

Front row: Mr Mark Bube, Mr Fred Braam, Dr John Koolaard, Mr Jacob Ploeg, Mr Don Petchell, Rev Jack Sawyer, Mr John van Dyk, Rev Peter Kloosterman, Rev Michael Willemse, Rev Robert van Wichen, Mr Martin Brooks, Rev Dirk van Garderen, Mr Ken Stevenson, Mr Edward Kastelein.

Second row: Rev Arend Witten, Rev Paul Archbald, Rev Hans Vaatstra, Mr Carl Van der Meulen, Vicar Ben McDonald, Rev David Waldron, Mr Peter Mulholland, Mr Paul van Echten, Mr Tjeerd Smilde, Rev Sjik Bajema, Mr Leen Vandenburg, Mr Wim Stolte, Mr Walter Walraven, Rev Daniel Wilson, Rev Alan Douma, Dr Murray Capill, Mr Douglas Field.

Third row: Rev Stefaans DeBruyn, Rev Bruce Hoyt, Mr Leen van Vliet, Mr Alan Thomson, Mr Andrew Millar, Mr Henk Hemmes, Mr Raymond Posthuma, Rev John Rogers, Mr Arnold Kaijser, Rev Geoff van Schie, Mr John Kloeg, Mr Ron Snoek, Mr Chris van Tonder, Mr Hans Snoek, Rev Reinier Noppers.

Back row: Rev Pieter van Huyssteen, Rev Andrew de Vries, Mr Marcel Bax, Rev Andre Holtslag, Mr Ewout Aarsen, Rev Richard Pot, Rev Leo de Vos, Rev Eric Stolte, Mr Bruno Saathof, Vicar Julian Dykman, Mr Graeme Posthuma, Mr Pieter van der Wel, Mr Daniel Flinn, Mr Roel Voschezang.

Absent: Mr Brent Mills.

# faith in focus

Magazine of the  
Reformed Churches  
of New Zealand

Volume 41/10 November 2014



The 2014 Synod  
Bishopdale

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## Editorial

This issue of the magazine, is specially dedicated to the recently held synod in Christchurch. What an event! Yes, the business of the RCNZ was well conducted under the watchful eye of the Moderator, the Rev Peter Kloosterman and the rest of the moderamen.

However, there was a lot going on during the week of the Synod. There were a lot of things happening in the background which helped to make this event a successful one. Synods are very much about people, and the people that I am writing about, is those people in the background who helped to make everything work.

Between the three congregations in Christchurch, there was a concerted effort to help make the everything work as smoothly as possible. There were the shifts of ladies in the kitchen, cheerfully serving the delegates with food, coffee, tea, water, peppermints. There were some great meals for both lunch and dinner, sometimes it appeared that there was too much food. Well, I wasn't complaining.

Then there was the people looking after the transport, the technical stuff like computers, overhead projectors, sound etc, those who looked after the logistics of everything that was happening.

Our brothers and sisters in Christchurch were very welcoming. They opened their homes to us, fed us, gave a nice cosy bed and treated us like one of the family. I was staying with a young family who certainly did that. Even the children treated me as though they had known me for years. I certainly enjoyed their Christian hospitality.

One little bit of news that I can pass on is, that the 2014 Synod re-appointed the editor for another three years and expressed thanks to Dr Sally Davey for her excellent contribution to the magazine. There is probably a lot more that I can write, but I think it best for you to read the report about the Synod starting on the next page.

I would like to welcome Mrs Jenny Waldron to the team. Jenny has agreed to write articles for the *Feminine Focus* column. May the Lord bless your ministry to us.

Mrs Jenny Waldron writes further about the love for strangers. And also gives a new-found perspective her week at the Synod.

Mrs Sally Davey reflects on five moral revolutions over the last 50 years.

Mr Tom Aicken, gives a critical assessment of the New Calvinism. (Mr Aicken is a minister at Langley Free Reformed Church in British Columbia)

Mrs Harriet Haverland gleanes interesting bits'n pieces from around the churches.

Mr Peter Kloosterman writes the final article "The Root and Fruit of Missions".

Cover image: Mr Anton Posthuma, Bishopdale

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.

**NB:** In line with common publishing practice *Faith in Focus* reserves the right to publish the names of all contributors with their articles, unless compelling reasons are given to the editor for not doing so. This applies to both print and online versions.

# Decisions, decisions

### Walter Walraven

Six weeks ago, the Reformed Church of Bishopdale was the host for the 28th Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. Delegates from around the country and from overseas descended upon a city that had changed and we beheld a new and modern church building in the area of Bishopdale. It was quite different from the last time I saw it in 2002, it was shiny and new.

We were made very welcome by all those who were involved in the running of this tri-ennial event. Members of all the churches in Christchurch helped with travel arrangements, kitchen duties and food preparation and many opened their

homes to us and made us feel like we were part of the family. The delegates were well watered and fed and physically sustained – for the next five days that very well organised group of volunteers would enable us to get on with the business of the 2014 Synod.

Thank you so very much to the many people of Bishopdale, Cornwall Street and Dovedale Reformed Churches who made the Synod a successful event, by showing us good ol' southern hospitality.

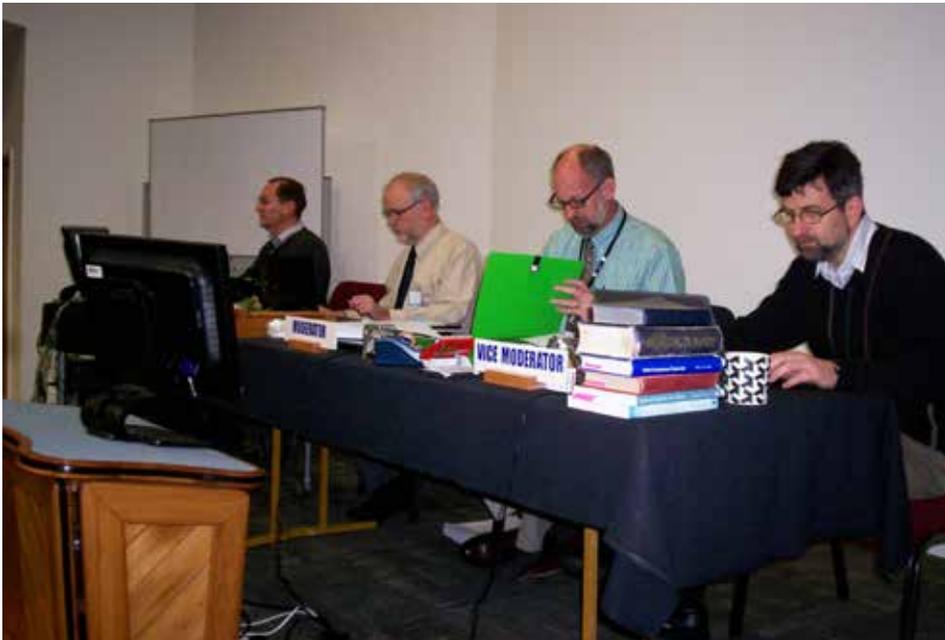
There was a sizeable agenda that needed our earnest and prayerful attention. We had to work through 21 reports and 20 overtures, many of which related directly to the reports from standing committees. There were times when

we got bogged down, due to the nature of the report/overture, and other times when we made very good progress, in dealing with matters of a more administrative nature. Sessions were begun and closed with devotions led by ministers and elders, providing a veritable smorgasbord of biblical teaching followed by a prayer of thanksgiving and singing from the new song book *Sing to the Lord*. The singing of the delegates was very memorable, with good voices, skillful singing and real passion which was reflected in the volume.

At times there was a great deal of solemnity in the way the business was conducted. There were tension and tears at times, laughter (to alleviate tension)



The synod dealing working through the inter-church relations report.



The Moderamen, hard at work.



Discussions with advisory committee members.



Messers Daniel Flinn and Hans Vaatstra during a break.

and the occasional quick one-liner to break awkward moments. During the more difficult matters that the delegates had to deal with, there was a great deal of willingness to work together to solve the seemingly impossible. Quite often there were discussions taking place over lunch or coffee breaks to try to find a way ahead and then bring these matters back to the assembly for final resolutions. It was encouraging, that in spite of differences we may have on certain matters, there was a careful and deliberate effort to work toward consensus in many of the decisions.

### **Moderamen**

The elected Moderator for this Synod was the Rev. Peter Kloosterman (Master-ton). He was able assisted by the Vice-moderator, the Rev. Robert van Wichen (Bishopdale), with elder John van Dyk (Dunedin) as First Clerk, keeping the minutes up to date and the Rev. Michael Willemse (Hamilton) as Second Clerk, projecting the motions, etc on the wall for the delegates.

### **Reflections from the moderator**

The Moderator reflected on some matters of interest which had occurred during the inter-synodical period. He spoke of some ministers who had, during that three year period, become emeritus or retired from their respective callings, (the Reverends Dirk van Garderen, and Michael Flinn) and Timothy Rott and others who had left the RCNZ to serve churches overseas, (the Revs Andre Scheepers, Nathan Ketchen and Andrew Nugteren). The Rev. Erik Stolte attended this synod as a minister-delegate, whereas he had attended the previous Synod as a vicar. Attending for the first time were Vicars Julian Dykman (Bishopdale) and Ben McDonald (Masterton). The Reverends Wynford Davies (Buckland's Beach, 1971-76) and Martin Geluk (from CRCA, serving on short term stints in Dovedale and Dunedin) and Mr Roy Nugteren (RCNZ Archivist) were promoted to glory during this period.

The Reformed Church of Oamaru was instituted in 2013, and their appointed delegates were present at the Synod.

This time of reflection, was concluded with a prayer of thanksgiving.

### **Fraternal delegates**

There were many representatives present from churches with whom we have sister relations and close contact. Represented were: the Canadian and American Re-

formed Churches, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, the Reformed Churches of South Africa, the United Reformed Churches of North America, the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia and the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. Also represented was the Reformed Theological College. There were more delegates than I have ever seen present at a synod.

