

faith in
focus

Magazine of the
Reformed Churches
of New Zealand

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Editorial

This month the Reformed Churches of New Zealand are hosting a meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). This will be held in Christchurch from 15-22 October, and the host church is the Reformed Church of Bishopdale. May the Lord bless this meeting to the praise of His glorious Name.

To tie in with this meeting, our lead articles are related to missions abroad especially in light of our co-operation with some of the member churches of the ICRC. The Rev Bruce Hoyt looks at the value of ecumenical relations, which has enabled the RCNZ to be partners in mission fields like Mbale (Uganda) and Papua New Guinea. The Rev John Goris (emeritus) gives us snapshots of places around the world where Reformed missions existed in the past and still exist today, and where there is the possibility of an open door for the gospel once again. These snapshots show us that there is much that the Lord is doing around the world. The Rev Peter Kloosterman – chairman of the OMB, tells us about the involvement of the OMB in overseas missions. Finally, Mr Walter Hargoort, missionary in PNG gives us some insight into how to help a church grow in maturity.

The Rev John Rogers gives another report on *Sing to the Lord*, our provisionally approved song book for the churches.

“How women started the culture-war” has its finale this issue. Issues about conversation continue with Mrs Sally Davey’s articles.

Over the last few issues “World in focus” has been dropped because of space issues, hopefully, this will again feature in the near future. It’s not always easy to decide what stays in the magazine and what doesn’t. It may mean that some articles or series of articles have to go on the “back-burner”, for the meantime so that some up-to-date reports or more relevant articles etc., can go in the magazine. The readership’s patience is appreciated.

Photo Credits:

Cover – Eucalyptus forest in Margaret River, Western Australia, by Joel Walraven.

The Thought of God – Maurice Roberts

Pg.4-5

To have God in his mind and thought is the believer’s constant source of strength. The martyr languishes in the flames but his mind flies upward to God his Saviour and looks forward blissfully to the glory that awaits him even as his body sinks to ashes. The imprisoned Christian forgets the harsh regime of the camp, the daily grind and gruelling labour, as his mind soars upward on the wings of hope to remember God. The weary missionary, struggling with unfamiliar syllables and convoluted grammar in his appointed sphere of service sees beyond the frustrations of the hour as he remembers God, his ‘exceeding great reward’ [Gen 15:1]. The faithful pastor of a congregation, entombed in his study and confronted with an impossible daily agenda of duties, brightens in his heart and feels his pulse quicken as he remembers his Master above. The thought of God enlivens all action.

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

Missions abroad (1)



An international gathering

Question: What do the following churches have in common: Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (United States), Canadian and American Reformed Churches, Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, Confessing Reformed Church in Congo, Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales, Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Ireland), Free Church of Central India, Free Church of Scotland, Free Church in Southern Africa, Free Reformed Churches of North America, Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis (Indonesia), Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia, Orthodox Presbyterian Church (USA), Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koshin), Reformed Church in the United States, Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), Reformed Churches of New Zealand, Reformed Churches of Spain, Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, Reformed Presbyterian Church North-East India Synod, United Reformed Churches in North America?

Answer: They are all member churches of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) and therefore have a common commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word. They express that commitment by faithfully adhering to either the Three Forms of Unity or the Westminster Standards or another confessional standard that is in harmony with these.

Of more immediate interest to us here in New Zealand is that delegates (some 50 or more) from these churches will be assembling in Christchurch for the 2009 conference from 15-22 October. There will also be observers sent from other churches as well.

What a gathering of representatives from faithful churches of our Lord it will be! And what an opportunity to meet leaders from these churches from all around the world. We will have the privilege of interacting with them, hearing

about the Lord's work in their part of the world, and learning of the struggles, joys and suffering of God's people where they serve.

The host church is the Reformed Church of Bishopdale, where dinner will be provided for the delegates, and where the evening meetings will be held. During the day the delegates will meet in the conference hall of the Holiday Inn, down town Christchurch, where the delegates will be accommodated.

A volunteer committee of members from all three Christchurch congregations has been hard at work planning and organising all the details for accommodating and caring for the delegates during the conference and arranging for transportation between centres. Many thanks to this great team of helpers.

There is opportunity for our churches to invite a minister from one of these overseas churches to conduct services on the Lord's Day, 18 October.

The value of ecumenical relations

What's the point of being a member of the ICRC? It provides an important avenue for maintaining relationships with many Reformed churches around the world. That is something we couldn't do otherwise. We have sister-church relationships with two churches in Holland, one in Canada, one in the USA, two in Australia, and one in South Africa. And we are in the process of developing a sister-church relation with one more church in the USA. Our Interchurch Relations Committee has its hands full trying to keep abreast of developments in these churches. But we can profit from regular contact with many other sound Reformed churches and that is what the ICRC enables us to do.

You may ask, what benefits have we profited from in our ecumenical contacts with churches in the ICRC? The most significant has been the cooperative mission work in Papua New Guinea. The initial contacts came through ICRC member churches already working in PNG. Those initial contacts led to regular

interaction with the Canadian Reformed Churches, who had sent the Rev. Stephen t'Hart as an ordained missionary to PNG. Earlier this year we were able to send our first ordained missionary, the Rev. Alan Douma, to contribute to the PNG mission.

Another benefit is that our Psalm and Hymn Selection Committee has had fruitful contact with the Free Church of Scotland, and they have been willing to allow our committee to use many of the Psalm versions from their recently published *Sing Psalms* in our own publication. You will find the copyright notice at the bottom of a number of selections in the red book, *Sing to the Lord*.

From time to time our synod appoints study committees on various issues. Several such committees have benefited from reports on various issues written by other churches. The work done by other churches saves the time and effort of our busy ministers. In addition, synodical committees are able to seek advice from experienced elders, ministers and theologians in other churches.

At our 2008 Synod it was decided that our Deputies for Students for the Ministry should make contact with churches that we have relations with in order to find candidates for the ministry who would be interested in serving in the RCNZ. Although it is our prayer that the Lord would raise up men from our own congregations to study for the ministry and fill our pulpits, in the meantime while we have a number of vacancies, we can be thankful for the contacts we have in churches abroad who may help to meet our present need.

In these and other ways our ecumenical relations with churches in other countries have been of great benefit to us. But perhaps more important than any benefit to us is the opportunity we have through membership in the ICRC to promote the unity of the universal church. Our Lord prayed "that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent

Me." The world learns of the mission of the Son of God through the unity that is seen in the universal church. And by the grace of God many throughout the world are brought to believe that Jesus was sent by the Father through our unity. Surely there is no greater motivation for ecumenical relations than this.

The programme

As you can see from the programme, the overall theme of this conference is "The Vitality of the Reformed Faith". The main speakers are well-qualified

men from four different churches: the Rev. Dr. George Knight, III is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and an adjunct professor at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Dr. Nelson Kloosterman is a minister in the United Reformed Church and a professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, the Rev. Frank van Dalen is the director of Mission to the World of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, and Dr. Mohan Chacko is the Principal of Presbyterian Theological Seminary, India.

One of the difficulties in promot-

ing ecumenical relationships between churches is actually arranging times to meet. For example, how can we meet with delegates from the seven churches with whom we have sister-church relations? The ICRC provides the opportunity to do this during the afternoon sessions when there is time for delegates from one church to meet together in committee with delegates from another church to discuss matters of mutual interest and to promote their ecumenical relationships. This has been a valuable aspect of the ICRC meetings.

Of course all the delegates are eating meals together and will be accommodated in the Holiday Inn so there is further opportunity for informal interchange between the delegates. It is often these informal interactions which lead to official ecumenical relationships when delegates report back to their respective churches.

Let us be in prayer for the safety of delegates as they travel and for the furtherance of the church-gathering work of Christ through this ICRC 2009. And if you live in Christchurch or are spending time there in mid-October, by all means take the opportunity to talk with delegates from overseas. You are welcome to attend any of the sessions that might interest you.

Bruce Hoyt

International Conference of Reformed Churches Christchurch, New Zealand, 15-22 October 2009 Theme: The Vitality of the Reformed Faith Programme			
	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Thu 15		Registration	Prayer Service
Fri 16	Opening devotions Roll Call, Credentials Appointment of Executive Recess for Executive Committee to nominate for committees Re-convene Appointment of Advisory Committees	Plenary session: agree daily timetable; membership of advisory committees and workshops. Corresponding Secretary's Report Recess Committees	Opening devotions Church introductions/updates Paper 1. "The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of the Charismatic Movement." Rev. Dr George Knight III Plenary discussion Closing devotions
Sat 17	Day Out		
Sun 18			
Mon 19	Opening devotions Plenary discussion Church introductions/updates Discussion of Paper 1 Advisory Committee Reports Recess Committees; Workshops	Optional plenary session Committees Workshops	Opening devotions Church introductions/updates Paper 2. "The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of Individualism in Church Life." Dr Nelson D Kloosterman Plenary discussion Closing devotions
Tue 20	Opening devotions Plenary session Church introductions/updates Discussion of Paper 2 Advisory Committee Reports Recess Committees; Workshops	Optional plenary session Committees Workshops	Opening devotions Church introductions/updates Paper 3. "The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge from Islam." Rev. Frank van Dalen Plenary discussion Closing devotions
Wed 21	Opening devotions Plenary session Church introductions/updates Discussion of Paper 3 Advisory Committee Reports Recess Committees; Workshops	Optional plenary session Committees Workshops	Opening devotions Church introductions/updates Paper 4. "The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of the Asian Context." Dr Mohan Chacko Plenary discussion Closing devotions
Thu 22	Opening devotions Plenary session Discussion of Paper 4 Advisory Committee Reports Recess Committees; Workshops	Convene plenary session Final Reports	Closing plenary session Closing devotions

**South Island
FAMILY CAMP**
Teapot Valley Camp,
Nelson.

CANCELLED

**TILL
DECEMBER 2010-
JANUARY 2011**

*Note: This was an
additional camp. And
therefore does not replace
North Island Camp.*

Missions abroad (2)

Reformed witness in world-wide focus

Where does one start with such an assignment? There is much to be shared. Let's start with the oldest Christian nation.

A is for ARMENIA, situated at the foot of Mt Ararat. It became the first nation in the world to accept Christianity. That goes back to AD 301. Over 80% of its population are still considered Christians (mostly Armenian Apostolic Church), and that in a largely Muslim environment in the Middle East. The Armenians consider that the apostles Bartholomew and Thaddeus were the first to reach their country with the gospel. Later three other apostles came.

A Reformed witness is of more recent date. Born in Athens, of Armenian parents who escaped the Turkish massacre of Armenians in 1915, Aaron Kayayan came to the Reformed faith in France. He began in the pastoral ministry after training in Switzerland, and subsequently in a French Huguenot seminary. In 1969 The Back to God Hour started to engage him in their French broadcasts. Meanwhile he also began to share the riches of the Reformed faith among his own people, both in Armenia and abroad.

The spread of the gospel started in the Middle East: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria... to the ends of the earth!

Today the message of the gospel is still being heard in the M.E. despite severe persecution of Christians. Witness to the Reformed understanding of biblical truth is largely coming over the airwaves. Faithful messages are coming from Cyprus through the ministry of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF). And people are responding! But even on the ground the good news is being spread, and that also in Israel! David Zadok, regional worker for Christian Witness to Israel (CWI) translated the Heidelberg catechism into Hebrew. David actually visited New Zealand a number of years ago, and spoke in Hamilton and Wellington. *Pray for the spread of the gospel in the Middle East, and remember the persecuted Christians there!*

B is for BRAZIL. Did you know that John Calvin initiated the sending of two missionaries to a French colony in Brazil (Guanabara near Rio de Janeiro)? Reformed witness has been borne there since 1556, and even a Reformed Confession was published, the first in the Americas. The work came to an abrupt end a few years later, but during the next century the Dutch (Zealanders) started a colony in North-Eastern Brazil, and brought the Reformed faith there. It was initially on behalf of the WIC

(West India Company). Their colony was headed by a governor, the Count Johan Maurits van Nassau.

