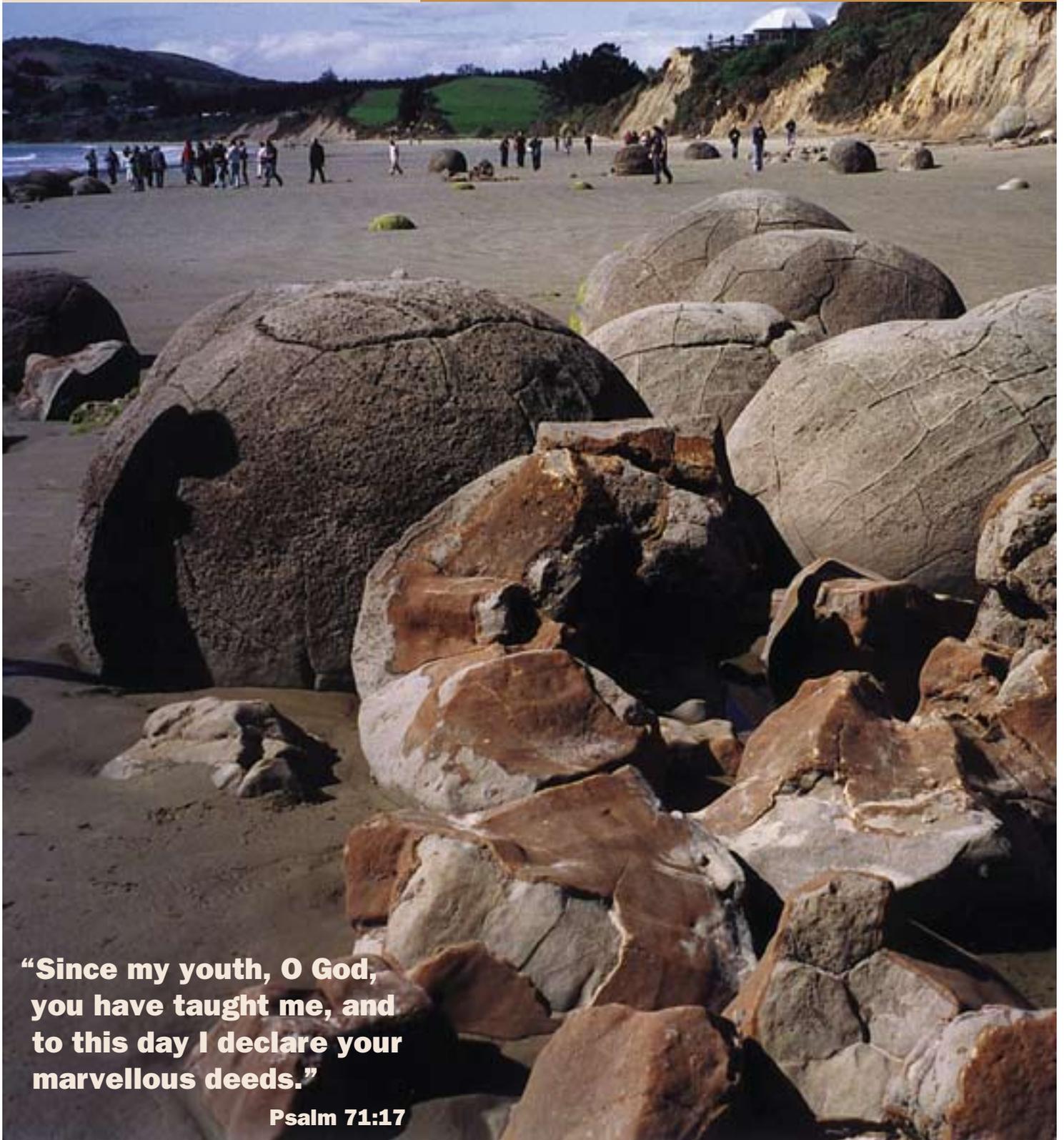


faith in **focus**

Magazine of the
Reformed Churches
of New Zealand

VOLUME 33/4 MAY 2006



**“Since my youth, O God,
you have taught me, and
to this day I declare your
marvellous deeds.”**

Psalm 71:17

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Editorial

The news from northern Nigeria that Muslims are burning down churches because of the Muhammed cartoons is no surprise. The Muslims there have been persecuting the Christians in this way and other far more horrific ways for some years now. This has especially been occurring since the northern states in Nigeria have implemented the Islamic sharia laws.

What is happening there and in many other places in the Islamic world proves the saying which goes, "If you want to hit a dog you'll always find a stick." And fundamentalist Islam will find its stick. Whether it's some pretty mild cartoons (certainly compared with what the media has satirised Christianity with), the release of another video showing abuses by western armed forces in Iraq, or whatever, they'll hit out. Patrick Sookhdeo's interesting comparison of the two faiths in this issue shows that quite clearly. And with the present position Islam has, this is not going to change. The 'World in focus' column continues to bring us more proof of that. And as we've seen in western countries with Muslim populations, it will affect us close to home too.

The Australian Labour M.P. was quite right when she expressed the concern that white Australians are aborting themselves in such numbers (100,000 babies every year) that in fifty years time Australia will be a Muslim country. That won't be a nice place to live in.

But she didn't exactly say what kind of country she wanted Australia to be then. Like it is now? Because the way Australia and all the western countries are now isn't much better. In fact, the raft of social engineering legislation our leaders have been pursuing will make being a faithful Christian here as difficult as being in a Moslem country.

Why do the nations rage and the kings of the earth plot in vain?

The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One.

"Let us break off their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters."

The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the LORD scoffs at them.

Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill."

Psalm 2:1-6

Photo: The rocks at Moeraki Beach, North Otago

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.

A level playing field?

Comparing the different treatment of Christianity and Islam

Dr Patrick Sookhdeo

Sir Iqbal Sacranie, secretary general of the Muslim Council of Britain, has said that he wishes to see Muhammad protected from insult or disrespect. Interestingly, he did not make this remark in the context of the current furore over the Danish cartoons of Muhammad. He said it much earlier, in a debate on BBC Radio 4's *The Moral Maze* on the subject of legislation to ban incitement to religious hatred. Sacranie's hope was that the new law once passed would be used to protect Muhammad from any negative criticism.

Sacranie was greatly disappointed with the form in which the religious hatred bill was eventually passed on 31st January, and complained of injustice and impediments to the promotion of a cohesive and harmonious society in Britain. However, he may soon find his hopes for the protection of Muhammad are fulfilled in the wake of the international response to the Danish cartoons of the Islamic prophet, a response which appears to have been not only orchestrated but deliberately aggravated.

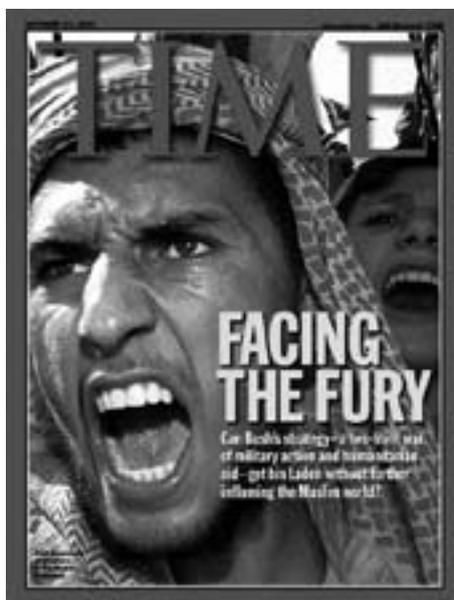
The worldwide responses to the cartoons have raised two questions: (1) Why are Muslims, even "moderate" Muslims, so passionate in the defence of Muhammad from any kind of slight? (2) Why do British politicians and church leaders feel the need to tread so delicately around Muslim sensibilities?

Why this passionate defence of Muhammad?

The answer to the first question lies in the veneration of Muhammad. This is a paradoxical aspect of Islam, which in theory affirms the believer's direct access to God without the need for any intercessor. Accordingly, Muhammad should be viewed by Muslims as simply a human channel for God's revelation. In practice, however, Muhammad's figure towers over Islam not just as its founder, but as the "perfect man" who was divinely inspired not only in his Qur'anic revelations, but in all his sayings and deeds. He is considered infallible, free from sin, and serves as the supreme example which all Muslims are obliged to emulate in every small detail. Muhammad is also seen as the intercessor with God who can change the divine decrees and admit those he intercedes for into para-

dise. Love for Muhammad (and his family) is deeply inculcated into most Muslim children. Many Muslims, especially in the Indian sub-continent, hold that Muhammad was created from an eternal heavenly substance (Muhammadan light) that pre-existed with God. He is a logos-like figure similar to Christ—a sinless saviour, mediator and intercessor.

A main concern of Muslims is the person of Muhammad, who must be protected from any criticism or slight. Protecting his honour is an obligation on all. Any suspected denigration of Muhammad immediately creates disturbances and riots in many Muslim



countries and communities, more so than blasphemy against Allah himself.

The antipathy towards pictures of Muhammad stems from several of his own comments, as recorded in traditions which Muslims call hadith. An example is his statement that "angels do not enter a house in which there is a dog or a picture" (Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith 5.338). However, this has not been taken as an absolute prohibition in all kinds of Islam at all times: witness the numerous examples of Muslim paintings of Muhammad in earlier centuries.

Many Muslims have vocalised their outrage that the Danish cartoons could be interpreted as suggesting that Muhammad was a "terrorist". Here too is a paradox. These Muslims seek to portray Muhammad as a Jesus-figure, a peace-maker and channel of God's mercy, motivated by a profound

love for humanity, who treated his enemies with forbearance, even kindness. They say that Muhammad (himself) never killed anyone. Yet Muhammad was a general who led his army in wars of conquest against non-Muslims, and under whom brutalities were committed against some of his opponents. His words and example are cited by the most militant of Muslims today as the justification for their violence, which others call terrorism.

Why are people being so sensitive to Muslims particularly?

The second question concerns the reason for the special treatment of Muslims, in contrast to that of other groups. Ask a British politician or church leader why they feel Muslim feelings should be protected and their reply will probably include words like "respect," "sensitivity," "courtesy" etc. But is this the real reason? It can be tested by comparing the treatment of Muslim sensibilities with the treatment of another faith's sensibilities—e.g. Christians. Do the same voices protest against the numerous shows, artworks and writings which Christians find offensive and blasphemous? Do they call for Christian feelings to be protected? The answer is no. The reason for this double standard appears to be not "sensitivity," but "fear". Non-Muslim society—including the Church—is afraid of angering Muslims because of what they might do in retaliation. And what some of them might do was clearly seen in the placards carried by Muslim marchers in Britain last weekend with slogans such as "Massacre those who insult Islam" or "Whoever insults a prophet kill him."

The motivation of fear also explains the double standards of the Metropolitan Police during the demonstrations in London against the cartoons. None of those carrying placards calling for murder or beheading was arrested. Scotland Yard explained that the decision not to arrest was taken because they feared a riot would have ensued. They did, however, arrest two other protestors, who were carrying cartoons of Muhammad. Police said they were detained to "prevent a breach of the peace." Evidently they did not fear a non-Muslim riot, only a Muslim riot.

The police have also shown double standards in their treatment of Christian evangelists, especially in Muslim areas of the UK. There have been several incidents

where police have intervened to prevent such evangelism, but Islam is strangely untouched.

Fear could also explain the strangely arrogant attitude of the government whereby they expect the public to formulate an opinion on the matter of the cartoons without having actually seen them. Unless fear is a motive this would seem to imply an astonishing lack of respect for the British people, treating them like children.

As a result of this fear we are on the verge of creating a no-go area in society, which would allow Muslims to dictate the terms on which they will relate to the rest

of the population and ban the discussion of certain subjects. The suggestion is that there are religious taboos linked to “core identity” which should be off-limits to others.

Gross hypocrisy

At first sight, this seems a very generous and compassionate response to a minority in our midst. Yet it could prove to be the thin end of the wedge. It could soon be followed by Muslim requests to have this voluntary self-censorship enshrined in law, by means of new blasphemy legislation to protect Muhammad from criticism. The thick end of this particular wedge might be laws like those in

Pakistan, where since 1991 there has been a mandatory death penalty for “defiling the name of” Muhammad (Section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code). Furthermore, Muslims might seek a news/debate black-out on other issues connected with their “core identity” such as the treatment of women in Islam, honour killings, or the death penalty for Muslims who convert to another faith. Then these important human rights issues could no longer be discussed in the UK.

The uneven playing field is a characteristic of Islam. While Muslims rampage in fury about cartoons of Muhammad, no mention is made of the highly offensive anti-Christian and anti-Jewish cartoons produced by some Muslims, including blasphemous depictions of Christ. Contrary to what Jack Straw has said, there is an open season to vilify Christianity.

A compliant press, an insipid Church and a pusillanimous government—all three erring on the side of pragmatism—are effectively allowing the playing field to be tilted in favour of Islam. If ordinary British non-Muslims perceive this tilt, i.e. that non-Muslim society has in effect submitted to Muslims, a submission borne of fear, how will they react? Is it possible that the British National Party will be the beneficiaries, being viewed as the only true protector of British values and Britain’s Christian heritage?