### Absent and remembered

There were letters of apology from the Reverends Peter Moelker and John Haverland who were unable to attend due to the birth of a son (Moelker) and recovering from surgery (Haverland). Also noted was the fact that the Rev. Rick Eikelboom from the FRCA was unable to attend due to a family bereavement. Prayer was offered up to the Lord, which also included emeritus minister Mr Carl Larsen, who was recovering from surgery, Mr Derrick Watson, who is terminally ill and the Braam family with the translation to glory of Mr Pieter Braam.

### Advisory committees

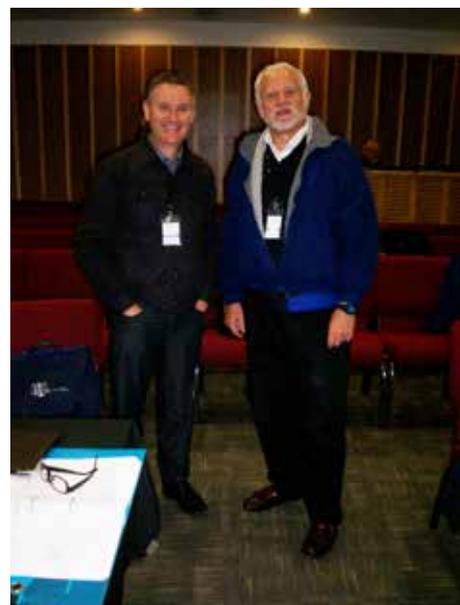
At times, decisions were delayed because of significant disagreement with parts of overtures or the content of reports. Advisory committees were appointed to deal with the problems at hand so that they could propose the best way to proceed and save the assembly a lot of valuable time. Some of these were delicate, historical, church discipline matters, others related to the forms and confessions. These sort of situations certainly demonstrate that we have men in our churches with some wonderful skills and organisational capabilities – they are a real asset to their brethren.

### Synodical archivist

Mr Leen Vandenberg (Hasting delegate) was reappointed to be the temporary synodical archivist until a suitable replacement can be found. This position used to be filled by Mr Roy Nugteren who some time ago was translated to glory. A couple of years ago the archives were moved to the Reformed Church of Hastings and Mr Vandenberg has been looking after them ever since. However, he does not want to continue to do this work *ad infinitum*, and considers a younger person might be a better option. If there is anyone in our churches who would be willing to take on this appoint-



Messers Bruce Hoyt and Hans Snoek.



Prof Murray Capill with Mr Douglas Field (URCNA).



The Stated Clerk, Mr Pieter van der Wel.



Messers Edward Kastelein (PRCA) and John Koolaard.



During breaks, there was always something to do.

ment, please contact the Stated Clerk, Mr van der Wel, [stated-clerk@rcnz.org.nz](mailto:stated-clerk@rcnz.org.nz) .

### **Bible translations committee**

The Rev Pieter van Huyssteen presented the report of the Bible Translation Committee. The committee in approaching the 2011 Synod's mandate considered the following criteria for pulpit-Bible versions as adopted by the 1986 Synod:

*It must comply with the principle of literal accuracy*

*It must comply with the principle of clarity*

*Its approach should not be in conflict with the RCNZ's theological confessions*

Interestingly, this report generated two overtures from the churches/presbytery. One overture was for all the churches to use the English Standard Version as a pulpit Bible by the year 2020 and the other, that the NIV2011 be investigated for pulpit use. Both these overtures were defeated. After some healthy discussion it was decided that the English Standard Version (ESV) and the New King James Version (NKJV) be declared suitable for pulpit use. Both versions are literal trans-

lations, whereas the NIV is a dynamic equivalent. There seems to be quite a lot of interest in the churches and a number of people are already using the ESV. Elder Don Petchell took great delight in leading the closing devotions by stating that he would be the first to use the ESV after the assembly's decisions.

### **Inter-church relations**

Sadly, a long standing relationship we had with the CGKN (Christian Reformed Church of the Netherlands) was discontinued at their request, because of a lack of contact between our two churches. Given that both they and the RCNZ are in the ICRC (International Conference of Reformed Churches) it seemed best to continue any further co-operation through that forum. The IRC (Inter-church Relations Committee) will express our thanks for the relationship that we have had with them since the establishment of the RCNZ.

The Synod decided to continue our relationship with the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands for the next inter-synodical period, because there appears to be a willingness by the RCN to listen to the concerns of sister churches and they also did not open the offices of the church to women. However, we would express concern that they have not clearly rejected their report "Men/Women in the Church". The IRC will take up this matter with them and indicate that unless they clearly withdraw from this direction our relationship will be affected.



Messers Andrew de Vries and Ken Stevenson (PRCA)



Messers Sjirk Bajema (PCEA), Mr Richard Pot (FRCA) and Paul Archbald.



Mr Pieter van Huyssteen presenting an overture on Bible translations

The Grace Presbyterian Churches of New Zealand are a young federation of churches with whom we are quite familiar. They expressed a desire for closer co-operation with the RCNZ. It was decided to contact their deputies to explore future co-operation and to encourage our sessions to meet with local GPCNZ churches when difficulties arise between us in order to remove hindrances to Christian unity.

At the last synod in 2011 the relationship with the CRCA (Christian Reformed Church of Australia) was changed to Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship and then changed at this Synod to Churches in Ecumenical Fellowship which differs from that of a sister church, with new rules governing how the relationship functions. The CRCA will be notified of those new rules by the IRC. If you want to read those rules, they are in the minutes of the Synod, point 84 and can be viewed online at: <http://www.rcnz.org.nz/synodical/synod-2014.php>.

The GKSA (Reformed Churches of South Africa) is still in sister-relationships with us. However, the relationship may be put under strain if they continue to ordain women as deacons. Our IRC will convey our concerns at the way they have dealt with appeals made to their synod and, at the request of their delegate, the Rev Stefaans de Bruyn, demonstrate to them that their decision to ordain women is contrary to the Scriptures and confessions.

Other sister churches which addressed the assembly were the Orthodox

Presbyterian Church (USA), the the Canadian and American Reformed Churches, Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (our closest geographical sister) and the United Reformed Churches of North America. Mr Mark Bube of the OPC addressed the assembly on a couple of occasions in regard to life in the OPC and missions abroad. Mr Bube is a very engaging speaker and quite well known in our circles, especially when it comes to missions. He took the time to encourage the delegates to view missions in the long term; in fact we should see them

generationally, which was helpful advice given the fact that we still needed to discuss the overture brought by Dovedale in providing a compound manager in Papua New Guinea.

The Presbyterian Reformed Church delegate, Mr Ken Stevenson addressed the assembly and invited the RCNZ to have a closer relationship with them. He gave an overview of who the PRCA are and what they are doing in terms of missions and theological training. The PRCA came out of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the 1960s because of lib-



Messers Julian Dykman (the vicar at Bishopdale) and Fred Braam.



Always someone in the kitchen doing a good job.



Mrs Hetty and Mr John Arends representing all those who helped in the kitchen.



Messrs Dirk van Garderen and Daniel Wilson taking the opportunity to discuss the finer points.



Mr Mark Bube, OPC speakin on missions.



Messrs Richard Pot (FRCA) and Arend Witten (CanRef) checking out the agenda.



Mr Sjirk Bajema, PCEA.



Messrs Geoff van Schie, Renier Noppers and Ken Stevenson having a relaxing moment.



Mr Geoff van Schie, CRCA delegate.

eralism and formed a new federation. They have churches in Australia, Fiji and Vanuatu and have their own theological college – probably the world’s smallest, by their own admission. Other churches with whom we are in contact, such as the FRCA and GPCNZ, were represented and addressed the assembly.

### **Sing to the Lord**

For the Rev John Rogers, the presentation of the Psalms and Hymns Selection Committee report was somewhat the *grand finale* of 12 years of work for him and the many members of the committee. Many members of the churches were present at this evening presentation. For the catechism students who came to see how the Synod works they were treated to something special. Mr Rogers expressed his appreciation to the many people who had sacrificed so much of their time to make *SttL* possible. It would seem that the Rev Bruce Hoyt had missed his wife Lois for some 6,000 hours over that period of time.

A presentation by the Rev. Michael Willemse, of flowers and special edition leather bound versions of *SttL* were presented to Mrs Lois Hoyt, Mrs Lieda Brooks, Mrs Lydia Nugteren and Mrs Elrike Hoyt. Mr Rogers received his own leather bound edition as well as a tablet with a digital copy of *SttL* together with the liturgical forms and confessions.

It was proposed that a new committee be appointed to collate any errors; to make necessary amendments to the files for further reprinting; and to prepare a reprint of 2,000 copies of the present book with the new forms and confessions, possibly with thinner paper and smaller size (the Synod is to underwrite the costs). The committee received a favourable response from the assembly.

### **Missions**

Miss Janice Reid gave a visual presentation (movie) of her work for Reach Beyond, the organisation for whom she works in the setting up of radio stations in South East Asia. Reach Beyond recently carried out its 100<sup>th</sup> radio station installation – something to celebrate. She spoke about the huge influence that radio plays in that part of the world to bring the gospel message to those in darkness. It was interesting to see the effort it requires to set up a radio station, especially for those who erected the antennae without a crane. Afterwards, as recognition of her 22 years of service to missions, the moderator presented

Janice with flowers and a gift of \$4200 which came as a gift from the churches. It was mentioned that she could now buy herself a new desk.

The Rev. Alan Douma, the RCNZ missionary to Papua New Guinea, gave a presentation of the work in PNG in co-operation with other missionaries from the Canadian Reformed Churches and Free Reformed Churches in Australia. He gave an overview of the progress in all the centres and the Reformed Churches Bible College.

The Rev. Peter Kloosterman, con-

venor for the Overseas Mission Board (OMB) presented the part of the report dealing with the Overseas Mission Handbook. The Synod decided to provisionally accept the Board’s changes to the Missions Policy Handbook which supersedes the current missions section of the Office Bearers Handbook and the previous Missions Policy Handbook. This handbook was developed over many years and is to be used as a guide for sessions when contemplating sending people to the mission field. It is a well-developed resource which should prove invaluable.



*Miss Janice Reed and Mr Alan Douma give presentations on missions.*



*Miss Janice Reed receiving an unexpected presentation from Mr Peter Kloosterman – quite speechless.*



Messers Jack Sawyer (OPC) and Wim Stolte.

