

faith in focus

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of New Zealand

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“...stop and consider God’s wonders.” Job 37:14



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Editorial

Living as we do in a western democracy, and with the Christian background that we have, we can easily assume that the lifestyles we live are pretty much close to biblical. We see that apparently confirmed when we interact with family and friends in denominations which are quite clearly liberal. You, too, may have had had some involved discussions and even quite intense arguments with them.

But how about when someone visits you from a distinctly Christian background? How do we shape up when we meet those who have been through the crucible of persecution, or come from a more strongly Christian situation than yours?

I had that happen recently. It was quite a challenge. I realised just how much our society has been impacted by secularisation. But I especially realised just how much I have been taken in by that myself. It was a real wake-up call as to the craftiness of the devil. He won't attack you head-on, but over time and in many devious ways he'll try to distract and distort your testimony for Christ.

This fact certainly struck King Josiah in 2nd King 22. He was one who is described as doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord and yet, when the Book of the Law was found in the temple, he realised just how far he was from properly following the Lord.

That's why we need to constantly keep ourselves under the Word of God. Meditate on the Scriptures every day, pray, read good Christian literature, go to church twice on the Lord's day, keep good Christian company, attend biblical conferences, and go to Bible study. These are the ways the Holy Spirit not only keeps us in the Way, but also makes us more Christ-like. Then you will more and more see exactly how far you have been from His Will and you'll also be receiving His guidance and strength to do His Will.

*Examine yourselves to see whether
you are in the faith;
test yourselves.*

2nd Corinthians 13:5a

Cover photo: One of New Zealand's weta insects - this one is most likely an Auckland Tree weta.

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

The Bible beats Beelzebub!

Christ's enemy is your enemy

Sjirk Bajema

Dear believer, your life is in great danger! Every day, and every moment of every day, you could be in trouble. If you aren't already aware of this, then you must not continue on without being utterly convinced of exactly how perilous your position really is. You must know the terrible power that stands against you. You have to see how horrible it is, and how very cruel! But you can also live your life in peace. You can be richly blessed through depending much more on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Saviour. You cannot manage — yet He will for you. You fail — yet He succeeds. You fall — yet He picks you up!

There is an enemy out there. He can even creep right in — now! You see, the war that was in heaven has been fought on earth as well. The vivid imagery of Revelation 12 pictures the intense, continuing battle. That's what we read of in Revelation 12:17. John says that after the woman was taken out of the reach of the dragon, *Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring — those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.*

This is where matters stand now. The dragon — who symbolises the devil — rages against the brothers and sisters of the Christ-child who was born. He's going to get at all those who by faith are part of the Body of Christ — the Church. He gathers together all the forces of evil into battle against the Lord God.

Let's not forget who we're up against. In the words of Ephesians 6 verse 12, *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* It is the devil who is the prince of this world; 'he is "the god of this age." And so he's also called 'Beelzebub,' which means 'fly-lord.' No wonder William Golding titled his book of human depravity as 'Lord of the Flies.' The name reflects the evil of the devil.

Let no-one misunderstand. It was the devil who incited David to sin in 1 Chronicles 21:1. This was the Satan who dared challenge God to let him test Job. Then he

even asked him for more power to reduce that godly man to the most impoverished physical state imaginable. And he was the arch-enemy who stood accusing Joshua the high priest in Zechariah 3. Satan is only mentioned on a few such occasions in the Old Testament, but he's always there!

The devil is their leader

Throughout the development of the line of salvation leading up to Christ, Satan is hovering around. He directs his forces from a distance at every turn. On rare occasions, though, he comes to the front. In the New Testament, he personally attacks the Saviour. Then, of all times, he shows



"The knight, death, and the devil," by Albrecht Durer

himself most of all! Yet it's never so much as to give anyone else a start on him. He's not going to give himself away.

I'm sure Sir Arthur Conan Doyle must have had Satan's character in mind when he described the worst arch-enemy of Sherlock Holmes. In one scene Holmes asks Watson, his trusted companion, if he had ever heard of that most evil man. Watson replied in the negative, *'Never. Aye, there's the genius and wonder of the thing!'* Holmes cried. *'That man pervades London, and no one has heard of him. That's what puts him on a pinnacle in the records of crime. I tell you, Watson, in all seriousness, that if I could beat that man, if I could free*

society of him, I should feel that my own career had reached its summit.'

Watson asked further, *'What has he done, then?'* Holmes replies, *'His career has been an extraordinary one. He is a man of good and excellent education, endowed... with a phenomenal mathematical faculty.'* He described the man's achievements, and then said, *'But the man had hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind. A criminal strain ran through his blood, which, instead of being modified, was increased and rendered infinitely more dangerous by his extraordinary mental powers.'*

He moved on to describe what this man had become: *'For years past I have been continually conscious of some power behind the criminals, some deep organising power which for ever stands in the way of the law, and throws its shield over the wrongdoer. Again and again in cases of the most different kinds — forgeries, robberies, murders — I have felt the presence of this force, and I have deduced its actions in many of those undiscovered crimes in which I have not been personally consulted... He is the Napoleon of crime, Watson. He is the organiser of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this city. He is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He has a brain of the first order. He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows every quiver of them. He does little himself. He only plans. But his agents are numerous and splendidly organised.'*

You must be aware!

What an apt description for the devil. Doesn't it bring out a little of the terrible evil he is? For he is still far, far worse! This is why you must be equipped to fight against the evil one. If you can learn to see him at work, he cannot continue. That's why we must watch out. He is the world's prime hidden persuader, the master of subliminal motivation. The most smoothest and inspiring commercial has nothing on him! Remember, the devil is their leader. That's what we read in Revelation 12 :9. He leads the whole world astray. He's on this earth leading all those other fallen angels. Don't become his slave!

The devil is your deceiver

Consider this: where did sin come from? What was its origin?

Jesus tells us. In John chapter 8 he shows us through making an awful charge against the disbelieving Jews. He declares in verse 44 there, *'You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.'*

What was Jesus talking about? How was Satan the instigator of sin? In which way was he the deceiver? To find out, we only need to turn to Genesis chapter 3. There we read the account of the fall into sin of Adam and Eve. Verse 1 of that chapter says, *Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'*

Did God really say...? Ah, that's deception. You know, you can't be too sure... you wouldn't want to be black and white about things... I'm comfortable with it... God gave it to us after all... caught! He's got you — hook, line, and sinker! You try getting out of it now. The sinful trap has been cleverly laid. We become fixated in that sin.

The devil brings it all on against the Lord

But wasn't the devil's deceiving shown most when he tried to use all his deceitful wiles against our Lord Himself? At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, Satan 'brought it all on'! How? By going against the Word. He wasn't stupid enough to say it plainly, yet even now he attacks the believer in the same way we saw him doing it when he tempted our Lord in the desert. He attacks to interrupt our communion with God. He's trying to cut off our supply lines, so he goes against God's Word to us. That also affects our prayer to the Lord.

To realise that the devil is your deceiver is to understand that deceiving someone is to persuade them of something which is false. It's misleading. What he's doing distracts us from our Christian walk, and he's the master of that. Satan deals with confusion and lies. Put the truth in front of him, and he's gone!

This means that when we become caught up in sin, you live a lie — a falsehood which has taken us over. And how intricate is the web of deceit we spin around it! We go to extreme lengths to

avoid any accountability. Even to say 'the devil made me do it' is to deceive ourselves. I did it! I should have followed the words of the Lord in James 4:8! I should have resisted the wiles of the evil one by submitting to God!

The ultimate deception

However there is yet another angle to this deception which Jesus was tempted with as we are. We noted that Eve allowed herself to be seduced by 'Did God really say?' But the temptation was made that much stronger when the devil told yet another lie to her. He said to her in Genesis 3:4-5, *'You won't surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'*

You will be like God! We have here the philosophical rationale for the way of the world today. Everywhere we see the growing signs of man worshipping himself. It's in the jingle of a song, 'They said you'd never make it...' You hear it in the slogan of the commercial, 'For the most important person in the world — YOU!' And it's in the no-blame provisions of present divorce laws, where it doesn't matter what you do because you'll get the benefits anyway.

With this kind of influence from society, we shouldn't be surprised that this fixation on self has touched Christians. But then it is a surprise as to how much effect it has had on the Church! Or is it? The great deceiver is at work. Even in books written to warn believers about the work of Satan and his forces, there is the teaching that people have the power in themselves.

One example is found in the novels of Frank Peretti. Two of his books, *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness*, have promoted the prayer warrior movement amongst Christians. So what is wrong with these books, and others like them? Aren't they right to warn us against the forces of evil? Isn't prayer vitally important? We cannot disagree with that. But these books also contain one significant error — for while they contain a brief paragraph about the saving work of Jesus Christ, they say much, much more about the prayer support that angels need **from believers**.

Yes, you heard me right! Before forces of good can come down and fight the bad, you have to *do* something. As one angel said to another in *This Present Darkness*, *'You mean he could lose? Let's hope someone is praying.'* (p.102)

Further on it comes up again. The angel

says, *'We won't fight, not yet. Not until the prayer cover is sufficient.'*

Now, it could be said that this is an encouragement to pray — but for what reason? How can you be the one to defeat Satan?

