

# faith in focus

Magazine of the  
Reformed Churches  
of New Zealand

VOLUME 35/2 MARCH 2008



*“Those who had been scattered  
preached the word wherever they went.”*

**Acts 8:4**

## CONTENTS

<b>Supposed King crucified The headline from 2000 years ago?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Jerusalem A study in a city</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>World in focus News from around the world</b>	
<b>A feminine focus The feminine virtue of submissiveness</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Crossroads Bible Institute Helping the prisoner</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Our newest sister churches Report from the Canadian Reformed Churches' Synod</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Missions in focus The ICRC regional mission conference Prayer points</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Focus on home Gleanings in focus Family Camp 2007 - 2008</b>	<b>19</b>

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## Editorial

Here are two items related to Christian ministry. The first you may very well have read in your Newsletter:

**FOUND!!!**
**A MODEL PASTOR!!!**

"After hundreds of years, a model pastor has finally been found. He preaches exactly 15 minutes, condemns sin but never hurts anyone's feelings. He works from 8.00am to 10.00pm in every type of activity from giving out the Word to custodial service. He makes less than a hundred dollars a week, yet wears fine clothes, buys good books regularly, has a nice family, drives a new car and gives thirty dollars a week to the church. He also stands ready to contribute to every other worthy cause. He is 26 years old and yet has been preaching for 30 years! He is both tall and short and is winsome and handsome. He has a burning desire to work with teenagers and is occupied full time with older folks. He smiles constantly with a straight face because he has a sense of humour that keeps him seriously dedicated to his work. He makes 15 calls a day on members, spends all his time evangelising the unchurched and is never out of his office."

**MINISTRY MANAGER**

The Ministry Manager is an exciting role, responsible for successfully delivering our Christian Ministry using innovative initiatives to reach even more for the Lord. You will be young enough to relate to youth culture, old enough to be credible to a wide variety of people. As a mature Christian you will know how to build a team around you, and be able to manage complex logistics that that integrate the purposeful delivery of the programme. You will need to be prepared for a mixture of 'hands on' and 'hands off' work. Good networking ability and management skills coupled with excellent people skills will be necessary. You will be required to communicate to churches and the wider body of Christ to develop ongoing ministry partnerships. You will also head up the wider volunteer Ministries team, which includes our outreach, ministry and school programme. This job is not for the faint-hearted, you'll work some crazy hours in the public holidays, have lots of fun, be awesomely challenged and learn to truly trust God and honour His call on your life. If you are looking for a challenge and a great opportunity to positively and interactively make a difference in God's kingdom, talk to us.

Aren't they both quite sad? The first because it represents the unreal expectations a congregation can have of a minister. And the second because it is an actual ministry advertisement.

But sadder still is that this second piece represents an increasing trend amongst reformed-presbyterian churches. It actually comes from one of them. Could it be that our selfishness makes unreal demands on paid ministry workers because we won't and we can't be bothered to do the work ourselves?

**Photo Credits:**

*Cover – Kerekeri Mission House, built in 1840's*

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.

# Supposed King Crucified

A great teacher and miracle worker was crucified yesterday because of the apparent jealousy of the Jewish authorities. They successfully turned a fickle crowd against Him just one week after He had been massively welcomed into Jerusalem as the new King, supposedly the new Davidic King. No doubt the religious leaders were justified in their tactics since Jesus, the supposed King, had claimed to be the Son of God, clearly a blasphemous claim worthy of death. To ensure that His followers don't rob the grave and make up a story about Jesus rising from the dead in order to carry on their political aims, the political and religious leaders have made the grave secure, posting a guard, placing a massive stone in front of the entrance and sealing it with the High Priest's seal.

Jesus had been a controversial figure for the three years of His public life. Although raised virtually anonymously in the backwater of Nazareth of Galilee, He exploded into prominence when He turned 700 litres of water into wine and then carried on a ministry in which hundreds were healed of all kinds of sickness. He even cured the lame, the deaf, the blind and the demon-possessed. On two occasions He fed thousands out of a single bag lunch. There are three accounts of Him raising the dead. Although two might be inflated stories by credulous followers, the raising of Lazarus of Bethany just 10 km south of Jerusalem after four days in the grave was checked out thoroughly and confirmed by the authorities.

It was Jesus' unbelievably arrogant claims that turned the authorities against Him. He claimed to be the shepherd of God's flock – clearly a Messianic claim with Davidic overtones. He claimed to be the Lord of the Sabbath, putting Himself on a par with Moses, and apparently even with God. He claimed to forgive sins, clearly an act of blasphemy of the highest order. He claimed that his teaching was the true interpretation of the Torah of Moses despite all the great rabbis who disagree with His views. He claimed to be the only way to God. He said that only those who believed His teaching and who continued in it truly know God.

Despite their rising hatred of Jesus resulting from His exalted claims, the religious authorities were never able to show him up or even to find a single thing He did wrong. Quite the reverse: Jesus constantly tripped up the scribes using their own beloved Scriptures. And on many occasions He shamed the super-moral Pharisees for their hypocrisy.

Nevertheless this man was clearly a danger to religious and political stability in Jerusalem. Something had to give after the massive procession into Jerusalem last Sunday. The Roman authorities had begun to suspect a revolt was in the making. The religious authorities could see that an overthrow of the whole religious system of Moses was in the making. And this man, Jesus, was at the centre, if not the actual cause of it all. The High Priest, Caiaphas, summed it up in one of the council debates: '*it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.*'

This was a peculiarly ironic statement. Reporters for the *Herald* have recently discovered that Jesus had been telling His followers for several months that He would give His life for the nation, which He referred to as His sheep. He apparently emphasised to His closest followers that He would be arrested by the political and religious authorities and crucified.

So it appears that Caiaphas and Jesus,

despite being enemies, were both on the same track. They both thought He had to die in order to save the nation.

Caiaphas' view is easy to comprehend. Jesus had to go because He was the centre of a rising religious and political revolt that endangered the nation.

But Jesus' view is thoroughly incomprehensible. Setting aside His arrogant claims, how could this great teacher, this great miracle worker, expect to accomplish anything by His death? And clearly He could easily have avoided being crucified if He had wanted to. Rather it seems as though He engineered His own death. If there is anything that seems to confirm that Jesus was at least slightly deranged, it is the deliberate course He took which led to His crucifixion.

Can any good come from it? His followers are in total disarray. Their hopes of Messianic salvation and a Messianic kingdom have been totally demolished. Not a single one of them has shown any courage or leadership which could possibly be the basis of carrying on the movement. They were all followers, not leaders.

In light of the complete dissolution of the Jesus movement and its total lack of leadership after the death of Jesus, the actions of the authorities seem to be more than a little paranoid. They have had the grave secured with a guard, a huge stone set over the tomb and even had it sealed to ensure no one can disturb it. If this editor is any good at judging human character, there is one thing for sure: none of Jesus followers will make any attempt to disturb the grave where He was buried.

There is one more of Jesus' claims that must be considered. He claimed that He would rebuild the temple in three days if it was torn down, a claim which certainly supports the idea that He is slightly deranged. However, some of the authorities are certain that Jesus was referring to the

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temple of His body and thus claiming that He would rise from the dead three days after being killed. This view seems to be in line with what reporters from the *Herald* had earlier discovered. Not only did Jesus tell His followers that He would be arrested by the authorities and be crucified. He also told them that He would rise from the dead after three days!

It is this interpretation of Jesus' words that the authorities have used as the basis for securing the grave. They persuaded Pilate that the followers of Jesus might rob

the grave in order to make Jesus' claim appear to be true.

But the likelihood of Jesus' followers taking such action is remote in the extreme. And furthermore if they did, what harm would it do? No one would believe their story. It is one thing for a great miracle-working prophet to raise the dead. It is quite another for a dead miracle worker to rise from the dead by Himself!

Both ideas are quite unbelievable to any ordinary citizen of Jerusalem. As editors of the *Herald* we can quite confidently say that on the third day the grave where Jesus' body was laid will be untouched. No prophet how-

ever great can rise from the dead. None of Jesus' followers have shown any power to raise the dead. And none of them has the courage or ability to rob the grave and carry on the movement that died with Jesus.

Whatever anyone may think about the legitimacy of the charges against Him, Jesus is dead, and the Jesus movement has died with Him. Shalom.

*This historical archive material was drawn out through the creative talents of the Rev. Bruce Hoyt.*

**You are invited to the**

# 14<sup>th</sup> Hamilton Easter Convention

**21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2008**

## **Theme:**

The Triumph and Failure of Reformation and Revival.  
(Studies in Nehemiah)

## **Speaker: Dr. Don Carson**

An evangelical New Testament scholar, currently Research Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois.



Donald Arthur (D.A.) Carson (b. 1946) is an evangelical New Testament scholar and is currently Research Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois.

Dr. Carson and his wife, Joy, reside in Libertyville, Illinois. They have two children. In his spare time, Dr. Carson enjoys reading, hiking, and woodworking.

Dr. Carson's areas of expertise include biblical theology, the historical Jesus, postmodernism, pluralism, Greek grammar, Johannine theology, Pauline theology, and questions of suffering and evil. He is a member of the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research, the Society of Biblical Literature, the Evangelical Theological Society, the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, and the Institute for Biblical Research.

Dr. Carson has written or edited more than 45 books, including *The Sermon on the Mount* (Baker 1978), *Showing the Spirit* (Baker 1987), *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil* (Baker 1990), *A Call to Spiritual Reformation* (Baker 1992), *New Testament Commentary Survey*, 6th ed. (Baker 2006) and *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* (Zondervan, 2005). His book, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Zondervan 1996), won the 1997 Evangelical Christian Publishers Association Gold Medallion Award in the category "theology and doctrine."

Dr. Carson is an active guest lecturer in academic and church settings around the world.

## **Venue:**

Hamilton Reformed Church  
9 Aberdeen Drive  
(off Rifle Range Road)  
Dinsdale, Hamilton

## **Conference inquiries**

Pieter van der Wel  
Ph. 07-853 3144  
E-mail ec2008@slingshot.co.nz

## **Meeting Times:**

1.00, 3.30 & 7.00 pm Good Friday  
1.00, 3.30 & 7.00 pm Easter Saturday

*A bookstall will operate on Friday and Saturday*

A crèche will be available for the afternoon sessions

## **The Conference addresses will be:**

<b>Friday</b>	
1.00 pm	A Passion for the Promises and the People of God (Nehemiah 1-2)
3.30 pm	Never, Never, Never Give Up (Nehemiah 3:1-6:14)
7.00 pm	A Protected and Spiritually Nourished Pilgrim People (Nehemiah 7-8)
<b>Saturday</b>	
1.00 pm	Repentance and Contrition (Nehemiah 9:1-38)
3.30 pm	The Renewal of the Covenant (Nehemiah 9:38-10:39)
7.00 pm	The Triumph and Failure of Reformation (Nehemiah 11-13)

***There is no fee for attendance at the conference, but could you please register if you are coming so we know how many people to expect, esp. for catering purposes.***

There is facility for e-mail registration at  
<http://hamilton.rcnz.org.nz>

or

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

If your church has received Easter Convention pamphlets, you can use the attached registration form

Afternoon tea and supper will be provided as well as a light evening meal for those who register for this.

***The convention venue is:***

**The Reformed Church  
9 Aberdeen Drive, Hamilton**

# Jerusalem

**A study in a city**

## Patricia van Laar

High in the hills of Judaea stands Jerusalem, historically the world's most famous City. Dating from at least 2000 BC, it became the capital city of King David, who ruled from 1040 BC, and whose son King Solomon, built a magnificent temple on the site now occupied by a Moslem mosque. This was the centre of Jewish worship, where the ceremonial sacrifices were made, of bulls, lambs, goats or doves; sin, peace and fellowship offerings, five in number; and where the annual Day of Atonement was observed. In contrast to Bethlehem and Nazareth, there is so much information available about this city, that for short meditations like this the question is not what to put in, but what to leave out!

