

Clarion

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What did the days of the “creation week” consist of?

By C. Van Dam

Our starting point

What did the days of the “creation week” consist of? Were these days as we reckon days? Or were they long periods of time so that each “day” lasted thousands or even millions of years? There has been much controversy about this point and before we enter it, one thing must be clear. Decisive is what Scripture says about this. The Bible is the Word of God and is therefore normative also for this question. To the Scriptures we must submit. Considerations that arise from outside Scripture are secondary. For example, what an important figure in the history of the church said about the subject, or what science is currently teaching about it are all secondary considerations. Of first importance is what Scripture says. Indeed, we would not even know of the creation work of God in seven days if God had not revealed it to us in His Word. It is to that same Word that we therefore must turn for answers to our questions.

The meaning of “day”

What does Scripture say? If we turn to Genesis 1 and 2 and read these chapters carefully, we notice that the term “day” is used in different ways in these chapters. The context makes this clear. In Genesis 1:5, “day” refers to the time that it is light. “God called the light *Day* and the darkness He called *Night*.” However, in Genesis 2:4, “day” refers to a longer period of time, namely, the six days of creation. “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth, when they were created, in the *day* that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.” So we see two different meanings of “day.”

But what about each day of the creation work of God, the first, second, third, fourth day, etc.? What is meant by “day”? The answer must be that there is nothing in Scripture to suggest that these days were anything other than days, as we also reckon days, days that include daytime and nighttime.

Reasons for this position

In the first place, six times we read the words “there was evening and there was morning,” followed by the number of the day (Gen 1:5,8,13,19,23,31). This formulation shows that the author wanted there to be no doubt about how these days are to be interpreted. These are days that had an evening and a morning and were in this respect normal days. It will not do to try to drive a wedge between the first three days and those that followed; that is, those without sunlight and those with sunlight. Whatever the exact source of light was for the first three days, Genesis 1 makes it clear that all the days are to be perceived as the same. They are all days with an evening and a morning, days as man still experiences them.

Secondly, whenever “day” is modified by a number (and that happens over one hundred times in the first five books of the Bible alone), it always refers to a literal day. From a purely grammatical point of view, it is therefore highly unlikely that the

days of the creation week would have been anything different from what we normally consider a day. Consequently, current standard Hebrew dictionaries give the meaning of “day” in the passages under discussion as a regular day¹ and not as a long undetermined period of time. Similarly scholars commenting on the text, irrespective of whether they value Genesis as the Word of God or not, recognize that there is no justification for seeing aeons of time referred to.²

Thirdly, the fourth commandment reads: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work . . . for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day . . .” (Ex 20:8-11). It would make little sense to understand the term “days” in one part of the commandment literally (work six days and rest on the seventh) and understand it figuratively in another part (for in six days [millions of years!?] the Lord created). In this context it is noteworthy that nowhere in the Old Testament is “days” (the plural) used in any but a literal sense. If the days of the fourth commandment (in six days the Lord created) are actually ages or the like, then this is a unique use of the word and without any explanation or hint that it is symbolic for a long period of time.

Fourthly, if Adam lived in part of the sixth day and this day was a long period of time, how old did Adam then become? There is clearly no room for a long period of time. At the time of the birth of the third child of which Scripture specifically informs us, Adam was 130 years old (Gen 5:3).

Conclusion

The six days in which God created heaven and earth and all that is in them are to be understood as days and not long periods of time. To be sure, they were also special and unusual days. Certainly! These were the days God made the world! The first three days were also special because they had no sun to give the daylight. Unique in world history! But nevertheless these, too, could be called days with evening and morning. And so these were days as we experience them, with nightfall and morning, light and darkness.

Objections

Objections have been raised by those who reject the conclusion reached above. Let us consider the main points of disagreement since these objections include arguments from Scripture.

G.C. Aalders has written that “it is obvious that the creation day was limited by morning and evening, by the beginning and ending of the beaming light. Our 24-hour day includes the night and as such is a different concept in itself.”³ However, J.A. van Delden has correctly responded⁴ that if you want to speak rigidly in this vein, it is more consequent to say that the “day” of Genesis 1 refers to the night, for the text mentions

evening first! (“There was evening and there was morning, the first day.”) This is definitely not the direction to go. Genesis 1 clearly shows that the day was reckoned from the evening up to and including the next day (summarized in the word “morning”).⁵

2 Peter 3:8 is often referred to in order to argue that the days in Genesis 1 were not really days, but long periods of time. We read in that passage, “Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” But, notice that in this passage, “day” is a normal day. This passage does not support a figurative or nonliteral interpretation of “day” in Genesis 1. It does indicate that for God a day is *like* a thousand years, and a thousand years is *like* a day; but, not equal to a day! The point is that God is not limited as we are by time. He is God! And therefore, Peter suggests, the church should not despair. God can do in one day what would take man a thousand years! God hurries to come. That is the context of 2 Peter 3. If one applies this sense to the context of Genesis 1, then God can do in one day, what an evolutionist thinks should take thousands of years or more. A similar argument can be applied to Psalm 90:4. (“For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.”)