The devil is in Christ's power

It is Jesus alone who has brought the devil and his forces of evil under control. He won the Great Battle. There on the rugged cross at Calvary He offered Himself as the once-for-all sacrifice for our sin. When He cried out, *'It is finished,'* all was done that needed to be done. He paid in Himself the complete price.

Therefore, to now hint that something is needed besides that — to relegate the turning point of divine history to a mere paragraph in a novel about the struggle between good and evil — is devilish! It is falling for that old temptation, *'You can be like God.'*

Certainly, we must take Satan seriously. The apostle Peter says so in chapter 5 of his first letter. In verse 8 we read, *Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

His malice and cunning make him pretty scary! But then Peter continues in verse 9, *Resist him, standing firm in the faith.* Call on the name of Jesus! Jesus beat him! And we will beat him too, if we resist with the resources our Lord supplies. In the words of 1 John 4:4, *The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*

Martin Luther said the same in the words of his famous hymn, 'A mighty fortress is our God.' In one of those lines he sings about Satan, "One little Word shall fell him."

So, what word could that be? How could the one who directs that massive operation of manipulation against the coming of God's Kingdom ever be stopped like this?

Exactly the way Jesus did it. He quoted Scripture. He spoke His own Word — the Truth — against the lie.

The result was clear. Three times Jesus pointed Satan back to the opposite of what he is. And all that the evil one could then do was go — he didn't belong! In the same way, each time you depend on God's Word you are blessed. The devil's power is limited, and his end is destruction.

For now, the struggle may be long and very fierce. This world under Satan has developed the sophistication of evil into an incredibly elaborate attack. As Luther also wrote in his hymn, 'For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe; His craft and

power are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.' But then the next stanza sings, 'Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing; Were not the right man on our side, The Man of God's own choosing.' All power has been given to Jesus! He has bound Satan over to eternal condemnation. The judgment has been made, the sentence passed, and now the punishment is due.

Where are you looking?

Revelation chapter 20 is graphic in its symbolism about this. There the verses

10 and 11 say, *And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it.*

Dear believer, look to Jesus! Fix your eyes on Him, the Author and Perfecter of your faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and who sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. These are the words of Hebrews 12. They state emphatically

the triumph that is Christ's, which we celebrate in His ascension and soon-coming return. The writer brings it home to you in Hebrews 12:3 when he declares, *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that **you will not** grow weary and lose heart.*

Let's not be in any doubt. Satan is the leader of evil, and your deceiver, but he is in Christ's power! Your Lord and Saviour has it all in hand. It's working out according to His plan, not Satan's. That's why all things will work for the good of those who love Him (Rom.8:28).

World in focus

Valedictorian Sues School District That Forced Apology

Liberty Counsel filed suit against Lewis Palmer School District on behalf of Erica Corder, a high school valedictorian who was forced to publicly apologise for sharing her Christian faith at graduation. Erica was one of 15 valedictorians from the Lewis-Palmer High School class of 2006. For the past year, she has been the subject of criticism because the school continues to portray her as a student who engaged in improper conduct because she mentioned Jesus Christ during her speech.

Before graduation in May 2006, Principal Mark Brewer informed the valedictorians that they could choose one student to speak, or that all of them could deliver a 30-second graduation message. The students chose to have all 15 valedictorians participate and chose a general topic for each speaker. Erica and one other student were chosen to give concluding messages. Each valedictorian orally presented a proposed speech to the principal before graduation.

During her 30-second message Erica spoke about her faith in Jesus Christ. Afterwards, she was escorted to see the assistant principal, who said she would not receive her diploma because of the speech she had given. Principal Brewer later indicated that her comments were 'immature.' He said that she could only receive her diploma if she apologised to the school community. Erica prepared a statement saying the message was her own and was not endorsed by the principal. Brewer insisted that she include the words: 'I realise that, had I asked ahead of time, I would not have been allowed to say what I did.' Erica complied because she feared the school would withhold her diploma. She was also afraid that the school would put disciplinary notes in her file and would generate negative publicity, which could prevent her

from becoming a school teacher. Principal Brewer sent out Erica's message in an email to the entire high school community. Soon after, Erica received her diploma.

Liberty Counsel sent a letter on behalf of Erica to the Lewis Palmer School District Board of Education, explaining that her First Amendment rights had been violated, and requested that the district apologise for the email that Erica was forced to write and institute a written policy to ensure that no future constitutional violations occur. The school board has thus far taken no remedial steps. Meanwhile, Erica continues to be the subject of public criticism from school officials.

Mathew Staver, Founder of Liberty Counsel and Dean of Liberty University School of Law, commented: 'Valedictorians have the right to express their religious viewpoints while at the graduation podium. School officials have no right to threaten young graduates that their diplomas will be withheld. The school district's action in forcing Erica Corder to write an e-mail apologizing to the community for exercising her right to free speech is shocking.'

+ Liberty Counsel, PO Box 540774 - Orlando, Florida 32854 <<http://www.lc.org/libertyalert/2007/la082707.htm>>

Amnesty International Alliance Shattering over Abortion

The head of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland announced on 28 August that he was resigning from human rights group Amnesty International after the organisation changed its stance on abortion. Cardinal Keith O'Brien said he was withdrawing his membership because Amnesty's new position on abortion contravened the 'basic right to human life.'

The decision follows the recent move by Amnesty to back abortion in certain circumstances. The policy change has already led to calls from senior members of the

Roman Catholic Church in Britain and the Vatican for a withdrawal of support from the organisation.

+ Cardinal Keith O'Brien, 28 Manor Place, Edinburgh, EH3 7EB, Scotland

<http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/this_britain/article2903544.ece>

Dr D. James Kennedy 1930-2007

Slightly over a week after learning that Pastor D. James Kennedy would not be returning to his pulpit at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, church members heard the report that America's leading Presbyterian had gone on to be with the Lord. According to Executive Minister Ronal Siegenthaler, Dr Kennedy died peacefully in his sleep around 3 am on 5 August with his wife Anne at his side.

Pastor of a 10,000-member congregation and founder of Evangelism Explosion, Kennedy insisted on urbane and cultured presentation of the gospel. Impeccably dressed and backed-up by a magnificent pipe organ and professional grade choir, Kennedy blended history, logic, and rhetoric to make the Bible bear on government, cultural, and academic leaders.

According to Kennedy, in 1953, while listening to Donald Grey Barnhouse of Philadelphia's Tenth Presbyterian Church, he heard the question, 'Suppose that you were to die today and stand before God and He were to ask you, 'What right do you have to enter into my heaven?' What would you say?'

After obtaining theological training at the Southern Presbyterian Columbia Seminary, Kennedy moved to South Florida in 1959 and in nine months turned a 45-member congregation into a 17 member congregation. Evangelism Explosion soon followed and the steady march toward 10,000 members began. Today EE as it is known is organised openly in 211 nations.

A founder or benefactor to many Reformed institutions, Kennedy served on the ministerial staff of the *Christian Observer* under Converse and Elliott in a period stretching more than 40 years.

Kennedy left this message:

'Now, I know that someday I am going to come to what some people will say is the end of this life. They will probably put me in a box and roll me right down here in front of the church, and some people will gather around, and a few people will cry. But I have told them not to do that because I don't want them to cry. I want them to begin the service with the Doxology and end with the Hallelujah chorus, because I am not going to be there, and I am not going to be dead. I will be more alive than I have ever been in my life, and I will be looking down upon you poor people who are still in the land of dying and have not yet joined me in the land of the living. And I will be alive forevermore, in greater health and vitality

and joy than ever, ever, I or anyone has known before.'

+ Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, 5555 N Federal Hwy., Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33308 (954) 771-3187

Ireland stands by the Sabbath

For the present, a 60-year ban on Sabbath football games remains in effect in Northern Ireland. Football enthusiasts have announced plans to sue for their human rights, charging the ban is a vestigial relic of Protestantism.

Proponents of change will have to walk over the Free Presbyterian Church, the Orange Lodge, and the Democratic Unionist party first. The most powerful of Ulster parties, the DUP, is dominated by followers of First Minister Ian Paisley and members of the Lord's Day Observance Society.

Objecting to charges of racism, Rev. Mr David McIlveen, the Free Presbyterian moderator, noted that many African Christians now

living in the province consider the Sabbath special and sacred.

According to reports published in the Guardian, McIlveen further noted, 'We feel that a number of Christian sportsmen would be discriminated against. This would in general be a backward step for sport.'

+ Irish Football Association, 20 Windsor Ave, Belfast BT9 6EG, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom

Ten Commandments display can stay in Kentucky courtrooms

Federal District Court Judge Karl Forrester of the Eastern District of Kentucky ruled on 18 August that a display of the Ten Commandments, together with other historical documents in the Rowan County Fiscal Courtroom, is constitutional. Liberty Counsel represents Rowan County, Kentucky, in a lawsuit that was filed in 2001 by the ACLU of Kentucky, claiming that the display violated the Establishment Clause of the Constitution.