At one time he spoke quite emphatically of the necessity to be careful when publishing news about our overseas missionaries, especially on the Internet, because there are governments which trawl the Internet for the identities of missionaries and this could prove hazardous.

The South Island Presbytery, overtook the Synod, that the OMB become a national board. The decision was implemented so that the OMB Board is

to be moved to the South Island and the members who are currently on the board will transition out as new members become more proficient in dealing with OMB matters.

Another very important development for the work in PNG is to have a full-time college compound manager, whose task it will be to manage the day-to-day administrative and maintenance matters, increase the productivity of the self-sustaining projects to a level that will make

a difference to the running expenses of the Bible College, and free up the missionaries so that they can concentrate on what they are called to do. The Synod decided that one of the overseas mission boards call and send a full-time expatriate mission worker to manage the Reformed Churches College compound and that the RCNZ contribute one third of the cost for sending a mission worker for this purpose. This would be done by way of voluntary contributions to get the missionary there, and quota payments for the mission worker's stipend and support.

### The next Yynod

The South Island Presbytery overtook the Synod to open the next Synod with a thanksgiving conference to mark the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. This conference could highlight the common core beliefs of the Reformation held by the RCNZ; emphasise the reformers' conviction on the centrality of the Scriptures; express gratitude for the birth of the confessions; recall why the RCNZ began in New Zealand over 60 years ago; and remind the RCNZ that the Reformation is not over, but continues today. A thanksgiving conference about the blessings of being a reformed church can set an appropriately positive disposition for the upcoming Synod. This met with the assembly's agreement. ▶

## A new perspective on the Synod

I have to admit that I have avoided going to Synod in the past, after all, what can Synod offer a woman? However, this year, as it was close to home, I decided to attend as many of the sessions as I could.

Attending Synod 2014 has given me a greater understanding of the hard work that the men are required to do each Synod in order to keep the RCNZ federation of churches moving forward. It also gave me a real appreciation for the structure, foundational rules and polity that underpin our federation. There were many discussions around particular wording, procedures, motions and overtures and yet throughout all this, mutual submission and peace were clearly evident. For our churches this creates a unifying framework for the federation as a whole and yet retains enough flexibility for each

session to retain their own distinctives.

It was wonderful to see how the men of our churches spoke to one another with respect and honour, even though they may have had quite differing, and often strongly held, views. Sure, some of the discussions were more interesting than others but all were relevant, helpful and stimulating.

Joining me in the "gallery" were several elder's and pastor's wives, and it was great to meet new friends and sisters in Christ and to strengthen relationships already formed. Nearly all the ladies found the the sessions really interesting (and were often surprised to discover it so). I believe it would be a good thing for more women to join their husbands during the week of Synod and to sit in on the sessions. Firstly, it gives you a real sense of the very hard

work that our husbands are involved in during Synod, and to see first hand the long hours they put in and the weight of the discussions and decisions they are having to deal with. Secondly, attending Synod enables you to support and encourage your husband during the week and if, in the future, you are unable to attend Synod, you will better understand the pressures he is under and (hopefully) not get too upset when he can't make a Skype date or ring as often as he (and you) had hoped.

The singing alone is enough to warrant a visit to Synod! It is amazing. So, I would encourage women to come to Synod; you get to visit exotic locations like Christchurch and give your husband a hug during the breaks. Oh, and did I mention the singing?!

**Jenny Waldron**

The next Synod will be held at the Reformed Church of Palmerston North, Lord willing. Their delegates applied to be the host before the closing of the last session of the Synod. May the Lord bless their preparation to host the churches for this event.

### **Moderator's final reflection**

In the closing moments of the Synod, the Moderator reflected on the possibility that Messers Dirk van Garderen and Bruce Hoyt may not be at the next Synod due to their retirement. He thanked Mr Hoyt for his steadying influence on decisions of synods over the years.

### **Final comments**

People ask me if I thought it was a good synod. As I reflect on everything that took place, I can say that this Synod had highs and lows, very much like other synods do. As I represented my session, I did not agree with every decision that this deliberative assembly made, nor was I always happy with some of the things that were said. Yet, a synod is not primarily about getting your own way. It is about doing the Lord's work and honouring Him, making godly decisions for the well-being of His church and working together in federation to His glory and praise.

There is a lot more that could have been written about this Synod. There



*Messers Alan Douma and Walter Walraven sharing a light-hearted moment.*

were many more decisions made, points of order called, executive decisions recorded, many words spoken carefully and deliberately, there was brotherly fellowship enjoyed by many, new friendships forged and old acquaintances renewed, and a greater understanding formed as we worked together at the 2014 Synod.

We are very blessed by those who work in a variety of ways in the RCNZ churches. The Lord has been bearing fruit through their labours to build up

His church during the last three years. May we pray that our faithful God will continue to richly bestow His blessing for the next three years and beyond.

I hope that in some small way, this summary will give you a snapshot of some of the events at this 28<sup>th</sup> Synod.

*Mr Walter Walraven was an elder delegate for the Reformed Church of Silverstream and was appointed to be the reporter for the Faith in Focus.*

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## **Outward focus**

Sally Davey

# Sexual devolution: What has gone happened, and how we might respond

We are all aware that in terms of sexual purity, our world is a sorry place. It would be unrecognisable to our great-grandparents, and it's alarming enough to those of us who are in the midst of our lives. In large part the change has come from what we call the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s and onwards. But this is just the visible face of deeper shifts in attitudes and beliefs in the western world.

We have all seen huge changes in the way people live – in marriage and outside of it – and seen society's acceptance of these developments. All this tempts us to shrink from the world and hide ourselves from it.

What can we do? It's scary, intimidating, and can place Christians who know it's all wrong in a fearful and doubtful spot. Perhaps they will even have us

prosecuted for opposing their practices? Things are changing so fast that we often don't understand what is going on, and don't know how to respond. Where do we turn?

We need good teachers and leaders; and that is what God is providing for his church. These days, their help is readily available via the internet, even if you never get to meet them. For in-

“The velocity of these revolutions has been bewildering. Many of us don’t understand their technicalities; let alone their none-too-clear ramifications.”

stance, I’ve often found the writing of Al Mohler, President of Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, very helpful. He has a clear-sighted grasp of what is going on in western society, he reads widely, and is prepared to speak out in a courageous way about what has gone wrong. He writes a regular blog, the occasional book, speaks at conferences, and even the secular print media have published his articles. He’s also prepared to advise the rest of us how to respond and point out the ways things will get

worse if we don’t. He seems to me to be providing the kind of leadership we need to equip ourselves to deal with the so-called sexual revolution and its consolidation in the legislation in our land.

Recently, I heard a paper he gave at a Ligonier conference in Seattle, Washington. It was a masterful overview of the origins and progress of the sexual revolution in the United States; and, by extension, in other western countries. I found it particularly helpful because, while he was obviously aware of pressure groups’ activity, specific instances of harassment of individual Christians and institutions, and the direction of legislation, he was also very clear about the real source of decline: human sin and its tendency to suppress the truth in unrighteousness. I thought you may find a brief overview of Mohler’s address useful – and perhaps give you some motivation to put aside an hour to listen to him yourself.

Mohler begins by pointing out that we face a big challenge today. Christians often have very little time to answer questions about sexual morality; and sadly, giving the wrong answers can cost us a great deal. (Christian colleges have recently been sued for discrimination against students who claim transgender and other sexual preferences subsequent to enrolment). He warns that we need to prepare ourselves with an understanding of what has happened in the past 50 years, and with a clear appreciation of biblical truth on these matters.

Mohler does not begin with Scripture, as he wants it to have the last word – but he does state clearly at the outset that sexual “devolution” (or a negative,

counter-righteousness revolution) is the result of the Fall. What we have seen in the past 50 years is the exchange of a traditional moral wisdom that came from Christianity for the radical, individualistic make-your-own morality that we find today.

### Five revolutions

He goes on to outline five revolutions that have led to our current chaotic situation. The first of these was the **contraceptive revolution**. In the early twentieth century every Christian denomination opposed birth control. This began to change in 1930 when the Lambeth Conference (general conference of Anglicans worldwide) ruled that artificial birth control could be allowable in certain pastoral situations. The big watershed was in 1960 with the release of oral contraceptives, known as “the Pill”. The directive to doctors was that it was only to be made available to married women; though this was soon overturned. The result was that sexual activity was divorced from conception – that which, until then, was always assumed to be its consequence. One of the biggest sanctions on sexual immorality was thereby removed.

The second revolution was that of **divorce**. In 1969 the first state in the U.S. to legislate no-fault divorce set a pattern that soon spread to the others, and of course to most western countries. Hard though it is to imagine now, it had been, until then, a requirement for one of the parties in a marriage to prove adultery before a divorce was granted. The coming of no-fault divorce was hailed as a big advance, removing the rancor – and embarrassment – of blame and sordid revelations from the courtroom.

The **feminist revolution** came next; and it was a dominant feature of cultural change in the 1970s. Men were blamed for the “domestic concentration camps” baby boomer wives found themselves in suburban America. Public discussion of male and female roles in marriage and in society changed everything – and Mohler observes that feminist leaders were stunningly successful in convincing Americans that “male” and “female” were simply culturally-imposed concepts. This was to have further, ominous, consequences. This revolution also built on the last through arguments that controlling their fertility by easy access to contraception was the only way women could enjoy equal rights with men.

The fifth revolution was that of **ad-**



James P. Boyce Centennial Library, Southern Baptist Seminary, where Albert Mohler is the President. <http://andynaselli.com>

**vanced reproductive technologies.** These have mostly only been available in the last couple of decades; though of course in vitro fertilisation came earlier. Mohler gives a very rapid summary of some of these, pointing out that embryo sorting, the sale of gametes and free genetic screening have paved the way for “tentative pregnancies” (meaning that they may be terminated at will) and “designer babies”. They have also created a situation where it is possible for some to deny that marriage has any necessary link to procreation. We hear calls today for same-sex couples to have the same “rights” to have babies as anyone else.