It was located in Recife from 1630 to 1654. There was a Reformed gospel outreach among the local Indians (Amerindians), and some of the converts were sent to the Netherlands for seminary training.

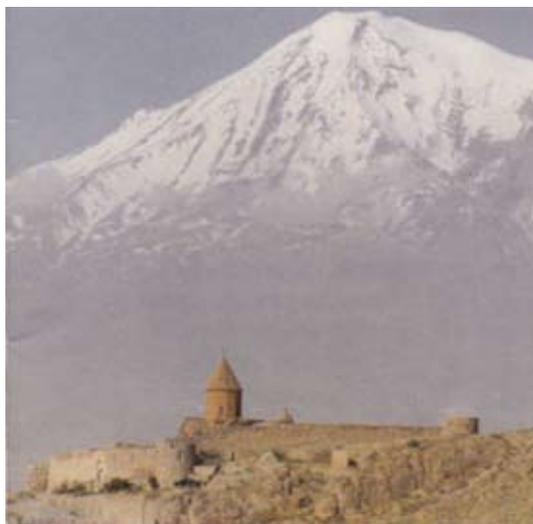
(I am very much indebted to my friend Dr Leendert J Joosse who wrote extensively about this in his most recent book, "Geloof in de Nieuwe Wereld")

Although the Dutch colony disappeared and the earlier French colony also, it is amazing that in the 20th century the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated), later joined by the Canadian Reformed Churches, started a mission work in the same area in NE Brazil in Recife and Maceio. In 2000 I was privileged to visit this area on behalf of the ICRC. Earlier during that same century Reformed farmers from the Netherlands settled in an area south of the original French colony of Calvin's days. In Curitiba there is a growing Reformed witness supported by the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

For the past 150 years there has also been a growing evangelical and Reformed witness from the Presbyterian Church of Brazil. The Korean Presbyterian church (Kosin) which is a member of the ICRC has been working in Brazil since 2004.

The Portuguese language, which is spoken in Brazil, and which has the seventh largest number of speakers world-wide (240 million), has a vehicle of communication on the Internet, in terms of a Reformed witness in training people for the ministry. This worthwhile work is backed by the Canadian Reformed Churches and needs support from other quarters too. One of the pioneers of this ministry, the Rev Ralph Boersema writes:

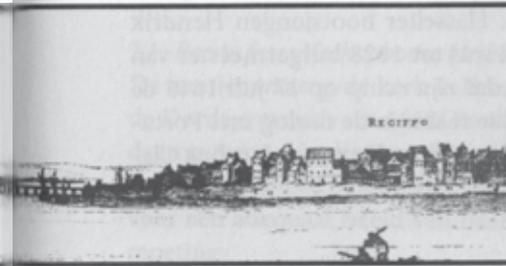
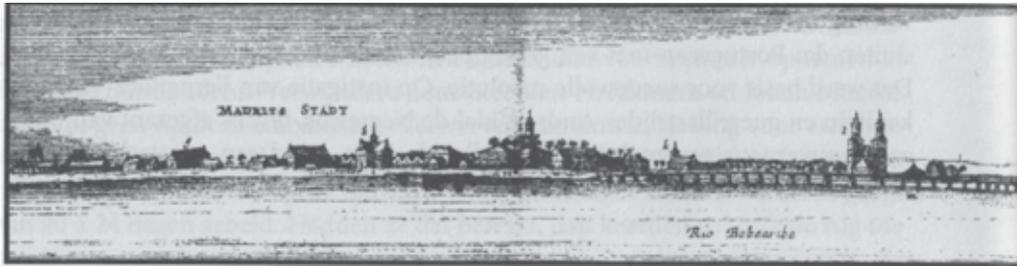
"Many Portuguese-speaking people do not have access to Reformed teaching, let alone teaching at the level of higher



Khor Virap Monastery and Mount Ararat



Pastor Aaron Kayayan



Recife in 1644

education for people such as church-leaders, pastors, theologians. This "distance education" is offered to people who wish to stay in their own place of work for training, i.e. their home churches. This school is like a global village. Some groups of students meet in local study centres. Degree courses are offered for Bachelor and Master degrees. There are also Diploma courses.

"We seek to raise up a generation of men and women of God in the Portuguese-speaking world. Our International Reformed Theological College (IRTC) is located in Bristol, Virginia, USA, with a Board of Directors. There is also a Brazilian "campus" at Belem. The IRTC has a special affinity with ICRC churches.

"The 2009 academic year started with 22 students, and several dedicated teachers who cannot be fully paid because the budget of USD \$58,500 is only partially met: less than half the amount required is raised. The fees are set according to the

living standard at the student's location. Perhaps some churches or individuals can sponsor a needy student, or help in meeting the budget. Do **pray** for this work, and if you can, **pay** something towards it!

"Visit our website: <http://pro-rege.net> and keep in touch."

Cis for CONGO. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has a population of some 60 million people of many tribal backgrounds. The Reformed message came to this country through the French radio ministry of the Rev Aaron Kayayan. It also reached other French-speaking nations in Africa, e.g. Benin, Ivory Coast etc. The son of this Armenian pastor has now taken over this radio ministry and tells us about this broadcast in the following paragraphs.....

"Reformed Faith and Life (RFL) is a radio ministry of Reformed convictions in the French language ("Foi et Vie Reformées" in French). Initiated in the late nineties by the Rev Aaron Kayayan, former director of the French department of the Back to God Hour in the USA, RFL is the fruit of the collaboration between some North American Reformed denominations (RCUS, URC, etc) and local congregations of the RCSA (South Africa).

Together they form the Reformed Radio Administration Committee (RRAC). The Rev Eric Kayayan, son of Aaron Kayayan, is presently the broadcast minister of RFL and is a pastor at Rietvallei Reformed Church in Pretoria-East. The Church council of Rietvallei oversees the ministry of RFL and reports annually to the RRAC. Rev Eric Kayayan was born and grew up in France; French is his mother tongue.

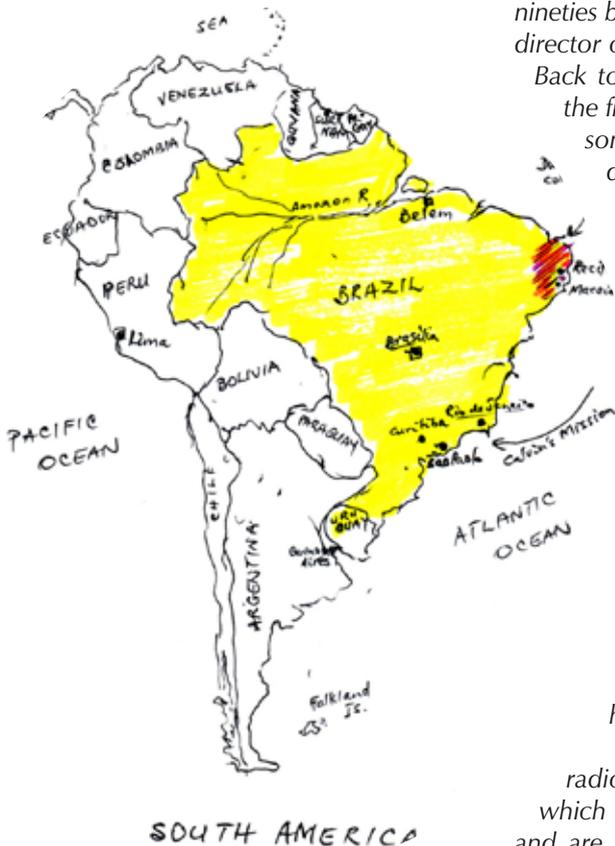
RFL produces on a regular basis radio programmes of 15 minutes, which are put under the form of CDs and are then sent to a variety of radio

stations throughout the French-speaking world, especially in Africa. They are aired by local stations in Madagascar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo Brazzaville, Rwanda, Burundi, Cameroon, Benin, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Chad, Republic of central Africa. They reach large portions of the African continent via SW and satellite broadcasts. These programmes also run on a few stations in large cities of France as well as in Quebec and Haiti. Besides producing radio-programmes, RFL sends Bibles in French and Christian literature to listeners for the sake of their edification in the Christian faith. From time to time, Rev Kayayan visits young Christian communities in Africa, bringing them Reformed teachings as well as brotherly exhortations and encouragement.

The text of all these programmes as well as additional information about the mission and vision of RFL, its creedal statement, its source of income and way of operating, along with the names of the radio stations airing RFL's programmes, are all available on RFL's website: www.foi-vie.org.za. We have also produced a short video on DVD to explain the vision and mission of our radio and literature ministry in French. It is available upon request."

As NZ Reformed folk we are also aware of the mission work undertaken by Rev Bill Berends in Nigeria in the 1970s and 80s. Keep praying for this nation where the influence of Islam is growing, and moving further South. In many African countries Reformed churches from Europe, America and Asia (Korea) are having a faithful input. ICRC regional conferences are also held there.

Cis also for CAPE COLONY where in the middle of the 17th century Jan van Riebeeck arrived to establish a port of call for the ships of the East India Company (VOC). When the area became more settled many French Huguenots found a refuge and a new homeland, and again the Reformed witness spread, also with settlers from the Netherlands.





A few centuries later a Presbyterian, a Scotsman named Andrew Murray, made a strong impact in South Africa.

C is also for the CZECH REPUBLIC, in earlier days known as Bohemia and Moravia, in Central Europe. There, over 100 years before the birth of Martin Luther, Jan Hus was born. He was one of the early lights of the Reformation along with John Wycliffe in England. Hus sought to bring the church back to the Scriptures, and took a bold stand that took his life. He was burned as a martyr in 1415. But the light began to shine in Bohemia, and even though the Roman Catholic Church recovered much lost ground, there is again a Reformed witness in that land. I had the privilege to preach there in the fledgling Reformed Church in Prague in 2005. The OPC (Orthodox Presbyterian Church) is having a missionary family there, and they are of Czech origin!



Jan Hus

C is also for CENTRAL ASIA. The Central Asian republics are strongholds of the Muslim faith, but in one of them, notably **Uzbekistan**, Reformed witness entered through the least expected

channel. Unknown to himself, Joseph Stalin was God's instrument (just like, in a sense, Cyrus of Persia was), in bringing a large group of Koreans into the country. During the second World War he considered that the Korean population living on the Pacific Coast of Siberia could pose a threat, and so he brought about a mass deportation to Uzbekistan. Among the thousands of Koreans were Presbyterians who took their Reformed faith with them into exile. In later years The Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea sent more missionaries there, and also to the other republics, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan.

D is for DUNDEE in Scotland. Well-known and much-loved Presbyterian minister in St Peter's church Dundee, Robert Murray McCheyne, was assigned along with others to investigate mission work among the **Jews...** a Presbyterian/Reformed outreach. His was an exceedingly beautiful life for the Lord, despite its brevity of 29 years. May such a *shining* Reformed witness be ours as well! Mission work ensuing from this "investigation" first began among the Jews in Budapest, Hungary, in the mid-nineteenth century.

E is for ESPAÑA, the local name for Spain. The European Reformation started well in Spain, and soon a Bible translation appeared, as well as a copy of Calvin's Institutes. Then came the Inquisition and the consequent persecution virtually wiped out the Reformed witness. In 1868 there was a second reformation, and finally in 1992 the state recognised the Reformed churches in Spain.

E is also for EGYPT, ERITREA and ETHIOPIA, three countries in northern Africa, where the gospel came in the first century. The Reformed witness came through in the 19th and 20th century. The church there suffers from a great deal of persecution. Representatives of the Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church and the Mehrete Yesus (Compassion of Jesus) Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Eritrea, addressed our Pretoria assembly of the ICRC. The OPC has been actively in assisting the churches of Eritrea and Ethiopia.