The display that Judge Forrester upheld is a 'Foundations of American Law and Government' display including the Ten Commandments, the Mayflower Compact, the Declaration of Independence, the Magna Charta, the Star-Spangled Banner, the National Motto, the Preamble to the Kentucky Constitution, the Bill of Rights to the United States Constitution, and a picture of Lady Justice.

Public displays of the Ten Commandments have enjoyed unprecedented favor in both the courts and the legislatures since Mathew Staver argued the McCreary County, Kentucky, case at the US Supreme Court in 2005. McCreary County involved the exact display that was upheld by Judge Forrester yesterday. The McCreary County case is back at the district court for another ruling but is likely to return to the Supreme Court, where a majority is expected to uphold the display.

These displays are spreading throughout the nation. In 2006 the Georgia legislature passed a law allowing a similar display in government buildings.

+ Liberty Counsel, Box 540774, Orlando, FL 32854 (800) 671-1776

Chinese House Church leader Cai Zhuohua released

Chinese house church leader Cai Zhuohua, jailed since 2004 for 'illegal business practices' by distributing Christian literature, has been released with stern warnings to stop practicing his faith outside of the government-sanctioned church. Bob Fu of China Aid Association told Compass that on 13 September, three days after Cai's release, officials of the Public Security Bureau took the well-known Beijing pastor to their offices and tried to intimidate him with threats. 'They warned him to be careful — not to be interviewed, to obey the law and not attend religious activities,' Fu said.

Officials from the National Security Bureau

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— China's equivalent of the US Central Intelligence Agency — on two occasions gave Cai similar warnings before he was released, Fu said. As an ex-convict whom the government is especially interested to control, Fu said, Cai must report to the PSB once a month.

Deprived of his Bible while in prison, Cai was forced to make soccer balls for the 2008 Beijing Olympics for 10 to 12 hours a day, according to the CAA.

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

Turkish Judge pressured to withdraw from Christian's trial

A Turkish judge announced his withdrawal this week from the case of two Christians charged with 'insulting Turkishness.' Judge Neset Eren said at a hearing on 12 September that he was quitting to 'distance the court's decision from any form of indecision or doubt.' Eren's announcement came after the plaintiffs' ultra-nationalist lawyer submitted a written request that he resign; Kemal Kerincsiz accused Eren of failing to deal impartially with the case. Eren had been expected to deliver a ruling at the hearing on 19 September.

Hakan Tastan and Turan Topal have been charged with insulting Turkish identity, but at a previous hearing, State Prosecutor Ahmet Demirhuyuk said there was 'not a single piece of credible evidence' against the two converts from Islam.

A new state prosecutor, Adnan Ozcan, replaced Demirhuyuk at Wednesday's hearing. 'If [Tastan and Topal] had been acquitted, there would have been a large protest,' said the Christians' lawyer, Gursel Meric.

Scores of Turkish academics and writers have been charged in the past two years under article 301 of Turkey's penal code for insulting the Turkish Republic, institutions of state or 'Turkishness.'

A recent European Commission report said that indictments related to non-violent expressions of opinion had doubled in Turkey in 2006, the *Turkish Daily News* (TDN) newspaper reported today. The report noted that more than half the incidents were raised under article 301.

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

Agencies sued for firing case worker

Liberty Counsel filed a lawsuit 18 September in federal court on behalf of Dennis Hughes against a youth services agency that terminated him when he refused to stop allowing troubled teens in its program to attend his church and church-sponsored activities. Also named in the lawsuit is the agency that manages the program and orchestrated his dismissal, the University Area Community Development Corporation (UACDC).

Hughes was a case manager for Bay Area

Youth Service (BAYS) in the Prodigy Cultural Arts Program, a program which provides case management services to juvenile offenders. If a juvenile enrolls in and completes the program, the State's criminal charges are dropped. BAYS receives virtually all of its annual revenue from the State of Florida. The program essentially operates as an arm of the State, but Florida has no law forbidding church leaders from attending functions with juvenile offenders in state programs.

For several years BAYS accommodated Hughes' religious activities during his free time, while he served first as youth pastor then as assistant pastor at Calvary Chapel of Tampa. During that time, some of the juveniles under his supervision voluntarily attended church services and sports activities sponsored by Calvary Chapel. One of the activities was held at the University Area Community Center Complex. UACDC, which also manages the Community Center, objected to the religious content of the Calvary Chapel youth activities, banned the activities from the Center and insisted Hughes end his participation.

Since UACDC also funds and manages the Prodigy program, BAYS adopted a policy that juveniles in the program could not attend any event where Hughes was present, even though no problems had ever arisen with the juveniles because of the church events. BAYS terminated Hughes, although he had excellent performance reviews, only because he would not agree to either stop attending his church or prohibit juveniles in the program from attending.

After Hughes was terminated, BAYS sent him its newly adopted policy, stating that staff members are not allowed to 'oversee, supervise, coach, mentor, counsel, or recreate with any active program youth or families as part of any outside activity or organization.' The policy is so broad that it prevents any church leader or youth activities volunteer from working in the juvenile program, because the leader would have to either leave a church meeting or make a juvenile and their family leave. It even prevents church leaders from attending the same church or participating in any church-related activity with a family member.

+ *Liberty Counsel, Box 540774, Orlando, FL 32854 (800) 671-1776*

Church vigilantes raid hostels

Instead of attending church on Sunday 16 September, a congregation of about 900 people rampaged through Nyanga hostels, businesses and informal settlements in search of articles stripped from their church at the weekend.

The congregation had been shocked to find their church, the WPT Ndibongo branch of the Presbyterian Church, had been stripped of doors, chairs, tables, electrical wiring and other movable items by thieves who seemed

to have gained entrance through the roof. The toilets and basins had also been maliciously broken.

So, instead of holding their church service, the congregants, many of them pensioners, dressed in white jackets, and with the ward councilor David Tshambula in tow, went looking for the stolen items.

Church member Noluntu Mda said that during their search in the area, congregation members saw people selling the church's chairs, doors and tables on the streets.

+ *Ntomboxolo Makoba, St Georges Street Chambers, 118 St Georges Street, 1st Floor (IOL), PO Box 4116, Cape Town, 8001 South Africa*

Naming the Psalter Hymnal

We're about to **go to print!** And in two flavours: both hard cover and 'soft'. The committee preparing our new Psalter hymnal is almost ready to release the first section. This will be the entire book of Psalms released on CD. This is the 'soft' version, and much of it has also been recently released on our website.

The Reformed Church of Dovedale is also taking the initiative of publishing this 'soft' version in a real, high quality, hard-cover book as a provisional work. The committee is delighted to cooperate with this venture.

But the book needs a name, and it would be nice to try for the final name even on this early edition. The default name is New Zealand Psalter Hymnal, and it is appropriate. But that's where you come in — to provide a selection of name options for the final hymnal. You can view the suggestions and submit your own at <http://www.hymnal.ws/name> until November 2007.

The Lord has blessed us as a committee with harmony and agreement, and we confidently trust that you will also find our work to be a blessing as we glorify God in song together. In addition to the Psalter, we have already begun selection of hymns for the whole hymnal which will be organised into categories based on the trinity - the work of the God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. May our work be a blessing to you, and a glory to God.

A feminine focus

Higher Education — for Girls?

Sally Davey

Once upon a time this was a serious question. Today you might laugh to find it a question at all. But a hundred years ago university education for women was a subject that generated quite a lot of heat. People worried about it overtaxing young women's physical and emotional strength, doubted their ability to cope with its demands, and frowned disapprovingly at the prospect of educated, bossy women losing their femininity. Some people were convinced that higher education would be good for women, and good for society, while others feared it would undermine women's great contribution to home and family.

Well, clearly, the advocates of higher education for girls won the day, but it was a while before it caught on to the level we see today. Women like my husband's maternal grandmother, who completed an M.A. in mathematics at Otago in the very early years of the twentieth century, were most unusual. Even in the 1950s, many women hesitated to take up the opportunities that were there. In the postwar years people were in a hurry to marry, have children and start family life. Delaying all this by years spent at university seemed senseless. In addition, some bright young women asked themselves, would a man want to marry a 'bluestocking' (a woman who was over-educated)? I remember my aunt discussing this with me when she was explaining why she didn't go on to do a post-graduate degree in the early '60s. (I think she always regretted it.) But today, in the wake of the feminist movement of the 1970s and beyond, we see women attending university in numbers equal to or even greater than men. They study every discipline, and go on to pursue every career open to men. Indeed, the question of higher education for girls is a question no more.

The benefits of a good education

In many ways I'm glad about this. Not for feminist reasons, but because I believe a

good education does benefit women, their families, their churches, and wider society. Young women who take the opportunity to develop their powers of analysis and communication, and who learn to understand the way their world thinks by means of a course of university study, will bring a great deal to marriage and to motherhood. But then, of course, there are also women whom God calls to a life of service as single or childless professionals. These Christian women are not single or childless because they are rebelling against God's design for them. He appears to have called them to other special service; and this service necessitates university study. My prayer is that they will bear much fruit for eternity in their service as doctors, lawyers, engineers, public servants, lecturers – or wherever it is that their contribution lies.

