

faith in focus

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**"The wind blows wherever it pleases.
You hear its sound, but you cannot tell
where it comes from or where it is going.
So it is with everyone born of the Spirit"**

John 3:8

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Editorial

At the moment I am doing a series through the Belgic Confession of Faith as part of the Confessional preaching the afternoon service. It is the first time I have tackled this Confession and it is being a special blessing. One part of this blessing is in realising how difficult it was being a Reformer or a supporter of the reforming cause in those days. After some 450 years and more of the Reformed faith in the Netherlands, we can easily forget that in de Bres' time it was very much touch-and-go as to whether those few who were reformed would actually live much beyond a year or two. The Spanish were executing their military campaign against the rebellious Dutch and most Dutch people were hedging their bets either way on how things would turn out. If Rome won the day, through Spain, most would be able to say they had always remained loyal to Rome and had given no encouragement and support to the heretical Protestants. And, then again, if the Protestants won, they would be able to say they always knew they would make it and had very much been in their prayers and help as much as they could. It has been estimated that only 10% were actually committed to the Reformation cause.

There is also a similar background behind the tract Calvin wrote, which we review in our lead article this month. Right throughout the 1530's and 1540's politically and militarily the situation could change to be very much against the Protestants. Of course, this makes their witness all the more courageous. They really did look to the Lord, as, indeed, many Christians are doing all over the world today. For ours is an age when believers are more than ever suffering and often dying for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And yet more and more are being converted into that faith, even in those places of extreme persecution. This will answer why so many news items in 'World news' concern the persecution of Christians. Because that is exactly what is happening almost everywhere, in all kinds of different ways.

Let's not think we are immune to it here either. The attacks of state socialism and its big brother, secular humanism, have been shaking up the western world. We must realise this and, unlike the 1960's and 1970's when it all caught the Church on the hop, we need to fight it out with them.

*Far be it from us to approve as right
those inhuman methods whereby many up to now
have sought to force such people to accept our faith,
denying them food, warmth and life's commonest
amenities,
and persecuting them with fire and sword.*

John Calvin

Photo Credits:

Dovedale Ordination – Sally Davey and Jan Buter

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The Reformation

Its start and its heart

John Zuidema

Sometime ago at an evening Bible study we watched the latest 'Luther' film starring Joseph Fiennes as Dr Martin Luther. In God's wonderful providence for his people, here was a man that the Lord used in a mighty way to bring the church back to what Scripture taught — and what a wonderful blessing that has been.

The vivid images in this film showed that the poorest of people were being blackmailed into paying for indulgences. They paid to view or touch some ancient relics so that their dear departed relative would leave purgatory and instantly go to heaven. The money so raised from poor people was used to rebuild St Peters basilica in Rome. On 31st October 1517, Luther wrote to the Archbishop of Mainz to protest against this practice and also nailed a copy of this letter — called the 95 theses — to the door of the castle at Wittenberg. Thesis 86 asks: 'Why does the Pope, whose wealth today is greater than the richest Crassus, build the basilica of St. Peter with the money of poor believers rather than with his own money'.

There was certainly a great need for a reformation! And God, in His providence, provided a man for the times in Luther. In accordance with his father's wishes Luther had enrolled in Law School, but dropped out almost immediately. He had left Law School, sold all his books and had become an Augustine monk on 17th July, 1505. His father was furious over what he saw as a waste of Luther's education. However, by God's grace and providence, Luther was privileged that his earthly father had sent him to study at university — but he was even more privileged that his Heavenly Father had directed him to search the Holy Scriptures to try and answer the many questions which burnt him up inside. This ultimately led Luther to challenge the authority of the Papacy by insisting that the Bible is the only infallible source of faith. Although it was not Luther's desire to cause a schism or split from the Roman Catholic Church, but to 'reform' the Roman Catholic Church from within, this was not possible because the Church of Rome was unwilling to rely on to the authority of Scripture alone. This was the real starting point

for the Reformation which we remember each year on or about Reformation Day, the 31st October.

The Five Fundamentals of the Reformation

Over time the essential elements of the Reformed came to be defined as the 'Five Solas'. They are the pillars that the Reformers believed to be essentials of the Christian life and practice. The five solas



Luther

are five Latin phrases that summarize the Reformers' basic theological beliefs in contradistinction to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church of the day:

- Sola scriptura ('by Scripture alone')
- Sola Christus ('by Christ alone')
- Sola gratia ('by Grace alone')
- Sola fide ('by Faith alone')
- Soli Deo gloria ('glory to God alone')

'By Scripture alone' (Sola Scriptura)

Luther said, 'A simple layman armed with Scripture is greater than the mightiest pope without it'. 'By Scripture alone' is the teaching that the Bible is the only inspired and authoritative word of God, and is the only source for Christian doctrine.

The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, believes its authority to be final and absolute and that the Church can be a form of infallible revelation, even in the contemporary church. And not only

the Roman Catholics, but Greek Orthodox, Coptic and even some modern sects rely on non-biblical sources.

The Mormons have their 'Book of Mormon'. The Jehovah Witnesses have their own version of the Bible. And many in Pentecostal and charismatic churches will say God has spoken to them directly. In such cases the 'By Scripture alone' principle goes right out the door.

Of course, we also need to be careful to rely on Scripture alone for our ultimate authority. Some regard our 'reformed' confessions, or the various creeds as being authoritative, but they remain subordinate to Scripture. This doesn't mean we should ignore interpretation. As R.C Sproul states, 'If we have come up with a new interpretation of a particular Bible passage that has never been thought of in the last 2000 years, then we would be well advised to reconsider, for more than likely we would be in error.'

So when we say 'By Scripture alone', we are stating that the Bible is the only final authority in matters of faith and doctrine. As Dr Martin Luther said, 'The true rule is this: God's Word shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel can do so.' Indeed, anything that does not originate from canonical Scripture, while helpful in interpreting Scripture can never be authoritative but must be tested against Scripture.

'By Christ alone' (Sola Christus)

"By Christ alone" is the basic belief that salvation is through Christ alone and that Christ is the only mediator between God and man. That means no mother of Jesus, no Pope, no Cardinal, no Bishop, no Priest, no Minister or Pastor, nor the works of the saints either past or living, can add to the work of Christ alone as mediator between God and man.

The Roman Catholic Church continues to honour the memory of the Virgin Mary and other exemplary saints. It still teaches that Mary that, if people ask through Mary, they may be assured that their prayers and requests will be heard and answered favourably.

Since we know that this teaching is contrary to Scripture [Jn 14:6], let us also not fall into the trap of relying on anything

other than the saving work of Christ alone as our Saviour. There is always the danger that we add something to "Christ alone": not our 'reformed' understanding of Scripture nor our opinion that we are the only 'true' church nor our understanding and celebration of the sacraments nor the necessity of a Public Profession of faith. None of these are necessary for our salvation.

However, I do not wish to drive a wedge between what Scripture teaches or what our confessions state or our understanding of them. I believe them to be in harmony with each other. But let's be aware of the devil's attempt to trap us into adding anything at all to the wonderful completed work of Christ alone as mediator. His work is 100% sufficient for our salvation.

'By Grace Alone' (Sola Gratia)

When we say 'by Grace alone' we are stating the biblical teaching that we are saved by the unprovoked and undeserved acceptance of God.

This was in direct opposition to the Roman Catholic Church who taught that salvation is made possible only by grace but that the faith and works of men are a means of obtaining greater grace. Hence, it taught that salvation is a mixture of God's grace and his own meritorious works performed in love.

The reformers on the other hand taught that salvation comes from God's free act of grace alone, dispensed by the Holy Spirit according to the completed redemptive work of Christ alone. Salvation is not due to a person's good works, or his associations or memberships, or even the strength of his faith. A person becomes a believer and therefore one of the elect by God's grace alone. God chose him before the foundations of the world [Eph 1:4] and brings him to saving faith in Christ through the gracious work of his Word and Spirit in the heart of the believer.

Of course this teaching really goes against our human thinking. Deep down, our sinful human nature convinces us that we can save ourselves. We may think that we need divine assistance or some one to lead us back after we have gone astray, but with some help we can find our way back to God. But such thinking undermines the teaching of 'by grace alone'. There is absolutely nothing we can do to assist in our own salvation.

The Bible tells us that even our very best works are like filthy rags when it comes to saving ourselves out of the mire of sin [Isa 64:6]. Thankfully, God's word also tells

us that God is full of compassion and his desire is that sinners run to the Saviour Jesus whom He has so gloriously provided [Jn 6:40; 2 Pet 3:9]. What's more, the Father sends His Holy Spirit into our hearts and minds and causes us to respond to the glorious message of Christ [Jn 6:44].

'By faith alone' (Sola fide)

'By Faith alone' is a teaching that distinguishes most protestant denominations from Roman Catholicism and Eastern Christianity. This teaching asserts that it is solely on the basis of God's grace through the believer's faith that believers are forgiven their sins. The opposite position is that believers are forgiven solely on the basis of any good works. This is called 'Legalism'.

Roman Catholicism, Eastern Christianity and Mormonism hold that a combination



Wittenberg church from a woodcarving by Lucas Cranach

of faith and good works are required for salvation. The Roman Catholic view tends to exclude 'by Faith alone' as grounds for justification, holding instead that salvation is not conferred on the Christian until after the Last Judgment, i.e by God's grace through faith as perfected by good works. The purpose of grace was to transform a sinner into a saint, a bad person into a good person, a rebel into an obedient son or daughter.

According to Scripture, God declares a person righteous before that person actually begins to become righteous. Therefore, the declaration is not in response to any good works, such as spiritual or moral advances within the individual, but is an imputation of the perfect righteousness that

God immediately grants to everyone who is united to Christ by faith alone. At the very moment when a person becomes a believer, he or she is clothed in His perfect holiness. Though still sinful, he or she is judged by God as blameless.

John Calvin, also a proponent of this doctrine 'by Faith alone', taught that 'every one who would obtain the righteousness of Christ must renounce his own'. According to Calvin, it is only because the sinner is able to obtain the good standing of the Son of God, through faith in Him, and union with Him, that sinners have any hope of pardon from sin, acceptance by and peace with God.

One more thing we need to consider. Some people suggest that it is their 'strong' faith that will save them [or heal them or whatever the case may be], but those people are in danger of making faith a 'work' and our works will never save us. Thankfully, our salvation doesn't depend on our 'strong' or on our 'weak' faith, although faith is necessary, but it depends on our strong God Who has done it all.

'Glory to God alone' (Soli Deo Gloria)

The answer to the first question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is, 'What is the chief end of man?' is, 'The chief end of man is glorify God and to enjoy Him forever'. This is the crux of the Reformation. The glory should not belong to the Roman Catholic Church, or the Pope or the Bishop or the priest, but to God alone.

This teaching is fundamental to all the church does and to all an individual does and to all a preacher does. The believer's end is to worship, to serve, and to glorify God and to enjoy him forever, beginning now.

What next?

The above five fundamentals of the Reformed faith should cause the believer to think about his or her response to this wonderful truth: 'Is what I am doing or planning or saying aimed at pleasing God or pleasing men? Is my happiness and joy found in God or in someone or something else? Is God's glory or my self-fulfilment the ultimate goal of my life?'

The way we answer this question will say much about our understanding of the Bible. The way we answer this question will determine how we worship God and serve God. The way we answer this question will determine our witness for Christ in the world we live.

Seeing the recent 'Luther' film together

made us think about the corruption in the 'Church' and the sorry state of society at the time. The reformation caused the Church to split and a 'new' Church to be born. It also brought reformation to society — and long may it continue.

May we never lose sight of how lib-

erating it is for sinners to know that salvation is fully and freely brought about by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, and that this is so wonderfully taught in Scripture alone — the very word of the only true and loving God whose desire remains to

save sinners. Glory be to God alone!

The Rev. John Zuidema formerly served in the Reformed Church of Foxton and now ministers in the Christian Reformed Church of Dee Why, New South Wales, Australia

Reforming still?

Calvin's writing on reforming the Church

Sjirk Bajema

One cannot help but be overwhelmed by the workload of the Reformers. From Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, Martin Bucer, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, and so many others, there is an enormous amount that has been published of what they've written. Even now, over five hundred years later, there are still fresh publications of sermons and other writings which have

been unavailable for much of the intervening centuries.

The writings of John Calvin, though, make him stand out even more in this area. Very few others can match the output of what he wrote. And, also, of who he wrote it to. For not only were the inevitable dedications in his commentaries and dogmatic works, but he also wrote to many people personally.