Frequently the argument is heard that when Scripture says that God created everything in six days, this is only a manner of speaking. God does not really mean it literally. He is only using terms understandable to us as humans. He speaks, to use a learned word, anthropomorphically.⁶ Now it is true that God in His self-revelation condescended to the level of man and used words, expressions, and also means that man could comprehend. For example, although God does not have a literal back or face yet He showed Moses His back and hid His face (Ex 33:23). In this way God in His self-revelation came down to man and made Himself known. Yet we know that God is not a man for Scripture informs us that God is spirit (John 4:24). There is, therefore, no ambiguity about the identity of God in His self-revelation, for the Scriptures make clear what the meaning is. However, it is an entirely different proposition to say that God’s revelation in His Word cannot be taken for what it says, because what is written in Scripture is only a human way of speaking to us. Such a position would necessitate that the theologians or scientists decide what part of Scripture has to be reinterpreted or reworded so that we know what God actually meant to say. Can we improve on the way God speaks to us in His Word? Scripture says the Word is near to us (Deut 30:14; cf. Rom 10:8). God revealed exactly what He wanted to say and meant (cf. 2 Pet 1:21; 2 Tim 3:16). Once we start insisting on “re-translating” Scripture so that it is “understandable” for our age in order to show what God “really meant” to say, we are lost. Where do we stop? What is God’s idea and what is man’s? This is the misery of so much modern theology. But, God’s Word is clear and perspicuous. It is a lamp before our feet. Its intent and message is plain.

Another objection to understanding the days of creation literally is the insistence that the seventh day never ended. The proof is said to be the fact that the text of the creation account does not include with the seventh day the words “and there was evening and there was morning, the seventh day.” The reason for this omission is said to be that the seventh day still continues for God is still resting from His work of creation. Now, if the seventh day is of such an extended length (so the reasoning goes), does this not suggest the same for the first six days of creation?⁷ In response, it should be noted that the order is different with the seventh day. The words “the seventh day” now come at the beginning and not at the end of this day. As such that is not so surprising, for God did not create on this day. In this respect this day was different from the preceding days for which a variety of creation acts could be mentioned. But



note, it is still called a day, with a number, just like the preceding six days, and it should be understood accordingly. There is absolutely nothing in the text to indicate that this seventh day never stopped.⁸

Another argument for seeing the seventh day as still continuing has been sought in John 5:17. In that chapter, we read of the Lord Jesus healing a lame man on the sabbath. When the Jews found this out, they persecuted Jesus “because He did this on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working still and I am working’ ” (v. 16b-17). On the basis of this passage it has been concluded that “Jesus’ reasoning is sound only if the Father acts *during His sabbath*; only on that condition has the Son the right to act similarly on the sabbath. . . . God’s sabbath, which marks the end of creation but does not tie God’s hands, is therefore co-extensive with history. Our Lord Himself did not see the seventh day of Genesis as a literal day”.⁹ However, this interpretation reads far more into the text than what it says! The point is that if the Father also works on the Sabbath (in His work of preservation and redemption), then so can the Son. There is nothing in the text to suggest that the Sabbath on which God is working is any other than the Sabbath that the Jews observe and on which the Lord heals.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above, we can conclude that the six days in which God created heaven and earth were just that, days with evening and morning. There is nothing in the Bible to suggest otherwise.

Why then has there been so much discussion and doubt sown on this point? There are other factors involved which affect one’s approach to the biblical text. We hope to look at these the next time, D.V.

1. See, e.g., W. Baumgartner et al., *Hebraisches und aramaisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*, fasc. 2 (1974), 382.
2. See, e.g., J. Skinner, *Genesis* (International Critical Commentary; 1930) 21; W.H. Gispen, *Genesis*, I (1974), 50.
3. G.C. Aalders, *Genesis*, I, 58.
4. J.A. van Delden, *Schepping en wetenschap*, (1977) 80f.
5. Cf. also the end of the preceding article in this series, “The First Day.”
6. A closely related theory is the so-called literary interpretation which “takes the form of the week attributed to the work of creation to be an artistic arrangement, a modest example of anthropomorphism that is not to be taken literally,” H. Blocher, *In the Beginning* (1984) 50.
7. See, e.g., H. Blocher, *In the Beginning*, 56.
8. See, e.g., Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 77f, n.73.
9. Blocher, *In the Beginning*, 57.

The doctrine of the church in Holy Scripture

By J. Faber

Editorial note: *The following is an edited transcript of a speech of Dr. J. Faber delivered in Edmonton during his speaking tour of Western Canada in 1987. The speaking style of this address has been maintained. The subheadings are from the editors.*

Introduction

Brothers and sisters, I am glad to be in your midst tonight to speak about the topic of the doctrine of the church in Holy Scripture. You will understand that this is a broad topic. If we speak about the doctrine of the church we think of that doctrine as it has been confessed by the catholic church, for instance, in the Nicene Creed in which we say we believe "one holy catholic and apostolic church." Or think of our Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 21 where we confess that "the Son of God from the beginning of the world to its end gathers, defends and preserves for Himself . . . a church chosen to everlasting life." Or we think of the Belgic Confession Articles 27 (and following) in which is spoken about the catholic church as "a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ, are washed by His blood, and are sanctified and sealed by His Holy Spirit."