### **Bewildering speed**

The velocity of these revolutions has been bewildering. Many of us don’t understand their technicalities; let alone their none-too-clear ramifications. And one of the most disheartening things about them is the way they have swept the general public along with them. Ten years ago, according to Mohler, 70% of Americans were against same-sex marriage. Today, the same percentage is in favour. It’s bewildering; and we wonder how it’s all happened. Part of the reason is a campaign on the part of the “sexual revolutionaries” to have their sexual acts normalised, not just allowed. Thus, the effort to have them talked about – placed in front of the public, in their homes, on sitcoms and dramas and documentaries via television, night after night and year after year – until they no longer seem strange. The “yuck factor” (as one social researcher mentioned by Mohler calls it) is, over time, simply dissipated.

The terminology has been changed, too (“partners”, not girlfriends or wives), and cohabitation has lost virtually all stigma against it. Living together is apparently the first choice of Americans – and not just among young people. Seniors live in the same way; claiming that to marry would lead to devastating taxation implications. But we have seen it here in New Zealand, too – grandparents moving in with “partners” shamelessly, and in a way that they would have frowned upon their grandchildren for doing only a decade or two ago.

But while some of this most recent activity is due to an orchestrated effort on the part of well-organised activists none of it could have happened without the previous revolutions – and, behind them, the Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century which was the arch-revolution in terms of people’s thinking. People are

influenced, yes – but they are ready for it. They are receptive.

Mohler’s narrative of the situation ends with a sketch of the confusion that reigns among postmoderns: we aren’t even sure what gender means any more, since it is simply an identity we can change at will. People are even beginning to say we need to get past a fixed and binary understanding of gender – hence it is “one more problem we need to overcome” – and, no doubt, legislate about. Today’s legal rulings always seem to come down to “consent” – that is, if it’s not *wanted*, it should not be allowed. And everything else is permissible. This is the brave new world we now inhabit. It’s sometimes plain terrifying, isn’t it?



*Albert Mohler*

But yet, Mohler points out, we are the people who should be responding – “We’re not shocked, we’ve read Genesis 3.” Because we have the whole, overarching biblical picture and the completed story of the gospel, we should be expecting this kind of rebellion to raise its head in a world that rejects Christ and his Word. We ought also to remember that the only world view which can withstand the onslaught is a committed, informed, Christian one.

It is important to be clear, as well, that these demands to change our morality, and to accept and approve the new one, is also a demand to give up the gospel. Where do we stand?

### **Teach your children well**

Mohler urges us to have a lot of conversations with our children – perhaps conversations we’ve never had before. If children aren’t taught; if they’re not being encouraged to become intelligent Christians, and if they’re not well-grounded in biblical truth and the power

of the gospel – then how will they stand when the pressure comes on them? We also need to realise how realistic and truthful the Bible is about sin. It knows about sin; it shows us sin. Mohler tells how, as a very young teenager, he instantly realised that some of the bad things mentioned in Leviticus are only there because someone, somewhere, was doing them ... how realistic are we? As Mohler says, we need to have conversations we’ve never had before.

I particularly liked the way Mohler concludes his address. He turns to Romans 1, the very passage which had made sense of everything for me as a young student when I was puzzled why so many had no desire to hear about Christ. The crucial point for Mohler (and, back then, for me) was the fact that men and women *suppress the truth in unrighteousness*. Nobody has any excuse: the Bible makes clear what sin is from beginning to end. But in their unrighteousness sinners have suppressed, twisted, and reinterpreted this truth about sin. This alone explains what has been happening all around us. We have, Mohler urges, no right to be surprised by any of it.

But then he shifts focus. Our tendency is to look at Romans 1, especially its tale of the progression of sin from idolatry to sexual perversion, and think – yes, that is what *those* people do. Thank the Lord I am not like that. They are the ones who need the gospel. But read on. God again gave them up – to what? To “envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless...”

Do we, who believe the gospel, never do such things? We too are in this list – every one of us. And if we read the Sermon on the Mount we have to acknowledge that we, too, commit sexual sin – at least in our thoughts. This realisation, says Mohler, ought to drive us to love and compassion for those living in the chaos wrought by sexual devolution.

This is a heartening conclusion. It helps dissipate our fear, equips us with better understanding of the situation; and keeps us properly aware that the Christ who saved us is also the only hope of the fallen world round us.

You can hear the full lecture at the following web address: <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/conferences/overcoming-the-world-2014-west-coast-conference/sexual-devolution/>

# “Philoxenia” – love of a stranger

## Jenny Waldron

I wrote an article on hospitality for the May 2014 *Faith in Focus* with the title “A Stranger Love”. To recap, we saw that the Greek word that is translated ‘hospitality’ in the New Testament is ‘philoxenia’ meaning love of a stranger.

Christ showed us love while we were yet strangers by giving his life for us so that we might have life. So too, we are to show love to strangers, not by giving our lives for others but by showing sacrificial love to strangers. Most of the times it is mentioned in the Bible, ‘philoxenia’ is used with ‘imperative force’, meaning it is something we must do,<sup>1</sup> without grumbling.<sup>2</sup> Since writing the article on “A Stranger Love”, I have been asked “but how can I show hospitality in practical ways?”

First you need to Be Prepared. Although this is the motto of the Scout movement, it could also be the motto of Christian women (and men!). Be prepared. So what does being prepared look like in reference to hospitality? Just as Jesus prayed, we too must pray so that we are prepared spiritually.

PRAY – for strength, ability, wisdom and courage. Hospitality can seem like a scary thing to do when you are first starting out but God repeatedly says “Do not fear, for I am with you.”

PRAY – for wisdom as to who to speak to and invite. Sometimes you don’t know where to start. You could start at the beginning of your church phone list (or at the end), asking yourself “how well do I know everyone in our congregation?” You might start with those in your Bible study or on your elder’s list. (In 1 Tim 3:2 one of the qualifications for elders is that they are hospitable and, unless they are single, they will need their wife (and family) on board to help to fulfil that mandate.)

PRAY – for opportunities to invite people for a meal, a drink or to stay overnight. Be open and generous with

your invitations to: visitors to church, people from your work place, people you meet on the plane, hitchhikers/tourists/foreigners to our country.

PRAY – for the person(s) you have invited. After you have invited someone, pray for your time together, that it would be a time of Christian fellowship (or if you are meeting with a non-Christian that you would show, in some way or by some word, the love of Christ) and that you would be a blessing to them.

In Matthew 25:35-36 Jesus talks to us about several ways we can show love to a stranger with some practical examples of how these scriptural principles of hospitality can be worked out in our lives:

*For I was hungry and you gave Me food*

*I was thirsty and you gave Me drink*

*I was a stranger and you took Me in*

*I was naked and you clothed Me*

*I was in prison and you came to Me*

Let us look at these five different areas we can show a stranger love.

FOOD: this is what we traditionally think of when we think of hospitality. We all have dishes that we can prepare with our eyes closed. It doesn’t have to be flash. Or even enough. People haven’t come to get their daily quota of calories from you. They have, primarily, come for the opportunity to meet you and get to know you, and vice versa. Sometime ago, an unexpected guest turned up at dinner time, after I had already stretched the meal for 3 hitchhikers, so I quickly added more frozen peas to the pot and put bread and butter on the table, to make everything go further. Cheese toasties, cup-a-soup, peanut butter sandwiches, or macaroni cheese, when served with a smile, will be received well.

Many of us have traditional dishes we like to prepare: Nasi Goreng, croquettes, roast beef and yorkshire puddings, braai, pavlova, oliebolien, chapatti. These can be very special to people who are not used to eating these things (and to those who are!). These days many people have food tolerances or allergies. If they are highly allergic to something, it is up to them to let you know. I had one gentleman tell me he was fatally allergic to fish just as I was about to add Caesar dressing to a salad (it has anchovies in it). I usually ask people when I invite them if there is anything they don’t/can’t eat. If you end up with a gluten-free, dairy-free, sugar and soy intolerant vegetarian you could either ask them for a recipe that they could eat or ask them to bring a dish to share. The internet is full of recipes that covers all sorts of food intolerances/allergies.

Special occasions are a good time to invite people, for example, at anniversaries.

“As Christ sacrificed his life for us, let us therefore sacrifice some of our comfort, time and money to show strangers the love of Christ.”

saries or on birthdays. You can invite singles, widows, the lost and lonely and share your special time with them. If you are having people for a special meal, set the table beautifully and use the good crockery (if you have some). My children enjoy decorating with candles, flowers (anything that can be picked out of the garden, or you could choose stones or shells), and prettily folded serviettes.

Occasionally people will not be able to come and give you late notice because of sickness or an unexpected event. Be gracious and remember to re-schedule, but what do you do with the excess food? Use this as an opportunity to take a meal to a widow, a shut-in or to a mum of 3 young children who would appreciate having a night off from cooking. We can show hospitality with food we have preserved, or an over-abundance of garden produce by sharing with others.

**DRINK:** In today's coffee culture, an offer to take someone out for a coffee may be less intimidating than a meal. I often ask young women to catch up over coffee. We have a great time and it is easy to talk with them without the distractions of children and housework demanding my attention and the atmosphere is relaxed. A cold drink on a hot day to a worker on site or to someone who has dropped in is very refreshing. After church, make use of the time you have when having a cup of coffee, to be intentional about having a Christianly conversation. This may seem so obvious, it doesn't even need to be said, and yet, sadly, our conversations are often about the busyness of the week, the weather, the problems of work/school/home without a mention of Christ, how the Lord has blessed or upheld us during the week. Recently I was talking to someone after church and she asked me, "How can I pray for you this week?" It brought a focus to our conversation. Another topic to talk about is the sermon, whilst it is still fresh in your mind.

**CLOTHING:** We can show hospitality by recirculating our clothing to families, students and unemployed people. Take clothes that your children have outgrown to another family. Have a Bring-and-Swap night with the ladies at church. Offer to alter or mend clothing for others. This is a dying art and many people no longer possess the skills or tools to be able to do simple repair jobs. Donate clothing to missions, church opportunity shops or to the homeless in your city/town. This can be such a blessing to others and a real way of showing a stranger love.

