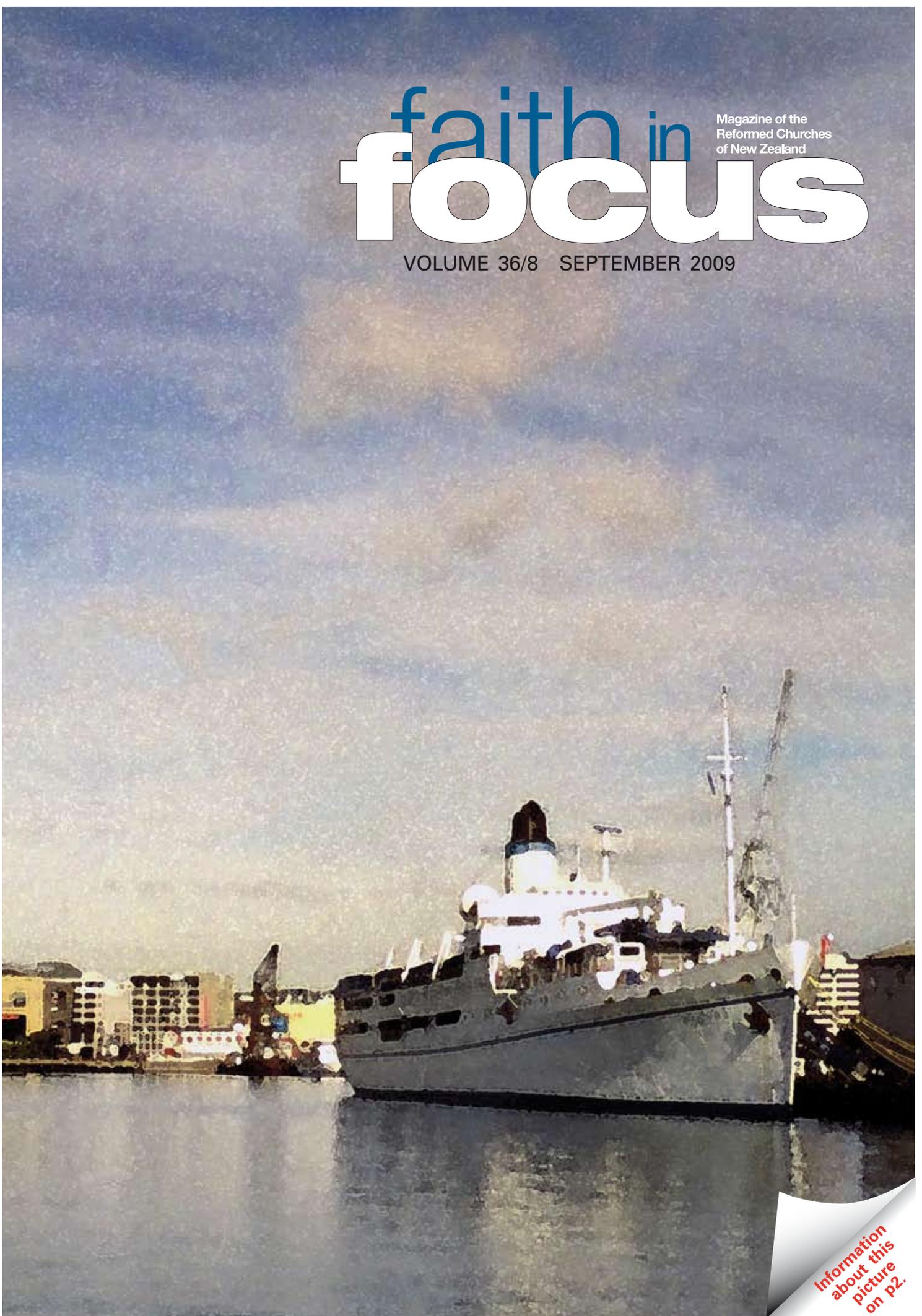


faith in focus

Magazine of the
Reformed Churches
of New Zealand

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about this
picture
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Editorial

This issue is all about missions. Not foreign missions, but missions that happen here at home in New Zealand by individual members of our churches. I suppose that some of us have a tendency to feel uncomfortable with the word missions when there is no official stamp given by the churches and sessions. No need to feel uncomfortable! Every Christian has a mission to sow the seed of the gospel.

Sowing the seed of the gospel is what the first several articles are about. We will read about that sowing through the ministries of Bible in Schools, street and beach evangelism, prison ministry and Sally Davey's article "The conversation with your hairdresser", which addresses how to talk to unbelieving acquaintances. These articles are designed to encourage and inform you, the reader. Please pray for these ministries and the people who are involved in them – that the Lord of the Harvest would be pleased to grant His blessing and encourage more workers for the harvest.

The Rev. Dr. Michael Flinn gives us insight into the recent CRCA Synod in May of this year, and we come to the second-last instalment of "How women started the culture-war" by Nancy Pearcey.

And finally, there is a letter to the editor. I am most pleased!

This is the eighth issue that I have had the privilege of editing and laying out. I hope you enjoy this issue.

I would like to acknowledge those people in the background who contribute their time and efforts to supply edifying articles, sub-editing, providing interesting images for the cover, and the National Publications Committee that works behind the scenes to make it all possible.

Photo Credits:

Cover – MV Doulos, during her visit to Wellington in July 2008, by Lukas Visagie.

Some facts about Doulos (courtesy of their website):

MV Doulos was constructed in 1914 and is currently the world's oldest active ocean-going passenger ship. She was purchased in 1977 by GBA Ships e.V. (previously known as Good Books for All), a private, non-profit, charitable organisation registered in Germany. The ship is registered in Valetta, Malta, and so the Maltese flag is displayed at the stern of the ship.

Doulos is a Greek name meaning bond servant or slave. Volunteers from over 40 countries serve on board Doulos as they seek to serve God and the nations they visit. They are mostly young people who have chosen to dedicate two years of their lives to be on board, learning to live and work together, and serving the communities in the ports visited. Additionally, the ship has a full complement of qualified crew, as required by international maritime regulations. Over 20 million visitors have been welcomed on board for tours, programmes and visits to the floating book fair. With stops in over 500 ports of call, this unique ship has visited more than 100 countries including Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australia, Europe, the Middle East and many island nations. Doulos is recognised in the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's oldest active ocean-going passenger ship.

Page 4 and 5 images supplied by Henri Pennings. Page 7 images supplied by Reuben Ploeg.

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

Missions at home (1)

Bible in Schools

Janice Reid

In a world full of sin and full of need, there's a lot of talk about missions...but even so, there's never enough. Still, the focus is often on overseas mission, and we neglect to see the mission that goes on right on our own doorstep, here in New Zealand. If "mission" is telling people about Jesus, then everything we do here in our own country, in our own town, to make Him known--all of that also constitutes "mission."

People in our Reformed churches are involved in many different types of mission; it's just that they often don't talk about it; don't promote themselves as they implement the Great Commission. God sees these quiet efforts and blesses them...but we also need to think about what is done locally, and ask ourselves how we can support it: by prayer, by encouragement, or even by personal involvement.

One type of mission done right in this country is Bible in Schools. I recently spoke with Ety Willemse from Hamilton congregation, who has been teaching Bible in Schools for several years, and still finds it a challenge. Yet she continues. Here's what Ety told me about this ministry...

Q: What exactly is Bible in Schools?

A: It's when we come into a state school and teach a 30-minute Bible lesson, once a week.

Q: Why is that necessary?

A: Many of the children in these schools have difficult home lives. Many of them know nothing about God, his Son Jesus, his friendship with people, the creation of the world, prayer...or all sorts of other topics Christians take for granted.

Q: Can you explain that a bit more?

A: I heard one story about somebody who learned from their Bible in School teacher about saying the Lord's Prayer. She liked it and used to say it, but she never understood it, until her own father died when she was about 16. I heard

another story about somebody who is grown-up now, but she remembers her primary school class more than 30 years ago, when the Bible in School teacher taught them how to pray.

Q: Sounds like Bible in Schools can have a lasting influence. That's very important.

A: Yes. I know somebody who was teaching Bible in Schools in Auckland, and they got halfway through the year before one of the children came up to them and said, "I always thought you were swearing! But now I understand that Jesus is a person."

Q: That's a very sad commentary about our society. But it does show clearly that Bible in Schools is necessary. So it's excellent that there are so many people willing to do the teaching, and give children who are outside the church community an opportunity to learn biblical truths they may never have access to, otherwise.

A: Yes, but it's really hard to find people willing to teach Bible in School.

Q: Why is that?

A: I'm not sure. But it's really hard work, and it's sometimes scary standing up in front of a whole class. Especially if there

are troublemakers! You have to believe that it's important, and then just do it.

Q: What about getting into the schools? Is that easy?

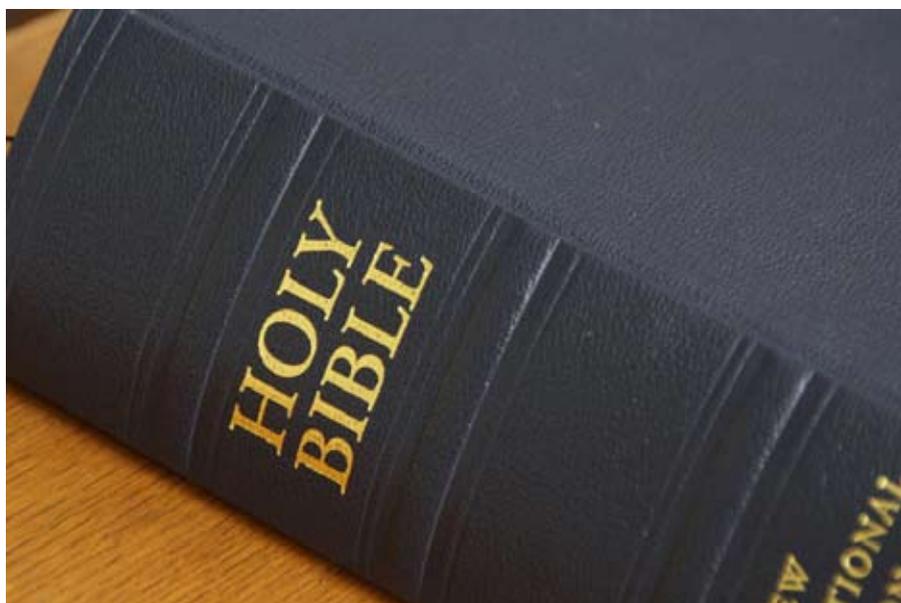
A: Not really. It's amazing that we are still allowed into the schools, but some of them still let us come. And each year it's been "will they allow us back in?"

Q: So there's a lot to pray for, and a lot to do. We need more people who are willing to teach Bible in schools. How much time does it take?

A: 30 minutes a week in class, and then there's preparation time. But the Bible in Schools people are really helpful, they hold seminars about how to teach, what you can say and what to avoid. They also give you all the material you need.

Q: Excellent. So again: we need people. We need to pray for the ministry of Bible in Schools. And we need to pray that many schools will continue allowing the teachers to come in each week and bring biblical truth to children that have no other way to hear it.

A: Yes. This is a ministry that can have a profound impact on children's lives and may be the only time they hear the gospel.



Missions at home (2)

Beach Mission

What is Beach Mission?

What is it? What's the point? Could your church run one? Could you lead a beach mission??

Let me tell you about the most challenging and rewarding event in our church calendar.

Over the last 6 years, Hukanui Reformed Church has organised a beach mission from the 26th of December to the 1st of January. For the first couple of years we went to Ohiwa in the Bay of Plenty and for the last four we have been working in Raglan.