The 'Selected Works' of Calvin is a

seven-volume set of what you would not usually read of Calvin. These are various tracts and letters that cover the span of his ministry. One in the first volume particularly stands out. In itself it would make a small to medium sized book in our time. And then we note who it was addressed to, because in this case Calvin addressed a no less personage than the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V.

This is representative of all his work. For



Statue of Reformers in Geneva

Calvin had very much the sense of being God's prophet for his age. In the crucial time in which Europe was at a cross-road, this Reformer put the Protestant case to the Emperor and his fellow rulers.

More significant, however, for the writing of this tract is the occasion to which its subject matter addresses itself. For this was written in connection with the 1543 Diet of Speier and the crucial issues before it. In the insecure climate that was Europe at this time, this Diet was looked to with keen anticipation. It was an opportunity which Calvin grasped, writing a solid defence of Protestant doctrine and practice.

But let's also note the way in which he wrote. Here was preaching by letter. And it's clear already by the way he begins. For he writes: August Emperor, You have summoned this Diet, that, in concert with the Most Illustrious Princes and other Orders of the Empire, you may at length deliberate and decide upon the means of ameliorating the present conditions of the Church, which we all see to be very miserable, and almost desperate. Now, therefore, while you are seated at this consultation, I humbly beg and implore, first of your Imperial Majesty, and at the same time of you also, Most Illustrious Princes, and distinguished Personages, that you will not decline to read, and diligently ponder, what I have to lay before you. The magnitude and weightiness of the cause may well excite in you an eagerness to hear, and I will set the matter so plainly in your view, that you will have no difficulty in determining what course to adopt."

The Letter

We turn now to examining the tract itself. In doing that there stand out two central pillars for the foundation and maintenance of the Christian faith. These are, firstly: A knowledge of the mode (way) in which God is properly worshipped; and, secondly: A knowledge (from Scripture alone) of the source from which salvation is obtained. Calvin regarded these two as so crucial that he says, When these two are kept out of view, though we may glory in the name of Christian, our profession is empty and vain.

After these two come the Sacraments and the Government of the Church. As these were instituted for the preservation of the two pillars of the faith, they cannot be used for any other purpose. Indeed, the only way of knowing whether they are administered purely, and in the right way, is to test them against the two pillars.

Calvin takes this basis and applies it in three areas: (a) In describing the evils which compelled the Reformers to look for answers; (b) In showing how the solutions of the Reformers were both appropriate and beneficial; and (c) In the necessity of an immediate application of these solutions.

Proper worship

We begin with the first pillar – the proper worship of God. As Calvin says, Let us see now what is meant by the due worship of God. It's chief foundation is to acknowledge Him to be, as He is, the only source of all virtue, justice, holiness, wisdom, truth, power. Goodness, mercy, life, and salvation. In accordance with this, to ascribe and render to Him the glory of all that is good, to seek all things in Him alone, and in every want to go to Him alone. And so prayer rises up, and also praise and thanksgiving – these being evidence to the glory we give Him. This is that genuine sanctification of His name which He requires of us above all things.

It's for this purpose that Calvin sees all of what is to happen in public worship. And he speaks of how important to this is our humbleness. The believer in meeting with God has to say "no" to himself. We're being trained to obedience and devotedness to His will, so that the deepest respect for Him lies in our hearts. That means we're really asking the constant question: "How is God being glorified in this?"

And He gives us the way to this as well. For what pleases Him in a simple, spiritual worship. There must be that faith which is truly a matter of the heart, through the simple and direct power of the Holy Spirit. Calvin quotes here John 4:23: "Yet a time is coming and now is when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth..."

That was quite some word to a world where church services had become filled with all kinds of elaborate and extensive ceremonies! And it was all theologically justified! The Roman Catholic Church pointed to how the practice had been in the temple worship of the Old Testament, and how this had been further enhanced by what had happened up to and in the 16th century.

But Jesus, in speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, pointed to a time beyond all kinds of ceremonies. All those intricate and involved details were pointing forward. They looked to the substance of which they were only shadows. While they had the Spirit outlined by the

many figures in the Old Testament, we have Him now in the fullness of time very simply. Calvin described it vividly: A new Judaism, as a substitute for that which God had very clearly wiped-out, has again been reared up by means of many puerile extravagancies, collected from different quarters; and with these have been mixed up certain impious rites, partly borrowed from the heathen, and more adapted to some theatrical show than to the dignity of our religion.

In our present age of innovative liturgical reform – with so many changes advocated for public worship – we too need to consider if we are beginning to do the same. It might seem and feel the right thing to do. People obviously are warming to them. But how do they help in the spiritual worship of God? We too might be able to bring in relevant quotes from the Old Testament. Yet how is the fulfillment in Christ Jesus clearly shown?

John Calvin goes on: ...men pay no regard to what God has commanded, or to what He approves, in order that they may serve Him in a suitable way, but assume to themselves a licence of devising ways of worship, and afterwards showing them on God as a substitute for obedience.

It's interesting, in this light, that the public worship of the Genevan church was very simple. There were no musical instruments, and only the singing of the Old Testament psalms and certain songs from the New Testament. And this in an age when the Lutherans sang the hymns of Luther from the high organs of the former Roman Catholic churches, and the Anabaptists already had the variety that we recognize so much in their spiritual descendants today.

The source of our salvation

Calvin next moves on to the second central pillar. He comes to the source from which salvation is obtained. And as he begins this, he explains straight-away the three parts to our salvation that we recognize from the Heidelberg Catechism and the Preparatory Forms for the Lord's Supper.

First of all, there's that sense of individual wretchedness. We are filled with the sadness as if suddenly we are aware that we are spiritually dead. The Word strikes in our hearts that sense of our total inadequacy.

Secondly, there is that turning to Christ. We can't do anything else. His power alone can save. He is the only Priest who reconciles us to the Father. It's His death

which is the only sacrifice by which our sin was paid. He alone made us right with God.

And, thirdly, we rise to a firm and solid confidence in Christ. We're open to being taught His grace, and to live His way in all that we do.

Of all these essential parts to a true faith Calvin finds the church just before the Reformation lacking. For with the first aspect, there had been a real watering down of original sin. In fact, sin had been reduced to certain controllable outward lusts. Our whole sinful nature had become ignored – we actually believed we were quite good. You know – you can do it! Think enough of the right thoughts and you'll be alright!

In regards to the second aspect, it was believed that turning to Christ was no longer an absolute must. Aside from going through Mary, or any of the huge host of interceding saints, your own works were needed to help you as well!

No wonder that with the third part – that firm and solid confidence in Christ – there could only now be a situation of suspense and uncertainty. Purgatory demonstrated this superstitious religion very well. As Calvin further described this: ...it is not surprising that after they had once founded their hope of salvation on the merit of works, they plunged into all this absurdity. It had to happen – that from such a precipice they should have such a fall. For what can man find in his work but materials for doubt, and finally, for despair? We see thus how error led to error.

Perhaps this aspect of our salvation seems to have stayed intact. We certainly don't believe in purgatory. We hold dearly to the doctrines of grace – those five precious points of Calvinism. Or, do you? Could you, dear reader, just now recite those part of T.U.L.I.P. to yourself, let alone to your neighbour?

And having been refreshed as to God's grace in our lives, do we actually live in that? Our period in church history has been described as one of the most spiritually impoverished. Although the Word of God is freely available, we use it less than ever. Although personal communion with the Lord is unhindered, its practice of prayer have become at most the few rushed moments amongst the demands of modern living.

A local Lutheran minister even decried the loss of the minister's study as a place of peaceful meditation and reflection. He believes that it, too, has been taken over by telephones, computers, and fax machines. The time for genuine spiritual peace has

been pushed aside. It's that kind of busyness that so easily leads to believing in ourselves, and in what we have. To be apart from God only leads to darkness, and already we cannot see it!

Because we are going through the motions things seem to be okay. All the activities of the church are being done. You go to worship, to fellowship, and drag the children here, there, and everywhere! Of course we're doing the right thing! Can't you see it?

The sacraments

Yet the form without the content is meaning-

less. This is shown as the tract develops to speak about the sacraments. The sacraments – two gracious provisions from the Lord for preserving the pillars of faith. And, yet, what had they become?

Actually, no longer was there two. In addition to God's stated two of baptism and the Lord's Supper, five more had been added. The coverings of sin had become this bad! And even with the two which were biblically-based, there was no pointing anymore to what they really meant. Baptism had become a very involved ceremonial "christening". And the Lord's Supper? Why, that was not only corrupted on the outside,

"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2)

Hastings Christian School (secondary teachers wanted)

Hastings Christian School has recently been granted permission by the Minister of Education to extend its teaching programme through to Year 13. We give thanks to God for His provision in this regard, as it ushers in an exciting new phase in the development of Christian schooling in Hawke's Bay.

Currently the school is Year 1–10, so over the next few years we have the challenge of putting into place a senior secondary school curriculum. The school has just opened a new block of classrooms designed specifically for the secondary area. We are therefore beginning the process of looking for qualified and competent Christian teachers who are committed to upholding and maintaining the confessional statements that define the special character of our school. Interested teachers must be willing to take up the challenge of implementing a senior curriculum in their respective subject area(s). Subjects that we are looking at in particular are: Science (Chemistry, Physics, Biology), Art, Graphics, Economics, Accounting, Physical Education and Languages.

If you are a teacher who is qualified in one or more of these subject areas and you would like to know more about the Hastings Christian School, then we would love to hear from you.

Gerald Feyter
Deputy Principal

School: 06 878 6696
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it's very meaning had changed. Calvin protested: What Christ commanded to be done, and in what order, is perfectly clear. But in contempt of His command, a theatrical exhibition was got up, and substituted for the Supper. For what resemblance is there between the Mass and the true Supper of the Lord? While the command of Christ tells believers to communicate with each other in the sacred symbols of His body and blood, the thing seen at Mass ought to be called excommunication. For the Priest separates himself from the rest of the body, and eats apart that which ought to have been brought forward into the middle and distributed. Then, as if he were some successor to Aaron, he pretends that he offers a sacrifice to pay for the sins of the people. But where does Christ once mention sacrifice? He bids us to take, eat, and drink. Who authorizes men to change taking into offering?

Furthermore, Calvin argued against the lack of explanation. The people were being entertained with showy ceremonies, while not a word was said about what was meant. And, what's more, it was an entertainment people were being charged to see! Yes, in many places, just to eat the so-called 'host' was costing money.

The government of the church

This brought Calvin into the whole area of church government. An area in which his greatest sadness was the abuse and neglect of the pastoral office. Scripture, as we read in the letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus, clearly points to pastors and bishops – both names means the same, 'elders' – as being called to build up the church with sound doctrine. No man could be a true pastor of the church if he did not perform the office of teaching.

Yet, at the time of the Reformation, there was scarcely one in a hundred of the bishops who ever mounted the pulpit in order to teach. No wonder! These men had become no different than secular rulers and princes, lording it over the people with privilege and property.

But added to this was the disgrace those ordained brought to their calling. Calvin writes: At a time when the corruption of the world is at its height, there is no order more addicted to all kinds of wickedness. I wish that by their innocence they would refute what I say. How gladly would I at once retract. But their depravity stands exposed in the eyes of all – exposed is their insatiable greed and extortion – and exposed is their intolerable pride and cruelty. The noise

of indecent revelry and dancing, the rage of gaming, and entertainments, abounding in all kinds of excessiveness, are in their houses only ordinary occurrences, while they glory in their luxurious delicacies, as if they were distinguished virtues.

One's mind is also cast back to more modern abuses, such as air-conditioned dog houses and thirty feet statues of Jesus! There is nothing new under the sun. And, yet, what is dangerous for us all is the devil's lure of earthly power. It is such a fading pleasure and, still, it traps us so very quickly. As the saying goes: Power corrupts – and absolute power corrupts absolutely!

But there is still more. Calvin adds the absence of proper elections and appointments to office. It all becomes hidden. What should have been something the church took pride in had become a dark secret. And it resulted in the most cruel tyranny over the souls entrusted to their care. Laws have been piled above laws, to be many snares to the conscience. For they have not confined these laws to matters of external order, but applied them to the interior and spiritual government of the soul. And they kept being added, until they amounted to a large multitude, which is now a labyrinth....

No wonder the comparison was drawn to the Pharisees of Jesus' time. They too held back the people from their covenant God. The Church had so quickly changed from the loving Body of our Lord, into a terribly insatiable monster, devouring more and more souls.

Yet it was in this awful time that the ever-gracious God raised up the Reformers. In the words of Calvin: This much, certainly, must clear alike to just and unjust, that our Reformers have done no small service to the Church, in stirring up the world as from the deepest darkness of ignorance, to read the Scriptures, to work hard to make them better understood, and in happily throwing light on certain points of doctrine of the highest practical importance.