Now tonight we would like to see something of the scriptural background of the doctrine of the church as it has been confessed by the church of all ages. When we read the Scriptures about the church, there is a wealth of revelation of God concerning His work in gathering His church. But in order to systematize that contents of God's revelation I would like to take especially three expressions for the church, three indications of the nature of the church and I do so in a trinitarian manner. We speak about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. You may say that all the outgoing works of God are works of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Also the work of gathering the church. Now if we think of that doctrine of the trinity, the Father, the Son and

the Holy Spirit, then I would say that Scripture reveals to us that the church is, in the first place, the assembly of the covenant people of God the Father. In the second place, you can say the church is the body of Christ, God the Son. And in the third place, the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit. I would like to take those three indications of the church as our guideline tonight.

The assembly of the covenant people of God the Father

First then, I speak about the church in the Scriptures as the assembly of the covenant people of God the Father. When I indicate the church in such a manner, I

***"The church is . . .
the assembly . . .
the body . . .
the temple . . ."***

think especially of the revelation of God right in the beginning of Holy Scripture. We confess that the Son of God gathers His church from the beginning of the world to the end. Therefore if we speak about the church we should not only speak about the church of God in the new dispensation but we should also think of the church of God in the old dispensation. Now in the Old Testament there are especially two nouns that are used as an indication of the church. Allow me first to mention those nouns in the Hebrew language. There is the word *qāhāl* and there is the word *ʿēdā*. That has been translated in the Revised Standard Version in this manner. When the Hebrew text has the word *qāhāl*, the RSV uses the word "assembly." When the Hebrew text has the word *ʿēdā* the RSV uses the word "congregation." Assembly and congregation.

In order to read some words of Scripture in which you find these indications, let us think of the very important moment

that the LORD God called His people at Mount Sinai. In Exodus 19 when Israel comes to Mount Sinai God says to Israel "you shall be My own possession among all peoples . . . you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The LORD God established His covenant with Israel at the Sinai and gave the ten words of the covenant. In the book of Deuteronomy (5:22) Moses speaks about the ten words as the words that "the LORD spoke to all your assembly" and in Deuteronomy 9:10 and 10:4 he calls that "the day of the assembly." That was the day when there was the gathering of the congregation of Israel. Therefore that is called the day of the assembly. In the law of Moses in Deuteronomy 23 you will find a law about all those who enter the assembly of the LORD, Yahweh. The LORD God of the covenant is the convener of the assembly of the LORD and the assembly of the LORD is an Old Testament name for the church of God. It is the church that God brings together.

Now there are even passages in the Old Testament in which you find both expressions. I think, for instance, of Judges 20:1 where is spoken about the congregation assembled as one man to the LORD at Mizpah. A gathering of God's people at Mizpah is called the congregation — the congregation assembled. "The chiefs of all the people, of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God" (v.2). So the people of God formed the congregation. That congregation comes together in the assembly and the assembly is called the assembly of the people of God. Also, in Numbers 14 when Israel sins against the LORD on the way through the desert, "Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel" (v.5). There you have the broad name of the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel. So in the Old Testament there are especially two words to indicate the church of God - the assembly and the congregation. The congregation is assembled as the people of God.

Now we may say that the expressions "the people of God" and "the assembly of the people of God" have in the Old Testament already a perspective to the New Testament. In the New Testament is again spoken about the people of God. But you know that all expressions of Exodus 19 are then as it were transmitted to the congregation of the New Testament. I think, for instance, of the way in which Paul speaks about the church of the New Testament as the Israel of God and the way in which Peter in his letter writes about the church as the chosen race. He says to the church called out of the Jews and Gentiles, "you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Or you can think of the way in which Peter in the meeting in Jerusalem in Acts 15 had said God has "visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name" (v.14). So in the same manner as God took the people of Israel in the old dispensation as a people of His own possession so there is a people that God takes out of all tribes and nations in the new dispensation — a people for His name. The apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans, chapter 9 applies to that people of God out of the Jews and the Gentiles all the names that the prophets had given to God's people. Once no people but now God's people for God has gathered a people of His own that He calls His people — a holy nation, God's own possession.

And now we see that those two names, the assembly and the congregation of the covenant people of God are applied to the church of God in the New Testament. The two places where our Lord Jesus Christ speaks about His church in the gospels are Matthew 16 and 18. In Matthew 16 we read that Peter confesses that the Lord Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Then the Lord Jesus says you are Peter and on this rock I will build My assembly, My church. The Lord Jesus here uses the same word that is used in the Old Testament for the assembly of the people of God. Christ called that My church, My assembly. In Matthew 18 the Lord says that if a brother sins, you should admonish him first, but then if he does not listen tell it to the church, to the assembly. The Lord Jesus speaks about the New Testament people of God as assembled in a similar manner as the Old Testament people of God were assembled on the day of the assembly. So there is the assembly of the congregation of God. That word *ekklesia* that is used in the New Testament is found in the French word "église" for church. It is the assembly of the people of God.