Beach Mission is a week long event where we put on a range of activities to draw a crowd enabling us to preach

the gospel to them. Usually we run craft activities for the children to give them something interesting to do on top of their outing to the beach. We have also offered free face painting, ballooning, and colouring-in competitions. One of our team has been trained by Open Air Campaigners and is also a good illusionist; so every day we run a short presentation with a gospel message. In addition we have lolly scrambles, we provide suntan lotion (donated by the cancer society), free sausage sizzles and offer water to the holiday-makers. The holiday-makers have also been treated to free kayaking, which has been enjoyed by lots of people. In the evenings we try

to serve the community by spending an hour or so picking up litter around the beach front. Even this activity has led to a number of witnessing encounters as people ask us why we are doing this work.

Over the last couple of years we have had a creation board as well, an idea picked up from an article in *Creation* magazine. It is a large board we put up for public display with lots of interesting images and articles about why the biblical account of creation is the only logical explanation for us being here. It draws lots of viewers and interested people, and we can use the subject of creation to get into a gospel discussion.

On top of that, each year in Raglan's New Years Eve parade, we have entered a float with a distinctive Christian theme. As we go through the parade, where thousands of people line the streets, we have been able to hand out between 2,000-3,000 gospel tracts each time in just a few hours.

The work

As you can imagine it takes a reasonably large team of people to do all this work. Lots of dedicated people help with the smooth running of the whole week; from cooking dinner to cleaning the toilets, and everything in between. It can take a bit of work to keep a group of evangelists out on the beach for the day. Most of the team are also involved with gospel proclamation to some degree. The Union Church of Raglan has kindly offered us their hall, which has a functional kitchen and bathroom facilities, and also a large lawn where we can all pitch our tents for the week. On Sundays we have had the privilege of leading the service there in our own Reformed way.

Each year the mutual encouragement of Beach Mission has been tremendous to say the least. We all feel that we are on MISSION and it is very rewarding. Leading up to Beach Mission we have a number of meetings and at nearly every meeting we reflect on the reason for going. The reason we go is out of

“We do not know who will be saved but we are commanded to preach the gospel to all creatures.”



Reuben Ploeg using the creation board to witness.

obedience to the Great Commission where Jesus said "Go". We also pray for lots of opportunities to share the gospel, and that people might repent and put their trust in Jesus.

We do all of the above-mentioned activities at Beach Mission in order to be able to create opportunities to present the gospel to people. This usually occurs one to one, or sometimes one to a group. There are also the crowds that gather for the 'magic' shows, and the many thousands who are personally handed a gospel tract.

The joys

It has been wonderful to be part of a large team who are working together to present the gospel to people over a whole week. We have been seed-sowing like the farmer who went out to sow. We do not know if the seed falls on stony ground, hard ground, between thorns and thistles, or on good soil; but we do know that we have sown the seed. Often we know when someone has understood the gospel by the expression on their face. Usually people are deeply impressed with the words that are brought to them and happy that someone took the time to explain it to them.

Last year, when we had our biggest team with lots of fantastic weather and lots of people on the beach, one team member worked out some conservative figures to estimate how many people we might have reached with the gospel. He figured that we had a team of about 17 people doing frontline work, meaning engaging people with the gospel. We were at it from about 11 am till about 4 pm each day handing out tracts and



Robert Chase distributing tracts and engaging in conversation about Christ.

speaking to people. If each person, on average, would have spoken to at least 5 people a day over the 6 days (many spoke to a lot more than this!) that would make at least 510 people who would have had the gospel explained to them in an easily understood manner. On top of that we worked out that together we would have handed out at least 4000 Christian tracts that contained a clear and biblical explanation of the gospel.

A wonderful outworking of all this gospel proclamation is that some people who came along to Beach Mission intending to be helping in the background actually gained so much confidence that they themselves become involved in one to one witnessing and had some great talks with unbelievers where they were able to share Jesus with them.

People need to hear the Gospel!

Despite what a lot of people think, there is actually a real openness in many people to listen to and hear the gospel. As God's people we are under compulsion to bring the gospel to those who have not heard or may have only heard part of the message. Let's encourage each other more and more to be active in sharing our faith. I hope that as a denomination we can become known as a people that are out there where the people are, out there with the gospel of Jesus Christ in order that by all means some may be saved.

We do not know who will be saved but we are commanded to preach the gospel to all creatures. Let's spur one another on while there is still time. Time is fast running out – how many days do you have left on this earth?

If you think that this would be a great thing to do with your church then I would suggest that perhaps you join in with our Beach Mission for a year and then make one happen in your area. A positive effect of doing a whole week of witnessing is that on other occasions, such as at work, school, or with friends you will be much better equipped to present the gospel in a way that makes sense to people.

God bless you as you seek to serve Him in your community.

If I can be of any help drop me a line on h.pennings@xtra.co.nz

**Henri Pennings
Hukanui**



Balloon making inside the tent.

Missions at home (3)

Evangelism: What do you say?

Last Saturday morning 12 of us met at church with the express purpose of sharing our faith with others. Emboldened by prayer and armed with Christian tracts, gospel portions and some church fliers, we walked down the road into the main street of Avondale trying to witness to as many people as possible. It was encouraging to see some of our children, aged as young as 7 and 8yrs, enthusiastically handing out gospel tracts to passers- by whilst many in the team declared the gospel to a wide range of people. This event was in addition to our regular outreaches in Queen St. in Auckland city every 3rd Saturday night (we have been doing these for the last 3

years). Over this time some 30 members of our congregation have been involved, to some degree, in personal evangelism to strangers.

Most of us, I believe, are interested in evangelism. We understand the importance of the gospel and the terrible fate awaiting those who have not taken hold of it. One of the struggles, however, is knowing what to say and, especially, how to get started.

Getting started

Most weeks in church you probably hear the Ten Commandments read to you. These are an excellent starting point! The Heidelberg Catechism LD 1

Q&A 2 gives a great outline for a gospel conversation, summarising the things an unbeliever needs to hear, “*first, how great my sin and misery are; second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery; third how I am to thank God for such deliverance.*” Q&A 3 shows us how we come to know our misery, “*The law of God tells me.*”

The problem is that most people think they are good. The rich young ruler was convinced he was good because he thought he had kept all of the commandments. If we simply tell people that Jesus died for their sins, it is meaningless to them because they don't think they are all that bad. Jesus said that he came for the sick, and unless someone knows they are unwell they will not seek the cure. This is why the Ten Commandments are such an important tool in starting an evangelism encounter.

Romans 3:20 tells us that through the law we become conscious of sin. Paul makes it clear that he didn't understand sin till the law revealed its true nature (Rom 7:7). In fact, Galatians 3:19-25 tells us that the purpose of the law is to lead us to Christ. This is why we usually start a conversation by asking someone if they think they are a good person. Then we ask if we can test their assertion by using some of the Ten Commandments. Most people will admit fairly readily to having lied, stolen, looked with lust and that they have committed murder in their hearts!

When we do this we're not condemning sinners. John 3:18 says, “*Whoever does not believe stands condemned already...*” In fact, it is very humbling because when I have talked to real adulterers, and even a genuine killer, I must admit that I am as guilty as them in God's eyes (Mt 5:21-28).

Now, you might think that people would get quite angry at this. However, the opposite is true. Of the last 100 people I have evangelised in this way, only one or two were upset – but they were already angry before I talked to them. Romans 3:19 tells us that the law

“If people don't know that they have broken God's law, how will they know their need to escape his judgement and wrath?”



The team in action.

silences their mouths – I see this conviction occurring regularly! Most people have never heard this before and they will respect you for explaining it clearly to them.

Sadly, many modern evangelists have shied away from the ‘harsher’ teachings of the Bible and seek, instead, to emphasise only the positive aspects. However, we can’t leave out these essential bits! The law makes us thirst for righteousness! We are all sinners and we all need to confess, repent, and seek forgiveness. If people don’t know that they have broken God’s law, how will they know their need to escape his judgement and wrath?

At this point we will ask the person we are witnessing to if they think God would judge them as innocent or guilty if they stood before him. Most people are honest and realise that if God judged them according to the Ten Commandments they would be guilty. You can support this with the fact that “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” (Rom 3:23). Then we ask them where they think God should send them. Heaven or hell? This is, of course, a very sobering question but also very important. Once the person recognises what they deserve, we ask them if they know what God has done so that they don’t have to go to hell. It is only after this point that the glorious gospel message of Jesus Christ, his work and the salvation offered through him, is proclaimed. It’s amazing how few people, even those who claim to have some kind of Christian background, have ever heard this life-giving message.



Henri and Joel talking with a group about the Gospel.

Successful evangelism

So what is a successful evangelism event? Obviously, our sovereign God can use anything for his purposes regardless of our weakness. Yet, we should still try to preach the gospel as best we can. This is evangelism, when someone hears the gospel. We also trust that he who began a good work will carry it on to completion (Phil 1:6).

It can be tempting to think that filling our church or seeing someone come to the Lord is successful evangelism. However, the Bible makes it clear that as we declare God’s praises, he is the one at work through his Word. Not all who hear will believe. Many will stumble as they are destined (1 Pet 2:8). When Paul preached in Athens some believed but others rejected the gospel (Acts 17). Not even everyone who heard Jesus believed.

Worship

Gospel proclamation to strangers is an important aspect of our worship. God has made us his royal priesthood “...that you may declare the praises of him...” (1 Pet 2:9) As a father I’ve found it important to include my family as well. Our children have come into town on Saturday nights once they turn 13, and even the young ones are involved as much as they can in daytime outreaches and at events like Beach Mission.

Gospel declaration is not just for the street. 1 Peter 3:15 says we should always be ready to give an answer, and this can happen anywhere. I have explained the gospel to visitors to church. Our annual Holiday Club has been a



Ben Goris handing out tracts.

prime area for doing it. In fact, in all church activities and in all relationships we should be able to proclaim the gospel message.

Another opportunity we have in our country is the ability to evangelise people of other religions and cultures. We regularly encounter lots of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, etc. in Auckland city to whom we witness with a freedom that we could never have in their own country.

You can evangelise!

Barring disability, all Christians can declare God’s praises with only a little help and, especially, with someone to demonstrate. My friend, Henri Pennings, got me started by letting me watch him and now I try to do the same. A very encouraging moment was at NYC’09 when 84 campers came with us into Hamilton City and, despite only minimal training, were very active in evangelism.

To help you and to see others who use the Ten Commandments in their evangelism I thoroughly recommend you read *The Way Of The Master* by Ray Comfort and Kirk Cameron, and visit their website of the same name. Also recommended is Julian Batchelor’s book, *Evangelism*. My friend Matt Old from “Gospel Outreach NZ” has a very helpful website at kiwittracts.co.nz. You can also contact me at r-sploeg@paradise.net.nz.

**Reuben Ploeg
Avondale**

Missions at home (4)

Bringing the Gospel to those in prison

In 2005 the Ladies Fellowship in the Reformed Church of Silverstream invited their husbands to a meeting to hear about the work being done in the “faith-based” unit in Rimutaka Prison in Upper Hutt.

Mr Leen Groen, Unit Manager, and Mr Patrick Lewis, Programmes Manager, explained how Unit 7, the “faith-based” unit, got started.

The “faith-based” unit was the first of its kind in Australasia and would be a model for other prisons in New Zealand and Australasia. The aim of its programmes is to lower the incidence of reoffending once a prisoner is released. So far, the unit has a lower incidence of drugs, violence and antisocial behaviour. In fact there is a zero tolerance to these things. The Bible is central to the unit and its 60 prisoners and staff. The programmes are mandatory for every prisoner and are based upon scriptural

prison ministry waiting to happen.

We’re going to prison!