However, when I look around me in the Christian world today, and when I listen to what other Christians have to say on the subject, I've been finding that not everyone shares these opinions. In fact, quite a number of Christians – maybe even a growing number – disagree. For them, the question of higher education for girls is very much an open question, and they're inclined to oppose it. Because of this, I thought it would be useful to review some of these objections, and to offer my thoughts on them.

The most common objection

The most common objection, as I've found in my experience, is a 'spin' added to the truth that most Christian girls will be wives and mothers some day. This, claim the objectors, is their great calling in life, and this is what they should prepare for. What use, then, is the time spent studying at university? How will three or four (or more) years reading books, doing labs, attending lectures and writing papers prepare her for being a good Christian wife and mother? What have English literature, higher mathematics, engineering, law or dairy science (to pick a few subjects at random) to do with homemaking, submitting to a husband, or raising children? To put it bluntly, philosophy and nappies don't mix!! If your degree is going to get in the way of your proper calling, forget the degree... Furthermore, many of these objectors argue, a young woman who has spent three or four years doing a degree has just used up three or four

critical years when she could have been helping her husband and/or having her first few children. (At this point, people often start talking about the biological fact that it's more likely that women will conceive in their twenties than their thirties; so starting at 18 or 20 is even better, in their minds.) Better to get married young and get on with the real business of life.

Well, I do have sympathy for the major presupposition behind this objection. That is, marriage and motherhood are without doubt the major calling of women in this world. The Scriptures make this quite clear; and Christians, quite rightly, have been defending this truth vigorously for the past three decades or so. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that God sometimes withholds the blessings of this calling from some of his faithful daughters, and does seem to be calling them to serve him in the professions (for which university study is most useful). But there is more to a degree than this – much more. A university education actually enhances a woman's usefulness as a wife and mother. It helps her to develop more mature powers of analysis, for instance. She will learn how to grasp (quickly) the key points of an argument, and weigh them up critically. In the course of her studies she will have plenty of practice at considering a question, researching it, and then putting together her own conclusions and defending them on the basis of good supporting evidence. (She will learn this in many different disciplines: it is a skill common to most of them.) Given this, her ability to study the Scriptures and to weigh up the theological teaching of others will be greatly strengthened. She will become a much better Berean (Acts 17:11-12). She will, if she uses these skills with faith and with grace, be much less prone to being tossed around by every wind of doctrine, and will therefore be a tremendous asset to both her husband and her children.

The 'wasted years' argument

But what about the 'wasted years' argument? Should young Christian women be encouraged into early, or very early, marriage? While I certainly don't want to tread on sensitive toes here, I would like to offer a few counter-suggestions. There are some advantages in marrying young, should a young woman be sufficiently mature, and should she meet a fine and godly young

man. But there are also some good reasons why it can be very beneficial to wait a few years. I think there is little doubt that it is a good thing to become as mature as possible before entering into marriage. By maturity I mean maturity in the faith. This involves knowing the Scriptures well, and knowing oneself — one's own particular sinful propensities — and how to deal with them. If we know our weaknesses, and have learned to work on them, particularly in our relationships with others, then we're in a much better position to deal with the stresses and strains of living with another sinner in the intimacy of marriage. Certainly, most of us women are in a better position to do this when we're 24, say, than we were at 18. We will almost certainly make a wiser choice of marriage partner as well. Not only will we know ourselves better, we will also know what we're looking for a whole lot better. By becoming more godly ourselves, we will also know what a godly Christian man should look like!

In addition, these late teen and early twenties years are often the critical years for getting to know God more deeply. We're on the threshold of adulthood, and our ability to understand the ways of God have

reached a mature level. So, if we have the time, energy and mental 'space' to get to know God then, we are building a great foundation for our whole adult life. (Try reading Packer's *Knowing God*¹ and you will see what kind of knowledge I mean.) The university years — for most people between, say, 18 and 22 — are absolutely prime time for the business of getting to know God. University life gives a marvelous opportunity to devote time to the study of God. We are already attuned to sitting at our desks, being quiet, and concentrating... (the very habits required for Bible reading, prayer and meditation on the Word). And if we're combining the discipline of university study with the spiritual disciplines of the Christian life² then we're building very wisely for our future calling.

The place of the father

A second objection to higher education for girls runs like this: it is far better for a girl to be at home, under the authority of her father, and learning mostly from her mother, until she marries. While the extreme forms of this objection come from what is sometimes called the 'hyper-patriarchy' movement, variations of it are found

in many Christian circles. This line of thinking stresses the fact that the Bible gives parents primary responsibility for training their children, and highlights the dangers of letting their vulnerable daughters come under the sway of ungodly influences in the world. To aspects of this approach, I am quite partial. It has many precedents in the pattern of Christian family life in past centuries. It was taught in good books written in the nineteenth century³; and many Christians who argue this way today look fondly back to earlier ages when girls did stay at home until they married. But I think this line of thinking can go too far. For one thing, it is a great blessing for young people to enjoy the friendship and example of Christian adults other than their own parents. This is one of the wonderful aspects of good church life! It makes me sad to think of parents clutching their children so close to themselves that they miss the benefits of learning Christian lessons from other wise adults. Secondly, many of the mothers I have met who home-school their daughters successfully have had the benefit of higher education themselves. I think one of the reasons for their success is that their own studies have made them



much better evaluators of the curricula they are using for their children. They are in a position to use, adapt and discard because they are good critical thinkers. But if they discourage their daughters from going outside the home and studying at university, will their daughters be able to teach as well in turn? I often wonder...

A very common objection to university study raised by Christian parents is that many dangerous ideas, destructive to the Christian faith, are taught at university. Many a young person has had his or her faith undermined because of the subtle — and sometimes open — challenges to the gospel that come from unbelieving university lecturers. Furthermore, the immoral way of life of many university students, it is argued, can be a dreadfully bad influence on young Christians. Will my son or daughter be drawn away into sin by friends they make at university? Parents worry.

Again, I have sympathy for some of this. It is quite true that universities are places in which many false philosophies of life are taught and discussed. Even more dangerously, criticisms of the Scriptures are conveyed by the power of ridicule and assumption — that only the very narrow-minded or naïve would take them seriously. These sorts of attacks can arise in almost any subject area. However, there are some subjects where anti-biblical ideas form the very foundation of the discipline. Perhaps this will offend those who have made careers in these disciplines, but the social sciences are particularly hostile to the gospel. There is not space here to engage in a detailed critique, but they were founded, in a period of history when the authority of the Scriptures was being overthrown in western culture, on ideas antithetical to the biblical teaching on human nature and human relations. To study in these areas is to encounter a complete set of alternatives to what the Bible has to say about sin, salvation and sanctification. Nevertheless, many Christians do study

them, because they are keen to enter the 'helping' professions, and degrees in these subjects are the gateway to such careers. I often worry about them, and have warned many a young Christian school leaver to think twice before enrolling in the social sciences.

The need of preparation

In answer to this difficulty, though, I would say: be prepared! While naïve and immature Christians should be very wary of subjecting themselves to study in university courses, the well-grounded 18 or 20 year-old Chris-

'The University of Otago, the first in the British Empire to admit female students to all of its classes (from its inception in 1869), is one of Thomas Burns' most visible achievements, and a demonstration of his belief in the importance of education.'

From an article by Glenys Jackson entitled *'Burns of Dunedin'*, published in *'N.Z. Memories'*, June/July 2006

tian can profit exceedingly by engaging in them. How is this? I suggest it because there is real value in gaining first-hand familiarity (through structured courses) with the ideas that drive our world. In courses that introduce you to these ideas, and encourage analysis and discussion of them, you will become adept at recognising them, predicting their outworkings in people's thinking and behaviour, and at answering them. In other words, study in such subjects (I mean especially the liberal arts or humanities) will help make you a better ambassador for Christ in this time and culture that he has placed us.

Parents' second concern, that of the potentially bad moral influence other students may have on their children, does have some substance. This is especially so in our times, when university halls of residence have (in their foolishness) made

their accommodation unisex, including mixed bathrooms. There must seldom be a week, or maybe even a day, when a young Christian in such a living situation would not be faced with behaviour they would much rather not see. However, while the above may be avoided through choosing a home-city university, or a private boarding situation such as our church network often readily provides, there is only a real cause for concern (I believe) if children are sent off to university without proper preparation. By this I mean a habit of open talking, parent-to-teenager, about all the issues of life and the biblical principles that relate to them. This is explained, most realistically and humorously, by Paul Tripp in his excellent book, *Age of Opportunity*.⁴ I know how good this talking can be, because it is what my parents did with me through my teenage years. Helpful, understanding, relaxed conversation *does* prepare a young woman for what she will meet at university. It does provide her with the inner resources to discern the moral challenges, resist the temptations, and know what to say and how to handle difficult situations. Besides this, our university cities all have good churches that will look after our students when they are away from home. But in respect of mixing with the world at university, there is one last thing I would like to say. The keen Christian student will see her unbelieving classmates as people in need of the gospel, and she will want to share her faith with them. She will not want to hide herself away, cluster (or should I say *cloister*?) together with only her church friends for company on the campus. University years are a great time for learning how to share your faith, and beginning to bring Christ's love to those who so desperately need it.

