be issued already in the present, in anticipation.

Therefore...all who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ are already demarcated as members of the true family of Abraham, with their sins being forgiven. They are demarcated by their faith—specifically, by their believing of the 'gospel' message of the sovereignty of Jesus Christ.

Wright explains that this is the meaning of the crucial term 'justification apart from works of the law'. The badges of membership by which some Jews had sought to demarcate themselves in the present time, ahead of the eschatological verdict, were focused upon the works of the law—Sabbath, food laws, circumcision, etc. Paul rejects this and substitutes a new badge of membership in the covenant—faith in Jesus. Wright stresses that the doctrine of justification by faith is not what Paul means by "the gospel". Again, the gospel is not an account of how people get saved. It is the proclamation of

the lordship of Christ and it is as this message is proclaimed that people come to faith and so are regarded as members of God's covenant people. The conclusion:

Let us be quite clear. "The gospel" is the announcement of Jesus' lordship, which works with power to bring people into the family of Abraham, now redefined around Jesus Christ a characterised solely by faith in him. "Justification" is the doctrine which insists that all those who have this faith belong as full members of his family on this basis and no other.

Conclusion

Their conclusion is that we have come a long way since Martin Luther sat wrestling in his study with the problem of his sin and guilt and how he could be free from the burden of it. Martin Luther and the other 16th century Reformers, quite simply, got it entirely wrong. They did not understand the apostle Paul and it is very much a case of out with the old and in with the new. If the New Perspective is correct, we are faced with nothing short of a revolution in our thinking about the way of salvation. We must rethink biblical terms like righteousness and justification. We must rethink the nature of the gospel message and we must rethink the mission of the church. So what is at stake here is nothing short of a completely new approach to the nature of salvation, one that wipes out with a wave of the hand a good deal of church history and certainly much of the older perspective that we always believed to be the biblical truth.

In the next 'Faith in Focus', we'll proceed to an assessment of the New Perspective.

The Rev. Michael Flinn originally presented this as the first of two lectures at the 2002 Reformation Conferences, held in Christchurch, Wellington, and Auckland.

Spreading heat or light?

Douglas Wilson's impact in Reformed circles

Ray Pennings

Some writers have a way of provoking strong reactions—either of support or displeasure—among their readership. Douglas Wilson is one such writer. That Wilson is prolific and influential both his devotees and critics agree. In 1977 Wilson became the pastor of Christ Church in Moscow, Idaho. Started in 1975 as a church plant of the Evangelical Free Church, this congregation became independent when the supporting church suddenly abandoned the work in 1977.

Wilson, one of the "guitar-playing song-leaders," was appointed as an elder and became the leader of this work. The original group of about thirty persons not only grew in numbers, but they also progressed towards a more orthodox Reformed theology. In 1997, Christ Church was one of the charter members of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals (CRE), a growing denomination with 21 churches spread across North America.

In addition to being the name most closely identified with the CRE, Wilson is the primary

force behind the monthly magazine *Credenda Agenda*, an associated website (www.credenda.org), a publishing house (Canon Press), a 120-student liberal arts university (St. Andrews College) and a seminary (Greyfriars Hall). A sought-after speaker at conferences, Wilson is noted for his direct, sometimes sarcastic, writing and speaking style. He boldly addresses gender, family, and societal issues in a manner that not only exposes the emptiness of modern thinking on these subjects, but hits uncomfortably close to home for many in

conservative churches whose lifestyles have accommodated some of modernity's ways. This boldness has not gone unchallenged. Several websites and magazine articles contain very strongly worded critiques of Wilson and "the Moscow crowd." In June 2001, the Covenant Presbytery of the RPCUS (Reformed Presbyterian Church USA) described the teachings of Wilson (and three others) "as a fundamental denial of the essence of the Christian gospel in denial of justification by faith alone" and as heretical.

We in the Free Reformed Churches (FRC) cannot ignore these controversies. Wilson's writings are found in several of our church libraries, are extensively read and discussed by many of our families, and have even been the resource books for various study groups. This short column can only provide a very general overview and a few summary analytical comments.

Major themes

The website of Christ Church (christkirk.org) identifies three distinguishing themes that also provide a framework for reviewing the major themes covered by Wilson's writings.

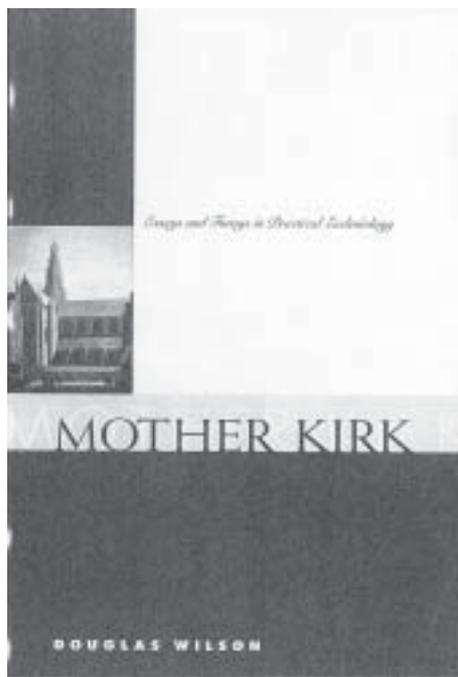
First and foremost the emphasis is on practical obedience to the Word of God, especially in the area of (Reformed) ecclesiology. Discipline and accountability, in both family and church, is a prominent theme. There is little tolerance for dualism. Whether the issues relate to gender, entertainment, or interaction with culture, Wilson is prepared to directly challenge his readers as to whether their standards are being shaped by worldly conformity or by Scripture. He directly challenges fathers, as heads of their household, and elders, as being called by God to rule the church, to ensure that ungodliness is not tolerated and that discipline is used to maintain purity. This emphasis stands as a welcome counterbalance to the ever-loosening standards and individualism of our age and is, I believe, a significant factor in explaining Wilson's appeal.

The second theme dominating Wilson's writings relates to family and education. He has a strong covenantal emphasis. He espouses courtship as preferential to modern dating practices, and emphasises the importance of parental involvement (and particularly fathers) in choosing spouses for children. Some of these views (in combination with the similar views expressed by his wife, Nancy, in her publications) have provoked controversy. However, even those who disagree with Wilson's practical suggestions rarely argue with his exposition of the scriptural principles on which they are based. Wilson also provides practical advice relating to creating a home-life conducive to a covenantal community, advice that helpfully counters the influences of feminism and

individualism with which our culture is steeped.

Wilson advocates a "classical Christian education" position. This emphasizes the cultivation of a Christian worldview and the pursuit of the ancient ideals of truth, beauty, and goodness. Known for its rigour and focus on the ancient texts of western civilisation (including not only the Scriptures, but also Greek philosophy, Augustine, Aquinas, and classic Reformation texts), this approach includes cultivating an appreciation of the arts, architecture and culture.

The third emphasis with which Christ Church seeks to distinguish itself is "the importance of a solid and defined doctrinal



foundation on which to build our lives as Christians. As evangelical Christians we stand in the stream of historic Protestant orthodoxy, and are seeking to build on that foundation." The Westminster Confession, the Three Forms of Unity, the London Baptist Confession (1689), the Savoy Declaration (1658) and the Reformed Evangelical Confession are cited as confessional standards. Since these confessions include both baptist and paedobaptist positions, the church allows both practices (as determined by family), defending this on the basis that both positions "share a covenantal paradigm."

Analysis

After this all-too-brief survey of Wilson's writings, let me use the rest of this article to make some cautionary comments for reflection by those who appreciate his writings.

The first comment relates to his style. While colourful and even entertaining at times, Wilson is deliberately provocative. He

has a very sharp tongue and frequently makes use of sarcasm. If one were to critique solely on the basis of style, Wilson stands co-accused with Luther and other Reformers of allowing their sharp tongues to sometimes draw attention away from more substantive points. Not only does this approach detract from the effectiveness of his often valuable and well-reasoned arguments, but occasionally the reader senses that biblical standards of appropriate Christian charity and civility are compromised. The offence he causes is compounded by the relative absence of empathetic words for the widowed, single mothers, and other victims of brokenness in society. It is one thing to strongly speak in favour of responsibility and the ideals to which we ought to aspire—this Wilson does well and he is to be commended for it. It is another thing, however, to allow our approach to convey superiority. It is only God's grace that makes a difference and therefore we need to make sure that no one can accuse us of self-righteousness.

Flowing from this stylistic concern is Wilson's tendency to make dogmatic statements on issues of Christian liberty about which different positions can be held within the parameters of Scripture. He does not always differentiate between a biblical principle and its implementation, and he uses dogmatic language to describe both. An illustration or two might clarify the point.

Introducing his book on ecclesiology, Wilson argues, "the reformation of the family is at the heart of the reformation of the Church. All Christians concerned for the Church must recognize the importance of structuring the family according to the Scriptures and not according to the smoke of this world." So far, so good. What Wilson has articulated here can directly be traced to Scripture. He then proceeds to illustrate this point by noting, "our culture is so rebellious that we have institutionalized our rebellion and cannot even conceive of how a genuine obedience would appear. We must nevertheless begin; Christians must insist on the abolition of the government school system, our nursing home system, our government welfare system, and countless other agencies and bureaucracies designed by the godless to replace the family. Christians must take their children out of government schools and day-care centres, their parents out of rest homes, and food stamps out of the budget." Is one to conclude from this that Christians with either children in public school, parents in a nursing home, or supportive of public welfare—regardless of their circumstances or context—are not concerned about the reformation of the Church? It is disrespectful to faithful believers who take different views on these practical issues to equate the efforts of a Christian nursing home or a

government-run school (say, for instance, in a developing country) with efforts "by the godless to replace the family."

Another example comes from what Wilson writes about the importance of training young men to be leaders of their families and in society. Here too he makes many valid and important points, but he clearly overstates his case. In contrast to the "wimpiness" and lack of backbone evident in our time, Wilson advocates "a theology of fist fighting" in which "young boys should obviously be trained in the use of real firearms." Now perhaps these things are obvious in Idaho, but for most, it is a huge leap from the principles underlying training for male leadership—an important and neglected Biblical principle—and the use of fists and firearms. Throughout his writings Wilson presents both principle and application with the same black-and-white approach. Those who may agree with his principles but disagree with some of his applications are characterised with the same condemnatory brush.