**ACCOMMODATION:** Who could you offer accommodation to? Maybe visiting preachers, missionaries, singing groups (not the whole group necessarily but maybe one or two). Be generous. We have had visitors sleep in our bed while we slept on the fold-out couch. Have the children sleep in the lounge while your guests sleep in their beds. If you have a caravan or camper van, that may be another option. Of course, having a spare room as a guest room is ideal but many of us do not have that luxury (until the children move out of home). Be thoughtful- especially of visiting missionaries and preachers/teachers. Be aware of their need for rest. As interesting and exciting as it may be, resist the urge to talk late into the night with them (unless they are up for it). Too many late nights for a travelling speaker can become exhausting. Time may well present itself for longer fellowship over breakfast, morning tea or dinner. If they feel rested and welcomed they may well want to return for a visit at another time. Be practical and attend to their physical needs; supply towels and show them where and how to make a cup of tea/coffee. Tell your guests what time breakfast is normally served, but be flexible if they require an earlier/later time. Also be available. Sometimes, guests have some extra time and would like to chat, visit local places of interest (overseas visitors in particular), practice their music/singing or write. Also make sure they arrive at the concert/workshop/church or their train/plane in plenty of time. Other ways of showing hospitality with accommodation may be fostering children, having elderly parents live with you, sheltering homeless people when they have no other place to go or offering to help a temporarily misplaced, unhoused person(s).

**VISITING THE SICK:** Another way of showing hospitality, especially to those of the faith, is to visit the sick, infirm and disabled. Many of our elderly people become sick and house-bound in their latter years. They may have been faithful Christians for many, many years and now, due to failing health, they are no longer able to attend church services. They appreciate a visit (not too long) and most really enjoy meeting children too. Visit those who are in hospital and minister to the rest of the family. Taking a meal to the family of those in hospital can be helpful at a very stressful time. Recently, my daughter was sick and a friend brought a bunch of cheery daffodils for her room and a card. It was

very much appreciated.

**PRISON:** Here is an opportunity to show love to strangers and to bring the gospel to those who are in prison. Some of us may be able to be involved in the Prison Ministry,<sup>3</sup> bringing the Word of God to prisoners. Another ministry to become involved in is Crossroads Bible Institute that sends Christian correspondence courses to prisoners.<sup>4</sup>

So let us prepare ourselves to show 'philoxenia', and put into practice showing love to a stranger. As Christ sacrificed his life for us, let us therefore sacrifice some of our comfort, time and money to show strangers the love of Christ.

### Recommended reading

Janet Hosier and Liza Hoeksma: *Entertaining Angels* (opening hearts and homes to the homeless)  
Karen Burton Mains: *Open Heart, Open Home*  
Edith Schaeffer: *The Hidden Art Of Homemaking*  
Edith Schaeffer: *L'Abri*  
Alexander Strauch: *The Hospitality Commands*

1 Romans 12:13, Heb 13:2

2 1 Peter 4:9

3 See <http://www.pfnz.org.nz> for more information about Prison Fellowship and Angel Tree ministries.

4 Contact [CBI New Zealand](http://www.cbi.org.nz) P.O. Box 11005 Hastings 4158 New Zealand

## Synod 1-liners

"Paul Archbald is too close to perfection".

"Robert van Wichen follows Roberts Rules".

"Have you got subjunctivitis?"  
Paul Archbald to Dr Hans Snoek

"By executive order" – a new terminology used at the synod.

"Re-inventing the wheel is a very good Reformed principle – but a frustrating one."

"We are hearing the same point in stereo".

"Paul is that attractive, I have a hard time keeping my eyes off him".

"I have done M.A.R.S., it takes 3 years".

# The New Calvinism: a critical assessment

**Tom Aicken**

I am not a fan of the New Calvinism, as it is called, and where I am most concerned about it is in those very points of its departure from the old (historic) Calvinism. Though I have been asked to write this article, I am rather reluctant to do so for several reasons, and I think that I need to begin with these.

1. *This is a movement which is not easily defined.* Its leaders and main proponents differ in their own understanding of it, and no one, it seems, is ready to build a wall around it; indeed, the very nature of the New Calvinism appears to be inclusive rather than exclusive.
2. *This is a movement whose leaders (with a few notable exceptions) cannot be identified precisely.* Lists

“There are different factions within the New Calvinism, and two of the more prominent ones have been dubbed Neo-Puritanism and Neo-Calvinism.”

of its leaders and supporters usually include many Calvinists of the older, more traditional variety.

3. *There is considerable error, I believe, in much that has been written about this movement.* I will endeavour in this article not to contribute more of the same, though I am not certain that at every point I will succeed. It is in my view not a movement at all, but an assortment of several smaller movements, each one a hybrid as it attaches itself to something else, including some recent trends in theology and church practice which are decidedly not Calvinistic. A major part of this present paper will be devoted to some of these.
4. *I am far happier writing about something which I am eager to promote.* There are some things that are good about the New Calvinism, and I do not wish to overlook that, but, in the midst of all the excitement and optimism, someone needs to sound the alarm on its dangers. As disagreeable as such a task may be, the urgency of it is too great to be ignored, and so I offer my own impressions and critique.

## **Neo-Calvinism vs. Neo-Puritanism**

There are different factions within the New Calvinism, and two of the more prominent ones have been dubbed Neo-Puritanism and Neo-Calvinism. The Neo-Puritans are said to be led by John Piper and Mark Driscoll, who focus on the sovereignty of God in salvation, emphasizing evangelism and personal conversion as the means of fulfilling God's redemptive purpose. The historical figure revered by this group is Jonathan Edwards, although it is probably better to say that it is Edwards as interpreted by Piper.

The Neo-Calvinists, in contrast, are said to be led by Tim Keller and Gabe Lyons, who focus on the sovereignty of God over creation, emphasizing the cultural mandate and the restoration of creation as the means of fulfilling God's redemptive purpose. One of the historical figures revered by this group is

Abraham Kuyper, who spearheaded a new kind of Calvinism at the turn of the last century. Kuyper embraced the notion of presumptive regeneration, a view of the covenant which regards everyone in the congregation (not only professing Christians, but their children also) as regenerate, or at least until the contrary should become evident. This view sees little need for discriminatory preaching in the churches. Clearly, matters of evangelism and spiritual awakening would not be a priority, whether in or out of the church, and it is but a short step from there to touting the cultural mandate (filling, subduing, and ruling over the earth), rather than the calling of sinners to Christ, as the primary mission of the church as light to a dark world. Taken from his Stone Lectures of 1898, Kuyper stated: “That in spite of all worldly opposition, God's holy ordinances shall be established again in the home, in the school and in the state for the good of the people; to carve as it were into the conscience of the nation the ordinances of the Lord, to which Bible and creation bear witness, until the nation bears homage again to him.”

To separate too sharply like this, however, between the sovereignty of God in salvation and His sovereignty over creation, almost as if to pit one against the other, has the effect of obscuring the facts rather than clarifying them. The Scriptures plainly teach that God is sovereign over the whole creation (Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1:11), that He is so for the eternal wellbeing of His people (Rom. 8:28,32), and, ultimately, for the praise of His glorious grace to them in Christ (Eph. 2:7). Even His common grace to everyone serves the purpose of bestowing His redeeming grace on His elect (Gen. 8:22; Matt. 13:24-30). Since the fall of man into sin, which has brought a curse upon the earth (Gen. 3:17-19), priority must be given to evangelism for the cultural mandate to be achieved (2 Sam. 23:3; Ps. 111:10). The curse upon the earth will finally be lifted, and creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption, only when the glorious liberty of the sons of God is at last re-

vealed (Rom. 8:19-23). This is not to say that Christians are not to serve as salt and light in the world until then, or that progress may not be made in terms of what William Wilberforce called “a reformation of manners” by doing so – probably more progress at certain times than at others – but we will not see that blessing in all its fullness until the new heavens are created, along with the new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:10-18).

### **Piper and the Neo-Puritans**

I do not deny that these factions exist within the New Calvinism, but there is more to this story which is too often overlooked, bringing even the terms “Neo-Puritanism” and “Neo-Calvinism” into serious question. Let us begin with John Piper and his concept of Christian hedonism. He makes this foundational

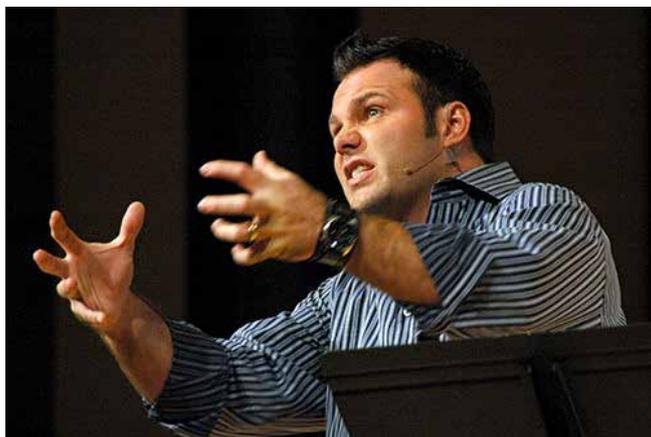
the Church Growth Movement. These leaders do not take a stand, for example, on the regulative principle of worship, but employ a very seeker-friendly style in their assemblies and conferences. Driscoll insists that he is seeker-hostile and seeker-insensitive, but there is no question that his shock-approach and vulgarity in the pulpit are carefully designed to get people’s attention and to influence their thinking by any means that he can. It is not a Puritan practice to promote oneself in this way, or to rely on one’s own resources to change public opinion, but to humble oneself rather under the mighty hand of God, committing everything to Him who judges righteously.