### A strategically positioned city

Geographically, the city has always been a strategic point. In Biblical times Israel was the corridor from Africa to Asia, and even today, being roughly at the meeting point of Africa, Asia and Europe, and linking these three continents, it is the most important route in non-air travel. The city itself is at the edge of one of Israel's highest table lands, standing 762 metres above sea-level, 55 kms from the Mediterranean. Old Jerusalem in the time of David was set on a hill, with the Kidron Valley on the east and the Tyropeon valley to the west, but by the time of Christ it had spilled westwards, across the latter valley to other hills. Beyond the Kidron Valley, the Mount of Olives, so important to the Lord, overlooks the city.

Access to Jerusalem was difficult from all points of the compass except the north, with extraordinarily steep journeys to be undertaken from Jericho on the east. The road from Hebron to Bethlehem en route to Jerusalem is described as an "intimidating gorge" that until railway in the 19th century, was the only communicating link to the south western regions. To fully describe the topography is impossible and well beyond the purpose of this short article. So is the history of this troubled city. Suffering invasion after invasion from Gentile nations, occupied from time immemorial by innumerable foreign rulers, its situation has 'defied its name', to quote one encyclopaedia. 'Yet

Jerusalem has had an influence on the religion and the thought of mankind out of all proportion to its size and position.' And you will be well aware of its modern history, still disputed, still argued over, still threatened, still divided.

### Early history

In an Oxford Press index of proper names, the meaning of Jerusalem is given as 'Founded in Peace,' followed by a bracketed question mark (?). In actual fact we do not know from the Bible by whom or when it was actually founded, but some kind of city existed there when Abram arrived. The first mention of Jerusalem is in Genesis 14: 18, after the rescue of Lot and defeat of the five kings by Abram. Melchizidek, King of Salem and priest of God Most High, is recognized as being King of Jerusalem.

To meet Jerusalem in the Bible again, we move on for more than 400 years, into the Book of Joshua. There the name is used in full. The Israelites have just recently crossed from their desert wanderings into the Promised Land. Jericho's walls have fallen, Ai has been defeated, and a treaty has been made between the Israelites and the deceitful Gibeonites. Adoni-Zedek, the Amorite King of Jerusalem, alarmed at these events, joined forces with four other

kings to make warfare against Israel. This story, in Joshua 10, is best famed for the enigma of the lengthened day until Joshua's fighting forces won the battle.

### Judah and Benjamin

The division of the land of Israel between the tribes, resulted in the city of Jerusalem being on the borderline of the allotments made of the southern regions, to Judah and Benjamin, following along the Hinnom Valley. Both Joshua 15: 63 and Joshua 18: 2 speak of the Jebusites living in Jerusalem, so that the city on some maps of that time is labelled as Jebus. The latter reference (18:2) records the city as in Benjamin territory, but the former tells that the people of the tribe of Judah were unable to dislodge the Jebusites. [The smallest tribe of Benjamin must have relied heavily on the support of Judah.] So the Jebusites controlled Jerusalem, living there until the time of David. Hebron remained the capital until David captured Jerusalem and made it his capital. So the third city in Jesus' life became a second 'city of David.'

### City of peace? A paradox

The history of Jerusalem since those early days has been one of warfare and disaster, right down to the present day. Destruction



Photo of old Jerusalem at night (Credit www.jerusalemshots.com)

by Nebuchadrezzar and by the Romans; in captivity to Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, to mention only Biblical times; claimed by Jews, Christians, Moslems in post-New Testament centuries, as well as being under the yoke of various Gentile, modern nations until 1948. How ironical it seems, then that its name is one of PEACE. Yes, as we think of Jerusalem, Peace seems far away.

This is one of the paradoxes of God. For this is the city that featured most prominently in the life of the Prince of Peace, the Saviour of the world. First as a new-born baby, as Luke tells us. The law of Israel must be fulfilled in every respect. So after the period of forty days (the completion of the purification time after child-birth, Luke 2: 22) Joseph and Mary took this first-born Son to the temple in Jerusalem for his dedication, as the Law commanded. He was dedicated in commemoration of the escape of the first-born in the Exodus, He who himself was born to be the Passover Lamb of God, the substitute whose life was to be offered for the sins of the world. Teaching concerning this ceremony seems to have been neglected, and consequently the purpose of this dedication has been misunderstood by many Christians. The

dedication of the Lord has even been used in support of infant dedication in lieu of infant baptism, overlooking the fact that this dedication was of the first-born only, and had nothing whatever to do with the Old Covenant, established with its sign and seal of circumcision, and inextricably linked to the New Covenant promised in Jer. 31: 31, established with the sign and seal of baptism (Acts 2).

### **The eternal Melchizidek**

So Joseph and Mary brought to the Temple in Jerusalem its King as a tiny baby, this One of whom Melchizidek was the 'type' so many thousands of years before; Melchizidek whose name means King of Righteousness and King of Peace (Heb. 7:1, 2), the Melchizidek who was from eternity, without genealogy, destined as a priest forever, known only by special revelation to His human mother and foster father and to a few shepherds who, it is said, were not even allowed admission to the Temple; this baby still unrecognised by any but a couple of devoted old people, Simeon and Anna, who were also given supernatural revelation. The aged Simeon foresaw and understood something of the cost to this child. He warned Mary, '...a

sword will pierce your own soul, too.' In the words of a South African carol: 'but high in the sky top, up there I can see a cross; it is shining, its shining on Thee...' The cross overshadowed Him, from beginning to end.

Our Lord Jesus is this Melchizidek, King of Righteousness and King of Peace. Is it then so strange, that His City Jerusalem is given the name of Peace? What peace is there without righteousness? And does not righteousness, imparted to us, bring peace?

From the start of His earthly life, Jesus is associated with this city, to the end, where, just outside its walls, He made peace for us with God. So, in the future at the consummation of the ages, in some mysterious way, we may look forward to a Heavenly City known as the New Jerusalem.

Read Psalm 85 with the great city of Jerusalem in mind. In that city — in the Person of the Lord and Saviour — love and faithfulness meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other.

*'Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem.'*

## **World in focus**

### **Ten killed, three churches set ablaze in Nigeria**

Ten persons have been killed and three churches set on fire after Muslim students in the city of Bauchi began a rampage on 11 December because unidentified people pulled out two foundation blocks of a high school mosque under construction. Area Muslims joined the attacking students, resulting in the deaths and damages in the city, including dozens of homes belonging to Christians.

The identity of nine of the 10 people killed has been kept secret as the Bauchi state government has ordered security agents to bury the bodies in a common grave, eyewitnesses to the burial reported. The body of the 10th person has been identified by eyewitnesses only by his surname, Bogoro, a Christian security agent.

A teacher at the Government Day Secondary School-Yelwa (also known as Baba Tanko Secondary School), who pleaded that his identity remain undisclosed out

of fear of Muslim attack and government penalty, said he witnessed the sparking of the rampage when Muslim students claimed that the foundation of the school mosque had been pulled down. Muslim students began attacking Christians in their classes, he said. 'They broke chairs and desks,' he said. 'They also attacked their Christian colleagues with knives and daggers. I had to run for my dear life because the situation became uncontrollable.'

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

### **New URC Discussion Group**

A new Google Group has begun as a discussion group for the United Reformed Church in North America and its ecumenical friends.

A different group maintained in co-operation with the Christian Observer is located at [co-urc-owner@yahoogroups.com](mailto:co-urc-owner@yahoogroups.com). To join this email discussion group, send a subscription request along with a brief statement stating whether you are

a member of a Christian church and (if so) stating what church (name and city) you belong to, to the moderators at [co-urc-owner@yahoogroups.com](mailto:co-urc-owner@yahoogroups.com). If you do not provide this information about church membership, your request to join CO-URC will not be approved.

+ Mr. Bill Konynenbelt, Stated Clerk, United Reformed Churches, 5824 Bowwater Cr. N.W., Calgary, Alberta T3B 2E2 (403) 286-0521 [URCNA@Shaw.CA](mailto:URCNA@Shaw.CA)

### **Christians in India finally can adopt children**

Ending a long era of absence of adoption rights for non-Hindus, the government has cleared the way for all religious communities in all Indian states to adopt legally. The government of the Congress Party-led United Progressive Alliance on 26 October gave notice of new rules under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act or JJA of 2006, making room for all communities to adopt. The Rev. Dr Richard Howell, general secretary

of the Evangelical Fellowship of India, said his group welcomed 'the significant move' by the federal government 'to enhance the legal rights of adopted children and the couples who adopt them.' It is estimated that barely 5,000 children a year are adopted in the country, though there are more than 56 million orphaned and destitute children.

+ Compass Direct News Service, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana CA 92799

## **Christians pressurised in Indonesia from West to East**

Whilst Indonesian Muslims have traditionally been nominal, cultural, progressive Muslims, Islamic fundamentalism and militancy is growing. From west to east, Christians are coming under increased pressure. Islamists are pressing ahead with Sharia law in autonomous Aceh, while militant fundamentalists in West Java continue to tackle 'apostasy and Christian expansion' by persecuting pastors and evangelists and forcing the closure of churches. Meanwhile in Papua the genocide of a betrayed Christian people is being perpetrated. Please pray that President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono would make a just stand for the rights and security of ethnic and religious minorities. Pray too for God to give Indonesia's Christian leaders the 'Spirit of wisdom' (Ephesians 1:17) in abundance.

+ Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin / No. 457 / Wed 05 Dec 2007

## **No-Pope zone**

The GAA has declared that no office bearer, or any other person, is authorised to represent the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia at any function or any other activity associated with the visit of the Pope to Australia in 2008.

+ 'Australian Presbyterian', November 2007

## **Pity poor Perth**

A shortage of Church of Scotland ministers is impacting on many parishes throughout Perth and Kinross. Perth city centre is especially hard hit as three vacancies already exist there and a further one will arise with the retirement early next year of the Rev. David Denniston, minister at the North Church.

Even one of Scotland's most significant churches, St John's Kirk, in the heart of the city, has been without a minister since the Rev. David Ogston retired after almost 30 years at the helm of the historic church in which John Knox preached in May 1559.

The national church reports 1,200 pulpits and roughly 1000 ministers to fill them. There are 43 congregations in the Presbytery of Perth and currently 28 ministers plus two without charge. Vacant city pulpits are Craigie, St John's and St Leonards-in-the-Fields and Trinity.

+ Church of Scotland, 121 George St., Edinburgh EH2 4YN Scotland

## **World Communion of Reformed Churches**

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC) will host the inaugural meeting of the newly formed World Communion of Reformed Churches in 2010, CRC officials announced 14 December. The groups involved in the merger are the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), based in Geneva, Switzerland, and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), based in Grand Rapids. The organizations have a combined membership of more than 80 million Christians. 'Together these two groups now represent a significant number of Reformed churches around the world,' said Jerry Dykstra, the executive director of the CRC. 'Since the CRC is one of the churches in both groups, our participation in the merger has been critical to the process.'

The meeting of the new group's Uniting General Council, which is expected to draw more than 1,000 delegates and visitors from around the world, is scheduled for June 18-28, 2010 at the CRC's Calvin College in Grand Rapids.

WARC is a worldwide fellowship of 75 million Reformed Christians in 214 churches in 107 countries. REC represents 12 million Reformed Christians in 39 churches in 25 countries, with 27 of the churches also belonging to WARC. Besides the traditional Reformed churches, the new organization will be open to Presbyterian, Congregational, and other denominations with a Reformed heritage, he added.

+ Henry Hess, Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave., SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560 (616) 241-1691 <http://www.crcna.org>

## **Creation surfaces in Hollywood**

The creation-evolution battle and the battle for Hollywood converge in a new film to be released in February. *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* brings us Ben Stein, TV personality, actor and former White House speech writer, on the big screen, asking one of life's biggest questions: 'Were we designed, or are we simply the end result of an ancient mud puddle struck by lightning?'