The third comment regards Wilson's theology. His writings are generally orthodox, in conformity to the historic Reformation creeds. The focus on covenantal obedience and living in covenant community prompts careful attention from readers raised in the FRC tradition. We are wary of the dangers of presumption and loose living that can sometimes flow from such an emphasis. However Wilson's focus is on the importance of covenantal obedience, accountability to God in the context of covenant communities, and the responsibility to let gospel light shine

in the world—themes which have biblical foundations and cannot be ignored.

As with any emphasis that becomes a defining characteristic of one's work, it can sometimes lead to distortions. For instance, warnings against a presumptive covenantal view can easily result in an undervaluing of covenantal promises. In Wilson's case, a different danger appears evident. The emphasis on objective obedience and accountability can result in neglect of the subjective application of God's work. The Catechism highlights how faith involves "both a certain knowledge and an assured confidence" of which the consequence must be good works. But our confidence cannot be based on our good works! The Holy Spirit must apply the work of Christ to our hearts, which will lead to the realization that "even our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin."

I expect Wilson would agree with this formulation. However, it is not a theme that is emphasised in his writings. In fact, it seems from his overall writings that Wilson would caution against this emphasis, noting that it can lead to "the problem of the introspective conscience" and an individualism that negates the covenantal themes of Scripture.

Wilson's critics suggest that it goes much further. The details surrounding this serious list of charges do not lend itself to simple summary. J. V. Vesko, in a review of Wilson's 2003 book *Reformed is Not Enough*, focuses on several of the key concerns regarding Wilson's writings.

One is the notion of regarding baptism

as the backbone of the Church, with a resulting view that membership in the covenant is the basis for participation in the Lord's Supper. The most serious charge deals with Wilson's views on justification, which reframes the historic Reformed understanding of justification to include both individual justification and corporate justification at the consummation. These views, which have been advanced by N.T. Wright and others in the "new perspective" camp (which, in fairness to Wilson, he does distinguish his position from, even as he highlights some points of agreement), have far-reaching implications that go to the heart of our understanding of the gospel. The temperature of the debate has heated significantly with strongly worded accusations coming from all sides.

The debates surrounding Wilson's views raise serious concerns in my mind. From his most popular writings that I have read, there is no specific reference that I can cite that "proves" the strong accusations made by Wilson's critics. I do, however, find what he has written less than complete and the implications of what he says, quite disturbing. Even when dealing with the themes of sanctification, we need to emphasise the work of Christ and the great exchange that takes place between the sinner's guilt and Christ's righteousness. While it is legitimate to highlight the objective and external and its importance in the Christian life, this should never be done by downplaying the necessity of the subjective application of Christ's finished work by the Holy Spirit.

A caution

Wilson's writings are helpful and direct in confronting contemporary issues, even if his style and tone is sometimes distasteful. The merits of his arguments certainly outweigh this flaw. However, I do caution Wilson readers among us to make distinctions where he fails to do so. There is a difference between the, "Thus saith the Lord" of biblical principle—on which we may not compromise—and the choices made in applying that principle to a specific circumstance. Wilson's advice—much of it valuable and worthwhile—needs to be read as advice, not as the "only way" faithful Christians can live. And in the process, we ought to be very conscious of the different emphasis that characterises his writing. While Wilson's works on family and gender are not the primary focus of the theological controversy surrounding him and others of the "new perspective," I sense even in these works an imbalance and I wish that themes like the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation and sanctification were more prominently evident.

As with any human author, one must read discerningly, always testing what is written

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against the standard of God's word. Douglas Wilson has provided us with many resources that address subjects in a direct manner that few others have dared, and there is much good to be gleaned from his writings. Used in conjunction with other works on these themes they can be read with profit.

Endnotes

1. "Mother Kirk", p.17
2. "Future Men", p.131
3. "Reformed is Not Enough", p.191

Ray Pennings is an elder in the Free Reformed Church of Brantford, Ontario. He

is employed by the Word Research Foundation, a think tank whose mission it is to influence others to a Christian view of work. This article first appeared in *The Messenger*, the magazine of the Free Reformed Churches of North America, with whom we have a reciprocal arrangement.

Between You and Me ...

A prayer for the elderly

Dick G. Vanderpyl

*Lord, Thou knowest better than I could know
Myself that I am growing older and will some day be old.
Keep me from the habit of thinking:
I must say something on every subject and on every occasion.*

*Release me, I pray, from craving to straighten
Out everybody's affairs. With my fast store of
Wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it all,
But Thou knowest, that I want a few friends at the end.*

*Keep my mind from the recital of endless details:
Give me wings to get to the point.
Seal my lips from my aches and pains.
They are increasing and love of rehearsing
Them is becoming sweeter as the years go by.
I dare not ask for grace enough to enjoy the
Tales of other's pains, but help me
To endure them with patience.*

*I dare not ask for an improve memory, but
For a growing humility and a lessening of
cocksureness when my memory disagrees with
the memory of others. Teach me the
glorious lesson that just occasionally
I may be mistaken.*

*Keep me reasonably sweet. I do not want
To be a Saint, some of them are so hard to
Live with. But a sour soul, mature in
Years, is one of the crowning works
Of the devil.*

*Give me the ability to see good things
In unexpected places, and talents in unexpected
People; and give me, O Lord the grace
To them so.*

Remember this at all times: Read 19:32

"To rise in the presence of the aged, Show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord.

Also check other scripture verses as: Job 32:6; Proverbs 23:22; 1 Tim. 5:1. With "Respect" check Isaiah 46:4; Proverbs 16:31, and Ephesians 6:1-3.

*We give thanks to God that we were able
to celebrate the*

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*of our parents, grandparents and
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Their wedding text was Psalm 121

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Marieke and Brent Schimidt
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Thomas, Petra

Peter and Jocelyn
Alexia, Seth, Rebekah, Hadleigh, Margriet
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Winifred and Peter Balchin
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Melanie and James Ure, Nadia, Annabel,
Marcus

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'On the far side of the sea'

A perspective on trauma

Dirk J van Garderen

Delinda van Garderen is an assistant professor of educational studies at SUNY New Paltz. Last October, while visiting a campus in nearby Wallkill, Delinda suddenly collapsed. She was rushed to St. Luke's Hospital in Newburgh, where she faced a life-threatening medical crisis. In this article, the Rev. van Garderen writes of his perspective on this traumatic event and his daughter's miraculous survival.

Wednesday, October 22. I received the call at 10:47 a.m. (New Zealand time). The unfamiliar voice on the other end said, "Mr. Van Garderen? My name is Cathy. I'm a friend and colleague of Delinda. I have some, uh, bad news, I'm afraid. I'm with Delinda now... at the emergency room of the hospital in Newburgh."

"What is the matter? Is she okay? A car accident?"

"No. She collapsed and fainted at a school where she was doing research," Delinda's friend explained. "She was brought here by ambulance."

"But is she okay?" I asked again.

"Yes...but it's very serious. The staff here is worried. Delinda is very ill."

Half a world away—and my worst possible nightmare is coming true!

Things were anything but well with my daughter. No one seemed able (or was it willing?) to tell me the exact nature of the problem. With what can only have been God-given strength, I tried to probe—but I couldn't make head or tail of it. Feelings numbed my mind.

Eventually, a nurse from ICU (intensive care unit) came on the line and offered a more clinical description. *Dangerously high blood pressure, pulse rate exceeding 150. Breathing extremely labored, needing 100% oxygen. Seizure. Very much life threatening.*

"If she were my daughter, I'd drop everything and get here now," urged the worried nurse. At that very moment in my conversation with the nurse, I heard shouting and confusion. There was a frantic concern for Delinda's life. She had fainted once again.

Her voice obviously strained, the nurse said that the situation was extremely critical. Further tests were needed urgently. The heart specialist now attending Delinda would call me back in about an hour with an update.

On putting the phone down, thoughts exploded in my head. *What now? How? When?* My wife, Gonny, was out visiting a

church member. I rang and told Gonny to wait there. On arriving and seeing my wife, I lost my composure and broke down. It took some time before I was able to sob, "It's Delinda. It's very serious. She's in ICU. We need to be there!"

Within an hour the heart specialist called as promised. "Massive blood clots in the lungs," the doctor explained. Pulmonary embolism. "Get here straight away. Your daughter is in a critical condition. If she survives the next twenty-four hours she has a fighting chance." Delinda's age, physical condition, and being a non-smoker were very much in her favor.

Incredibly, Delinda herself, who was struggling but conscious, came on the phone. A tiny, trembly voice spoke: "It's me, Dad... I'm okay?" What a question to put to me! To comfort her I told her that I would be there within twenty-four hours, that as we were speaking a travel agent was making emergency arrangements. "Dad! What about the cost?" Dutch blood evident even in such dire circumstances!

Suddenly, the implications of my coming dawned on her. An anguished voice spoke over the phone. "Dad, I'm not dying, am I? Dad, tell me! Am I dying?"

I have never been asked a harder, more difficult question in all my life. *O Lord, hear me! Not that, Lord! Save her! Spare her!* All I could say was, "It's okay, Delinda. I'm coming. We're in God's hands."

Within six hours of the news breaking, arrangements were set to fly out from Auckland via Los Angeles to JFK (New York). Amazingly, within that six-hour period there were already indications that God's people in New Zealand, Australia, and the USA were on their knees interceding for Delinda, the family, and myself.

The flight seemed endless. Auckland to L.A. takes twelve hours. Dismay and frustration in L.A. as the flight booked to New York was cancelled—an extra two-hour wait! The only positive to come out of that was the need to let the folks who would be waiting at JFK know about the delay. I had no contact numbers and therefore rang New Zealand. Praise God, Gonny pointed out that there was no further news from the hospital—no news being good news.

After being en route for over twenty-four hours, the plane touched down at JFK at 11:40 p.m. local time. Imagine the relief on finding someone holding a hand-lettered sign with "Van Garderen." It was Cathy Whittaker, a dear colleague and friend of Delinda's. She and husband Bill had driven down from

Kingston to pick me up and take me to the hospital.

At 2:45 a.m., after being admitted via the emergency entrance, I gently but with all my strength was hugging my precious daughter. She looked pale, extremely small, and totally vulnerable to all of that medical machinery. But Delinda was alive—gloriously, wondrously alive!

We hugged, prayed, and gave mutual assurances that all was fine now. God had spared Delinda during those first critical hours, and just being together was a miracle tonic in itself—for both of us.