F is for FAR EAST, that includes such countries as **China, Korea, Japan**, etc. At first the Gospel followed the Silk Road into **China**. In AD 635, during the time of the T'ang dynasty, a Syr-

ian missionary by the name of Alopen, came to Xian, the old capital of China. There is still a memorial of that visit. From there the gospel spread north to Mongolia, even affecting the household of Genghis Khan. Interestingly, for over 2000 years Jewish people seem to have been living in China, where they have been known as "the people who do not eat the sinew of the hip". Reformed witness was brought first to Formosa (Taiwan) by Dutch sailors. At a later time Presbyterian and Reformed missionaries arrived in China. The martyrdom of John and Betty Stam is well-known, also the mission work of Eric Liddell of "Chariots of Fire" fame. On behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, the Rev C.W. Oppelaar was sent to Taiwan in the 1960's, and again in the seventies and eighties. You may still remember Stephen Feng who was supported in his studies at the RTC. At present the Korean churches and also the OPC have a Reformed witness there. In recent years the Chinese translation of works of Luther and Calvin have actually been published in China.

Korea received the gospel, first rejecting it, and then receiving it with open arms, especially since the great revival in 1911 which started in Pyongyang. Presbyterian missions grew through the implementing of the so-called Nevius method (self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating). The name of OPC missionary Bruce Hunt stands out. The Kosin Presbyterian Church (member church of the ICRC) stood up to the pressure of emperor-worship during the Second World War, and grew vigorously. They sent missionaries to numerous countries, well over 300, to all parts of the world, with a clear Reformed emphasis. What is the secret of such a growing and mission-minded church? One thing, at least, stands out: Presbyterian Christians are committed to coming together for prayer *at 5am every week-day morning*. We can learn a few things from the church in Asia!

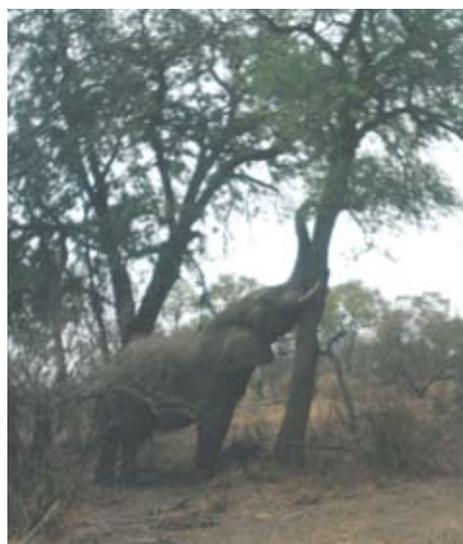
Japan was slow to open up for the gospel, but a consistent Reformed witness there has been blessed. In 1960 a Japanese student was sent to Geelong. I vividly remember Hoshi San. Japan is a difficult field, but the persistent outreach of the church has been blessed.

G is for GUATEMALA, in **Latin America**. There is growing Reformed witness through the Presbyterian Church in that land, and missionaries of the Free

Reformed Churches of North America have also been labouring there for some time. Many other countries in Latin America have seen an active Reformed witness. For almost 100 years the Free Church of Scotland has been proclaiming the good news in Peru, later they came to Columbia. The OPC has had a witness in the Caribbean area, and in Surinam, as well as the Dutch. In Uruguay and Argentina, and also in Venezuela Reformed churches are found.

His for HUNGARY, where the Reformed faith was confessed in the early years of the Reformation, and from where it spread to other East European countries (e.g. Balkan, Slovakia, Ukraine, etc). The Hungarian Reformed Church is one of the few Reformed churches where the government of the church became "Episcopal", i.e. led by bishops. At the most recent ICRC regional meeting in Europe, a wide variety of Eastern European countries were represented, even from the former Soviet Union. Most likely the northernmost Reformed witness is found in Norilsk, Russia/Siberia, within the Arctic Circle (Look it up!). There, a missionary family works on behalf of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Also from Eastern Europe hailed the well-known Polish-born John a Lasco (1499-1560). He was converted in the Netherlands, and sent to London to minister to a refugee congregation of Dutch and French Reformed Christians. He stayed there until the persecution by Queen Mary "chased him away". There

Evangelism, is no push-over!



are many Hungarian Reformed Churches throughout the world. Apart from countries in the Balkan region, they spread to North and South America and Australia. *Oh! to be hung(a)ry for the Word, for worship and for witness!*

Is for INDIA. This amazing continent of over one billion people with its racial, ethnic and religious diversity has had a gospel witness for almost 2000 years. According to tradition the apostle Thomas went to India. A powerful outbreak of missions began with the work of William Carey at the end of the 18th century. Reformed missions started about 100 years



One of Myanmar's popular images

later when Presbyterian missionaries arrived from Scotland. There are several ICRC member-churches in India, and others may also join the ICRC during this year. Neighbouring Myanmar (Burma) has many small Reformed denominations, in fact, more than ten. Both countries have poor and persecuted churches, and look to big sisters for help in Word and deed! And prayers too!

Nis for NORTH KOREA. This country which received the gospel when still united with South Korea, has since the partition after the Korean War (1950's) become more and more isolated and oppressed. Recently a young man escaped from North Korea to China, and was converted there. Now he wants to go back and bring the good news! It is a needy place, both in terms of daily bread and the Bread of life. And yes, there is a Reformed witness in that land too!

Pis for PAKISTAN where the ARP (Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, USA) has been having a Reformed witness for many, many years.

That is also where our own Frank van Dalen served with his wife Emily and family in the last part of the 20th century. No doubt many folk will remember Kamran Nazir who studied in Geelong and spent some time in New Zealand as well. *Pray for this land where Christians suffer hardship and persecution.*

Pis also for PNG. Before the RCNZ team arrived in Papua New Guinea there was already a Reformed witness in that country, but we are grateful to be part of it now. P also reminds us of the Pacific and its tiny island nation of Niue. Niueans in Auckland have had a

Reformed witness since 1976. Further, P stirs memories of the work and witness of Alex and Renona Munro in the Philippines, a work in which we also supported them. And should we forget Janice Reid's start in her radio work, also in the Philippines? Give thanks for God's enabling!

Wis for WHERE ELSE? It is important for us to find out where else the Reformed message needs to be brought.

Zis for ZAT (that), Zat's you and I, and where you and I live, to be a Reformed witness! Oh, yes, there's also Zimbabwe where the Rev Willem Pieters came from to shed some Reformed witness in New Zealand. But how about us? Are we shining as lights in a dark world?

To be sure there is a Reformed witness world-wide, but it is only a small percentage of the total gospel witness. How **visible** and **vocal** is it where you are?

John Goris

Missions abroad (3)

The OMB and missions

By Rev. Peter Kloosterman

At the 2008 Synod in Hastings I was appointed chairman of the Overseas Mission Board. I have been asked to write about the role of the OMB and the mission work of the RCNZ. I must say that I am grateful for the opportunity to write in *Faith and Focus*. I am the chairman but the board is composed of many able people and they have made the chairmanship manageable. Allow me to introduce you to the board members. The members are mainly drawn from the Wellington Presbytery so that meetings can be held regularly and without extensive travel and expense. They are: the Rev. J. Goris from Wellington; Messrs. Henk Velvis and John Verbokkem from Hastings; Mr John Koolaard and Prof. Anton Meister from Palmerston North; and Mr Derek and Mrs Rosalind Cressy, Mr John Kloeg, Mrs Elise Stolte and I from Masterton. John Kloeg serves as Clerk, Elise Stolte as Treasurer, and Rosalind Cressy as Administrative Assistant. There is a liaison from each of the other presbyteries: Mr Ed Havelaar from Christchurch and the Rev. DJ van Garderen from Auckland. They meet with the entire OMB at least once a year and are informed of decisions and discussions via the minutes and other correspondence. When there are significant issues to be addressed, they may also be asked to be present at the meetings.

Synodical mandate

The Board is appointed "to act on the Synod's behalf in supervising and regulating the mission work of the RCNZ, particularly by carrying out synodical decisions pertaining to overseas missions." Its tasks include coordinating the sending and supporting of missionaries and promoting missions. The OMB tries to fulfil its mandate in the service of the churches. The OMB desires to encourage the congregations to fulfil their mission calling from the Lord. It is the churches that are given the task of the Lord's calling to "Go and make

disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you..." (Mt. 28:19, 20).

Imagine the relationship of the OMB to the churches and missionaries to be like a generator (the local church) and a spotlight (the work of missions) to shine the Gospel in dark places. The Lord has endowed the church with the authority and, therefore, the power to send missionaries. The missionaries are the ones commissioned with the gospel to preach the truth of the work of Jesus Christ. They

the issues that are faced when engaging in missions.

Word and deed ministries?

As with every church and mission agency there is an abiding tension between word and deed ministries. The OMB is aware of this as it seeks to fulfil its mandate. This is nothing new. This tension has existed throughout the history of the church. I am reading *Te Wiremu: A Biography of Henry Williams* by Lawrence M. Rogers. In this book Rogers indicates that there was a difference in approach between Samuel Marsden and Henry Williams at

“As with every church and mission agency there is an abiding tension between word and deed ministries.”

are the spotlights. The OMB's task is to help make that connection between the lights and the power source. Now this is an oversimplification as illustrations go. I recognise that the role of sending missionaries isn't as easy as finding one missionary and getting him connected with a church. There is much that needs to take place with both the churches and the missionaries. Lights need to be placed well for effective lighting. Bulbs rattle loose and burn out. Generators need petrol and maintenance. Alternative power sources are offered. There are numerous fields and opportunities and a finite amount of resources. Multiple extension cords could be plugged in. How do you know you have the right one? Which one will truly and most brightly shine the light of the gospel? The ease of travel and global news in the endless stream of information only increase awareness of the needs and the opportunities. These are some of

this very point, though in their day it was the tension between what is called civilising and Christianising. Marsden was the first Christian missionary to set foot in New Zealand, as such he was also the superintendent of the mission work. He set the direction and placed the people in their positions. Thus he sought to develop settlements in which the Maori could be "civilised" and thereby introduced to the teaching of the gospel. For Marsden the "deed" became an avenue for the "word." When Henry Williams arrived he took a different approach. In 1826 he wrote to the Committee of Missionaries and asked that he be given the charge of the mission work in New Zealand which would allow him to initiate action and change policies. Williams sought to bring the gospel to the Maori people and help them to apply it in their civilisation. Thus, for Williams, "word" preceded "deed," or in the terms of their day, Christianising

preceded civilising. However, Williams didn't exempt himself from opportunities to address the needs of civilisation. Rogers recounts Williams's great influence in New Zealand precisely because he was involved in the daily life of the Maori. He sought to bring the claims of God's word for justice and mercy to bear upon the Maori. This is the universal claim of the Almighty God. This difference between the approach of Williams and Marsden illustrates the tension that exists between word and deed ministry.

Biblical truth is needed

We must be careful in the 21st century that we not think we have removed ourselves from this struggle. The Rev. John Rogers has written in previous articles in *Faith and Focus* about the effect of handouts on the work of the Lord in Uganda. The flash buildings and high living of NGOs compared with the situation of impoverished people makes the help they offer very attractive. This breeds a culture of dependence. It

symptoms, however, will differ and healing will take different lengths of time. This calls for wisdom and patience. A medical doctor told me that the amount of morphine you administer to someone in great pain would be lethal if it were administered to someone not in pain. Isn't that amazing? God has made our bodies able to handle something lethal when they are broken, but not when they are healthy. This is important for us to see on the mission field. There are matters that would be lethal in healthy context, but might be a means of relief in a broken context. Does this mean we have different views of sin or the gospel on the mission field than at home? Not for a minute. But it means that we must address sin with the gospel and allow the work of Christ to be the only comfort for body and soul.

Partnerships with indigenous churches are beneficial for maintaining the priority of gospel proclamation in the work of missions. I am in favour of encouraging and allowing the local church to do as

“Our goal should not be duplicating the RCNZ in PNG.”

is easy for the church to mimic this because of the results that flow from this method. As we work on the gospel front from the wealthy West, we must avoid the temptation to address spiritual problems with money, material and even educational assistance rather than the substance of biblical truth via the preaching of the gospel. It is the truth that sets free. It is this same truth which helps keep the tension between word and deed in balance. This is not always an easy tension to deal with. It is often a question of priority. It is keeping the gospel centralised that makes room for the assistance with life's hardships.