It seems that until they came little else was heard than old wives' fables, and stories equally frivolous. The theological colleges resounded with bawling questions, but Scripture was seldom mentioned. Those who held the government of the church made it their only concern that they did not lose any of their wealth, and accordingly, had no difficulty in allowing whatever gained for them even more money. Even the most prejudiced, despite whatever they might say against us otherwise, admit that

our people have in some degree reformed these evils.

Are we reforming still? Can we honestly say we have come a long way in sanctification since 1543? How do the unbelievers see the church? And how far have we extended the Lord's influence in this world? Oh that the Lord would raise up Reformers once more! Men and women who are Spirit-filled to declare with their mouths and lives the glory of the great God! Believers who are joined so strongly to the source of true salvation. And a people of God who love His Word!

Can we share Calvin's confidence? Together with him, can we say: ...let there be an examination of our whole doctrine, of our form of administering the sacraments, and our method of governing the Church; and in none of these things will it be found that we have made any change to the ancient form, without attempting to restore it to the exact standard of the Word of God.

A response

There is a response to John Calvin's letter. The expectation which the Protestants had for the Diet of Speier, though not fully realized, yet were not altogether disappointed. The Diet decreed that, in the meantime, Protestants should continue in the possession of their rights, and a promise was given by the Emperor that no time would be lost in assembling a General Council for the final determination of religious differences. The Pope, Paul III, was horrified at these concessions. He was equally grieved and provoked at the threatened revolt of his "very dear son", the Emperor. He wrote to him a Paternal Admonition warning him against his association with these heretics and strongly hinting at excommunication.

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World in focus

Hindu militants in Nepal kill and terrorise

Early on 1 July, armed militants broke into the Salesian mission complex in Sirsiya, south-eastern Nepal, and murdered Fr Johnson Prakash Moyalan (60). The killers are believed to be militants from the Nepal Defense Army (NDA) which claims it is fighting for the restoration of the Hindu Kingdom. They stole only Fr Moyalan's mobile phone with contact details of many Catholic leaders, workers and institutions who have since been contacted by the militants, threatening them with violence unless they pay money. The NDA has perpetrated many acts of terrorism since Nepal was declared a free secular state in June 2006. They have bombed Maoist institutions, a Christian orphanage in Birganj, media outlets and a mosque in the south-eastern industrial hub of Biratnagar. Please pray for Nepal and the growing gospel ministry of its young, dynamic Church.

+ Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | No. 490 | Wed 06 Aug 2008

Christian woman in Eritrean prison dies of malaria

Azib Simon, 37, imprisoned and tortured for her Christian faith since December, died of malaria the week of 14 July in Eritrea's Wi'a Military Training Center.

Weakened by ongoing torture, Simon contracted malaria only a week before she died. Christians in the prison are rarely given medical attention, and authorities refused to provide treatment for Simon's malaria.

Simon had attended the Kale-Hiwet Church in Assab, one of the independent evangelical churches that have been targeted by the country's Marxist-leaning authoritarian regime.

Prisoners at the Wi'a military camp are under constant pressure to recant their faith.

Simon's death makes a total of five Christians whom Compass Direct News Service has confirmed have died in Eritrean prisons after being tortured for refusing to recant their faith.

Since 2002 the oppressive regime has outlawed all independent Protestant churches, closing their buildings and banning gatherings in private homes. Worshippers caught disobeying the blanket restrictions are arrested and tortured for

weeks, months or even years. They are never allowed legal counsel or brought to trial.

The government only recognises Islam and Eritrean Orthodox, Catholic and Lutheran Christian denominations as 'historical' legal religions.

It is estimated that more than 1,000 Christians are imprisoned at any given time. Many of the arrests of Christians take place in groups when the government breaks up local house meetings.

+ Compass Direct News Service, Post Office Box 27250, Santa Ana, California 92799, 949-862-0304, Fax: 949-752-6536, info@compasstrust.org

Pennsylvania Supreme Court overturns hate crime legislation slipped into Agricultural Bill

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court on 23 July struck down legislation that added 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity' to Pennsylvania's 'ethnic intimidation' law through an amendment slipped into an 'agricultural crop destruction' bill. The justices ruled that the legislation violated the Pennsylvania Constitution's provisions prohibiting altering or amending a bill in order to change its original purpose.

The overturned provisions of the ethnic intimidation law were used to arrest and charge Christians for evangelising at a 2004 homosexual parade in Philadelphia.

Michael Marcavage, director of Repent America and one of those arrested at the parade, characterised the legislators that managed the tainted legislation as using methods that "...were extremely devious and yet another chilling example as to how far politicians are willing to go to silence Christian speech..."

+ Foundation for Moral Law, Post Office Box 4086, Montgomery, Alabama 36103, 334-262-1245, Fax: 334-262-1708, Info@morallaw.org

Liberal Theologian compares Biblical position on homosexuality to pro-slavery and pro-apartheid views

At a Lambeth Conference event the week of 28 July, the Rev. Dr Richard Burridge, Dean of Kings College London, likened advocates of biblical positions on homosexuality to those who are pro-chattel slavery and pro-apartheid.

Burridge said that Jesus supported inclusiveness in his earthly ministry, that apparent biblical condemnations of homo-

sexuality must be read in the context of other condemnations that we no longer consider valid, and that Paul's treatment of homosexuality was characterised by 'concern for an inclusive community'.

Meanwhile, a leading Anglican bishop also raised the issue of slavery in the context of homosexuality. The Rt Rev. Mouneer Anis, Bishop of Egypt, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa, denounced on Friday 1 August the 'advocacy of unscriptural practices'. He diagnosed sexual obsession, including homosexuality, as 'a new form of slavery: a slavery to modern secular culture and to immoral desires and lusts'.

+ VirtueOnline, 1236 Waterford Road, West Chester, Pennsylvania 19380

+ The Archbishop of Canterbury, Lambeth Palace, London SE1 7JU, England, 020-7898-1200, Fax: 020-7261-9836

Church of the Brethren celebrates 300th Anniversary in Schwarzenau, Germany

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford reports that about 1000 people gathered 2-3 August in Schwarzenau, Germany, to celebrate the 300th Anniversary of the Brethren movement on the banks of the Eder River, where the first group of eight Brethren, led by Alexander Mack Sr, were baptised in 1708.

Keynote speaker Marcus Meier, a research fellow at the Institute for European History in Mainz and a German academic authority on the early history of the Brethren, spoke about the influence of Pietism and Anabaptism on the early Brethren. Meier described the baptisms in Schwarzenau as being 'the primal seal for [today's] many-branched Brethren movement.... Here a group of eight people first counted the cost,' he said, quoting a phrase from a hymn by Alexander Mack.

Preaching for worship were Fredric G. Miller Jr., pastor of Mount Olive Brethren Church in McGaheysville, Virginia, and James Beckwith, the 2008 moderator of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference and pastor of Annville, Pennsylvania Church of the Brethren.

Five of the six major Brethren bodies were represented at the celebration: the Church of the Brethren, the Brethren Church, the Old German Baptist Brethren Church, the Dunkard Brethren Church, and the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches. The representative from the sixth major

body, the Conservative Grace Brethren Churches International, was unable to be present.

+ *Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, Illinois 60120, 800-323-8039, Fax: 847-742-6103, cobweb@brethren.org*

Algerian Christians sentenced for spreading faith

On 2 July, a court in western Algeria convicted two Muslim converts to Christianity for illegally spreading their faith. The court in Tissemsilt, 110 miles southwest of Algiers, handed Rachid Muhammad Essaghir, 37, and Djallal Dhamani six-month suspended sentences and 100,000-dinar (\$1,660) fines. The men were found guilty of 'distributing documents to shake the faith of Muslims'.

Essaghir has now moved from Tiaret to the coastal city of Oran with his wife and 1-year-old daughter after police shut down his internet café in April. Officials closed the business for failure to obtain necessary written permission from local police, but Essaghir said that this was an excuse to harass him for his work as an evangelist, as many internet cafés in Algeria function without such permission.

A friend of Essaghir said that 'despite his numerous convictions, he doesn't care anymore; God is in control'.

+ *Compass Direct News Service, Post Office Box 27250, Santa Ana, California 92799, 949-862-0304, Fax: 949-752-6536, info@compasdirect.org*

ARP General Synod sets position on Scripture

At the annual meeting of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian (ARP) Synod that began 10 June at the Bonclarken assembly grounds in East Flat Rock, North Carolina, several motions were made and carried that set the ARP position on Scripture. The position was adopted that the Bible alone, being God-breathed, is the Word of God written, infallible in all that it teaches, and inerrant in the original manuscripts.

Yet to be clarified is the seeming contradiction between the position limiting Scriptural inerrancy to the original manuscripts and the Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church that in the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 1: Of the Holy Scriptures, Section VIII, state that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments have been 'by his [God's] singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical'.

Other related motions modify the Form of Government to include the new position in ordination vows for ministers and elders,

and revise the Manual of Authorities and Duties to include the adopted position.

+ *The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, One Cleveland Street Suite 110, Greenville, South Carolina 29601, 864-232-8297, Fax: 864-271-3729*

United Nations attempting to criminalize Christianity

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) is working to defeat a resolution called 'Combating Defamation of Religions' that was offered by the Organisation of The Islamic Conference that attacks Christianity and moves to criminalize it.

ACLJ is sponsoring a petition to the United Nations' High Commissioner of Human Rights opposing the resolution.

+ *American Center for Law and Justice, Post Office Box 90555, Washington DC 20090-0555, 800-296-4529, Fax: 757-226-2836*

California Appeals Court reverses earlier ruling requiring state teaching credentials

The California Court of Appeal on 8 August reversed an earlier decision by ruling 3-0 that the state's education code allows parents to home school their children.

In early March a three-judge panel of the California Court of Appeal determined that parents had no legal right to home school, setting in motion efforts by groups including the Alliance Defense Fund, Liberty Counsel, Home School Legal Defense Association, and Focus on the Family to provide information to the court that compelled the court to uphold parents' constitutional right to educate their children at home.

+ *American Family Association, Post Office Drawer 2440, Tupelo, Mississippi 38803, 662-844-5036*

Home Schooling family in Germany has five children seized by Government

The home schooling Gorber family of southern Germany in January had six of their children seized in a surprise raid by the youth welfare office ('Jugendamt') and police while Mr Gorber visited his wife at a local hospital where she had been admitted due to complications from pregnancy with her ninth child.

The Gorber's regained custody of their three-year-old son after a six-hour German Family Court session in the week of 28 July. Five of their children remain in foster care, though the court did increase the time the Gorbers could visit these children up from the one hour every two weeks imposed after the initial raid.

A 5 July 2008 change to the federal youth welfare law signed by German Presi-

dent Horst Koehler establishes the standard by which family courts are to determine whether custody of parents can be taken away when the children are 'endangered'. Endangerment is not defined in the law. The highest German courts have ruled that home schooling is not tolerated because it creates 'parallel societies' and is an abuse of parent's rights. Administrative agencies and courts have stated that the failure to send children to school is by definition 'endangerment'.

Opponents have accused the child welfare system in Germany of corruption driven by exorbitant payments by the government to children's homes and foster care providers. The local operating youth welfare committees include privately owned and for-profit children's care institutions who participate with legal sanction on the committees with two-fifths of the total vote.

+ *Home School Legal Defense Association, Post Office Box 3000, Purcellville, Virginia 20134, 540-338-5600, Fax: 540-338-2733, info@hslda.org*

Apostasy current issue in Egypt and Iran

In Islam, a person's religion is considered a state matter. Muhammad, the founder of Islam, once decreed that whoever leaves Islam should be killed. This hadith (saying of Muhammad) forms the basis for Islam's apostasy law that deems leaving Islam (apostasy) a capital offence. In Egypt, two very courageous converts to Christianity are suing the state for their right to have their Christian status registered on their ID cards. This has sparked considerable debate in Egypt about religious liberty. In Iran, as repression is escalating horrendously, a bill before the parliament would make the death sentence mandatory instead of optional for both apostasy and the promotion of apostasy. Please pray for Muslim converts to Christianity, some of whom have been detained, tortured and even killed by Iranian police in recent months.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin / No. 491 / Wed 13 Aug 2008*

California Supreme Court denies freedom of conscience to doctors

The California Supreme Court ruled on 18 August against two doctors who refused upon principles of their Christian faith to artificially inseminate a lesbian. The doctors strongly believe that children should be raised whenever possible by a mother and father, and they did not want to participate in the deliberate exclusion of a father.