I was dropped off at my daughter's apartment in New Paltz (very much my choice of a place to stay) at four in the morning. The Whittakers had to drive yet another half-hour north to their home. I do not believe that I am given to gushing, but their generosity, the first of an endless line of truly wonderful people I was to meet in the next two weeks, was beyond measure.

Delinda was to stay in ICU for another five days. After another three days in a recovery ward, she was discharged on the understanding that I would be with her for the next week.

Personal reflections

Medically. The two weeks spent with Delinda proved to be both life changing and life challenging. Gradually, as we obtained more and more information on the nature, possible causes, and prognosis of Delinda's condition, the enormity of what had happened began to sink in. This growing awareness is an on-going process that will, I suspect, continue for some time yet. The possibility of having to be vigilant and take special medication for the rest of her life is very real. We now know that blood thickness (neither too thick nor too thin) is absolutely vital for life and health.

The treatment Delinda received consisted of different medications of varying dosages (Heparin and Coumadin) designed to make her blood the right thickness and, in time, dissolve the clots that had formed in her left leg. Healing and recovery depended very much on her physical strength to withstand and overcome the extreme stress to which Delinda's lungs, heart, and whole body had been subjected.

The healing aspect went extremely well. In fact, within five days Delinda was off the oxygen and (almost) her usual talkative self—at least for relatively short bursts of time. I recall smiling a number of times when, after having had visitors who told her how

well she looked, she confided, "Dad, I feel almost embarrassed about looking so well!" Yes, she does look well, but that can be deceptive. I've lost count of the number of medical folks who have told me, given the size of the blood clots, Delinda's survival is little less than a miracle.

Mentally. What both Delinda and I discovered (or had to learn all over again) is how enormous and daunting the mental readjustments are after such an experience. While on one level everything is the same—you're still the same person—it is also a fact that nothing is the same, especially in a mental sense.

You become totally conscious of your own physical limitations. Every muscular tweak and twinge, especially in your legs (where the clots originate) and chest area, set off panicky alarms bells at full volume. The fear of bleeding, especially internally, drives you into a state of virtual panic. Fear overwhelms and takes a vice-like grip on your heart and feelings. Doing anything physical, especially for the first time, involves overcoming major mental hurdles.

These mental battles are largely invisible to those around you. The natural tendency is to hide them. "How are you?" *Oh, I'm fine! I'm doing okay.* Meanwhile, what is really going on is anything but fine and okay! You're scared, vulnerable, and uncertain. You feel overwhelmed by even the tiniest of trials.

The need for mental healing in this area is very real—and it takes time, often even more time than the physical healing. Both Delinda and I learned—and, in a very real and challenging way, still need time to come grips with—such this reality.

Spiritually. After spending two weeks with Delinda—this had been my first trip to the US—I was able to leave for Auckland on November 5. The Qantas flight from JFK was delayed by almost two and a half hours. The plane waited this one out on the tarmac.

A fellow passenger, noticing I was seated in the middle row with three empty seats next to me, asked if I minded him taking two of them. No choice really and, therefore, I agreed. He proved talkative—an expatriate New Zealander who had lived in New York for many years. He was on his way to Melbourne for the Rugby World Cup finals. We were soon exchanging our stories.

The medical questions he asked me were deeply searching and soon made me realize I was speaking to an expert. He proved to be attached to one of the top New York hospitals as senior anesthetist and knew the names of many of the most prestigious medical experts in the area. Discovering that Delinda and I knew no one in New York's medical establishment, he offered his own name plus personal e-mail address, beeper number, etc., with an enthusiastic invitation for us to contact him as soon as he returned

to New York.

This doctor then asked about my work. On telling him that I was a pastor, he exclaimed (in somewhat toned-down language), "Man, how can you still believe in your God when these awful things have just happened to your daughter?"

Two things struck me. First, how could Delinda and I (along with family and friends) have coped if we had *not* believed in a personal God who hears and answers prayer? Second, in leading a man like this across my path at this vital juncture, how could I *not* believe in Providence?

and vulnerable. We were at times overwhelmed and overcome with our own smallness and absolute weakness. God has been good, but He also put us through a wringer that made us feel spiritually dehydrated.

Delinda asked me a number of times if and where I saw the Lord working all things together for the good of those who loved Him. Glib, clichéd answers will not do. You find yourself driven to take a journey that is not easy and takes time. However, in saying that, we want at the same time to testify our thankfulness and joy in proclaiming that God



Dr. Delinda van Garderen attended Sunday morning service at Westminster Church on November 2, shortly after her release from St. Luke's Hospital. She is flanked by two very able ministers: her father, Rev. Dirk van Garderen (right), and her church pastor, Rev. John Vance.

Looking back, there are a hundred and one strong and glorious signs, each of which testified to the presence and power of God and revealed His loving, protective, providing, and guiding hand. God has been good!

But—and there always are *buts*—Delinda and I are the first to testify that the testings experienced during this time and subsequently have been and remain often difficult. The "Why me?" question remains real. Why did God allow this to happen? What have we done? Is God punishing or somehow chastising?

More. Delinda's confidence—including spiritual confidence—was tested and shaken severely. The battle with fear, uncertainty, and the questions about the reality of God's love is spiritually exhausting. True, we were both driven nearer to the Lord and to each other. These few weeks have proved precious and ones that we will not forget for the rest of our lives. But the walk through the shadow of the valley of death made us feel both afraid

has never left us and, in weakness, we continue to love and trust Him.

God has many loving hands

As a pastor I have lost count of the number of times I have comforted and been comforted by those wonderful words in Psalm 139:9-10. In these past weeks, as a father, these words took on a new and, in many respects, literal meaning.

From our perspective in Auckland Delinda has settled "on the far side of the sea." She's a long, long way from what we call home and lives in a world—among colleagues, friends, and a Christian community—that is completely alien to us. In fact, my daughter regularly pointed out that she sometimes feels somewhat schizoid—living in two worlds that have no real experience of each other. By coming to be with her I became the first to cross over from one of her worlds into another. It proved to be quite an experience.

What struck me above all else—and did so time and again—was that God has many, many visible, real, and tangible *hands* He uses to guide and hold us fast.

First, there are the hands of all of those folks who reached out and helped in a medical sense. I think of the schoolteacher who, trained for medical emergencies, administered the first aid that proved to be critical in saving Delinda's life. He proved to be the first of a series of many hands—specialists, nurses, and all kinds of medical folks at St Luke's Hospital.

Second, there are Delinda's colleagues from SUNY New Paltz. I doubt whether they know or would be prepared to acknowledge it, but their hands, that is, their help, words of encouragement, personal sacrifices, and genuine reaching out still make me feel completely humbled and overawed. I have often thought of the typical American in terms of the letter B (big, brassy, bold, boastful, etc.) but discovered none (or hardly any) of

the B traits whatsoever. On the contrary.

What also stands out for me is how God used their hands to guide and hold both Delinda and me fast. True, most of these folks did not share or even understand my faith commitment (and they were staunch Democrats to boot!). But I saw in and through them God's hands and was, time and again, given an opportunity to express and point this out. I remain utterly thankful.

Third, there is Delinda's Christian family from Westminster Presbyterian Church. Although "on the far side of the sea," I felt completely at home with this fellowship. Blest indeed is the tie that binds our hearts in Christ. Prayers, little (and not so little!) hugs, words of encouragement, and a willingness to help often made both of us blush—and immeasurably thankful!

It is forever true that it is better to give than to receive. I would add, from personal experience, that it is easier to give than to receive. And receive we did—boundless

generosity that brought to mind God's hands guiding, providing, and holding us fast. Times around Delinda's bedside, in various diners, homes, cars, etc., have become treasured experiences more precious than gold.

Since returning home to New Zealand I have lost count of the number of times folks have asked me what those weeks spent with my daughter were like. How did we cope? I reply, "We were guided by, held fast, and helped by God's many, many visible and real hands!"

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, all those who helped Delinda medically. And thank you, colleagues, friends, sisters and brothers in Christ.

"(C) 2003 Dirk J van Garderen. Originally published in The Compendium, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Rock Tavern, N.Y., USA. Used with permission."

World in focus

Pakistani President visits Forman Christian College

During a visit to Forman Christian College (FCC), the most prominent Presbyterian educational mission in Pakistan, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's president, formally returned the school's management to the Presbyterian Church and restored its authority to grant degrees. Musharraf also promised government help in establishing and equipping a new program in information technology at FCC.

The historic college in Lahore, founded by Presbyterian missionaries in 1864, was returned to PC(USA) management in March after more than three decades under the control of Pakistan's Islamic government.

During a convocation at FCC on 6 December Musharraf called nationalisation of schools "bad public policy," and commended the Presbyterian Church for its contributions to his country and said his government welcomes all who come in partnership to help improve education and quality of life in Pakistan.

Musharraf, an FCC graduate, also expressed gratitude to the PC(USA) for having sent Dr. Peter Armacost, president emeritus of PC(USA)-related Eckerd College in Florida, to serve as FCC's principal, continuing what he called the Presbyterian church's long tradition of sending accomplished educators to Pakistan and endorsed FCC's plans to establish Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science programs that meet US accreditation standards.

"All in all," said Armacost, "it was a very good day for the college."
+ John Filiatreau, PCUSA News, 100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202, (888) 728-7228 ext. 5504, pcanews.pcanews.org

Christian woman tortured in Egypt amid crackdown

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) urged Egypt on 3 December to end the torture and interrogation of a 30-year old Christian woman, who has become a symbol of persecution endured by Muslim converts to Christianity.

Mariam Girgis Makar, an ex-Muslim, was reportedly arrested at her Alexandria home by four plain clothes policemen without a warrant on 21 October after helping other Muslim converts to Christianity change

their religious affiliation on their identity cards.

Makar is the only one of 20 tortured Christians from her region who is still in custody. Another convert, Mr. Issam Abdul Fathr, who was suffering from diabetes and at least one other medical condition, died recently while being transferred from a police station to hospital, church sources said.

+ Stefan J. Bos, ASSIST News Service, PO Box 2126, Garden Grove, CA 92842-2126

The Parents' Television Council rates DVDs and video games

The Parents' Television Council has released a list of recommended DVDs and video games for parents shopping for entertainment gifts. Melissa Caldwell with the PTC says there was not a glut of family-friendly games and movies to consider. The PTC list identifies several G and PG-rated films (General audiences and Parental Guidance suggested) and E-rated video games (for Everyone) that are free from offensive content, including such movies as "Finding Nemo," "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang," and "The Music Man," and games such as "Dora the Explorer," "Wheel of Fortune," and "The Hobbit."