In the movie, Mr. Stein, who is also a lawyer, economist, former presidential speechwriter, author and social commentator, is stunned by what he discovers – an elitist scientific establishment that has traded in its open-mindedness for dogma.

Even worse, say publicists for the feature film, 'along the way, Mr. Stein uncovers a long line of biologists, astronomers, chemists and philosophers who have had their reputations destroyed and their careers ruined by a scientific establishment that allows absolutely no dissent from Charles Darwin's theory of random mutation and natural selection.'

'Big Science in this area of biology has lost its way,' says Mr. Stein. 'Scientists are supposed to be allowed to follow the evidence wherever it may lead, no matter what the implications are. Freedom of inquiry has been greatly compromised,

## **Interested in teaching English as a Second Language?**

Expressions of interest are wanted from people interested in teaching English in China or North Korea.

This is a new project and is in the early stages of development. People with a missions outlook are sought.

You must be 18 or over.

You must have a university degree.

You should have an ESOL qualification.

You should have ESOL teaching experience.

You must have good pronunciation.

You must be a member in good standing of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Please email

Paul Goodenough (North Shore)  
[paul.g@callplus.net.nz](mailto:paul.g@callplus.net.nz)

and this is not only anti-American, it's anti-science. It's anti the whole concept of learning.'

Expelled documents how teachers and scientists alike are being ridiculed daily, denied tenure and even fired for believing there is evidence of 'design' in nature and challenging the current orthodoxy that life is entirely a result of random chance. For example, Mr. Stein meets Richard Sternberg, a double Ph.D. biologist who allowed a peer-reviewed research paper describing the evidence for intelligence in the universe to be published in the scientific journal *Proceedings*. Shortly after publication, officials from the National Center for Science Education and the Smithsonian Institution, where Dr Sternberg was a research fellow, began a coordinated smear-and-intimidation campaign to get the promising young scientist fired. The attack on scientific freedom was so egregious that it prompted a congressional investigation.

In the film, Mr. Stein meets other scientists like astrobiologist Guillermo Gonzalez, who was denied tenure at Iowa State University in spite of an extraordinary record of achievement. Gonzalez made the mistake of documenting the design he has observed in the universe. And there are others, like Caroline Crocker, a brilliant biology teacher at George Mason University who was forced out of the university for briefly discussing problems with Darwinian theory and for telling the students that some scientists believe there is evidence of design in the universe.

Unlike other popular documentary films, *Expelled* isn't one-sided – it confronts scientists like Oxford evolutionist Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*, influential biologist and atheist blogger P.Z. Myers, and Eugenie Scott, head of the National Center for Science Education. In fact, the creators of *Expelled* spent two years interviewing scores of scientists, doctors, philosophers and public leaders for the film. According to the New York Times, Dawkins, Scott and other evolutionists are now claiming the film's producers deceived them into going on camera by hiding the Intelligent Design orientation of the film. But Mr Stein denies misleading anyone. 'I don't remember a single person asking me what the movie was about,' he told the *Times*. 'The incredible thing about *Expelled* is that we don't resort to manipulating our interviews for the purpose of achieving the shock effect, something that has become common in documentary film these days,' said Walt Ruloff, co-founder of Premise

Media and the film's co-executive producer. 'People will be stunned to actually find out what elitist scientists proclaim, which is that a large majority of Americans are simpletons who believe in a fairy tale.'

*Expelled* is produced by Premise Media, and marketed by Motive Entertainment, which has spearheaded *The Passion of the Christ*, *Polar Express* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. It will be distributed by Rocky Mountain Pictures, with numerous box-office successes to its credit.

+ Michael Ireland, Assist News Service, PO Box 609, Lake Forest, CA 92609-0609 www.ex-pelledthemovie.com

### Mystery shrouds release of Egyptian woman convert

An Egyptian convert to Christianity released by police under murky circumstances has revealed details of her week-long detention last July that differ greatly from original reports of torture. Speaking by telephone from Egypt through a translator at her side, a woman claiming to be Shaymaa Muhammad al-Sayed said police in Alexandria angrily interrogated her about why she became a Christian but treated her 'not good, but not badly.'

But contradictions between the convert's version of her detention and the testimony of eyewitnesses have raised questions about whether al-Sayed is under ongoing police pressure. Of most concern now, Christian sources said, is Al-Sayed's commitment to *Compass* that police withheld her national ID card when they released her on 23 July. Egyptian citizens must produce a national ID to carry out bank transactions, acquire a job, obtain a pension check and travel within or outside Egypt.

Lawyer Ramses el-Nagar, who said he met with the convert while she was in police custody in July and several times since her release, confirmed that she does not have an official ID. According to El-Nagar, Egypt's security police further complicated the issue of Al-Sayed's identity by releasing the convert under her false Christian name – Maryan Eleya Saleeb.

Conversion from Islam to Christianity is forbidden in Egypt. The 26-year-old Al-Sayed had obtained forged papers under the last name Saleeb in order to live as a Christian when she left her family and converted in 2003. But some of Al-Sayed's friends remain puzzled by the strange nature of her release and current living arrangement, on her own — far from her family, who live in Alexandria, and apart from her husband. 'We are not sure if Shaymaa is out [of jail] yet, or if the one who was released

was someone else,' one of the convert's friends told *Compass* last month.

+ Compass News Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0304

### Bible launch

More than 300 Philippine church leaders, government dignitaries, and IBS-STL translation partners celebrated the *Ang Pulong sang Dios Hiligaynon* Bible launch November 17, 2007, at Central Philippine University, in Iloilo, Panay, the Philippines. Dedications were also held November 19 in Bacolod City on Negros Island, and December 11 in Mindanao. The dedications were covered live on TV and radio.

'Long ago the Bible was only open to the clergy, and ordinary people were prohibited to have a Bible... But today we not only celebrate the liberty to read the Bible but to dedicate the Bible in the language of the people—a Bible they can read and understand,' Iloilo Provincial Governor Niel Tupas Sr. said.

Seven translators and 20 reviewers from various Christian denominations worked on the new Hiligaynon Bible, with SIL as a primary translation partner. Sixteen years in the making, it is an accurate, contemporary translation for 7 million Hiligaynon-speaking Filipinos. An additional 4 million people speak Hiligaynon as a second or third language.

Two older Hiligaynon Bible translations exist, but archaic language, unnatural grammatical constructions, and exegetical errors make them difficult to use.

International Bible Society and Send The Light merged as IBS-STL Global on 1 March 2007. The combined organization delivers more Bibles into the hands of more people, in more countries, more efficiently than either could individually. The organization holds the copyrights to the English *New International Version®* (NIV) and *Today's New International Version®* (TNIV), as well as 42 international Bible translations.

+ International Bible Society, 1820 Jet Stream Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80921

### York rejects Mugabe

The Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, cut into pieces his clerical 'dog collar' on a television program broadcast by the BBC to the world, and the Ugandan-born cleric vowed he would not replace it until Robert Mugabe is no longer president of Zimbabwe. The second-highest ranking cleric in the (Anglican) Church of England was himself a refugee from the tyrannical

regime of Idi Amin, who ruled Uganda from 1971 to 1979. He said it was right for British Prime Minister Gordon Brown to refuse to attend the December conference of European Union and African leaders held in Portugal.

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

## **Repression in China escalates in lead-up to Olympics**

Repression is escalating in China in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics as the Communist Party government prepares the country to go on display before the world. The government is determined that visitors and television viewers will witness only stability, harmony and economic development and not human rights abuses, neglect or repression. The government wants to ensure 'subversive' elements and 'reactionary' forces do not spoil the show. Though Shi Weihan's Christian bookshop near the Olympic village sells only government-approved books, Shi and an employee were recently arrested. On 7 December, 270 house-church pastors meeting together for prayer, study and fellowship were arrested in a major police raid. As of 10 December, 150 are still in custody. Please pray for justice and for God's purpose to prevail.

+ Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin / No. 458 / Wed 12 Dec 2007

## **Sudden violence in Iraq shatters Christmas calm**

Since 2004, Iraq's Christian minority has suffered such great violence and intimidation that the fragility of life is a daily reality to those who choose to stay and not flee abroad. Some recent signs of growing peace resulted in well-attended Christmas services. However this calm was short-lived in Mosul and Baghdad where bombs struck churches, a monastery, a convent and orphanage on Epiphany Sunday, 6 January. Later attacks on churches in Kirkuk inflicted casualties and further major damage. Please pray that the Church will be sustained with courage as it perseveres amidst these further co-ordinated attempts to intimidate Christians to leave Iraq. May it be a force for healing within the fractured nation. May God's grace and protection faithfully guard the Christian community as well as all who are seeking to secure peace.

+ Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin / No. 461 / Wed 16 Jan 2008

## **Times are changing in Ulster**

The Free Presbyterian Church of Ireland has a new leader. For the first time in 56

years, the Irish have a new leader. Stepping down as Moderator, Ian Paisley said on 18 January, 'We can now get on with the job that the Church is engaged in, to preach the Gospel, to build more buildings and to push on with our work.'

Rev. Mr Ron Johnstone of Armagh was elected to the moderatorship. Some reports indicate the former Deputy Moderator received unanimous support. According to the Belfast Telegraph, the new Moderator read out a unanimous tribute from the church's 200-plus ministers and elders in attendance and praised his predecessor for 'his sacrificial labour of commencing and consolidating the Free Presbyterian witness'.

Often ranked with King William and Lord Carson as champion of Protestant Ireland, Paisley has taken office as First Minister in Ulster's Stormont Parliament.

Having broken with the Orange Lodge over its moderation toward Papists, Paisley was an unlikely candidate to sit down with Martin McGuinness, the public face of Sinn Fein and the reputed voice for the terrorist wing of the Irish Republican Army to fashion a peace for Ulster.

+ Rev. Ron Johnstone, 1 Drummanmore Grange, Armagh BT61 8RQ Northern Ireland

## **India sets new standard for persecuting Christians**

With more than 800 attacks around Christmas time in Orissa state, the number of attacks on Christians in 2007 crossed 1,000 for the first time since India's Independence in 1947.

At least 200 incidents of anti-Christian attacks, including four murders, had been recorded before violence erupted in Orissa's Kandhamal district that killed at least four Christians and burned 730 houses and 95 churches, according to a report of a fact-finding team released by Christian leaders 8 January.

The report, released by the All India Christian Council (AICC) in conjunction with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) and the Christian Legal Association, says that while four Christians were confirmed dead, at least six were seriously injured and numerous others are missing who are presumed killed by Hindu extremists in the rampage that began in Kandhamal on Christmas Eve.

The report notes that the violence could have been averted if authorities had enforced the law. 'In all the villages we have visited, people testify that the attacks, destruction and looting was done in the

presence of the police,' the report says.

It states that Hindu extremists from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) attacked members of the minority community with guns, knives, tridents, bombs, and other weapons.

+ Compass Direct News Service, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana CA 92799

## **Uzbekistan a persecution hotspot**

Predominantly Muslim Uzbekistan is a persecution hotspot for its Protestant Christians and other religious minorities. The Uzbek authorities' continuing restrictions are aimed at keeping Christians living in constant fear and stopping internal outreach. Any religious activity not held on the premises of a registered religious organisation is 'illegal'. Thus it is even harder for religious groups who are unable to get registered as all their activities are strictly suppressed as illegal and the participants treated as criminals. Police regularly raid church services, Christian literature is destroyed and believers are fined and even imprisoned. Church buildings are being confiscated. Even more restrictive laws are expected soon. However, the solidarity of Protestant churches is growing under persecution. Please pray that God will strengthen and protect Christians in Uzbekistan.

+ Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin / No. 462 / Wed 23 Jan 2008

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Faith in Focus by visiting the  
Reformed Churches Home Page  
<http://www.rcnz.org.nz>

## Feminine focus

# The Feminine Virtue of Submissiveness

**Sally Davey**

This is not what you might think it's going to be. It will not, principally, be a solemn warning about letting your husband make the decisions in your house. Submissiveness of character consists of much more than wives submitting to their husbands. But I hope the following thoughts may be helpful, since there are some important general principles behind this lovely quality; and until we appreciate them, it is difficult to succeed in putting them into practice.

### An attitude

I know this is a difficult virtue to cultivate. It is difficult not just because it is controversial, unpopular, and out of sync with our culture. It is a struggle because submissiveness goes right against the grain of our willful, disobedient hearts. One of the first things God told Eve when she sinned and fell was that her desire would be for her husband – to control him, win out against him, overpower him. Submissiveness is very much an attitude thing. It is not just a matter of letting him have it his way, while thinking on the inside – ‘how stupid!’ You can have the outward action right, but the inner attitude makes your response all wrong. It is even possible to agree with what the Bible teaches about submission, yet be quite an unsubmissive person. I have noticed, for instance, that some women who insist loudly that wives submit to their husbands display a most unsubmissive approach in doing so. They are willful, bossy and aggressive in their demand that other women submit to their husbands. This makes me wonder whether they see submission as something involving an outward action only, and not a quiet, humble attitude of the heart.

Nevertheless, all of us find it a hard attitude to achieve. Pride, arrogance and willful insistence on having our own way are basic to our sinful hearts. Humility and

submissiveness just do not come naturally – even when we are right, and simply reminding others what is right to do.

### The battle in the past – and present

This has been the case since sin entered the world, and never more so than now. The women of old in biblical times were encouraged by their culture, and by the teaching of the Old Testament, to be gentle and self-effacing; and to respect the leadership of their fathers, husbands and elders. But what do we find? Even they wanted their own way, and would stoop to devious means to achieve it. They were inclined to manipulate, agitate, demand, cajole – and yes, even boss their men around from time to time. Think of the sad case of Rebekah, who was so devoted to her son Jacob that she carried through a scheme to deceive her husband Isaac and get Jacob, the younger twin, the birthright that should have been his brother Esau’s. Tragic results ensued, as we all know. Consider the reminders in Proverbs about nagging and contentious wives. (These would not have been written if wives were not sometimes like that.) Think of the misery Samson endured, once he gave in to the pressures from *his* wife. Think of the way Herodias manipulated Herod to get rid of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12). These women all lived in cultures that encouraged submissiveness in women, yet their hearts rebelled – and they got their own way.

Western culture has rather violently rejected these ideas about womanhood. You might think it has only been for the past thirty or forty years; but that is only in the most strident and open and political way. Women have been after control for a lot longer, albeit in a more spasmodic and subtle fashion. But true enough, there is virtually no encouragement now in our wider culture for women to be submissive, humble or gentle. Everything screams from the opposite direction. ‘Know your own mind.’ ‘Don’t let him tell you what to do.’ ‘Take care of yourself.’ ‘You can do it!’ ‘Don’t have such a low view of yourself; you need more self-esteem.’ ‘Girls can do anything.’ ‘I just have to learn to be more assertive.’ You’ve heard it all before. The feminist movement has been well-organised and successful at a political, educational and rhetorical level. Our thinking about women and their role in all spheres of

society has changed out of recognition since the 1960s. We seem to have women running almost everything that counts in New Zealand today; and even the more conservative U.S. may be about to get its first woman president.

### The opposite to submission

Right through our culture, on so many levels, runs a basic selfishness and arrogance that brooks no opposition to ‘me’ and ‘my interests’. Children are taught from a very early age that they should think highly of themselves. Schools advertise that they aim to instill confidence and pride in their students. (Anyone that advertised the encouragement of humility would provoke hoots of derision.) We learn to affirm ourselves, avoid selling ourselves short, and make our dreams happen. It is little wonder that teachers in our schools have a terrible job trying to manage their classes. Imagine facing 25 youngsters who have been bubbling with unchecked ‘confidence’ since their days in childcare centres and pre-schools! Not a pretty thought; yet it is the lot of many teachers. Submission to any kind of authority – parents, teachers, whoever, is a foreign concept indeed. To be sure, some of this meets a bit of a check when young people enter the workplace. They find that employers do expect a degree of obedience and respect in return for a pay cheque. Likewise, customers might take offence and not come back for repeat purchases if you treat them rudely or arrogantly. People engaged in business usually know something about respect. There is a certain level of submissiveness that seems worth it for promotions and pay rises and success in business. But this is only skin-deep. And its lack of heart-level conviction will sooner or later erupt in some disrespectful word or action.

The rebellion is most obvious of all in the marriage relationship. Many, many Christians have commented on this. Some say it is the work of the evil one to destroy the most important God-given bond we have: to strike, as it were, at God himself. Certainly, our culture mocks and derides the submission of women to their husbands. These days, women do not think of their husbands as their leaders or as heads of their family. If anything, husbands are merely equal partners where authority (if any) is shared. However, there is always

a cost to spurning God's order of things. Doing it 'my way' is expensive in the extreme. As we all know, men and women in our society are not very successful at running their lives or their marriages in defiance of God's principles. Marital strife, separation and divorce are commonplace. But the prevalence of these tragedies does not make them any less painful.

As I have briefly observed, the outworkings of unsubmissiveness around us today are multitudinous and almost infinitely variable. Sometimes it seems to me that selfishness and arrogance are the drivers of people's lives. Certainly, they explain much of the suffering that we inflict on others as well as on ourselves. But are we immune from this as Christians? Of course not. We may recognise the principle that we are to be submissive – God tells us in his Word that this is how we should be – but often we are not.

### **God's Word today**

Whether we are good at applying them or not, we Christians who take God at his Word know two important commands to be submissive: children should obey their parents, and wives should submit to their husbands. Now, to obey these commands is clearly difficult in our context. Children will have to ignore the message of television, movies, their peers, and advertising (in addition to their own sinful hearts). So how do we fare? Are our children submissive? Do they (from their hearts) want to do as their parents ask? Do they behave as their parents would wish, even when they are out of sight of mother and father? Furthermore, are they learning to curb their own pride and greed in order to serve others? Do they never push and shove for food before others can get it? Are they learning to be quiet and respectful in situations such as school lessons or catechism classes, to make teaching a pleasure for their teachers, and to make it possible for other students to learn?

How about we women? Are we as submissive as we could be? For sure, we may let our husbands have the final say in making decisions, but do we (for instance) connive and manipulate our husbands in other ways? Do we use tears or other emotional pressure to put him on the back foot, make him feel guilty, and get him to do what we want? Do we make life so difficult for him that we stop him disciplining the children as he knows to be right? Do we manipulate behind the scenes to get what we want, later presenting him with

awkward-to-reverse *faits accompli*? I fear we do at times. Many of us believe that we can – and do – make better decisions than our husbands. We think we see situations more clearly, more sensitively – perhaps we're convinced we understand more of what is going on than our busy husband does. But we have to stop and question ourselves here. Sometimes we're just incorrect about this; sometimes we may be right but we just have to rest in the fact that God has given him the responsibility. And God will hold him accountable. God wants us to respect our husbands, not just give them the go-ahead to make the final call. Once we are married, respect is a bottom line. So, obviously, the time before marriage is an important time to think about this. Young ladies need to be realistic about some critical things, and to look carefully before saying 'yes.' They need to ask themselves these kinds of questions: Is this young man wise, or at least showing signs of becoming wise? Can I respect his judgment? Is he applying himself to the kinds of things that will make him a godly, discerning head of the household by the time he's 35, say? Is he working hard at knowing God's Word, reading good books, encouraging you in the same things? He may seem really attractive at 22, but will I be able to respect him, and submit to him at 45? Asking the right questions now may avoid some big difficulties later on.

### **In Church life**

The Scriptures also speak about submissiveness in church life. We should respect our leaders. This means holding them in high regard, not speaking of them with contempt, as if they have no idea what they're doing. Sometimes women talk as if the elders and deacons might begin to show a little wisdom if only they would start listening to the women! Are we encouraging other (e.g. younger) women to respect the office bearers by refraining from this sort of gossip? It's amazing how contagious disrespect can be... Another pitfall is neglecting to consult the leaders before launching projects that we and our friends get really excited about. All too often, we women get upset and offended when our already half-executed plans are questioned. If only we had discussed them first, we would have made life a lot easier for the office bearers and ourselves alike. We need to deal with pride and disrespect – submissiveness certainly contributes to harmony in the church.

It is the scriptural picture of this virtue that will motivate us from first to last. We will never be able to grasp it, or practice it, unless we keep Scripture before us. Christ himself shows us what it looks like in its perfection. As he told us, he came to do his Father's will (not his own), and he submitted to his Father in everything. His humility was at the heart of his submis-



sive obedience. We can see this clearly in Philippians 2. Have you fully grasped that the heart of submissiveness is humility? We need a humble attitude in relationships with others, and especially with those in authority over us. James reminds us of this when he tells us that we should submit ourselves to God. He quotes Proverbs 3:34: 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' It is when we are humble that God gives us the grace to encounter every difficult situation, to respond lovingly in every difficult relationship, and so on. Peter writes the same thing when he exhorts younger people to submit to the elders: Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble,' (the same verse as in Proverbs). We need so much to have a humble attitude toward God and others. But if we do, God will give us the grace we need to be truly submissive.

#### **The inner motivation**

Ephesians 5 is the passage most of us think of when this topic comes up in discussion. It is interesting, isn't it, that everything Paul writes here points us to the inner motivation for submission. That motivation is our love for Christ. Marriage

being a picture of Christ and his church, wives and husbands are reflecting the love between our Lord and his beloved when we submit (as wives) and love sacrificially (as husbands). Put like that, in its true, spiritually-focused sense, we cannot go wrong when we are humbly and lovingly submissive in marriage. (And as a footnote, have you ever noticed that in verse 33 where Paul reiterates, he reminds us to 'respect' our husbands. We always associate this passage with the word 'submit' but in actual fact Paul is interested in our heart attitude, not just outward or outward compliance. Women do sometimes see submission as an external thing only; but I wonder how, when respect, as Paul notes here, is inherent in it. You cannot really submit to someone without respecting them. It's impossible. It would be like the child who, when told to sit down and does so, then retorts, 'I'm sitting down on the outside, but inside I'm still standing up.') We need to keep reminding ourselves of this as long as we both shall live... There are rewards, of course – it is good for our husbands, good for our marriages, and good for our own hearts. It may even lead to the conversion of our husbands, should we have come to faith before them. Remember what Peter wrote? '... Be submissive to

your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives – when they see your respectful and pure conduct.' (1 Peter 3:1-2).

#### **A fine feminine submission**

The loveliest example of feminine submissiveness I can think of in the whole of the Bible is that of a young woman, given some earth-shattering news by the angel Gabriel. Mary was frail, human and sinful, but God had chosen her to bear his only Son. This would involve her in some potential embarrassment: she was not yet married to Joseph, her betrothed. But having heard Gabriel's message she simply said: 'Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.' (Luke 1:38).

And so let it be to us, in our walk with our God, and in all our human relationships. May our submissiveness bring him glory.