The high court unanimously ruled that the state's civil rights laws offer virtually no

exceptions for people of faith, thus implying that everyone in the state's wedding industry must service same-sex weddings and that California family law attorneys must handle adoptions by homosexuals, same-sex divorces, and so on.

+ Pacific Justice Institute, Post Office Box 276600, Sacramento, California 95827, 916-857-6900 Fax: 916-857-6902, pji@pacificjustice.org

New King James Version (NKJV) Warnings

The January 2008 issue of The Banner of Truth contains an article from The Friendly Companion titled 'Warning! The New King James Version of the Bible.'

The article states that the NKJV is actually a new Bible translation rather than being an update of the Authorized King James Bible (AV) 'with just a few archaic words modernised,' and that in order to receive a copyright for their Bible, the publisher Thomas Nelson 'made over 100,000 alterations' that included removing approximately 20,000 words.

The article continues that the NKJV translators claim to have used 'the reliable, underlying Hebrew Masoretic and the Greek text known as the Received Text or the Textus Receptus', but in some instances copied the wording from 'the Critical Text and the corrupted Westcott-Hort Text'.

The article concludes by stating that 'Satan is attacking the church from within by casting doubts upon the traditional text of the [AV] by bringing about a multitude of different versions, thus sowing confusion among the churches', and urges reading of the book Three Modern Versions by Alan J. MacGregor for a more detailed examination of the NKJV's textual errors.

+ The Banner of Truth, 11 Split Rock Road, Boonton Township, New Jersey 07005, ncbanner-subscriptions@yahoo.com

+ Netherlands Reformed Congregations of the United States and Canada

Saudi Arabia shaken by apostasy

Saudi Arabia is modern Islam's beating heart. A 1744 pact between the Islamic reformer Wahhab and ibn Saud resulted in a state where Wahhabi clerics would legitimise Saudi rule in exchange for Saudi protection as they advanced Wahhabi Islam. Since the 1970s, billions of Saudi petrodollars have funded the global growth of intolerant, anti-Jewish, anti-Christian, pro-Sharia, pro-jihad Wahhabi Islam. But things are changing deep inside Saudi Arabia, in the hearts and minds of young and educated Saudis accessing satellite TV and the Internet. Not only are some

Saudis reportedly questioning the intolerance of Islam, some are even converting to Christianity. A young Saudi girl was recently brutally executed by her father for apostasy in converting to Christianity, but because of the internet her murder has been exposed and her martyrdom widely mourned. Please pray for Saudi Arabia.

+ Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | No. 492 | Wed 20 Aug 2008

Death of John William Robbins

John William Robbins, Ph.D., 59, died at his home in Unicoi, Tennessee on 14 August 2008. A funeral service was held in Johnson City, Tennessee, on 18 August.

Dr Robbins received an A.B. in Political Science from Grove City College, and a Masters in Political Theory and a Doctorate in Philosophy and Political Theory from The John Hopkins University. He served on the staffs of two U.S. congressmen, and over a 20 year period served several public policy institutions.

Robbins was an ordained PCA Elder and licensed to preach by Westminster Presbytery. At his death, Robbins served as Elder

and taught Scripture in the Presbyterian and denominationally unaffiliated Reformation Church of Unicoi, Tennessee.

In 1977, Robbins founded and began directing a Christian think tank, The Trinity Foundation, which has published 75 books, 180 lectures, and 275 essays; hosted conferences and seminars in several states; and published a monthly newsletter.

Dr. Robbins is survived by his wife of 35 years, Linda; three daughters, Juley Grady, Laura Juodaitis, and Meri Robbins; two sons-in-law, and six grandchildren.

+ The Trinity Foundation, Post Office Box 68, Unicoi, Tennessee 37692 423-743-0199, Fax: 423-743-2005, tjrtrinityfound@aol.com

The insanity of assisted suicide

An article in the May 12 edition of The Guardian shows just how heartless assisted suicide is. Documentary filmmaker Jon Ronson originally set out to make a movie that advocated for assisted suicide, but after following around 'right-to-die' advocate George Exoo for several years, off and on, Ronson changed his mind.

The one incident that had the biggest

Hutt Valley Christian School - Staff Wanted

The following vacancies are coming up for NZ-registered Christian secondary teachers in January 2009. Hutt Valley Christian School is a small (roll in 2008 is 68 students) Year 1-12 Christian school owned and operated by an Association of Reformed parents and supporters. One distinctive feature of our school is that our Board and teaching staff are all committed to the Reformed faith as the most accurate expression of biblical Christianity. We aim to develop a biblically consistent world and life view in our students and invite you to consider participating in this with us. Located in the scenic Wainuiomata suburb, we are within 30 minutes driving distance of Wellington city.

Secondary Teachers: (1) English/history to Y12. (2) Mathematics/science to Y12. Experience with Cambridge IGCSE will be an advantage.

Primary/Intermediate teacher required: To teach a Y5?8 combined class of about 20 students (assisted by a teacher aide).

Only Christians of Reformed/Calvinistic convictions can be employed. The children are all from believing homes and parents are very supportive. Our website gives more information on the school.

Please send your CV with 3 referees (1 must be your Pastor/Minister) to the Headmaster, Box 43-127, Wainuiomata 5048, Lower Hutt. Only people eligible to work as a teacher in New Zealand can be considered. Further information can be obtained from Mrs J. de Vries; ph (04) 564 8552; email admin@wellingtonchristianschools.org.nz; website www.wellingtonchristianschools.org.nz

CSAWD Teacher Training Scholarships

The Christian School Association (Wellington District) is inviting Reformed Christians who are either undergoing teacher training or contemplating it to apply for a Teacher Training Scholarship. Applicants who are successful will be given a scholarship to assist with their studies and will be bonded to work at **Hutt Valley Christian School** on completion of their studies. For application forms and more information, please contact Mrs J. de Vries; ph (04) 564 8552; email admin@wellingtonchristianschools.org.nz; website www.wellingtonchristianschools.org.nz

impact on Ronson happened in May of last year. That was when he got to meet Exoo's new assistant, who was being trained to take over Exoo's role.

Susan [not her real name] lived alone, a middle-aged lady with a collection of plastic lizards. While we waited I asked her how they met. 'I was bitten by a brown recluse spider in 1993,' she replied. 'It was so painful I wanted to die.' She said she called the official right-to-die groups, 'but they wouldn't help me.'

'Because you weren't terminally ill?'

'Yeah, they rejected me,' she said. 'But then someone said, "You might want to call George." Kind of like under the counter.' Susan said she would have killed herself with Exoo's help – he was perfectly willing – but she couldn't find anyone to look after her pet snake. Eventually, they got talking. If she wasn't going to be his client, perhaps she could be his assistant.'

Susan once wanted to die, but then found a reason – a very perverse reason – to go on. She wanted to commit an irrevocable act, but then changed her mind. And yet she is now travelling the world helping people kill themselves. It's ironic and it's insane. May God open her eyes.

+ *Reformed Perspective*, June 2008, www.ReformedPerspective.ca

OCRC-URCNA Announcement

August 27, 2008

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Shepherd and King!

By this letter we announce with thanksgiving that at its recent Synod the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches accepted the invitation extended to them to join the United Reformed Churches in North America.

On Friday, August 22, 2008, the Federation of Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches met in Synod in Nobleton, Ontario, to discuss an overture to accept the invitation extended to the federation to enter into federative union with the URCNA on the basis of three Forms of Unity and the Church Order. The invitation to the OCRC was made by Synod Schererville (2007) and subsequently ratified by a majority of the consistories of the URCNA, as required by the Church Order.

Prior to the Synod, four of the five churches in the OCRC held congregational meetings in which members expressed themselves strongly in favor of a federational decision to accept the invitation. Due to other congregational concerns, the Cambridge OCRC consistory made a deci-

sion to postpone indefinitely dealing with the matter of joining with the URCNA. For this reason they also abstained from voting on the overture, which was presented at Synod and will remain independent for the present. All the votes which were cast were in favor of accepting the invitation and joining with the URCNA.

As per the invitation, the churches by virtue of last week's synodical vote are received immediately into the URCNA, without conducting a colloquium doctum for their ministers. The congregations involved are in Bowmanville, ON; Burlington, WA; Kelowna, BC; and Nobleton, ON.

May the Lord Jesus be honoured by these decisions of our respective synods and grant us grace to receive one another in charity, that together we may contend for the Gospel in one mind and spirit. We pray that this development may strengthen all the congregations as we serve one another and submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

In Christ's Service,

On behalf of the Committee For Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity

Rev. Harry Zekveld, secretary

+The Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the United Reformed Churches in North America

Feminine focus

Historical Hymns and their Context: Isaac Watts

Sally Davey

During my childhood and teenage years, when I was growing up in the Anglican Church, I had no idea that metrical psalms were anything other than hymns, just like any other hymns in our hymnbook. When we sang psalms in our school chapel, we sang them to different kinds of tunes, and the words were the actual text of Scripture. We knew they were psalms. They did not have

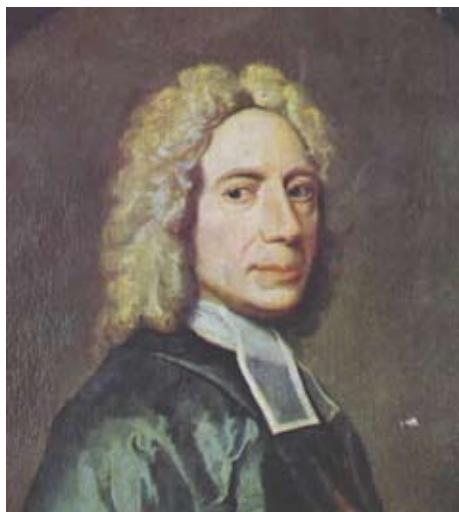
regular rhythm and rhyme, like hymns did. It is only since I've been in churches that come from the Reformed and Presbyterian lineage of the Reformation that I have begun to learn about metrical psalms, and the reasoning that led to their creation. They have an interesting history, especially when you consider the strongly-held convictions that shaped their form.

The historical background

The Reformers were deeply committed to the idea that God's people understand all the elements of worship. Thus, they believed that the Scriptures, and all the words spoken and sung during worship, should be in the language of the common people – what was called the 'vernacular'. This is the reason Luther devoted so much effort to translating the Bible into the German of his day, as did Calvin with his French translation of the Bible. But while Luther

continued the practice of hymn singing, and himself wrote some fine, biblically-based hymns, Calvin and the Reformed wing of the Reformation (which included British Presbyterians), adopted metrical psalms and a few biblical canticles as the only acceptable songs for worship. Calvin, Knox and the English reformers who shared Calvin's convictions (e.g. those later called 'Puritans') believed that only the inspired words of the psalms were suitable for worship. Songs of human writing were not. Thus, in the centuries after the Reformation, Reformed and Presbyterian (and even Anglican) churches sang psalms only. When we look for good hymns written in the 17th century, we find them mainly coming from Lutheran Germany, and from the pens of devoted pastors like Paul Gerhard. Many of these hymns are the product of faithful witness during the terrible sufferings of the Thirty Years' War (1618-48).

In addition to believing that only the psalms are permissible songs for worship, Calvin and those who followed him agreed that they needed to be reworked into a form suitable for congregational singing. These men believed that it would be too difficult to teach congregations to sing the plainchant melodies trained choirs had previously sung the psalms to. Admit-



Isaac Watts

tedly this was still a day of low literacy, and there were few published songbooks available. Paraphrases of the psalms in regular metre, in a series of repeated stanzas, and with a pattern of rhyming lines, were just what would fill the bill, Calvin believed. He was very enthusiastic about Clement Marot's early metrical versions when he came across them at Strassbourg; and encouraged the writing of similar verse paraphrases for the rest of the psalms. These were later published as the Genevan Psalter.

In the United Kingdom

As it is said, the rest was history... Both Scottish and English reformers retained these two convictions: the psalms only must be sung, and they should be rendered in metrical form for ease of singing. Thus, until 1820 in the Anglican Church, and until the 1860s in the Presbyterian churches, only metrical psalms were sung.¹ Non-Anglican ('dissenting') English churches of Calvinist persuasion probably continued singing only the metrical psalms until a similar date to the Scottish Presbyterians. This being the case, then, what were English metrical psalms like? The collection that became the order of the day for English churches was compiled by Thomas Sternhold, a former groom in Henry VIII's court, and his friend, John Hopkins, a Suffolk country

vicar. They were ballad-style arrangements, some of which were very good. A number were written by William Kethe, and included the rendering of Psalm 100 that we know so well today as 'All people that on earth do dwell.' However, many were awkwardly phrased; and 200 years later, John Wesley was to call them 'wretched, scandalous doggerel'.