Definitely not “peace in our time”

Has the time come for Christians to be more assertive and demand their rights—the freedom to proclaim the Gospel without intimidation even in Muslim areas of Britain, and the withdrawal of material from the public domain which blasphemes against Christ? Should not the Church speak out to affirm the continuing importance of Britain’s Judaeo-Christian heritage? And should we not all remember our history? Appeasement does not ultimately bring peace.

Article written for Church of England newspaper, 7th February 2006. Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo was brought up as a Muslim in Guyana, South America, and migrated to England with his family, while still young. In England he came to examine his Islamic faith and understanding. He was converted to Christianity while at University, where he studied Islam and gained his PhD. He set up the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity— is its director, and also the director of the Barnabas Fund in Britain (www.barnabasfund.org)

Ascended

Here will I make a horn grow for David and set a lamp for my Anointed One. I will clothe His enemies with shame, but the crown on His head will be resplendent.

Ps. 137: 16, 17 (NIV)

Resplendent cradle? Only a feedbox; Lowly mother, Carpenter Father,
A borrowed stable for His birth.

No earthly glory, No world’s media; Just anxious mother to ponder in her heart,
And shepherds from work in the fields to see The One born to universality,
In a manger, resplendent with His glory.

Resplendent cross? Gallows of shadow, Women watching at its foot;
A criminal cross for His death.

Earthly shame, Soldiers and enemies, The mother, heart pierced by a sword,
And murderers, justly condemned, yet mocking The One born to die for you and for me.
That cross, resplendent with His presence,
A cross of glory, Heaven would see.

Resplendent tomb—Yet not His own. Only a few of the women behold—
A rich man’s cave for His place of rest.

No funeral of honour, Secretly buried: The fearful disciples had fled.
Sealed with a stone, soldiers to guard, to watch that none steal him away.
But angels watched too, All heaven was aware, Awaiting the dawn of the fairest day,
The day of the One Whom the grave could not hold,
Empty tomb, resplendent with victory,
A cave of joy and life and hope.

Resplendent crown—And a throne of glory? God and Man, royal, divine—
A crown of thorns for His head.

His only throne on earth’s darkest day, was that criminal cross, lifted up from earth
A throne of mockery and mirth
But now, paradoxical? Whom do we see Clothed in magnificence, seraphim worshipping?
Mankind who mocked Him trembling in fear, Cringing before this majestic Judge?
Judge of Justice, Judge of knowledge; King for all eternity.
No mocking now, no insult or jeer from the voices of those who have learnt to fear.
Yet Judge of Mercy, appointed eternally—Known as the Judge who does Right.

Brilliant crown—No longer of thorns, Crown of a King once born to die;
Risen, ascended, exalted, forgiving. Believing, we perish not, you nor I.
Brilliant throne, as we see it now; Glorious Redeemer before Whom we bow.

Worship the One Who came from above, Worship the One Who came in love,
To a humble cradle, a shameful cross, laid in a borrowed tomb,
Who forever will wear that right of His own,
An eternal, resplendent, ethereal crown.

Patricia van Laar

Home mission in focus

Christianity Explored – Questions and Answers

Michael Flinn

Last year in our congregation in Christchurch, we ran *Christianity Explored* for the first time. We found the course so helpful and encouraging in our evangelism that we would like to share it with you. The following article is written in the form of an imaginary interview in which I have tried to anticipate some of the questions you might have. If there is something that I have missed, please feel free to contact me at mflinn@xtra.co.nz.

What is Christianity Explored?

It is a course that introduces people to the person and work of Christ over a period of 10 weeks using Mark's gospel as a basis. Participants read the gospel of Mark and come together to discuss such topics as "Jesus, Who was he?", "Jesus—Why did he come?", "What is grace?" "What is a Christian?", "Continuing as a Christian", etc. The course, which is really a series of basic Bible studies, was produced by a man called Rico Tice, the pastor of All Souls Church in London.

Is it a sound course and how does it fit in Reformed churches?

I'd heard *Christianity Explored* billed as "the conservative answer to Alpha", and I would say that is about right. It uses the Alpha concept—shared meals, video presentations, discussions and question and answer times, and even the weekend away (although you don't have to do this—we got together on a Saturday morning and had a shared lunch and it went fine). But it is very biblical throughout and its explanation of the church, prayer, and the person and work of the Holy Spirit is sound.

Who is it for?

Well, the course has a variety of uses. It would be great for introducing a friend or neighbour to the gospel and could be run on a more personal basis in your home or in

your friend's home. If you want to hear the videos for each study, you will need access to a television and video recorder. You could dispense with that and just do the Bible studies with a friend, but Rico's presentations are good and help set the tone for positive discussion. It's also less threatening for people to listen together to what someone else has to say than to have to give answers to study questions right from the start.

We ran the course with about 16 people coming from all three of our congregations in Christchurch. This works best with a person inviting a friend or neighbour along, and coming with him/her. You don't want to weight the discussions with too many Christians, if I can put it that way. And the Christians who do attend need to realise that the goal is to explore *the basics* of the Christian faith and message for those who know little or nothing about it. It is not to demonstrate how much



he or she knows about the Bible or raise all sorts of detailed theological issues that frighten off people who are inquiring about Christianity for the first time. In the first couple of meetings, I pointed out what the course was all about and (with a smile) said that if I thought any question would take us down a rabbit hole, then I'd pass on it and leave it until after the group discussion when I could speak to the person privately. The folk who came quickly caught on to this and the discussions went very well. That said, the course is also helpful for those who want to learn how to share the gospel with people in a clear way (it shows us a good example of how to evangelise a friend or neighbour).

How did you get people to come along?

As I say, we made the course available to all three congregations, informed everyone about it and invited expressions of interest. We also prayed about it publicly and asked people to think and pray about inviting someone along. We had people from many different backgrounds and a cross section of ages too, which was great. The course went so well, that we had everyone attend for the

entire time, and if someone had to miss out a discussion, it was common for people to give their apologies and/or ask for the video tape so that they could "keep up".

Is it necessary to run the meal or can you do without that?

The meal was prepared by ladies in our congregation, which was fantastic, although it does take a bit of organization, as you can imagine. People were rostered on and brought along the meal. We sat around tables in the church lounge and, after a short prayer, ate together. The meal took around 30-40 minutes. The ladies did an excellent job and were great hosts. One blessing of this is that folk in the congregation really feel part of the course even though they may not be attending. It's a community effort and that helps to have more people involved in the outreach ministry. It's also not a bad thing, after a while, to ask course participants to bring along dessert. That helps them to own the course as well, and feel that they are contributing. At the end of the course, we asked the participants what they thought about the meal, whether it was necessary. They all said that it was really helpful in breaking down barriers between people. Over the meal those attending the course could get to know each other better and this led to more open and relaxed discussion afterwards. So all up, it really is worth it if you can arrange it.

What happens after that?

After the meal, we retired to another room, which we had set up with a video recorder and tables. For the first 20 minutes or so, we would discuss any issues or questions that arose from the previous week's "home study". (Yes, there is some homework, but no-one had any problem with doing this). After that, we would go to the video presentation (these are about 20-25 minutes long, making them shorter than the Alpha videos). We'd then discuss this for about 15 minutes. All up, including the meal, the sessions lasted about two hours. We ran them from 6.30-8.30 on Friday nights.

How easy is it to run the discussions?

The course is very well set out. Each participant receives a study guide, which we supplied free of charge. But in addition to that, the course comes with a guidebook entitled "How to Run the Course" and a

“Study Guide Leaders’ Edition”. We also supplied Bibles obtained from the Bible League, which we made available for people to purchase if they wanted one. It is important to have the same edition of the Bible being used so that the presenter can refer to page numbers. Remember, people who are inquiring about Christianity do not know their way around a Bible, and this courtesy is very much appreciated. The material is so well set out that it is very easy to lead it (the leaders’ edition even supplies the answers to the discussion questions!). But you do need to lead in a way that is not overbearing or intimidating. The whole idea is that people can *explore* Christianity by asking questions in a non-threatening forum. They are not yet ready for a lengthy sermon! It is helpful if you have a relaxed, easy manner with people and are able to use humour from time to time.

In terms of content, there should be any number of people in your congregation who can take people through this course. You don’t need to have a minister lead it and if a question comes up that you cannot answer, you can always put a “rain check” on it and come back with a response next week. In fact, at the beginning, people are asked: If you could ask God one question, and you knew it would be answered what would it be? The responses we had were wide ranging: “Why is there so much evil and suffering in the world?” “What happens when we die?”, etc. We then wrote these up on the whiteboard and referred to them from time to time as we went through the course. It is great when people come to see biblical answers to their questions but the answers don’t all have to come in the first session!

Is there any follow-up afterwards?

That’s a good question. Towards the end of course, we showed people the type of material that was available including basic Bible Studies and books on aspects of the Christian life and faith and where they could get hold of these. Especially when people are coming from different congregations, it is important that local sessions know who is attending *Christianity Explored* so that they can follow these folk up appropriately afterwards. The group discussions went so well that the participants wanted to come together again after some time to “catch up” with each other and discuss another topic, but again, personal follow-up work really needs to be done by people locally. Ideally, people should be ready to start coming to worship services after they have been to this

course, and they should not be so “foreign” to them, but they may still not be ready for this. You have to tailor the follow-up to where people are at.

Would you see this as a suitable course to run on a regular basis?

Absolutely! We hope that it will be run each year in Christchurch, with the hosting of the course perhaps shared between the three congregations. If we know that the course will be run annually, then we can think and pray about inviting specific people. Also, if you are running the course, you can pass on the information and contact details to the *Christianity Explored* website (www.christianityexplored.org.nz). Then if someone is interested in doing the course, he/she can search for a church in their area that



runs it, so you may have people coming to you and asking when the next course is available.

Where can I get the course and is it available on DVD as well as video?

The best place to look for it is the website mentioned above. This will tell you where you can order the material from. You can decide how much you want to get hold of and in what format (both DVD and video are now available) but I do recommend that if you are running the course for the first time, get hold of everything. It costs a bit, but it is worth it. Once you have the material, you can keep reusing it and stock up on study guides only.

There is another new course called *Introducing God*. How does *Christianity Explored* compare with that and can they both be used?

Introducing God has been produced by

Dominic Steele, pastor of Annandale Community Church in inner Sydney. It is run along similar lines. Both courses take the best aspects of the Alpha concept but are more theologically sound. Both courses are very versatile and can be used in a variety of ways from one-on-one gospel presentations to home groups to larger group settings. There is some overlap between the two courses, but whereas *Christianity Explored* presents the gospel by working through Mark’s gospel (many participants will read this through for the first time during the course, which is quite a milestone in itself), *Introducing God* begins by looking at the nature of our society and then in the second lesson looks at God the Creator from Genesis 1. Then comes the Fall (Genesis 3) and then Psalm 2 before moving to passages in Luke, Acts and the NT epistles. *Introducing God* aims to convey the biblical world and life view (the broad sweep of the biblical message) to people who know little or nothing at all about Christianity. It might be useful to run this course first, and then, in the next year or six-month period run *Christianity Explored*.

One final question: Did you personally benefit from running the course?

Yes, it was great for me—great to work closely with others in the congregation on something so positive (it has to be a team project) and great to share the gospel with interested people. It really is exciting to see people come to understand the biblical message for the very first time and to start to show signs of a personal response of repentance and faith. The discussions even afforded me some very good sermon illustrations! I heartily recommend this course to all our congregations.

SERMONS ON CD

A series of sermons on the prophecies of Jeremiah are now available on CD in an MP3 format. These sermons were preached by Rev John Haverland in 2005 in the Reformed Church of Pukekohe and sought to apply the prophecies of Jeremiah to the issues and concerns of this present day, both in the church and in society. There are 17 sermons on one CD and this can be listened to on any MP3 capable car stereos or personal CD players, on all computers that take CDs, and on DVD players. Cost: \$5 per disk including postage and packaging. Please write to: The Pukekohe Reformed Church, PO Box 363 enclosing payment, or email Mrs Glenys Dunne – Dunne@xtra.co.nz

World in focus

Hindu extremists attack Christians

Hindu extremists attacked Christians in two incidents in India's Andhra Pradesh state on 12-13 Jan. Seven Christians, including two pastors, sustained injuries. In Nizamabad district on 12 Jan., a mob of about 100 extremists attacked a group of Christians led by the pastor of a Pentecostal church as they distributed Christian pamphlets near a bus stand. Police intervened before they could burn the pastor alive. On 13 Jan., in the same district, members of Hindu extremist group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh dragged five people from a 5-year-old girl's birthday party and beat them. Among the victims was Pastor Nagani Swami David, who was kicked unconscious and left at a Hindu temple.

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

Church burnings continue

A press conference sponsored by the National Coalition for Burned Churches, in partnership with the Center for Democratic Renewal, at a media briefing 17 Feb. in Atlanta, Georgia, issued a plea to the public to help burned churches rebuild and to law enforcement to adopt new measures for responding to fires and helping prevent them.

Church burnings have not stopped over the past 15 years. From 1999 to 2000, some 1,507 church fires were determined to be caused by arson, attempted arson, suspicious, or undetermined, said Rose Johnson-Mackey, the coalition's program director.