+ Parents Television Council, parentstv.org
+ Dr. Dominic Aquila, Presbyterian Church in America, 1700 N. Brown Rd., Suite 105, Lawrenceville, GA 30043, (678) 825-1000 editor@pcanews.com

Book notes

"No Little People" by Francis Schaeffer is now back in print. It features sixteen sermons from a PCA minister and one of the most influential evangelicals in the past 50 years. The title essay, "No Little People, No Little Places," will be an encouragement to all of us.

Order from the PCA Christian Education and Publication Bookstore at www.cepbookstore.com

+ PCA News, Presbyterian Church in America, 1700 N. Brown Rd., Suite 105, Lawrenceville, GA 30043, (678) 825-1000

Christian dies in police custody in China

Reliable sources have confirmed the death of a house church Christian in police custody on 30 October. Mrs. Zhang Hongmei, 33, was arrested

by local police in Dongmiaodong village on 29 October. Police summoned Zhang's family and asked them to pay a bribe of 3,000 RMB (about \$400). They were unable to raise the money, a sum that is well over a year's wages for them. Later as Zhang's family pleaded with police officers, they saw Hongmei bound with heavy chains, visibly injured and unable to speak to them. On the following day, police told the family that she had died at noon.

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

Lessons from a hostage pastor in Colombia

Juan Carlos Villegas, 28, the assistant pastor at Family Christian Church in the Medellin suburb of Bello, was leaving a Sunday afternoon church retreat 24 miles from the city on 28 April, 2002. A few yards down the road, guerrillas of the National Liberation Army (ELN) took Villegas hostage and demanded his church pay \$25,000 for his safe return. In telephone negotiations with the abductors, Family Christian's head pastor, Andres Puerta, reminded them that the ELN had earlier agreed to not kidnap pastors. The rebel commander agreed to free Villegas 12 days after his capture in exchange for a Bible. Eighteen months after the ordeal, Villegas is drawing on his experience to counsel families of hostages and hopes to use his platform as a former hostage to help bring peace to his war-torn homeland through the gospel.

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

HIV infections soar among Gays

New cases of HIV, which causes AIDS, jumped sharply among homosexual men in the US from 1999 to 2002, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported.

The number of new infections climbed 17 percent for homosexual men in this period, compared with 7.3 percent for all men, the study revealed. It was published in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

+ *Virtuosity Digest, 1236 Waterford Rd., West Chester, PA 19380*
dvirtue236@aol.com

Hungary's President defends free speech

The Hungarian Jewish community expressed concern on 23 December about a veto by President Ferenc Madl of one of Europe's toughest legislations against hate speech. Madl also asked the Constitutional Court to review the law. In a statement released by his office Madl said he refused to sign the hate speech legislation because the bill could "restrict freedom to a greater extent than is constitutionally permissible."

The law, adopted by parliament in December, stipulates that any person who publicly incites hatred "toward any nation, or national, ethnic, racial, or religious group" could face three years in prison.

In addition, someone who "publicly insults the dignity of a person because of his or her national, racial, ethnic or religious affiliation" could be found guilty of a misdemeanor and sentenced to up to two years of imprisonment.

+ *Hungarian Reformed News Exchange*

Christians refused government assistance as floods hit Vietnam

Most of the people affected when Central areas of Vietnam suffered from a devastating series of storms and heavy rains on 14, 16, and 24 November have received financial assistance and immediate relief from the Vietnamese government. However, 425 Christians in the Quang Ngai province and 654 Christians in the Ninh province were refused help solely because of their Christian faith, according to the Washington, DC-based International Christian Concern (ICC).

According to ICC (www.persecution.org) approximately 75,000 houses were destroyed, 120,000 hectares of rice crop ruined, and thousands of rural people have been left homeless, as a result of the storms.

"These Christians already live in dire poverty, and this tragedy has left many hungry and sick. Without assistance, many are expected to die.

The Vietnamese government routinely persecutes Christians in the

rural areas of Vietnam, and this is another example of how Christians are denied the most basic elements needed to survive," says the ICC report.

+ *Michael Ireland, ASSIST News Service, PO Box 2126, Garden Grove, CA 92842-2126*

Doctor & nurse needed

A medical doctor and a nurse are urgently needed for the Akisyon A Yesu ("Compassion of Jesus") Presbyterian Clinic at Nakaale in South Karamoja, which is operated by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) Uganda Mission. The Karamoja region lies in the northeastern corner of Uganda in east central, equatorial Africa. Interested parties are urged to contact the Committee on Foreign Missions.

+ *Committee on Foreign Missions (215) 830-0900 bube.1@opc.org.*

+ *The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Box P, Willow Grove, PA 19090-0920, (215) 830-0900*

Christian murdered in Poso

The Indonesian Central government has sent an additional 1,000 police officers to Poso, in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, after the latest incident of violence against Christians.

According to International Christian Concern (ICC), a Washington, D.C.-based human rights group, shots were heard in Tiwaa village (15km from Poso) on 1 December. One Christian resident of the village, Pian, stepped out his front door and was shot. He is in critical condition in the Poso Public Hospital. Tiwaa is located next to another village that was attacked on Sat., 29 November.

Two villagers were killed in this previous attack including the chief of the village. Jihad warriors, probably trained by JI (an Al Qaeda affiliated disbanded Jihad group), have been attempting to stir up hatred between Christians and Muslims and create a major confrontation. Since these attempts have not yet created their desired effect, it appears that the Jihad is now targeting Christian leaders (either the

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church leaders or the leaders of the village who are Christians).

In an outdated but welcome move, the entral government has admitted that the local governments are not doing their work correctly, and has sent special teams to investigate how the local governments are handling the conflict.

+ *International Christian Concern (ICC), 2020 Pennsylvania Avenue NW#941, Washington, D.C. 20006 1846*

Poll on religious beliefs

An October poll conducted by Zogby and the University of Rochester surveyed people's religious beliefs around the world. Among the most significant findings: Only 60 percent of American "born-again Christians" versus 95 percent of all Muslims believe they will suffer negative consequences for disobeying their religion. Except for South Korean Buddhists, a majority of all respondents in various countries believe that a more religious society would be an improvement in their respective nations. More than half of those surveyed associate violence in their own country with politics rather than with religion.

+ *PCA News, Presbyterian Church in America, 1700 N. Brown Rd., Suite 105, Lawrenceville, GA 30043, (678) 825-1000*

Church going to the dogs

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. - Rover, of course, needs his run in the park. But what about his spiritual needs?

All Saints Episcopal Church in Fort Lauderdale wants to meet those needs—and those of his owner. The church has started monthly services for pets and their loved ones, even providing doggie treats for Rover at communion time.

Don't worry about an accident during a hymn or prayer. The church keeps a mop and bucket handy.

"There's nothing that can ruin the service," says church staffer Char Vinik, whose family plays guitars during the 6 p.m. contemporary pet service on the third Sunday of the month. Consider it a way to entice people to church who otherwise might not go. Many people feel guilty about leaving their pets home on the weekend after being away at work Monday through Friday, says the Rev. Roger Allee, associate priest at All Saints. So once a month, the church lets people bring their entire "family," Rover included.

"If they start getting boisterous"—as in barking or hissing—"don't worry," Allee reassures about 50 churchgoers at the most recent pet service. "They're praising God as only they know how to do it."

Indeed, church members ignored loud snorts and snores from Rose the pug during the recent service after she climbed into a pew next to owner Dorothy Bowen of Fort Lauderdale.

"People really love their pets and take them seriously," says Allee.

Some Catholic parishes now schedule blessing ceremonies for pets, especially around October 4, the feast day of renowned animal lover St. Francis of Assisi.

"It's not usually during the Mass but afterward," says Mary Ross Agosta, spokeswoman for the Archdiocese of Miami. "Everyone is asked to bring their pets, from turtles and iguanas to the usual cats and dogs," she says. "You realise your pet becomes part of the family."

The Rev. Maud Paraison, Episcopal rector of the Church of Intercession, visited All Saints' pet service last month and was charmed by parishioners holding their pooches, singing hymns and participating

in the liturgy. "It's something to look into" for her own church, she says, where "people are close to their pets." All Saints got the idea for the special pet services because many dog owners bring their pets to run on the church grounds. "We lovingly call them 'the dog people,'" Allee says. "We thought, why not invite them to church?" Vinik adds.

So far, about 50 or so people show up with about a dozen pets in tow—mostly dogs, from a dachshund to a labrador mix, and usually one or two cats.

And if you ask them, then yes, they are convinced their pets enjoy the singing, the spiritual message and mixing with other parishioners and their pets. After all, they will tell you, their pets have souls like humans do.

"Cats are persons—only they spell it purr-sons," quips member Barbara Slauson of Fort Lauderdale. She brought her cat, Lacey, in a pet carrier.

Don Hayes, who brought Jonesy, his 3-year-old Jack Russell to All Saints, says he is convinced his pooch not only has a soul but will go to heaven. He says he read a book about near-death experiences and the people talked of meeting their pets on the way to heaven before "returning" to Earth to finish out their lives.

"You just wonder what they are thinking," Hayes says of pets. Of Jonesy, he says, "He's very sensitive to my emotions."

Indeed, spiritual peace seems to spread over the pets during All Saints' service. There are no cat-and-dog fights. Well, maybe there's a rare hiss or a low growl, but nothing too serious. Rather, the animals tend to greet each other warmly.

Maxi, a 1-year-old German shepherd mix, rubbed noses with Henry, an almost 3-year-old labrador mix, as their owners, Jennifer Vanderweit and Amy Sammons, sat together in a pew.

"She could use a little church," jokes Vanderweit of the active Maxi, who settled down once the services began. "It benefits us both."

+*Ft. Worth Star Telegram (23-8-03)*

One killed in raid on Children's Centre

One employee was killed and about eight others, including a nun, wounded when the Egyptian army attacked a Christian centre for mentally and physically handicapped children and orphans early Monday, 5 January, a human rights watch-dog said.

The Barnabas Fund claimed the casualties were a result of a military operation involving 500 Egyptian soldiers who "descended upon the Patmos Christian Center," 30 kilometers east of the capital Cairo, "accompanied by two bulldozers."