In the days of the New Testament, that word "assembly" also had a political meaning in civil life. It was used for the gathering of the citizens of a Greek *polis*, a Greek city. In Acts 19 we read of the riot in Ephesus and there the word "assembly" is used for an assembly of the citizens of Ephesus. You see then that the word assembly was a word that was also used in civil life. But then it becomes in the New Testament — in the line of the Old Testament — the word for the assembly of the citizens of God's kingdom. You may say that the church is an assembly of those people who by the grace of God have become obedient citizens of God's kingdom.

These are thus some indications for that first thought that in Scripture the church is indicated as the assembly of the covenant people of God. And then we think especially of God the Father.

Therefore you may say that the confessions are right when the confessions speaking about the church stress that element of assembly. I think of the Belgic Confession in Article 27 where the church is an assembly, a congregation. We should not build up the indication of the church of God from the individual. We should build up the confession about the church of God from the assembly of the people of God.

Another element if we think about the significance of the church as the assembly of the people of God, is that we never should make a contrast between the so-called clergy and the so-called laity. For

the word laity comes from the Greek word for *people*. The laity are those who belong to the people of God. But, all ministers, elders, deacons also belong to the people of God. So precisely the concept of the church as the assembly of the covenant people of God is devoid of any hierarchical concept. It cuts off all ideas of a contrast between clergy and laity.


Now I want to continue by speaking about that second element, namely, that the church is called in Scripture the body of Christ. Then we think of God the Son.

The body of Christ

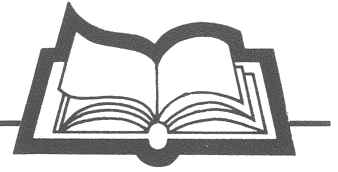
If we first of all make a survey of the texts in which the church is called the body of Christ in Scripture, I think of three texts from 1 Corinthians, one text from Romans, four from Colossians and five from Ephesians.

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 8:15 Paul writes: "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?" And then in chapter 10 he speaks about "a participation in the body of Christ" at the Lord's Supper. "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." And then in chapter 12 he writes broadly about the image of the congregation as the body of Christ. "Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (vv.12f.).

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FROM THE SCRIPTURES



By J. De Jong

“And He entered Jerusalem, and went into the temple; and when He had looked round at everything, as it was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.”

Mark 11:11.

One Last Look

It almost appears as an anticlimax. Mark has just recorded how the Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem surrounded with the cheers and cries of many residents of the city: “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” Right after this Jesus went straight to the temple, looked round at everything, and went to Bethany. Why did He come just to look around at things? And what is the significance of a visit made just to look around?

Jesus’ actions here become clearer for us when we recall that this is His last formal visit to the temple. This is a visit which ushers in the final week of His work on earth, a week filled with mounting bitterness, strife and envy against Him. To be sure, He returned to the temple to drive out the money changers. And His teachings and debates of the final week occurred in and around the temple. But here Mark records a specific visit by the Lord Jesus to the temple for the sake of the temple itself. Jesus looks intently at everything in the temple, its furniture, its utensils, the fine needlework and decorations, the altars, and the dividing curtain.

We can compare this last look of the Lord Jesus with the first look at the temple as anointed Messiah. Then the devil took Him to a pinnacle of the temple and told Him to jump down and so manifest Himself as the Son of God in the court of the temple. The Lord Jesus knew what Scripture prophesied concerning the messenger of the covenant. The prophet had said that “. . . the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold He is coming . . .” The Lord Jesus knew that He was the messenger of the covenant. He also longed to fulfill the temple and its administration, its services, sacrifices and offerings. But Jesus also knew that what the devil suggested was wrong. His was not the way to fulfil the temple.

But now the Lord Jesus has come to the time of fulfillment. Now He looks around at everything with both feet on the ground. And now He knows that He must follow through with the mandate given to Him by His Father. To be sure, from this point He must continue to proceed one step at a time, and one day at a time. So Mark also adds that, because it was late, the Lord Jesus left the city and returned to Bethany. The same zeal and longing that remained with Him throughout His life was still there. But longing and zeal must be coupled with patient obedience. The Son of God must

bring forward the fulfillment as one who is the Son of man.

Yet this look — a deep and intent looking as occurred more often in His earthly life, cf. Mk. 3:5,34,5:32, Lk.6:10—was just what Jesus needed in order to proceed with that final intense week leading to His death on the cross. As He looks at *everything*, He is assured that the hour has come. For He sees the altar and dividing curtain, the mark of the separation between God and man due to sin. He realizes in His heart that He is the one to bring down the curtain — indeed, to have it torn in two.