The pragmatic argument

There are a number of more pragmatic objections that Christian parents sometimes have to their daughters spending a period studying. Some ask – wouldn't she be better off getting a job for these years, and saving up the money to help her future husband buy a house or start a business? Well, my inclination is to answer by asking: what is really important? For sure, it is handy to have the extra savings, and to have the ability to buy your first house before you start a family, should God give you one. But if you are thinking long-term, surely what you are after is the best upbringing for that family. After all, what is the best spiritual and

HOUSE AVAILABLE

Our four bedroom (one sleep out) home will be available for a family who would like to holiday in Masterton, from Thursday the 20th of December 2007 until Thursday the 3rd of January 2008. No rent will be charged; we are just asking for a Reformed family to house sit. Please contact: John and Hettie Arends, Ph 06 3708003 or email arends@dutchkiwi.net.

educational co-leadership for that home? Wives who are well-prepared for marriage and motherhood are more important than a paid-off mortgage. A woman who has the ability to contribute spiritually in the church, to offer her husband discreet and wise counsel on matters pertaining to the faith and the upbringing of the children, is, I would have thought, more valuable than one who is simply a partial-breadwinner. Wives who have learned to read widely and discerningly, and have the ability to convey the main points of a good book, have helped many a busy and tired husband. (One man calls it 'vicarious reading' on his part.) And there are other scenarios. Perhaps a husband has studied in an area necessary for his career – in the applied sciences, let's say. A wife who has enjoyed a wider-ranging education, touching on the humanities – or perhaps even some years studying the Scriptures at a seminary – can help her husband immensely.

Others ask – if she is going to do some study, why not choose something practical and useful, like child-care or book-keeping; something that she can use as a mother or to help her husband run a business? I see the point, but still believe that there are far more useful things again, eternally-speaking, that a young woman could study, if God has given her the desire and the abilities.

The concern about cost

Finally, there is the question of the cost of this study. We live in a day when students have to pay for more of their tuition than was required in my university years. Indeed, we baby boomers probably did not know how spoiled we (and our parents!) were. Our university bursaries covered the cost of our tuition, and the living allowance covered most of our living expenses. What we earned in the holidays was for extras, like cars and clothes and some of the more expensive textbooks. Now, however, students bear much greater costs. For many, large student loans or dependence on well-off parents is a fact of life. Some parents wonder whether a daughter with a student loan will be a liability. Will a man want to marry a girl with a loan to pay off? (I've actually heard this asked.) Well, unless the loan has been extravagant in size, and used for wasteful purposes, I would simply assume that a young man put off by a debt incurred for worthwhile study is probably not one you'd want your daughter to marry. Is this how you see it?

The danger of pride

I hope I have made a convincing case for educating our young women well. But there is one danger in emphasizing all this. And that is pride. Education, like every other blessing God showers upon us, is an opportunity to be thankful for, not something to boast about. It is not as if some letters after (or in front of) one's name makes one any more worthy a servant of Christ than a person who did not have the ability, the encouragement, or the money to pursue a similar education. I am sure we will realise that in heaven, if we do not here and now. Pride is a particular temptation for gifted children (and their parents), and needs to be guarded against.

Over the past year our ladies' Bible study group has been working its way through the book of Acts, and we've all been struck by the marvellous way God used the Apostle Paul in the spread of the gospel around the Roman world. It was simply amazing. We have seen in our study that one of the reasons Paul was so greatly used is that God had prepared him for this task. He had a very fine mind, and had received

one the best biblical educations available in his day, at the feet of the great rabbi, Gamaliel. But in addition, he had a strict and faithful Jewish upbringing, and developed a deep understanding of Greek culture as a result of his earlier years in Tarsus in Cilicia (part of the world where Greek thinking and language were the dominant culture). It is not hard to see why God called him to be apostle to the Gentile world of his day. And yet, Paul did not rest his case with Christ on externals like his great learning. In the third chapter of his letter to the Philippians he observes that he had every bit as much to boast about ('in the flesh') as did those who insisted upon circumcision as the way to please God (and he lists his qualifications). He had done all the right things, been in the right places, and gained all the right qualifications. But then he adds: 'whatever gain I had, I counted as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ...' (Philippians 3:7-9)



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, Bible 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.)



In the end, it is Christ, and not anything we are, have been born with, or have achieved, that counts. But it is wisdom to take every opportunity he gives us to improve our usefulness as his servants.

Endnotes

- 1 J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1973)
- 2 See Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Navpress, 1997)
- 3 For instance, John Angell James, *Female Piety: A*

Young Woman's Friend and Guide (First published in London, Hamilton Adams, 1860; reprinted by Soli Deo Gloria, Morgan, PA, 1999)

- 4 Paul Tripp, *Age of Opportunity* (P & R Publishing, 2001)

Missions in focus

Janice Reid

Dr. John Koolaard is the Chairman of our denomination's Overseas Mission Board, and is also a member and organist in the Palmerston North congregation. John is married to Antoinette, and they have 5 (soon to be 6) children. John has worked as a scientist for 11 years and is currently at AgResearch. In his odd moments of free time he enjoys working in the large garden at their home in the foothills of the Tatarua ranges, under the shadow of giant wind turbines.

A short visit to PNG

There were large numbers of people out and about on the streets, heading home from work, at the markets, congregating in groups to talk and chew beetlenut (bui), lighting fires right on the side of the street to cook food, or just generally milling around. That was the very first impression as we drove from the airport to the Mapang Missionary guesthouse in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. All those 'black' faces out on the suburban streets, many of whom were looking at our car and the 'whiteskins' inside as we passed by. And then there was the litter. Plastic bags, wrappers and containers lay trapped against those ubiquitous high fences topped with razor wire protecting every property. These fences betray a dark side of this country – one of high crime resulting from unemployment and poverty.

Rev. Hans Vaatstra and I were in this tropical land for five days on behalf of the Overseas Mission Board of our churches to visit Wally and Jeannette Hagoort, our missionaries from the Reformed Church of Hukanui, and to see the work they are involved with. This was my first trip to PNG, although Hans had been once before, three years earlier.

Visiting our missionaries

The Mapang Missionary Home, which Wally and Jeannette manage, is a well-known

stopover place for Christian workers and other travellers passing through the capital city. It has served for nearly fifty years as a safe but low-cost accommodation alternative to hotels.

Since they arrived to take over management at Mapang, our missionaries have made a number of significant improvements which have led to a high level of patronage. Although they usually have nationals (local PNG people) doing the manual chores such as cooking and cleaning, running the place is still a full-time job for Jeannette especially, with the constant stream of visitors, phone calls and enquiries throughout the day and evening.

Apart from the work at Mapang, both Wally and Jeannette are actively involved

with two groups of believers affiliated with the Reformed Church in PNG. These two groups are in two different 'settlements' on the edge of Port Moresby. A settlement is a shantytown that has sprung up because people have come from villages throughout the country to the capital in search of work and prosperity. But in PNG, with 40% of the population living on less than US\$1 per day, there isn't much of either commodity, sadly. They have no money and cannot afford a house, so they build a little shack in one of these settlements and try to eke out an existence, typically selling produce or goods at the markets. Often their relatives will join them so there often are family groupings (clans or 'lines') in the same neighbourhood.



The three foreign missionary couples in Port Moresby: Stephen and Dorinda 't Hart (back left), Wayne and Cheronne van der Heide (back right) and Wally and Jeannette.

The two settlement church groups that the Hagoorts are involved with are East Boroko and Vanagi. These are under the supervision of the Nine-Mile Church, the only instituted church in the Port Moresby area. We visited East Boroko twice, the first time to meet the saints there and see Jeannette's literacy class where she teaches adult members of the fellowship (and some others) to read the Bible for themselves. Many of these poorer people have little formal education so this is a great help for them. The second visit was when Wally taught a profession of faith class of six adults who desire to become members of the Reformed Church. He was using a Pidgin (Tok Pisin) version of the Heidelberg Catechism.

East Boroko Settlement

When we arrived at East Boroko the first time, the group had prepared a welcome for Hans and myself. They thanked the New Zealand churches for providing money for a new roof for their church building, and for our other generous support, especially for the Bible College at which one of their number is currently studying. Gifts were presented to each of us as tokens of their appreciation – bright, hand-woven shoulder bags (bilums).

Aisi Kosa – ex-rascal

The leader of the East Boroko fellowship is a brother by the name of Aisi. We listened with joy to his testimony. He was a notorious criminal before the Lord changed his heart. About two years ago he was moved to stop and listen as Wally was telling the Gospel of Christ to a youth meeting one evening in the settlement. He gave his heart to Jesus soon after but continued for some time to struggle against the bad habits of his former way of life. Then, on New Year's Eve 2005, the Lord convicted him about these things and he promised to put away for good the gambling, drinking, etc. that had characterised his earlier life. Praise God for His life-changing power!