Five Baptist churches in Alabama which were in the same vicinity were burned. On 3 Feb., Rehobeth Baptist in Randolph; Ashby Baptist and Old Union Baptist in Brierfield; Pleasant Sabine Baptist in Centerville; and Antioch Baptist in Antioch. New Harmony Holiness Baptist in Fairview, burned the night before.

On 7 Feb. Morning Star Baptist in Boligee; First Dancy Baptist in Pickens County; Galilee Baptist in Panola; and Spring Valley Baptist in Gainesville burned. On 11 Feb., Beaverton Free Will Baptist in Lamar County burned. The Rev. T.G. Mackey Sr., president of the coalition and pastor of Mt. Zion AME church in Greeleyville, South Carolina had his church burned by an arsonist so is

aware of the anguish and challenges of rebuilding.

+ *National Coalition for Burned Churches, PO Box 40784, Charleston, SC 29423 (843) 853-5363*

"Healing oil" sanctioned by Vanuatu Presbyterian church

Thomas Tarisu, a Presbyterian elder from Malaliu village on Nguna has used a passage from the book of Exodus (Ch3 vs. 22-33) in which God directs Moses in the preparation of a sacred anointing oil comprised of fruits to make a local product that has healing properties.

Elder Tarisu said the "healing oil" has cured his backaches and sore knees. Tarisu also mentioned other cases of illness cured by the oil—a skin disease and a paralysis. However, Tarius said "those who need it must have faith in God which is the primary thing. With faith, the anointing oil will heal."

+ *port vila presse, PO Box 637, Port Vila, Efate, Vanuatu*

Katrina rebuilding update

The rebuilding partnership continues between First Presbyterian in Gulfport, Mississippi, and churches as far away as California and Canada. To date around 600 volunteers have stayed at Camp Hope while working there, and about US\$550,000 has been donated for support of ministries and recovery efforts, and as of mid-February about 18 homes have been restored and five more are in various states of repair. Open slots for volunteers to assist between late April and July are available.

+ *First Presbyterian, PO Box 6012, Gulfport, MS 39506 (228) 863-2664*

Peter Akinola on events in Nigeria

The Most Rev'd Peter Akinola, President of the Christian Association of Nigeria speaks out on the recent events in Nigeria stating in part:

That it is very clear now that the sacrifices of the Christians in this country for peaceful co-existence with people of other faiths has been sadly misunderstood to be weakness. We have watched helplessly the killing, maiming and destruction of Christians and their property by Muslim fanatics and fundamentalists at the slightest or no provocation at all.

That an incident in far away Denmark which does not claim to be representing

Christianity could elicit such an unfortunate reaction here in Nigeria, leading to the destruction of Christian Churches, is not only embarrassing, but also disturbing and unfortunate.

It is a no longer a hidden fact that a long-standing agenda to make this Nigeria an Islamic nation is being surreptitiously pursued.

That all acts of hostility meted against Christians by Muslim in the past have remained unaddressed with nobody paying compensations or the culprits brought to justice.

We demand that further destruction of Christian Churches and property in this nation be permanently put to an end and that all levels of government in this country should take adequate steps to protect the lives and property of Christians and that no further destructions will be tolerated or ignored.

+ *The Anglican Communion Office, St. Andrew's House, 16 Tavistock Crescent, London, England W11 1AP*

Dr Henry Morris, Founder of Institute for Creation Research, dies

On Saturday, 25 Feb., Dr. Henry Morris, died at the age of 87. Dr. Morris served on the faculties of three major universities and was founder of the Institute for Creation Research—a graduate school and research organization—and the Christian Heritage College (currently San Diego Christian College). Dr. Morris was considered the Father of the Modern Creation Movement.

Dr. Morris was a prolific Christian writer, and is best known for "The Bible and Modern Science," "The Genesis Record," "The Biblical Basis for Modern Science," "The Long War Against God," and "The Defender's Bible."

+ *Institute for Creation Research, 10946 Woodside Ave., Santee, CA 92071 (619) 448-0900*

Abortion banned in South Dakota

On 6 Mar., 2006, South Dakota Gov. Mike Rounds signed a ban on all abortions in his state. This is the first abortion ban passed by a state legislature since the 1973 Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision that decriminalised abortion in all 50 states. The new law is scheduled to go into effect on July 1, 2006.

+ *Office of the Governor, 500 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501 (605) 773-3212*

Indian tribe sends missionary to Welsh Presbyterian church

Indian tribes once converted to Christianity by missionaries from Wales are returning to evangelise the Welsh because of their believe that the country is in a state of religious decline.

The Diocese of Mizoram, in the north-east of India, has sent one missionary to south Wales and is planning to send another in April, to help the Welsh Presbyterian Church with its shortage of ministers.

Many of the Mizos, as they call themselves, were converted to Christianity by the Welsh between 1840 and 1960, with more than 80 percent of the population becoming Christian.

Mizos refer to the Presbyterian Church of Wales as the "Mother Church," and the ties are very strong.

+ *Presbyterian Church of Wales Office, Tabernacle Chapel, 81 Merthyr Rd., Whitchurch, Cardiff CF 14 1 DD <swyddfa.office@ebpcw.org.uk>*

D.R.C. upholds suspension of homosexual pastor

A synodical appeal committee of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), upheld the suspension of minister Laurie Gaum, even though Gaum was public about his relationship and had pledged fidelity to his partner in a public ceremony. The local governing body decided this conduct was not in keeping with the office of minister in the DRC. The appeals committee acknowledged that Gaum was in a permanent relationship of love and faithfulness, but judged even such a relationship, made him subject to discipline.

+ *Dutch Reformed Church (NGK), PO Box 4445, Pretoria 0001, South Africa*

GKSA meets opposition to decision to join Council of Churches

The January synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA), dealt at length with the issue of women in office, dealing with the issues of procedure in the face of change. A decision to join the South African Council of Churches, (SACC), provoked angry reaction from some in its members.

The church council announced that a Pretoria congregation did not accept the synod's decision to join the SACC. Another congregation in the town of Orania denounced the SACC as an organisation with a satanic basis, saying it would be blasphemous to join with this "Antichrist." That congregation pointed out the SACC's

links with World Council of Churches (WCC), and the Catholic Church as proof of its allegations. The WCC, it noted, participates in the Parliament of World Religions, "a New Age movement that would put all religions together as differing ways to same ends."

+ *South African Council of Churches, PO Box 62098, Marshalltown 2107, South Africa*

Statement on women in military adopted by N.A.P.A.R.C.

A new statement regarding women in the military was approved at the annual meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC). The statement, which could be ratified by each of NAPARC's member churches in the next year, states that women are not "to be conscripted or employed in military combat roles but rather they are to be defended by men and kept from harm's way that they might fulfill their Biblical callings and duties under God." Three member churches of the NAPARC have adopted statements adding that women already in the military should consult God's word regarding their current involvement and that it is the duty of men to protect women even though women are allowed the right to protect themselves, even when that might involve physical violence.

+ *REC Secretariat, 2050 Breton Rd., Suite 102, Grand Rapids, MI 49546 (616) 949-2910*

New proposals to settle Free Church dispute

The Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) has launched new proposals in an attempt to resolve the differences between themselves and the Residual Body of the Free Church of Scotland.

Some of the proposals they will cover are: The status of those ministers who were purportedly suspended in January 2000, property, finance, and pensions.

+ *Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), Principal Clerk of Assembly and Press Officer: Rev. John MacLeod, Portmahomack, TAIN, Ross-shire IV20 1YL*

Parker T. Williamson unhappy with Spahr decision

Pastor Parker T. Williamson, CEO of the Presbyterian Lay Committee, says the ruling by the judicial panel of the Presbytery of the Redwoods, which has acquitted Rev. Jane Spahr of misconduct for her performance of the same-sex ceremonies for lesbian couples in 2004 and 2005, is very damaging to a denomination already wounded by its liberal leadership.

Williamson also said "we're facing huge deficits because people are getting fed up with this liberal leadership that has turned its back on Scripture."

Williamson also contends that many in the PC(USA) have become disaffected over the leftist tendencies of the denominational leaders, and says this decision by the Redwoods Presbytery court "simply is one more nail driven into that coffin. We're going to lose a lot of faithful Presbyterians over this.

+ *Presbyterian Lay Committee, PO Box 2210, Lenoir, NC 28645 (828) 758-8716*

Missionaries return to Nigerian ministry sites

Larry and Rose van Zee of Pella, Iowa, and Dave and Jan Dykgraaf, of Grand Rapids, Michigan, Christian Reformed Relief (CRWRC) staff member Jeremiah Yongo, and 12 families of Nigerian Christians were forced to evacuate their homes 26 Feb., after riots broke out in connection to the Danish cartoon fiasco. On 7 Mar., they were able to return to their ministry sites in Niger State.

+ *Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave., SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560 (800) 55-CRWRC*

World Council of Churches finances decline

The Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) was told on 20 Feb. by its finance committee that its income and reserves have declined by 30 percent since its last gathering.

The committee said that member churches should be declared "inactive" after three consecutive years of non-payment of membership contributions. At the present time, member churches are declared inactive after seven years of non-payment.

The number of the council's 340 members churches contributing to the WCC rose from 55 percent in 1999 to 75 percent in 2005, but membership contributions remained at about US\$4.8 million.

+ *World Council of Churches, 150 route de Ferney, PO Box 2100 1211, Geneva 2, Switzerland*

College students charged in church fires

Two Birmingham-Southern College students Russell DeBusk Jr., and Ben Moseley, both 19, along with junior Matt Cloyd, 20, a former Birmingham-Southern student who transferred to the University of Alabama, have been arrested for conspiracy and arson in the fires at nine Alabama churches.

It was reported that the men set the first fire as a joke but decided to start the others to cover their tracks. Each church arson carries a mandatory minimum sentence of five years.

United Methodist, Birmingham-Southern College President David Pollick vowed at a press conference on 8 Mar., that he wants Birmingham-Southern College to have an active role in helping rebuild the burned churches. This will be done with financial aid and volunteer labor and by working with the United Methodist Church's North Alabama Annual Conference.

+ Birmingham-Southern College, 900 Arkadelphia Rd., Birmingham, AL 35254 (800) 523-5793

Church raises funds for mission amongst gypsies

The Rev. Dick Otterness was guest minister at the Tappan Reformed Church in Tappan, New York, on 12 Mar., to raise awareness and funds to start a mission for the Roma people in Hungary. Otterness and his wife, Carolyn, will leave their home in Schenectady, New York, in April to start the mission, which is partnered with the Reformed Church of America and the Reformed Church in Hungary.

The Roma are descendants of warrior classes from Northern India and are often known as "Gypsies." Otterness said 8 to 12 million Roma are scattered across Europe, with large populations in Spain, the United Kingdom, and Hungary.

+ Tappan Reformed Church, 32 Old Tappan Rd., Tappan, NY 10983 (845) 359-1694

Dr. D. James Kennedy denounces Bible text for schools

A new textbook for public schools promoted by the Virginia-based Bible Literacy Project has been promoting a new textbook for public schools called "The Bible and Its Influence" (BLP).

Dr. D. James Kennedy, senior minister of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, who sits on the advisory board of the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools, explains why he does not endorse the BLP text.

"It is relativistic. It's the typical liberal approach to the Bible," says the Florida pastor. "When I was in a half-liberal seminary it's a kind of thing that they pushed all the time, the purpose of which is to undermine the students' confidence and faith in the teachings of the Bible and in the Word of God." Kennedy feels the BLP's textbook contains "very anti-biblical material" that takes an "extremely radical"

approach to studying the Bible.

+ Dr. D. James Kennedy, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, 5555 N. Federal Hwy. Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33308 (954) 771-8840

Afghan man faces execution for becoming Christian

Supreme Court judge Ansarullah Mawlavizada told the Middle East Times that even though the Taliban regime is no longer in power, an Afghan man faces possible execution for allegedly abandoning his Islamic roots and becoming a Christian.

Abdul Rahman converted from Islam to Christianity 16 years ago. Apparently his relatives notified authorities about the conversion.

The constitution in Afghanistan is based on Shariah law, which states any Muslim who rejects his or her religion should be sentenced to death.

If sentenced, Rahman would be the first person punished for leaving Islam since the Taliban was ousted by American-led forces in late 2001.

About 99 percent of Afghanistan's 28 million people are Muslims, with the rest mostly Hindus.

+ Embassy of Afghanistan, 2341 Wyoming Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202) 483-6410

More Christians arrested in Afghan case

An avalanche of media coverage of an Afghan man facing the death penalty for converting to Christianity has sparked the arrest and deepening harassment of other Afghan Christians. Since the arrest of Abdul Rahman for the "crime" of leaving Islam for Christianity two other Afghan Christians have been arrested, and another Afghan convert was severely beaten.

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

Church to be closed by 'eminent domain'

The city of Long Beach, California, is using the power of eminent domain to condemn the Filipino Baptist Fellowship's building to make way for condominiums.

A hearing was held 13 Mar., to vote on a resolution authorising the city attorney to begin condemnation proceedings.