Partnerships in missions

It is important for the RCNZ to recognise the place of partnerships. Our goal shouldn't be a cultural or church duplication on a foreign field. The issues we face in NZ are different than the issues faced in PNG, Uganda or Indonesia. The root is the same. They all arise from sin. The cure is the same. The bondage to sin can only be broken by the gospel of Christ's death and resurrection. The

much as possible in terms of gospel ministry in evangelism and discipleship. We should assist the churches in becoming self-propagating, self-sustaining and self-governing. Not like we are! But like the Lord can make them. They need to learn how to apply God's word faithfully to the struggles and sins that they face. We must teach and encourage faithfulness to the supreme authority of God's Word, a love for the work of Jesus Christ, and a longing to live in a way that shows gratitude for His grace. This will take time. This means we have to encourage God's people in a mission context (and in the local context too) to grow up to be what God wants them to be. It means we have to commit ourselves to long-term service and wait for the Lord to add His blessing on the work.

No duplication

The work in PNG is an example of how a partnership can work. First of all, we must recognise that the work of the Lord that is taking place in the Reformed Church of PNG (RCPNG). Our goal as the OMB, on behalf of the RCNZ, is

to assist the Lord's work, not to do our own work there. Our goal should not be duplicating the RCNZ in PNG. We seek to serve the Lord and His people by offering the blessings we have – a strong heritage in the truth; a long history of applying God's word to church life and the life of God's people. We use these for the well-being of God's people in PNG. After all, it is Christ's church not ours that we pray would be built there. As such, it will be built on the same foundation: Jesus Christ. It will have the same blue-print: the apostolic teaching. It will be built the same way: through the work of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the gospel.

Gospel ministry has priority

This may narrow our focus in missions. It means our first question should be, "How will this work or assistance help the church of Christ fulfil her calling?" Christ is very specific in His commissioning of the disciples. The Gospel ministry has priority. This reflects the teaching of Scripture; "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rms. 10:17). From this ministry flows the care for those in need. This has implications for our working with the tension of word and deed. We need patience. We live with finite resources. Acknowledging that, we must focus our use of God-given resources on the long-term development of Christ's church, with a premium placed on preaching the word. We must maintain a hearty and healthy view of God's providence if we are to engage faithfully in the work of missions. The comfort of God's providence means patience in adversity and hopefulness for the future. Hopefulness, not because we will eliminate the problems of poverty, or enhance the living standard of God's people, but hopefulness because in the midst of poverty and a day to day subsistence God's people have the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ. That hope will change their culture. It will change their lifestyle as they reflect more and more of the work of Jesus Christ. That is the goal of missions to bear witness to the authority which has been granted to Jesus Christ.

RTC LADIES AID

If churches require more Ladies Aid stickers to go on their collection boxes please contact Gea Willemse at: minister@hamilton.rcnz.org.nz and they will be sent out to you.

Missions abroad (4)

How do you help a Church to grow to maturity?

Walter Hagoort

For this issue of *Faith in Focus*, I have been asked to write an article on the process of 'Growing the Church' as part of our mission work. What follows are my own reflections on our last five and a half years' work here in PNG, supporting the Reformed Churches of PNG. I am not trying to tell you that the process we have used is the 'only' way to work or necessarily the best way to work in all situations. Rather, I am seeking to share how we have worked and why we have worked in this particular way.

How we operate in missions is very much dictated by how we view the mission church. In some Reformed circles, the mission church is seen as an outreach of the home sending church, and that all the missionary, as well as the mission church Christians are considered members and under the authority of the church which sent the foreign missionary. A missionary working in this situation would be working like a 'father' and the local people would be treated like his children, as he has the authority and the knowledge while they are considered too young and immature to assume responsibility. Responsibility and authority is not given to the mission church until the overseas sending church is satisfied that the 'church plant' is mature enough and ready to be instituted and have its own ordained office bearers. This of course does raise a few questions:

- When is a church a church?
- Is a church only a church once it has been instituted?
- If a group of people meet together to worship and serve God, sit under the preaching of the Word, and the Sacraments are administered and discipline is applied, is that then a church?
- Does a group have to have reached a prescribed level of maturity or just display the three marks to be a church?

- If a church group is a part of the body of Christ and Christ is the head of that body, can another church come in between?
- Does the authority of the sending church extend to all those that the missionary works with and for, or just to the missionary himself?
- If there is an existing Reformed Church in a country, whose authority should the work of missionary coming to that country be under?

While there are many more questions that can be asked, you may have noticed that I view the mission church in another way. While I realise that many mission churches are not fully mature, nevertheless I regard them as 'The Church' and Christ as 'The Head' of that Church, not a foreign sending church. With this view of the local church here in PNG, we see our role here not as coming in as 'fathers' to tell the churches what to do, but more like 'brothers' to come

and work alongside them. We see our role as supporting the local church and helping them to grow to a state of maturity where they no longer need outside help. While each of us missionaries is individually under the spiritual oversight of our sending churches, all our work with the church groups here is undertaken under the authority of Reformed Churches of PNG.

One instituted church

When I talk about the Reformed Churches of PNG, I am referring to the ordained elders from the various church groups who meet together and rule the Church under Christ. At the present time, there is only one instituted church and so all the various church groups come under its authority. Each church group has its own leadership team, but all these teams work under the authority of the (at present) one church consistory or as we would call it in NZ, the session.

Each of these various church groups



are at different stages of maturity, but the methods that we use as we minister amongst them is the same. We preach, we teach and we guide or give counsel. Now, while we may use the same methods with each church group, the way we apply those methods in each group differs according to their state of maturity.

The way we use these three methods of preaching, teaching and guiding in helping the PNG churches to maturity can best be illustrated by using the example of the way we bring up our children.

Stages of maturity

The first stage is the 'baby stage', where the infant is just new, is completely dependent on you and can only drink milk. At this stage the preaching is a lot of 'milk', keeping to the basic gospel message and avoiding [complex??] doctrine and controversy. Teaching will be simple, trying to instill good habits of regular church attendance, bible study and prayer. The guidance will be very much 'hands on' as the group will not have any other real spiritual leaders.

The second stage is the 'toddler stage', where the group is making its first tentative steps but it still needs to be watched carefully. It can now eat mashed or soft food and gentle correction is given. During this stage the preaching becomes a bit more 'solid'. The teaching begins with basic Bible studies etc. and the guidance will still be strong, but some leaders may begin to start taking their 'first steps'.

We then move to the 'childhood stage', where the preaching is solid food, applying the stories of the Bible to the believers' lives. The teaching and Bible studies will contain more 'meat' and a leader or leadership team will develop

and get involved in the practical aspects of the group but spiritual things will still be under the control of the missionaries and/or consistory.

When the group is in the 'teenage stage', this is both exciting but also challenging. As the group moves from childhood to adulthood, there is much learning taking place, greater responsibility is being taken and room is allowed for them to 'learn from their experiences'. During this time the preaching is more doctrinal and also more challenging, dealing with issues and perceptions. Leaders may also be able to lead the liturgy during the services and even to preach if they have the gifts. Teaching is more of a catechetical nature and the believers are given the opportunity to become confessing members of the church. There will be obvious leadership in the church but it will be operating with guidance. Whilst this leadership would be given plenty of room to make their own decisions, care would still be taken so that 'fatal mistakes' would be avoided. Education to prepare for adulthood is also needed, so suitably gifted leaders and members are encouraged to prepare for works of service by attending the Bible College.

Running their own affairs

When the church group is at the 'young adult stage', they will be looking after their own needs and they will be of 'marriageable age and so have left their father and mother'. But as they are still lacking all the experience of full maturity, they will still seek out advice when problems arise or they need to make a major decision. Now the group is looking after its own needs, with its own trained leaders doing most of the preaching and teaching, but the missionary and

/ or consistory are still available to give advice when problems come up, or just to confirm and reassure.

The last stage is the 'full adult stage', where it is a mature church, being self governing, self funding and self propagating. The church will have its own preachers and teachers, and be looking to God for guidance. Instead of the church needing help, it is giving help. Instead of needing advice, it is giving advice. Instead of needing the help of a missionary, it is sending out its own missionaries. However, the church will not be independent, but still an integral part of a group of churches working in federative unity, and a part of the wider body of Christ. When this stage is reached the missionary should not be needed for this church group, and should have moved on to other work, with other people in another area or country.

Unless the Lord builds the house ...

I have shared with you the methods we use and the way we work as we try to help bring the RCPNG to the stage of being a mature group of churches. However all the plans we may make, and all the work we do, will count for nothing unless it is blessed by God. We serve in PNG because God called us to come and serve Him here. We depend on God to show us what He wants us to do, and how He wants us to do it. We can do nothing without the help of God who enables us. Unless the Lord blesses us and our work, we labour in vain.

May the God of all grace, continue to build His church here in PNG, and though they may have little strength, may they keep His word until the day of His appearing, for the glory and praise of His Holy Name.



Sing to the Lord

Perhaps you are asking, why we have, at this point at any rate, called our proposed new book, *Sing to the Lord*? We tossed quite a few names around, including some suggested by people outside the committee, but many we found already taken, like the straightforward *Psalter-Hymnal* and *Book of Worship*, both excellent names. We tried quite a few with the word *Praise* in them but, as often used as that is in hymnbook titles, just take a look through the Psalms and see how many of them are not praise, at least not as we generally think of it. You will soon see that such a name is one-sided to say the least. Life is often hard, and especially sometimes for the Lord's people, through persecution. As well as that, we have our own problems that we have to deal with before the Lord – in preaching, praying and singing – namely, our sin. So by some circuitous discussion, or discussions, we arrived at *Sing to the Lord*, a title for all seasons, like *Psalter-Hymnal* and *Book of Worship*.

That teaches us a lesson in Church singing right away – and worship in general, for that matter. The songs the Lord gave us directly, the Psalms, deal with life as it really is, warts, pains, feelings of being hard done by; you name it, it's all there. Excuse me; warts is a euphemism; I mean sin! We want life always to be joyful; at least we seem to want worship always to be joyful! It could hardly have been mostly joyful in Israel with that song book. With that in mind, perhaps you will be a little more aware of, and prepared to sing, the complaints and Psalms of confession, even if it is Psalm 137, for example (“How can I sing the Lord's song in a strange land?”), sometimes only in solidarity with your suffering brothers and sisters elsewhere. But then again, it may be Psalm 55, stanzas 2, 8, 9, or 14, or the whole lot of them; when your problem is with your brother or sister right next to you in the pew (“If enemies insulted me,... But it is you, my closest friend....”). Or maybe they have a problem with you? Or maybe you should weep 55:9 after the elders have had to give us some of that sad sort of news we all hate to

hear (“... we once enjoyed sweet fellowship, as to God's house we'd go.”). Or again, maybe it will be tears and joy flowing mingled down as we sing Psalm 126 with some grieving, hoping, praying parents. And then there is most of Psalm 22 which David wrote, don't forget, on some occasion when he felt “a worm and no man.” So we could conceivably sing it of and for ourselves at times. It was, of course, a Psalm Jesus sang on the way to the cross and we sing it to remind ourselves of the cost of our redemption.

We have asked you all for feedback on our work as you ‘test-drive’ it over the next eighteen months or so. My secretary tells me time's up on that.

Maybe it would be useful to explain some of our approach to this question. As I do so, I necessarily have to defend the policy to some extent, because, i) it is part of our mandate from Synod; and, ii) I don't think the question is as simply answered as some may think. (But as I speak to it, don't think I'm taking offence at your criticism. I'm not.)

First off, Synod never decided to produce a completely new Psalter. Some may disagree with that decision and that is fine, and can be debated, but that was the decision: “In respect of updating language, the committee is to leave well alone by and large and change only when necessary for meaning” (Mandate, 3.c, Synod 2002). There are many rea-

“Poetry is a piece of art and you don't have to look very far to see that updating language can do awful damage to poetry. As a basic starting point, we should respect the integrity of an artist's work.”