The Lord Jesus was obedient to the call given Him here by His Father. The first thing that Matthew narrates after the Lord Jesus died is: “And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom,” Matt.27:51. The dividing wall of partition was broken down, giving us access to the throne of grace. Priest, altar and sacrifice came to fulfillment in Him, because He saw His own office as willing Highpriest and Victim for the sins of His people.

The temple — it had pulled the Lord Jesus from the first days of His life on earth. As a twelve-year-old boy His heart was filled with the things of the temple. And why not? This was where the Lord gave reconciliation and life to His people. But Jesus also saw that the temple had to be fulfilled. His great love for the temple led Him to see how He was the fulfillment of the earthly temple, and how He had to break with the earthly temple in order to place His body as a pure offering and eternal sacrifice before God, through which justification and life is given to all who believe.

So that is all that this was — a *last* look, nothing less and nothing more. After His resurrection Jesus never visits the temple again. And in His final week He also prophesied the destruction of the earthly temple. Not one stone would be left upon another that would not be thrown down, Matt. 24:2. History proved the truth of His words, for only forty years after His death, the temple was completely destroyed.

The earthly temple is gone, but in Him the heavenly temple is ours! We may be cleansed from sin in the eternal offering of His heavenly body, and may also be nourished by it to life eternal! We may share the life of Him who came to fulfill the temple, making Himself a new and heavenly temple for us. He looked at everything — and followed through! This remains our joy all our days!

The doctrine of the church in Holy Scripture — *continued*

In the letter to the Corinthians the image of the congregation as a body is used in order to indicate that all members are members of the one and the same body and that they should use their gifts and talents joyfully and cheerfully for the well-being of the other members. I think that in the first letter of the Corinthians Paul, in using that image of body, is thinking of the body as an organism. In his usage of the image of the congregation as the body of Christ he does not first of all think of the relationship between Christ as the head and us as members of His body. Rather, he thinks of the mutual relationship of the members of the body. For in 1 Corinthians 12 he says the head cannot say to the other members I do not need you. Then he does not mean there the head Christ but he simply uses the image of the body as an organism in which all the members work together.

In Romans 12:4,5 he says: "For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." We are one body in Christ. He does not speak there of the body of Christ but he speaks of being one body in Christ.

In the letters of Paul to the Ephesians and to the Colossians you get the deepest revelation about the congregation as body, for there Paul speaks about Christ as the head and he says: "He is the head of the body, the church: He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything He might be pre-eminent," Colossians 1:18. Or you can say with Ephesians 1:22,23 God has made Him, Christ, "the head over all things for the church which is His body." The church is the body of Christ. But you know that Paul then in chapter 5:23 speaks about Christ as the head of the church His body. He also writes: "The whole body, joined and knit together, . . . makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love," Ephesians 4:16.

That is, shortly summarized, the revelation of God about the church as the body of Christ or as a body in Christ. If we think about the significance of that *image*, then we must say that we should never use the idea of the church as the body of Christ in order to speak about the church as a mystical supra-temporal phenomenon. There have been Christian thinkers who have used the concept of the church as the body of Christ to say that it is something that is above this earth and above this reality above this life and time, that it is a supra-temporal mystical body of Christ. But when Paul uses that

illustration of the church as the body of Christ, Paul first of all very simply thinks of that congregation, for instance of Corinth, that congregation with all its faults and mistakes which nevertheless was a church of God, an assembly of the covenant people of God. Paul indicates that in that concrete congregation the members should know of the privilege and of the responsibility of being members of one and the same body. We should not make that something invisible. Sure there are invisible aspects of the church, also of the church as the body of Christ, that

***“. . . to function
as a living member
of that body.”***

communion, that fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ as worked by the Holy Spirit. And I can only speak in faith about the church as the body of Christ. But, this speaking in faith does not make that reality a reality which is not of this world. Now it is the grace of God that He calls His people through His Word and Spirit and that He makes a congregation a body of Christ. But you will understand that that image of the body of Christ is precisely used in Scripture in order to admonish us to function as a living member of that body, that I am a living member as our Heidelberg Catechism puts it (L.D. 21). The catechism also speaks about the communion of saints that should be exercised within the congregation of God.

Now we come to the third indication of the nature of the church. You may say that that third indication is the indication of the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit.

CHURCH NEWS



DECLINED to Fergus, ON and
Grand Valley, ON:

REV. B.J. BERENDS
of Smithers, BC

* * *

CALLED to Edmonton
(Providence), AB:

REV. G. WIESKE
of Lincoln, ON

The temple of the Holy Spirit

The church as the temple of the Holy Spirit is found especially in three passages of Scripture. You can think again of the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul speaks about the members of the congregation. He says: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are" (vv. 16ff). In the same manner as God dwelt in the Old Testament temple in Jerusalem, so by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, God is pleased to dwell in the congregation. He dwells in the congregations through His Spirit. The Spirit who proceeds from God the Father and from God the Son dwells in the church and makes the church into God's temple in which God is present.