In August 2006, under the umbrella of Prison Fellowship New Zealand, five of us went to Rimutaka Prison to start what would hopefully be a fruitful ministry in the prison. You can imagine, the trepidation some of us felt as we walked through the confines of the prison. What a huge place! There are compounds within compounds. Go through a gate. Wait till it locks behind you. Proceed through another gate, and so on. How would we be received by the prisoners? It didn’t take too long to see that the prisoners were very willing to listen to what we were going to present, and appreciated our presence.

What was quite startling was the mix of men there. Maori, Pacific Islander, European New Zealander, Arabic, Asian and African. Some were very new to

as well as the rest of the Old Testament as the foundation for understanding the New Testament. We showed them the connections between Adam and the Fall, the New Adam and salvation, the ceremonial law and the sacrifice of Christ and how history was moving toward the great day of the Lord.

Many prisoners “appeared” to know the Gospels well, but their overall knowledge of Scripture was woeful, and our presentation of the Scriptures and the Genesis series challenged many. Some struggled, others rejoiced. One chap was an outright evolutionist and struggled greatly with the truth as presented, and argued the point on many occasions. He was a contentious opponent of Genesis and creation and quite taxing to us, I might add. These days, it seems he may have accepted the truth of Genesis, because he is in charge of the DVD library and promotes Ken Ham’s Genesis series amongst the prisoners.

During this time, we got to know quite a few of the prisoners and felt quite relaxed with them, and they with us.

Heidelberg Catechism as a Bible study?

It was decided that we would lead a Bible study using the Heidelberg Catechism as the framework for our studies. It was soon evident that the prisoners, even those of Christian backgrounds, were hearing something that they had never heard before. Many were introduced to Bible teaching that rocked the foundations of what they believed or didn’t believe. Imagine hearing about “sin and misery”, “mans deliverance” and “mans gratitude” for the first time, or that we have a natural tendency to hate God and our neighbour!! Nothing humanistic about this! Some found this hard to handle and wouldn’t come for a while afterwards, then a few months later they would turn up again.

It has been a great experience to teach these men using the HC, especially because of the personal nature of the catechism. Often it was pointed out

“Imagine hearing that we have a natural tendency to hate God and our neighbour!! Nothing humanistic about this!”

principals, while linked with Justice Department strategies and objectives. Truly unique!

We were told that these men need mentors to guide them in how to live in society, how to raise their families and how to relate to authority. They need mentors that will be an example for them to follow. As members of the Reformed Church we would be very welcome to come and talk to the prisoners, lead Bible studies or even just teach them everyday practical things which would help them to “make it” back in society. It was evident – here was a

the gospel. Others actually came from Christian homes at one time! One of the prisoners was an Afrikaner who had been raised in the Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa and who had attended a Christian school.

What to do?

It was our intention to start off with something easy to be an ice-breaker and a good way to teach the gospel to these men. Ken Ham’s Genesis series of 12 DVDs was very helpful, and the prisoners were very receptive. We set out to show them the importance of believing Genesis

that the gospel is a matter of the heart and that it is for “me” too. We were able to have discussions on practical Christianity which again was challenging for the prisoners.

Easy believe-ism?

For many of them, it seems easy to embrace the gospel while in prison. The whole unit is buzzing with a “Christian” culture. It almost seems like a case of going with the flow. It may be true of some. Some even think they are able to prophesy after having a Bible in their hands for just one week! Imagine that! My observation is that it is possible that there are three different groups of men in Unit 7 – true converts, novices who have only heard the gospel for the first time, and those who are just along for an easier ride. Thankfully, it is not for us to judge their motives. The Lord who looks upon the hearts of men does that. Nevertheless, we are privileged to be able to bring the gospel to these men in the confines of the prison.

So how have we progressed with the Heidelberg Catechism? We are now up to the last section, which deals with the Lord’s Prayer. Even here we expect to challenge much of their thinking in regard to the modern idea/practice of prayer.

One thing that we have said to these men on quite a few occasions is that we do not apologise for anything that we teach, because what we teach comes straight from the Bible. Many a time there has been serious discussion on black and white issues, which they find difficult to comprehend, but with some further discussion in a friendly non-threatening way, we manage to make ourselves understood. Whether they finally accept it or not is not an issue. After all, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict these men about the truth of the Scriptures. But one thing is evident – when you show them from the Scriptures that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is immutable (unchangeable), and that He is the same yesterday, today and forever, there begins a deepening appreciation for what the Bible teaches. And hopefully, a desire to be more holy. In fact, we have stressed to the prisoners that to be a Christian, they need to be holy. God says “be holy for I am holy”. It is a command not an option. It is an imperative for the Christian life. After all, when they get out of prison, how will they live their lives? Will they take with them everything that they learnt

in Unit 7, or will they go back to the old ways and look up all the old friends and associates?

Personal contact

The other side of this ministry is the personal contact with the prisoners. We try to show them that to be a Christian doesn’t mean that you have to be super-holy, and that you need to have a high and lofty calling like a minister or evangelist, as some of them want to be. No, we tell them that the calling of the Christian is to serve the Lord in whatever it is that he does. Do all as unto the Lord. “Whether we eat or drink, we eat and drink unto the Lord.”

Some prisoners have problems reading, and they struggle with the language of the Bible. We try to empathise with them, because they haven’t had a good education, nor the best upbringing. Many have come from unbelieving and broken homes, have suffered abuse, and have committed some serious crimes. On the other hand, some are well-educated and from “good” homes.

Sometimes it’s surprising to find out what some of these men are incarcerated for. We don’t ask questions about

their crimes. But, when you get to know them, they may share with you what they have done, and the consequences of their actions. It’s not our place to judge them, that has already happened through the courts of the land. Among these men we have a word and deed ministry, where we try to show the compassion and love of our Saviour for those in prison, to befriend them, and to pray for them and with them.

There are others

It is a great privilege to be able to bring the gospel of our Lord to this dark place. In fact, there are prisoners in all of our prisons who need sound biblical instruction. There are men whose lives have hit rock-bottom and need to hear the “Good News”. Prison is one place where you may witness men or women transformed by the Living God through the Gospel and the gracious work of His Holy Spirit. Why not get a team together in your church, and begin a prison ministry?

To Him be all praise.

Walter Walraven

Report on the CRCA Synod

After a prayer service on Sunday 10th May, Synod 2009 of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia convened at Wonga Park on Monday 11th and ran through to Friday 15th May. Rev. John Haverland and I had the privilege of attending the synod as fraternal delegates from New Zealand. It was a special blessing for us to be able to catch up with some old friends from New Zealand and make some new acquaintances and friendships as well.

The 4-fold task

At Synod 2006, the CRCA adopted what they called “the 4-fold task”, as a way of fleshing out their expressed desire to be “a church reforming to reach the lost for Christ”. From the committee reports and from the first day of this synod, it was clear that the 4-fold task would be at the forefront of most of the discussion

and decisions. In fact, the impression we received as delegates is that this concept will have *defining* significance for the CRCA at least for the foreseeable future. So what is “the 4-fold task”? A summary follows:

- Pray
Synod 2006 decided to call on the Lord for such an outpouring of his Spirit that people will be assured of his love through his Word, seek to please the Saviour in all things, manifest the godly life and be filled with prayerful and sacrificial compassion for the lost in all the world.
- Multiply
This is the second task: to enable local churches to expand numerically, equip and nurture their members, and become the mother-churches of as many fellowships and congregations as possible; and

also to take further initiatives to create fellowships by penetrating structures of society with the gospel.

- Train

The third is to multiply the number of well-trained persons (ordained, non-ordained, full time, part time, voluntary) lovingly dedicated to the creation and development of such fellowships and congregations by proclaiming the gospel.

- Align

Task 4 is to reform continually the life of the denomination (including the church ethos, customs, church order, use of resources, denominational committees, support staff and agencies) to encourage and enable the fulfilment of the fundamental aim.

At this recent synod, it was decided that church visitation procedure will now be structured around the 4-fold task. Furthermore, *the entire denominational structure*, including all committees and their mandates, will be aligned to this framework and function within it in order to advance the fundamental aim of being a church reforming to reach the lost for Christ. This last decision was not unanimous. There were some dissenting voices and some abstentions, but while the CRCA are open to suggestions, feedback and proposed modifications, it is clear that this vision will drive and shape the denomination for some years to come.

As fraternal delegates, it appeared to us that that these broad sweeping functional changes were made too quickly and perhaps without understanding and approval from the churches as a whole. The concerns expressed by a number of delegates on the floor of the synod and the divided vote are clear evidence of that. Nonetheless, the course has been set and the congregations and new committees will be working with this in the next triennial at least.

What do we as fraternal delegates make of the 4-fold task? Well, we can only applaud the desire of the CRCA to be engaged in reaching out to the lost with the gospel. Their stress on the great commission is one that should also challenge us here in the RCNZ. Nonetheless, this is not the only task of God's covenant people. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever" (Shorter Catechism, Q. 1). The writers of the Shorter Catechism under-

stood that evangelism was part of what it means to glorify God in this world, but it was by no means the only task that our covenant God gives us. As his people, we are to take seriously all his commands, including those that call us to become more like Christ in every dimension of our lives and those that call us to worship him as he directs in his Word and to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness in all that we do. There is a danger in both the wording of the 4-fold task and in the new denominational structure that the CRCA might become consumed with multiplying their numbers and with church planting to the exclusion of other vital aspects of our Christian calling. And those congregations that struggle to implement the task and fit into the proposed vision might feel somewhat out of sync with the direction and commitments of the CRCA. It remains to be seen how the churches will process these decisions and begin to work with them.

The Reformed Theological College

Dr. Murray Capill gave a presentation on behalf of the RTC. He pointed out that the College remains fully committed to the Reformed Confessions and is increasingly aligned with the CRCA's mission values. He said that for the past few years the RTC has been "hovering below critical mass" in relation to student numbers. In response to this, and as an attempt to draw in CRCA students who are currently not training at the College, the RTC proposed to the synod a second path to ministry, involving church based theological education. The idea is that students who choose this pathway can stay off campus for two years, studying under a local mentor, and then be resident at the College for only two more years in order to complete the required degree programme. (It should be noted that students who elect not to use this pathway can still come to the College for the entire 4 years as per normal. It is likely that many students will continue to choose the 4 year resident programme). For the second pathway, the RTC is proposing that they make use of the BILD material, which is a programme for church based theological education based in the US. The BILD course uses readings and discussion rather than lectures as a means of communicating information. It also emphasizes mission, outreach and church growth strategy from the book of Acts. The RTC lecturers will supplement the BILD material with

their own and also offer short intensive courses at the RTC. In conjunction with the BILD courses, standard courses for the required BTh degree will also be covered in two year period in which the students are off campus and then the final required BTh courses will be offered over the remaining two years at the campus in Geelong. There was considerable support for this proposal from the various classes (presbyteries). The CRCA deputies for theological education will assess this second pathway to ministry and make a recommendation to the churches later this year. Given the level of support for this, it seems highly likely that the CRCA will begin to offer church based theological education as an option from 2010 on.

Preaching of Ministers from non-CEF Churches

CRC Wantirna overtured the synod to change a 1985 decision of synod regarding guest preachers. The overture requested that "church councils may invite preachers from other churches to preach in our churches in special circumstances after the Session (Church Council) has thoroughly satisfied itself that such preachers will bring a Biblically sound message that will not compromise but respect Reformed doctrine." This overture proved controversial. The debate made clear that there was difference of opinion over whether a minister who did not subscribe to the Reformed Confessions or was Reformed by conviction should or should not be permitted to preach on an occasional basis. Some delegates argued that the Reformed Confessions summarize the truth that is in the Scriptures and that if a minister was Arminian or charismatic by conviction, it would not be appropriate for him to preach from a CRCA pulpit. Others did not see a problem with this provided the minister respected and did not compromise the truth expressed in the Reformed Confessions. In the end, the synod decided to adopt the overture, but added some more decisions to it:

1. That any church inviting such a preacher will discuss with the current chairman of Classis the wisdom and desirability of such an invitation before it is extended. If the chairman is a member of the Session in question or unavailable, another member of the Moderamen will be consulted.
2. All such invitations will be reported at a regular Classis meeting at which time the Session will inform the Clas-

sis regarding the preacher, the reason for the invitation, and the steps taken to ensure the message was biblically sound and did not compromise the Reformed faith.