Oh well, still send it if you like, to him or me. We will still consider it. Perhaps some of it may be suitable as a letter to the editor or maybe send responses or questions to me directly (jrogers@clear.net.nz) and we can have a conversation about it in *Faith in Focus* over the next however long.

We have already had quite a bit of feedback and we thank all those who have given us their critiques. It has pretty well all been in very good spirit and mixed with compliments as well. A few have questioned why we have retained thees and thous and so forth in some selections, for example, Psalm 32, 51b.

sons why we have not updated language in a thorough-going way.

Poetry is a piece of art and you don't have to look very far to see that updating language can do awful damage to poetry. As a basic starting point, we should respect the integrity of an artist's work. Would anyone take a brush to Mona Lisa to drag her into the twenty-first century? We wouldn't dream of it. But people will to a hymn-writer's work: and usually people with far less talent than the original author; people who also make sure they copyright their own songs, something few of the old writers ever did, I suspect. (See the

quote from Wesley below.) They wrote for the Church.

Secondly, one of the wonderful things about the Church is that she is a very old institution. Having songs in the language they were originally written or translated into is a real expression and nice reminder of that, so long as they are understandable. Then I really feel “compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12, AV) egging me on from heaven. The Church is no Johnny-come-lately outfit that is so insecure that it must shout out its relevance with every pronoun! No, we have the confidence to be ourselves for we are part of something far greater than this poor modern – oh sorry, that was yesterday, silly me – I mean, post-modern world.

Thirdly, many old and loved hymns have been sung for years and memorised or almost memorised, and it really irks people when they are singing their favourite hymn and stumble across these what are to them annoying little, needless changes; not to mention even changing what the writer originally wanted to say. It’s an old problem, mind you. As one works his way through the hymn books, one comes across many ‘versions’ of a hymn. And I am not the only one to object. We came across the following recently on the Cyber Hymnal website. “Charles Wesley wrote over 6,000 hymns; as with most hymnists, his works were frequently altered. In the preface to the 1779 *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists*, his brother John wrote:”

I beg leave to mention a thought which has been long upon my mind, and which I should long ago have inserted in the public papers, had I not been unwilling to stir up a nest of hornets. Many gentlemen have done my brother and me (though without naming us) the honour to reprint many of our hymns. Now they are perfectly welcome to do so, provided they print them just as they are. But I desire they would not attempt to mend them, for they are really not able. None of them is able to mend either the sense or the verse. Therefore, I must beg of them these two favours: either to let them stand just as they are, to take things for better or worse, or to add the true reading in the margin, or at the bottom of the page, that we may no longer be accountable either for the nonsense or for the doggerel of other men.

I don’t feel this so strongly about the Psalms because they are versifications of a text God gave us in another language in the first place. The same applies to translations of hymns. However, since there will, for the reasons cited above, be hymns in our final book, Lord willing, still with old language, there will be nothing odd in principle about there being some Psalms with old language either. So our approach has been, if they’re well done, understandable, and better cannot be found elsewhere, we have just kept them. Therefore, as I recall, we have only changed the pronouns and old verb endings in Psalms that originally had them if we needed to change something else as well, or perhaps had to complete the Psalm. Hence, Psalms 15, 32, 99, for example, are completely unchanged. On the other hand, when we came to Psalm 48, we have the much-loved *Psalter Hymnal* 89, *Within Thy Temple, Lord*, but it only covers the last half of the Psalm. The Christian Reformed Church also liked PH.89 and wrote new stanzas 1 and 2 for their new 1987 *Psalter-Hymnal* (the Grey Book). But for some reason they still left a couple of verses in the middle of the Psalm undone. So we wrote our stanza 3 ourselves to complete the job. Of course, the new stanzas 1, 2 and 3 being new work, neither the CRC nor we wrote them in old language, so the final three stanzas, the

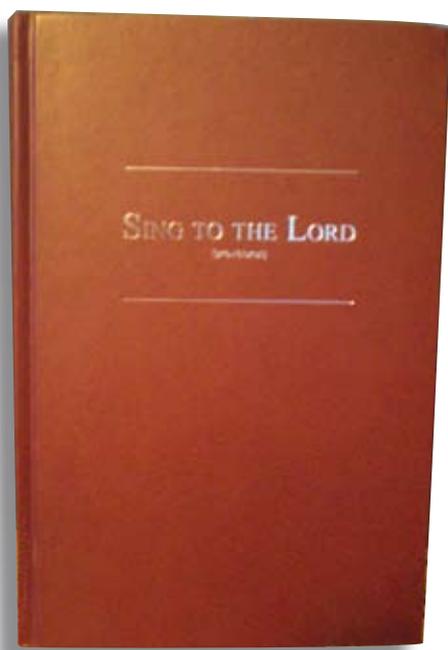
old PH.89, were also updated: *Within your temple, Lord, ...*

Jubilate hymns took the bull by horns about thirty years ago and updated the language of many hymns they put in their *Hymns for Today’s Church* (in many respects a very good book, by the way). If one is going to do such a thing at all, they have done it best. But what they did with *Lo, he comes on clouds descending*, for example (which I just finished reviewing), infuriated me, as I’m sure it would have John Wesley! The Grey Book did much better on this one, leaving it almost completely as Charles wrote it (if Charles wrote it all, as it has come down to us!). As another example, the BoW has changed the final lines of every stanza of *Who is on the Lord’s side* to say “By his call of mercy, by his sovereign grace, we are his own people, his own royal race.” I have often wondered why they did this – to make it more Calvinistic perhaps? But there is nothing un-Calvinistic about “By thy call of mercy, by thy grace divine, we are on the Lord’s side; Saviour, we are thine?” We are allowed to profess our commitment to Christ.

One brother wrote us – and I’m sure he won’t mind me quoting him to advance the conversation:

Reality is that we don’t speak that way anymore and very few people (even among older Christians) still pray that way. I’m particularly concerned for those who are new to the faith. They already have much to learn and come to terms with let alone worry about the difficult grammatical terms (verbs) that usually go with those pronouns (eg. ‘carest’ in Ps.73b and ‘holdest’ and ‘wilt’ in Ps.73c – the latter Ps could easily be updated).

True, I don’t think I’ve ever prayed in that language at all in my life. But actually, people can use this old language, even unbelievers, very well when they want to, and understand it. Very modern sixth formers – pardon, I forget myself; post-modern sixth formers – still read Shakespeare. I saw not ever so long ago the phrase from Psalm 23, “my cup overfloweth,” in a newspaper advertisement. I was reading an article in a secular newsletter just now in which was the question: “And whence cometh this outrage?” Not so long ago I phoned a wrong number and their whole answer phone message was in Elizabethan English – only, he had his cases and verb



endings all mixed up! So forgive me but I had a private chuckle. Even the term *political intercourse* or *social intercourse* one comes across from time to time. And anyway, as one still reasonably young person said to me only half a dozen years ago, "I expect the Church to be different."

So I'm not so sure it is as great a problem as is sometimes thought. Yet I might as well confess straight away that we will not be completely consistent, as even the New Psalter Hymnal and the BoW were not either. Some words almost have opposite meanings from what they

did 400 years ago. For example, *prevent* in 1 Thessalonians 4:15. We now say *precede*. Obviously words like that must be changed. And we are not very good at understanding more interesting sentence-structure anymore. So even if we will force you to think hard occasionally to understand some words or phrases at times, understanding is still our aim. So generally if we think it's well known to the old words and understandable, we have left it alone.

By the way, we have also taken up John Wesley's suggestion of using footnotes – not too many, very short,

very tidy, in two sorts of instances: i) to explain some words which may not be so well understood but which cannot be changed. For example, *publican* in *Lord, like the publican I stand*; *Lord Sabaoth* (Lord of Hosts) in *A mighty fortress*; and ii) to give references for biblical allusions in a hymn which may not be readily recognised. For example, "Thou of life the fountain art, freely let me take of thee; spring thou up within my heart, rise to all eternity" (John 4:14) in *Jesus, lover of my soul*. We trust they will prove helpful.

John Rogers

How women started the culture-war

(Part 6)

Nancy Pearcey

This series has shown how the industrial revolution broke away from home-industry to two separate spheres: home and business. We have now "progressed" into a split and broken society. Now society consists of two spheres: home/women/religion and work/men/atheism. And ne'er the twain shall meet. The solution of society has been to merge the spheres by also getting women out into the workforce leaving children as the victims. Are there more realistic solutions?

Reconstituting the home

A better course would be to challenge the trend toward emptying the home of its traditional functions. On the conceptual level, we need Christian economists willing to rethink the modern economy from the ground up, and creatively craft a biblically inspired philosophy of economics. What is the proper function of the family and of economic institutions, and how can they interrelate in ways that support rather than hinder each sphere's proper calling before the Lord?

Christians also need to challenge the "ideal-worker" standard in American corporate culture, which decrees that an employee should be available for full-time (even overtime) work without permitting his personal and family life to interfere – because he has turned all that over to a home-based spouse. The

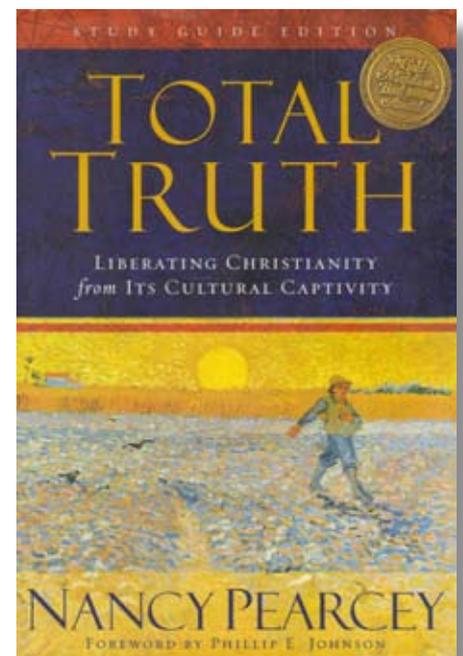
ideal-worker standard did not function well even when wives and mothers were still home-based, filling in for absent fathers. Among the many causes of the rebellious youth culture of the 1960s was a great deal of "father hunger." The ideal-worker also helped create America's rootless, mobile society because it required workers to be willing to move anywhere at any time – tearing apart extended families and stable neighborhood communities. Family life became impoverished and more difficult to sustain without that traditional network of support systems.

Christian organisations ought to be the first to debunk the ideal-worker standard as harmful to families. They should be on the forefront in offering practical alternatives for reintegrating family responsibilities with income-producing work – through such things as home-based work, part-time work positions with prorated benefits, flexible hours, and telecommuting.

Heidi Brennan of Mothers At Home, a national group headquartered in Virginia, says the single most frequent question the organisation receives from mothers around the country is, How can I earn an income and still be home with my family? Many women are finding that an effective way to combine work and family is to start a home-based business, and today women-owned small businesses are growing at a rapid pace. Home-based work has the added benefit

of providing a means for children to participate, so that parents once again fulfill the role of training their children in basic work skills and values, just as in the preindustrial household.

Nor are these suggestions just for women. One poll found that men (age 20 to 39) with young children said having time with their family was the most important issue in their jobs. A full 82 percent said a family-friendly schedule was "very important," while only 56 percent wanted more job security, 46 percent mentioned a high salary, and 27 percent mentioned status.



What about single mothers, families living in poverty, and others who have no choice but to work? Even they would benefit from measures that allow them to integrate work with raising children, instead of putting them in day care. Some groups have discovered that strategies first developed among the poorest of the poor in places like Bangladesh work equally well in America's inner cities. For example, the Women's Self-Employment Project in Chicago works with poor women – mostly single mothers – using a rotating loan system developed in Third World countries in order to support the creation of "microenterprises" based in the home. Many work-training programs offered to low-income women channel them into hotel cleaning, data entry, and other positions that offer relatively little scope for creativity or responsibility. By contrast, self-employment gives women the opportunity to develop initiative and

Yet these were all aspects of a single fundamental cleavage. "The fissure in society divided the sexes," explains Newbiggin: "the man dealt with public facts, the women with personal values." Read that sentence again and notice how succinctly it covers the split between public and private, facts and values, men and women. We can better understand secular feminism by realising that it was an attempt by women to cross this troubling chasm in order to join men in the public sphere. A better route, however, would be to find ways to close the gap itself, recovering some measure of integration of work and worship for both men and women.