In a statement to ASSIST News Service (ANS) the organisation stressed the troops "blocked the entrance to the compound with a large pile of stones and rubble and then they destroyed seven meters of adjoining wall." The US Copts Association said that soldiers were also seen "setting fire to structures on the premises."

When "those working at the centre rushed out en masse to prevent the army from coming onto their property ... soldiers threw stones and bottles at the protesters," added Barnabas Fund, which has close contacts with the centre.

+ *Stefan J. Bos, ASSIST News Service, PO Box 2126, Garden Grove, CA 92842-2126*

+ *Barnabas Fund, The Old Rectory, Pewsey, Wiltshire SN9 5DB, United Kingdom*
+ *US Copts Assoc., 529 14th St., Ste 1081, Washington, DC 20045 (202) 737-3660*

Persian ministries for World Witness

A programme written and produced by Rev. Tat Stewart, director of Persian Ministries for World Witness, is currently being aired on the Iranian Christian Broadcasting website, <http://www.icbtv.org/>. The first of 10 weekly segments was broadcast on Christmas Day. This avenue of communication has the potential to reaching three to five million Iranians in their own language.

+ *The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, One Cleveland St., Greenville, SC 29601-3696 (864) 343-8297 ext. 236*

Geologists demand removal of creationist book

A new book offering an alternative view of how the Grand Canyon was formed is the object of a book-banning effort by prominent evolutionists, who have demanded that the Grand Canyon National Park Service

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remove the text from bookstores within the park.

"*Grand Canyon: A Different View*" is the 2003 work of Tom Vail, who collected essays from 23 contributors (most of whom hold earned doctorates in science). His book presents a creation science viewpoint of the Canyon's formation that is quite different than what most Canyon visitors are told.

Creation scientists present evidence that the Grand Canyon was formed not by the slow erosion of the Colorado River over millions of years, but by a lot of water over a short period of time.

The controversial "*Grand Canyon: A Different View*" has been on sale at the Canyon's bookstores since last fall. It quickly raised the hackles of the presidents of seven science organisations, who jointly signed a 16 December 2003 letter to the park's superintendent urging him to remove the book.

"I've had reactions from the staff all over the board on it," park Deputy Supt. Kate Cannon told the Los Angeles Times. "There were certainly people on the interpretive staff that were upset by it. Respect of visitors' views is imperative, but we do urge our interpreters to give scientifically correct information."

The book's status at the park is still up in the air. Grand Canyon's superintendent, Joe Alston, has sought guidance from Park Service headquarters in Washington. Meanwhile, the book has sold out and is being reordered, the Los Angeles Times reported.

+ *Jeremy Reynolds, ASSIST News Service, PO Box 2126, Garden Grove, CA*

Greenville Seminary produces new documentary video

Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in South Carolina is releasing its first professionally-produced video to churches and individuals. The 16-minute video covers the school's philosophy of education, its theological commitments, its emphasis on the gospel and missions, its love for the Church, as well as the academic curriculum and location.

+ *Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, PO Box 690, 418 East Main St., Taylors, South Carolina 29687 (864) 322-2717 video@gpts.edu*

John Stott recovering from stroke

The Rev. Dr. John R.W. Stott, longtime Rector of All Souls Langham Place (Church of England) in London, and noted evangelical author, speaker, and missions statesman, suffered a mild stroke in late December. The prognosis for a "reasonable" recovery for the respected cleric, who is 82, was good but his physical condition precluded his travel to the Urbana Missions Conference held at the University of Illinois at Urbana later that month. Dr. Stott's prepared address on "Radical Christianity" was read by Joshua Wathanga, Associate General Secretary of the Kenyan student movement of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. [CC-REC]

+ *John Stott Ministries, 1050 Chestnut Street, Suite 203, Menlo Park, CA + 94025 (650)617-0390*

Churches destroyed, families displaced in Nigeria

Muslim extremists burned down 10 churches and over 100 church-owned properties in November during unprovoked attacks against Christians in the town of Kazaure. According to Rev. Umaru Dutse, Chairman of the Jigawa state chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), an undetermined number of Christians also died in the attacks. Dutse said Muslim fanatics justified the attacks with claims that a local Christian blasphemed the prophet Mohammed, but the CAN official believes the blasphemy charge was merely a pretext. "The attack is (part of) premeditated and continuous persecution of the Christian community here," Dutse said. "We have faced these attacks over the years." [CC-REC]

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

Dutch churches give final approval to Union

Three Netherlands churches cast their final vote on union 12 December. Each of the three synods met separately on December 12 and approved the merger. The churches will become the Protestant Church in The

Netherlands. The formal union will take place 1 May, 2004.

In the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKN), the vote was 66 to 6 in favour of the union. In the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NHK), the vote was narrower, 51 to 24, just making the two-thirds majority required. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in The Kingdom of The Netherlands (ELK) voted 30 to 6 in favour. The GKN was a founding member of the Reformed Ecumenical Council in 1946. The new Protestant Church in The Netherlands will continue its membership and be the first REC member to include a Lutheran element in it. In addition, the new PCN will be the host for the next REC Assembly in Utrecht in July 2005.

The two Reformed denominations and one Lutheran denomination have been in union discussions for decades, with the Reformed churches beginning the talks in the late 1960s. The Protestant Church in the Netherlands will have more than 2.5 million members, making it the second-largest church in the country after the Catholic Church. [REC]

+ *REC News Exchange, The Reformed Ecumenical Council, 2050 Breton Rd. SE, Ste 102 Grand Rapids, MI 49546*

Protestant pastor assassinated in Pakistan

A Protestant pastor in Pakistan's Punjab province was murdered in the early hours of 5 January, just minutes after he left his home to catch a train to Lahore. Pastor Mukhtar Masih, 50, was shot once in the chest at close range with a 32 calibre pistol sometime after 3 a.m. in Khanewal, 180 miles southwest of Lahore. Police officials ruled out robbery as a murder motive because 3,500 rupees (\$58) were found untouched in Masih's pockets and there were no signs of struggle. Police suspected it was a grudge killing. As pastor of the local Church of God, Masih regularly conducted 10 minutes of prayer and Bible reading over the church loudspeaker each day at 6 a.m., a common practice in areas which, like Khanewal, have large Christian populations. Parishioners from Masih's congregation confirmed that Muslims had threatened their pastor "on many occasions" and several times tore down the speakers.

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

Books in focus

"Gideon Blows the Trumpet" & "David and Goliath"

by Cor Van Rijswick

I found the books well written and mostly accurate to the Bible, with enough added detail to make the story easier for children to understand and bring the story alive. My son, who was nearly six, was keen to hear them and liked them the first hearing with the CD, but it didn't hold his attention, since he can't read well enough to follow the story, and he didn't like the singing. He listened better when I read them to him, but didn't want them read to him again as he found them too long. They may be better suited to the older age range suggested.



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Patricia van Laar

Derek and I became great friends almost from day one. I don't remember who started working in the Health Department first—I think it was me. Early in February we both began attending history, English and other classes at night school in order to gain our University Entrance. I could beat him at English, but he was a brilliant history student and ran rings around me.

He could also run rings around me in one aspect of our work. In those days, patients had to claim a refund of doctors' fees, and I spent many tedious hours writing out warrants for multiples of seven shillings and sixpence (75 cents), the Social Security payment for an ordinary doctor's visit in those days, or twelve and six for a night or Sunday visit. Derek and I would then put these into piles of envelopes ready for posting. We would chat to each other while this equally boring task was performed, and he was much faster than I. This was surprising, for he was

one-armed—a birth affliction which sometimes occurred in those Thalidomide days. Somehow he would flip the envelope flap up with his hook and slide the warrant in with his hand while I was still struggling with the flap.

Mutual understanding

I am sure that the reason I felt so much at ease with Derek was that I understood him, as few in that work place did. I never told him, as far as I remember, about my own probably-genetic physical defect and its consequent psychological problems, which by the time I met Derek was well on the way to being removed by medical dentistry (also cosmetic). So it was no problem at all for me to empathise when he told me he used to rub lumps of coal up and down other boys' backs, to prove to them that he with one hand was as good as they with two.

Yes, we were close friends, but one outstanding difference separated us. When he found out that I was a convinced Christian, Derek assured me that "Christianity is just a fire insurance policy, in case there is a hell."

At night school we sat at the back of the room with another friend. The three of us, or rather Derek and I, would often have discussions, usually of a religious nature, while Ian listened in. I did not know it at the time, but Ian was really interested, and later entered the Christian ministry. I'm not quite sure how we fitted these discussions into the work/study programme, but must have managed both quite well, as all three of us were numbered amongst only eleven out of over fifty to pass the end-of-year state University Entrance examinations. Most of the fifty dropped out one by one as the year progressed. It was no easy task to do this exam while working full time.

After two years working together, I left to go to teachers' college. We remained good friends, although not quite as close as before, attending each other's 21st birthday parties. I went to Derek's in a long frock, on the bar of Ian's bicycle!

Subsequent years

We had only occasional contact in subsequent years. Derek decided to study for a law degree, and joined a law firm where an adopted uncle of mine also worked. One night, as I heard from his mother later, he was riding home from university when his long scarf caught in the wheel of his bicycle. As he fell off, the handle of the bike swung round giving him a severe painful blow in the

stomach. Some months later Derek was diagnosed with cancer, which had started at the exact site of the blow. I was by now living on the West Coast, and every time I came back to Christchurch I cycled to the hospital or across the city to see him at home. His mother always welcomed me and took me to Derek's room, leaving us to talk. On the second visit, he said, "You know, I'm not as bad as you think."

"Oh?" I answered, raising my eyebrows.

"No," he continued. "I believe in Christ. Don't believe in the church, though." I felt, reading between the lines, that he had (perhaps as a history student) come to accept the historical fact of Christ, and maybe some of the theological implications of His life and His nature, but I had the impression that he did not yet know Him as Saviour.

It was some months before I could go to see him again, and by this time he was very ill indeed. He had had several operations, and one of his hospital nurses was a Christian who in the past had been in the same Bible class as I. He also had visits from ministers of various denominations, some of whom I knew well as devoted servants of the Lord. All of these touched his life for Christ, sowing and watering seed.

At almost my last visit, Derek said to me, "The elder from my church is coming to see me tonight."

But he doesn't believe in the church, was my thought.

Seeing the expression on my face, Derek added quietly, "I received the Lord Jesus as my Saviour two weeks ago."

I experienced something of the joy of the angels.