3. On receiving the report, Classis may decide that such a preacher must submit to a Colloquium Doctum before he can preach again.

Pictures of Christ

CRC MacArthur overtured “that in light of the Scriptures, Synod reaffirms its commitment to our confessional position that Christ be portrayed to his people not by pictures but by the living preaching of his Word.”

As background to this overture, at Synod 2006, in one of the devotions, delegates were invited to reflect on the sufferings of Christ with the use of sections of the movie “The Passion of the Christ”. This matter was of particular concern to us in the RCNZ and also to many in the CRCA. It was the subject of one of the overtures to Synod 2008 in Hastings. Heidelberg Catechism LD 35 makes clear that under the second commandment, “we are in no way [to] make an image of God nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word.” The catechism asks: “May we then not make any image at all?” The answer is: “God can not and may not be visibly portrayed in any way. Although creatures may be portrayed, yet God forbids making or having such images if one’s intention is to worship them or to serve God through them.” In my fraternal address, I drew attention to this as one of the current issues that has caused strain on our interchurch relationship. The CER of the CRCA had acknowledged this and urged us to wait because this matter would be dealt with at this synod.

During the debate, a number of delegates expressed that the overture went too far and may have bearing on the question whether or not it is appropriate to have pictures of Christ in Sunday School material or whether or not one is sinning by having in one’s home a painting depicting the crucifixion (such as one of Rembrandt’s paintings).

In the end, it was decided not to sustain the overture. Instead, synod decided: “to uphold our commitment to LD 35 with respect to images and the worship of God.”

As fraternal delegates, we were disappointed with this outcome. There has never been any doubt over the CRCA’s

commitment to the Confessions and to LD 35 in particular. All the delegates, both at Synod 2006, and 2009 signified their agreement with the Confessions by standing in the normal way. The problem is over the *interpretation* of the Confessions at this point, and the particular question of whether or not it is consistent with what we confess to project digital images of an actor portraying Christ in a worship context. In our minds, it would have been clearer if the synod had ruled that “the practice of portraying digital images of Christ in worship is contrary to the biblical teaching expressed in HC LD 35.” This would have made it clear that such a practice would not occur again in the CRCA. We can only hope that the decision will be taken seriously by all member churches of the CRCA, and if such a practice were to occur in a worship context because of ongoing lack of clarity about what LD 35 actually teaches, that the local classis will intervene and ask that this, or something like this, not be done.

The Solomon Islands Mission

For me, this was the highlight of the entire synod. On Thursday evening, we were treated to a presentation of the mission work in the Solomons. Rev. Kevin Reitveld gave a visual presentation of the many and varied aspects of his work there, and then Susan Larsen, from the Reformed Church of Wellington, gave an overview of the work of Bethesda, which

has been started up in the Solomons to help people with physical disabilities. Her own experience in occupational therapy will serve her extremely well when she goes to the Solomons later this year. I found the CRCA work in the Solomons to be extremely encouraging and I can only admire the commitment and dedication of the missionary team who are serving the Lord so faithfully and fruitfully in this culture.

Other items of note

- The CRCA is now in full ecumenical relations with the Hervormde Kerk in South Africa, as well as the the Dutch Reformed Church and our own sister church, the Reformed Church of South Africa (GKSA).
- It was decided “to finalize responsibilities and obligations to the Reformed Ecumenical Council until its dissolution in 2010”. This is because the REC is joining with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to form a new body – the World Communion of Reformed Churches. This is problematic for the CRCA and it is likely that their deputies for Ecumenical Relations will recommend not becoming part of the new WCRC. This synod also decided to send observers to the forthcoming meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches to be held in Christchurch later this year. The RCNZ is a member church of the ICRC.



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- It was decided in relation to the RCNZ to: “to endorse the CER’s move to work with the IRC to redefine the relationship with the RCNZ so as to move beyond the current environment in which various issues repeatedly become a stumbling block and a cause of strain.” The CRCA’s Committee for Ecumenical Relations

(CER) expressed the desire to explore various possibilities with our Inter-church Relations Committee (IRC). This was taken up by the synod so the two committees will be holding discussions and reporting back to the churches on the outcome of these talks.

- The synod decided to support Chris-

tian Witness to Israel (Australia) by recommending that the churches hold a special offering for this organization every year.

That’s it for the 2009 CRCA synod! I hope you have found this report helpful and informative.

Rev. Dr. Michael Flinn

How women started the culture-war

(Part 5)

Nancy Pearcey

This series has been about the industrial revolution causing men and their work to move out of the home, and the duty that fell to women in the home to preserve love, emotion and values. Even the meaning of the word virtue became feminine and focused primarily on sexual purity. Religion too, originally full of manly duty and virtue, became the domain of women and children. Understandably, various reactions arose to the new femininity. For men this included a focus on manly men, and for women, the feminist movement.

What hath woman lost?

How does this historical perspective give us a better understanding of contemporary “women’s issues”? What principles can we draw out for crafting a more

biblical view of marriage and family?

First, it is clear that we cannot understand the changes in women’s roles and circumstances without relating them to parallel changes in men’s roles. The two are intertwined in a dynamic interaction. The Industrial Revolution caused both men’s and women’s work to contract and become more specialised; the work of both sexes lost range and variety, and became more intensely focused. Men lost their traditional integration into the life of the household and family (no more of those cookbooks written for men!). They lost the close contact they once enjoyed with their children throughout the day, and as a result were unable to function as their children’s primary parent and teacher.

For their part, women at home lost their former participation in economic production, along with the wide range of skills and activities that once involved. The loss of women’s traditional productive role placed them in a new economic dependence: Whereas the preindustrial household was maintained by an interplay of mutual services, now women’s unpaid service stood out as unique, feeding into a stereotype of women’s character as selfless and giving – or more negatively, as dependent and helpless. Women also became more isolated: They lost their easy contact with the adult world, while at the same time, their responsibility for childrearing actually increased, since it was no longer shared by fathers and other adults in the household.

It might be asked why, since both sexes lost much of the integration of life and labour characteristic of the preindustrial household, only women pro-

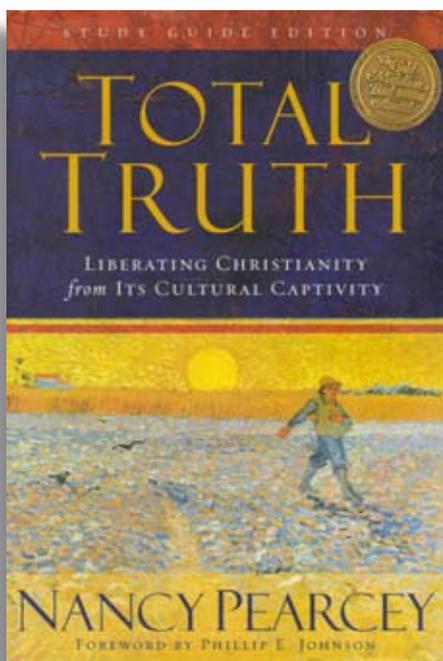
tested. Why has there been a women’s movement but no men’s movement (at least, not until recently)? The answer is that the contraction of women’s sphere was more onerous because they were confined to the private sphere – which means they suffered from the general devaluation of the private sphere. The home was cut off from the “real” work of society, isolated from intellectual, economic, and political life, at the same time that the church was. I suggest, that just as it is not good for religion to be compartmentalised in the private realm, it is not good for women either.

Remoralising America

A second theme we can draw from history is that the goal of the reform movements of the Benevolent Empire was to “remoralise” the public sphere with the values of the private sphere – of religion and family. We could even say this was an early stage of today’s “culture war”: Politics, economics, and academia were beginning to declare autonomy from the old controls of religion and morality, and evangelical Christians were fighting back.

Yet there was a gender dimension to this conflict: Since men worked in the public sphere, they were the first to absorb the ethos of modernity – while social reform was largely fueled by the efforts of women (backed by the clergy). Thus, to be more precise, it was largely an attempt by women to remoralise the public sphere and draw men back to traditional values.

A third theme should be obvious: This strategy did not work and ought to be abandoned. Men perceived the attempt at remoralisation as an attempt



to impose “feminine” values, which they were bound to resist. The consequent male rebellion against religion and family led to a devaluation of both – a trend that continues even today.

Despite the adverse consequences, astonishingly, some social commentators persist in holding women responsible for “taming” men. In an article titled “Women Taming Men,” columnist William Raspberry says crime and drugs among African-American men are the fault of ... African-American women! “As long as women tolerate this behavior in men, it will continue,” Raspberry writes. In support, he argues that it was women who “created marriage” and “domesticated” men, and who “are the civilizers of the society.”

Yet the historical record in America shows that this approach did not work. The truth is that men will be drawn back into family life only when they are convinced that being a good husband

and father is a manly thing to do; that parental duty and sacrifice are masculine virtues; that marital love and fidelity are not female standards imposed upon men externally, but an integral part of the male character – something inherent and original, created by God.

No double standard

Finally, the failure of the strategy of separate spheres illuminates why the feminist movement grew rapidly in the 1960s. It meant that many women were no longer willing to be the “moral guardians” of men or to “regulate men’s sexual behavior.” In short, they refused to maintain the double standard. Nor were they willing to remain isolated in a private sphere that had been devalued and emptied of much of its productive and personally fulfilling work. Feminists urged women to leave the empty husk of the home and to stake out a claim in the public arena, where “real” work

was done and where they could regain some respect.

Of course, there was only one small problem – or actually several small problems: young children. Who would take care of the children? That’s why it became so important to feminists to gain control of their reproductive lives through contraception and abortion; and when they did have children, to demand state-sponsored day care. These measures seemed crucial to gaining relatively equal access with men to the public realm.

Clearly, these “solutions” are morally objectionable to most evangelical Christians. Yet few have suggested realistic alternatives to the historical and economic trends that gave rise to them. In conservative circles, writes Dorothy Sayers, women are often simply “exhorted to be feminine and return to the home from which all intelligent occupation has been steadily removed.”

Feminine focus

Sally Davey

The conversation with your hairdresser

Sometimes it seems as if we play ships-in-the-night with the rest of humanity. We live in a world inhabited by family, friends and church members who see everything the way we do. To be sure, we brush with other people in the course of a day’s activities; but that does not mean we engage with them in any way that connects our world with theirs. What stops us? Surely we do not lack the opportunity, or the time or the words to say something – do we?

No, the reasons are deeper than that; and have more to do with our own attitudes than with anything other people “out there in the world” might have to say in response to us. Why? After all, the girl at the supermarket checkout, the man who comes to spray our spiders, the other mothers at the kindergarten

and the lady who does our hair are all usually quite happy to talk. What’s wrong with us? I ask that question of myself quite often. You see, we are not good at communication with the people God put us among. Those we live with, and worship with, inhabit one world (and we are comfortable in this one). But the others we mix with in our work, or at the supermarket or hairdresser, belong to the other one, and we only skim its surface. We find ourselves unable to bridge the gap between the two.