Last June, a high court ruled in *Kelo v. City of New London* that the municipal government could seize the homes and businesses of residents to facilitate the building of an office complex that would provide economic benefits to the area and more tax revenue to the city. The practice of

eminent domain is provided for in the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution, but this case is important because the seizure is for private development and not for "public use," such as a highway or bridge.

Attorney John Eastman, director of the Claremont Institute's Center for Constitutional Jurisprudence stated that "We're not talking about a rundown slum that's boarded up with bars on the windows." "The church is a vibrant church. So we'll challenge whether they're allowed to take it at all."

+ The Claremont Institute, 937 West Foothill Blvd., Suite E, Claremont, CA 91711 (909) 621-6825

On Sunday 19 March, 2006

the Lord called home to Himself

Job van Maastricht

beloved husband of the late Klaske

and loved father and Opa

of:

Yvonne and Walter Walraven

Rachel, Nathan, Joel, Elise, Shari,

Anna and John

Michael and Brenda

van Maastricht

Hannah, Hayden, Shannon,

Sophie and Courtney

Ingrid and James Posthuma

Amy, Richard, Dean, Andrew

and Louise

Bianca and Danny den Harder

Aaron, Jason, Ryan and Liam

Job 19:25-27 –

"I know that my Redeemer lives ..."

A feminine focus

Sally Davey

Amy Carmichael: Surrender of Self

Do you ever feel as if you are living with one hand firmly on the things of this world—family, possessions, home comforts, career—and only one hand in God’s, for His use as He sees fit? The desire to give **all** to God—to give up one’s life to His service—has motivated many Christians to serve as missionaries in far-flung parts of the world. Certainly, this desire greatly influenced the thinking of Jim and Elisabeth Elliot, missionaries to Ecuador in the 1950s. In their journals they wrestled with the need (as they saw it) to remain single for His sake, if they were to be really useful as missionaries. This theme of self-consecration was especially pronounced among the missionaries of the late nineteenth century. And perhaps in no one was the desire to give up all more characteristic than it was of Amy Carmichael, the young Irish woman who went to India.

Elisabeth Elliot, who wrote a biography of Amy Carmichael, calls her “my first spiritual mother. She showed me the shape of godliness.” Introduced to her while a teenager at boarding school, Elisabeth writes that it was from Amy that she “began to understand the great message of the Cross, of what [Amy] called ‘Calvary love.’ I saw that the chance to die, to be crucified with Christ, was not a morbid thing, but the very gateway to Life. I was drawn—slowly, fitfully...but inexorably.” To give your life in service to others for Christ’s sake is Calvary love. It requires death of self; but it is, as Elisabeth writes, the way to life eternal.

We know a great deal about Amy’s work because it was a very public one. Many people visited her home in India. It was a home that saved and nurtured many young lives. And because Amy was a prolific writer, recording her spiritual thoughts and writing home to all those interested in her work, we have a clear record of what she did, what she hoped to do, and the desires that lay behind it. In all this Amy has been a powerful model for many Christians—both in her own lifetime, and in the years since her death. Her attitude and her actions were altogether lovely. There is much to admire, and to emulate, in Amy Carmichael.

Amy’s background

Amy was born in 1867, and grew up in a small village on the north coast of Ireland. She was not native Irish, but the daughter of Scottish settlers (of whom there were many in the north of Ireland). The Carmichaels owned a flour mill, and they were serious Christians. They were part of a group of seceding Presbyterians who had left the Church of Scotland over doctrinal errors. They were generous supporters of their church, and firm in their convictions. Amy’s parents taught their children carefully, and family prayers and Bible readings were part of every day’s routine. For three years Amy went to a strict Wesleyan Methodist boarding school in Yorkshire, but then afterwards, when the Carmichael family moved to Belfast for business, she studied the usual ladies’ subjects (music, singing and painting) at home. When she was 18, however, tragedy struck the family. Her father had lent some thousands of pounds to a friend who needed to make a new start in life. When he was unable to repay, the worry contributed to David Carmichael’s double pneumonia. He died at the age of 54. Though the blow was heavy, Amy’s mother found God faithful and all-sufficient. Amy herself, though a sensitive girl, gained strength from her mother’s example. She became like a second mother to her brothers and sisters; and soon began to find ways to help others as well.

For some years, Amy’s Christian conscience about the sufferings of those less blessed than herself had been deepening. One day she and her brothers helped an old woman struggling with a heavy bundle on the way home from church. They blushed beneath the gaze of other wealthy and well-brought-up people; but the lesson from this experience increased her seriousness toward God. She began prayer and Bible study group for poor children: every Saturday morning the “Morning Watch” met to review their faithfulness in their devotions, and to have some fun with Amy. She took an interest in the situation of poor mill girls, called “Shawlies” because they wore their shawls over their heads as they were too poor to afford hats. These girls were often abused by men, and had babies out of wedlock.

Amy grieved over them, but was not sure what to do.

The influence of the holiness movement

Then, in 1886 (when she was 19) an old school friend invited her to go to Glasgow to a “Keswick” meeting. This was a gathering along the lines of a now-famous convention at Keswick in the Lake District, which was aimed at deepening people’s spiritual walk with God. It downplayed doctrine (which the founders believed only confused and divided people) and emphasised the receiving of instantaneous sanctification as a “second blessing.” They held that if a Christian only surrendered himself to God completely, he could receive this blessing. Loved evangelical Anglican bishop, J.C. Ryle, was deeply concerned about this teaching, and wrote against it in his book *Holiness*. He feared that Christians were being misled by the idea that an instantaneous experience of “surrender” would end their struggle with sin.

Amy hoped she would receive this instantaneous blessing—which had been explained to her as a sweet, emotional experience—at the Glasgow meeting. It did not happen quite as she hoped, but she went home with a firm sense of commitment to Christ. She kept up her Keswick connection, attending many conferences and corresponding with others she met at them. In 1887 the Keswick people in Belfast organised a meeting there, and invited the great missionary to China, Hudson Taylor, to speak. This was a powerful introduction to the calling of overseas missions, and Amy was much moved. The Carmichaels invited one of the Keswick organisers and benefactors, Robert Wilson, to their home, and thus began a lifelong father-daughter friendship between Amy and this older man, whom she entitled the “Dear Old Man” (or DOM for short). But she continued her efforts for the Shawlies, and began what we would call an outreach group or mercy mission for them. She arranged meetings, one each night of the week with different activities such as Bible classes, choir practices and night schools. Soon there were 500 girls involved, and they needed a good-sized building in which to meet. By bravely approaching two wealthy Belfast patrons, she found the money to purchase land and build a sheet-metal structure (known as the “Welcome Hall”). This was a work that brought delight, spiritual blessing and a bet-

ter way of life to hundreds of young women in the city of Belfast.

Robert Wilson, lonely in his home with his two unmarried sons after the deaths of his only daughter and his wife, asked Mrs Carmichael if Amy might go and live with them as his daughter. She agreed, and Amy moved to Broughton Grange. But she had not forgotten the pull of missionary labour, and during the two years she spent at the Grange she used her time reading spiritual books (her tastes were somewhat mystical) and praying. She told her mother and Mr Wilson of her desire to follow Christ to a mission field, as their potential loss was the only thing constraining her from deciding to go. Typically of those involved in the Keswick movement, the thing that convinced her it was God's will that she went was hearing what she believed to be God's voice saying clearly "GO YE." All her life Amy was to receive what she was convinced were words from God giving her decisive direction in making important decisions.

Overseas mission

At first she was attracted to China, but she was turned down for medical reasons: she was not physically robust. Then she was determined on Japan. She sailed for that country in 1893, without confirmation that she could join the CMS missionaries there. But the farewells from her mother, and from Mr Wilson, were emotionally draining—her departure left her exhausted. Amy spent a little over a year in Japan, travelling with missionaries and doing what she could with her few words of Japanese. Here is a sample of what she wrote home about an encounter with a Japanese family in a letter home:

"the usual 'buts' rose—I don't know enough, may make mistakes and do more harm than good. Still that solemn Voice I am learning so slowly to recognize, spoke on—'Go and tell them about Me.' It *must* be His, so I went... In the simplest colloquial I repeated 'God so loved the world,' told them the very little I could, and left them sadly enough. It was so *little*... My words are so few and broken as yet, but pray that somehow He may use it to bring glory to His dear name."

Later in 1894 Amy became ill—so ill with headaches that the doctor suggested she should leave Japan. So she went to Sri Lanka (Ceylon as it was then). But then she heard that Mr Wilson had had a stroke and left immediately for England, arriving home very ill indeed herself. The DOM recovered, and was delighted to see her, but Amy's determination to serve as a missionary

meant he was to lose her all over again. Ten months later she was off to India, this time as a Church of England Zenana missionary (though supported by Keswick funds) to Bangalore (where the climate was easier on more delicate British constitutions). Here is where Amy spent the rest of her 85 years. At 27, she had found her niche in God's vineyard as a fruitful labourer.

For the first year or two Amy struggled with learning Tamil (I think she was not a natural linguist!) and then she traveled with a CMS missionary, Thomas Walker, and his wife through the small villages around the Tinnevely district, where he

was based. Around the time that Amy joined the Walkers they gave up their official CMS connection—but that did not concern Amy, who always considered herself a "Keswick" missionary. Walker was a stern-seeming, at times forbidding man; but one who was deeply devoted to Christ. He immediately discerned Amy's own uncompromising commitment, and encouraged her efforts as she found her life's calling in India. To begin, he helped her learn Tamil, considered to be the most difficult Indian language—and, characteristically, he did nothing to make it easier for her.

Her lasting work



Amy at Broughton Grange, about twenty-four.

Amy, like many missionaries, chose to adapt what she had done best at home to her new field of labour. Together with several Christian Indian women, whom the Indians called "The Starry Band," she travelled the villages and did her best to teach women and girls about the gospel. Then, in 1901, her most lasting work began. A little girl who had escaped from temple prostitution (something kept so secret many British officials and missionaries did not believe it still existed) was brought to Amy and the Walkers. Little Preena was very brave—she had escaped once before, and had been punished by having her hands burned. But she begged to stay, and curled up in Amy's lap, calling

her "Amma" (Tamil for mother). Thomas Walker was cautious: he knew there would be trouble, both from the temple officials and from the parents of the little girls—who, out of their poverty, sometimes sold their baby girls to the temples. The British administration had already gotten rid of suttee (the burning of widows on their husbands' funeral pyres) and the sacrifice of baby girls to the gods (they were eaten by wolves and crocodiles), but many did not know temple prostitution of little girls still existed. Over time, Amy and the Walkers approached the British administration and arranged for the custody of many little girls. Amy had discovered her work in India: though imagining

she had gone to carry the good news of the gospel as an evangelist, she found she was to mother little girls (and later boys), and to provide a home for them so they could grow up in the love and the training of the Lord. This work, long after her death, continues as the Dohnavur Fellowship.

As the years passed, and as Christians in Britain and the United States read of Amy's work in her books and letters, donations enabled the purchase of land and the building of houses to provide homes for increasing numbers of little abandoned children. By the 1930s there were several hundred being cared for at once. As the children grew up, some of them continued in the family as carers for and teachers of new generations of children. Amy took care that her girls were married to good and godly young men. Many a Christian home in India had its early foundations laid at Dohnavur; and other missionary works—such as the hospital where a cousin of mine served for many years near Calcutta—drew inspiration and started to take in abandoned babies to care for. The gentle, patient work of Dohnavur has sent ripples of Christian influence far and wide throughout India as the children brought up by the Fellowship have gone on to work elsewhere. You could say that it brought Christian family life to those who would otherwise never have known it.

A singular focus

Amy herself never married: she regarded it as part of her calling in dying to self, and giving all to Christ. Her devotion to Him was singular. She never wavered from her early Keswick principles, loving especially to read the works of Christian mystics such as Thomas a Kempis, Brother Lawrence and (earlier) Julian of Norwich. Amy spent the last twenty years of her life as an invalid, confined to her room, which was a special trial that only deepened her walk with Christ. The poetry and devotional books she wrote, especially in these years, were characterised by the themes of a believer's love for her Beloved. She had thoroughly committed her life to Christ, and she wanted to lose herself in Him. All her lonely moments of sleeplessness were given to prayer, meditation, and writing short notes to the children and other members of the Dohnavur community, encouraging them to die to sin and live for the Lord Jesus. For her, to die would be gain. To one of her nurses, who came in to say goodbye as she left for furlough, Amy said, "We won't meet again in this world. When you hear I have gone, jump for joy!" She died in early 1951, and was buried,



Amy, age forty-two, with Lola and Leela.

as asked, in her little garden at Dohnavur, without headstone and on a simple wooden slab—not even a coffin.

Everyone who knew Amy loved her: some, indeed, were so devoted they viewed her as a kind of saint, and believed that it was almost impossible she should sin. Such was the quality of her love for God, and for all those little needy ones He had placed in her path. It would seem as if the parable of the sheep and goats had been written about her. Amy was truly a vigorous, busy, sweet-natured and loving-hearted woman who had looked for a way to show Christ to pagans who never knew Him. When she found her calling, she laboured constantly in it until she was taken home herself. She is the kind of woman we love to love.