And you can think of the way in which Paul in the second place writes to the Ephesians about the church. There Paul reminds his gentile readers that they were once alienated from the commonwealth of Israel (1:11-12) and later says, "you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (2:19-22). In Ephesians 2 Paul had used all kinds of expressions for the church — fellow citizens, members of the household of God; but, it culminates in that image of the church as a structure that grows into a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. So it is the Holy Spirit who makes the church, who brings the church about through the preaching of the Word. The church is a Spirit-created reality in this world, a fruit of the Work of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ poured out on the day of Pentecost. In the book of Acts we see how it is the Holy Spirit who through the preaching of the Word brings together the assembly of the congregation of God's covenant people; how it is the Holy Spirit who builds that body of Christ into a living organism.

The third passage is from Peter. The apostle Peter in 1 Peter 2:4-7 speaks about the believers who have not taken offence at Christ but are being built upon that cornerstone, Christ. Then Peter writes "you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people." But in that same context he has said, "like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices ac-

ceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” That spiritual house in 1 Peter 2 is an indication of the church as a temple of God through the Holy Spirit. If we think about that revelation of God in Scripture that the church is a temple of the Holy Spirit then we should see the tremendous privilege that the people of God may form together a structure, a house that God is pleased to dwell in through His Spirit. That fact makes the gifts within the congregations, charismata, gifts of the Holy Spirit. Working together as members of one body is a using of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The church is a creation of the Spirit of God.

Conclusion

Well brothers and sisters those are three indications of the church of God in Scripture. I could speak about many more. The church is called the sheep, the flock of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church

is called the bride of Christ the bridegroom. The church is called the branches of Christ, the vine. The church is called the new Jerusalem, or the Jerusalem that is above, that comes from above, which is the mother of us all (Galations 4). But I took these three indications in order not to overload my introduction but to give a good basis for a discussion¹ about the church of God in this world.

I may end by saying that in our confession there is a Scriptural summary of these data. And now I think especially also of the fact that the confession says that there can be hypocrites in the church of God. That is based on what Scripture says. The apostle John in his first letter says there can be people who are in the church but who are not of the church. And John says that they went out of us because they were not of us. So precisely because the church is that work of the

triune God in this world, that work of grace, we should not take for granted that we are members of that church but we should be aware that we can only be living members of the church of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we should also be aware of the fact that Scripture says that God knows those who are His. That is God’s view of the church, the church in the sight of God. At the same time Scripture warns us that everyone of us should stay away from iniquity. That is our responsibility. Also in that light we should always speak about the church of God with awful reverence for God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and with a deep feeling of our privilege but also of our responsibility with respect to God’s church.

¹ Some questions (with answers) of this discussion will form the contents of the next article.

True ecumenicity₃

Different ecumenical organizations

By K. Deddens

World Council of Churches (W.C.C.)

In 1948 the World Council of Churches (W.C.C.) started. The character of the W.C.C. is described in its Constitution as follows: “The World Council is a fellowship of churches, which accept Jesus Christ our Lord as God and Saviour.” In an official declaration the W.C.C. added to this Constitution the clause that it “does not concern itself with the manner in which the Churches will interpret the foundation.” In other words, when becoming a member of the W.C.C. a “denomination” must agree with the foundation, at least officially, but how it reads and explains that foundation is up to that “denomination” itself. The W.C.C. does not want to concern itself with the “interpretation.” Not many words need to be wasted on the completely ambiguous, and therefore unbiblical character of this foundation, which, because of the arbitrariness of its interpretation, can be subscribed to by even the most liberal and sectarian group. This, in fact is done. It would be difficult to be more unbiblical for an organization which claims to be a community of faith. It can hardly be more

misleading. In the course of time the W.C.C. continued in its liberal direction of modern theology in which Jesus Christ is no more than a good example of solidarity.

International Council of Christian Churches (I.C.C.C.)

In the same year 1948 the “opponent” of the W.C.C. was born, the International Council of Christian Churches (I.C.C.C.). The foundation seems to appeal to us very much: the plenary Divine inspiration of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and, as the Word of God, the supreme and final authority in faith and life; the holiness and love of the one and Triune sovereign God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the essential, absolute, eternal Deity and the real and proper but sinless humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ; corruption of man; salvation of the redeemed and the everlasting suffering of the lost; those are just some doctrinal points from the Constitution of the I.C.C.C.

But however solid the foundation seems to be: concerning the criteria of be-

ing a church, it is silent in three languages. The whole church problem is obviated. They think in terms of a spiritual unity across the church walls: the Baptist can remain Baptist, the Methodist can remain Methodist, etc. So that means that neither the sacraments nor church discipline is mentioned.

Not only the Baptists were admitted, which reject God’s covenant with us and our children, but they also admitted member churches, which, Arminian in creed, deny election.