*Dr. Sally Davey is a member of the Reformed Church of Dovedale and a frequent contributor to 'Faith in Focus.' She is also a speaker and lecturer specialising in church history.*

## Crossroad Bible Institute

**'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.' (2 Cor. 5:17)**

Since Crossroad Bible Institute (CBI) began in NZ, approximately 320\* inmates in prisons throughout New Zealand have been ministered to through a unique discipleship and faith-based course. This faith-based re-entry education programme material is provided by CBI, which commenced their ministry in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1984 with the mission statement: 'Scripture Alone, Christ Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone and to God Alone be glory'. CBINZ — instituted in February 2006 — is the fourth country of distribution following South America, Canada and Australia (which includes the Solomon Islands and Fiji). CBI (amongst other projects) distributes and administers a personal, in-depth and long-term programme that is designed to help inmates grow dra-

matically in a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ, preparing them for and assisting them in successful re-entry upon release. Once the inmates begin to study the Bible, they experience a change in their hearts, in their attitudes and in their behaviour towards one another. Courses are on three levels and are marked by trained instructors and returned to the students with personal letters of encouragement and discipleship. CBINZ has around 45 trained instructors, with more under way.

The Lesson booklets themselves are a combination of filling in missing words from Scripture verses, True/False questions and multiple choice. At the end of each lesson the students complete 'essay questions', giving them an opportunity to express their faith and thoughts about God's teachings in their own words. Included with each lesson is a Roadmap. The Roadmap is a personal devotional booklet which covers

seven days. The student is asked to look up three Scripture readings for each day, summarise the theme and then answer what this means for them.

#### **A personal example**

I first 'met' David when he sent in his completed first lesson, 'Great Truths of the Bible,' in early August 2006. David wrote then: *'I love this study. It is good to look into God's Word and to question why I do believe.'* As David worked through the lessons and the roadmaps, faithfully studying the Word of God, his faith continued to grow and strengthen.

After a few months David wrote:

*'I just wanted to say how much I am enjoying the study. I get very little mail and look forward to receiving my lessons back. My walk with the Lord is growing daily and the study has helped me better*

understand the way the Lord is working in my life and how I should act and behave as a Christian. The Lord has given me a new life and a fresh start. It continues to amaze me how much I get from studying and reading the Bible. Each time I look into the Word the Lord shows me something new. I have a new spirit in my heart and hope for the future.'

Some months later David told us:

'When I first came to prison I had turned my back on God. Five times I tried to commit suicide in prison because I felt so low and that because of my crime I deserved to die. But the Lord had a plan for my life. He kept me alive so that I could fulfil the purpose He has for me... In prison, I cried out to the Lord for help and He came to me in my hour of need. I asked God to forgive me and not only for my sins but also for my betrayal of Him. I know that I serve a merciful God and that He has forgiven me. I know that He never gave up on me. It was me that gave up on Him. Even though I was in a very dark place the Lord reached down and rescued me. His light found me and saved me. Jesus came to me in prison and by His grave He saved my life.'

It very much illustrates what we read in Ephesians Chapter 2: 1-10. We recognise our total depravity and are convicted and acknowledge that it is only by God's great love for us and His mercy, that '**makes us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.**'

The Lord had prepared works for David to do in prison. In January 2007 he wrote:

'I have been taking the Church Service and Bible Study since 17 December and will do till the end of January. The Pastoral team are all on leave till then. I am always amazed how the Lord gives me the words to say. P.S. One of the Officers found the Lord over the weekend. Great news.'

The following month David wrote:

'I decided to decline my Home Detention hearing. It is too restrictive. I also felt the Lord wanted me to be here a little while more. Three people gave their lives to the Lord at Church today. I will now see if I can sign them up for some study with CBI.'

A month later:

'Today at Church another young man gave His life to the Lord. Can you please send me a couple more information sheets on CBI that I can pass on, thanks.... . I have now been in prison 12 months and it has been a life-changing experience for me. I have come a long way in the Lord and a long way in knowing myself. The CBI course has helped me to better understand my relationship with God and other people. It is hard to face the fact that when I leave prison all that I had before is gone. I feel that in my life I had to die to the world so that I could see what a life without the Lord in it was like. I was a very foolish and selfish man. The grace of God and His love for me has saved my life. The Lord has never left my side. All my life I have been running away from God, though I knew better and could lead a good life without Jesus in it. How wrong I was. I just wish that I could have seen the signs earlier and not have to cause my family so much pain. ....Everyday I am amazed how much the Lord is doing in my life. He continually brings me opportunities to talk to others

and help many men. The Lord has given me a new passion for helping people and I want to devote the rest of my life to being a giver rather than being a taker. The CBI Study has been a great inspiration to me and having to write a daily roadmap has kept my focus on the Lord.'

David asked for prayer for his family each time he sent in his lessons. He also regularly prayed for the CBI team and the work being undertaken with inmates. At one time David shared he had a problem committing verses to memory and asked for prayer to remember scripture. Weeks later he wrote:

'I have now committed two verses to memory, learning them bit by bit. I do very much enjoy the study. They always seem to be on a topic that I need to work on in my life.' (The CBI studies are actually specifically designed for prison inmates.) 'The lessons have been challenging at times. Shed many tears as I was required to address many issues in my life. The study has been very good for me and has helped me grow in many ways. My faith and love for the Lord continues to grow daily,



despite some people in here abusing me for my belief. It is funny the insults and abuse just serve to strengthen me. One thing prison does is that it forces you to face your problems. You have nowhere to run and hide!'

David completed the first Course (Great Truths of the Bible — 12 lessons) and continued on to do the second course (Survey of the Bible — 14 lessons). When David sent in Lesson One from Survey of the Bible he wrote:

*'I enjoyed the first lesson. I see that this study makes you think more and reflect more on what we are reading. I love to read God's Word and as I do I come to understand how wonderful it is to be considered one of His children. We are very fortunate to have such a loving Father... I have been helping a young boy with Bible Study and yesterday he told me he wanted to make a commitment to Jesus. I was very happy for him. I passed him a form to enrol in CBI. I am sure it will be a great help to him as he learns more about Jesus.'*

David also shared about times when struggling in his faith. He wrote:

*'I need to learn to discern my will and the Lord's will in my life. I want to serve the Lord and not my own selfish desire... Being a Christian is not a quick fix. It is hard work. It gets harder as you become stronger... Since a young age I have felt that I was the worst and not worthy of love. All the sexual abuse from my father, the abandonment and neglect from my mother as a child had a huge impact on my life.'*

Yet David says that Philippians 3:8 sums it all up for him:

**'What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ.'**

David continued:

*'What makes me strong is total trust in Jesus. Asking Him everyday what His will is for my life, and doing my very best to stick to God's plan for my life. It is also faith. A very strong faith that the Lord is in control of my life and He does have a plan for me. It is like being asked to walk across the Auckland motorway in rush hour blindfolded, trusting the Lord for protection. Has it been easy — hell no. It has been the hardest year in my life, my offending, my fall from grace, my imprisonment, the loss of my family, my freedom, my sanity,*

*the loss of all my possessions (my Mercedes car, my five homes, my \$120,000 salary). But I am a better person because of it. I have the love of a very loving God and that sustains me. When I am released from prison my life will be rebuilt on a solid foundation and that foundation is the Word and love of God. I had to lose it all to have the chance to die and be reborn. I am very passionate about my faith and that gives me great strength.'*

(Note: Permission received from David (not his real name) to publish his letters)

Many of the CBI students have shared and written similar comments to that of David. Philippians 1:6 comes to mind; **'being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.'**

### Help of chaplains

CBINZ works closely with prison chaplains, who are sent regular updates of the students enrolled and their progress through the lessons. Working with the inmates is a team effort. Most of the chaplains are very supportive of CBI and enrol students for the Bible Study Course. However, many students are enrolled through the encouragement of fellow CBI students.

The following comments received from chaplains reflect their support and encouragement for the work of CBI:

*'Thank you again, your work for the Lord is tremendous and know that you provide something for prisoners that is pure gold;'*

*'Just to let you know, not that you don't already know that God's spirit is working wonders in the prison by renewing, transforming, equipping, uplifting, empowering and setting free those who truly turn to Him in faith. God's Word is mighty and it is an honour to serve Him here. It is a real pleasure to work with you and all the other saints (at CBI) that give of their time and resources freely to further the kingdom of God. Hallelujah;'*

*'Only God can change the heart of man. What you are doing at CBI is crucial for it helps the men to come to know God and walk with Him;'*

*'Thanks for all that you are doing for the spiritual wellbeing, sharing the Word of God with the prisoners;'*

*'I really appreciate the student updates;'*

*'Thank you for the work you do to support these men.'*

### Student responses

As always, we receive many student responses. The following letter came from a student at Wanganui Prison.

*'Dear CBI Leader*

*Blessed be the name of our Lord Jesus, because I've got your letter today. I mean just now. We came back from outside, locked in our cells, got our dinner and the letter was pushed under my cell door. Well to be honest, I'm so happy and beside, remember when I told you about people here telling dirty jokes, well because we complained to the Chaplain here in prison, he told those people to stop telling jokes. And reading your letter, yes I want to finish (carry on our study) and beside I've got a small group doing Bible study every afternoon in our yard. So please let me carry on the CBI study and please pray for my small group doing Bible study in our yard.*

*Last of all the Spirit of God is moving through the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.'*

Another letter we received was from a student at the Auckland Women's Prison.

*'To my CBI Leader*

*I'm so sorry I haven't kept in contact with you. I was going through a lot of doubt and confusion. I had a lot going on with myself and the master of all lies was getting the best of me and I stopped going to church services, Bible studies. I was spiritually broken. But now the Lord has opened my eyes and has granted me serenity within myself. I've been doing a lot of studying with other ladies in here to build my faith. Things that used to hang me down and make me worry I don't bother it's all in the Lord's hands cause I trust in the Lord which it is written 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not onto your own understanding but in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your path straight: — Prov. 3:5, 6 Praise the Lord.' I claim that and I humble myself before Him. My attitude has changed dramatically cause of Him. I've never had so much peace within myself ever. I see a lot of sinful ways in others that I never saw before and I was exactly like that plus all the things that used to matter to me don't matter to me now. What matters to me is trusting in the Lord and being obedient to his commands. I'm so thankful that you still keep in contact and care. Thank you all and God bless you all.'*

### Vital support of churches and individual Christians

Our sincere thanks to all churches and individuals who have supported this work both financially and in prayer. It is most definitely a ministry based on prayer. We need the Lord's wisdom and guidance as we write to the students and encourage them in their faith and support them in their walk with the Lord. Please continue to pray for the students and their families, for the chaplains who work with the inmates, for the instructors who mark the lessons and write to the students and for all those involved in the work of CBI here in

New Zealand and overseas. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless and use the ministry of CBI to reach inmates with the Gospel and transform their lives to be living testimonies of God's love and grace upon them. May we who know the love of God and have experienced His grace in our lives not take it for granted.

Regular reports either for personal interest or your church bulletin are available. Please make contact via e-mail: <CBI.NZ@clear.net.nz> or by post to: Crossroad Bible Institute, PO Box 11005, Hastings 4158. Donations can be made through the same address. CBINZ does not receive funding

from America but operates through funding within New Zealand.

\* As at year end 2007, 313 inmates have enrolled with CBI. This includes: 71 students enrolled but not yet underway; 110 active and 132 no longer active, most of whom have been released. It is our prayer that they would continue to walk closely to the Lord and that His hand would be upon them.

*This was submitted by the CBI New Zealand committee*

## Report on the CanRC Synod 2007

Smithers, British Columbia, Canada. Where is that? I know where Vancouver is but that is the only city I know the location of in BC. These days you go to google maps to find out. Well, it's a small town of about 5500 population, located 650 Km NNW of Vancouver as the crow flies, and more like 1100 Km by winding road if you drive.