Vanagi Settlement

On the Sunday we worshipped God at the other settlement with about 20 of the saints. Wally led the service in Tok Pisin and Rev. Vaatstra gave the sermon in simple English, it not being thought necessary to translate it for the people present. The sermon was from Acts 20:22-32 and the theme was how the Bible is a gift of God's grace to us. While the service was held at the local community hall in the



Hans and John with Jeannette Hagoort and her literacy class in the East Boroko church building.



Wally Hagoort with Aisi Kosa, leader of the group at East Boroko.

middle of the settlement, and all around about could see and hear what was going on (there are no walls on any of the three Reformed Church places of worship in Port Moresby), the rest of the community stayed away. Later, we asked Nawai, one of the young men of the church who is also studying at the Bible College, why the community people don't come along to church. The reason was that people in that place simply don't know what the Reformed Church is and where it comes from, and hence it is viewed with some suspicion. We talked about possible ways to counter this problem.

The Nine-Mile Church

We also met with the Session of the Nine-Mile Church. The Pastor is Rev. Bas Fairiro, who has served there for many years. The core members of this Church are refugees from West Papua (Indonesia). They came across the border to PNG some twenty years ago, bringing the Reformed Faith with them. However, because they were all from a foreign tribal group they have so far had little success attracting other local people to join with them in the church. They have recently bought a piece of land near the settlement and plan to erect their church building on this tribally 'neutral' venue. The hope is that this will overcome some of the cultural barriers which seem to be keeping people from attending the church. The pastor's house has already been built on this land.

The new Reformed Churches Bible College PNG

Wally and Jeannette cooperate with other Reformed missionaries in PNG. Two of these live near Port Moresby and are sent out by (our newest Sister Churches) the Canadian Reformed Churches, although both missionaries are Australians. Rev. Stephen 't Hart, his wife Dorinda and 4 (soon to be 5) children have worked in PNG for about ten years. He and Wayne van der Heide are the main teachers at the new Reformed Churches Bible College (RCBC). This is the college that our New Zealand churches have donated so generously towards. The teaching program began this year and it is intended to take a holistic approach to Christian discipleship and leadership training for all areas of church leadership. One of the first crucial needs identified was for Biblical teaching in the churches on marriage, and this course is underway to the first cohort of about ten students.

Since the College is quite a way out of town, and since it is not good that students are separated from their families, modest houses are being constructed on the large RCBC property so that if a student has a family they can live together on site. The intention is that they would earn their keep by growing vegetables and livestock on the site and selling them in the market.

It seemed to us that the Bible College is a very important and necessary development to assist the Reformed Churches in PNG to grow and mature. Indeed, they themselves have been wanting such a place for many years. There is a culture of dependency in PNG, and much foreign church missionary effort in the past has unfortunately operated in a way that has entrenched rather than sought to overcome this national malaise. The three Reformed Church fellowships in Port Moresby are largely comprised of poorer, lesser-educated people who don't have what we would term full-time, salaried jobs. More godly Church leaders are needed to guide the believers, and also to train others to take their places in the various offices and roles of Church life.

The missionaries all get on well together, and complement each other in many ways. Wally and Jeannette Hagoort are doing a great job, at Mapang as well as in the two settlements in Moresby. I commend them to you and ask that you continue to uphold the Hagoorts with your prayers and encouragement.

We can be confident that the reigning Lord Jesus is building His Church in PNG. It is our privilege as Reformed Churches in New Zealand to be used by Him to partner with and assist our brethren there to be the witness that He calls them to be.

Planning a mission trip? Let us pray for you!

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

Letter to the editor

Dear Editor,

I was very interested in the article that appeared in the July 2007 edition of Faith in Focus on redemptive-historical preaching particularly because, in God's providence, I had been doing some reading on redemptive-historical vs. exemplary preaching just the week before the magazine was released.

I would like to begin by saying that it is sad that there is such a polarization between these two approaches. On the one hand, exemplary preaching is often guilty of using a particular passage to 'springboard' a topical message, which has its own problems (e.g. it could be better preached from a different passage which deals more directly with the topic at hand). On the other hand, redemptive-historical preaching is often guilty of making weak (or even failing to make any) application. Both of these extremes are unbiblical.

The answer to correct Biblical preaching is not found exclusively in the redemptive-historical or exemplary approaches. Rather the answer would seem to be found in the middle. Truly biblical preaching is both thoroughly exegetical as well as thoroughly applicational — i.e. true preaching is expositional. Sadly, whilst the preaching we often hear from our pulpits contains good theology, there is very little application. Ours is a faith which is based on the truth. But the truth is never to be left hanging in the air. It is the goal of every pastor not only to divide the Word of God faithfully, but also to know his flock and then faithfully, boldly, and convincingly to apply the very truths to the lives of the members of his congregation.

By applying the Word of God in our preaching, we are not assuming the role of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works through the means of those who bring and apply the message. If application is to be left completely to the Holy Spirit, then the apostles were the biggest stumbling blocks to the work of the Holy Spirit whenever they commanded people to repent. The Holy Spirit applies the Word of God through the applicatory preaching of ministers.

Anything short of this exegetical and applicational preaching falls short of the biblical model. Throughout the Scriptures, the pattern set forth is that the Word of God must be applied to those who hear

it at that given time. This is the pattern that we are to adhere to in our own day and age. We as weak and feeble sinners, saved by grace, are just as much in need of being exhorted to apply and obey the Word that is preached, as was every child of God in the Old and New Testament. Wherever this active application is absent in preaching, we can be assured that there will also be an absence of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The truth is that we are stubborn sheep who not only need to hear the Word preached, but also be instructed in how to obey it in a practical, everyday way.

Only when the Word of God is more powerfully preached from our pulpits in this way can we expect to see a people who are not only convinced of the truth, but who also desire to consistently walk in it, and teach it faithfully to their children.

In my experience within our own church, we have been subject to both extremes, but mostly the sermons preached from our pulpit lean towards the redemptive-historical approach. The result of this type of preaching is inevitable, and already the signs are showing. There seems to be a general lack of hungering and thirsting for righteousness due to a lack of application and exhortation in the preaching. At the same time, there is also a lack of a true grasping of the Scriptures, despite what the redemptive-historical approach seeks to achieve. One need not probe very deep to see that these problems exist. Many of our adults are not adequately equipped to teach and defend the glorious truths contained within the Scriptures. This problem becomes more evident when the church begins to substitute fellowship for doctrine as that which unifies us. As if that were not bad enough, there is a lack of passionate desire to rectify this problem. Most seem content to maintain the status quo. Why? Because there is a lack of exhortation to holiness from the pulpit.

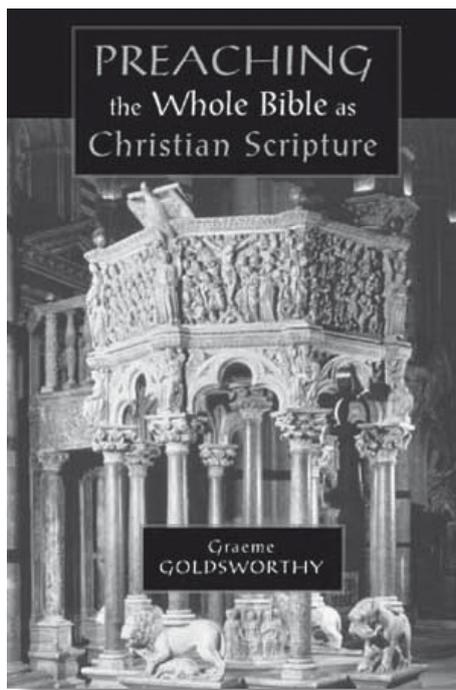
The telltale proof that this is a problem can be seen in our children. Many of our children no longer know the catechisms, let alone the Scriptures. How many children within our churches can recite the answers to the Heidelberg Catechism? How many children in our churches are daily saturating themselves with the Scriptures? I have on various occasions tried to speak to some of the children in respect to what they learn in Sunday School. The response often varies, but the most common is a watered down 'story-telling' rendition of biblical accounts. Where has this left our

children? Our children are no longer set apart from the world. Instead they are beginning to look and act more and more like the children of the world. And what are we doing to stop this? The sad answer is that we are bringing worldly ideas and practices into our churches hoping that it will cause our children to think twice about leaving. Well, it won't work. If they are so shaped by the world, they will leave the church eventually, and then all you are left with is a church in a mess. Instead, I would like to challenge us with two very serious questions:

Are we as parents, and God's Church, being truly faithful to the Lord's command to instruct our children in His commandments?

What kind of generation is being raised by our complacent and half-hearted Christianity?

Before we answer these questions, let us first examine our hearts and answer



this question: How can we expect positive responses from our children in these areas when many parents are not even practising these very things?