Defining our world for unbelievers

This is not to say that people who live in the world without Christ are not nice, friendly and approachable people. Frequently they are good company. Often they open their hearts, and will talk about their struggles, difficulties and uncertainties in life. It can be surprisingly easy to talk with unbelieving people about all manner of eternally-significant things, like relationships with others, anxiety about the future, career decisions, money matters, and so on. Our problem is bringing the ideas that define our world into the conversation, and thus into the lives, of the people

inhabiting the other world. So we don’t do it. At least, hardly ever. Do we? Sure enough, we know, usually, when we are getting dangerously near the time we have a duty to say something. Take the situation when your hairdresser (for instance) admits she just doesn’t know what to do with her teenage son, who is hanging around with a bad crowd at school, and in the weekends. What would you do, she asks you? This is the moment your conscience won’t let you remain quiet about the difference being a Christian makes. “Well”, you venture, summoning your shreds of courage, “We – er- take our boys to church. We take them to catechism.” Perhaps you’re thinking, “Phew. I got it out. I wonder what she’ll think. But at least I was brave enough to say it. Now she knows we go to church. I’ve witnessed.”

But you haven’t. Not really. It might be true to say you made a beginning, but really sharing Christ with your neighbour involves a lot more than this. There are a lot more things that need to be taken from your world to hers if she is, really and truly, to hear what is at the heart of the gospel, and to put her trust in Christ. The Christian faith is a body of

truth, and it needs to be explained, in words, in order to be understood and believed. The problem is, “going to church” or “attending catechism” means little or nothing to most unbelievers in the world today. Not only do they have very little clue as to what the terminology means; they haven’t the foggiest how being involved in such activities would help a person live her life.

Lifestyle is not enough

Sometimes we comfort ourselves with the thought that what counts is our lives. Yes, that’s how we witness to Christ. Kind smiles, loving actions, generosity (especially in time of need), not swearing – this kind of living is what will show the world who Christ is. It’s witnessing “without a word” – at least, without the kind of offensive talk we reassure ourselves that non-Christians don’t want to hear. But... while loving actions are an essential accompaniment to the gospel, they are not the gospel themselves. The gospel is conveyed in words. We must explain it, apply it, show people how it makes sense of their lives. It is a series of essential truths that have to be believed if a person is to be rescued, by Christ’s work on the cross, from certain punishment in hell forever. This is just inescapable. We have to talk.

Let’s imagine a conversation of this kind. For the sake of example, let’s go back to the hairdresser’s appointment. You are sitting in her salon, as you do, every six weeks or so, for up to an hour getting your hair shampooed, cut and blow-dried. You know your hairdresser quite well. She is an unbeliever, a friendly, chatty one. What are the bottom-line essentials of a conversation with her? How do we do it?

The first thing to consider is our attitude. Unless we really want to share the gospel with this other lady – to engage with her at heart-level, it simply will not happen. It entails several things. First, we need to be sure we actually care about this person’s spiritual state. Am I fully conscious that she is a sinner in dreadful danger? That she is rushing towards the final judgment, unprepared to meet her Creator? Does this thought fill me with compassion for her? Do I see her, as the Saviour saw the crowds, as a sheep without a shepherd?

Preparation important

The second important thing is to be prepared for such a conversation. We need to spend a bit of time on this,

because useful discussion of the gospel rarely occurs without thinking through what we are going to say, and the ways we are going to take up spiritually-related turning-points in a conversation. In actual fact, lack of preparation; lack of practice in explaining the essentials of the gospel, and in applying its truths to a range of different life-issues often leads to fear and awkwardness. For many of us, it is the reason we don’t engage in evangelistic conversation much, if at all. We simply don’t know what to say, or how to say it. There are many good books which can help us prepare, but the best way of all is simply to try faithfully, and to learn from our mistakes. (There is nothing like shame and embarrassment to make us learn, and fill the gaps in our knowledge.)

The third, and most important thing,



is to pray. Not only is it true that no one can repent and believe unless God is working in her heart; it is also a fact that praying prepares our own hearts for useful conversation. When we pray we believe that God hears us, that he will prepare the way for what we say; that he will give us wisdom, courage, and so on. When we have been praying regularly for this person, we will engage in conversation with a great deal more confidence, and a more trusting, relaxed frame of mind.

Wisdom required

So back, then, to the hair salon. Having made yourself ready to introduce Christ in some way to your hairdresser, how does it happen, as she stands

there, working on your hair? As you may remember, she has just asked you about schools and teenagers – and she’s revealed her fears for her son and the bad crowd he’s mixing in. What do you say next? Obviously, there are several ways to get to the heart of the matter – which is sin and our need for salvation. We need not go there in one great (and probably incomprehensible), conversation-stopping leap. It may be good to agree with her about the effects of bad company on impressionable and immature minds – then take it further. You could note that the Bible has some useful wisdom concerning this (think, the book of Proverbs). You could assure her that it’s the right thing for parents to teach their children wise principles of action, and to be directive about friendships (lest she think that parents are supposed to let teenagers drive their own ship all the time). You could talk about some things that went well with your own children when you gave clear direction, and some things that went wrong; not neglecting to show, in a general way, that these principles come from the Bible. (But do keep in mind that there’s nothing worse than a bragging parent who represents her family as a showcase!)

Always the heart of the gospel

However, you do want to work towards the heart of the gospel, always. I find it is all too easy to stop short at the general, life-issues point in such a conversation. People are often comfortable enough at that level, but it seldom goes as far as their hearts. Yes, the Bible contains wise principles that enable everyone to live more upright lives. But we are selling people short if we leave it there. Simply put, the general moral principles of the Bible are not enough information for salvation. We need to show people their need of a Saviour, and take them to the cross. But we do need to expect that the cross will be “foolishness to those who are perishing”. It is, as Paul wrote, an “offence”. How often we make our little forays, conversationally, then quickly retreat as soon as we sense a negative response in the person we’re talking to. The stony silence, the embarrassed change of subject, the little smirk are all cues for us to drop the topic like a hotcake. This is where we often duck for cover, when a better, bolder tack may be to summon our courage. Ask “does this embarrass you?” Consider discussing the reasons the cross is an offence. Ask her if she’s ever thought about the life and

death of Jesus Christ. And the ultimate question you are hoping to ask is “Where do you stand with God?”

But of course you are thinking – no one ever gets through all these things in a single conversation of one hour, especially when there are other people

around, and while a hairdressing job is also going on! Quite true. Such a conversation is merely the beginning: further investigation may follow, more discussion, perhaps a Bible study together, where more questions are asked and answered. Be always suspicious of

“instant conversion” stories. They seldom happen. But good conversations, in which opportunities are recognized – and taken – are often the beginning of God’s work in a person’s heart.

What do you talk about with *your* hairdresser?

Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Avondale

Prayer & Praise items: Early on Friday morning, br. Joe Wielemaker passed away. Joe was a longstanding and faithful member of this congregation who loved and served the Lord in many capacities, including a number of terms as an elder. He used his building skills in the construction of the hall and the kindergarten building. Joe was also instrumental in the establishment of Immanuel Christian School and served as a board member for some years. We give thanks to God for his life among us. We pray that God will uphold his wife Gré and the family at this time.

Evangelising in Avondale: We had a great morning on Saturday in Avondale. Yes, it was raining, but we still talked to lots of people and handed out at least 100 tracts and some fliers for our church. The Meinsma and Ploeg families, along with Marja and Henry, walked from the church down the main road of Avondale. We were joined at about 10:30 by Matt Old and another 5 “GO International” members. One brought along his flip chart which got a lot of attention. I got to use it for 3 different people and it makes me determined to get one for our team. It was encouraging to see young Zach and Brad being such keen tractors, seeking out people to give them to. You don’t need to be very old to do this evangelism thing. I saw at least two people speak to two different members of the team one after the other, so they got the gospel twice! Josh had a long and good conversation about the gospel with an Ethiopian Muslim man who was

clearly very interested. After he left Josiah told us he had just spent half an hour preaching to him before Josh! He was obviously very keen to hear. As you know, we don’t pull any punches in our message – we preach sin and repentance very plainly. There is such a wide range of people represented in Avondale. On just one street we witnessed to Muslims, Mormons, homeless people and addicts, Africans, Asians, Indians and Islanders. There are also a lot of needy people in our area. I’m really keen to do an outreach at the Avondale markets in a few weeks time. We can get there an hour or so before church. There are heaps of people there. We will bring along our church fliers which Marja and Sharon produced – thanks guys! Please pray for us and for all the people who heard the gospel from us. Please also pray for yourselves, that you may be filled with boldness by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel as we ought.

What is on your iPod or mp3 player? What are you listening to in your car? Listen to sermons every week for free! www.sermonaudio.com/rcwainu or www.sermonaudio.com “faith cometh by hearing”

Family announcements: Wedding Bells: This Saturday (25 April), Lord willing, Dan Hunt and Anna Smilde will be married before the Lord and His people. The ceremony will take place at 1.30pm at the Holy Trinity Anglican Church, 78 Queen St, Waiuku.

Family prayer & praise items: Another milestone in the life of this congregation: John and Tiny Gjaltema celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary last Wednesday. We praise God for His blessings on your marriage and pray that He will continue to keep you in His care.

Bishopdale

Pastoral. This week, Kees van den Ende

was buried. Please remember the family at this time, in particular his wife Nellie.

Pastoral. It is our privilege this morning to witness the Profession of Faith of Marcus Balchin. Welcome to family and friends who have come especially for the occasion. Let us rejoice in God’s goodness and grace.

Pastoral. In the afternoon service, Piet van Leeuwen will publicly profess his faith in Jesus Christ. This is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate God’s grace, not only to Piet, but also to ourselves.

For those who have not yet heard, Graeme and Amanda Zuidema were blessed last week with a son. His name is Joshua John. Lord willing, he will be baptised on 23 August (when Graeme’s parents will be here).

Buckland’s Beach

Pastoral: Following up from the closure of the Mangere congregation at its present site, there has been talk of relocation and, as a result, a call to consider planting a new fellowship somewhere else in the Auckland region. That kind of challenge is directed most directly to the Auckland Churches. Our elders at Buckland’s Beach have been asked to commit this matter to the Lord. Should we be planning in the direction of planting a new church? Why should we? What would we have to offer? Where would it be located? Who would we use? Should we start thinking about calling a second pastor to serve here and thus free up the time to work in this direction? Surely these questions need to be raised, discussed and, above all, prayed about.

Christchurch

Calling Meeting Report. Session met this past Wednesday at 7.15pm for our regular Calling meeting. The meeting was opened by Br Raymond Posthuma.

Every second meeting the opening is also part of our Sermon Evaluation. This was carried out on the Sermon last Sunday morning on the passage from James 3:13-17, a fruitful discussion was had. An update was given on an interim Pastor, we are still awaiting a reply from Rev Crosbie de Kreester from Melbourne. Other options will also be pursued. Sermons and a profile was circulated of Rev Jason Tuinstra from the URCNA, further information of a number of other men from the URCNA is being sought. A request was sent to North Shore for some further information and sermons of Vicar Andre Scheepers. A list of available ministers from the CRCA had been sent to Rev. Westendorp for comment. Once this has been returned a letter will be sent to these men requesting information.

Dovedale

Wedding News. Desiring God's will for their lives and believing that the Lord has brought them together, Melinda Watson and Davy Kerkhoven, and their families, invite you to witness their marriage, when they exchange vows before God, on Saturday 11 July at 12.30pm at the Reformed Church of Christchurch, 63 Cornwall Street.

Pastoral Notes. In the morning service today, we have the privilege of welcoming Br. James Williams into full communicant membership. A celebration cake will be served after the service in the fellowship hall. Br. James, may the Lord increasingly bless you as you serve Him among us and cause you to be a continued blessing to us. Sunday evening study and discussion session.