Obviously, we could also raise exegetical questions about the way Scripture deals with the relations of husbands and wives, women's leadership in the church, and so on. But such questions go beyond the scope of this book. My

I greatly enjoyed becoming a mother, even homeschooling our son because I wanted to be intensely involved in his life. In addition, for most of my career, I have worked part-time and from a home office, which allows me to combine work and parenting responsibilities. Yet in my student days, unable to foresee all this, I went through an agonising dilemma – and it was this experience that caused me to begin thinking about the pressures women face when they become mothers.

Let me highlight the issue by turning it around: My husband was about to become a father for the first time, but he did not have to wrestle with fears of giving up a central source of fulfillment, and the exercise of his gifts, for a significant portion of his life. When men have families, most are able to continue working in their chosen fields (though admittedly, they often do make difficult trade-offs between family and career advancement). At the time, I confess, it struck me as decidedly unfair that women should experience such intense pressure to choose between the two major tasks of adult life – between pursuing a calling and raising the next generation.

Rachel Cusk, in her book *A Life's Work*, says many women describe becoming a mother as a "shock." Their lives are turned upside down by the constancy of a baby's demands. At the same time, they are astonished by the intensity of the love bond they form with their newborn. They feel like aliens entering a strange new world of home and childrearing.

Why does all this come as such a surprise? Because through young adulthood, most of us have been carefully primed for participation in the public world – while growing out of touch with the private world of babies and families. We probably haven't even baby-sat a neighbor's kids since we were teenagers. Our identity and sense of self-worth has been built primarily on our public persona and accomplishments, especially at work. By contrast, motherhood is still individual, personal, and private. As Cusk puts it, "In motherhood, a woman exchanges her public significance for a range of private meanings" for which she has not been prepared. Modern child-care manuals, she comments, "begin with a sort of apocalyptic scenario in which the world we know has vanished, replaced by another in whose principles we must be educated."

Here the yawning gap between public

“The practical application of Christian worldview is so important.”

to take charge of their lives. It also gives them much more flexibility in working around their family responsibilities.

At the same time, Christians must not fall into the trap of assuming that paid employment is the only thing that will give women a sense of dignity. That's a mistake secular feminists often make. Instead Christians need to challenge the prevailing ideology of success by insisting that individuals are most fulfilled when they enjoy a sense of calling or vocation – whether in paid or unpaid work. We all long for a sense that we are contributing to something larger than ourselves, to a greater good, to God's purposes in the world.

Private and personal

To summarise the historical changes we have traced, in the nineteenth century the two-realm theory of truth came to be reflected in a deep social divide. Whereas in colonial times the social order was viewed as an organic whole, by the mid-nineteenth century it had splintered into a set of separate domains. Society was segmented, says Donald Scott, into "sacred and secular, domestic and economic, masculine and feminine, private and public."

goal has been to show how the social and intellectual context shapes the very way those questions are conceived. Though we no longer live in the nineteenth century, the tension between the public and private spheres continues to have profound personal consequences, especially for women. Most women today are trained, like men, for life and work in the public sphere. As a result, they may not even have much contact with the private sphere until they have children, which can then be a difficult and even traumatic transition.

My own interest in this subject grew out of the conflicts I experienced upon becoming pregnant with my first child. As a seminary student, I was profoundly ambivalent about this pregnancy. What would having a child mean for my future? How could I have children and still grow professionally? The only way I knew to pursue my deepest interests, to fulfill my calling before the Lord, was in the world of ideas, through academic study. But having a child seemed to pose a profound threat to the possibility of continuing my studies. I felt as though I were facing a black hole of uncertainty.

To jump ahead, I want to say that

and private spheres becomes a personal issue, as women find themselves catapulted into a new world that is not only unfamiliar but also undervalued. If they are feminists, as I was when I had my first child, they may even feel guilty about taking on “traditional” female roles and responsibilities in the home. Women often face intense pressure from the outside world, including former colleagues urging them to return to the “real” world of professional work. Because of the unusually high percentage of professional women in the Washington, D.C., area where I live, there are no less than three support organisations that help mothers who want to leave the workplace, or at least cut back, while they have young children at home. The pressure is so relentless on professional women to stay in the workforce and put in long hours away from their families that women who want more time with their children need support from others who understand the strain.

Blueprint for living

Not only this topic but all the topics we have discussed up to this point have profound personal implications. These are not merely abstract intellectual matters fit for philosophers and historians to debate in the rarified atmosphere of academia. Ideas and cultural developments affect real people, shaping the way they think and live out their lives. That’s why it is crucial for us to develop a Christian worldview – not just as a set of coherent ideas but also as a blueprint for living. Believers need a roadmap for a full and consistent Christian life. We also need to understand enough of modern thought to identify the ways it blocks us



The RTC Board, Faculty and Staff rejoice that **Dr Phillip Scheepers** has formally accepted his appointment as Lecturer in Missions and co-ordinator of Church Based Theological Education.

We praise God and thank him for leading Dr Scheepers and the College to this point.

Pray for the College, and Dr Scheepers and his wife Chanel, as they prepare for him to assume this role early in the new year.

Harry Westendorp, Acting Chairman, on behalf of the Board

from living out the gospel the way God intends – both in terms of intellectual roadblocks and, as we have seen in this chapter, in terms of economic and structural changes that make it harder to live by scriptural principles. It is enormously difficult for fathers in a modern industrialised society to function as the primary parent, as Scripture calls them to – and as they did in earlier historical periods. It is likewise difficult for mothers to raise their children well, and still be faithful in honing their other gifts in a Christian calling. The distance between home and workplace, between public and private spheres, means most of us are required to specialise in either one or the other, at least for a substantial period of our lives.

The personal dimension to living out a Christian worldview typically gets

short shrift in most books on the subject, yet it is by far the most important. What ultimate benefit do we gain from investing time and effort to develop a Christian worldview, if it is only a new way to think? A mental exercise? A slick set of arguments? New ideas have limited value unless they transform the way we actually live – the day-to-day decisions we make, the way we interact with other people, the way we run our organisations. The practical application of Christian worldview is so important. We cheat ourselves terribly unless we take the final step and restructure our entire lives by the life-giving truths in God’s Word.

This article is the conclusion of the series “How women started the culture-war”, by Nancy Pearcy.

A Covenant home

The sermons on Noah reminded me that more than anything else we need to raise up our children in the promises of the Lord. We need covenant homes. No matter what education we give our children, no matter how often we attend church, no matter how much wealth we give our children, the atmosphere of our homes is essential. What is a covenant home like?

A covenant home affirms God’s promises. As parents we need to remind our children every day that they are heirs of the richest promises imaginable in Jesus Christ. Parents ought never to treat their children like other kids in the neighbourhood who do not know the Lord. No, our children are not pagans! If we allow our children to live like pagans right under our roofs we do not understand the wonderful status God has given to them. Parents need to remind their children that God’s promises are greater than our own unbelief. Do you remind your children of their rich inheritance? Do you talk to them about what their baptism means?

A covenant home encourages openness. In our homes we talk about our trials and temptations openly. As parents and children we honestly admit that living in this world is difficult and dangerous. We talk about the beauty of sexuality, not the smut. We talk about history and hair-cuts, cars and computers, roses and roasts when we wake up and go about our daily activities until we go to bed. We praise our Creator for excitement of creation and Christian culture. We read and study the Bible together after our evening meal and discuss how it applies to our lives. Do you communicate openly as a family?

A covenant home discourages legalism. Do you remember how Tedd Tripp reminded us that you can glue apples on a lousy fruit tree to make it appear fruitful? What happens then? The apples turn brown and rot. You can make hundreds of rules and you can glue all this obedience on the outside of your kids. But if you have not appealed to their hearts, the obedience is nothing but rotten. Only God’s grace can change hearts to love him and serve him. Appeal to your children’s hearts. Remind them that God has promised to win their hearts to love and serve him. Then obedience will be a joy; it will be lovely fruit from a changed heart. As parents do you encourage legalism or grace?

So what is your home like? Is it a place of covenant nurture? Nothing else is going to save our families.

Rev L de Vos

Sally Davey

The Car Conversation

There are not many places in our busy, distracting world where it is possible to enjoy a long, uninterrupted conversation with another person. No doubt you've experienced the frustration of sitting down with someone you've wanted to catch up with for some time – and there's a knock on the door – or the phone rings – or a family member bounces in to remind you of something. What you wanted was a nice, long heart-to-heart about matters of importance. Big stuff, not nitter-natter or trivia. The kind of conversation that allows you both to exchange ideas, to develop clearer understanding, or to solve significant problems, unimpeded by intrusions. You need hours, not minutes. Yet it seldom seems to happen. What can you do to make it happen?

It seems to me that we have to make a deliberate undertaking with our friend, husband or child – or we have to creatively appropriate opportunities that exist already. The former alternative might involve a long walk in the park, or even better, a hike in the mountains. Existing opportunities might include a long car trip, one you have to make anyway with the person with whom

you want to talk. Let's imagine the ways this car trip might be used to achieve our conversational purposes. With some deliberate planning your drive to a sports event with a child, your journey to a women's presbyterial in another city or your travels to a distant weekend holiday-destination with your husband could become the perfect opportunity for the kind of conversation you've dreamed about, but never managed.

Purpose

The first thing to consider is the purpose of your conversation. What exactly is it you are trying to achieve? You may have several aims in mind, depending on the situation or the person with whom you are going to travel. One might be to get to know a travelling companion well. She might be someone you've talked with briefly a few times, and with whom you sense you may have deep rapport if only you had the opportunity to talk for longer. On this car trip you hope to develop that. Another aim might be to discuss important plans that need to be made for the future with your husband. You don't often get to be alone for long; and you're conscious that the months – even the years – are racing past without some important decisions being discussed or made. How long should we work at our business? Where should we live, long-term? Is there a greater contribution

we should be making to the life of our church? And so on. Such questions need a full airing, and you cannot consider each other's thoughts properly in the 15 minutes between the alarm going off and getting up. A third aim might be simply to sit, undisturbed, with your friend and to encourage one another from the thoughts you've each been gathering as you've lived, read, prayed and walked with the Lord over recent months. This could be an exciting time of mutual edification.

Many of us also long for extended quiet time with another to try and resolve a conflict; but I suggest a long walk in the country may be a better scenario than a car trip. Difficult personal discussion may be too much for the one who is driving the car – and besides, I have just been listening in to the national debate about cell phone use and driver-distracting conversation – so most likely the car is not a good option! A quiet hike together in the tussocks may serve you much better – especially given that you can always sit down on a couple of rocks to open the Bible together and pray.

Planning

It is critically important to plan for this kind of conversation. It is potentially the most important kind of conversation you can ever have. They can be life-changing. Think of the one between the risen Lord Jesus and two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They covered around 11 kilometres that afternoon and evening; meaning hours of discussion. "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" these disciples recalled, in Luke 24:32. It is surely worth praying that the Lord will guide your hearts, minds and lips as you prepare for your drive together. Usually, you know some time in advance that this occasion is coming up, so there is opportunity to ask for God's help in thinking of the right topics, the right questions and lines of discussion. Pray for your friend, your husband, your child – for whoever is going to take this drive with you.