In this I.C.C.C. they speak about the acceptance of the “fundamental truths of Scripture” and in fact they reduce that foundation to the Apostles’ Creed. As if infant baptism, the covenant of grace, election, the conversion of man who is powerless in himself, the three marks of the true church, all would be peripheral. As if these matters should not belong to the fundamental doctrine of Scripture. To the I.C.C.C. the church seems to have one enemy only, namely communism. As if liberalism and other forms of humanism are not equally mortal enemies to the church of Christ.

Reformed Ecumenical Synod (R.E.S.)

After World War II also the "Reformed Ecumenical Synod" (R.E.S.) started.

In 1949 its first meeting was convened in Amsterdam at the initiative of the synodical churches. These churches did not participate in the W.C.C. Delegates from several Reformed and Presbyterian churches from all over the world were present. Already in 1946 a constitutional meeting of this "synod" was held in Grand Rapids, Michigan, prepared by the Christian Reformed Church in the U.S.A. The churches accepted as basis "the Holy Scripture, as interpreted in the Forms of Unity of the respective Churches who participate in this assembly." The goal was

to seek what is most subservient to the general building up of the participating churches and to give a common testimony of the faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints, and to assist each other in the maintenance of the purity of the doctrine and the reformation of life.

The synod of the (Liberated) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands of Amersfoort 1948 decided to decline the invitation to participation. Participation was considered unacceptable, because the synod had objections against the basis: the several confessions, mentioned in the basis were contradictory, according to the judgment of the synod (Art. 75, 3,A).

Another reason to decline the invitation had to do with the goal of the R.E.S. . . . The Synod of Amersfoort considered that reaching the goal of the R.E.S., "namely, 'maintaining the purity and the reformation of doctrine and life,' depends first of all on the obedient and faithful proclamation of God's Word in the local churches, wherever in the world they are," but that "the churches which invited us have deviated from this obedient and faithful proclamation" (Art. 75,3,E).

The committee which delivered a report to the Synod of Groningen-South 1978 concerning contact with churches abroad added a consideration regarding basis and goal of the R.E.S. This committee pointed to the fact that the synodical churches had publicly deviated from the Reformed confessions, and were now also a member of the W.C.C. (the synodical churches had decided at the Synod of Sneek 1969/70 to ask for membership of the W.C.C.). These W.C.C. churches contribute to funds supporting revolutionary movements. It is therefore impossible to sit at one international "synod" table together with churches which involve themselves in revolutionary activities.

At the Synod of the Reformed Churches held in Groningen-South in 1978 it was also pointed out how bad the influence could be of churches who tolerate modernism: "This evil influence by means of papers of the R.E.S. in the Christian Reformed Church is extensively shown by the deputies of the Canadian sister churches in their last appeal to the Christian Reformed Church regarding the doctrine of the Scripture" (published in 1977; see Synod of Coaldale, Acts, p. 102ff. [Appendix VII]).

Not only by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, but also by churches participating in the R.E.S., objections were raised against developments in the synodical churches. The Kosin Presbyterian Churches of Korea left the R.E.S. In 1981 the Free Church of Scotland broke with them. Objections were voiced not only against a liberal view regarding Scripture, but also against the fact that in the synodical churches homosexuals were admitted to the Lord's Table. A number of member churches of the R.E.S. asked that the membership of the synodical churches be rejected. Finally it came to a crisis at the meeting of R.E.S. in 1988 at Harare. There it was decided to maintain the membership of the synodical churches. The consequence of it was that four groups of churches suspended or cancelled their membership: the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk (the Netherlands), and the Gereformeerde Kerken (South Africa). The conclusion must be that the R.E.S. is not the solution as the way to counter the ecumenism of the W.C.C.

International Conference of Reformed Churches (I.C.R.C.)

But is there, then, no possibility for true Reformed ecumenical activity? There is! The initiative came from the deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. They asked for

an ecumenical synod, or a session of a general synod, at which all the churches could be represented: from Africa, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands and Korea. We are of the opinion that it is of great importance to have a conference together and to have oral contact as churches who stand on the same basis.

This proposal was submitted to the Synod of Groningen-South 1978. The deputies for churches abroad were of the opinion that here a matter was broached which had to be considered seriously. They were convinced of its great importance and gave some reasons for that. In this way a penetrating testimony could be given of the unity of the Reformed Churches in all five continents, over against contemporary religious leagues of churches. Besides, it could be an encouragement for the small and/or young churches abroad, who live very much isolated: to know and to recognize each other could promote the bond between the churches. There could also be cooperation in matters which the member churches have in common, such as the development of a Reformed strategy of mission over against modern liberal mission theories and practices.