At a recent meeting of the session, we decided to make use of a training series called Visiting Members. Visiting Members is a video series containing ten 30-minute Elder and Deacon training sessions on the principles and practices of visiting church members. It is part of a series of instructional materials designed specifically to equip church leaders with biblically based, encouraging, versatile, and practical training. We hope to begin this evening after the worship service and a shared meal. The plan is to allow time for members to fellowship as we set up the equipment and prepare the simple food that we each have brought. God willing, we will begin viewing about 7pm and conclude sometime between 8-8:30pm.

Dunedin

An Appreciation. Dear brother and

sisters, We would like to thank you all for your prayerful support when Henk suddenly passed away. We felt the nearness of God at this time which helped us get through. There are many people we would like to thank individually but the list is so great. Please accept this as our personal acknowledgement and heartfelt gratitude to you all: for the baking, meals, cards, e-mails, flowers, afternoon tea for the funeral service, organ playing, programmes for the service, and door ushers, etc. We thank Rev Robert van Wichen for leading the service and his continued pastoral care to us afterwards. We would also like to thank the many people that travelled from afar to be at the funeral. We know that Henk is now with his Lord and Saviour and that one day we will see each other again. Thank you again. The Geerlofs family.

Congregational Meeting. Congregational meetings will be held after the morning services on Sunday 26 July, DV, to vote on extending a call to Vicar Daniel Wilson to serve as our next minister in Dunedin and Oamaru. An overall two-thirds majority will be required. If you are unable to attend a signed vote may be submitted to an elder beforehand.

Pastoral Notes. Our condolences also go to Jac Verkade, a country member living in Invercargill, on the death of his brother, Nick. Nick Verkade was a member of the former Reformed Church of Invercargill. May the Lord comfort and strengthen the Verkade family during this time of bereavement.

Oamaru News. It is with that mixture of joy and sadness that I mention the passing into glory of our brother in Christ, Cornelis (Kees) Campfens. He died at Dunedin Hospital early in the morning of Wednesday 22 July. Our continuing prayers are with his wife, Lidy, and their children and grandchildren, that they may know strength and comfort from our loving Father in heaven in the difficult days ahead. As a long-time member of the congregation in Oamaru, Kees is missed already. His trust in God, and his faithfulness over the years since he moved with his family from Wainuiomata, have been a blessing and not soon to be forgotten.

Foxton

Fellowship news and prayer items: We'll uphold the following members in our prayers of thanks and supplication: Today, during this morning's service, we witness the baptism of Levi Eeuwe



On Monday the 8th June 2009 the Lord took to Himself at the age of 79

Henk (Hermanus) Geerlofs

Beloved husband of Martha and loved Father, Opa and Great Opa of

Louise Geerlofs

Arie and Janice Geerlofs
– Angela & Steven (Sam & Arie),
Brendan, Selena, Regan

Rick & Faye Geerlofs
– Lisa & Matt, Malachi & Katrina,
Joshua, Tessa

7 East Avenue, St Kilda, Dunedin

*Nothing will separate us
from the love of God*

(I John: 1 3-9 and Romans 8:35-39)

Dykstra. It is our prayer that the Lord will grant Jason & Esther the strength and wisdom to train Levi in the things of the Lord and that, one day by the grace of God, this baptism will be affirmed when Levi does a heartfelt profession of faith in his Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Hamilton

Pastoral and matters for prayer. On Thursday afternoon, around 5.15pm, the Lord took to Himself two-year old Aiden Roux (Hukanui). Aiden had received a part of his father's liver on Tuesday but unforeseen complications resulted in an overwhelming infection which brought about his death. In God's providence, I have been able to be with the family throughout much of this time and I have been asked to lead the funeral. Please pray for Paul (still recovering from the surgery) and Sharon, their daughter Hayley, their extended family and the folk at Hukanui.

Masterton

Men's Breakfast: Men's Breakfast season starts again this Saturday (27 June). Two others are planned for 4 July and Friday 24 July (an evening meeting). All men, younger and older, are warmly invited to gather for fellowship over breakfast. The topic for study and discussion is Humility in Christ. Breakfast at the church is at 7:30am, followed by a study beginning at 8:00am and finishing at 9:00am.

Pastoral Notes: We thank the Lord for the birth of another covenant child. Lydia Alexandra was born to Andre and Annelies de Leeuw on Thursday, 9 July. Both mother and baby are doing well.

Nelson

From Session: Allen Vandenberg has expressed a desire to profess his faith before the Lord and this congregation. He will meet with session on Tuesday to give a testimony of his faith, and Lord willing his profession of faith will take place on Sunday the 8th of August. Praise the Lord!!

Vicar Daniel Wilson. Following a meeting last Wednesday session has unanimously agreed to place Daniels name before the congregation, to vote whether to extend a call to him to serve the Church here in Nelson. Voting will take place next Sunday 26 July after the morning service; a majority of 75% will be required to extend a call. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact one of the elders prior to the vote.

Palmerston North

From the calling committee. At the recent AGM, the congregation was given an update on our home mission work in Wanganui. It was pointed out that the Session was undertaking an assessment of the work, having written a letter to the members in Wanganui and following up on this with home visits. These visits in Wanganui will soon be completed. Session believes it would be prudent to meet with Vicar Daniel Wilson, who has recently been made available for call and who has been visiting some of our churches.

Seniors' Get-together Reminder – Don't forget this week. What have our seniors been up to lately? We thank the Wouters, Pita and Maarten, for the enthusiasm and energy they have put into organising afternoon meetings for us to enjoy. So far we have experienced two – first in May, a visit to the Antarctic on a tour ship with Mariske, the Wouters' daughter, who has been there a few times, camera in hand, as the official compulsory Government observer and representative on these tours. This was a most interesting and beautiful slide show, plus a movie section of comical penguins 'swimming' on the ice. Followed by little penguin poffetjes accompanying the afternoon tea! Then in June we delighted to see a DVD presentation by Henk den Hartog, of the flower industry in Holland, from planting right through to delivery of bulbs and flowers to the countries of the world. We were encouraged to try out for ourselves the process by each being presented with a lily bulb to plant in a pot, a flowerpot to plant it in, and a bag of special potting mix to put in the pot with the lily. In September we are to bring our pots to church with the resultant flowers. So keep your eyes open then to see a magnificent display of colour. On Thursday 9th July we are due to meet at 12.30 p.m. for a kind of pot-luck mid-winter dinner – no Christmas crackers, though. Don't forget, seniors, let's hope we have 30 or more as we did last time. Each bring a contribution for sharing – a meat dish, rice dish or what-have-you, or a vegetable selection or salad, or may be a dessert, or icecream or a tin of fruit. The meal will be followed by an 'Open Door' DVD – the story, told by himself, of an MBB's journey from darkness to the Light of the Gospel. Come and enjoy.

Daniel Wilson: At a Session meeting last Tuesday evening Session met with Daniel

Wilson. As a result of this meeting Session voted unanimously to place before the congregation the following motion: "That Session extend a call to Daniel Wilson as a second minister for Palmerston North, with a particular focus in Wanganui." If there are no lawful objections voting will take place on the 26th July (DV).

Announcements: Today with great joy we welcome into membership in our congregation Ian and Beverley McDonald and their son Dean. It is great to have you with us and we pray that you will



The Free Reformed School Association (Tas) Inc. of Launceston invites applications and expressions of interest for the position of a

High School teacher

to join the small but dynamic team of John Calvin School staff. The school is particularly looking for someone with senior Maths teaching abilities.

Full-time employment at the John Calvin School would commence at the beginning of the new school year, January 2010. Those who are interested in part-time employment only are encouraged to respond and apply as well.

The school's class sizes are very small.

All enquiries will be responded to promptly and with confidentiality.

Applicants must be a member of the Free Reformed Church of Australia or any of her sister churches.

Conditions and salary exceed the Tasmanian Independent Schools (teacher) Award.

For more information on this position, general information and expressions of interest, please contact the Principal, Mr G Brouwer.

Phone: (03) 63 271800 (home)
(03) 63 443794 (school)
E-mail: icalvin@netspace.net.au

Applications, including a CV, should be directed to:

The Board of the Free Reformed School Association (Tas) Inc:

E-mail: icalvin@netspace.net.au
Address: PO Box 89, Launceston 7250, Tasmania, Australia.

feel very much at home in our church family.

Pukekohe

Last Wednesday another daughter was born to Josh and Marlies Phillips. They have named her Kelsey Jacqueline. Both mother and baby are doing very well. We thank the Lord for this beautiful gift of new life. Kelsey will be baptised next Sunday in the morning service.

Wellington

Ezee meals, our church and our community. A couple of church members have got together to start up an ezee meals service in the Brooklyn area. The Ezee meals programme is supported



The Free Reformed School Association (Tas) Inc. of Launceston invites applications and expressions of interest for the position of a

Primary school teacher

Full-time employment at the John Calvin School would commence at the beginning of the new school year, January 2010.

The school's class sizes are very small.

Any primary-trained teacher or student-teacher (finishing his/her degree by the end of 2009) is encouraged to apply. All enquiries will be responded to promptly and with confidentiality.

Applicants must be a member of the Free Reformed Church of Australia or any of her sister churches.

Conditions and salary exceed the Tasmanian Independent Schools (teacher) Award.

For more information on this position, general information and expressions of interest, please contact the Principal, Mr G Brouwer.

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by the Wellington City Mission, and the meals are already sold at different spots in the city. Ezee meals tend to be handy for folks who are less mobile or perhaps struggling with finances. We think it could be a great way to serve people in our community and get to know people's needs. Our plan is to start small with pamphlet deliveries in a few areas to see if we can help people by delivering meals. The meals are frozen (but nutritious and delicious!) and are sold from between \$4.50 to \$7.00. The church won't profit from the sales, but a small margin goes to the Wellington City Mission. Pamphlet deliveries to Brooklyn, Aro Valley and a few other areas have started this weekend, and the freezer downstairs is full of ezee meals ready to go!

From the Pastor. Following a heart attack late last week, Lyn Cornege's condition deteriorated quite rapidly this week and, after sleeping for several days, our sister Lyn passed away early on Saturday morning. Please keep Lyn's family in your prayers. The funeral will be held in Waikanae, details to be advised.

Report of the Wellington Presbytery Meeting July 2009

The Wellington Presbytery met on 11th July in Palmerston North, and was chaired by the Rev Michael Flinn. Church Order Article 47 questions were answered on behalf of the Wainuiomata and Silverstream sessions.

The Presbytery considered and upheld an appeal from a member of the Wainuiomata church. An overture from the Wellington congregation proposing supplementary questions to be asked annually of the churches in the Presbytery was not sustained. Reports scrutinising the minutes of other presbyteries/classes, and of a church visitation to the Hastings congregation, were received.

The Presbytery Youth Liaison reported on a successful Queen's Birthday Camp at Camp Kaitoke. The studies led by the Rev Pieter van Huysteen were well received. Changes to the WRYC constitution encouraging local sessions to recommend new members to join the youth committee were also finalised.

The OMB Liaison reported on progress in Papua New Guinea, and opportunities and work taking place in Pakistan and Uganda. The Hastings session advised on the progress of the building team in Papua New Guinea. It was also noted that Alan & Odette Douma benefited greatly from the Pacific Orientation Course they recently attended.

Pastoral advice was given on a matter to the Palmerston North session in closed session. The next meeting of the Presbytery is scheduled to be held on 7th November in Foxton.

Short Report of the Christchurch Presbytery Meeting on 18 July 2009

For the convening church of Nelson, Elder Ewout Aarsen opened with a reading from 1 Corinthians 14:20-26 and noted that while worship is directed to God only, worship should strengthen our love for God and for the brethren. As we worship we serve not only God but also one another and ensure that all are included. We have an assurance of Christ's presence as we worship him.