Lessons from her life

What particular lessons may we take from her example today? Several important things occur to me; and I will try to be brief about each. Firstly, she is a model of whole-hearted devotion to Christ. It was her first goal in life to love her Saviour better, and to serve Him more fully. She yearned for there to be more of Him, and less of her. She really did long to die to self—and in a way that is rare today. How often we get discouraged with ourselves! We catch ourselves out planning for our own comfort, pleasure and convenience. We begrudge others our time and energy, we find time spent on the things of God dry and unattractive, and we fidget at the effort. We are so often selfish creatures on the lookout for ourselves.

Though a very attractive young woman, with many delightful gifts and graces, Amy never married. There were fine young missionaries who wanted to marry her, but Amy had early on decided that she would serve Christ better if she remained single. Quite aware of the likelihood of loneliness, she nevertheless set her course for service—alone, but always provided with the comfort and encouragement of friends; helpful counsel when needed; and the joy of fruit for her labours. Truly, Amy could look back on her life and see that the work of her hands was “established.” (Psalm 90:17) Are you single, struggling to find encouragement in a world that tells you women can only find fulfillment in a relationship with a man? Even Christians face this at times; but those who are Christ’s need not wonder if their singleness is in vain. God can use it, in very special ways, in those He has kept for Himself—even if only for a time. Amy’s life, in the ways she poured it out, is a living picture of how this may be. Take heart!

But we also need to be careful in our evaluation of Amy as a Christian role model. It is all too easy to view her brightly-burning flame with an uncritical gaze of adoration. We women are apt to be undiscerning at times, and we need to take care lest we, and others near us, lose our hearts without engaging our minds. We are inclined to fall in love with practical acts of loving-kindness, and react with indignation when anyone criticises those whose lives are full of them. So, let me take a deep breath: the truth is, not everything Amy believed or practised was biblical. No one was more sincere in what she believed, or more faithful in what she practised; but in some things she was not a model. Her Keswick teachings, for instance, do not produce the stability of Christian discipleship that we need to aim for. Her guidance was not drawn from the principles of God’s Word, but from the “voice” that she thought was God speaking to her. She looked for specific directives as to where she should go, what

she should do, whom she should consult, and so on. Christians who do this are not content with the principles of Scripture—they are looking for “more,” and sometimes they go astray.

In addition, Keswick teaching downplayed the role of the church. In many ways, the movement replaced the church for its followers; and in this period we find Christians like Amy acting as lone rangers, blazing new trails independent of the wisdom and leadership of the church. Both she and the Dohnavur family would have benefited from the shepherding of church leaders. That they managed to continue without it probably owes a great deal to the purity of Amy’s personal example. She always deferred to others rather than risk dissension. But personal piety can never replace good teaching and wise church government. We should be especially thankful where we find all three. We need them all.

IN TOUCH

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

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

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



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

The gates of Jerusalem

The Fish Gate

Patricia van Laar

“Follow me and I will make you Fishers of Men.” (Matt. 4: 17 – 20)

“ARE YOU A MERRY ANDREW?”

The speaker’s voice snapped us to attention at a secondary school Crusader rally. We knew where the question came from. We had seen the huge billboard posters about town, with these words stretched out above the picture of a large tin labelled ‘Andrews Liver Salts’. In those days this was a panacea for all liver disorders, and as a morning drink (fizzy, I think), guaranteed to brighten up our disposition and our day!

What has this to do with the Fish Gate?

The general and logical assumption is that this gate was near the fish market of Jerusalem. In came the fishermen with their catches, prepared for transport and sale by salting or drying. Being on the north wall, the nearest side of the city to the Lake of Galilee, it was convenient for those bringing in fish, and also convenient if any came from the Jordan, or from most parts of the Mediterranean coast. Thinking about this while preparing my article, suddenly I saw the possible answer to a question that had often puzzled me. Did you ever wonder how it was that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem knew John, a fisherman from Galilee? Maybe he was the one entrusted by the firm ‘Zebedee & Co.’ (Matt. 2: 21, Luke 5: 10) to go to Jerusalem and sell their catch in that city? It is plausible that John may have travelled there regularly for this purpose, and through his trade become acquainted with the Temple servants, and even known to the High Priest himself, (John 18: 15), perhaps as a result of frequent worship as a devout Jew at the Temple

Nehemiah tells that the beams and doors of the Fish Gate were assembled, bolts and bars affixed in place. But the men involved with this gate do not have their names recorded. We just read of them as the sons of Hassenah, numbers not known. Even of the father we know nothing but his name. Man has forgotten the workers. Yet we may be sure that God has not. He inspired the family identification of apparently unimportant men who were entrusted with the protection and strengthening of this rather unromantic gate. Isn’t that encouragement? No matter how unimportant and ordinary we may seem

to be, no matter how dull or unromantic our task, God notices faithfulness on the part of his followers. Every Christian’s contribution is important in God’s eyes.

A Gate for All Christians

Why was this gate, under the inspiration of God, second in the line, next to the Sheep Gate?

Look at the illustration of the Lord Jesus, seen in this. As we read of the well-used gate, we naturally think of fish and the trade of fishing. In His call of the fishermen, Jesus symbolically reminder us what every Christian, to a greater or smaller extent, must undertake for the Lord. Each must start training immediately after crossing through

would catch, to the starting gate from which we ourselves have come.

I don’t think this is fanciful on my part. There is a connection between these two gates. The wall joined them together, next to each other. I thank God for those who fished for me, and pointed me to the Sheep Gate. None of these were important people. One in particular was an old Brethren spinster, who had great influence on me sixty years ago, leading my Crusader group (now Secondary School Christian Fellowship). Her name must by now be all but forgotten, except by those of us who owed her a great deal - and I wonder how many of us are left? Some would have dismissed her as too old and old-fashioned to work with youth. We girls did not think so. An ordinary person doing an ordinary job? No, she was an ordinary person, doing under God, an extraordinary job. Like her, a multitude of people, who have themselves entered by the Sheep Gate, are now asked to take their own fishing rods or nets, and ‘fish’ for others. This is the way of the Fish Gate.

What is more, this can begin straight away. I have just read two accounts of Moslems who became Christians. One returned to his homeland where there were no Christians at all amongst his home group of over a million. He told the Good News, new to him, to his own family and some neighbours, (a dangerous thing to do), and 15 of them received the Lord. Five years later, five evangelists, being himself and four of the original fifteen, were working full time amongst this tribe. The second story, from a different country, was similar.

Bringing your catch

So, what has this all to do with the opening of this article, Are you a merry Andrew?

The questioner drew our attention to Andrew, as a less ‘important’ disciple. He was not one of the inner three, Peter, James and John. In fact, his activities are mentioned only three times in the Bible. But each time, he was fishing. Each time, he brought his catch to Jesus.

The first catch was his own brother, Peter. John 1: 41 says that the first thing Andrew did after meeting Jesus was to find his brother Simon, and tell him, “We have found the Messiah.” Unimportant? What a catch that was! [Philip also, told his friend Nathanael.]



the Sheep Gate. Not fishing for fish, but ‘fishing’ for men, was the first occupation for which He prepared His disciples. “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” It is appropriately built next to the Sheep Gate.

We get the same call. We are the ones who now must follow and fish, but only by being connected to the first gate, the Sheep Gate, the place of the Lamb of God. This is our starting point. Only then comes the Fish Gate. And from it we point those whom we

Andrew found a boy with loaves and fish, and brought him to Jesus. I wonder if the boy was reluctant to give up his lunch, but was persuaded by the disciple? Just a little boy. Only one? Unimportant? From this catch were fed five thousand. I read once of an evangelist who was disappointed at one of his meetings, because only one young person answered his call to follow Christ. Only one! Unimportant? If I remember aright, that lad's name was David Livingstone.

The third and last story recounted of Andrew was of his being approached by Philip, with some Greeks who wanted to see Jesus. Greeks?

Andrew brought them to Jesus.

So here are three types, the interested, the perhaps reluctant, and seeking foreigners, despised Gentiles. Andrew was able to deal with them all. Andrew was a superb 'fisherman.'

Are You a Merry Andrew? An ordinary person, but used by God to bring others to Christ? There is no greater joy than to be one of God's fishermen – as all of us should be.

The gate was not repaired by the nobles, the leaders, the academics, but by unnamed sons of an unknown father. Like Andrew, they seized the opportunity. Pray, and watch for opportunities that God brings your way. But make sure you point them in the right direction – to the Sheep Gate.

The Wall

Three generations of workers are given - Meremoth the son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz; Meshullam son of Berechiah, son of Meshezabel; then a two-generation family - Zadok son of Baanah. Faithful generations are the greatest blessing we can have as a family. Many of us rejoice in the faithfulness of generations of forefathers. Parents, bring your children up so that they too will want to build. Young people, determine on a Christian marriage in a partnership that will encourage both father and mother to continue bringing up children in the Lord's way.

But there is a note of sadness in this section of the wall. The men of Tekoa worked here, but the nobles would not "put their shoulders to the work, under their supervisors." This sounds as if they were too proud to work under someone else, if not too lazy. Or too proud for manual labour? Or was it just because they were too proud to work by the Fish Gate? Is this too a lesson?

There is building for all to do for the Lord. There is fishing not to be neglected. What excuse do we find for our failure to fish? Does hesitation or refusal indicate pride?

It is difficult to be thought of as odd, a religious maniac, a fundamentalist (a dirty word these days, frequently substituted for fanatic.) Pride steps in, and we withdraw our fishing line.

Unimportant sons of Hassenah repairing the gate, did not find excuses, nor did the generations next to them, working on the wall. The puffed-up nobles did. For this, they are accountable to the Judge from heaven. How sad to be one who does not put his shoulder to the wheel, leaving the fishing and labour for others to do. Determine with God's help, to be a son of Hassenah.

A Final Thought

Andrew was a superb fisherman, but Jesus surpassed them all. Study how he dealt with Nicodemus, holding out the very bait that would catch his Pharisaic, scholastic mind. Then look at his method with the very opposite, the Woman of Samaria. The bait he dangled before her too, was perfect for her. The Lord can teach us all to use the best bait for our 'fish', but this takes willingness, effort, prayer, as did the work in the days of Nehemiah.

Don't keep the Fish Gate closed.

Books in focus

Fractured Families: *The Story of a Melbourne Church Cult*

by Morag Zwartz, 2004, Parenesis Publishing, Boronia, Melbourne.

How would you like it if, within your congregation, there was a distinct and separate group?

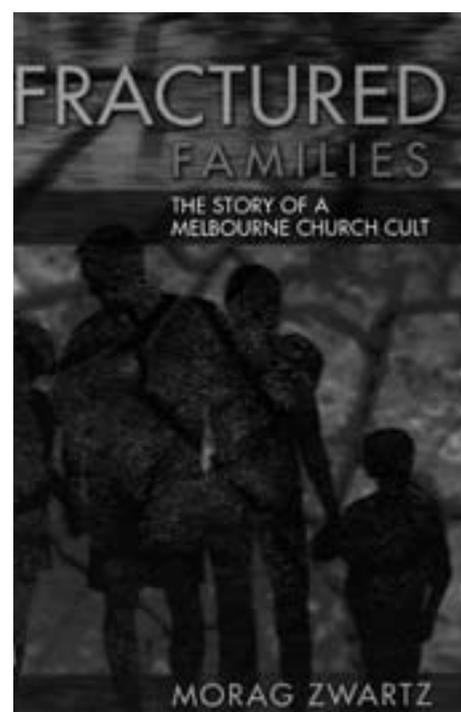
Now, you might say, we've got groups like that in our churches. There are cliques to be found in every congregation of one sort or another.

This group, however, while being in a fellowship, is only in fellowship with those who are a part of the group and thoroughly committed to its ideals. This group has its own weekly studies and an annual weekend retreat. Furthermore, this group's leadership closely monitors the personal decisions of all those within the group, dictating where one should live, what kind of work should be done, and even who would marry whom—invariably another person within the group. Many within this group are employed by companies owned by members of the group.

Within the congregation, this group obviously dominates church life. The majority of the elders are from this group, and the minister too is part of this group, or at least very sympathetic to it.

This group within your congregation is growing. In fact, the very rapid rate at which your church's membership increases all comes from people who seem to have some affinity with this group. While they may tell you, "God told us to come here," you wonder a bit, especially when they are exclusively involved with the group members.

It's not stopping, though. You have had questions about the minister's preaching and the Bible studies he does. He always has that certain "holiness" angle in his preaching, goes on about "sin" a lot and the need for constant repentance. In fact, you have heard that he himself goes regularly to one of the group's key leaders for "counsel." A leader who is not in your congregation or



denomination! You wonder where “grace” disappeared to. You rarely hear, if at all, the distinct reformational ‘solos’.

Well, what I’ve briefly described here is what has been going on within several congregations of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria (PCV), in Australia. And before you jump to the gun and say what do you expect from a liberal denomination, such as the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, you need a bit of background. For the PCV is part of the Presbyterian Church of Australia—a denomination which stayed out of the Uniting process in the 1970’s in order to retain its Calvinistic heritage. Subsequently it has continued to reclaim that heritage, exemplifying this by decisions to remove women from the office of minister and then the office of elder.

But there have been some hang-ons from the past. A certain traditional element has remained—the ‘haggis and bagpipes’ brigade—together with other liberal and doctrinal wings.