Then plan well. Think about it. What do you need to be talking about? What would be edifying? Are there burning questions that need to be answered, one way or another? Maybe you should



do some searching thinking before your conversation, and consider the options biblically and prayerfully before you set out. Perhaps you even need to read a book or two that helpfully applies the relevant biblical passages to your situation. Possibly you should write your thoughts out, weighing pros and cons, helping you to come to some conclusions you could then summarise and explain to your husband/friend/teenage child. If you have no particular items to discuss, but have just organised this trip to spend time with a friend, you might need to plan a few subjects of conversation. Should it be her needs or your needs? Her joys or yours? Or the struggles of someone else you may want to help together? If you have a long journey during which to talk, and your aim is simply to enjoy each other's company by means of mutual edification, think of some good spiritual subjects that are worthy of a long airing. How about prayer? Or dealing with suffering in a biblical way? Should it be the ways to glorify God in our daily work; to resist sin; to develop contentment or to love more selflessly? If you fear you are short of ideas to discuss, consider buying or borrowing a CD of a good sermon on these or similar topics. Many church web sites nowadays have their ministers' sermons downloadable in MP3 files. Having listened to someone expound and apply a relevant text, you'll then have fuel for your ongoing conversation as you drive. Teaching listened to together is often far more efficacious for your soul, given that you can then discuss it.

The one thing you need to avoid is the temptation to squander this precious time. You don't want to look back on your three-hour car trip and realize you've spent it in idle chatter, light gossip, or discussion of the weather, your clothes, your diet or your children's annoying habits. We need to redeem this time, because we live in sinful days; and our time in them is short. Our attitude should be – here's this opportunity, what is the best use we can make of it?

Be structured

There is nothing like taking aim to make sure you achieve results! It seems to me that we could all do with some disciplined habits in conversation – at least, I know I could. This especially applies to the several-hours'-long, settled-in-your-seats type of conversation. All too often we ramble on, flitting from one sub-topic to another, drifting off on tangents rather than directly

responding to our companion's point, and never returning to it properly. This may be a relaxed way to talk; but it doesn't get us to where we could be going in a properly useful interchange. It can also be quite disappointing to the person who asks a searching question. She really wants your comment; the matter is one that bothers her; but off you drift, airing your own musings rather than interacting with her question. We must stick to the point as best we can – or at least return to it. I was really impressed once during a conversation (and yes, it was in a car!) when our host and driver, a new acquaintance who was fast becoming a friend, said several times in the course of it, "Now this is a rabbit trail, but we'll get back to your point..." And he did. Rabbit trails may

reaching edifying conclusions about important topics. Rabbit trails will probably be our specialty. We may be fun, but we may also be somewhat exasperating to those "significant others" in our lives.

The second thing is that we need to be solid workmen when it comes to God's Word. If we're not carefully studying the Scriptures on a regular basis, *i.e.* daily, there's little likelihood that we're becoming skilled at understanding and applying it. We won't know where the key passages on various topics are to be found; and most likely we'll lack a clear understanding of the basic outline of Bible history, or of the major themes of Bible teaching. How, then, can we have a proper conversation that touches constantly on biblical principles if we don't have the equipment ready to hand for it?

“Opportunities for extended, intimate discussion are rare and precious. Savour them.”

be interesting – even important – but they fast become spaghetti junctions that get us lost. By all means explore them; but do remember to return to the highway!

It is equally helpful to think of your conversation as a structure, with a beginning, a middle and an end. You start off with some introductory exchanges, usually along the lines of "yes, this is important to talk about", "we must see if we can help each other on this", "let's discuss our ideas on what we could do about that" – or similar. Then you go on to unpack the possibilities together. Ultimately, nearing the end of the time you have for the subject, you come to some conclusions, or review the ones you've arrived at along the way. Doing this makes your conversation properly useful – and lastingly so.

Getting equipped

But we're never going to have this kind of conversation properly if we aren't engaged in ongoing, regular self-equipping for it. If our overall approach to life as a believer isn't purposeful and orderly, we'll be muddled and haphazard when it comes to conversation. We'll just ramble on, saying whatever occurs to us next, without ever really solving problems or

Finally, we need to read widely. To have something worthwhile to talk about, to be interesting and constructively helpful, we need to have mental equipment at the ready. An empty mind will not supply us with good conversation. So, we need to fill our minds – with reading on all the subjects the Christian needs to know about – history, current events, biblical answers to life's problems, biographies of faithful Christians, biblical worship, hymnody, prayer, education, marriage, trends in the contemporary church – anything good and informative that we can lay our hands on. But even if you feel you're the only one you know who reads much, don't despair. Try sharing what you've been reading with your friend or husband. Describe the story, relay the main arguments, take him or her into the book with you. Bring it alive for your companion. Then you can both discuss and apply it. It's almost as good as reading the book together, if you do it interestingly. You've prepared the food for thought, and you can share the meal with profit.

Opportunities for extended, intimate discussion are rare and precious. Savour them. Next time you plan ahead for a car trip, plan for your conversation as well...

Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Avondale

Is creation/evolution a side issue? Charles Darwin didn't think so! He felt that evolution and the Christian view of a creator were totally incompatible, because he clearly understood that evolution damaged the very gospel Christ. But why does it? See a world-class documentary film that explores the influences that shaped Darwin's thinking as it retraces his world-changing voyage on HMS Beagle. See *The Voyage that Shook the World* screening here at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 12 August. Supper will be served afterwards. Could everyone bring a plate please. There will be a gold coin collection to help offset CMI's costs.

Search for a minister. On Wednesday, Session had the privilege of meeting André Scheepers. It was an opportunity for sharing our respective visions for the work of the church and on particular, the challenges in front of us in Avondale. André is busy preparing for his presbytery exam on Friday 18 September. We have also re-established correspondence with Rev. Peter Moelker. Rev. Moelker had earlier shown interest in coming to NZ. At that time, we were not ready to talk, because a call had already been extended to another candidate. Rev. Moelker's current stated supply position ends in December so he could be available after that time. Session has discussed with him a six month term in Avondale. If the Moelkers settle and the congregation supports their ministry, a call could be extended. There are many uncertainties ahead of us. At this stage, Session encourages everyone to pray for André Scheepers as he prepares for his exam and for wisdom as we consider the alternatives. A congregational meeting has been scheduled for Sunday 20 September after the morning service, at which stage we can expect to have more information. We can have confidence that the Lord of the Church knows our needs and that He will lead us to a right decision.

Bucklands Beach

From Session. Following the vote taken at last Sunday's congregational meeting, the session has written to the Synodical Committee dealing with students for ministry indicating that we are prepared to consider having a vicar serving here in Bucklands Beach during 2010. The committee will advise us of their decision in due course.

Christchurch

Pastoral. At the time of writing, Dr. Keith Warren and his wife from Redlands, Queensland have kindly offered to come and serve our congregation in a short-term ministry during November and December.

Pastoral. The elders met with Larissa Storm, and are happy to announce that she wishes to publicly profess her faith. D.V. this will take place on the morning of Sunday 23 August. We thank God for the way He has worked in Larissa's life and brought her to this decision. Please remember and give thanks for her in your prayers.

Notes from Session Meeting. Session approved the request of Rev Keith Warren to run a "Marriage enrichment Course" during his stay. This would be a 7-week course beginning late Oct. Some of our mid week meetings may need to be put on hold to accommodate this worthwhile course for both young and old.

Dovedale

Prayer of Confession – To be used during the morning service. Almighty and most merciful Father, We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou them, O God, who confess their faults. Restore thou them that are penitent; According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.

Session Report. The Elders informed the Deacons that after a meeting with Sr. Tammy Braam, we had gladly agreed to her request to publicly profess her faith on Sunday, Sept. 6th.

Dunedin

Pastoral Notes. We are thankful to God that he called to glory our dear sister, Mary Henderson, on Tuesday. Her suffering is over and she is with her Lord where she so longed to be. Mrs Henderson was in her 93rd year and had suffered from Parkinson's Disease with increasing severity. Although she had been physically unable to worship with us in the last few years, the strength of her faith and witness was an encouragement to all who knew her.

Pastoral Notes. On Sunday 6 September, the congregations in Dunedin and Oamaru will be asked to vote on a proposal, recommended by session, which involves calling Rev Bruce Hoyt to live and work in Oamaru as their minister. Such a move would leave the Dunedin pulpit yet to be filled and gives rise to a number of questions as to how such a placement would work in practice. Those details which were apparent to session have been discussed and resolved. As it is not practical to go into all the particulars here, a handout will be available to members after the morning service today. Please see one of the elders if, after reading the handout, you have any questions or concerns.

The elders were very pleasantly surprised to receive an e-mail from Rev Martin Geluk last Saturday offering a return visit for another short-term ministry. The offer was eagerly accepted and we now look forward to having Martin and Corry with us for the months of October and November.

Hamilton

Pastoral and matters for prayer. Congratulations to Ian and Diana Julian with the birth of a son to Hayley on Friday a week back.

Hastings

Marriage seminar. David and Jenny Waldron are planning to hold a marriage seminar on Friday 4th September at 7:30p.m. at the church property. All married couples and interested indi-

viduals are invited to attend, listen and participate in exploring some practical aspects of keeping marriage strong and healthy.

Hukanui

Notices. Congratulations to Auk and Bauk ter Veen who celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary on Wednesday.

Gerrit Lagas. Last Tuesday the Lord suddenly took home Gerrit Lagas from Tokoroa. The Lagas' were longtime members of the Reformed Church of Tokoroa and then of Hamilton till they joined a local church in Tokoroa some years ago. Gerrit was 78 years old. The funeral service will be held at the Apostolic Church, cnr Maraetai Rd and Thompson St, Tokoroa, at 11 am on Tuesday 4th August. The burial will take place immediately after the service at the Tokoroa cemetery. After the burial there will be opportunity to see the family at the Apostolic Church. Please remember his wife Janny and his children and grandchildren at this time of loss though there is also joy and thankfulness for a husband, father and grandfather who has gone home to the Lord.

Masterton

Dear congregation – With great thankfulness to the Lord we announce the birth of Evan Hans Veenendaal, born July 18 at Wairarapa Hospital. We are ever grateful for the blessing that all of you have been for us thus far. Thank you for your wonderful care by sending meals and gifts. Mother and child have made it past the swine flu and are doing very well. Mostly thank you for your prayers which have again been answered. In Christ, Lindsey, Anjana, Sonya, Ayesha, Nadia, and Evan.

Palmerston North

Announcements. Our condolences to Lyn Kroon and to Derek and Wendy at the passing away of Bill last Sunday. Thanks to all those who came to support Lyn the family at Bill's funeral on Thursday. May we all know and experience comfort and strength in our Lord.

Pukekohe

This morning we have the privilege of seeing Petra Kerkhoven readmitted to the fellowship of the church. It is appropriate that we do this at a Lord's Supper service so she can take part in this means of grace once again. We rejoice in God's mercy and grace to you and pray that you will be encouraged and comforted

in your faith in this church.

Next Sunday Luke and Natalie Bylsma, Marc Bylsma, Jeremy Kaijser and Katrina Huysdens will all profess their faith in the Lord and join this church as communicant members. Blair Bylsma will also be baptised. We look forward to all this with joy! All are invited to a shared lunch at John and Miriam Kaijser's after the service next Sunday to celebrate this occasion.

It is with joy that we announce the remarriage of Jan and Petra Kerkhoven. If there are no lawful objections this will take place at 2.30 pm on Saturday 19th of September at the Pukekohe Reformed Church and will be led by Rev John Haverland. Please do not bring any presents – your presence on the day is enough. Would everyone please bring a contribution to an afternoon tea that will be held in the church lounge after the wedding service. All are welcome.

Silverstream

Congregational Meeting: Session invites members to attend a congregational EGM, in the school building on the Silverstream site, at 7.45 pm on Wednesday, August 12. The purpose of the meeting is 3-fold. There is to be a combined Bible study with the topic: "Humility"; discussion of a possible application for a vicar; and a request from the OMB for additional funds for PNG – our suggested contribution being \$5,000. The vicar in question is Iwan Baumann. Iwan was born in the Ukraine, but settled in the States, where he studied at Westminster Theological Seminary (West). He has done several internships in the United Reformed Church, and comes highly recommended. He is interested in serving in the RCNZ. The proposal is subject to further investigation by the Session as to Iwan's spiritual and academic qualifications, as well as the financial details.

Wellington

From the Pastor. The season of Ramadan begins this week. Traditionally Christians have used this time as a reminder to pray for Muslims, that they might discover the truth about Jesus. Perhaps you can make this a regular prayer during the next few weeks.