Hans Berends, as the New Zealand Southern board member to the Reformed Theological College, reported on recent developments including the prospective replacement of retiring faculty members and the proposed alternative pathway which would allow candidates for the ministry to study both at college and in their churches. A general discussion ensued.

Presbytery agreed to a request from Dunedin for approval to take steps to call the Rev Jim Klazinga as a Minister of the Word and Sacraments, in a part-time capacity, to the church planting work in Timaru. Rev Klazinga reported on the developing work in Timaru. Weekly services are now being held and also a Bible study which receives good support from the wider Christian community.

In discussing the best way in which vacant churches could be assisted with pulpit supply they were encouraged to pursue short-term supply options where appropriate with the assurance of financial support from other churches if required.

An offer from Bishopdale to host the 2011 synod was gratefully accepted.

A report was heard on the progress

of establishing a Regional Youthwork Committee.

Responding to Article 47 questions Bishopdale testified to answers to prayer as they look forward to the arrival of their minister-elect, Andrew de Vries, and in the recent granting of resource manage-

ment consent for building expansion. Dovedale were thankful for the mutual support being shown within the congregation and for faithful attendance of both worship services. Nelson delegates spoke of how they have been heartened by the recent short-term ministries by the Revs

Barry James and Dick Wynja.

Presbytery agreed to reconvene on Friday 20 November to conduct the final examination of Vicar Andrew de Vries.

John van Dyk

Letter to the Editor

Dear brother Editor,
Mangere Church no longer!

It was with quite a degree of sadness that I learned about the closing down of the Mangere Reformed Church, and I have been chewing it over for some time.

It may have been considered a "practical" decision to close down a shrinking church. However, was that the only viable option?

It is true that a church building in a certain location is not what should keep a church going. But a building does create a focal point for a greater or smaller congregation to meet. And where people meet, folk from all around can be called and gathered for worship: the gospel can be proclaimed!

The lampstands among which the glorified Jesus walks as Lord of the Church were local churches mentioned by name (Rev 1:9-20). In thinking about the church in Mangere, I asked myself: What happened? Has the lampstand been removed? (cf Rev 2:5) By whom? For what reason? Was the church too small? Why and when does a church become too small?

Which RCNZ congregation could be next? Am I too pessimistic? Shouldn't we just be "practical" and move on, or is some soul-searching in order? My mind is full of questions.

We do want our Reformed witness to grow. We want it to spread all across the land, and we rejoice when a small group emerges, even smaller than Man-

gere's 30-plus membership.

If there is a faithful proclamation of the Word, what else do we need to survive and grow? Perhaps we should consider questions like that *regularly*. When I read Revelation 3:8, I notice that the Church of Philadelphia had "little strength", but they also had a "great secret"! What? Why?

Let us ponder prayerfully what the Lord of the Church has to say as he walks among the lampstands, taking stock of the situation. Let us listen to what the Spirit has to say to the churches, our churches too. Maybe there is some biblical advice that we can use in the RCNZ!

Yours, with genuine Christian concern,
John Goris

Missions in Focus

Cultural orientation – is it useful?

By Rev Alan and Mrs Odette Douma

I want to get a T shirt made – "We survived POC!"

Some fourteen weeks of joy and sorrow, laughter and tears, frustration and satisfaction, you name it we experienced it! The Pacific Orientation Course (conducted by the Summer Institute of Linguistics) has been running for over thirty years equipping and preparing missionaries to work in the Melanesian/Polynesian cross-cultural context.

For the first eight weeks we stayed in the POC compound at Nobnob on a mountain (some four hundred metres elevation in just 3 kilometres of road)

outside Madang Town, in the north of Papua New Guinea. The beautiful views and fantastic sunsets were marred only by the numerous communication towers that dot the mountaintop.

Preparing for village living

In a typical week, we would go for at least one tramp to get us 'Westerners' fit and prepared for Village Living: nationals often walk up to five kilometres each way just to go to church. The walks were also a very valuable way to become familiar with the village setting. Some of the walking trails were no wider than your foot, with a big drop down the mountain on one side! On one tramp, the Director was busy telling us that at this certain place we were walking past, his wife had fallen over the side and broken her wrist. And would you believe – I fell off the side of the path just as he said it! Fortunately, my feet slipped out from under me off the path and I could grab hold of the path with my

hands as I started to slide down the mountainside!

We also had lectures on the customs of the Melanesian people and PNG Pidgin language classes. The main teaching tool is "immersion." We were matched up with a family from the local villages whom we visited and had meals with; even staying overnight at their bush houses. The eight-week stay in the POC compound was preparation for five weeks of Village Living – total immersion! Just the two of us in a village with people we had never met before, speaking another language and with quite a different way of living.

The purpose of Village living is to continue to learn PNG Pidgin and the Melanesian culture as well as to learn coping skills and to gain a more realistic view of ourselves through being immersed in a cross cultural context for these five weeks. So...what did we learn?

Well, everyday living in the Village is **hard work!**

Doing things a different way

You get up in the morning and our first task was to light the fire (open fire with a grate over it) to make a cup of tea and breakfast. There was no refrigeration so you have to learn another way with the food. Anytime during the day a generous-hearted person may come and bring you a gift of fresh fish, so then you have to light the fire and cook it after which you then could keep it for a little while. The village people would very generously give you food: pumpkin, banana, paw paw, greens, beans, pineapple, fish – but how can you use it all when it won't keep? Odette spent hours making banana and pumpkin cake in the drum oven (a twenty litre drum hung in a metal cover and placed on the fire) to use all the food given. The upside was that the people loved them! You have to walk three kilometres to the garden to get food for dinner. When the wood is wet you have to “work” (fan) the fire all the time.

We washed our clothes by hand in

a bucket and found the clothes would become more and more grey and dirty! (It was interesting that the one shirt I took home again did actually clean up again after a few washes through the washing machine!) Drinking water had to be fetched from a spring in the bush some 3 kilometres' walk away (near the gardens). When it did actually rain we could collect water from the tarp we had strung up. And so you start to get the idea that a lot of time and energy is taken up simply with everyday living.

During this time of Village Living POC gave us **twelve assignments** to complete within the five weeks of Village Living; including making a map of the village, writing cultural observations, drawing a kinship chart of our *Wasfamili* (care family), learning and teaching a skill, and conducting a survey of our village. The aim of the assignments was to get us out and about interacting with the people of the village. It was to be a tool in which to grow relationships and learn about the Village. At first, it seemed somewhat

overwhelming, but on hindsight it proved to be a very helpful tool.

We found the people of the Village very friendly, but we were not always sure how to relate. If we dropped by their place, it sometimes seemed like they were waiting for us to move on again, yet they could sit for hours with us at our place. A few people became friends and were lovely in their care for us. What I found interesting was the hierarchy system in the Village. There were the clan chiefs and then a “pecking” order of importance. People were often called by their positions: Headman, Council, Committee, etc.

Learning the Melanesian culture?

At first we spent a lot of our time simply **not knowing** what to do or how to do it nor when to do it. It got better when we came to realise that we will never be one of the PNG people that we will always be regarded as “white-skins” and while respecting and being sensitive to culture, we do not have to do everything as they do it. And so we



A normal evening on our verandah



The Kaysons our WasFamili.



Odette cooking



Our House in Village

learned to establish our own routines within the Melanesian culture.

For example, the people of the village would take their mealtime dishes down to the creek and wash them there whereas we would heat water and wash them at the house with a splash of bleach thrown in. The people of the village would wash their clothes in the creek as well, but we would wash them at the house with water drawn from the well as to us the creek water was somewhat stagnant and our clothes only became more stained when we did wash them in the creek. The people knew and accepted we were different.

One of the things we did learn was to **wait**.

One time we went out to the road at 7 o'clock in the morning to catch the PMV (Public Motor Vehicle – read “bus” either a van or two-tonne truck with a canopy over the tray). Initially we were waiting for an “uncle” to come with his truck. But word came that he had stopped in the next village for a cup of coffee and so was not coming after all! So then we waited for the PMV to come. In the end we waited some 2½ hours to catch a PMV (and that happened more than once)!

Time, Pidgin and storying

Another time our *Waspapa* (the father in our care family) told us we were going to the garden. So Odette and I get ready immediately – I mean, we're going to the garden right? Well...yes... but just sometime today and it wasn't until 3 hours later that we actually went! And, we also had to learn to distinguish between an ‘intention’ and an ‘appointment.’ When someone kindly offers to take you out fishing “tomorrow” it is an intention that will probably not happen after you have waited for two weeks! This happened a number of times and we learned not to be disappointed but take them as well meant intentions.

Language wise we learned PNG Pidgin to a workable level to hold a conversation.

Being immersed in a village for five weeks creates a very steep learning curve! It's fascinating that as you are exposed to the language in fulltime everyday life how much soaks in sub-consciously – to the point that as you were speaking you could hear when you made a mistake and could try to correct yourself. I was reading the PNG national newspaper (written in English) and found that in places they wrote

English with PNG Pidgin grammar and I thought, “Boy! That's what my PNG Pidgin must sound like to them.” Reading the Children's Bible to the children regularly in Pidgin was a helpful way to become more familiar with the language as well. (The children of the village just loved the Tok Pisin Children's Bible and would spend hours just looking through the pictures and telling each other the Bible Stories, while the older ones would work out the Tok Pisin words – they only learn in English at school.)

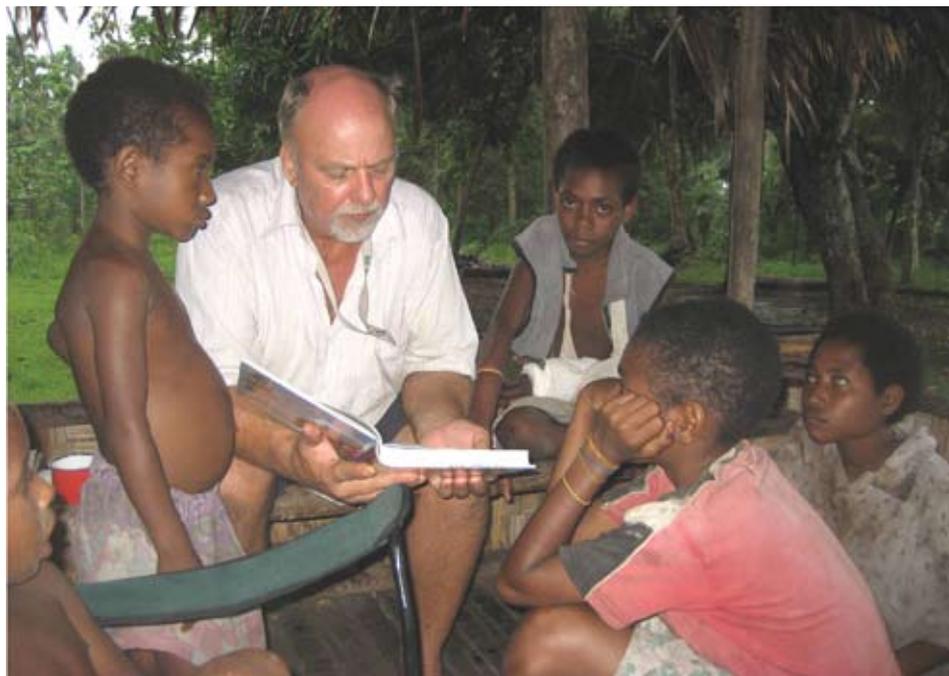
Another big thing in Melanesian culture in the village is to **“stori.”** To us, a huge amount of time seemed to be taken up with sitting around and “storying.” In some ways, “storying” is another word for conversation. PNG is still largely an oral society, few people actually possess books and although a number can read, generally they do not read as a pastime. And so they learn and share experiences predominantly by talking together! This was great for us for generally there was always someone to talk with. The people loved to hear stories about Australia and New Zealand and were particularly impressed to hear about Odette going to London on her own by plane and could not get over her travelling from London to Paris by train through the “Chunnel” (the train tunnel that runs underneath the English Channel). “But doesn't the water leak in and drown everyone?” they asked incredulously. A tunnel under the saltwater! Although they live by the sea they are afraid of it. And when new people came, Odette

had to tell the story all over again! I must admit that I found it hard going to go working with the men for the day (say digging a drain in the cocoa plantation) and then after dark have a meal with all the workmen (provided by the owner in lieu of money payment) and have to story! At first I found it hard to understand the different voices and then to be the focus of attention by twelve or more men all asking you to “story” in your faltering Pidgin! It was all jolly hard work but got better as our grasp of the language improved.