Another of these left-overs has been ‘The Fellowship,’ a group which traces its theological line back to the Keswick holiness teachings of the late 19th and early 20th centuries; since then using the teachings of such men as Watchman Nee and Derek Prince.

The account Morag Zwartz gives of the history, development and present-day status of this group shows that the PCV could only ever act in one way towards this group. It took a long time but the Presbyterian system is quite involved in its rules and regulations, even being written in Parliamentary law. There have been decisions made regarding this group, which have been appealed against by those ministers and churches supporting them. The latest development came out in a news item in the Australian Presbyterian in March 2006. There it noted under the title, ‘Elders excommunicated’:

Moderator-General Bob Thomas released the following statement on 24 February:

The Presbytery of Melbourne East has removed the elders of Trinity Presbyterian Church Camberwell from the eldership and membership of the Presbyterian Church of Australia because it considered that the way they have discharged their duties is unsatisfactory and not in accord with the code of behaviour expected of elders.

*For many years a group known as **The Fellowship** has used the Presbyterian Church, particularly in Camberwell, as a cover for their activities. These activities have affected the spiritual and emotional well-being of many people.*

The Presbyterian Church regrets that this

group has been able to operate for so long from within it, but church processes are lengthy, and sub-Christian belief and practice is often difficult to detect and deal with.

The Church has set up means by which people who have been affected in some way may receive help and counselling. A number of people have already availed themselves of this facility and the church will be pleased to hear from anyone else who feels aggrieved by the actions of the group.

The response of the group was predictable. They are appealing it, and believe they have been denied “procedural fairness and substantial justice.”

So Zwartz’s book gives a good background to what is a very current headline. This book serves well to put what might otherwise be an interesting news item in a larger and quite devastating picture. A devastation she documents quite well in her book, showing what happens when one finds himself or herself offside with The Fellowship.

Now, you might be thinking, could it happen here? Surely the holiness movement couldn’t have that kind of impact within the covenantal framework of continental ecclesiology? Well, when I was reading it I shared the basic aspects of such cults with several from one of our churches. I read it out to them thinking it was something quite apart from what was in our churches, aside from the usual cliques. One responded by showing how from their experience a number of those factors had come up. We’re not so immune after all. We have had such groups among us. And while they generally in our situation break off and begin their own groups—like the ‘black stockings’—they have come from us. This book provides one example of how this happens and especially the need of the church to respond as soon as possible.

If we think it couldn’t happen among us, it already has!

Reviewed by Sjirk Bajema

Focus on home

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Andrew Reinders

Avondale

Family devotional thought: Today Corrie and I are in Sydney. In fact we flew out on Friday, and will return tomorrow. We are away because a church that has been vacant for about 18 months has invited us to spend the weekend. This is similar to what we did when Avondale invited us over. We have not received a Call. We are simply spending a weekend together for the purposes of looking at the possibility of whether we, and the congregation of Blaxland in NSW could serve the Lord together. At present there are about seven vacant congregations in Australia, with more retirements coming and not sufficient students at the RTC to fill those vacancies. We have commended ourselves, Avondale and Blaxland to the Lord in prayer, and ask you to join us in that. Rev. John TerHorst.

Bishopdale

Baby Boy: I am excited to let you all know that Zachary John van Tuinen was born on 15th February @ 12.20am, weighing in at 9lb 6oz’s. Carrie & Zachary are both doing very well. Thank you, John van Tuinen.

Attention Tertiary Students: On 5th March at 7:30 p.m., an evening of Bible study (led by Mr. Don Capill) and discussion afterwards will, D.V., be held at the Waimairi Road Community Centre, 166 Waimairi Road. We are aiming to evangelize to non-Christian overseas students, who are interested to know more about the Christian faith and what the Bible teaches. You are encouraged to warmly invite your non-Christian classmates to come along and learn more. Supper will be provided. If you have any questions please contact Mr. Don Capill or Neville Watson.

Baptism It is our joy today to witness the baptism of Richard and Cindy’s daughter, Saskia. Welcome to family and friends who have come along especially. This is an important day in Saskia’s life, and we are pleased that all of you are able to share it with us.

Bucklands Beach

Pastoral. As mentioned, this morning Caleb Michael Josiah Duinkerke will be baptised.

We praise God for thus enabling us to welcome him officially and formally into the New Covenant Community. A special welcome to the members of Caleb's family who are here with us this morning. Please note that there will be a special opportunity for fellowship immediately after the service. A light luncheon is available and EVERYONE is invited and even urged to join in.

Christchurch

Notes from full Session meeting. J Klazinga has written an article on Easter, and has been invited to write an article introducing our church, for the St Albans community newspaper STANN.

Presbytery is preparing for a training day for elders and potential elders. Prof Murray Capill from the RTC is willing to come and lead this.

Dovedale

Men's Conference: This year St. John's Latimer Square is hosting another men's convention. There are two evenings this coming week, March 7th and 8th. The speaker this year is Rick Lewers, who is the minister in charge of an Anglican church in the Sydney diocese. The aim of the conference is to promote God-honouring leadership in the lives of men; to grow men stronger in their commitment to the Lord Jesus; to promote Biblically-based study and prayer and encourage the presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to all. There are still places available. The venue is the Christchurch Chinese Church, 286 Greers Road, Bryndwyr. Further details are available on the table in the church lounge and/or on the notice-board.

Dunedin

Ladies' Fellowship. The first meeting of the year will be held on Thursday 2 March in the church hall. Weather permitting, we will start with a walk, leaving from the church at 7:00 pm. For those who can not join us then, the meeting will start at 8:00 pm—with a cuppa to revive those who walked! The first meeting will have a more informal character: also to discuss the programme for the year. We would like those ladies of the congregation who have not joined us as yet to come along this time. Those who do attend have done so for many years. New members are always welcome. The Ladies' Fellowship started in the early 1960s and was known as the 'Sunshine Circle'. Through the years it has provided fellowship and encouragement for its members through Bible studies, speak-

ers, book reviews, etc. By having sales-tables at our meetings we have been able to buy many items for the kitchen and other parts of the church. It is amazing how little amounts add up! It would be good if this part of church life could continue. So we hope all you ladies will give it some thought. On behalf of our Ladies' Fellowship. Els Gouman

Session Notes. A proposal from Reformed Church of Bishopdale to hold a presbytery elders' training day on Saturday 3 June was agreed to in principle. Rev H Vaatstra is to investigate the possibility of the speaker, Murray Capill, repeating the training in Dunedin on 10 June, and also inviting regional Grace Presbyterian Churches to participate.

The Beginning

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and it was void and formless. Void can mean emptiness or darkness. Now we all know the meaning of emptiness! Or do we? Really!—and darkness? For emptiness, darkness is lifeless. It has no past and no future— There is nothing there to nurture. DARKness—EMPTYness is NOTHINGness! Into this 'nothing' came the Great Sound and into being sprang all that we hear or see around. Think of the wind sighing in the trees; Or of a hive full of buzzing bees; The meow of a cat; the bark of a dog; The soft-sounding 'thud' of a falling log; A mountain stream, coming from great height unseen falling—tumbling—foaming—babbling along; Or listen to a blackbird's beautiful song; The rumbling roar of an exploding volcano; The patter of rain; the soft swirling snow; The swish of a car passing by; The noise of a plane up in the sky. Yet, all this—and—much more which is seen or heard is but a whisper of the Great Sound—

THE MIGHTY WORD!

Scientists have this great notion that everything consists of time—power—space—matter—and motion. Well, listen to this!

In the beginning	— Time
God created	— Power
the heavens	— Space
and the earth	— Matter
and the Spirit of God	
	— Motion

Right from the beginning God is telling us that He is in control of His Universe.

Aleida (Lidy) Campfens

Foxton

Congratulations to Dick and Gina Holtslag, who are celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary. May the Lord continue to bless them with many more years of marital bliss.

Marriage banns: Congregation, Graeme Zuidema and Amanda Van Echten have indicated their desire to be united in 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 at St Andrews Presbyterian Church, Levin, on Saturday the 25th February, at 3:30 pm.

Fellowship news: On Thursday morning we laid to rest the earthly remains of Mr Philip Murdie, father of Helen Nugteren followed by a thanksgiving service. Mr Phil Murdie was called home to glory last Monday morning at the age of 81. May the Lord be near to the family during this time of grief.

Hamilton

Baptism: This morning we rejoice with Sebastian and Sarah as Peter Krienus Vos receives the sign and seal of the covenant through baptism. As the apostle Paul

says in Acts 2:39, "The promise is for you and your children..."

Church picnic. The Sunday school teachers would like to initiate a church picnic for the whole church community and have extended the invitation to Hukanui Church as well. The date for this is Sunday 26th of February. We

Profession of Faith. Session at its last meeting examined Joshua Geerlofs and with thankfulness was able to accede to his request to make public Profession of Faith. If there are no lawful objections this will take place next Sunday in the morning service (C.O. art. 59&63).

will meet at Parana Park, Memorial Drive by the childrens play area at 1pm. Bring a picnic lunch and something to sit on. (Postponement date in case of bad weather - 5th March). All are welcome, so please join us! Thank you - Jackie Hemmes

Hastings

This past week we have shared our sadness and our joy with the de Vries family in the translation to glory of Anne de Vries. Sadness, because our beloved brother has been taken from us. This is a great loss for us and especially his family who knew him as husband, father and grandfather. Joy, because we know that to be present with the Lord is very much better. Our loss is his gain and so we rejoice. The death of Anne is a sober reminder to all of us: "It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment." Death is one of the consequences of the Fall of man. But thanks be to God, death does not have the last word—Christ does! In his death and subsequent resurrection from the dead He defeated death and secured our eternal life. And so we look forward to His glorious return when we too will be transformed—no longer subject to sin or its misery, suffering and death. Because Anne was a serving elder, there are several families who are left without the care of an elder. Until a new elder is elected, we ask those families to contact the pastor in case of any need for counsel or pastoral help.

Hukanui

Lord's Day 1 is a beautiful statement that we use regularly to profess our faith: a personal statement that every believer may hold to with complete assurance; a tower of strength and focus of hope. For what is our only comfort in life and in death? It is the very fact that by grace, through faith, we belong, in body and soul, in life and in death, to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. However, it is especially at times of deep sorrow and pain that this statement holds so true and gives so much comfort. Especially this past week, as Jasmine Voogt was involved in a serious car accident on Wednesday morning. She was flown to Auckland Hospital with severe head injuries, but she did not respond to treatment, and on Friday afternoon our faithful God called Jasmine to come home to Him, to live in never ending glory and praise with Jesus Christ her Saviour. It is the faith of Lord's Day 1 that Jasmine Voogt professed in her life: this is the faith that comforts and strengthens Keith and Anita and the rest of the family as they walk through the valley of

the shadow of death. May our God continue to be faithful to them and all of us in His love and compassion as we grieve over the loss of a loved one, so young, and may we as church bear this burden with Keith and Anita and the family as their close family in Christ. A Thanksgiving Service for Jasmine Voogt will be held at the Reformed Church of Hukanui on Wednesday the 8th March, at 1:00 pm, followed by the committal service at Newstead Cemetery at 2:30 pm. Refreshments will be served at the Reformed Church of Hukanui after the graveside service. RN.

The church in Smyrna was a church oppressed and persecuted for their faith, not just by the people from the city but by the Jews as well. It was also a church of extreme poverty, as those who claimed the Lordship of Christ were either of the poorest classes of people or were blacklisted when it came to finding work and doing business. Yet Jesus says to them: You are rich! Why is this? Because they know Jesus Christ, have and confess Him as Lord: against which nothing even begins to compare! I believe that the same could be said about the Reformed Church of Hukanui. We are truly rich: it was truly awesome this past week to see the love and compassion of the family of Christ, which was clearly evident in the sharing of each other's burdens. In the midst of sadness and grief, our bond in Jesus Christ made the funeral of Jasmine Voogt on Wednesday an opportunity to truly encourage each other in our faith, even with over 500 people crammed into our church building. Thank you to all who helped set up and clean up, to all who brought food and drink and served, and especially for your prayers which have held Keith, Anita and the family close to the Lord at this time. It was also a reminder of how rich we are: for what we have in Christ goes far beyond anything this world can offer: truly our comfort, in life and in death, is that we belong to Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord! And what a wonderful church family to be a part of! May God continue to strengthen and uphold Keith, Anita, Renee and Jono, Daniel and Jolene as they adjust to life without Jasmine, and may He be their shield and very strong tower. And may we continue to walk this road with them. RN

North Shore

We welcome Pieter & Annette van Huyssteen and their daughter, Caroleen, to our congregation this morning as Pieter begins his vocation with us. We trust it will be a good year and that the Lord will guide us all and you especially so far as your future is concerned.

We are having a Church Lunch this morning to welcome the family, so introduce yourself and make them feel at home. Any visitors among us, please feel free to stay. We have brought enough food for you too.

Palmerston North

From Dick and Mary Wynja... We want to express our appreciation to all of you for welcoming us with such open arms and hearts. It is always a bit "tense" to come to a place where we have never been before and where you really are not sure as to what to expect. But you have made it like coming home to family! And, of course, in Christ, we are a family! We look forward to getting to know as many of you as possible and pray that our Lord will bless our brief time together.