On my next visit he expressed the desire to go to the Lord, for he had faced so many operations and was suffering so much with no hope of recovery. "I don't know why the Lord leaves me here," he said.

I returned once more before going with my brother on an 'OE' to England (although it was not known as that at the time). I took an autograph book I had been given by my Christchurch friends and Bible Class students when I first went to Hokitika, in which each had written a Bible verse or Christian message. I asked Derek to do the same, and he wrote John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Underneath he wrote, 'Together in God's love.' He knew as well as I, that our platonic friendship had been a divided one,



divided by his lack of faith. As I left, he said, "Bye bye, Patti. I'll be seeing you."

Forever with the Lord

My brother and I came back from England over two years later. My adopted uncle and

his wife came to see us. And the uncle, not a church-goer, told me that Derek's funeral the previous year was the most wonderful he had ever attended. Read out at the funeral, my uncle said, was an article Derek had written for the national Presbyterian

Church magazine. The one who had looked upon Christianity as a fire insurance policy, had entitled his paper, "What my suffering taught me."

Mission in focus

Janice Reid

SUMMER CAMP U.S.A.: *Mission work or holiday?*

This article was written by Thomas van Wakeren, a member of the Reformed Church of Avondale, who spent the last American summer (June 9th to August 16th) at Presbyterian Clearwater Forest Camp in Minnesota.

What does it take to make a good camp counsellor?

1. Do I need to love kids? YES
2. Do I need to be sporty or sport-minded? NO
3. Do I need to be good in anything specific? NO
4. Do I need to lead Bible studies? YES
5. Do I need to be tolerant? YES
6. Do I need to work with people that I do not know? YES and NO
7. Will I make a difference? YES!

There are thousands of summer camps in America, mainly on the East coast around New York but also more inland as far as North Dakota. Each camp has its own unique features, including: who runs them, what they offer the children, and how long they last.

Summer camps exist because so many city children do not get a chance to play in parks. Most cities do have parks, but New York alone has 8 million people (twice the population of New Zealand). Having spent four days there, I can truly say it is a concrete jungle. From the curb to the front gate, there is no grass. From the front gate to the front door, there is no grass. The backyard is as big as a master bedroom here in New Zealand, and it is usually concrete: no grass. Schools in New York also have no grass; there simply is no room. Imagine spending your whole life in a place like this!

For this reason summer camps came about, to give city children a chance to enjoy the country life, to be away from the hustle and bustle of the city, to see the sunset at night, to hear the birds sing.

The camp I went to was in Minnesota,

which is vastly different from New York. There is grass, it is a spacious suburban life and as a result the camp ran for six days at a time, whereas in New York the camps would normally last two, four or eight weeks long. The ages are mostly the same, from age 7 to 17, from elementary school to the end of high school.

What makes somebody suitable to be a good counsellor at one of these summer camps? Let's think back to those seven questions I asked:

1. **Do I need to love kids?** YES. The summer camp is set up to let kids enjoy themselves. As my camp director said, "You are employed to be there for the kids." As a counsellor you get a cabin group of up to 13 children (in my case boys) and you will spend 18 hours a day with that group of children. You will sleep in the same cabin as them. The

children are split into three age groups"— 7-11 years old, 12-15 years old and 16-17 years old. As a counsellor you usually get the choice with which age group you would want to work with — but bear in mind, you need to be flexible as sometimes you get placed where the need is. In essence you are the children's role model. They look to you as a counsellor, as a friend, someone who cares for them, and if you are not genuine the children will spot that a mile off. You, as a counsellor, need to be prepared for bed wetting, home sickness, and clashing personalities within the group you are responsible for.

2. **Do I need to be sporty or sport-minded?** NO. There are different kinds of camps — general and special camps. Special camps focus solely on one thing, i.e. sports or music. General camps have a range of activities on offer. I went to a general camp where we had several different activities on offer within the scope of a Christian camp. (Non-Christians did come but they were usually invited by friends, or their parents made them go). The afternoon was broken





up into two groups. One was CAMPERS' CHOICE, where the kids had a choice of archery, arts and crafts, frisbee, soccer, playing games and canoeing. The other was FREE TIME, where we had duties like organising games, patrolling the camp, running the tuck shop, or helping the lifeguards. The camp director is flexible. He/she would like to use you in your best area first but you need to fit around the program, not the program around you.

3. Do I need to be good at anything specific? NO. If you are good at something, you will add to the kids' experience. If not, you only need basic knowledge. The kids will accept anything you say — e.g. if you tell them that New Zealand's national anthem is "Row, row, row your boat," they will believe you! A typical question is, "Why do I need to take a shower everyday?" Or, "Why can't I retrieve my arrows while other kids are still firing arrows?" What's really important is this: do you genuinely care about the children? They will know it if you don't. You need to be patient with them and listen, give them your time.

4. Do I need to lead Bible studies? YES. If you go to a Christian camp, you do. If you go to a sport or music camp, you don't. At Clearwater Forest, we had Bible studies lasting for 75 minutes. This is broken up: you do practical examples in a group, such as having a group activity on the confidence course, then you relate that to the Bible passage you're studying. Every week (that is, for each new group of campers) the studies are the same. They are repetitive for a counsellor, so it is a good way of meditating on a passage. Leading Bible studies is a challenge, as the children's knowledge of the Bible is very poor. For example, the story about Job is not usually told or taught until about

age 15. Everyday there is a 45-minute morning worship, which involves a skit by the staff and a lot of action songs. The evening service lasts about 30 minutes, and is just singing. As a cabin counsellor you are expected to do an evening devotion with your cabin kids, which for some counsellors means just asking how the day went and what they enjoyed that day. I generally did a 10-minute devotion on the day's Bible study topic.

5. Do I need to be tolerant? YES. American children have the ability to pretend that they didn't hear what you said, and the last thing you want to do is lose your cool. I found it difficult to know what words are acceptable in American society. Americans talk a lot. They talk slowly and walk slowly, which can frustrate and irritate a Kiwi. Americans like to talk when you are explaining something to a group, so patience and tolerance is needed. Do not get grumpy — just explain that that sort of behaviour is not acceptable.

6. Do I need to work with people I don't know? YES and NO. Although I didn't know any of my fellow staff members on the first day, by the end of the first week I knew every one of the 21 staff. There are 10 days of team bonding and building before any kids turn up for the first camp. Even the weekly volunteers are friends after the first day. You work as a team. Individual flaws are secondary and get put on the backburner until the 'end of week' team meeting.

7. Will I make a difference? YES, and YES again. Every week the 'reward,' the reason I wanted to be a counsellor, was echoed to me through the children. The rewards are smiling faces, children not wanting to go home, children holding your hands, children asking if you are coming back next year, the way they tease you about Australia (thanks to the other counsellors). As an international staff member, it speaks volumes that you care about American children — it heartens both the parents, and your fellow staff members.

Mission work or a holiday?

Now to go back to the question in the title of this article, Mission work or holiday? The answer lies in your attitude — the reason you came to America. If you came looking for a cheap way to get to and to see America (the pay is about \$2,500, expenses about \$3,000), then it is not mission work. Your attitude will reflect that. The children will not be your number one priority. You will do just enough work to get by. The blessings mentioned above might come, but they will be shallow.

If you came with a willingness to give, give and then to give some more, then the blessings will fill your heart and new 'friends

for life' are guaranteed.

There is a need to fill American churches with young people. Too many churches there will die out as the result of no young families or young children to keep the church alive. We have the knowledge to teach. Let us use this knowledge in a practical sense. Money is not an issue; dedicated Christians, role-models with Christian maturity are the issue. That is what America needs.

On a parting note, I can say that I have grown in Christ while in America. I have been able to meditate on Hebrews 12:1-2, and seen its relevance to the rest of the Bible. I have been challenged to work outside my comfort zone. I have seen how genuine American staff members are towards the children, and the love they have at Clearwater Forest Camp. I have learnt new games and songs, and seen some 500 to 600 smiling faces that I will never be able to forget. I have made lasting friendships. As the song 'Heart of Worship' says: "King of endless worth, No one could express how much you deserve, all I have is yours, every single breath."

MIF prayer notes

Rev Stephen and Dorinda 't Hart continue in their ministry in Papua New Guinea, soon to be assisted by Walter and Jeannette Hagoort and another missionary family who will serve as teachers to assist the church. Please pray for this work, for the believers in the Reformed Church of PNG, and for the health and safety of mission team members. Pray especially for our own missionaries, the Hagoorts, as they continue the demanding Pacific Orientation Course which involves a lengthy stay in a village in primitive conditions. Ask for God's enabling grace, and for strength to cope with all that the course demands. Ask also for joy and delight in the Lord as they endure!

At time of writing, the first test of training materials should have been completed in Cambodia, where Janice Reid is working with Jean-Luc Lebrun to develop courses that will help Christian announcers in missionary radio stations. There is great interest in these materials: pray that the Lord will guide Janice and Jean-Luc to develop them in such a way that they are most useful to those who spread His name to their countrymen in developing nations.

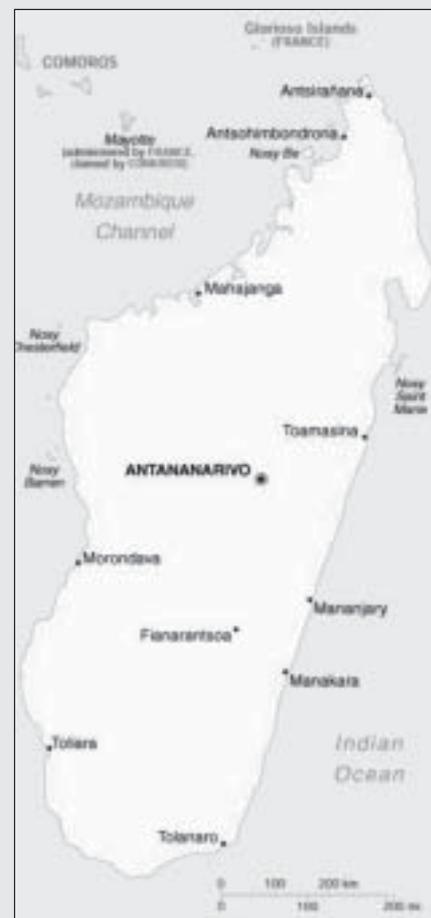
Please continue in prayer for Kevin and Machi Rietveld, and for newly-arrived missionaries Jack and Trudy Visser, serving in the Solomon Islands with the Christian Reformed Church of Australia. Pray especially for the cultural adaptation and settling in of the Visser family.