Respectfully and sensitively assertive

And finally what did we learn **about ourselves?**

We learned of our weaknesses and the need for God's grace to be sufficient for each day. We also learned what culture shock was, the feeling of being disempowered and helpless because you don't know the language or the culture well enough and being fearful of causing offence. While being open to learn new things, we also learned over time to be respectfully and sensitively assertive. And we learned that we can never be like the PNG people in their culture but we have a wonderful oneness in Christ Jesus and that crosses all boundaries of peoples and cultures. Most of all we learned anew that the Lord is near: Psalm 121 came more alive for us experientially as the Word, prayers and songs of praise strengthened and comforted us constantly as we worked



Alan reading Pidgin Childrens Bible

our way through what was a challenging time. All praise and glory be to His wonderful Name!

Now, would we recommend that anyone intending to work long term in a cross cultural context go through POC? Absolutely! Two weeks after completing this course I was called upon to organise and conduct a funeral (service) of a stillborn baby – in PNG Pidgin! Also I had to be in charge of the Reformed Churches Bible College administratively (the other staff member going after three days), and to help our first team of NZ Mission house builders to adjust to the ways things happen (or don't!) in PNG. We would not have been able to do this without the POC training. I think it is a good investment for long term mission workers as part of their preparation for the field.

We would like to express our appreciation and thanks for your ongoing prayers and encouragements – especially to those who took the time to write to us during Village Living. It reminds us that we are all in this mission calling to PNG together, each with the task that God has assigned us. How good it is to be part of the Church of God!

Origins of the ICRC

An introduction to the next issue

Ever since the days of the Reformation in the sixteenth century when several groups moved away from the main body of the Church in western Europe, there have been efforts to bring these people together. We confess correctly that the true church of Christ is ONE! We must never be *content* with a “divided Christianity” as such.

Many Reformed and Presbyterian churches came into being because sections in the church wanted to be faithful to the Scriptures. However, where there are common biblical bonds, an expression of *unity should be sought!*

Reformed Churches in many places have been conscious of that especially since the twentieth century. When there were reasons to distance themselves again, there also had to be reasons to seek togetherness again.

In October 1982 a group of repre-

sentatives of ten Reformed and Presbyterian denominations worldwide met together in Groningen, the Netherlands. That is when the ICRC (International Conference of Reformed Churches) was born. These representatives came from the following churches, viz. Canadian Reformed Churches, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Free Church of Scotland, Free Reformed Churches of Australia, Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin), Reformed Churches of Indonesia, Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated), Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka, and the Free Church in Southern Africa.

The main address was delivered by the Rev D Deddens (Drs) entitled “*The Unity of Faith as Gift and Mandate*”. That set the stage for the formation of the ICRC. Every four years a conference would be convened, starting in 1985 in Edinburgh, Scotland. After that came Canada, the Netherlands, Korea, USA and South Africa. The 2009 conference will be held in New Zealand, in the city of Christchurch, in October, DV.

The main purpose would not be merely to meet and encourage each other as churches, but to seek to support each other and work together in the area of missions. Older and possibly more mature churches would stand together with younger and possibly more enthusiastic churches in proclaiming the Gospel of grace.

The ICRC is not just a matter of *talking* together, but also of *action* together. That action area is missions, the support of persecuted fellow-Christians and aid to disaster-stricken areas such as Myanmar.

Among the mission concerns of the ICRC is a growing interest in **urban missions** (see accompanying article from a recent Newsletter). More about Reformed Missions world-wide in the next issue of Faith in Focus!

John Goris



Left to right: Ank Posthuma, Maria Holtslag, Alie Holtslag, Alie de Ruiter, Margaret vanderZwaag, Yvonne Walraven. Absent: Henny Gijsbertsen (Masterton).

These ladies from Silverstream, along with many other ladies throughout New Zealand knit blankets, jerseys, scarves and mittens for Operation Cover Up for the organisation Mission Without Borders. These knitted goods are sent to poor families and orphanages in Rumania, Moldova and Ukraine. Just to give some idea of the scale of this operation last year, 7,171 full sized blankets, 2,838 cot blankets, 12,880 jerseys and 16,000 hats were sent. If anyone is interested in knitting or donating wool please contact Yvonne Walraven at yvonnawalraven@hotmail.com or phone (04) 527 4379.



Missions Newsletter

Published by the Missions Committee of the
International Conference of Reformed Churches

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
(Matthew 28:19)

Greetings!

This issue of our Missions Newsletter is dedicated to an aspect of missions that is coming into prominence, and has been getting growing attention from several of our member churches: URBAN MISSIONS.

It may be that many other churches have also been highlighting the importance of missions in the great cities of the world, but the Missions Committee is only receiving mission news from a few churches. Apart from the statistics supplied for our Survey Booklet we do not know a great deal about what is going on.

Take, read and put your hand to the plough! (Luke 9:62 -Despite urban emphases, the rural picture is still meaningful!)

John Goris, convener, ICRC Missions Committee

An Eye that sees.....

Under this title Roger Selles Greenway and Thinandavha Derrick Mashau have written a book challenging the Church to engage in Urban Missions.

Others have also drawn our attention to urban missions, and it is your editor's intention in this Newsletter to focus on this vital aspect of the Church's outreach in this present-day world.

The urban population in our world is growing rapidly. Fast-growing cities on all continents create new social problems, but also many new gospel opportunities.

In China alone there are almost 100 cities with over one million inhabitants. This is over a quarter of the world's total. Then single out Beijing, and you will find there are over one million *disabled* people! That is, one million challenges to show compassion! There are, of course, many more mega cities. Consider Sao Paulo the biggest mega-city in South America, Mexico City in Central America, New York City in North America; Lagos in Africa; Bangkok, Mumbai, Delhi, Dhaka, Calcutta, Tokyo in Asia: all mega-cities with 10 million and over inhabitants.

Brothers Mashau and Greenway have given an apt title to their book on urban missions: *“An Eye that sees...”*. Urban mission, any mission for that matter, requires **vision!** You know the story about Elisha's servant who was terrified by the invading armies of the Arameans (2 Kings 6:15-17). What did the prophet say? “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them,” and then the prophet prayed, “O Lord, *open his eyes* so he may see!”

In urban missions we need, first of all, eyes that see the immense challenges, but next to that, also eyes to see God's provision.

The Scriptures give us ample prodding for urban missions. Mashau and Greenway's book draws our attention to some biblical narratives which might easily be overlooked, e.g. Note, wicked Nineveh of which God says, “Should I not be concerned about that great city?” (Jonah 4:11). Then there is Babylon, concerning which Jeremiah has to give this message to the Jews deported there, “Build houses and settle down..... also seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray for it...!” (Jeremiah 29:4-7). And let us not forget how Daniel gives himself positively, and evangelistically, to serve that city.

Look also at the enthusiasm with which the apostle Paul enters the arena of the cities of the ancient Roman world, e.g. Athens, Corinth, Ephesus and Rome.

And what about our Lord Himself? Look at the discerning way in which he deals with a lost individual when he meets the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). Cities have numerous lost, lonely and hurting individuals. And not only that! Look at the way in which the Lord Jesus takes notice of the plight of children!



Roger Greenway



Derrick Mashau

The book "An Eye that sees" singles out the significance of outreach among children in the urban context, street children, homeless children, orphaned children, abused children.

"Consider the fact", writes Derrick Mashau, that 45% of Africa's population is under the age of fifteen..." (p.114). Roger Greenway tells us about Mexico City which is reported to have over one million street children (p.120). Read on in the book "An Eye that sees" and discover what can be done in ministering to the needs of children.

In an earlier publication of Roger Greenway ("Apostles to the City", 1978) the author explores various avenues of outreach, some of which are summed up in "An Eye that sees".

In approaching the challenge of urban missions it is important,

- To understand the postmodern mindset (paper presented by David Robertson at the Pretoria Conference, 2005).
- To take note of the multi-cultural and multi-religious elements of the population (note paper presented on the Islamisation of Europe at the Euro regional conference in 2007).
- To consider the plight of Jewish people who have not yet acknowledged Messiah Jesus.
- To "see" the local urban scene as an urgent 21st century mission field.
- To follow the biblical concern for the poor, the alien and downtrodden.
- To bear in mind that there are usually large (tertiary) student populations in the great cities. In this strategically important group are often numerous foreign students, who appreciate a home away from home.
- To mobilise the local church to be on the look-out for practical and evangelistic opportunities (Word and Deed ministries). Urban mission involves the whole church, not just a missionary sent out by the church.

- To study the message and methods of Paul's urban strategies (helpful chapters in Roger Greenway's book, "Apostles to the City").
- To proclaim the *whole* counsel of God for the *whole* person, not merely to combat social needs in a secular way, nor to water down the truth by entertainment.
- To be cautious not to proselytise people to a Reformed "church-culture", but to seek them to be "transformed by the Word" (Rom 12:1,2); the old adage "semper reformanda" to be applied to ourselves and new converts.
- To let new members contribute their "transformed" gifts and backgrounds to the local body of Christ, instead of them simply fitting into an existing "mould". I found the book by Stefan Paas ("De werkers van het laatste uur") particularly helpful in this regard.

JG

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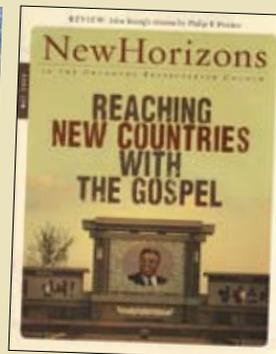
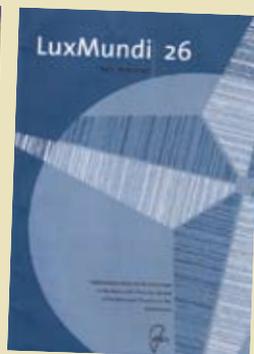
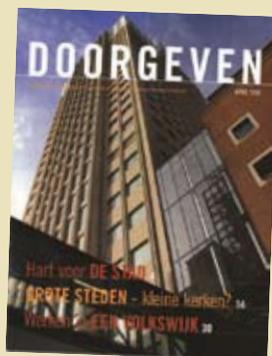
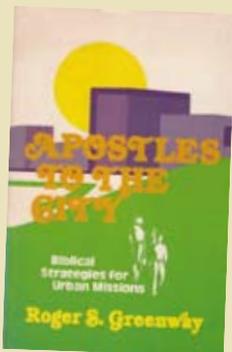
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Proceedings of the ICRC, Pretoria, 2005.



The Next issue of our Newsletter will be published, DV, before the middle of the year, with reports on the second Euro regional conference, and the African regional one, as well as some details on the forthcoming plenary conference of the ICRC due to be held in Christchurch, New Zealand, in October (15-21), 2009, DV.

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