What does this have to do with preaching? Everything! The pulpit is the place where the pastor (with the support of the elders) is able to most effectively exhort the whole congregation by powerfully calling each member to account based upon the preached Word of God. This was the classical Reformed and Puritan approach to the pulpit. And we seem to have largely moved away from this.

May the Lord grant that His Word would once again be preached with authority, passion, and power from our pulpits, as it was in the days of the Reformers and the Puritans. May He grant that we as congregations would be challenged to walk in holiness. May He grant that we would repent of our complacency and once again hunger and thirst for Him and His Word.

For the glory of Christ and His Church,
Justin Geldart
Bucklands Beach

Rev. Archbald replies:

Br J. Geldart writes critically of the redemptive-historic approach to preaching, and indeed seems to feel that this kind of preaching contributes to problems in our people — especially the youth.

I agree that some proponents of the redemptive-historic approach have gone to extremes in leaving virtually all application to the Holy Spirit. I pointed out the problems with this view in the first article. Failure to make application can indeed have serious consequences upon the flock, as Br Geldart suggests.

The issue, however, is not *whether* application should be made, but *how* it is made. That is the crucial difference between redemptive-historic and exemplaristic preaching. For that reason, it is not a matter of a compromise between redemptive-historic and exemplaristic preaching. There should be no compromise between right Christ-centredness and application, on the one hand, and out-of-context application on the other.

Br Geldart opts for a 'both-and' approach, somewhere between the two extremes, as he sees it. In fact, the exemplaristic method is already a 'both-and' approach. It tries to combine redemptive-historic aspects with application based on examples or morals that seem to crop up in the text. The issue that I have with that approach is not the reference to examples or to morals, but the drive to focus on such things *irrespective of whether that is the point of the text or not*.

Br Geldart obviously has the welfare of the Lord's people at heart. The kind of things that he laments ought to concern us all. But let us be sure we identify the true cause behind such symptoms. The cause, whatever it might be, is not redemptive-historic preaching, which is both exegetical and applicatory, when done properly.

Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Avondale

Family prayer & praise items: Tomorrow night, our time the (civil) wedding of Marius Stok and Lucie van Rij will take place in Dordrecht, the Netherlands. The church ceremony will take place on their return to New Zealand. Remember them in prayer as they enter married life together.

Church Teachers Meeting - Calling all teachers or leaders of groups in our church: you are asked to attend a meeting on Friday September 28 at 7:30pm in the basement. The purpose of the meeting is for the encouragement and training of all members involved in any form of teaching in our congregation. So, if you're involved in Discipleship, Sunday School, Cadets and Calvinettes, Friendship, Friday Night Junior Youth, or any other areas where teaching occurs please come along. Session hopes to encourage and equip all involved in these important ministries. Please see me for details. Reuben Ploeg

Avondale Reformers soccer team. Another soccer season has finished for our church team in the NZ Christian Football Association (NZCFA). This year we played again in the 2nd division, called the Super League. The competition includes 3 men's leagues and 1 women league (making up 30 teams), all played on Saturdays at Riversdale Park in Avondale, from April to September. The NZCFA purpose is "to be a medium that facilitates churches to fellowship and share the gospel of Jesus Christ through sport". We had 15 men from our church involved during the season (Josh, Toby, Glen, Neil, Reuben, Elmer, Thom, Pieter, Tjeerd, Theo, Phil, Brett, Steven), along with special appearances by the Ploeg grandson & granddad combination. The remaining 5 players were from outside our church. We had a good season with a respectable 6th placed finish. At prize giving we received a number of prizes, with the best of all being the "Christian Team Sportsmanship" cup for 2007, which

included prizes from the competition sponsor (Lotto): 3 soccer balls, pump and team kit bag. Our team was picked from the 30 teams playing in the competition, so we were pretty stoked with that - well done team! A BIG thank you to all who supported us this season (including the wives - who not only had their husbands play soccer for a few hours, but also had to endure the injuries and post match discussions regarding the game). It is a real joy to be able to get together and play sport and have numerous people from the church come along and watch (and in Ben's case be a fantastic support by looking after the kids). Enjoy your time off and Lord willing we will be back playing in April 2008!

Family prayer & praise items: Congratulations to Len & Ann van Trigt who in this past week celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary. We thank and praise God for keeping them and for what He has done through them in the life of this congregation.

Bibles & Prayer needed: On Monday night, a few of us met to share the gospel with one person at the 'Avondale Lodge'. This was not meant to be, as the person did not turn up. However, by God's grace, we found ourselves with nine people who all wanted to hear what we had to say! We focussed the Bible study on God's grace, through Christ by using the Prodigal Son story and also another heart warming life story that demonstrates grace. We told the hostel residents that God is gracious and through repentance He welcomes us, regardless of what we have done. God is so good. We have decided to try to make this a regular occurrence but we need your help! First and foremost we need your prayers, but in a practical sense, if you have any Bibles (full or gospel only) that you don't have any need for we will find a very good home for them, as we have already had one person request a Bible. -Carl, Henry, Tjeerd & Sharon

Congratulations to br John Gjaltema who turns 80 this week. We give praise to God for this milestone and pray that He may continue to bless and keep you.

Bucklands Beach

Pastoral. This week has a real milestone - Happy 90th Birthday to our sister Bep Kroon. May the Lord bless and keep you in the year ahead. You have been a real

blessing to us as a fellowship here in Bucklands Beach and may you continue to do so. There will be a luncheon after Church on Sunday 16th September to celebrate Mrs Kroons 90th Birthday. Can everyone please bring a generous plate for the celebration.

Dovedale

Session notice: Session presents the Rev. John Rogers (by acclamation) to serve in the ministry of word and sacrament in the Dovedale congregation. Voting will take place after the morning service of the 9th September. Votes can be cast by all communicant members and a two-thirds majority is required to enable a call to be extended.

Spring dinner for senior citizens. Krisi Posthuma and Adrienne Braam are organising this event which will run on Saturday, 1 September here at the church from 5.00 - 7.30 p.m. A number of people in the local area have been invited and are coming, for which we are very thankful, however there is still room for more. If you know of someone who is lonely, lives alone, or who may enjoy coming to such an event please let us know. The ultimate aim of events such as this is to reach out to these people and help wherever we can - either physically or spiritually - through our conversation and interaction with them. They will be collected and dropped off, treated to a three course banquet, waited upon by some of our young people, entertained by members of the congregation, and be led in the singing of old songs and hymns. Thank you all for your willingness to help and be involved.

Pastoral notes. In recent years our habit has been to have a prayer meeting on the Friday prior to the Lord's Supper celebration. So many, through history, have found consistently, that corporate prayer is one of the key means God appears to insistent upon, prerequisite to His blessing. You already know that expectation without genuine prayer is presumption! But, dear friends, we need to take that to heart. Some of you will remember that Dr Pipa, in his rejoinder to prayer to us some years ago, stressed that the scriptures led him to conclude that prayer is the "powerhouse of the congregation". He, of course, assumed that we understood that God required that we pray genuinely, according to His will, in

faith, etc. How about reconsidering coming to the prayer meeting, scheduled for Friday the 5th of October? You may well also be encouraged through it, and certainly others attending will be encouraged by your presence.

Dunedin

At 11:30 am on Saturday 15 September (DV), Alexia de Reus will marry Bryan Hoyt in a service at the Hall of Memories, Waitaki Boys' High School, Waitaki Avenue, north end of Oamaru.

Foxton

Wedding banns: - Jesse van Echten & Melissa van der Waardt. It is with great joy and expectation that we announce that Jesse & Melissa have signified their desire to be united in marriage on Saturday 29th September 2007. If there are no lawful objections, the ceremony will take place on that date.

Hamilton

Wedding: Hans Joubert and Renée van Rhyn warmly invite you to their wedding on 1 September, 2007, at 1pm in the Hamilton Reformed Church, followed by light refreshments.

Hastings

From the Session. Over the past year and a half the session has been considering the need for a second minister. About a year ago session made the decision to have a vicar and towards the end of the vicar's internship to consider whether it would be good to call a second minister. At our last session meeting we discussed this again and session has decided that a 2nd minister would be of great benefit to the congregation. This will have several benefits. It will enable us to increase our evangelistic outreach in the Hastings-Napier area. It will enable better follow-up and teaching of converts and adherents. It will enable better pastoral care of the members. We will benefit from a varied preaching ministry through the different perspective of two ministers. It will enable one of our ministers to engage in teaching and training on the mission field from time to time without hindering the regular ministry of the word here in Hastings. Of course it is essential that the two ministers be able to work together will and that they complement one another in their respective gifts and abilities. It is therefore session's intention to ask the congregation to consider extending a call to David Waldron after he has passed his presbytery exam in November,

D.V. Of course this all depends on the providence of God. We must be aware that both David and I could receive calls from other vacant congregations and these will need to be given full consideration by us. We believe the Lord has placed an open door before us to extend the work of the Gospel in this area and to be more actively involved in mission work overseas. We ask the congregation to be in prayer for our plans for the future. We also ask that you talk with your elder about these plans if you have any suggestions or ideas on these matters.