This so-called Neo-Puritanism is also closely aligned with the Charismatic Movement. Its proponents insist that the extraordinary (miraculous) gifts of the Spirit have continued to our own day,

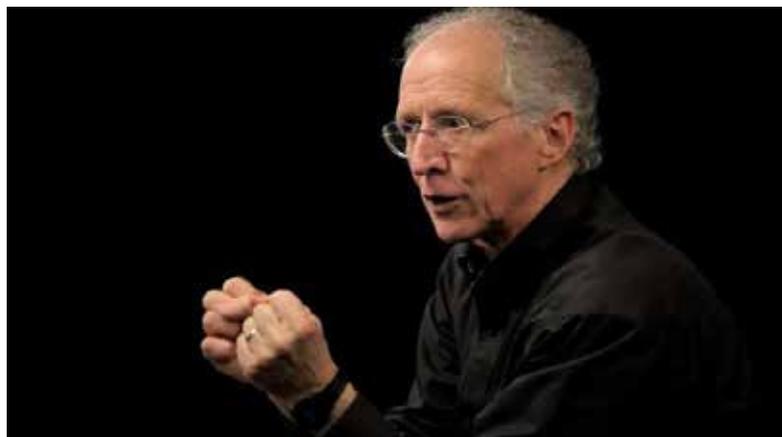
the New Calvinists, and it is not what they are calling out for in their preaching. Greg Dutcher addresses this problem to some degree in his book, *Killing Calvinism*, and it is a serious matter of the heart which demands the careful attention of us all. Let us learn to live before God, rather than before men. Let us put our own house in order before teaching others to do so. And, in contending for the faith, let us do so graciously. This has always been the Puritan way.

### **Keller and the Neo-Calvinists**

On the other side, the kind of Christianity that Keller (and others) actively promote, though connected with the Neo-Calvinism of Kuyper, and with the dominionism of the Christian Reconstructionists, is clearly laced with other less-friendly associations, too. On one level, I find the writings of Tim Keller



Mark Driscoll



John Piper

to his ministry. Though I have profound respect for Piper, I see no connection between his Christian hedonism and the Puritans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As Piper himself acknowledges, he takes this notion from the writings of Blaise Pascal, and to some degree from C.S. Lewis. One might be happier had he found it in the Scriptures, but that would be considerably more difficult to do. Piper summarizes Christian hedonism by stating that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him. But, surely, it is better to turn that around, to say that we are most satisfied in Him when He is most glorified in us, when we seek by His grace to do all to the honour and glory of God.

Moreover, it is misleading to say that the kind of Christianity which Piper and Driscoll represent with such passion is Neo-Puritanism when it is so saturated with the principles and practices of

and that we need not fear to see this work of the Holy Spirit in our midst. The Puritans who did not fear the work of the Spirit at all, but fervently prayed to see more of it, did not share this view.

We see another close tie, this time with New Covenant Theology. These New Calvinists may be strong on certain doctrines, such as the substitutionary atonement and justification by faith, but they are very weak on sanctification -- too weak to be thought of as heirs of the Puritans. What is Puritanism if it does not seek to raise the bar on sanctification? Many of the New Calvinists embrace New Covenant Theology, not recognizing therefore any continuing place for the Ten Commandments or any of the rigorous demands of godliness. Not all these leaders and their followers are cut from the same cloth, of course, but the practical Christianity of the Puritans is sadly lacking in the lives of too many of

and Michael Goheen rather helpful, and even insightful at times. Their “story-arc” (as they call it) of “creation – sin – redemption – restoration” brings to mind some of the struggles that I have experienced in my own life in seeking to live as a Christian in an increasingly pagan society, first when I attended a secular university, then when I had to learn to defend my faith at a liberal seminary, and even later on when I tried to minister to people in some of my churches who had imbibed far more of the world than they had of biblical principles and the rudiments of Christ.

At the same time, however, one does also find some very disturbing features in their writings. They quote extensively, for instance, from liberal scholars, including Leslie Newbigin (Goheen’s favourite), who is also the most-quoted author in the Emergent Church Movement. Why would anybody want to base so much of

his thinking on the ideas of a man who was not committed to the authority of Holy Scripture, and who believed that everyone's interpretation of the Scriptures (except possibly his own) was too culturally conditioned ever to be right? These liberal scholars have clearly made a great impact on these New Calvinists, and even some of the language that these newer authors use, such as "seeking justice and shalom," is very reminiscent of the Social Gospel Movement.

The problem does not end there. Some of the ideas on restoration by these New Calvinists may add an important footnote to the mission of the church, but they go beyond that, making cultural impact and the ultimate restoration of the earth the main thrust of the church's mission to a fallen world. The primary purpose of salvation, according to Keller, is not the calling of lost souls

but not Titus, so that Timothy might minister the gospel more effectively to Jews – in other words, if it is his becoming all things to all people, that by all means he might save some – then surely, it is a good thing. But the evidence shows something else. Contextualizing is the business of adapting the message to the culture, which in practice involves not only objective translation but subjective interpretation and compromise.

Keller, for instance, is a theistic evolutionist who thinks that parts of Genesis must be interpreted so as not to conflict with what he thinks is contrary to science. He says that Genesis 1 has the earmarks of poetry and is therefore a 'song' about the wonder and meaning of God's creation, and that God guided some kind of process of natural selection as a biological mechanism to bring the world into being. In Keller's world,

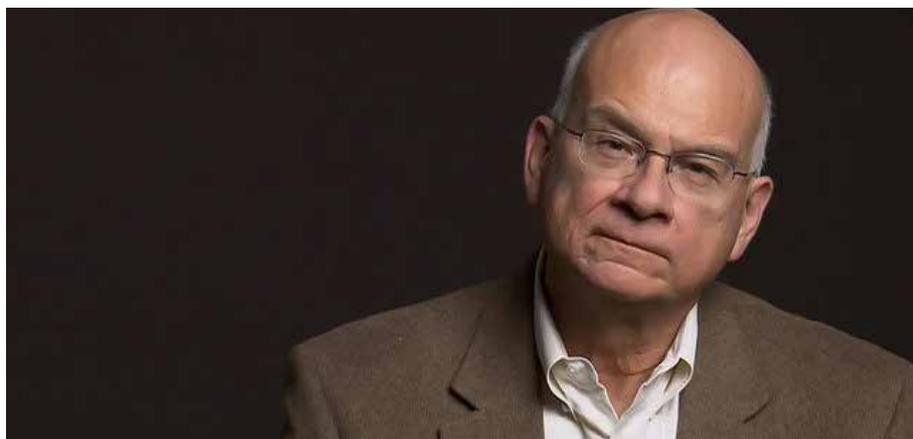
does not know, that perhaps there is a trap door that he does not know anything about. Quite apart from the fact that this seriously undermines the urgency of Christian missions, it also contradicts what is so clearly and repeatedly taught in the Scriptures, and what Keller must surely be aware of, that no one comes to the Father except through Christ His Son (Jn. 3:36; 5:23; 14:6; Acts 4:12). Keller keeps insisting that the main story of the Bible, what it tells us about Christ, must not be changed, but, once again, it seems that there is room even here for revision.

### Conclusion

I stated earlier that there are some things which are good about the New Calvinism, and by now one may well question whether I really believe that. But of course I am delighted that there is



Michael Goheen



Tim Keller

out of darkness, not the establishment of Christ's kingdom, not the building of His church, nor the preparation of His people to be the bride of Christ, but to make this world a better place. Think about that. As Christian hedonism is to Piper, so is this "better world" foundational to Keller's ministry. The ramifications of such a vision are enormous, and we must not underestimate the effects of such teaching on the next generation.

Now to contextualization, which is another recurring theme and emphasis among these New Calvinists. The seminary that I went to embraced the New-bigin brand of contextualization forty years ago, and I think would approve of the New Calvinists who employ it today, even though it is presented by them with a more conservative stamp and appears therefore to be somewhat traditional. But what, exactly, is it? If contextualization is the reason for Paul circumcising Timothy,

where death precedes Adam's fall, there are major clashes, not only with what we are told has happened (Heb. 11:3), but with the gospel itself in its account of the two Adams (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15). In contrast, Paul states that he is not ashamed of the gospel, that his preaching was not with persuasive words of human wisdom to the end that faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God, and he warns against what is according to the basic principles of the world (including, therefore, this kind of contextualization) and not according to Christ.

One more point, which to my mind is equally disturbing, is that Keller denies the exclusive claims of Christ and allows that God may have a trap door for unbelievers. When asked by NBC's Martin Bashir if all the millions of Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus and Jews who die without Christ are going to hell, Keller answered that he

bold preaching again on the sovereignty of God, on the grace of God in salvation, and on complementarianism (carefully distinguishing between the roles of men and women). What lover of the Lord and His Word would not rejoice in such developments? Indeed, I would very much like to be more positive about this movement than I am, embracing the optimistic view of so many others that it may improve over time, but, as history has demonstrated repeatedly, truth mixed with error has a detrimental effect in the long run.

I am reminded of Spurgeon and the Downgrade Controversy. The Baptist Union had nothing holding it together except the one doctrine of baptism by immersion. In 1888, Spurgeon wrote in the *Sword and Trowel*, "If I disagree with a man on ninety-nine points, but happen to be one with him in baptism, this can never furnish such ground of

unity as I have with another with whom I believe in ninety-nine points, and only happen to differ upon (that)." Similarly, TULIP (and sometimes it is not even the whole flower) is not enough, it seems to me, to hold the New Calvinism together. There are those who are eagerly working to make it a united movement, rather than a series of smaller hybrid movements, even to the point of trying to pull people like Rick Warren into the mix, but all such attempts will surely fracture this phenomenon even more.

The unmistakable fact of the matter is that Calvinism is much more than merely the five points. It is, beyond knowing God, embracing everything that He has revealed about Himself in creation and in Holy Scripture. It is being in awe of His sovereignty, thankful for His holiness, ashamed of one's own corruption in contrast to that, and it eagerly celebrates His electing love and the riches of His saving grace in that, while one was yet a sinner, with nothing that he could do for himself to win the approval of a righteous God, the Lord sent His Christ, His own dear Son, into the world to fulfil the demands of His covenant in the sinner's place, to make him His son and heir with Christ, and a beneficiary of His everlasting favour. Calvinism is a set of doctrines, yes, but it is also a way of life, a life that hates sin but loves the Word and all the ways of God, a sanctified life that is lived in grateful response for His goodness and mercy, for His un-failing compassions which are new every morning, and seeks to present oneself as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, whose glorious coming he anticipates and whose praises he longs to sing for all eternity. Calvinism serves a holy God, and so seeks to worship Him in a reverent manner, with simplicity, sincerity, not adding to or taking from what God has commanded.