Country profile: Madagascar

Madagascar is the world's fourth largest island and is home to more than 16 million people. It is situated off the east coast of Africa. There are 18 main ethnic groups of mixed, Indonesian, African and Arab descent. The economy is based on subsistence farming, and the country does not produce enough rice to feed its own people.

Slash-and-burn farming has destroyed vast areas of forest and caused bad erosion. Malaria and malnutrition have become major problems because of the economic slump. A slow economic recovery is under way. Eco-tourism has great potential—if the country's rich bio-diversity is not destroyed. Annual income per person in 2000 was \$250US.

After several years of Marxist rule following a coup in 1972, democracy came to Madagascar, and there is now freedom of religion. However, the extremely liberal National Council of Churches has put pressure on the government to restrict visas for evangelical missionaries. Some 47% of the population claims to be Christian, however this figure includes Catholics and Mormons, which are the largest groups.



Pray for Madagascar:

1. Church growth increased remarkably in the 1990s, but much of this was in pentecostal groups and in the Lutheran church. Pray for spiritual maturity and close adherence to the Word of Truth among new believers, many of whom do not have the maturity to "test the spirits, to see if they are of God."
2. Veneration of ancestral spirits, and witchcraft, are widespread and even increasing among those who claim to be Christians. Many have little understanding of the biblical message of salvation.
3. Theological training is the greatest source of weakness for the church. In 2001 there were seven seminaries and ten Bible schools, but many are theologically liberal and easily accommodate astrology and heathen customs. Pray that the teachers in such schools may return to the biblical theology for which their forebears laid down their lives.
4. Pray for effective ministry to young people, and to less-reached areas and people-groups within the country.
5. Pray for effectiveness of those who are involved in outreach to the people of Madagascar.

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A feminine focus

The Spiritual Discipline of Stewardship

Sally Davey

Jesus taught His disciples that the fruit of peoples' lives reveals the state of their hearts. And it is the practical, everyday choices we make that determine the kind of fruit we are going to produce. Probably, these days, nothing reveals more clearly what is in our hearts than the choices we make about how we use the resources God has given us. We live in a world where we have much, and God has given us the responsibility of

using wisely what He has given us. We are accountable to Him for everything we do with it. So it is very important that we make good choices – for His honour and glory.

The two most telling resources

Choosing well in this kind of way is called being a "wise steward" in the Scriptures. It is an important aspect of our obedience to Christ. It is also one of the spiritual disciplines Donald Whitney has written about – one that we must practise with earnestness

and purpose. In writing about stewardship Whitney could have said many things, but he has chosen to single out our management of two of the most telling resources God has given us: our time and our money. Choices about these two commodities in effect determine our lives, because what we do with them is so critical. What we give our time and money to tells whom we serve: ourselves and our own pleasure, or God Himself. Choices in these two areas say the most about who we are. They define us.

Whitney's chapter on stewardship is full of urgent reasons why we should be careful about the use of our time and our money, and he has a number of valuable suggestions on how to use them well. It is compelling reading, and I've been caused to think hard about my own stewardship decisions. I'm sure you would benefit as well. Whitney writes for Christians generally, and I'm conscious that there are some questions about time and money that apply differently to women. Since reading Whitney, I've also read two other books that deal with the same issues, in application to women. (They are actually books written for Christian women). As I discuss Whitney's insights, I shall introduce you to these books as well.

Time

There are many biblical reasons for using our time well. In fact, they are a recurring theme of Scripture. Ephesians 5:15-16 contains one of the most direct of these reminders: *"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil."* The point is that the world is full of temptations to sin, and unless we take active steps to discipline our lives – especially our thoughts – we will find our time, our valuable time, eaten up by high-tech distractions, idle talk, or ungoverned thoughts. The natural course of our minds, our bodies, our world and our days leads us toward evil, not Christlikeness. Wise stewardship of time requires conscious effort – it certainly will not happen just by itself.

Secondly, and even more soberingly, we are accountable to God for the use of our time. We will be accountable for the use of our time on the day of judgement. Jesus said; *"But I tell you that men will have to give an account on the day of judgement for every careless word they have spoken."* (Matt. 12:36). If that is the case, then surely it applies to every hour spent carelessly. Jesus also said in Matthew 25:14-30 that we are accountable for all the talents we have received and how we use them for the sake of our Master. And, as Whitney asks, what talent is more precious than time? We only have seventy or eighty years of it with which to serve God, and they flash past by the minute, hour, day, week and month. This minute will never be ours to use over again. How are you using it? One of the ways we should use our time is to grow nearer to God, to use what are called the "means of grace" – in order to become more useful to Him. Think of point the writer of the letter to the Hebrews made when he chided these Jewish Christians for failing to use their time in a way that would have led to spiritual maturity: *"In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you*

the elementary truths of God's Word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!" (Hebrews 5:12). Are **we** using our time on the kinds of activities that will prepare us for heaven?

Some Christians have a very clear sense of eternal reality, and have a dread of using time badly. Whitney himself recalls a dream in which he was in a place of persecution, and was awaiting his turn to be executed. While waiting, he was overcome by the awareness that in a few moments he was about to enter eternity and that all opportunity to prepare for that event was now gone. In his dream he dropped to his knees and began to pray the last prayers of his life, committing his spirit to Christ. At this point he snapped awake, fired with adrenalin (as we do from turbulent dreams). His first conscious thought was that one day this



would *not* be just a dream, and since that day could be any day, he should use his time wisely, since that is all the time we have to prepare for where we will be, forever.

Bringing it home

Elizabeth George, whose excellent book, *A Woman after God's Own Heart*, I have just read (twice!) pulses with the same sense of urgency. She is a vigorous advocate of managing your time well, especially as a homemaker, and has all sorts of practical ideas for organizing your home more efficiently so that you can do more for your husband, family and guests with your available time. She even used to study time-management books in her husband's seminary library so that she could apply the principles to her housework and other tasks as a mother. She has list-making down to a fine art, and knows all about routines, and the value of "keeping moving" as a first principle.

But Elizabeth is much more interested in

time-management priorities; and spiritual priorities come at the top. She writes about planning for eternity by growing toward maturity *now*. Among other ideas, she has some helpful suggestions for scheduling Bible study and prayer into our day. But she also discusses other priorities for our time, too. Discipleship (i.e. being personally taught by other, more mature women) is one of these. Elizabeth came to faith in her twenties when she already had two small children, and says she needed a lot of help to reorganise all aspects of her life (including her thinking) according to God's priorities. Older women were a great help to her. She went to women's Bible studies and listened to them talking. She took classes on various aspects of Christian living and marriage at her church (Grace Community Church in Los Angeles). She read books. And she sought the advice of women whom she had observed and admired. One suggestion she had really impressed me. Here is how she put it: *"Interviewing other Christian women is one of my favourite means of being disciplined. When God sent a godly, older woman to my church, I took one look at her life and saw clearly that she would never be able to commit to a series of discipleship sessions with me. So I made a list of all the questions I wanted to ask her and set up an appointment. We met just that one time, but those two precious hours she gave me were life-changing!"* Have you ever thought of doing that? I've often realised that more mature Christian women, some of whom I'd love to have as wise friends, just haven't got the time to spend with me in that way. A simple, practical way to ask for some of their time is to plan carefully for a short session, and have a few special, important things about which to ask their advice.

Five key concerns

One of the answers this particular lady gave Elizabeth George was fascinating – and motivating. She called it her "five fat files." This is a very simple idea, but a great way to prepare for future usefulness. All it involves is choosing five topics that you want to focus on as areas of spiritual growth, or in which you'd like to become a lot more knowledgeable. Choose topics of eternal, spiritual value. To choose, ask such questions as: "What do you want to be known for?" and "What topics do you want your name associated with?" Then, having chosen, purchase five manila folders and label them according to your five choices. Fill them over the months and years with notes from your Bible study, notes or photocopies from good books you've read, insights you gather from listening to good speakers at conferences, or good sermons. Make sure you aim to be in the good books, or at the good conferences, so you can add

to your files! And keep at it, year by year. One of Elizabeth's friends has been studying prayer for more than 20 years – studying what the Bible teaches on prayer, reading books on prayer, looking closely at men and women of the Bible who have prayed, and praying! Whenever the women of the church need someone to teach on prayer, lead a day of prayer for women, or open a meeting with prayer, they think of this woman. Another woman is known for her knowledge of the Bible, while others have specialised on practical topics like hospitality, child-raising, homemaking, or Bible study methods. Some have chosen more theological topics, such as the attributes of God, or the doctrines of grace. Others have chosen to study different life situations, such as singleness, widowhood, or life in the pastor's home. Others again have chosen aspects of Christian character such as the devotional life, the heroes of the faith, the fruits of the Spirit, and so on. "Wouldn't you love to sit in on the classes these women may teach in ten years – or read the books they may eventually write?" Elizabeth asks. I say YES! (And add, wouldn't you love to be in conversation with women like this?) We can be such women too, if only we use our time wisely, now.

Money

The use of our money also says who we are, spiritually, as well. Jesus taught this in the Sermon on the Mount. After warning that we should put our energies into building up spiritual treasure, not running after the perishable treasures of this world, He said: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21). God gives us all that we need in this life — in fact, He gives us everything, all that we are and have. And because He owns everything we own, we should treat it carefully, as good managers on assignment from Him. We should hold onto it lightly. We should not only be willing, but eager, to give it in the service of God and, as a means to that end, give it to others. Interestingly, almost everything Whitney has to say about stewardship of our money is on the subject of giving. I think that's very helpful to us in our day, in our country, in our churches. Too often we live in the here-and-now, thinking of our possessions as ours or our children's, for good. But, as Whitney says, "We don't own anything. God owns everything and we are His managers. For most of us, the house we now call 'my house' was owned by someone else a few years ago. And a few years from now, someone else will call that house 'my house.'... You probably believe that in theory already, but your giving will be a reflection of how much you genuinely believe it." How much do we treat giving as a personal responsibility? (It's not always

something "other people" do). I remember, for instance, being a student (for quite some years, and in various churches). It was so easy to get into the pattern of thinking "I'm just a poor student, I only have just enough to meet my needs... Giving is for people who aren't studying, people on salaries, who can tithe, etc..." Well, I came to the conclusion after a while that this was wrong. Anyone who receives from God has opportunity – no, responsibility – to give back to Him! And so I began to give, even if it wasn't a whole lot at once. No longer did I pass the collection plate on to the next person simply because I was a poor student. How about you? Are you in a similar situation? How is your perspective on what you "own"?