Howard Street progress. The outcome of the congregational meeting held on Monday night resulted in a majority decision (86.5% in favour), to go ahead with the purchase of Howard Street Church. This support was backed up with a commitment totalling \$166,550 in gifts from the congregation. This is extremely generous and prayerful thanks must go to all who were able to make a commitment. Unfortunately however, there is still a shortfall of \$33,450 to meet the required balance of the \$200,000 needed. This is the sum of money required to bridge the gap generated by the purchase price of \$1.6 million, less the estimated \$1 million from the sale of the Florence Street properties and a \$400,000 bank mortgage. From the 1st of April 2008 tax law changes. All donations will become fully deductible against other personal income. Currently the tax refund on any donation is a maximum of \$1,500 per person. To utilise this tax benefit, we will consider taking up the offer from the Howard Street Eldership to leave the \$200,000 in as an interest free loan for 1 year. The Negotiating Team will convey our current status to the Howard Street Eldership in the next few days and patiently wait for their response. We can have faith and peace that this matter is in the Lord's hands and that His divine will shall be revealed to us in His time. Please be in prayer for the Negotiating Team and their task ahead, and also for the whole process, that it may continue in such a way that God continues to receive the honour and glory.

News from the Cunninghams. Nigel Cunningham was ordained to the ministry of the word and sacraments in the Christian Reformed Church of Cobden, Victoria, Australia on 8th September. Nigel had previously been serving in the Cobden congregation in the position of home missionary and is now their minister. A further

With thanks to our faithful God we rejoice in the celebration of the

50th Wedding Anniversary

of our loving parents and grandparents

Arie and Marina van Seventer



**18 December 1957
den Haag, the Netherlands**

Psalm 89.1-2

I will sing of the LORD's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.

I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself.

With much love;

Vera & Craig Treacher
Daniella, Damian, Karina, Rebecca

Carla & Jerf van Beek
Marit & Ritchie Flinn, Ilse & Matt Heeringa, Elke, Jos, Hester

Dan & Bonnie van Seventer
Anouk

Al & Sonja van Seventer
Grace, Holly, Sophie, Eva, Jemima

**263 Twyford Road, RD 5
Hastings
Phone 06 8799116**

cause for joy and thanks is that Michelle is pregnant and due in January next year. For more recent congregational members who do not know the Cunninghams, Nigel served in the Hastings Reformed church as a vicar in 2002.

Hukanui

Profession of Faith: Session has also met with Elke Vermeulen this past week and with joy has agreed to her request to profess her faith in the Lord before this congregation. Therefore, Marissa Theron, Christian and Elke Vermeulen, and Dianne Wisse will, D.V. profess their faith before God and His people in the worship service on Sunday morning the 9th September.

Ladies Retreat Oct 26/27: this is now only about 6 weeks away. You should find registration forms and information in your pigeon holes. Join the combined Retreat with the Abereen Congregation for a time of study and fellowship & No cooking!! If you have missed out, or require more registration forms, please contact Carina 854-5583

Masterton

Adults' Games Evening. Yes, another great time of fun and fellowship is planned for

the adults of our congregation (anyone older than youth club age). Please keep the evening of Saturday the 10th of November free for this event. The youth will be available to babysit for anyone who should need it. - The Organisers

Family Fun Day Saturday 13th October 2007 D.V at the Kleinjan's place 1838 State Highway 2 Mt Bruce.Young and Old . Everyone is invited to join in for a day of fun and fellowship to celebrate Leo's and Dick's birthdays. Activities will run from 10am to 3pm. with BBQ lunch provided. Mark your calendars now.

Women's fellowship. Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, September 25, 2007 @ 7.45pm. Our venue for this evening is Ubonsri Peacock's house, 179 A Chester Road, Carterton.We will be talking about "Our Culture". Amongst a few other items on this evening, Heidi will share her experiences about what it is like to come into a new culture, and then we will discuss ways to help new "New Zealanders" feel at home in our country. We hope many people will come and share their stories and advice.

Nelson

Women's Fellowship All ladies are welcome

to attend our monthly meetings. We meet at the Church on Thursday the 2nd of August at 7:30 p.m. We will be doing some fun interesting projects for use at the upcoming Presbyterial. Our short constitution will be read and any amendments needed will be addressed then.

Notes of Session Meeting held 21st August 2007. The Calling Committee advised Session that they have asked Vicar David Waldron, who is currently doing his Vicariate in the Reformed Church of Hastings, to visit Nelson and conduct both Services on Sunday 30th September 2007. Session Clerk.

North Shore

Session planning meeting. A reminder to Session members that we have a special Session meeting on Tuesday, 14th at 7.30 pm to discuss further the possibility of calling a second minister and our recent thinking re evangelism.

News & Announcements. Dovedale Call - The vote to call John Rogers was taken last Sunday 9th September. The vote was not sustained so a call will not be extended to him. Please pray for the Dovedale congregation as they continue searching for a minister.

News & Announcements. Simon van der Wel from Hamilton, Peter & Joanna van der Wel's son, has just completed his vicariate at the Sutherland CRC in NSW, passed his preliminary examination and has been declared eligible for call.

Session meeting report. Second minister/evangelism. We spent a lot of time discussing this topic. First we discussed the congregational meeting held on 9th September. The suggestion of sharing a second minister with other churches in Auckland area, we decided to take this idea to the next Presbytery meeting for their consideration.

- Job description: A more clear and defined job description is to be prepared.

- The treasurer has been asked to prepare a proposed budget for Feb & March 2008 and also for the 2008 financial year.

- We discussed the whole aspect of evangelism and the procedures in calling a second minister.

- We agreed to hold a special Session meeting on 1st October to further plan and discuss the issues before us.

- David Waldron has been contacted. In mid-October he will give us a date when

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he can come and preach, after his exam, which is on 3rd November.

Silverstream

Session Notes. Profession of Faith: Session is pleased to announce that Rob Knol is to profess his faith, Lord willing, during the morning service next Lord's Day. If there are any lawful objections, please let your elder know as soon as possible.

Session Notes. New Member: Although she has been with us for some time now, the Session is pleased to announce that Sr. Stephanie Koens has been accepted into membership in our church, on her request and following a meeting with the elders. We give thanks to the Lord that Stephanie feels sufficiently at home here to take this step.

Covenant Baptism. We are privileged to witness the baptism of Sebastian Paul Eldershaw, son of Simon and Melanie during this morning's worship service. We

pray that the Lord will be with Simon and Melanie in the vows that they make and that the Lord will guide them as they raise their children to serve and love Him.

Outing for Senior Members. On 3 October we have planned another outing for our 65 and over members. This time we are going to Foxton. In Foxton we are going to visit the flax museum and also have a trip on the horse drawn tram. Those who want to visit the windmill can do so for an extra \$5.00 cost. The total cost for travel, museum, horse tram and hot lunch is \$35.00 per person. This is excluding coffee/tea etc, fellowship and fun is also free. More details to follow. We must your enrolments by 24 Sept. Please phone John Leenders if you would like to come.

Wainuiomata

Profession of Faith: The Session is pleased to announce that Richard Sarfti is plan-

ning to profess his faith in Jesus Christ on September 16, if there are no lawful objections. Let us strive to encourage Richard and also make him feel at home in our body.

Email from the Bartletts: Hello to you. We are thrilled to let you know that Anna and Lynton Baird are now engaged to be married probably in April next year. We are thrilled with this development and thank God for bringing these two young people together! After all the sad and difficult times Anna has been through in the last couple of years it is so nice to see her SO happy. And on top of all this she is now driving her own car again (after not being allowed to drive for 3 1/2 years). Dennis and Janette

Wellington

Church family. This morning we have the opportunity to witness the baptism of Olivia Kathleen Reurich.

Auckland Senior's Day – October 3rd 2007

This year Avondale hosted some seventy senior members from all the churches of Auckland Presbytery in a much appreciated way. In what has become a much looked forward to date on our senior's calendar, we heard from the Rev. Dirk van Garderen speak of his trips to the United States of America and the Netherlands. He spoke of the huge Reformed-Presbyterian scene in America and the developments in Holland.

In the afternoon we were privileged to hear the fine voices of 'The Pinesongsters,' the choir of the Pinesong Retirement Community, the musical talents of several of the young people in the Avondale congregation, and doing some singing of our own.

Before, in-between, and after these, we were well provided for with morning and afternoon teas and a superb lunch. They provided a good time to meet old friends, some whom hadn't seen each other for quite a while. It was a tremendous encouragement to see the Lord's keeping and blessing of our founding generation.

We saw that also through the daughters, granddaughters, and even a great granddaughter, of the Avondale church who looked so well after us. We give them a big 'thank you' for making it such a good day.

We look to continuing this tradition next year at this time of the year.



Young musicians from Avondale



Rev Dirk van Garderen speaking



Lunch



Pinesong Retirement Community Choir



Lunch



Singing together



Helpers serving



Listening to the talk



Helpers in the kitchen