Congratulations to Jason and Sandra Elliott on the birth of Samuel Joseph, born Wednesday at 1.50pm, 7lb 13oz. We wish you our Lord's bountiful blessings as you raise this new covenant child and your other children for Him. May He grant you both strength and wisdom in the weeks ahead as you get to know this new little person.

Congratulations are in order to Steffen and Jant and family as they rejoice in the safe arrival of Emma Martha, 8lb 3oz.

Choosing a Minister. One of the toughest tasks a church faces is choosing a good minister. A member of an official board undergoing this painful process finally lost patience. He'd just witnessed the Pastoral Relations Committee reject applicant after applicant for some minor fault - real or imagined. It was time for a bit of soul-searching on the part of the committee. So he stood up and read this letter purporting to be from another applicant. The Application Letter read: Gentlemen, Understanding your pulpit is vacant, I should like to apply for the position. I have many qualifications. I've been a preacher with much success and also had some success as a writer. Some say I'm a good organizer. I've been a leader most places I've been. I'm over 50 years of age and have never preached in one place for more than three years. In some places, I have left town after my work caused riots and disturbances. I must admit I have been in jail three or four times, but not because of any real wrongdoing. My health is not too good, though I still accomplish a great deal. The churches I have preached in have been small, though located in several large cities. I've not gotten along well with religious leaders in the towns where I have preached. In fact, some have threatened me, and even

attacked me physically. I am not too good at keeping records. I have been known to forget whom I have baptized. However, if you can use me, I promise to do my best for you. The board member turned to the committee and said, "Well, what do you think? Shall we call him?" The good church folks were appalled! Consider a sickly, trouble-making, absent-minded ex-jailbird? Was the board member crazy? Who signed the application? Who had such colossal nerve? The board member eyed them all keenly before he replied, "It's signed, 'The Apostle Paul.'" (Unknown)

Pukekohe

This morning we have the joy of hearing Warrick Loveday profess his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and join the church as a communicant member. It has been very encouraging to see how you have gradually but steadily come to believe in the Lord Jesus and in His work for you and to see your active participation in the life and fellowship of the Church. We pray that you will continue to grow to full maturity as a Christian and be a useful member of the Church and Kingdom of the Lord. We extend a warm welcome to family and friends who are here for this occasion.

Last Thursday morning Michael Willemse and I joined the other pastors of the churches in Pukekohe for an extended time of prayer for the various churches of our town and for our work and witness in this district. It was a profitable and encouraging time of discussion, fellowship and prayer.

The Bible and the future: On Tuesday at 7:30pm we meet for the next seminar on this subject. Christians hold to a variety of views regarding the progress of world events and the future return of Christ. This week John Haverland will introduce two of these views – the amillennial and the postmillennial – and in the following seminar Michael Willemse will present another two – the premillennial and the dispensational. It is important to understand these major positions so that you can determine what you believe from the Scriptures and so that you are not carried away by false ideas. It has been encouraging to see the first two seminars well attended by catechism students and members of the congregation.

Wainuiomata

Profession of faith. The Session rejoices to announce that Briony Keast and Jason de Vries have both indicated their desire to publicly profess their faith in Jesus Christ.

This will take place on Sunday, the 26th of March during the morning service.

Wellington

Session notes. Our pastor has been invited to speak at this year's ANZAC Day commemorations in Brooklyn: Session approved of this.

Ladies night out. Due to popular demand the Ladies Night Out will be starting up again this year. This is an informal and fun night out on the third Monday of every month for ladies (of all ages) of the congregation. We are hoping to do a variety of things such as beading, cardmaking, guest speakers,

going to the movies etc. Our first meeting is on Monday 20th of March at 7.30pm in the back of the church. We will be having a coffee and dessert evening, so bring along your favourite dessert (with the recipe). Also bring along any ideas you have about what kind of activities you would like to do. For our second meeting we are hoping to go to Village Beads in Petone. If you would like to go please RSVP to Petra by 2nd April so that we can make a booking. We will provide more information closer to the time. We are also hoping to start up the heart sisters programme and we will be putting more information about this in your pigeon holes in the next couple of weeks.

Greetings from Sauk Village, a southern suburb of Chicago

By the time this article is published, Lord willing, I will have completed my second year of studies here at Mid-America Reformed Seminary. We arrived in August of 2004 and continue to watch our time here fly along!

The academic year at Mid-America begins at the end of August and goes through to the end of May. For the three months at the end of the academic year, each student under-

takes a twelve week internship at one of the churches throughout North America. My first internship was served at Lynwood United Reformed Church, which is where we have been worshiping since we arrived here. This meant there was no packing up and moving to a different house for three months. Friends of ours served their internship at Edmonton, in Canada. For them, this meant a journey of some four or five days by road there, as well as back again! During my internship, I was expected to preach around twelve to fourteen times, to attend Session meetings, and to visit with those who are unable to attend church, or who were experiencing illnesses. I was also able to lead a men's Bible study



Andre & Anita Holtslag and their family

on Saturday mornings, where we looked at the office-bearer's qualifications.

As the academic year draws to a close, thoughts start to turn towards the upcoming internship. At this stage it is not known which churches will offer internships, so we will wait and see what the Lord has planned for us. The first semester of the year ends just before Christmas. There is a two week break and then there is a four week intensive term of one block course. We are currently enjoying a couple of days rest and we will begin the second semester at the beginning of February.

Mid-America Reformed seminary's sole purpose is to train men for the pastoral ministry. They have five full-time professors and one part-timer that takes care of the Greek language training. Those who come to the seminary having graduated from university generally have learned Greek, but most students still need to learn their Hebrew. The work on languages is done intensively in the first year and then in subsequent years it is a question of applied languages as the work of exegesis is undertaken.

The Master of Divinity course is designed to take three years, but some students spread the workload out and take it over four. At the moment, the student body consists of around 22 fulltime students and three part-time students. The juniors, or first year students, have their classes by themselves. The seniors and the middlers take their classes together on a two year rotation. As a student, your first sermon is prepared and presented to the class in the second half of the first year.

Mid-America trains students from the United Reformed Churches of North America and the Orthodox Presbyterian church. Other denominations are also represented in smaller numbers, and Mid-America also has students from other foreign countries from time to time. Because of this, they have a strong commitment to the teachings of the four confessions, which suits someone like me coming from New Zealand.

Classes end around lunch time each day and the rest of the day is spent in reading and undertaking the assignments and papers that are required. Each student is assigned a faculty counselor and each group meets with their counselor on Thursday mornings for a time of prayer. For the other mornings of the week, we gather at about 10:00am for chapel. Students and professors take it and turn to lead this chapel service, and on Fridays we normally have a pastor from one of the local area churches come in to lead the chapel.

Added to the schedule in the middle and senior year is the work of preaching. The seminary receives many invitations from all over the USA and Canada for pulpit supply, and students are expected to use these opportunities to gain experience, as well as to serve the churches that support Mid-America's work.

After three years of preparation and planning, my wife Anita, myself, and our five children, traveled over here in August of 2004. We had home-schooled the children in New Zealand and were able to continue with the home-schooling here in the states. This meant that the children have not had to make the adjustment to the American school system. The children have learnt to enjoy the snow in the winters, although thus far, this winter has been particularly mild and warm even by Chicago's standards. When there is snow, they are very quick to don warm clothing and go outside and make snowmen and snow forts. We are now much more comfortable with the extremes of temperature we get in Chicago. Last summer was particularly warm and humid. We have learned to enjoy the blessings of central air-conditioning and central heating, which are almost mandatory living in a climate such as this.

Anita is serving as a counselor in the Calvinette program here at Lynwood, and she also runs the library for the Seminary Wives Fellowship. The ladies meet every month for a time of Bible Study, fellowship, and to listen to a guest speaker. I was elected to serve as President of the student Body next year. Over the last couple of years, the Student body undertook the payment for, and the translation of, the four confessions into the Hindi and Marathi languages. One of the students comes from India and he and one of the Professors returned there during the summer to encourage those working in the church in India. It is hoped that the confessions will be a great help in proclaiming the wonderful teaching of Scripture as explained in our confessions.

I am certain that Reverends Rogers and Haverland would dearly love to visit us here in America to see how we're getting along, but thankfully, with modern communication, we have been able to keep them up to date with the work we're doing here, and keep them in contact with the professors of the seminary and the Session of the church that we worship in.

We look forward in the Lord's providence to my being able to graduate in June of 2007 and then returning to New Zealand to be able to undertake a vicariate there. We have been enabled to keep up to date with news

from New Zealand via bulletins and through receiving a copy of the Faith in Focus also. We continue to appreciate the financial and prayerful assistance that we receive from many back in New Zealand, and covet your prayers as we continue to prepare for service as a minister of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. To God be the Glory.

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Please feel free to send us some mail. We would love to hear from you!

AUCKLAND PRESBYTERY

The Auckland Presbytery met on Friday evening, the 24th of February, 2005. A special welcome was extended to Michael Willemse, currently doing a vicariate with the Reformed Church of Pukekohe.

It was a regular meeting, with Presbytery able to deal with the previous Minutes, the correspondence, various reports, and the questions asked each meeting of three of our churches—in this case Hukanui, Mangere, and the North Shore. It was encouraging to hear of the Lord's work in these congregations, and we had a time of prayer for each of them.

We heard of a number of ministerial changes in the CRCA and noted also the high number of vacancies in the churches there. Amongst the Reports we heard of the work of the Crossroad Bible Institute, who are involved in a Bible Correspondence course with prison inmates. This ministry, founded in North America, has been blessed with an openness into New Zealand prisons through the chaplaincy board and is currently setting up operations with a New Zealand office in Hastings. While it needs to be a non-denominational ministry it is based on clear reformational principles and is being largely promoted through Reformed folk in Australia, and also appears to be developing that way in New Zealand. From the National Diaconate Committee we heard that the special offerings held for the earthquake which largely devastated northern Pakistan are being committed to a TEAR hospital in that region.

We dealt with the matter of the part-time

preparation for entering into the ministry by Br Pieter van Huyssteen. This means he will be with the North Shore church for this year preaching, visiting, and teaching, at the end of which he will undergo an examination consistent with someone entering ministry under Article 12 of the Church Order.

The Presbytery examinations for Pieter and Michael will be scheduled for 13-14 October, D.V.

Presbytery warmly thanked Br Peter van der Wel for his work as the Clerk of Presbytery for the past year and were thankful that he is able to continue for 2006.

Reporter: Sjirk Bajema

CHRISTCHURCH PRESBYTERY, 10TH & 11TH MARCH 2006

Presbytery commenced on Friday evening for the examination of minister elect, Robert Van Wichen, at the Reformed Church of Bishopdale with a significant number of the congregation in attendance. Following words of welcome and a devotion by moderator Rev Ralph Adams, Robert Van Wichen delivered his examination sermon on Matthew 8:5-13. Presbytery sustained the sermon with the concurrence of examiner Rev. Paul Archbald. Robert was then examined in Old Testament (Rev. R. Adams,) New Testament (Rev. D. Van Garderen), Systematics and Ethics (Rev. M. Flinn), Bible Knowledge and Church Polity (Rev. J. Klazinga) and Church History (Rev. H. Vaatstra). After Presbytery's deliberation Rev. R. Adams announced with joy and thankfulness to God that Robert Van Wichen's examination was sustained overall and that he was eligible to be ordained as minister of word and sacraments in the Reformed Church of Bishopdale. The date for ordination was set for the 26th of March.

Presbytery reconvened the following morning. Income and expenditure accounts were received from the National Youth Camp Committee. (Presbytery had made a one off contribution to assist with the NYC budget for the last camp). Presbytery thanked the Committee for their work. The Reformed Church of Nelson delegates provided an update of their current application to the needy churches fund reporting that their application was approved in principle but were still awaiting agreement from the churches in keeping with CEC regulations. Annual church visitation reports from Dovedale,

Dunedin and Christchurch were accepted. Article 47 questions were asked of the Dunedin delegates who were able to share with presbytery the blessing of three recent profession of faiths and that vicar Andrew Nugteren and his family had arrived and were settling in well in Dunedin. However Dunedin delegates also expressed concern about the transitional nature of its student population, which was having a negative impact on membership figures. Elder R. Moot then led in prayer for the Dunedin congregation. Presbytery re-appointed Rev. H. Vaatstra as OMB liaison. Paul Davey was appointed to the National Publications Committee and

Revs M. Flinn and J. Klazinga were reappointed as synodical examiners. Leo Fietje was reappointed stated clerk but signaled his intention to retire from that position at the end of the year.

Presbytery agreed on a future Presbytery Elders Training day with Rev. Dr Murray Capill as speaker. Rev. H. Vaatstra expressed the desire for the conference to be repeated in Dunedin in conjunction with southern Grace Presbyterian Churches, and will follow this up. A proposal to increase mileage reimbursement for presbytery business from 30-33 cents per km. was accepted.