From the Pastor. At our men's study this past week, in talking about the church as a family one of the things we talked about was the importance of being able to pray for one another. Often it seem

that we could benefit from prayer, but nobody knows. Either that, or we assume that someone else will let the pastor or the elders know that we are unwell, have lost our job, are going overseas, have a challenging situation coming up, or whatever it might be. But often the elders and I are the last to know, because it turns out that nobody has told us! It would be a good thing if we could share both our joys and hardships more easily, as that will help us build a stronger church family. So next time, please let us know so that we can pray for you! You can either speak to me or to any of the other elders, or else email your prayer request to prayer@wellington.rcnz.org.nz (which comes through just to me).

Short Report of the Auckland Presbytery Meeting held on 7th August, 2009

The meeting was opened with devotions led by Elder Jacob Ploeg of Avondale and the singing of Ps.87 from *Sing to the Lord*. The Rev. Michael Willemse was in the chair.

The main item of business was a review of our own procedures at the meeting of 16th April, 2009, when the Presbytery concurred with the decision of the Mangere elders to de-institute the[eir] congregation. This review was prompted by four letters to the Presbytery expressing concern about various aspects of the decisions of both the Mangere elders and the Presbytery. The letters were not properly in the form of appeals (which, if they were, would then have to be directed to Synod;) and two of them were from non-members of the Reformed Churches. The best we felt could be done was at least engage in some self-evaluation. The general conclusion was that at one point the Mangere Session should have gone more slowly and communicated better with the congregation; and further, that the Presbytery could also have slowed the process down by offering extra help for a period of time. This may have alleviated the concerns a few have had about how the decisions were arrived at but, in the Presbytery's view, it would not have affected the outcome.

Other matters we discussed: the question of pastoring our covenant youth especially when they begin to drift away (a future training day topic); ensuring spiritual oversight of various camps conducted under the auspices of our churches; and the receiving of Church Visitation Reports for the North Shore and Avondale.

Hamilton was then asked the questions of Article 47 of the Church Order as a result of which the following may be noted: currently members of Aber-

deen serve on the boards of all three Christian Schools in Hamilton (which schools are given some financial support through special offerings); and the church continues to operate a Christian kindergarten from the church property. The congregation supports Janice Reid in her radio mission work in Indonesia and Andrew Dickson doing diaconal missionary work in Uganda. Andrew has been working without a stipend while his suitability for this work was assessed. A review process is currently underway. The

Orthodox Presbyterian Uganda Mission wish to keep Andrew on the field, so an arrangement for permanent placement for Andrew is being worked out. Financial support from OMB and other RCNZ churches, as well as from OPC's Committee of Foreign Missions is being sought. A recent initiative within the congregation is to build up fellowship within elders' districts through regular fellowship lunches. There is a good spirit of unity in the congregation.

John Rogers (reporter)



CBI NEW ZEALAND – JUNE 2009

We are thankful to the Lord that He continues to build up and expand the ministry of Crossway Bible Institute (CBI) in New Zealand prisons.

April was a busy month as we organized our trip to the South Island. Anne and I meet with all the instructors at least once a year. Much of the work in CBI is done via correspondence, so it is important to meet with the instructors regularly to encourage them in their work and to share a time of mutual feedback on the ministry; as well as to deal with issues or concerns. Instructors live throughout NZ hence the meetings are co-ordinated in different areas. Sometimes there is more than one meeting in an area.

We also strive to meet with the chaplains in 16 of the prisons throughout NZ at least once every two years, but more often where possible. In this way we hope to bring CBI to the attention of the chaplains, seeking their active support to encourage the prisoners in the study of God's Word. We also do this by presenting regular (at least annual) reports to

the chaplains, letting them know which prisoners are doing CBI, which course they are doing, and how often they are sending in their lessons. This gives the chaplains a good overview of who is doing CBI courses, and enables them to have some contact with these prisoners and encourage them in their faith.

In May I was able to train people who are interested in becoming instructors in Christchurch, Ashburton and Dunedin. These sessions are normally around 3 hours. We also held meetings with current instructors in Christchurch and Dunedin. It was a very encouraging time as we could share from the lessons that had been marked the power of the Lord at work in the prisons.

I was also very thankful to meet with the chaplain(s) at Christchurch Men's Prison, Christchurch Women's prison and Otago Corrections Facility. I thank them for taking the time from their busy schedules to meet with us.

There was also an instructor training session held in Wellington and another in June in Hastings. We now look to organise our next set of meetings in the Wanganui/Palmerston North areas.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who support CBI in various ways. This only goes to show that this ministry is very much a team effort. So thank you to those who help with the administration, to those who uphold us in prayers, to those who contribute financially and to the instructors who faithfully mark the lessons and write their letters of encouragement to the students. Thank you.

I would like to share the following words of thanks received from CBI students in the last few months. Included are also some comments from students as they share their experiences of the Lord at work in their lives.

Hi CBI, Thank you for your letter. I am very surprised to find I've come to the end of this study (GTB) as it's only been about 8 months and wow! I've had an awesome time with these teachings. I'd like to continue on with CBI because your support is so inspirational and I always look forward to hearing from you all. Can you please pass on my deepest gratitude to the instructors for their wonderful letters to me. I am so lifted by their words. Thank you for all your support and kind words. May God bless you.

Dear CBI, Thank you for your support and warm encouraging letters. I am on trial for my charge next week and am spending more time than I would like to in my own head at present. Realizing that our Father works for our own good and seeing prison as my own belly of the whale it could well be that God's will may be for me to spend more time here in prison than I want to. So I accept that the outcome will be our Father's guiding hand helping me to strengthen my own path in following Him. Whatever the outcome God's will be done. Once again thank you CBI.

Dear CBI since my return from where I was sentenced I have been feeling down and have felt estranged from the Lord. All my prayers were not answered. I suppose He has a purpose for this occurring but I'm at a loss as to what it could be, as it seems to me more harm was caused. I know the Lord Jesus was accused and tried falsely and I take great comfort in that. I find myself falling back into sinful thinking, actions, speaking angry, resentful and unclean words because I feel deserted, unheard and alone. This is not good. Am I being tested? How do I strengthen my love and faith for the Lord? Two weeks later now. I feel much better and not alone as I once did. He helps me in subtle

but powerful ways and I of course feel indebted. I guess as I see it, the further down I felt the closer He got.

A question in the lesson asks: What benefit do you personally receive from studying the Bible? "Just knowing that when I read His Word all those unnecessary thoughts really are shown as unnecessary. Reading the Word opens my mind to the truth of what's really necessary."

When I first came into prison I was very upset and I had asked God to get me off the hook and I would do anything for Him. When I came in jail I was angry that He didn't help me out. But when I think about it now, He didn't help me to get into trouble. If I had listened to Him in the first place I wouldn't be in here now!

Thank you for your support in the past 14 months since I've been with "Crossroads". It has made a big difference in my life and I pray that our Heavenly Father will bless you.

Just before I started this lesson (GTB 9) I had written a letter to someone who had done something to my partner. I wanted revenge. I had hatred. As I started this lesson I read the Bible passages and the Holy Spirit helped me realise it was not the way to go. It is Your right to avenge Lord. I rewrote the letter. Thank You Lord for strengthening my heart with Your words of wisdom. I was tempted to take a few tea bags from the staff room where I clean. I was stopped in my track by an overwhelming guilt. It is theft. They are not mine, and I didn't do it. I felt really good for it. Tried to explain this to another Christian. He said it was only tea bags. I said it is a sin to matter how small. It was theft. I tried to explain you can't go out and sin then ask for forgiveness knowing that it's not

right in the first place. Sin is sin in God's eyes. The Holy Spirit is really working in me. Thank You Lord for giving me the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thank You Lord Jesus for giving CBI the gift to reach out to others in need of your love. Thank you so much.

Thank you CBI. Your Course (GTB) is awesome and grounds me in daily study. Without God life is all darkness. I never want to leave His wonderful light. Thanks again and God's peace and love be upon your house of learning. God bless you all at CBI.

Thank you very much for continuing to send me these Bible study lessons and helping me to keep myself occupied throughout the days and weeks with my learning and your teaching me so very much about the Lord Jesus Christ. I really love the memory verse for the week. I find that I can learn the verse off by heart in a very short time. If I ever forget the verse I just repeat it over and over in my head and sometimes out loud when I am going about my daily chores.

Thank you CBI for this opportunity that you have given me to get closer in my walk with God. All the lessons help me heaps in my faith and in my life. I feel great and I feel free even though I might be here in prison. Thanks CBI for putting me on the right track with the Lord.

I continue to show hate to my own family due to them making a statement it would be better if I was dead. In a nut shell I've never been able to forgive and even worse my own brother tells me if I ever spoke out about the sexual abuse our father did, he would kill me.

When I was living in a bad place with my partner, drugs, alcohol, gangs we had no money, although we wanted to get away from that place. I made the

decision to just leave everything we had behind and put our faith and trust in God that there was something better for us elsewhere. We moved back home to my family. A week later we found out we were going to have a baby. The most wonderful blessing God had bestowed on us. It is through this blessing that He changed our lives around. Blessed be the Lord God.

The frustrations of being in prison are beyond comprehension. Locked away by yourself you have a long time to think about your life. Some people left alone with their thoughts are very lonely. But it depends what you do with those thoughts. Used as a spiritual journey it is such a healing, enriching, emotional, humbling, spiritual journey. If you draw nigh to Him, He will draw nigh to you. I have never been as close to God, open about God, blessed by God, faithful to God as I have been/am in here. The daily blessings I see in here, receive in here, bestowed upon not just me but my family too is also beyond man's comprehension.

Please continue to pray for:

- Those in prison
- CBI students and their families
- Chaplains
- CBI Instructors
- Ministry of CBI in the prisons and those involved with the work of CBI in NZ.

Let us give praise and thanks to our Lord for the love and grace He has shown to many in the prisons.

If you would like further information about CBI ministry you can contact us on CBI.NZ@clear.net.nz or write to Crossroad Bible Institute, P.O. Box 11005 HASTINGS 4158.

RCNZ Family Camp

The campers start to arrive just after lunch, vans loaded with children ready to hit the pool, and with parents and grand parents just glad to arrive, finally. Meeting up with old acquaintances at the registration table, saying hello to people they had never met but knowing there was a common bond ... that's how family camp begins.

For some, all things are new, for others it's the place their families have been

year after year; but for all it's a place of spiritual refreshment and growth; a place of Christian fellowship, where friendships begin and bonds grow stronger. There is time for Bible study and prayer, recreation and rest and a lot of fun; and, of course, great food!

We would like to thank Paster Kloosterman and Pastor Flinn for leading us in the morning studies and evening devotions. The primary focus of the

camp is spiritual growth in young and old, and the studies were certainly a blessing to us.

The campers got in behind the mission work in Papua New Guinea with over \$4000 dollars raised through the Sunday collections, as well as by the means of shaving some old beards, moustaches and heads!

The kids also had a good time doing sports, crafts, Bible Club, games, fish-



ing, swimming and canoeing. There is heaps to do at Finlay Park and having your friends around makes it a special week.

And, if you missed out last year that's OK because it's all happening again! ...

Lord willing, the 2009/10 camp will begin on Saturday 26 December '09 and run until Saturday 2 January '10.

Pastor John Haverland will be leading the morning studies on 'Applying our Faith' from Ephesians 4-6, with five devotions on the practical outworking of our faith in the church, relationships, marriage, the family and in the workplace.

Pastor Leo de Vos will be leading the evening devotions on 'Noah: Walking with God in an Ungodly World'. These will tie in with the morning theme, giving an Old Testament perspective made relevant for us today.

This year we will also have an exciting kids club running during the mornings as well as a babysit and an organised toddler playgroup with special things to do for the little ones.

We have the new shed to use again for the volleyball and soccer in the afternoon sun, and of course the banquet, concert evening and New Year's celebration[??].

For those of you that have never

attended a family camp before, go and talk to someone who has seen what it's like. We'd love to see you there.

We are now online! Visit www.rcnzonline.com/familycamp to register or look out for a registration form at your church soon!