Over one hundred years ago, B.B. Warfield wrote (and it is reprinted in his Selected Shorter Writings), that "Calvinism is just religion in its purity. We have only, therefore, to conceive of religion in its purity, and that is Calvinism." This may sound somewhat simplistic, but it does set forth, and rather beautifully, what needs to be stated at the present time, that Calvinism, the genuine article, will not seek to align itself with passing fads and fancies (as what is known as Neo-Puritanism is doing), on the one hand, nor will it seek the company and counsel of those whose wisdom is of this world (as today's Neo-Calvinism is

doing), on the other.

Let "old Calvinists" beware, and not be too quick and eager to throw in their support for something that further investigation would reveal is really less than what it ought to be. I am not saying that we have to agree on everything. We should not hesitate, for instance, if we wish to hold conferences with

people who insist on a different mode of baptism than is our own practice. (Please note what Spurgeon said above.) But we should insist on something more than the five points.

*Mr Tom Aicken is the minister at Langley Free Reformed Church in British Columbia.*

## Focus on home

Harriet Haverland

# Gleanings

## THE GLEANINGS

### TEAM:

**Odette De Kock** –  
Auckland Presbytery

**Yvonne Walraven** –  
Wellington Presbytery

**Frances Watson** –  
South Island Presbytery

*Collated and edited by*  
**Harriet Haverland**

## MINISTERS, STUDENTS AND CHURCH WORKERS

**Rev. Andre Holtslag** of Dovedale (Chch) received a call from the Reformed Church of Hastings. Please remember him, the Hastings congregation and the Dovedale congregation in your prayers as he seeks God's wisdom.

**Rev. Bill Wiersma** plans to work in the Reformed Church of Foxton for a number of months to help them out while they are without a fulltime pastor of the Word.

**Rev. John Rogers** will be in Uganda during the months of October and November (DV) to lecture at Knox Theological College.

**Rev. & Mrs Norm de Jong** arrived in Hastings to spend another three months there assisting during their vacancy.

**Albert Couperus** was awarded the Mid-America Alumni Association Scholarship for Pastoral Ministry. This Scholarship for Pastoral Ministry is available to full-time second and third year stu-

dents based upon the student's involvement in ministry related labours over the previous few years, his demonstration of academic aptitude, and pulpit skills as judged by a committee of alumni. We can give thanks for this achievement and the good progress Albert has made thus far. Please keep Albert and his family in your prayers. (Wanganui)

## CHURCH BUILDINGS

**Christchurch:** Last Sunday we voted to proceed with progressing the building plans toward gaining a building consent. Please remember the Building Committee in prayer as they work through these matters that things will progress smoothly. We are reminded that the building is only one part of our congregation; we are a body of believers striving to serve our Lord. May we not lose sight of our calling to love one another and let us be quick to share the hope we do have in Christ.

The Reformed Church of **North Shore** hoped to have begun their building extension. As a result of many delays and questions from council, they still had not obtained building consent by the beginning of September, but the end is in sight. The first council pre-start meeting had been done giving the go ahead to re-route a sewer and remove a manhole which was in the way. Diggers were scheduled to start on site on the 20th of September. For the next few months they can continue to use the church as usual.

## DENOMINATIONAL

**Auckland Ladies' Presbyterial Day** will be held on March 28<sup>th</sup> 2015: The

Pukekohe ladies warmly invite all ladies from the Auckland Presbytery to attend a Women's Day in Pukekohe. Please save the date and more details will follow.

## MISSIONS

**Hukanui** had the pleasure of hosting an evening where Sue Hanna from *Hagar New Zealand* talked about her vital work in Cambodia with Hagar over the last 7 years in helping restore broken lives. She has been on the front lines, working in trauma care, recovery and reintegration for women and children who have suffered extreme human rights abuse, trafficking and exploitation. She spoke about the fight against modern day slavery and how Hagar is working to fight against this global problem.

**Mission Work Opportunity:** Missionary Associate needed. From Mbale, Uganda, the OP Uganda Mission reports that a number of the OPCU churches in the villages around Mbale have begun Christian schools (nursery/kindergarten and Primary 1/Primary 2 level). Two of the schools are now in their second year. Two more began in February 2014 (the Ugandan school year begins in February). The Mission is looking for a missionary associate who would be willing to come to Uganda to assist in the training and discipling of the teachers in these OPCU schools. If you are interested in helping in this area of ministry, please contact omb@rcnz.org.nz for further information.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH & EVANGELISM

The **North Shore** Mainly Music group held a most enjoyable Family Night Dinner toward the end of the third term. It was well attended by Mainly Music parents and children, as well as members from the congregation, with plenty of opportunities for fellowship. During their last Mainly Music session for the term they celebrated their fourth year of ministry with a special birthday cake. Please always keep them in your prayers as we never know what seeds have been planted in people's hearts through this ministry.

**Avondale:** The Holiday Program saw a good number of children registering to attend during the holidays and prayed that this outreach would be a blessing to these children and their families. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." *Matthew 19:14*.

## CAMPS & CONFERENCES

The **Auckland Reformation Conference** was held October 30<sup>th</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup> and hosted by the Reformed Church of Avondale. The speaker this year was Dr Phillip Scheepers, lecturer in Missions and Church History at the Reformed Theological College in Geelong, whose particular focus is on missions to the Muslim world. He spoke on the theme "Let the earth hear His voice" – *Reflections on the Reformation and the Call to Missions*. In celebration of the 200th an-

niversary of the gospel being preached in New Zealand (by Rev. Samuel Marsden on Christmas Day, 1814 at Oihi Bay), the conference this year focussed on the Reformation and Missions. Is being "reformed" and believing in a majestic, sovereign God a hindrance to evangelism and missions or is it rather the driving force behind a truly mission-oriented church?

**An Explore Conference** was hosted by the Reformed Theological College, Geelong, late in October. This new event replaced the Fan the Flame conference, which had been a great blessing to many people over the last seven years. **Explore** was specifically designed for people moving toward being a pastor, preacher, missionary, church planter or church worker of some kind. Explore promised to be very focused, highly interactive and to address key issues that our churches and up-and-coming leaders need to face if we are to have a new generation of gospel pastors and leaders.

**National Youth Camp 2015** is approaching fast and enrolments are now open! The camp will be held from the 2nd-8th January at The Narrows in Hamilton. The theme of the camp 'Pick Your Side' focuses on resisting the world and our

# LADIES PRESBYTERIAL

— ADVANCE NOTICE —

### When:

Saturday, 21 March 2015,  
9.30 – 3.00 pm

### Where:

Reformed Church of  
Wainuiomata

### Topic:

"Bound – Now Free"  
*New Life in Christ*

*Mark your calendars for a day of fun  
and fellowship with other ladies of the  
Wellington Presbytery.*

More details to follow.



*"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."*  
Prov 1:7

## Teacher Vacancy

Silverstream Christian School is seeking the services of a Reformed Primary/Intermediate School Teacher for the 2015 school year. Silverstream Christian School is a school set up to provide Christian education to our covenant children. Our aim is to develop a biblically consistent world and life view in our students based on the Reformed Faith. Applicants must be committed to the Reformed Faith and Reformed Christian Education. This is an opportunity to be a part of a vibrant covenant community.

If you have any questions or wish to apply please email:

**board@silverstreamchristian.school.nz**  
**or phone Koen van der Werff on (04) 5297 558**

own sinful desires with Rev Leo De Vos leading the studies on "Overcoming the World". Come along for fun and fellowship with other fantastic young people and to be encouraged and strengthened in your faith.

## FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

**Masterton:** Progressive 'P' Party –Ladies Fellowship would like to invite you to Participate in a Pleasant Party, with Plenty of Particularly nice food, and Positive People. Meet dressed as Postman Pat, the Prime Minister, a Pineapple, or anything else beginning with the letter 'P'! Your Progressive 'P'-themed dinner and dessert destinations will remain a mystery to you until the night, but come Prepared to have a wonderful time. Please bring a donation along with you – this event is a fundraiser for Voice of

the Martyrs. (This event is for those aged 18 and above).

**North Shore:** Cadets and GEMS held their annual garage sale in early November.

## ACTIVITIES

**Christchurch Youth group event:** Come along to the Annual Extravaganza. We aren't calling it a talent evening, although talent may be involved. Almost anything and everything is acceptable – the only thing is we have a limit on how many piano pieces we are putting in, so if you want to do piano get in quick. The length of an item is up to you, but much longer than 10 minutes is likely to be eliminated.

***"I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." Ezekiel 34:26***

Here is sovereign mercy – "I will give them the shower in its season." Is it not sovereign, divine mercy? – for who can say, "I will give them showers," except God? There is only one voice which can speak to the clouds, and bid them bring forth the rain. Who sends down the rain upon the earth? Who scatters the showers upon the green herb? Do not I, the Lord? So grace is the gift of God, and is not to be created by man. It is also needed grace. What would the ground do without showers? You may break the clods, you may sow your seeds, but what can you do without the rain? As absolutely needful is the divine blessing. In vain you labour, until God the plenteous shower bestows, and sends salvation down. Then, it is plenteous grace. "I will send them showers." It does not say, "I will send them drops," but "showers." So it is with grace. If God gives a blessing, he usually gives it in such a measure that there is not room enough to receive it. Plenteous grace! Ah! we want plenteous grace to keep us humble, to make us prayerful, to make us holy; plenteous grace to make us zealous, to preserve us through this life, and at last to land us in heaven. We cannot do without saturating showers of grace. Again, it is seasonable grace. "I will cause the shower to come down in his season." What is your season today? Is it the season of drought? Then that is the season for showers. Is it a season of great heaviness and black clouds? Then that is the season for showers. "As your days so shall your strength be." And here is a varied blessing. "I will give you showers of blessing." The word is in the plural. All kinds of blessings God will send. All God's blessings go together, like links in a golden chain. If he gives converting grace, he will also give comforting grace. He will send "showers of blessing." Look up to-day, O parched plant, and open your leaves and flowers for a heavenly watering.