Since I had only limited time, I decided to fly. Ouch! \$800 just to get a return flight from Vancouver to Smithers. That comes out of my pocket since Synod 2005 decided that we should send a delegate if it could be done at no cost to Synod. I was going to Chicago for an ICRC Interim committee meeting so attending the CanRC Synod was a little jog from LA to Smithers and then on to Chicago. (The CanRC delegates very

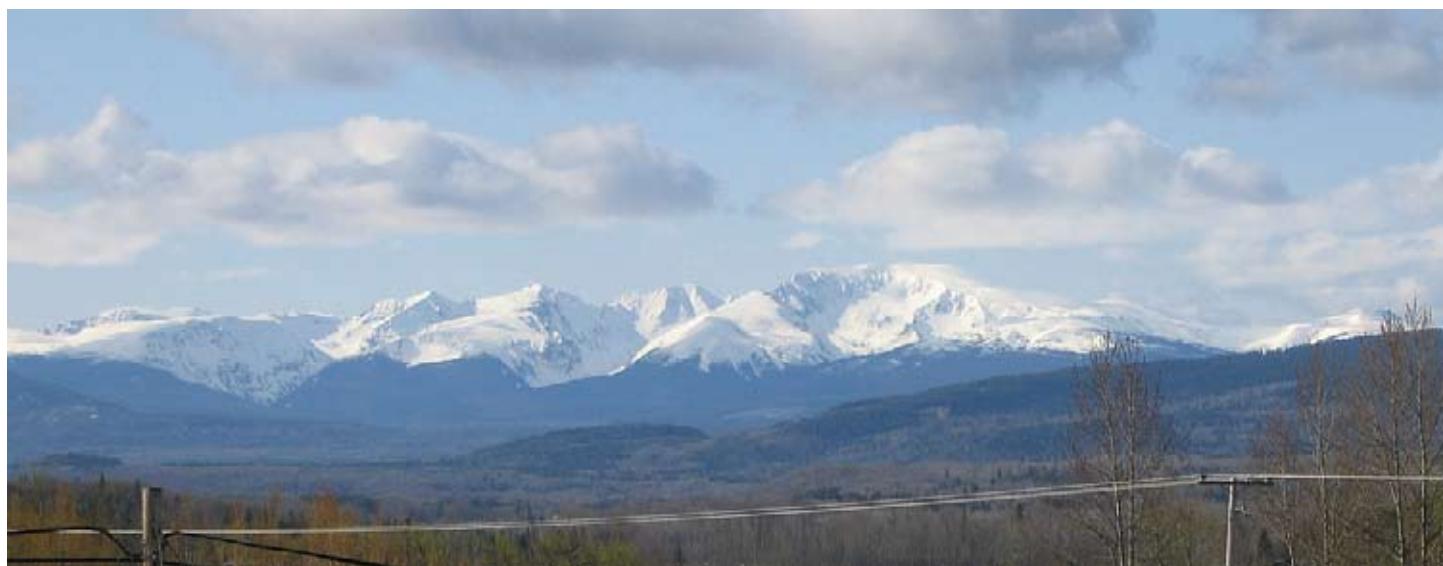
graciously passed the hat and provided me with a gift that went a long way toward covering my travel expense.)

The long side-trip was worth it! The view even from 17,000 feet going north over BC shows a country that beats New Zealand for scenery! As a Kiwi by choice I hate to say it, but that's the way it is. Mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes, forests, and game of all kinds — an outdoorsman's paradise. Just in my few days around the small town of Smithers going to and from my host's home to the Canadian Reformed Church in Smithers I saw a bear, a moose, several deer, a couple eagles, and two species of humming birds at the feeder outside the window of my host's lounge. It was late spring (Synod met from 9-22 May),

so the ski fields were closed but there was still plenty of snow on the mountains surrounding Smithers.

However there was work to do. Plenty of it. I was glad to be an observer rather a delegate since the reports to be studied by the delegates amounted to over 600 pages bound in three volumes and that doesn't count 145 letters from individual churches as well as 3 overtures and 18 appeals. I frankly didn't see how they could finish in two weeks. But they did! The amount of work they accomplished makes our synod's agenda look like a picnic by comparison.

There are 49 Canadian congregations and 4 American congregations totalling 16,000 members that comprise the CanRC. These churches make up 8 classes and 2



*View on the way to Synod*

regional synods. Each regional synod sends 6 elders and 6 ministers as delegates to the general synod. Most of their ministers are currently trained at the Canadian Reformed Theological College in Hamilton, Ontario. The CanRC also fully support a teacher training college and are involved in mission work in Quebec, Brazil, East Timor, and Papua New Guinea. They have sister relations with Reformed churches in Scotland, USA, Korea, Holland, South Africa, Australia and now New Zealand.

I say 'now New Zealand' because this synod decided with a 21-3 majority to accept our offer of sister-church relations. Our previous

two Synods (2005 and 2002) had extended this offer because our synod has seen the CanRC churches to be faithful, confessional churches with which we may cooperate in many ways for our mutual strength and for the advance of the Gospel. For several years we have been working closely with the CanRC in the mission in PNG supporting that work through sending the Hagoorts and by our financial assistance. Rev. Steven 'tHart has been warmly received when he has visited our churches. We look forward in less than a year to the commissioning of Rev. Alan Douma for work with Rev 'tHart in PNG.

In recent years we have been helped

by the CanRC: at our 2005 Synod it was decided to give provisional approval to the CanRC versions of the Canons of Dort and the Belgic Confession to replace our present versions. Some of our elders have read sermons prepared by CanRC ministers and several of our sessions use catechism material developed by men in the CanRC. We have also received members from time to time from the CanRC. [I am not aware of any RCNZ members who have migrated to the CanRC.]

The CanRC Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad recommended that the Synod accept our offer of sister relations. Two of the committee members had visited our churches and had discussions with our Interchurch Relations Committee. They noted that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia had not been able to enter sister-relations with us because of their difficulty with our sister-church relationship with the CRCA. However the FRCA has made it clear that they have no problem with the CanRC entering into sister-relations with us. There were 16 churches that sent letters of concern to the CanRC synod about our request for sister relations. Most of these referred to our relationship with the CRCA as a potential problem. Their committee however noted that we were seeking to deal faithfully with our Australian sister churches.

In my speech to the CanRC synod I emphasised the value ecclesiastical relations with them would have for us and also assured them that we seek to conduct our ecclesiastical relations with the CRCA in a faithful manner.

After considerable discussion the CanRC Synod decided:

1. To recognize that the RCNZ is a faithful church of God and accept the invitation of the RCNZ to enter into sister-church relations according to the established rules.
2. To write a letter addressed to the next Synod of the RCNZ communicating this decision and including the request that the RCNZ take note of and take seriously the concerns of the FRCA regarding the CRCAustralia.
3. To send a delegate (delegation) to the next Synod of the RCNZ in order to present this letter to formalize relations and visit the churches.

At this Synod it was clear that the CanRC takes ecclesiastical relations with churches abroad very seriously and values them greatly. Much time was spent discussing their concerns about schism in Holland where a small group has split from the GKN-



*CanRC Synod delegates at work*



*CanRC Synod Delegates and Foreigners*

lib. Despite a request from this group, the CanRC decided not to enter ecclesiastical relations with them because they believe their action was schismatic.

The CanRC continues diligent work with the URC/NA as they take steps toward uniting. Specifically they are working toward a common Church Order, a common Psalter Hymnal, common liturgical forms and confessions, and a common approach to theological education for ministers. All the decisions relating to the URC/NA were unanimous. Clearly there is a real desire to proceed with this union between the CanRC and the URC/NA. However no definite date can yet be set.

The CanRC Synod affirmed its previous recommendation of the NIV for use in the churches but also permitted the use of the NKJV, the NASB and the ESV.

Synod agreed to a request to study the issue of women voting. The present practice is that women do not vote in congregational meetings.

Although the CanRC Synod conducts its business differently from our Synod, it considered a huge amount of material and



*View out my bedroom window*

did so with a calm and deliberate spirit that evidenced the presence of the Spirit of God in their midst guiding them throughout.

We can look forward to cooperating with

Canadian Reformed churches in the years ahead to the glory of God and the advance of the Good News of Christ.

**Rev. Bruce Hoyt**

## Missions in focus

**Janice Reid**

### Report on the ICRC Regional Missions Conference at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Jim and Anneke Kloeg hail from Masterton congregation, where they own a bakery/café. Jim is also treasurer of the Overseas Mission Board, and as such he attended the regional missions conference of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) that was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, at the end of January (Our Reformed Churches are a member of the ICRC).

At the 2005 Synod it was decided to send two delegates to this conference, so Janice Reid and myself attended this conference together with my wife, Anneke. Rev John Goris is the convener of the Missions Committee of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), so of course he was there, as well.

The theme of the conference was "Aspects of Ministry in Asia."

Quite a few delegates arrived on the Saturday. We met in the motel which was organized by Pastor Poh of the Reformed Baptist Church in Damansar. It was sufficient and gave us rest each evening. We all had a bit of jetlag so off to bed on the Saturday evening. On Sunday morning we went to church and were welcomed by Pastor Poh and enjoyed fellowship with the members of the church. They made us really welcome. After the church service we enjoyed lunch together. This they do every Sunday. The church service is much as we are used to in NZ. The singing is done in English, the sermon in Malaysian. The church service starts at 11am Asia time, which means whenever most people are there the service starts, e.g. the evening service starts officially at 6.30pm but started about 10 minutes late and even at 7pm still some members arrived. We really felt at home.

On Tuesday morning we had breakfast together at 7.45, then at 8.30 the conference began. First devotions and prayer,

then the opening lecture was presented by Dr. Mohan Chacko who is principal of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary (Reformed Presbyterian Church of India) at Dehra Dun, some six hours' drive from Delhi. The topic of his paper was 'Equipping for Ministry in Asia.' He gave a broad and well thought through presentation on how to equip men for ministry in Asia (*look for a summary of his article in MIF in May*).

#### Ministry in Asia

In preparing men and women for ministry in Asia, it is important to look at the social and political context, which is unique in the world. In addition to this, the religious context is important: Christians and churches in Asia share certain special features. These also are relevant for training for ministry and mission.

The nature of Ministry in Asia is as complex as the Asian situation itself. For example: in some countries being a minister is a position of prestige, and it is easy to become sidetracked by the awareness of that fact. In other countries, however, ministers of religion are despised. And

to make things more difficult, the image often changes in large denominations or churches, so that the minister is seen more as the CEO of a large organisation, than as one who meets the spiritual and physical needs of others.

Another aspect of Dr Chacko's paper was a discussion of how theological education must be used to equip the whole people of God. In order to achieve this it must be ministry-oriented, missional (focused on missions), and responsive to

the needs of the church.

Some very interesting discussion followed and everyone was encouraged to contribute their questions. The afternoon was free time and some went for a nap and others checked their emails or did some shopping and sightseeing. In the evening after our dinner we shared with each other where we are from and where we are involved in. We closed the evening with praying in groups for the needs of the churches in Asia.



ICRC group



ICRC Goris presentation

### Tentmaker ministry

On Wednesday morning we continued with a very interesting topic: "Appropriate Creative Access to Closed Places." An OPC minister who is working as a tentmaker/missionary led this presentation. The term "tentmaker" comes from Acts 18:3. Paul made tents in for his living while he was staying with Aquila and Priscilla, rather than relying on money given by the believers in that area. In modern mission terms, the term 'tentmaker' often refers to people who work in places that are closed to traditional missionary efforts, for political or religious reasons. Most tentmakers are financially supported by income from their jobs, but some may be supported by their sending churches. They have what appears to be 'secular' work, but they are in that place for the purpose of careful and creative outreach where open evangelism is against the law, where the church is persecuted, and where most people have little or no access to Christians or Bible teaching.

This missionary described the problems with traditional attempts at evangelism in some closed countries. Bible smuggling, for example, is very dangerous and can result in imprisonment for foreigners and death for national believers. Other, more 'creative' types of outreach under the general umbrella of tentmaking may be done with less risk and much more effectiveness: for example work with children, medical work, and refugee work. The speaker also explained that business, agricultural work and educational assistance are often used by tentmakers as a means to gain access to a closed area.