Making your dollar go further

In closing, I've just been reading another good book. Last month I had a day to spend at Koorong bookshop in Sydney, between being dropped off by a cousin on the way to his work, and picked up by my brother after his work had finished. Soon after walking in the door I saw the book. It had a very bright-coloured cover, and an arresting title: *Dress Like a Million Bucks Without Spending It*. Well, I thought, it may not be an especially spiritual book, but I can't pass this by... Written by two Christian women who have brought up their families in the "real" world of consumerism, and lived out frugality with contentment themselves, it's a real gem! These ladies, Jo Ann Janssen and Gwen Ellis, really know a thing or two when it comes to the spiritual principles behind spending your resources wisely, and dressing to the glory

of God, with modesty and good sense. Yes, they know how to find bargains at consignment stores (American for "op shops"), and yes, they know how to sew, mend and re-model clothes. But better than that even, they have learned the art of teaching their children, by their own examples and good counsel, how to be better stewards of their resources, how to dress with dignity, how to resist the clamour of the latest fad, and how to be content with what God has given them. As an example of applied stewardship, it was practical, and spot-on. I bought copies for myself and my two sisters! It may be just what you're looking for as well.

Postscript

This is the last of my review articles on Donald Whitney's *Spiritual Disciplines*. May I add that this book has only grown better with a second reading and closer thought? It has certainly increased my desire to pray, to study the Scriptures, to spend more time alone with God, and to be more active in serving Him through usefulness to others. And I think – I hope – that this desire has resulted in some action! I can say with certainty that I've tried – and found true – the principle that discipline in these areas bears real fruit. May it be so for you, too.

(This article is the sixth in a series reviewing and applying Donald Whitney's "Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life". This book is available from NavPress, P.O. Box 6280, Christchurch, Phone +64 3 343 1990, Fax +64 3 343 1330, navpressnz@maxnet.co.nz)

Focus on home

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Andrew Reinders

Avondale

Our brother Pieter van Huyssteen has been formally asked to lead a monthly service in Afrikaans at North Shore and Bucklands Beach (alternating). Session supports this work and has given approval for this, with the sermons he uses being passed by our minister.

Bishopdale

Weddings: It gives us great joy to announce two wedding which will both take place in January, Lord Willing, unless there are lawful objections. Chris Bromley and Heather Dimpleby will be married on Saturday 24th of January 2004 at St Johns Latimer Square. Rev John Haverland will officiate. Marcus Verkerk and Michelle Meyerink will be married on 16th of January 2004 at Christian Reformed Church of Gosnells (WA). Rev Clinton Berends will officiate. May the Lord guide and direct your final preparations for marriage.

Interim Pastor: The session has received an offer from the Rev Bob Brenton, currently serving the First Randolph Christian Reformed Church in Wisconsin North America, to help out the Reformed Church

of Bishopdale for a period of 4-6 months beginning at the end of February while he takes short term leave from his church to revisit NZ with his family. Rev Brenton was the pastor of the Reformed Church of Wellington from 1993-1998 and supervised Martin de Ruiter during his vicariate. The session believes this is a helpful interim step for the congregation in the Lord's providence and has accepted this offer subject to working out some of the practical details.

Christchurch

Thank you. Once again we are at the end of another year! Lots of things have happened, both joyful AND sad events. I want to give thanks to Pastor Jim for his pastoral care, often in difficult situations. He, together with the session, had to give up much family time to look after and encourage the flock. Also a word of thanks to the many congregation members who worked so faithfully in the tasks they performed. I would like to commend on the redeveloping and replanting the garden at the side of the carpark, established by two hard working gentlemen.

So please tell your children NOT to run through them, as I have seen some do. An appreciative church member.

Dovedale

The Reformed Church of Dovedale has arranged a special Christmas Service in Afrikaans for all the South Africans and any other interested people, living in the greater Christchurch area. This service will be lead by Rev. Jan Lion-Cachet, former Reformed Minister from Port Elizabeth - S.A. & currently from the Reformed Church of Wellington. This will be the first Afrikaans church service for Christchurch and we are looking forward to this special occasion! We would like to invite everyone, who is comfortable with Afrikaans or who would like to attend, to come along and join us for this joyous occasion. Bring your friends and family along!

Dunedin

Today we have the privilege of witnessing the baptism of Lillian Edith Duthie. By baptism, the mark of God's covenant of grace with us, our little ones are received into the Christian church whereby they, no less than

adults, are promised the forgiveness of sins through Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit who produces faith. A warm welcome to family and friends of Joshua and Susan Duthie worshipping with us on this occasion.

Since this will be the last bulletin for the year, congratulations in advance to Peter and Dini Braam who will be celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary on 10 January 2004. Congratulations also to Tony and Anne de Reus on having reached fifty years of marriage on 19 December. Thanks be to God for the blessing of long and fruitful marriages.

Congratulations to Maureen Duthie whose article, "Mary had a little lamb: A masterpiece of design", was published in the latest issue of Creation magazine.

Hamilton

Pastoral There will be a commissioning service in Hukanui this morning for Walter and Jeanette Hagoort who will be leaving for Papua New Guinea on January 15 to commence their work in support of the

A new student for the ministry

We farewelled David and Jenny Waldron, and their seven children, on 16th January at an evening at church. They travelled to Geelong a few days later, where David will study for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in our churches at the Reformed Theological College, having already completed some studies through Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, in the USA, via distance learning. David is English, and he and Jenny, who is a New Zealander, have lived in Raetihi, where they grew Tulips, and David ran a specialist software company. On moving to Palmerston North to join the Reformed Church there, they have become thoroughly a part of church life. David's studies will take two to three years, after which they hope to return to New Zealand. They will be joining another ex-Palmerston North family, Robert and Laurel van Wichen, and their six children, training at Geelong.

We pray them God speed, and a good time of service of the Lord and learning in Geelong, and hasten back to serve the churches here. Please also will you remember them in your prayers – and all the students and staff at the College.

Chris Kavanagh



Jenny and David Waldron, and their seven children: left to right Isaac and Vashti at the front, Elijah (partly hidden), Josiah, Solomon in Naomi's arms and Zipporah. They are singing to us at their farewell evening.

spread of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in that country. It is our prayer that the Lord will use Walter and Jeanette to good effect and will keep them safe in His grace and providence. Their boys are staying in New Zealand. May the Lord give them the grace to trust and serve Him too.

We congratulate Cor Bouter who received a knighthood from Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands last Friday evening, via her ambassador in New Zealand. He was made a "Ridder in de Orde van Oranje Nassau" in recognition of fifty years of public service in Holland, and since 1987 in New Zealand, conducting a number of choirs and initiating a combined choirs event in the Netherlands which is still held each year. We rejoice with Cor and

Ge and family on this wonderful tribute.

Last Wednesday many of our congregation attended the funeral service for Peter Heeringa. His love for his family, church and community was gratefully acknowledged. We pray that the Lord will comfort and sustain Janny and family in His grace.

Wainuiomata

Baptism This morning we are privileged to witness the baptism of Jacob Rosner and also officially receive Roelien as a member in full communion. Adam will be studying more about the teachings of Scripture and the Christian faith and our confession of the same. We also welcome Roelien into full communion with the people of God here in

Wainui! We will strive to be a blessing to you, Adam and your family in every way, and we also trust that you will grow in fellowship with Christ and his people.

We rejoice with Andrew and Wilma Reinders in the birth of a new baby on Christmas Day: Andrew e-mailed this: Today we share in the birth of Christ our Saviour. Today we also share in the birth of Rebecca Grace, born at 8.15am this morning, and weighing in at 6lb 4oz (a monster compared to Catherine and Richard!) Mother and baby are both fine.

Wellington

Coffee Morning. Next week after the morning service everyone is welcome in the Babysit for coffee to celebrate Mr and Mrs Oosterbaan's 50th Wedding Anniversary.

NEWS FLASH:

South Island takes North Island Family Camp by storm!!

Yes, it's true – this year five intrepid families from Christchurch packed their bags, travelled north and descended upon Finlay Park, the venue for the annual north island family camp. It is true to say, that a fair number from these families were ex-northislanders, keen to rekindle fond family camp memories from the past, but are now staunch red and black supporters in every way.

The colours, red and black, were clearly



"Overseas visitors"



A study group



visible throughout the camp, on our clothing, flags, banners and, of course, our horns (rudely referred to as a sick cow!), but we also made ourselves known with our Crusaders theme music (Vangelis) being played whenever possible. Our aim was to take south as many trophies as possible and didn't do too badly with a volleyball cup (first!), talent quest cup (second) and best joke trophy. The volleyball final would have to be a highlight, a nail-biting finish between Canterbury and Palmerston North, Canterbury narrowly winning two games to one. Another nail-biting finish was the soccer final, Canterbury having to concede the game to Auckland after a penalty shoot-out. But, we were humble enough to concede this defeat! I nearly forgot to mention the "Game of two Islands" quiz on talent quest night, very ably won by the south and of course it wasn't rigged as some would say!

But, on a more serious note, the camp for us Canterbury people wasn't just about



The cooks put their feet up!



Horror stories, anyone?



Spot the ball



winning trophies (truely!). Our real reason for going was to rekindle past north island friendships, introduce our children to the fun and fellowship of reformed family

Camps and to enjoy a week of Bible study, relaxation and fun! And did we achieve these things? Definitely, YES!! We all agreed we had a tremendous week of fellowshiping with old friends and making new, thought provoking Bible studies, friendly (?) sporting challenges and, not to mention, just enjoying the beautiful surroundings at Finlay Park. Highlights for the children would have to be the water-slide, swimming pool, new years bonfire and fireworks and the late night trip to the glow worm caves!

A HUGE thankyou to all the organisers – Henk Hemmes for running the camp, the vanderWels and team for the great food, the kids club organisers and devotional leaders, Helen for the line-dancing (and everything else you did Helen!!) and everyone else who had a part in organising the camp. We had a wonderful time and,

Don't despair, We'll be back!!!!

Linda Vanderpyl

(We are planning to place these and more photographs from the Family camp on our denominational website - <<http://www.reformed-churches.org.nz>>www.reformed-churches.org.nz)



Guess what night this was?