**C H Spurgeon**

## ProLife Facts

46 pastors, ministers, priests and vicars collaborated to pay \$4,670 for two fullpage adverts in suburban newspapers close to Wellington. The adverts appeared on August 20th and 21st, and read: "Pregnant Worried? If you are facing an unexpected pregnancy and feel that abortion might be your only option, we are here to offer confidential care and support. There is a better solution for you and your baby." The initiative came from the Hutt Valley branch of Voice for Life, who contacted the local church leaders. The adverts appeared in the "The Hutt News" and "The Upper Hutt Leader", which covers Lower Hutt, Eastbourne and Wainuiomata. The 46 pastors' addresses are supplied along with the names of their churches – a bold witness of proactive Christian concern in action.

## ProLife Facts

How should we "value" a small baby developing in the womb? For abortion rights advocates the preborn baby has no intrinsic value. The campaign to do away with all abortion law calls for abortion to be treated as a "health" issue. It is left unsaid, but the assumption is that the preborn child has no value whatsoever. The official medical terminology used in New Zealand speaks of the baby about to be aborted as the "contents of the uterus" or a "product of conception". The Christian attitude towards the unborn child is inspired by the language of the Bible. Psalm 139 enlightens us about the true value of each life in the womb. Verse 13 describes the care and attention that God bestows upon each developing child: "You knit me together in my mother's womb". God made us, not as mass production units, but as unique individuals "fearfully and wonderfully made"; each one with a role to play in His divine plan. If God values us so much, then that is the true benchmark, the true standard of value and protection for the innocent and vulnerable preborn baby in the womb.

# The Root and Fruit of Missions (Part 3)

**Peter Kloosterman**

## **Review**

Much time has passed since this series began. I will, therefore, briefly review the previous articles. In missions we need to distinguish between work that is directed at root matters and that which is directed at fruit matters. Root matters are those core/basic activities of the church of Jesus Christ: preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments and exercising discipline. The fruit activities of the church are the cultivation of Christ-like living. The fruit consists of living out the work of Christ in witnessing, caring for those who are in need and showing mercy to those who suffer.

This distinction is vital because many resources of the church are spent in supporting fruit work rather than root work. It is a constant temptation on the field

and in our local communities to strive to cultivate fruit without reflection on the need for the root and the official work of the church. In fact, as stated in the second article, much harm is done this way. We contribute extensive amounts of time and money to the alleviation of poverty, to the care for the needy and strive to make inroads into our communities. The works previously cited show that much of what has been done by the church has not helped to alleviate poverty and suffering. It has actually hurt those we are trying to help. It hurts because it creates dependency and undermines personal and social responsibility.

## **Distinctions**

This is why I suggest that the distinction between root and fruit is necessary. Think of this distinction in terms of education. We speak of primary, secondary

and tertiary education levels. Primary involves very foundational needs: learning to count, the alphabet, how to read and do maths; all basic instruction. Something would be quite wrong in primary education if we started with tertiary subjects. We know that we would hurt students' education if we didn't make these distinctions.

That is why I am urging you to reflect on these distinctions regarding missions and outreach. When someone goes to a different culture it is very easy to impose a development that is basic in a western culture at a level that is much beyond what the church and individual Christians can handle.

An example of this might be Sunday School materials. There are amazingly well-printed materials that teach the Bible stories at a child's level. These have crafts and activities, often including colouring and puzzles. Availability and supplies are easily overcome here in New Zealand. It's more a matter of choice than of supply.

Think of what happens in a mission context. The church is striving diligently to teach the children from God's Word the stories of God's redemptive work. Then along comes a mission team with a suitcase full of well-produced booklets and the crayons, felts and coloured pencils to fill them out. This has an immediate attraction for the children. They will be ecstatic because of the novelty and the value of what they are being given. Nothing the local church could develop or obtain by themselves can compare with what is brought. They don't have the supplies, nor the resources to obtain the supplies. Eventually, these supplies run out. Then what? The children have had a taste of something much better than what the local church could ever provide. Will they continue if the local teachers can only revert to



the telling of Bible stories as they had before? Some might say, no problem, we can ship the material and let's raise money for getting the material to those who want it. Our mission money will now be spent on sending materials that we think are basic, to sustain this fruit work on the field. Have we created a form of dependence? No matter how well-intentioned and cost-effective this may be, if it is not something that is locally developed, locally supported, and locally sustained we are in danger of trampling the root to develop our familiar fruit.

### How do we help?

Understanding God's design for His people and the church is vital to our understanding of what is going to be most helpful in the work of caring for those in need and the priorities we implement in missions. This is part of what we confess as God's people. It is found in Lord's Day 24 of the Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 64: "It is impossible for those grafted into Jesus Christ by true faith not to produce fruits of gratitude." This means that the best way to assist in missions and in our outreach is not by targeting the fruit but by targeting the heart.

In an amazingly prescient way, the authors of the Heidelberg catechism ask this question "...where does that faith come from (Q&A 65)? Notice, they speak of "that" faith. There is a context in this question. It is the kind of faith that saves and makes one share in Christ and all His blessings. A kind of faith that begins to produce fruit because it is grafted into Christ. Does it come from an aid organisation alleviating need and administering assistance? Nope. Does it come from an agency rallying people and resources to defend the widow, orphan, and those who suffer unjustly? Nope. Does that mean that these activities are unimportant? Nope. They are essential as the fruit of faith. But notice they are not the root of faith. Where does faith come from? "The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel and then confirms it through our use of the sacraments."

This is the calling of the church. This means that one of the most important and effective things we can do for the well-being of mankind is to work in and through the church. In planting churches and assisting churches with their gospel proclamation. It is the gospel proclaimed that will change a culture, not the ad-

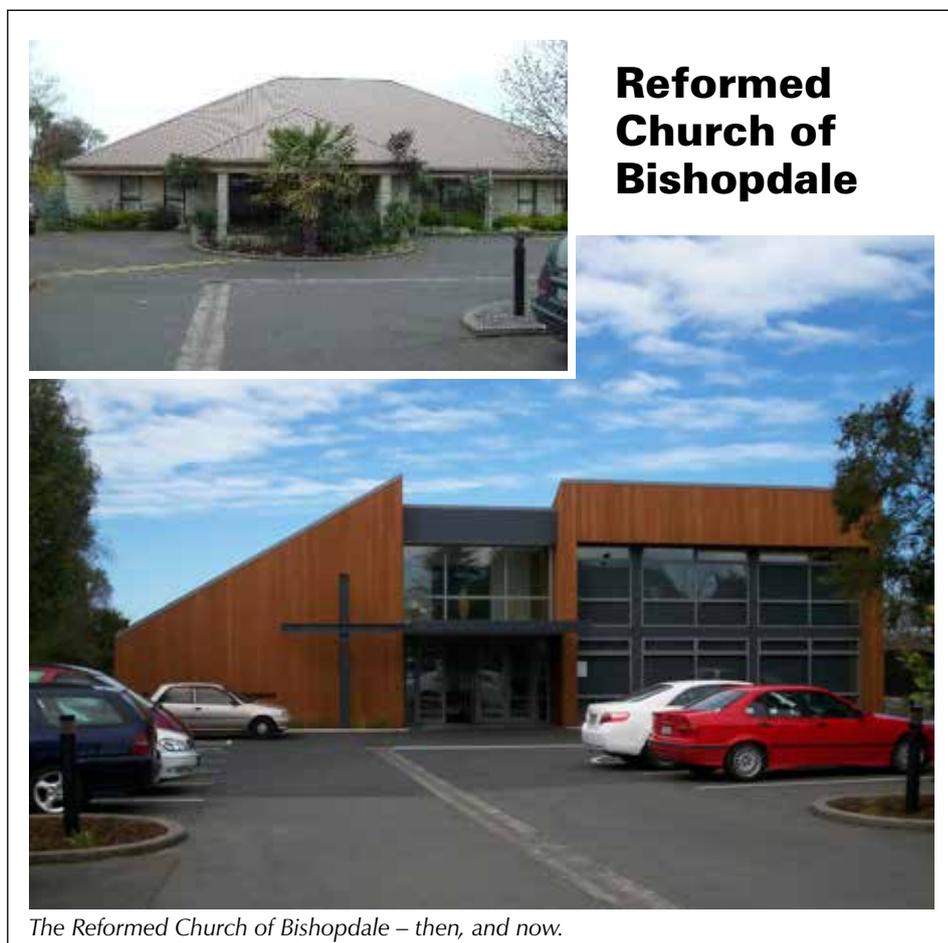
ministration of aid. That only creates a different form of dependency. This is historically the focus of missions. This is also biblically the focus of missions. When you read through the New Testament do you appreciate the fact that most of the letters are addressed to the church? That the book of Acts directs us to see that God's method is to save His elect and incorporate them into a church. This is His means of changing and shaping a culture. Sadly, this has been compromised in recent decades through the desire simply to help and allow those in other countries to share our fruit; but without a root that cannot be sustained.

Let's apply this then to our Sunday school illustration from above. We need to start with asking different questions. Think of the preceding article that talked about asset-based community development. Is the church's instruction of the children vital? Yes. In the context of missions, frequently the children are coming from unbelieving homes. The next question that we need to ask is: What assets does the church have to develop this activity? In their evaluation of priorities, what place does the instruction of children have? How are they accomplish-

ing that priority now? Perhaps rather than a church-based approach (which is something popular in the West) they should opt for a family-based approach. This would mean that the children are brought into a relationship with parents from the congregation and learn side-by-side with their children. This gives priority to relationships which are needed in all church settings. What resources do they have or are they willing to contribute to this development? Do they want assistance? Do they need assistance? These are important questions, because it allows them to provide their answers, rather than offering our solutions.

Now we conclude. What started as a distinction is now a call to examine and evaluate our principles and priorities. What do we seek on the field? What do we trust to really address the needs of mankind? Will we prioritise the root work? Will we recognise fruit work and do that with greater local input? Do we have the confidence in God's method to trust that He will use and bless what many regard as weak and foolish (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-31)?

*Mr Peter Kloosterman is the minister of the Reformed Church of Masterton.*



*The Reformed Church of Bishopdale – then, and now.*