### The value of radio ministry

After this Janice Reid (New Zealand) shared about her work of training radio announcers and described the partnership that HCJB seeks to develop with local ministries. In the afternoon a trip to Melaka was organized. Melaka is an old city where originally the Portuguese arrived and then the Dutch took over and were eventually driven out by the English. There is still a "Stadhuis" there which bears that name. Also we saw an old church which used to be for over 100 years a Reformed Church (Gereformeerde kerk).

### Aspects to ministry in Asia

On Wednesday morning Pastor Poh, our host, held an interesting talk on the topic 'Extending our Ministry further in Asia.' He discussed some of the major things that we need to keep in mind when doing



*ICRC singing*

ministry in Asia. One of these is consideration of the men who do the work of church planting—the importance of choosing the right men, training them the right way, and providing support for both the men themselves, and their ministries. A second thought is the location where the mission is carried out; a third is a consideration of the methods employed—whether we limit ourselves to proclamation of the Gospel, or include other assistance such as good works.

In the afternoon we had free time for a couple of hours. Because it was nearly the end of the conference, many people used this time to write reports or have final meetings with other delegates, sharing ideas and resources. Final reports and discussions, a closing devotion, a time of

prayer, and the conference was over.

It was an enormous privilege to be part of this conference and to learn so much of what is going on in the mission fields of Asia. It was also an eye-opener to learn how some churches struggle to make ends meet, but still do not despair; they rely on the Lord for their provision.

Let's be committed to pursue aggressively every opportunity the Sovereign Lord presents to us to further the proclamation of the gospel to the nations, remembering that ultimately He is the one who provides the clear and focused opportunity, the necessary personnel, and the required support.

## Focus on home

*Andrew Reinders*

# Gleanings from our bulletins...

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

### Avondale

Family Prayer & Praise items: Congratulations to Toby and Karen Dickens who last Friday became the parents of Jade Marie. We give thanks and praise to God for this gift of new life and pray God may grant wisdom as you seek to raise her in His name.

Teaching the Teachers: On Saturday 26 Jan (at 7.30pm), Reuben will be repeating the training session aimed at teachers and leaders. During the session, he will provide useful tips to make the teacher and the lessons more interesting for the

children. Reuben will be adding a few new points for those who attended the previous session. So if you are teaching (or thinking of teaching) Sunday School, Cadets & Calvinettes, Discipleship, home group etc and your presentation lacks zip and could benefit from a bit of professional help, mark the date in your calendar.

### Bishopdale

Evangelism Car Wash: On Saturday, 15 December (this Saturday) we will be operating a free car wash with an evangelistic spin for the Bishopdale community here at the church. The car wash will go from 8:30am - 12pm. From 7:30am - 8:30am there will be a time of prayer in the church to prepare. Please also remember to pray for the car wash this week. We would love to have people of all ages serving in this mission so do come along if you wish to help in any way. - Tim Sterne. 'Therefore

Wedding banns. Congregation, Michelle Marie Barton and Vernon Mark Lomberg have indicated their desire to be united in Christian marriage. They want to begin their life together in the name of the Lord and in the presence of His people, and continue it to His glory. If there are no lawful objections, the ceremony will take place here at the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach on Saturday, 12 January 2008, commencing at 1.30pm.

### Christchurch

Wedding banns. Verak Rin and Janelle van Leeuwen have signified their desire to be united in marriage in this church on Saturday 22 December 2007. If there are no lawful objections, the ceremony will take place at 1.00 pm on that date.

This afternoon we are blessed to witness the sacrament of baptism as it is administered to Elias Timothy Havelaar, by Rev. Robert van Wichen of the Reformed Church of Bishopdale.

Notes from full session meeting 12/12/2007. Earlier this month, some of the elders met with Lynton Brown to discuss his desire to publicly profess his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The elders are pleased to endorse this desire, and the profession of faith is planned for Sunday 30 December.

### Dovedale

Pastoral notes The session are also conscious of the need for us to be praying together as we look for a minister to serve with us. We plan to have these prayer meetings together regularly on Wednesday or Friday evenings, or before worship on a Sunday. The first of these meetings is scheduled for Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2008. Please mark it in your diaries.

### Hastings

50th Wedding Anniversary. We wish to express our thankfulness to the Lord, and warmest congratulations to our parents and grandparents, Arie and Marina van Seventer, as they have been truly blessed with 50 years of happy marriage. "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, His love endures forever" Ps. 130 vs. 1 With love from Craig and Vera and family, Jerf and Carla and family, Dan and Bonnie and family and Al and Sonja and family.

Wedding banns. Lord willing on Saturday the 29th December at 11.30 am, Ilse van Beek and Matthew Heeringa will exchange their wedding vows. The ceremony will be

held in our garden at 265 Twyford Road, Hastings (weather permitting, otherwise to be held at the church.) As part of our extended church family you are all warmly invited to celebrate this happy occasion with us. Coffee and tea will be served after the service. All welcome. "We wait in hope for the Lord, He is our help and our shield. In Him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His holy name." Ps 33 vs 20-21.

From the Pastor. At the end of the year, it is good that we give thanks for what God has done over the past year. Every beat of our hearts and every breath we breathe has been a gift from God's Fatherly hand. He has provided for all our daily needs: food, shelter, and clothing and has given us a great abundance beyond our needs. He has granted us every spiritual gift in Christ: forgiveness of all our sins, the white robes of Christ's righteousness in which alone we can dwell in the presence of God, the promise to be with us by His Spirit always, the assurance that we will never be separated from the love of God in Christ, and an inheritance reserved in heaven for us. For all these gifts let us give Him thanks. As a new year approaches let us also renew our commitment to serve Him. It is a great privilege to serve the King of kings and the Lord of lords who gave Himself to serve us. In order to do that we are called to renew our minds so that we are not conformed to this world. One of the best ways to do that is to take time each day to remove the influences of the world (the Lord speaks of going into an inner room and shutting the door) in order to read His Word, meditate on it and commune with Him in prayer. If you don't have such a habit, make it a habit this coming year.

Baby for Nigel and Michelle Cunningham. Some of you missed hearing or seeing the announcement earlier, so here are the details: Irene Amberley Rose Cunningham was born January 4, 2008, weighing in at 6lb 11oz (3.040kg). All went well, and the family is rejoicing in God's goodness to them.

### Mangere

Pastoral. As a result of last Sunday afternoon's text for the sermon – Article X of the Belgic Confession of Faith – a number of folk scurried for their dictionaries afterwards to look up the word 'effulgence'. Apparently it could not be found. But if you have a dictionary old enough it gives the definition of "being radiant." So then it

would mean Jesus Christ is the image of the Father's substance and the radiance of His glory, equal with Him in all things. Other versions of the Belgic translate it to the effect that Jesus "bears the very stamp of His nature," or is "the reflection of His glory."

### Masterton

The Session discussed the sending of Jan-Erik Stolte to Theological College to study in preparation for a call to the ministry. The subject of which seminary we send him to was discussed. The elders and deacons decided to send Jan-Erik to Mid-America Reformed Seminary. There were several reasons behind this decision. First was the character of education received at Mid-America. Mid-America is a school whose sole purpose is to train men for the ministry of the Word. This allows them to maintain a single focus and develop an education which is tailored to the needs of the ministry. Secondly, this school is highly recommended by several within the denomination. Thirdly, Jan-Erik indicated that he thought this school would better equip him for the challenges that he would face in the ministry.

### North Shore

News & Announcements Congratulations to John and Marielle Posthuma as their new daughter was born early last Monday morning, weighing 4kg (8lb13oz) and has been named Anneke Elise.

### Palmerston North

Congratulations!! Congratulations to James and Leah de Vries and extended family on the birth of their daughter. Charlotte Johanna de Vries was born, by emergency C-section, on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December at 9:55am, weighing in at 8lb 1oz. We thank the Lord that she is a healthy baby, and pray He will be with Leah during the next few weeks of recovery.

### Pukekohe

Wedding: It is with joy that we announce the wedding of Jodie de Ridder to Tim Jochem. Unless there are lawful objections, this will take place at 3pm on Friday 21 December at Taradale (near Hastings). The wedding service will be led by Rev John Haverland. We wish you a happy and blessed day Tim and Jodie.

## Letter to the editor

### A response to *Higher Education – for Girls?*

Sally Davey asks a vital question: *Higher Education – for Girls?* As a mother of two daughters I would answer a hearty yes. A woman's calling as a helper to her husband is a demanding one whether he is a plumber, a politician or a preacher. Furthermore, the training up of children has eternal consequences; it is the keeping of the covenant. Therefore daughters need to be thoroughly equipped to carry out this task. Where I beg to differ is with the definition of 'higher education' and how and where it may be obtained. I have always appreciated Sally's articles in the past and hesitate to criticise, however I feel compelled by the importance of this issue to respond.

What is 'higher education'? The question reminds me of the story of a young man who went to his uncle who was a Rabbi.

'Uncle,' he said, 'I think it would be good to learn some of the Greek wisdom [higher education].'

'Hmm,' the Rabbi said, stroking his beard, 'You know the Scripture commands us to meditate on the Lord, day and night... so you find some time that is neither day nor night and you may use that time to study 'Greek wisdom'.'

#### **A Christian parent's responsibility**

Our duty to all of our children including our daughters is that they receive the highest education: to know God and His Word and to learn about His creation by 'thinking God's thoughts after Him.' My question is, can this education be found in a 'secular' institution such as a university? My concern with Sally's article is the proposition that our girls need to achieve some kind of tertiary qualification, a degree irrespective of where it is gained, in order to be equipped to do what God calls them to do. The implication is that they are not well equipped if they do not undertake a course of university study. The pursuit of 'higher education' is suddenly necessary to become a wife of noble character. If this was so, then surely Scripture would tell us.

Four of our sons have studied at University. Three sons sought qualifications for

professions for which they had a strong calling and which helped to equip them for their task to exercise dominion. In order to persevere, they really needed a strong commitment to the end goal. We ensured that they were very well prepared and supported. Nevertheless, it was a trial for each of them. One son did not have a strong calling. He went to 'find himself' but found only confusion. The experience has not benefited him. We regret that he went to University. If young men who are called to contend in the 'market place of ideas' can fall prey to the folly and temptations of the world, how much more vulnerable are young women as the weaker vessels, the daughters of the 'one who was deceived and became a sinner' (1 Tim: 14b)?

Our two daughters will not go to University except under very extraordinary circumstances, such as if they are called to a profession which is suitable for a woman or if they are gifted for the single life. Even so, we will seek a Christian institution or an alternative means of gaining the qualification. We will not subject them to an environment which has become actively hostile to Christianity. In the past God was simply ignored, thus robbed of His rightful glory. Today the environment has become more openly antagonistic to the faith; there are direct assaults on the character and authority of God and on His followers. Some of the blasphemy and profanity published in official university publications is so vile as to leave a permanent effect. This was evident when even the normally lenient chief censor found an issue of *Critic*, the Otago University student magazine, offensive to the extreme. This is not hyperbole; it is a fact of university life.

Young Christians fall, lose their faith and sear their consciences by not speaking out about these matters. They are guilty by as-

sociation. (H.C. LD 36). 'Be not deceived, bad company corrupts good character.'(1 Cor.15:33) Sally acknowledges the danger. 'Many a young person has had his or her faith undermined because of the subtle- and sometimes open – challenges to the gospel that come from unbelieving university lecturers.' (Emphasis mine.) What if it is my young daughter or yours? Considering what the Bible says about the enormity of causing our children to stumble, should we allow even one vulnerable soul to 'be drawn away into sin...'? As a parent, I find the idea at odds with our covenant vows. Furthermore though Sally discusses the dangers, she offers no answers or any solid reasoning using Scripture or other evidence to allay those fears; she simply dismisses them as if the mere mention of them is sufficient as an argument. This tactic makes it confusing to interact with the article.