The problem was, commitment to metrical form, when coupled with an equally strong commitment to a paraphrase as close to the biblical text as possible, left writers of these metrical psalms with a very difficult task. The demands of regular metre and a fixed rhyming pattern placed limitations on the choice of words and word order. Frequently, this resulted in stilted word choices and contorted word order. And the more closely the writer wanted to stick to the scriptural original, the more constrained he often became. Take this example from the 1651 edition of the Bay Psalm Book, the Psalter of the New England Puritan community:

'The Lord to me a shepheard is: want therefore shall not I.'

'Hee in the foulds of tender grass doth make me down to ly:

'Hee leads me to the waters still. Restore my soul doth hee;

'In paths of righteousness, he will for his names sake lead mee.' (First stanza, Psalm 23)3

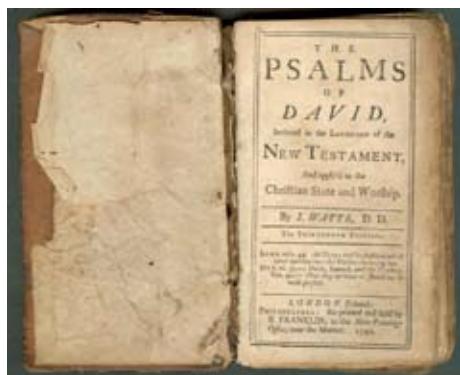
Such renditions may have been biblically faithful, but they were hardly beautiful.

Another, practical problem revolved around the way churches sang the metrical psalms. Again, remembering that this was an age of limited literacy, congregations were stretched until every member had memorised the words. The Westminster Directory of Worship, written by the Assembly that worked on the Confession of Faith and the Shorter Catechism in the 1640s, recommended that 'the minister or some other fit person appointed by him and the other ruling officers do read the Psalm, line by line, before the singing thereof'. Hence arose the British practice of 'lining out', which was the rather awkward practice observed in most churches for a good century or more. Organs were in disfavour and choirs frowned upon, so the general modus operandi was this reading out of a line (sometimes by an illiterate parish clerk), followed by the unaccompanied singing of the line by the congregation.

Watt's dissenting background and upbringing

Into this setting, in 1674, Isaac Watts was born. His family was committed to the dissenting cause, as members of a church whose clergyman had been ejected from his pulpit in 1662. This minister, like thousands of others, had refused to conform to the rulings of Charles II for the conduct of worship under the Act of Uniformity. Isaac's own father was imprisoned when he was still a baby, and the family's sufferings left a lasting shadow on the boy as he grew up. At a very young age he exhibited a precocious intelligence, particularly in poetry. His father, a schoolmaster in Southampton, gave Isaac his early lessons in Latin; and by the age of nine he was learning Greek; by ten French; and Hebrew by the time he was thirteen. Around this time his father had to go into hiding for six months in London, due to his refusal to submit to the King's position on religious conformity. The family, like so many others, rejoiced when William of Orange landed on English soil and James II fled to France. Religious liberty was now ensured, and the Watts' congregation could worship openly without fear of persecution.

Young Isaac's faith developed at an early age – not surprisingly, given his family's dearly-held convictions. A boy of exceptional abilities, he was destined for university study. However, to graduate from either Oxford or Cambridge would have entailed



conforming to the Church of England; and Isaac knew he had to forego the opportunity he was given for this. Instead, he attended a dissenting academy at Stoke Newington, north of London. Some of these academies were of a high academic standard, and it seems he received a good education there. He flourished at Stoke Newington, making lifelong friends who were also interested in poetry, and studying extremely hard – probably too hard for the sake of his already-frail health.

As we have noted, Isaac had grown up in dissenting churches, where the singing of metrical psalms was the weekly practice. As a budding poet, he became increasingly discouraged at the poor quality of many of the Sternhold and Hopkins collection, and began to think about how they could be improved upon. While still living at home his father challenged him to write something better, and it was then that he started to write the hymns for which he has become so famous. His congregation was prepared to sing them, but because they were largely illiterate, they still had to be lined out. Nevertheless, he continued writing. By the time he was 44 he had written more than six hundred; and we still sing quite a number today. They encompass a wide spectrum of Christian experience. Some of his most famous, and most powerfully evangelical, deal with the cross of Christ. Of these, the greatest has to be 'When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of glory died'.

Watts was called to the ministry of the gospel, and served two congregations well until his health gave out in 1712. From then on, he lived in the home of his wealthy dissenting friend, Sir Thomas Abney, at Cheshunt in Hertfordshire. He continued as minister to his church in London, but was only able to preach intermittently. However, his hymn-writing continued for the next eight years.

Watt's approach

Probably most interesting of all for us is Watts's approach to the singing of the psalms. As we know, he had been vexed at the poor state of English psalm-singing for many years. By the early 1700s he had reached a number of conclusions about singing in worship, and gathered his thoughts in an essay which he attached to the 1707 edition of his *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*. Its full title was 'An Enquiry how the Psalms of David ought to be Translated into Christian Songs, and how lawful and necessary it is to compose other Hymns according to the clearer Revelations of the Gospel, for the Use of the Christian Church'. One of the problems Watts addressed in this essay was the terrible bind metrical psalm-writers had got into by trying to meet the conflicting objectives of rhyme, meter and close adherence to the biblical text:

'Now in reducing a Hebrew or Greek song to a form tolerably fit to be sung by an English congregation, here and there a word of the original must be omitted, now and then a word or two superadded, and

frequently a sentence or an expression a little altered and changed into another that is something akin to it: And yet greater alterations must the psalm suffer, if we will have any thing to do with rhyme; those that have laboured with utmost toil to keep

very close to the Hebrew, have found it impossible; and when they have attained it most, have made but very poor music for a Christian church. For it will happen, that one of the most affectionate, and most spiritual words in the prose, will not submit to its due place in the metre, or does not end with a proper sound, and then it must be secluded, and another of less proper sense, be put in the room of it: Hereby some of the chief beauties and excellencies of David's poetry will be omitted and lost, which if not revived again, or recompensed by some lively or pathetic [emotionally moving] expression in the English, will necessarily debase the divine song into dullness and contempt...'⁴

The only logical solution for the corner metrical psalmody had thus worked itself into, Watts believed, was for churches to learn the Hebrew way of singing and sing the actual text of the Psalms. That, however, he viewed as too difficult for congregations to try – and he reasoned that only choirs in cathedrals could manage it. (Interestingly, 300 teenage girls at my high school did achieve it – but admittedly we had a musical chaplain who taught us well, we had excellent organ accompaniment, and we did have plenty of practice at our daily chapel services.)

So what did Watts recommend? His answer was fairly radical, given the thinking of his time. Working from the premise that converting the psalms into singable songs for English churches always involves some degree of paraphrasing, he went further to give a number of reasons why the themes from the rest of Scripture could and should be worked into the psalms, thus making them into completely new songs. For one thing, he argued, Christians living in the light of Christ's finished work should sing new songs of love and gratitude – just as Mary, Zechariah and Simeon did in Luke Chapters 1 and 2. The Psalms of David, though foreshadowing Christ, did not speak of him as those who have God's completed revelation know him. Watts's conclusion was that songs based on the Psalms, but with reference to Christ worked into them, would better fit the worship of the Christian churches.

Some examples

Watts knew he would come under heavy criticism for challenging the principle that only inspired words should be sung in worship; and he devoted considerable space in this essay to answering the objections he anticipated his critics would make. He

*Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.*

*Under the shadow of Thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
And our defense is sure.*

*Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless years the same.*

*Thy Word commands our flesh to dust,
"Return, ye sons of men:"
All nations rose from earth at first,
And turn to earth again.*

*A thousand ages in Thy sight
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.*

*The busy tribes of flesh and blood,
With all their lives and cares,
Are carried downwards by the flood,
And lost in following years.*

*Time, like an ever rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.*

*Like flowery fields the nations stand
Pleased with the morning light;
The flowers beneath the mower's hand
Lie withering ere 'tis night.*

*Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be Thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.*

(Source for text: www.cyberhymnal.org Note that our Psalter Hymnal, as do most modern hymnals, includes verses 1,2,3,5,7 and 9 only. Apparently it was John Wesley who changed the first word of the hymn from 'Our' to 'O'; most likely to eliminate the inelegant repetition of 'our'.)

was sure there was a case for singing new songs to God in worship. In the coming years he pointed the way by reworking of many of the Psalms into songs with Christian themes. They were published together in 1719 as *The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament, and Applied to the Christian State and Worship*. One of the best-known of these was his rendering of Psalm 72, which famously begins:

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

Try reading this hymn sometime, alongside the text of Psalm 72. When you look for the ways Watts has interpreted Psalm 72 in the light of what God has revealed about Christ in the rest of the Scriptures, you will understand his point.

Of all this collection, the most famous of all is probably that based on Psalm 90. It has become a much-loved part of British national life, and is frequently sung on state occasions. There is a context to this hymn which is most interesting. Life for the dissenters had been greatly relieved by the accession of William and Mary to the throne of England. The Toleration Act of 1689 meant that it was now legal to worship outside of the Church of England, and without following the Prayer Book liturgy. However, William and Mary were childless; and on William's death in 1702 Mary's sister Anne became Queen. She was the last surviving child of King James II, and she too had sympathies toward Roman Catholicism. Neither was she kindly disposed toward the dissenters. In 1714 she acted against them through legislation which would have dissolved Nonconformist schools. However, on August 1, the very date the Act was due come into force, the Queen died. For half a century afterwards dissenters viewed that day as a great day of deliverance. Once more they were freed from an oppressive monarch. Watts's own commemoration was the writing of his great hymn, 'O God, our help in ages past'.

This hymn, which has sometimes been called Britain's 'second national anthem', has close associations with important public occasions, especially those celebrating deliverance from trouble. It was a favourite of Winston Churchill, and was sung at his funeral at St Paul's Cathedral in 1965.

In New Zealand, too, it has often been a choice at Anzac Day services. For nearly 300 years now it has called Englishmen to remember their past and the many times he has protected them from danger. It is God who has caused them to live in safety. Whenever and wherever it is sung, this hymn reminds its singers that while God is eternal, man's years are fleeting. The generations come and go. But God is everlastingly God. To him, a thousand years are like a mere evening. To the man who trusts in his own strength, the brevity and frailty of his own existence is frightening. But to the believer who looks to God for the only certainties that matter, the reminder of God's eternal faithfulness provides unshakable hope.

Certain turns of phrase in this hymn have become familiar expressions in the English language. One of these is 'Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away'. Another is 'A thousand ages in Thy sight are like an evening gone'. They are not exactly what verses 3 and 4 of the psalm say, but they are very effective and expressive poetic interpretations of some of the ideas in those verses. Watts has certainly not included every point of teaching in Psalm 90 in his hymn. But what he has done is written a hymn in good English poetry that has stood the test of time, has been loved by generations of English churchgoers and citizens, and conveys to us some important, biblically-derived truths about God.

The place of Watts

What, then, may we say about Watts and his place in the history of the church and of hymn-writing? In an earlier article I tried to make the point that the best hymns in the history of the church have come from periods in which the church was most faithful. Is this true of Watts and his hymns? It is hard to say. Not everyone regards his hymns as great. Most do not have the depth of Charles Wesley's, for instance, and his choice of metre is not sophisticated. And the age in which he lived? Was it a time when God was honoured in England? Certainly, the particular churches of which he was a part, while having been faithful under persecution, were about to crumble before the forces of rationalism. By the end of the 18th century many of them had become Unitarian and had lost their love for Christ and his Word. However, when one considers the foundation Watts laid for biblically-based hymn-writing over the next century, we may certainly regard him as

belonging to an age of glorious, evangelical hymnody. He stood at the threshold of one of the great periods of hymn-writing in the history of the English church.

(Endnotes)

- 1 The exception among Anglican churches appears to have been cathedrals, where the singing of the Old Testament text of the Psalms to chanted melodies continued.
- 2 Quoted in Faith Cook, *Our Hymn-Writers and Their Hymns* (Evangelical Press, Darlington, 2005), p. 20
- 3 Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, eds., *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings* ((Harper and Row, New York, 1963), Vol. II, p.556.
- 4 Isaac Watts, "A Short Essay Toward the Improvement of Psalmody", pp. 7-8

Interested in teaching English as a Second Language?

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

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

You must be 18 or over.

You must have a university degree.

You should have an ESOL qualification.

You should have ESOL teaching experience.

You must have good pronunciation.

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

Please email

Paul Goodenough (North Shore)
paul.g@callplus.net.nz

Reviews in focus

"How people change."

By Timothy S. Lane & Paul David Tripp.