Mission in focus

Janice Reid

Impressions of Port Moresby

By Rev. Alan Douma

Rev Douma is the minister of Tivoli Reformed Church in Queensland, Australia. Prior to serving there he was minister of Cornwall Street Reformed Church in Christchurch. He and his wife, Odette, traveled to Papua New Guinea in October 2005 to evaluate the opportunities for service there on behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

If one had to sum up in one word spending four weeks in Port Moresby on a short-term mission work it would be "adventure." Without a sense of 'adventure' you would forever be in a state of anxiety! It started when we checked at the Brisbane airport. Although we had bought our plane tickets months ago, we were left standing at the check-in counter because we were on "standby" and they were trying to find a seat for us. After about 20 minutes of waiting, we finally got a seat: in the very back row! We were met at the airport by Wally & Jeannette Haggort, whom we had never met before. They were waiting outside the airport because visitors are not allowed in. Anyway, they managed to find us eventually (the only 'white-skin' people looking lost and forlorn) and kindly took us home to the Mapang Missionary Home. They were a wonderful introduction to Port Moresby.

Mapang Missionary Home is a guest house for missionaries passing through the country, usually in and out from the airport.

According to the Lonely Planet Guide, they also act as a Backpackers-type accommodation if there is room. Mapang Missionary Home was an ideal base for the fullest exposure to mission work in Port Moresby and Papua New Guinea, as we had the opportunity to meet with many missionaries and hear of their experiences and insights.

Initial impressions? The first things that hit you are the blue-dressed security guards (literally) everywhere: even on the golf-course and at the end of the supermarket aisles. The next is the razor top fences and locked gates: even when you go into the settlements (squatter huts at the end of roads) there are fences everywhere! At Mapang Missionary Home there is a full-time gatekeeper—Sesa—who physically locks the gate with a padlock every time someone goes out or comes into the compound.

The next thing that hits you is the squalor. There is rubbish in the streets everywhere and red stains of betel nut juice all over the foot paths. You have to walk with your eyes down not only to miss the rubbish, but also to miss all the potholes: otherwise you can quickly twist your ankle! You move about with a sense of "alertness" keeping money and credit cards in different pockets, generally being careful where you leave the car and that sort of thing. But, having said that, the people down the street were always greeting you with a smile and "morning now" or "uppy-nun." They always have time to talk and if anyone puts up a poster, there is quickly a crowd of people ready to listen to the presentation: whether it be the Gospel or the advantages of mushroom tea. The markets are very colourful. It is fascinating to watch the people actually making what

they sell as they sit in the sand with their wares on a blanket.

Poverty is a big problem here. There just isn't much work. Enterprising people buy a large bag of something, break it up into smaller bags and sell them off—but you still need others to buy it who, in turn, don't have a lot of money. And so the greatest need besides knowing Jesus as Lord and Saviour would be creating jobs.

As a country, PNG is predominately a Christian State. They are very open to Missionaries and Christian Churches. They appreciate the help that the wider churches can give. The goal is to for the local churches to become self-governing and self-propagating and self-financing. It is very easy for mis-

sionaries to become sidetracked with 'DEED' issues and lose sight of the prominence of the Word. Please pray for wisdom so that missionaries may stay focussed on Christ and His Word.

It is a great privilege to be able to work with and for the Reformed Churches of Papua New Guinea. The denomination originated with the West Papuan refugees who brought with them the "Dutch" connection of the Dutch Reformed Churches from the Netherlands, who had colonised West Papua before it was handed over to Indonesian rule. We operate together under the Reformed Ministries, which is an Umbrella organisation of Reformed Churches coordinating the various Reformed Churches in partnership

(Canadian Reformed, Reformed Churches of New Zealand, Free Reformed Church of Australia) so that there are clear lines of communication and no overlapping in our work as Reformed Churches in PNG. It is rather interesting to see four-wheel drive utes and cars (there are not many roads without huge potholes and outside the city: the roads are even worse) driving around with "Reformed Ministries" written on the side of them! Maybe that is something we could do with the Church cars, hey?! (Only happens in PNG.)

After a few days in Port Moresby we went up to the Segori Plateau that is about an hour to an hour and half's drive up into the village of Ekorovo, where Rev. Stephen t'Hart is working as a fulltime missionary/minister. We enjoyed getting to know Stephen and Dorinda and the children, and the village people. On the Friday evening I found out I was to preach on Sunday evening in the village of Ekorovo. Fortunately it could be in English. So I spent Saturday afternoon going over a sermon I had brought on the 'Prodigal Son'. It is quite an eye opener to realise what language and terms you take and use for granted! I spent some time reworking terms and expressions using my limited knowledge of the PNG context. On Sunday morning we went up the road (you need a 4-wheel drive to get around up here) some 40 minutes to the village of Beregoro. Rev. Stephen t'Hart preached in Pidgin English; all too fast for us to follow exactly. The congregation sang lustily accompanied by (battery-powered 'amped') guitars and tambourines, and in a higher pitch than we are used to. But what a delight to be with the people of God in worship! What was particularly interesting was that there was a Catechism lesson right after the sermon. (On Wednesday evening they also have a church service with a Catechism Lesson as the "sermon" teaching element).

Back in Ekorovo in the evening, we had church at about 7.30p.m. I say 'about,' because concept of time in PNG is quite different. Church starts when everyone turns up, and that can be up to half an hour after church starting time (we just keep on singing until everyone is there!) You would have trouble adjusting to PNG time if you were an impatient person. However, they only had one Tilly lamp, so when it was time for me to get up and read the Bible and preach, I couldn't see the page! No worries, though, I just pulled out my Maglite pen torch from my top pocket (good to be prepared!) and went on without blinking.

A vision that is being developed here is



This is the East Boroko place of worship in contrast to the others who worshipped in buildings.



This is at East Boroko church group. It was the farewell devotion being translated into Pidgin English

to establish a Reformed Leadership Training Centre. There are (at the time of writing) some 6 church groups in the Port Moresby area, but only one instituted church with a pastor and elders. A real need is to train up leaders—pastors, elders, leaders for all ministries. The goal is to have established and instituted Reformed Churches that are nationally run: self-led, self-propagating, and self-funded. And so the missionaries are here to work themselves out of a job! But it brings a constant dilemma: how much help should they give? It is tempting and very easy to simply use overseas funds to run the churches and their ministries. The goal, however, is to use overseas aid to provide infrastructure—ministers, teachers, and materials— but the nationals have to provide for the labour and everyday running costs; otherwise as soon as the missionaries leave, everything will start folding up. Also, we need to be wise so that there is a sense of belonging and ownership (some ‘blood, sweat and tears’), rather than leave the local churches expecting handouts at every turn.

Later we spent two days and one night in a village in the Mekeo district, some 2 ½ hours drive north west of Port Moresby. What a story of God’s leading! This group of people were in the Roman Catholic Church (the village is predominately Catholic with a large church building, schools and a resident priest). A Korean Wycliffe Bible Translator came to the village to translate the Bible into their local language. As they had Bible Study with him, they came to realise that what the Roman Catholic church taught didn’t quite add up to what they saw the Bible teaching. A relative of theirs had married an Assembly of God pastor who came into the district and started an AOG church. This group joined this church, but after a while found that the over emphasis of the person and work of the Holy Spirit did not match their reading of the Bible. The Wycliffe Bible translator came to Mapang Mission Home and met Rev. Stephen t’Hart of the Reformed Ministries (PNG) and introduced the two. The church group then asked to come under the Reformed Churches of Papua New Guinea as a local church. We asked what they believed God was calling them to do, and what work was happening in their lives as a congregation. They had three visions:

1. To preach the Gospel to the twenty or so villages about them. (They rent a Public Address System and go to the villages street-preaching.)
2. To be trained, and to then train their own people in the Scriptures and ministries.



Mapang Missionary Home where Wally & Jeannette Haggort are based.

3. To establish a school for their children.

Their request to Reformed Ministries is for study materials and ongoing local training. They are excited about the Reformed Leadership Training Centre that is in the process of being established.

Closer to home we had a delightful day with the youth at the Youth Rally Day at 9 Mile Manse. Wally & Jeannette Haggort had helped organise a Youth Camp. For various reasons this had fallen through. But the youth of the churches had put a lot of effort into their skit and song presentations for the camp, so the elders of the 9 Mile congregation said—let’s hold a Youth Day. Note that this was something new for them. Even the logistics of getting everyone to one place was an ordeal! As for us, we merely jump in our cars and drive there without even blinking. But they have to take public transport. The really neat thing was that all the family turned up—from babies to grandparents! It was a lovely day together, and perhaps even a first for the church groups. That evening we had to take over fifty people home in two Hilux Utes, about fifteen people at a time (it isn’t illegal there).

Odette and I also had the privilege of worshipping with the 9 Mile Congregation, which is the only instituted church with a minister and office-bearers. The ladies and girls sat on one side of the church, and the men and boys on the other. This congregation is mainly made of West Papuan refugees, who have to apply every year for a residential visa—which gives a feeling of lack of permanence. I also led a worship service at Vanagie (in a community hall near the sea). My shirt changed colour as I became soaked with sweat while leading the service. We also spent time with the East

Boroko church group, who very generously gave us woven shoulder bags (belims) as gifts. All the church groups sang songs that had been written on the back of wallpaper, and the Order of Service was written on the blackboard. Each church had its own special characteristics and traditions. What we noticed in particular that each group of people had a different way of singing: from a harsh high pitch, to an almost Gregorian chant. Most of all, we felt privileged to be able to worship and minister to the people of God here in Port Moresby.

What stood out for us? The dire need of training and education, so that capable and mature church leaders may be raised up to lead the church groups to institution, maturity and ongoing outreach by the grace of God according to His Word and Spirit. What also stood out for us was their ready acceptance of us as brothers and sisters in Christ. As I brought Christian greetings from my home church, they enthusiastically urged us to pass on theirs to us. Their parting request was that we might come back and minister the Word of God to them. Whatever the future brings, only the Lord knows; but as Reformed Churches of New Zealand we have (by the Lord’s providence and calling) the opportunity of an ongoing wonderful ministry to assist the Reformed Churches of Papua New Guinea.

We would like to give a very special thanks to Wally and Jeannette Haggort for making our stay so special. Also thanks to the OMB (RCNZ) for the invitation and opportunity to spend this time in Port Moresby.

*Yours in Christ’s Service
Alan & Odette Douma
Tivoli, Queensland.*



This is a photo of Odette standing outside the Nine Mile church building. It is the only instituted church with a minister and office bearers.



This was the church group in Beregoro some 40 minutes drive up the hills from Ekorovo where Rev. Stephen 't Hart was stationed. They sang accompanied by amplified guitars and tambourines.

OPC Uganda Update

Phil Proctor, working with the OPC in Uganda, sends the following report:

I have been working very closely with the OPCU congregation here in Mbale, acting as the pastor for about a year now. God is blessing the congregation with growth, and last Lord's Day we had about seventy in attendance... A man in his late twenties came to the service and stayed to talk with me afterwards. "David" has been a drunkard for about five years and has, like the prodigal,

squandered everything in the "far country" of the drinking pit. His health is ruined, his wife and child have left him, and his mother has threatened to call the police on him if he continues to come to her home in drunken rages. He has hit "rock bottom" and is seeking to return to the Father's house. I invited him to my home on Monday morning, and told him that I too had been in that same far country, and that the first step to coming home is to ask Christ to give him a new heart. We prayed together, and David asked Christ to forgive and save him. I told

David that he was to drink only water, and that I would be following up with him daily. I've also talked with his mother and one of his brothers and asked them to help David in sticking to his "water-totaller" pledge (after two months, he can graduate to tea). I've met with David every day since then and, as of today, he has gone five days with no alcohol. I am also focusing on discipleship in the Word and am trying to formulate a plan whereby the church leaders can really take over this situation. Please pray for David, that God will continue to transform his life and that he may be a notorious testimony to the power of God in bringing prodigals home; for the church leaders of Mbale OPCU, that they will eagerly pursue the opportunity to disciple this "found sheep" and will lovingly care for David and his family; for me, that I will be able to minister God's Word to David; and finally, that God will be pleased to use David to open the door to reaching the thousands of people in Mbale who are consumed by the sin of drunkenness.

MIF prayer notes

Please remember **Wally & Jeannette Haagoort** in your prayers, as they settle back into their work. Ask our Lord to bless the new developments that have come up at Koki, and also that sufficient funds would become available for the development of the new leadership training centre.

Janice Reid is busy with her work in a Muslim country. Her ministry is twofold: teaching radio announcers who will staff small Christian stations in different parts of the country; and travelling to those stations to help programme directors learn how to do community research so their programmes—and their outreach—are more effective.

Jared Berends writes, "May brings my time in Mongolia to a close. I'm thankful for your support and prayers over the last three years. Please remember the fellowship here, as churches are planted in the remainder of the countryside towns in this province. Our God is an awesome God, I am thankful for the privilege of being here and seeing Him work in Mongolia in such a powerful way. In His grip, Jared."

Heidi Posthuma says that May is a 'closing' time for her and her teammate, as both women will soon leave the restricted country where they are teaching English. Pray for God's guidance and wisdom in the use of time, in goodbyes to friends, and also for replacement teachers at their school. The end of May sees a huge festival in this town where Buddhists believe they can multiply their merit for religious acts. Many pilgrims come to the city for this festival, and it is often an especially hard time for local Christians. Pray for God's mercy and grace on them during this festival.