#### **The influence of the world**

The article outlines some of the objections that some Christians have. One is a 'spin' (lie?) 'added to the truth that most Christian girls will be wives and mothers some day. This, claim the objectors, is their great calling in life and this is what they should prepare for.' So far, I have not detected the 'spin'. However, I am quite offended to be caricaturized as a 'book burner' and to have slogans such as 'philosophy and nappies don't mix!!' attributed to those of us who believe that becoming a godly wife and training up godly children is indeed a high and Biblical calling, one that requires considerable preparation by the ones called by God to do so — the parents. Perhaps what some would term 'spin' is really the practical application of the Biblical truth, i.e. doing rather than merely hearing the Word. Worldliness is pervasive and insidi-



ous. What is now regarded as the 'normal' life is very often indistinguishable from the patterns of the world and those who strive to live out Biblical principles are often branded 'hyper' something or other.

Is the preparation for marriage and motherhood really such a casual matter that our daughters can defer it while they 'get to know themselves better'? Where in Scripture are they called to do so? The pursuit of self is the world's chief delight and its persistent quest. Despite a plethora of books, self-help courses and devoted gurus, the world is ever more confused and lost. Has the quest for self-knowledge better equipped the people of the world in any way? The clear evidence actually proves the opposite; the preoccupation with self knowledge has created a generation unprecedented for selfishness evidenced by de facto/ short term relationships, abortion, divorce, slavery to addiction and the ultimate expressions of self-seeking, suicide and euthanasia. Sally is talking about gaining this self-knowledge in about the most secular place possible. It seems to me that it is like the 'man who looks in a mirror and after looking at himself goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.'(James1:23). Our children need to look away from self to get to know God and his Word better.

Is the standard set in Proverbs 31 so low that a humanistic secular institution is as good a place as any to prepare our daughters? Is a degree the key? Is it true that a 'university education actually enhances a woman's usefulness as a wife and mother.'? Are a woman's powers of critical thinking, analysis, discernment and even her ability to weigh up Scripture developed in an institution that patently sets out to stifle critical thinking and discernment? The egalitarian push for 'higher' education for all has resulted in higher education for none. It has helped produce a generation of young people who dress alike, speak alike, eat alike, drink alike and think alike. Why are we not astonished when even red-blooded farm boys and girls come home from Uni, ashamed to eat meat and suspiciously eyeing their fathers' cows as the culprits that are destroying the climate? People shrug and accept it as part of the 'university experience'. As Sally says, 'we see women attending university in numbers equal or greater than men.' We also see a corresponding decline in the birth rate and rise in the abortion rate (highest among 'educated' career women) and large numbers of children being raised in day-

care. Staying at home to raise children is despised and even Christian mothers feel the pressure. Such is the fruit of greater numbers of women sporting degrees.

### **The common caricature of men**

This age is marked by a pervasive undermining of the father as the leader (not co-leader) of his household. Media and culture depict men as fools, buffoons and women as the real 'brains of the operation'. Worse yet, men are now portrayed as a danger to women and children. We are so accustomed to seeing this that when a man faithfully exercises his headship it is seen as some kind of extremism. As people of God, we ought to be living out a Biblical lifestyle that clearly upholds the father as the God-ordained authority in each and every home. We subtly but effectively aid this erosion of the Scriptural standard by implying that it is 'extreme' for a daughter to stay at home under her father's authority and his protection. I daresay there are parents who wish they had 'clutched' their children a little closer to themselves and prevented the loss of their children to rebellion and its consequences. It can certainly be a benefit for young people to learn from other wise adults, but it should not be left to them alone to discern who is wise.

Fathers have been supplanted by many 'experts'. Children spend the greatest proportion of time being trained outside the home away from mother and especially father. It seems to me that the parents' training effectively ends once the child is potty trained, from then on they are put into the care of kindergarten, infant school, primary and secondary school. Now it is proposed that even the short time before a daughter is married should be taken up by even more time away from home. Our families are so conformed to the patterns of the world that it is seen as some kind of deprivation for a child to be at home. Parents' good intentions to provide the best for their children have been subverted into merely providing the funds to pay others to do the job. Children should be blessings to the household, their youthful vigour and strength should be a joy and comfort to the parents and should prosper the household. There is no better time or place for a daughter to learn how to 'deal with the stresses and strains of living with [an]other sinner[s] in the intimacy [familiarity] of marriage [family]' than when she is able to spend time at particularly her mother's side learning that 'the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world'.

As a member of that class the 'ignorant, unwashed' I confess that I ain't 'ad no edukashun.' Rather than hindering my contribution to educate our children, it made me strive all the harder. The most important aspect for our family is the leadership provided by the head of the house, the children's father. How I thank the Lord for his ability to 'accurately divide Scripture', his authority which ensures discipline and his example which models virtue to the children. What a relief it is for me that he takes up that responsibility for as the weaker vessel I cannot bear it.

### **The vital importance of Scripture**

There are a number of ways to obtain a higher education without having to "drink from polluted cisterns" or go to those who sit in the seat of mockers. Firstly, we can all gain the highest knowledge by studying Scripture. There are many correspondence courses such as those offered by the R.T.C. if a structured course is desired. What about seeking out our fathers, elders, pastors and husbands as teachers? We have the freedom to read books and articles that are wholesome, instructive and build us up in love and good deeds. A higher education can be gained by conversing with 'older women' and following their Godly examples, part of the blessing of church life. If qualifications are sought for specific occupations there are many extramural courses available. Some Christian institutions also offer apprentice-style training courses and finally there are Christian universities. Admittedly these are overseas, and may necessitate great changes to a young woman's life such as leaving home. However if a daughter was called to the single life, and thus to a profession for example, then this would become evident with the passage of time so she would be older and more mature in any case having spent the intervening years at home.

Yes, the Apostle Paul was greatly used by God and his great learning was used as a tool to communicate the Gospel. Yet despite his fine education, Paul was blind to the truth until he was confronted by the Lord Jesus Himself and then his eyes were opened. As a result, Paul pronounced his worldly advantages including his previous education as 'rubbish' and that he wanted only to 'know Christ' (Philippians 3). The inescapable fact is that Paul was an extraordinary *man* raised up in an extraordinary way, at an extraordinary time to an extraordinary task. Not all are called to

be apostles but all are to be witnesses to the truth of God's Word, which calls men and women to different but crucial roles. We women are not called to be poor copies of men or to follow the way of the world, but to pursue our unique God-given task with all the strength and ability that our gracious Lord equips us with according to God's plan. That way, God will do wonderful things for His people.

**Mrs. Hans Vaatstra**

## Reply

Dear Sir, I would like to respond briefly to Mrs Vaatstra's letter. I have no wish to

engage in a point-by-point rebuttal, as I am fond of Lisa. We have, however, had a pleasant and helpful telephone conversation and discussed the matter. I would simply like to make the following points:

I have always believed that higher education is merely a useful tool, something to be used in God's service. It is not a prerequisite for either marriage or motherhood. Clearly, university education should never be a source of pride for the woman who has had the opportunity to pursue it. Most importantly of all, it can never replace knowledge of God gained through study of the Scriptures. Gaining

this knowledge is of the first importance, and should be the great effort of our entire lives. Nevertheless, university study, if entered into by a mature, godly and discerning young woman, is useful training. I did believe I had made these points reasonably clearly in my article, but I am very happy to re-emphasize them. I have no desire to minimize the importance of parents, family or church in any young woman's life.

Yours sincerely,

**Sally Davey**

## Family Camp 07/08 ‘... For such a time as this.’

Family camp for this year was a 'bang-up' success. The weather was spectacular as well as the general atmosphere. A great time was had by all as parents caught up with old friends, teenagers made and remade friendships, and kids had stacks of fun. Based on the book of Esther, the studies were led by Reverend Bajema on '...for such a time as this.' It was an interesting study and everyone got a lot out of it. Overall it was some 'jawsum' week!

What fun it was waking up at 7.30 am everyday and getting ready for breakfast at 8. Now you might be thinking: 'Ay? That isn't much of a sleep-in; I wanna real

holiday.' But if that was going to be your mindset, you missed out on breakfast. Soon after (around 9) it was devotions and kids club. Finishing around 12.00, lunch was next at 12.30. The food was 'sweet as' and the cooks made sure they fed you a healthy and filling meal every time. Free time followed after lunch and this was generally the time where sports were undertaken and activities were opened. Around four-five hours long, this was the highlight of the day. Eventually, as another day came to a close, dinner became evident (at 5.30). Devotions came after at around about 8.00 pm. During this time, we sometimes had special guest speakers like Dr van Dalen who spoke to us about the Christian hospital in Sahiwal, Pakistan and conditions there, as well as Mr and Mrs Waldron who spoke to us about their

mission serving indigenous people in Australia. After devotions came supper and the usual chit-chat before lights out at 11 pm. This was the general daily routine when special events weren't on.

Sports that were played included soccer, touch rugby and volleyball with unfortunately old balmy Palmy (nah just jokes, Palmy) winning all of the above. Activities included the waterslide, the rope swing (yeyah!), kayaks, glow worms, swimming (in the pool and the river), biscuiting (cheers, Mr. Spies. That last wave was 'mean'...!), chatting, games such as table-tennis, sports, flying-fox, relaxing, eating, 'animal survival', the barn dance, etc. And for all those who enjoy the luxuries of life, the canteen was open all week (apart from Sunday, of course). Unique experiences put in place were a night under the stars for the youth which included kayaking or barging to a location for the night, and a 1<sup>st</sup> time ever actual kayak journey to the glow worms!

Royalty was the theme of family camp this year and, wow, there were a lot of costumes. Kings and queens, princes and princesses, bodyguards and even our very own 'dish-licking crew' (who almost went on strike) were present. A vast array of 'royalty' from all around the nation gathered at this, our very own, Finlay Park for a royal buffet dinner. I was so honored to be there.

New Year's Eve was a crack-up event. On the night, we had a 'sweet as' dinner outside which was quite cool, despite the mosquitoes. After dinner, we prepared ourselves for a fun barn dance. The dancing was kind of out-of-time at first, but nevertheless, most of us got it in the end. Oliebollen were laid out after the barn dance finished, and they tasted great! As the adults talked, a movie was put on (Night at the Museum) and about two hours later, the final count down was at hand.

### A personal account:

For me, family camp 07/08 was another great experience. I had stacks of fun as I renewed friendships from past years and once again had fun with my mates. Together, we listened in on the studies and discussed questions in our groups; it was great to mix with other Christians for the week. The atmosphere is more appealing because you know you can trust each other.

I thought the studies were real good in the way they were presented; not only by the speaker, but by the group and audience participation. Reverend Bajema had written study sheets for the devotion so that we could get involved. We could write down answers to the questions and then discuss them first within our study group and then later on within the wider group. That was cool, I reckon.

During the week, I got involved in a lot of fun which involved the pool, the river, the kayaks, the rope swing, etc. It was beyond that of the pools back home mostly due to the facts that there weren't so many people, I knew everyone and there was a whole lot more water. However, not all the fun was had in the water. On the field, there was a lot more challenging fun. I played soccer, volleyball and touch rugby for Hamilton. We almost got the soccer, but Palmerston North managed to get it in the end. Beware though Palmy, we'll get you next year!

In the end, family camp, I reckon, is an excellent camp. I highly recommend it with this rating: A+. Well, I hope you've been informed and we'll see you next year.

**Johan Kloeg**

Fireworks were sent off as we all celebrated the New Year. When the excitement died down, everyone slumped off to bed.

The concert was another highlight I looked forward to. A lot of acts were staged involving singers, musical instruments, readings and comedy. It was a terrific evening and I really enjoyed it. 'Clap clap' to all those who took part in it!

Overall, what did we get out of it? Easy! **Together** we had a **great time** and **learnt** more on how **we** should **live our lives** for **Christ** in this world.  
See you next year!

### The Kloeg family from Hamilton.

(There are further digital images available of the Family Camp at the Website or from the editor.)