*Published by New Growth Press
in cooperation with Christian
Counseling & Educational
Foundation (CCEF).*

WARNING! Anyone who picks up this book thinking it might be a useful weapon to use on someone whom they think needs changing is in for a surprise! Indeed, trying to categorise this book as 'particularly useful for those suffering from ...' is pointless. Right from its opening pages, this book is clearly more of a self-help manual than anything else. In fact, the authors are quite categorical in stating that 'the goal of this book is to help you grasp the implications of the good news of Jesus Christ for your identity and the daily trials and temptations you face' (p. 36). This book is useful for those living the Christian life. In the many and varied illustrations based on real or imagined life that it describes, are shared experiences that will be common to each and every reader. As much as anything else, this is a book about sanctification, and sanctification is a process common to every Christian.

Having said that, there are also those who may be suffering in the grip of despair more acutely than others do. Whether it is a feeling of personal ineffectiveness, a relationship that operates below its potential, or a church that has lost its primary focus, there are particular moments in life when deliberate and focused attention needs to be given to godly change. This book addresses these times as well. The reason why this book is as useful for all Christians as it is for those in acute difficulty is explained by the authors. Lane & Tripp have assembled a book that discusses the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its purposeful effect on the Christian life –

no more, no less. 'There is nothing new in this book - no secrets or magic formulas'

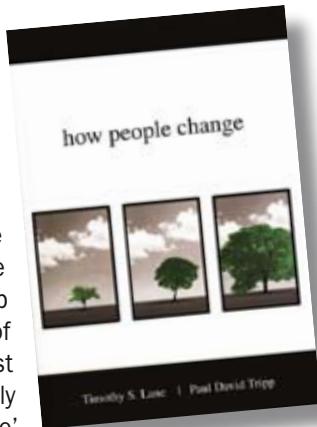
(p. 15). This is why the message they bring is timelessly relevant, and very appropriate for our times. The book is made up of 253 pages and is divided into twelve chapters. The first six chapters assess the common attitudes towards life's struggle that are held by our culture. These attitudes exist because of blindness to our identity before God, to the daily provisions that God gives, and to the process for dealing with life that God has set down in His Word. Only the gospel affords each person the tools necessary to live in obedience to God. The alternative to gospel-living is seen in the many different 'isms' that society uses to fill the gap that they refuse to let the gospel fill.

While many openly reject the gospel, the sad fact for many Christians is that they have a faulty understanding of the gospel that hinders their walk before God. 'Jesus is not a vending machine that dispenses what we want to feel good about ourselves' (p. 30). This is why Lane & Tripp give considerable attention to the components of the 'ordo-salutis' as a

remedy for this faulty thinking. They take great care to develop the doctrine of 'Union with Christ' as the bedrock of understanding the Christian life. Understanding where Christ has brought us from and where Christ is taking us to is critical for understanding where we are with Christ now. Thus, the authors look at passages in 2 Corinthians and Colossians to expound the richness of what it means to be married to Christ, which inevitably leads them to emphasize rightly the importance of the church community in facilitating Christian growth.

Chapter six serves as a transition that builds on the first five chapters as a basis for moving on to discuss the process of change. From chapter seven onwards, the four elements of the process of change that the authors put forward as a paradigm are developed.

Expositions of Psalm 88 and James 1:1-15 provide the biblical framework for understanding the HEAT of trials in our lives. Lane & Tripp reveal that God understands the 'heat' we face each day. The curse of the fall and its creation-wide effects are the very real framework of 'heat' that



encompasses our earthly toil. To better appreciate 'heat,' the authors hold up the wilderness struggles of Israel as a model for helping us to appreciate our own wilderness struggles, and canvass the beneficial purposes of those struggles.

'The Christian life is a state of thankful discontent or joyful dissatisfaction' (p. 135). While this sentence sounds odd at first, it aims to remind us that we must constantly admit that we are not all that we can be in Christ. Our sin generates THORNS. These 'thorns' are common to all, but the way we choose to deal with them is varied. The easiest response is to blame shift. The harder one is to recognise the deceitfulness of our own hearts. Thus, in relation to 'thorns,' the authors remind us that our ultimate problem is a 'worship disorder;' failure to keep the second table of the law is always grounded in failure to keep the first.

Next, the authors move on to the resources we have in Christ to deal with our heart's struggles. The Galatian's message of being 'crucified with Christ' becomes the basis for the CROSS and daily living. Again, the order of salvation is employed with particular emphasis on faith and repentance as the way to avoid living a cross-less life.

Finally, Lane & Tripp discuss the FRUIT. Here, we are encouraged to read the book of Philippians, and to ask seven pairs of questions that flow from the text. These are intensely probing questions designed to analyse the concreteness of our commitment to change.

The book ends with two case studies. The first concerns one couple's marriage difficulties, and the second a church that is concerned about its direction. The four elements of change mentioned above are applied as a grid for analysing the past and building a pathway to the future. Change the couple's name or the church's name and tweak the particular circumstances, and the reader will quickly recognise the true value of this book. Once again, CCEF has produced another very profitable read. Tripp & Lane's compelling and pastoral book is not written for someone else, but for you.

Reviewed by the Rev. Andre Holtslag, the newly ordained minister of the Reformed Church of Dovedale, Christchurch

Missions in focus

by Janice Reid

Church planting in the United States

Jim and Judy Bosgraf are home missionaries of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the United States. They served in three different congregations around the United States before Jim started to encourage his presbytery to focus on the need for church planting. Rather than looking elsewhere the presbytery hired Jim and Judy; who have now been doing this work for some 15 years, and have helped start 40-odd churches from Ontario, Canada, to Chicago...and on into nearby states. Janice Reid interviewed them during her visit to the USA earlier this year.

Q: How do you plant a church? Do you just go into a city and sit in a café, and people turn up for Bible study?

A: No, every time is different. In Moline, we've had contacts there for years. There's no Reformed church in the town, although we've seen a Reformed Baptist work. The Reformed Baptist people heard about our willingness, and they wrote to us and said if we were interested, they'd send us some people. They have a number of people in their church who will not join because they believe in covenant theology, but they will join our church!

Q: So how did things progress?

A: We had two months of weekly evening Bible studies, which we advertised a bit through word of mouth. That grew, and so when we came to the end of the time and wanted to review what to do next, we decided to start a worship service. Often we have to start with evening services, so that those who are attending other churches can come and see what the OPC is like, before they make the decision to move. But in Moline, they wanted to go the whole way right from the start, with Sunday school, midweek Bible study, and other things. But whether we can do all

that depends on what men I can locate to help do the leading.

Q: How do you manage to find leaders when you don't know these people or their spiritual condition?

A: That's why we do the Bible study to start with, so we can get to know people. Some who come to the Bible study make potential leaders; some attend the study but don't go further, and then when the church starts up, we get others coming along — some from other churches, and some new converts. The goal is always to reach out with the Gospel, not just to steal people from other churches. But often there are people who are Reformed in orientation but who don't have a Reformed church they can worship at, so they are happy to join us.

Q: What do you do about location? Where do you meet?

A: We're meeting in a motel in Moline, but in other places we've had meetings in schools, community halls. We've done a couple in movie theatres because they don't show movies on Sunday mornings — but we know we have to stop preaching when we smell the popcorn: it's almost time to show the first movie! We've even done one church plant in a dog kennel...it's just what was available. In Ontario right now, we have meetings in a hockey rink. But we do use a number of churches, when they're available.

Q: Do you often have meetings in schools?

A: It's getting more and more difficult to do that, with the increasing separation of church and state.

Q: Where does the money come from for all of this?

A: The Lord. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church does not have much money. The denomination gives some, the presbytery gives some, and the local churches that start up. But out of all the churches that we've started, we've only had one that we told them we couldn't afford it...but even that one found finance within 6 months. If it's of the Lord, money just isn't an issue. Some of the churches are wealthy, but some of them are very poor, and the people who founded the church are very

badly off. But God provides.

Q: Where do the ministers come from for these new churches?

A: That's one of the biggest challenges. There are actually a lot of men available, men coming out of seminaries and men who want to move to the OPC, but to find a gifted church planter and one who will fit with a particular group is always a real challenge. But it's always my goal to get out of the picture as quickly as possible, and leave local leadership to continue. But overall, matching the man to the congregation is the biggest issue.

Q: How do you match the man to the congregation? Do you get to know the graduates and recommend them?

A: The church home mission extension committee of the OPC are the ones who mostly do that; they go around the seminaries and interview the graduates, and a lot of people know to contact them, because they're making lists all the time of potential church planters. The newly-planted church is declared a mission work, and it is overseen by an established church or presbytery committee. And it's that church or committee that calls the new minister. But if there's no church overseeing the church plant, then the new congregation has a membership role within the presbytery.

Q: At what point would you consider a new church well-enough established to be instituted?

A: We look for three things: self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting. So they must have men who can lead the church, they must be strong enough to understand the need to reach out (propagate) with the Gospel, and they must be able to support themselves financially. Those are the three main things we look for, although we do provide support in some of these areas when it's needed.

Q: So what stage is the Moline group up to?

A: Just beginning. If they've got a solid enough group and they want to join the OPC, they make out a petition, and all the people who are interested in being part of that work will sign it, and ask the presbytery to be given official status as a mission work. And it goes on from there.

Q: It's really good to hear such stories about growing new churches. But what about the churches that don't work — that don't have enough people, or can't continue to function for some reason?

A: We just had one in a town up north; several families moved away, the minister and his family moved away, and now it's down to just a Bible study, and it's not even called a mission work, now. But there's still a lot of growth in other areas: some of the churches we've planted are now overseeing new churches themselves.

Q: How many churches have you, personally, planted during the 15 years you've been in this ministry?

A: Over 40.

Q: And how many church planting ministers are there in the denomination?

A: Oh boy, let me think a minute!! I would imagine there are 8 or 10 who are regional home missionaries, and there are many pastors who help plant churches, too.

Q: So all in all, how many congregations are there of the OPC in the United States?

A: 300-plus.

Q: Do you have any tips or ideas about church planting in your own country, to help us make people interested in joining our own new congregations?

A: I think there are no tricks. We believe in divine sovereignty. We believe that we are called to reach out with the Gospel. We believe the Church is the way God has provided for the spreading of the Gospel. And when all those come together, and when we're faithful...that's just the way the church works. It's not even our job; it's God's job, sovereignly to establish His church. There are some churches who focus on demographics and techniques, but we do not believe you can just set up a business model and start churches accordingly. We do have to be faithful in our stewardship, but we can't rely on human wisdom in our outreach. God gives us opportunities that we could never predict, but

if we're faithful in presenting the Gospel, and faithful in commitment to the church, and faithful in lovingly working with these people, then God blesses. This all sounds very positive, but in almost every one of these works there are major problems to work through...but in the final analysis: when we obey, God blesses.

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

Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Avondale

Queen Street: We had a good turnout for last Saturday night. 16 of us met at our church basement before heading out into Queen Street – perhaps a record? Siminz's crew was 9 and they were keen. Perhaps due to the rugby game the street was unusually quiet but that didn't stop the team getting stuck in. Ollie and Esther were working hard on the starbuck's corner having lots of conversations. Yvonne Thompson came out for the first time and was away in a flash. Yvonne had made some blankets and particularly sought out homeless people. Everyone else was roaming around while Hayley did a good job on the ANZ corner. One girl with nose

and lip piercings had already received a million dollar tract from someone else in the team when I tried to give her one. She asked if they were about Jesus when I asked her if she had read it. She then said I had talked to her last week (perhaps a few weeks ago? – can't remember) and she was now going to a church! 3 Saudis also went through the gospel message with me. Mohammed was translating for me and was very friendly. Abdulle listened politely, but a third guy (with a difficult name) heard me say Jesus was the son of God. At this, he made an angry gesture and left. Joel told me he also had some rejections. I guess the sadness is not for ourselves but for those who reject the saving offer of grace from God and who reject the Lord Jesus himself. Walking back through Aotea Square we saw a woman sleeping on the benches. We thought she was homeless but when Yvonne went and talked to her she was incredibly drunk and could hardly talk, then vomited on the ground. We eventually decided to call an ambulance. The ambulance was already looking for her so we just had to wave them down and

point the way. Overall, it was a positive night with lots of opportunities to share our faith and witness to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was also very encouraging to have such a big team and to see the new people getting stuck in.

Fitness for Christian Men! - In a society which places great emphasis on physical fitness and health, it is good to think about Paul's words to Timothy "... train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." (1 Tim 4:7,8). This year, Presbytery men's training day will be held on Saturday 9 August at the Reformed Church of Hamilton. Studies will be led by Rev. Michael Willemse and will focus on "Spiritual fitness." Studies will begin at 9.30am and conclude by 3pm with morning tea and lunch provided. For catering purposes, please let (contact name) know if you are attending by Sunday 3rd August.

Bishopdale

Jake Couplie started work in the church

about a month ago. You may be interested in knowing more about what he is doing. Here is a brief outline:

He is doing a course with Christian Counseling Education Foundation called "Dynamics of Biblical Change."

Visiting people in the congregation, both young and old.

Working with Drug-Arm.

Seeking opportunities for personal evangelism in the community.

Teaching a Bible course at Middleton Grange.

Developing promotional material for the church, including a church handbook.

Writing an article for Faith in Focus (which has yet to be printed).

Jake will be attending Session meetings every month (and has already attended one). The elders are still discussing to what extent he should be involved in their meetings, and we will let you know what we decide. On a personal note, I have greatly appreciated someone to work alongside. Please continue to pray for Jake and Thelmarie as they weigh up their plans for the future.

Pastoral. Less than a week to go! Rowan Dent and Nathalie van Tuinen will marry this coming Friday, Lord willing. And then the following week on Saturday, Timothy McCracken and Suzanne Braam will marry. If you have any lawful objections to either wedding taking place, please speak to one of the elders.

Pastoral. Congratulations to Jake and Thelmarie Couplie on the birth of Matthew Josiah. Great news!

Session meeting report from Wed 6 August. Calling Committee. A number of ministers from the United Reformed Churches of America are being evaluated as candidates for a second minister for the congregation.

Grace Theological College Seminars. Approval was given to make the church facilities available from 29 September to 4 October (the first week of the school holidays) for a course called "Introduction to Pastoral Counselling" and for a preaching seminar. The counseling course will run Monday to Friday 7pm to 9pm and 9am to 2 pm Saturday. This will be followed on the Saturday with Preaching from Old Testament 3 pm to 5 pm and from the New Testament 7 pm to 9pm. This will be open to as wider audience as possible in

the evangelical church scene and will be taught by Peter Reynolds, Principal of Grace Theological College.

Bucklands Beach

Some very special news re Andre and Sue Scheepers. The vicariate committee of our denomination has approved our session's recommendation that Andre be given an opportunity to prepare himself for possible ministry in our churches as a minister of the Word and Sacraments by serving as a vicar (intern) during 2009! Great news! All sessions have been advised and have been invited to lodge an application if they would like the Scheepers to come to them.

Baptism and public profession of faith. In the past 2 months our pastor has begun a series of classes for LABS (Language Assisted Bible Studies) members who are seeking to become members of Christ's Body and in particular our fellowship here at Bucklands. Session has subsequently approved of the request of Mr Yang Bee-Ea (Matthew) and his wife Jang Kyoung-Ja (Vivien) to become members of our fellowship. They will together re-affirm their faith before us and become members of our fellowship here at Bucklands Beach. Their two sons, Andrew and Peter, will also be received into membership. Furthermore, Sr Chen Yan Bing (Yan) will also profess her faith and receive the sign and seal of her salvation in Christ by means of baptism. This re-affirmation and profession of faith/baptism will take place during the morning service of August 24th.

Pastoral. Once again, warmest congratulations to our sr Betsy Storm who celebrated her 80th birthday last Wednesday! God has been good to her and her family. We too honour and give thanks for the significant role you and Ruud have had in most of the life of our church family here in Bucklands Beach.

Next Sunday. Next Sunday morning (30th August) we hope to introduce and welcome our vicar, Daniel Wilson, his wife Raewyn and their daughter. May we ask that you once more bring a plate so that we can have some extra special time with them after the worship service?

Pastoral. News from the Berends family: Clinton Berends has just circulated an update on the state of his health and future plans. If you would like to see the letter, please ask the pastor. He reports that things are improving, but that not everything is completely clear. Nevertheless, the family remains thankful for God's gracious provi-

Family Camp 2008/09

**Saturday 27th December
– Saturday 3rd January**

Come along and enjoy sweet fellowship with others from our denomination.

**Studies –
'In Christ Alone'**

led by Rev Peter Kloosterman

**Meditation –
'The Theology of the Psalms'**

led by Rev Michael Flinn

New Years celebrations –
Banquet dinner – Glow worm trips – Kayaking – Canoeing – Swimming – Volleyball – Touch Rugby – Soccer – Chess – Table Tennis – Kids Club – Settlers of Catan – Concert – Fishing – Rest!

Updates:

Great news – we have managed to keep the fees the same as last year! This is fantastic value for money for a week away in a beautiful setting with great food.

The Kids Club is being run this year by the Cressy family.

The National Youth camp runs from Friday 2nd – 9th January and we hope to arrange transport to Ngaruawahia for those attending both camps.

The National Cadet camp starts at Finlay Park the same day Family camp ends, so this is a great opportunity to attend both this year!

Check out your local Church for registration forms and more information or e-mail van7ter@ihug.co.nz

sion. He writes: We take this opportunity to express our ongoing thanks and love to you all. We feel continually thankful for all the support, in every way, that you have and continue to give us. We look forward to celebrating God's faithfulness on September 7th at a special thanksgiving service here in Redlands.

Christchurch

From Pastor John. I had cause this past week to have some email contact with a previous Pastor from Cornwall Street. As part of that exchange Bill Wiersma wrote, "Give our warm regards to the people there. Christchurch was a big slice of our family's life and growth." Bill and Betty are planning to go to Europe next month for an extended holiday.

Please keep in mind the matter of the planned roster for greeters at the door on Sundays. Session is anxious to free up busy elders and relieve them of door duty (except when there is Lord's Supper). The proposal was for a roster to be drawn up and that those wanting to opt out of the roster would need to do so. Some will fit into this role very comfortably. For others it will be a steep learning curve. To make this a little easier Session is planning a Meet and Greet Evening on Wednesday 27th August commencing at 7.30pm. I have been asked to provide some input into the evening. Our deacons are also planning to make this a fund raiser for Overseas Mission. So desserts will be served for a small fee for the OMB. We encourage you to come along.

Parenting (11) – Mentoring begins at home. Mentoring was something I didn't hear much about when I was growing up. Or have I just forgotten? 'Come to think about it, I don't recall hearing a great deal about mentoring in the early years of my ministry either. Of course we all knew that Paul had a mentoring relationship with Timothy and that Jesus did three years of intense mentoring with twelve disciples. In that sense there is nothing new about mentoring. It is as old as Joshua learning from Moses. These days mentoring has become much more intentional. In the last decade of my ministry in Sydney I regularly had Saturday morning breakfasts at the local McDonald's, often engaged in some wonderful "deep and meaningfuls" with young men from the congregation. Here in Christchurch too I've heard about men who like to spend time with younger men for that purpose. Also amongst the women that

is tending to happen much more. That led me to wonder why this is becoming such an important issue when a generation ago such mentoring was almost unheard of. I suspect that part of the reason lies in changes in family life. A lot of mentoring that is now done by leaders in the church was previously done in the home. Much of it was done around the family meal table with mealtime devotions. I grew up in a pre-television era where at least once a day – and sometimes three times a day – the whole family gathered around the table. That time not only included praying before meals but usually also included a chapter from the Bible after the meal – often with some lively discussions following. In those moments I not only learnt to know God's Word but I also gained a great deal of insight into life-issues from the attitudes and views of my parents. They were my first mentors. It is not my purpose here to judge today's families. However, I know that there are far more pressures on families today... and the ready availability of 'fast food' makes 'snacking and grazing' far more attractive. Family meal times are often the casualty. In that kind of environment regular family devotions become increasingly difficult. And when we then still do rush through a Bible reading there is little time for family discussion afterwards about the issues raised. Parents, you are the first mentors for your children. You are called to bring up your children in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph.6:4). In fact Paul especially lays that obligation on fathers. Youth leaders, pastors, elders and deacons will never adequately make up for the loss of mentoring that you fail to give your children now. I recall once visiting a new family in the church and I was delighted to hear of their determination to guard their evening family meal times – together with family devotions. May their numbers increase! In previous generations parental mentoring not only happened at family meal times. There was also more likelihood of sons working with their fathers on the job. That led to wonderful opportunities – not only to pass on trade skills – but also insights into the things of God. I recall the story of the Father and the young school-leaver working together on the land. When lightning struck a nearby tree the youth commented that they were lucky it hadn't hit the shed. The father corrected the son and pointed out that that it wasn't luck – it was the Providence of God that had caused the tree to be struck instead of the shed. Let's make every effort to

maximise the mentoring we do with our sons and daughters.

Dovedale

To the saints in Dovedale Reformed Church: We are delighted to announce the arrival of Natalie Rose Snoek at 0655 on the 5th of August. She weighed in at 5 pounds 10 (2.55kg) and was 52 cms long. She spent most of the first day in neo-natal care, but is now back with her mother who is doing very well. We thank you for your prayers and your thoughts at this time, and would like you to know that you are in our prayers also. We rejoice with you at the news that you have a pastor again, God is gracious to us all. We are settling in well here in Invercargill, we love the city and its people, and I have a good, challenging job. The biggest blessing though is the church down here. Grace Presbyterian Church has welcomed us with open arms, and we are happy to see God's Word preached faithfully and lived out in their lives. We are now members of Grace Church, and Natalie will be baptised some time in the coming weeks.

Dunedin

Belated congratulations to Mr Paul Schinkelshoek who was 80 years young on Friday 25 July. It was good to celebrate this milestone with you and wider family after our service last Sunday morning. We pray that the Lord will maintain your zest for life well into the future.

Pastoral Notes. Arnold Storm spent a few days in hospital last week with an infected knee that eventually received surgical attention. Let's pray for healing and a full recovery. Arnold and Marlene have recently taken into their permanent care a baby girl, Kandice. This is in addition to Casey, another infant girl and permanent addition to their family. We commend Arnold and Marlene for providing love and shelter to these children who although very young were also in very great need.

Pastoral notes. Congratulations to Jan and Henny Weegenaar who, on Friday, celebrated 55 years of marriage. Do pray for them as adjustments need to be made to deal with the after effects of the stroke suffered by Jan.

Hamilton

Pastoral: This morning Elliot Mark Bosgra will be baptised. We praise God that His covenant encompasses believers and their children and pray that God will bless and

guide Hayden & Jess as they raise Elliot for Him.

Chapel Library publishes a variety of articles to challenge and inform believers. You can read about the life and ministry of Charles Spurgeon or John Calvin, about how we can build up the local church or how we can be husbands or wives; by reading them we expose ourselves to the Word of God and are challenged to consider how we in our daily life and as members of God's church should respond to His claims on the way we think, work, worship, and speak. There are also useful sermons from various recent and not so recent preachers to teach and instruct. You can find this material on the table in the foyer; all these publications are also available to read or download from the Chapel Library website: <http://www.mountain.org/literature.html>

Hastings

Did you miss the combined bible study? There were over 100 people at the combined Bible Study last Tuesday. No doubt the topic "God's Sovereignty and Human Accountability: Are They Compatible?" was of considerable interest. If you missed it, just contact me (Bruce) for an MP3 recording or a CD and/or the written paper from which I gave the lecture.

Hukanui

Psalm 119 is multi-faceted jewel, describing in intimate detail the blessings of God's word. In fact, the more we read and meditate upon God's Word, the more profitable and enjoyable an exercise it is! Reading brings the truth into our heads, and meditating upon it brings it into our hearts. What about you? Do you find reading and studying the Bible a joy and a delight and a pleasure, something you just cannot get enough of; or is it more of a burden, a struggle and a 'have to' rather than a 'want to'? Do you find yourself constantly amazed at all God has done and revealed to us, or do you find yourself getting bogged down in bits you don't understand? Then this section continues to provide us guidance, as it shows us the great benefit that comes from spending time in the Word of God! It points us toward the fact that the Word of God stirs up our hearts to prayer! And here we are encouraged to pray for understanding, fellowship, maturity and holiness. Make that your prayer too.

Mangere

PASTORAL. Following last Sunday's congregational meeting to consider and vote upon

Session's proposal regarding relocation of the church there was a unanimous vote to support Session as it looks at the concept of relocation. We pray that the Lord will bless this process.

PASTORAL. It's a boy! Yes, as we all would have heard by now, Br & Sr Jacco & Carmen Verheij were blessed with a bouncy baby boy born this last Monday, the 4th of August 2008. His name is Nathan Jacob Verheij and he weighed in at 4085 grams, or just over 9 pounds. We rejoice with the family, thanking God for His goodness, and also grateful that Naomi has her own baby brother.

Session Notes: Session have been in contact with the Rev. Terry Flanagan from the Christian Reformed Church of Macarthur in New South Wales. As a result of this we are planning to have Terry and his wife Jan visit us in late September. More details will be made known as they come to hand.

Announcement regarding the Rev. T. Flanagan. Following initial contact with the Rev. Flanagan, in which he expressed an openness to a call, and sent a response to questions and two sermons on MP3 files, we were planning to have him come over in late September. Following a meeting with his elders, however, he now feels he ought to stay with the Macarthur congregation and help establish the church further at their new location. He expressed his regret about this. We very much ask for your prayers as we continue this process of seeking a minister and for the work of the Relocation Committee.

Masterton

Pastoral Notes. The Lord has blessed Haydn and Sharelle McCormick with a healthy baby girl, Hallie. If you want to reach the McCormicks their phone number is 370-1476. Eeuwe and Rachel Reitsma have been blessed with a baby boy, Thomas Albert John. We give thanks to God for His goodness in the healthy birth of these children.

Pastoral Notes: The elders are grateful to God that Alwin de Vries appeared before them last week and indicated his desire to publicly profess his faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ. The Lord willing, Alwin will profess his faith before God and His people on Sunday, 31 August. If there are any lawful objections please speak with your elder.

Nelson

Church notices. Session update, Just a small note from Session to keep everyone

informed about where we are at with the calling process, the calling committee have invited two ministers to Nelson to lead us in worship on the Sunday and to meet with session and calling committee. The first to come will be Rev B Hoyt of Hastings who will be here with his wife on the weekend of 23-24 Aug. The second minister invited is Rev A Esselbrugge of Box Hill Vic Aus. The date of this visit still has to be confirmed, once it is known we will let you all know. Please keep the calling committee, session and these two Ministers in your prayers as we go through the process.

North Shore

News & Announcements. Sometimes when I wake in the night, I get up and read, and usually something light and unrelated to my work. Sometimes, I may lie in bed and pray; after all, as someone said, why count sheep when you can talk to the Shepherd? I was reading this week Matthew Henry on Psalm 119:62 and received a little rebuke about that: "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments." Henry says, "Though David is, in this psalm, much in prayer, yet he did not neglect the duty of thanksgiving; for those that pray much will have much to give thanks for. See, 1. How much God's hand was seen in his thanksgivings. He does not say, "I will give thanks because of thy favours to me, which I have the comfort of," but, "Because of thy righteous judgments, all the disposals of thy providence in wisdom and equity, which thou hast the glory of." We must give thanks for the asserting of God's honour and the accomplishing of his word in all he does in the government of the world. 2. How much David's heart was set upon his thanksgivings. He would rise at midnight to give thanks to God. Great and good thoughts kept him awake, and refreshed him, instead of sleep; and so zealous was he for the honour of God that when others were in their beds he was upon his knees at his devotions. He did not affect to be seen of men in it, but gave thanks in secret, where our heavenly Father sees. He had praised God in the courts of the Lord's house, and yet he will do it in his bed-chamber. Public worship will not excuse us from secret worship. When David found his heart affected with God's judgments, he immediately offered up those affections to God, in actual adorations, not deferring, lest they should cool. Yet observe his reverence; he did not lie still and give

thanks, but rose out of his bed, perhaps in the cold and in the dark, to do it the more solemnly. And see what a good husband he was of time; when he could not lie and sleep, he would rise and pray."

Palmerston North

Warm congratulations to Eeuwe and Rachael Reitsma (and family) on the safe arrival of Thomas Reitsma on Thursday. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Pukekohe

The Session has gladly granted a request for membership in the church to David and Louise Hill who have come to us from the local Brethren church. We are happy to have you join the church and pray that you will be encouraged and strengthened in your faith through the worship and fellowship of the church. We will ask you to sign the membership book on Sunday 17th August.

From the Pastor. Last Tuesday the Session met with Alida Roberts and Jodie Jochem to interview them regarding their desire to profess their faith. After that discussion we

were very happy to give them opportunity to do this (on a Sunday yet to be decided). It is very encouraging to see a steady flow of young people wanting to express their faith in Christ Jesus and join the church as communicant members. Let's pray that will continue!

This is a note to the parents of the students of my junior and senior catechism classes. The Scripture memory goal for this year is to learn John 1:1-18, a wonderful passage about the divinity, humanity and mission of the Lord Jesus. To assist them would you please make this a family project? If you work your way through it as a family each day you will all master it. I'm also trying to get them to remember some key chapters in the Bible. Ask them to test you on this list and then you can learn them together! Thank you for your help. JH

Wellington

From the Pastor. Congratulations to Richie & Marit Flinn after the safe arrival of Arie Solomon Flinn, a firstborn son, on Thursday morning! Special Collection Today. Recently, a number of men from the Hamilton congregations worked for a short period in the Sahiwal Christian Hospital in Pakistan. This experience led them to conclude that the hospital represented a unique outreach opportunity within a staunchly Muslim community. Pakistanis come to the Christian hospital because of the quality of care provided. Of course, this provides a wonderful opening for those proclaiming the gospel of Christ. There are few other opportunities to do this within Pakistan. Although the hospital has existed for 100 years, it has, recently, been on the verge of closure because the supporting churches in the USA have been unable to find people willing to work there. Closure would be devastating to the small Christian community there. Further, the Muslim community would perceive it to be a noteworthy failure of Christianity. There are, however, people here in the RCNZ who can provide the support to enable this hospital to grow again. The present plan is to bring one of the Pakistani doctors to NZ for training and then to send a medical team from NZ. In the future, the hope is that further teams would go to support that work. We are looking for financial support to enable this to work to grow. Please prayerfully consider this request. Should you wish to contribute to this worthy project, feel free to do so during next week's special collection. The Deacons, David, Jonathan

and Matthew.

Games and Dessert Evening – Coming up this Friday 7pm at the church. There will be a combination of less active and more active games so everyone can have a great time. Bring a plate of yummies, cake or desert so that we can also enjoy delicious food and fellowship over coffee.

Short Report of Wellington Presbytery Meeting 9 August 2008

The Wellington Presbytery met in Foxton, Saturday, 9 August 2008, to consider matters that were held over from the previous meeting in July. Rev. Pieter van Huyssteen opened the meeting with a meditation on Psalm 120 and led in prayer. He then called the delegates to sing Psalm 121b from the Book of Worship. After examination of the credentials, the meeting was declared constituted.

In view of the fact that Rev. van Huysssteen had not been present at the previous meeting he asked that Rev. Archbald, the previous moderator, lead the meeting as moderator. Presbytery agreed to this.

The delegates stood to signify their agreement with the confessional standards of the RCNZ.

The delegates from Wainuiomata and Silverstream were able to respond affirmatively to the questions of Article 47 of the Church Order. Wainuiomata asked for prayer for pastoral difficulties and were able to give thanks that 7 of their youth are preparing to profess their faith. Silverstream indicated that their evangelism and mission committees are active and that after many years the congregation was able with a very strong vote to approve the building of a new auditorium.

Rev. Michael Flinn reported very positively on the meeting with Jan Erik Stolte concerning his steady desire and intention to study for the ministry. It is with a real sense of gratitude that the presbytery could give thanks to the Lord for leading Jan Erik this way.

As a decision had been made at the March 2008 meeting to appoint (or re-appoint) synodical examiners every two years, the presbytery voted to appoint Rev. Leo de Vos and Rev. Peter Kloosterman.

The Reformed Church of Masterton had previously brought a request that presbytery

rescind its previous decision to grant Ed Rademaker a one year preaching licence. The Church Order committee also sent a letter to the presbytery in which they indicated that in their opinion granting a license was out of order since the RCNZ had no regulations for licensure. After some discussion of the reasons and with the acknowledgement that the Palmerston North session had the authority to act for their own congregations, the presbytery voted to rescind the licence.

Rev. Andrew Nugteren, the Youth Liaison, reported that the WRYC is working well together but they are asking the churches

for young men to be added to the committee with a view to future leadership in the committee. Presbytery approved an overture from the Reformed Church of Masterton that presbytery request the WYRC gain presbytery approval of any speakers from non-sister denominations for future youth camps.

Rev. Peter Kloosterman, the OMB Liaison, informed the presbytery of the need for additional funds for a house and vehicle for the Doumas as they will be going to Papua New Guinea at the beginning of 2009. Hastings, the sending church, indicated that Alan Douma will be

present at our synod and, Lord willing, will be commissioned as a missionary to PNG on Sunday, 7 December 2008.

Presbytery agreed to a request from the Wellington session that Rev. Nugteren not be included on the presbytery preaching roster for Wanganui in view of his being the counsellor for Dunedin.

The moderator led in prayer and the presbytery praised God in song to end the meeting. The delegates enjoyed a delicious lunch prepared and served by some of the women of the Foxton congregation.

Rev. Bruce Hoyt, Reporter

Many reasons for rejoicing

Last Saturday (2 August) we at Dovedale witnessed a very happy event. This was the ordination and installation of our new minister, Mr Andre Holtslag. It was something we had been looking forward to with considerable excitement; and the occasion was no anticlimax. All of us as a congregation, and all those who were visiting with us for the event, rejoiced together. As I thought about it afterwards, it occurred to me that there were many reasons for our rejoicing.

We at Dovedale have looked forward to a regular preaching ministry, it being 15 months since Dr Michael Flinn left us for his current work in Palmerston North. We have certainly not suffered in the meantime, having been blessed by the help of two retired ministers, Mr Wayne Brauning and Mr Martin Geluk, and some good readers. However, it was a real joy to us that Andre accepted our call, and has now taken up the preaching ministry in our congregation. We are delighted to welcome Andre, Anita and their children as part of our church family. The service of ordination was a very special occasion, and we are grateful to all who took part with us. It was so encouraging to have so many visitors, including members of our sister congregations in Christchurch, those from Pukekohe, and members of Andre's family. We especially want to thank the churches throughout New Zealand for all your warm letters of congratulation and encouragement. These were read out at the conclusion of the service, and we were heartened by them. Thank you for your prayers for us.

We know that it was certainly a time of rejoicing for Andre! For him and Anita, this day will have been the culmination of his three years of diligent study at seminary. It

is doubtless, also, a confirmation of Andre's call to the ministry, and the decision to take their family to the United States so he could undertake this study. We are glad you did all this, and rejoice with you, Andre and Anita.

We were very pleased to have among our guests at the service Andre's parents, his grandmother, and uncle, aunt and their children. We can imagine their joy at seeing Andre's studies completed, his examinations by the church sustained, and their prayers answered in his ordination on Saturday. Thank you for coming, and we look forward to your visits in the future!

Andre's ordination will also have been a cause of rejoicing for the Reformed Church of Silverstream, who had so much to do with his decision to study for the ministry, and who enabled him to study at Mid-America Reformed Seminary in

particular. We at Dovedale know we owe our brothers and sisters at Silverstream a debt of gratitude for this. We are the beneficiaries of your kindness, and we were very glad indeed to have your minister, Dr Paul Archbald, lead the ordination service



Mrs Cyciliah Muchirahondo and Mrs Beppy Dijkstra



Andre introduces his family to the congregation



The gathered throng outside the front door of the Dovedale Church, Shands Road in the background.

for us. Dr Archbald preached on 1 Timothy 5:17-22, and reminded us of the double honour of which our minister is worthy: not only that we provide for him and his family; but that we pray for him, willingly hear the Word preached by him, and make his work and that of our other elders a joy. Dr Archbald also noted the difficulties and temptations of ministers, and the importance of their living an upright life as leaders in the church. We will do our best to heed this reminder, and continue to pray for Andre as he labours with us in Christ's service in Dovedale.

Another congregation has also played an important part in Andre's preparation for the ministry. We are grateful to the Reformed Church of Pukekohe for all you have done over the past year of Andre's vicariate. We know this day has given the Pukekohe church much cause to rejoice as well. It was wonderful to have John and Harriet Haverland, and Martin, Moana and Sally Leenders with us at the ordination service. Dovedale, being the daughter church of Bishopdale, welcomed back a friend in their former pastor, when John preached for us the following evening. May all these interactions continue.

Thank you again, for your kind wishes and prayers. Please continue to rejoice with us all as we begin a new page in the life of our congregation. (Jan and I also hope you enjoy the photographs).

Sally Davey



Dovedale Church Session: Back Row L-R: Messrs Arjen Buter, Roel Dijkstra, Andre Holtslag, Richard Maffey, Paul Davey. Front Row L-R: Messrs Louis Couperus, Berwyn Hoyt, Frederick Voges, John van Garderen



L-R: Ministers Paul Archbald, Robert van Wichen, Andre Holtslag, John Haverland, John Westendorp