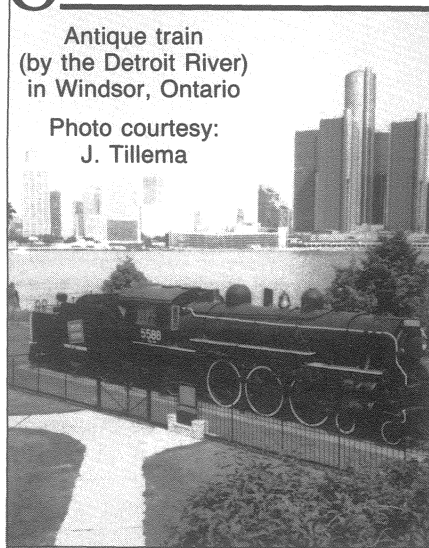
The Synod of Groningen-South decided to give a mandate to new deputies for churches abroad, namely, to deliberate with the sister churches and prepare an international meeting of churches. The Synod of Arnhem 1981 made the decision that the sister churches abroad and also the churches with which contact was practised, would be invited to a constitutional meeting for the convocation of a Reformed international conference. This constitutional meeting was held in Groningen-South in 1982. The meeting adopted the name *International Conference of Reformed Churches (I.C.R.C.)*. The following basis was accepted: "the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testament, as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity and in the Westminster Standards." The I.C.R.C. will meet every four years. The Synod of Cloverdale 1983 decided that the Canadian Reformed Churches would join the I.C.R.C. The first conference was in Edinburgh 1985.

The first meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches took place in Edinburgh 3-10 September, 1985, and brought together *ten member churches* and observers from nine other churches. The participants came from

OUR COVER

Antique train
(by the Detroit River)
in Windsor, Ontario

Photo courtesy:
J. Tillema



HYMN 40

Aurelia

Samuel S. Wesley, 1864

1. The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation
By water and the Word:
From heav'n He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her
And for her life He died.

2. Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation,
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy Name she blesses.
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endowed.

in the Covenant, Christology, and Nehemiah the Reformer. In the I.C.R.C. we have a truly Reformed ecumenical organization over against its caricatures in other larger bodies. The I.C.R.C. is not aiming for competition. It seeks to be a group of churches which want to be and to remain Reformed, churches which want to maintain the infallibility of the Word of God and to be faithful to the Reformed confessions, based upon that Word.

Are there differences between the member churches? Certainly there are. The confessions are not exactly the same. Let us not neglect that fact. There is a different historical background which is not to be denied. But let us not overstate the differences as if the one member is Reformed and the other one is not. Exaggeration is wrong. However, the differences in confession and also in church polity are to remain a matter of discussion. If there is the strong will to be and to remain Reformed churches, over against all kinds of false ecumenicity, and if we together have the strong desire to bow before the infallible Word of God, the blessing of the LORD can be expected.

Finally

True ecumenicity — is it possible? In many ecumenical organizations the antithesis is forgotten and humanism (in a new form) has taken its place. Criticism of the Bible and falsification of the Scripture mark much of today's ecumenism in an alarming way. In antithesis with the Babylon of false ecumenism, the appeal is still there: "Come out of her, My people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues" (Rev. 18:4). Churches who want to stand for the unabridged maintenance of God's Word and the confessions based upon it, see it as their remaining calling to be church of the living God, "the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). They also see it as their calling to help and support each other in the fulfillment of this calling.

In dependence on and with confidence in the mighty Kurios, who bought His people with His precious blood, we are able indeed to fulfil this ecumenical calling. We can do so if guided by Word and Spirit, in the unity of the true faith, looking forward to the great multitude which no man can number, "singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, saying, 'Great and wonderful are Thy deeds, O Lord God the Almighty!' " (Rev. 7:9, 15:3).

many different countries, representative of all continents.

This being a first meeting, the discussions were largely of a theological nature, homing in on the concept of the church and the covenant in the Reformed Confessions.

While there was evident agreement on the bases of Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th centuries, underpinning unanimous affirmation with regard, e.g. to the Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God and the only rule of faith and life; the Lord Jesus Christ as God and King of this world to whom all people and governments must give account: there was also recognition of difference of perspective on matters of less importance.

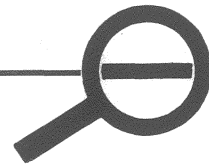
Conference recognized the Christian duty of securing the closest possible unity of Reformed Churches on the

practical level. With this in mind, and having regard to the fact that Christ gathers His one catholic church out of all tribes, nations and peoples, there was set up a committee on Missions with a directive to investigate areas of mutual helpfulness in missions and in the training of those called to leadership in missions. Conference also appointed a committee to study the text of the three ecumenical creeds, in order to come to a common text that can be recommended to the member churches.¹⁵

At the I.C.R.C. conference at Langley, British Columbia, 1989, reports concerning mission work and the text of the three ecumenical creeds will be discussed. Papers will be presented on the following topics: *Contextualization in Mission, Apartheid, Hermeneutics and the Gift of the Spirit, The Elder as Preserver of Life*

¹⁵ *Communiqué of the I.C.R.C. 1985, cf. Clarion, Vol. 34, no. 23, November 15, 1985, p. 487.*

By C. Van Dam



Disastrous times for children

On the surface, things have never looked so good for the child as in this final part of the twentieth century. There is prosperity and freedom. The threat of the child labour of the previous century or of hunger found elsewhere on the globe is nonexistent for children in the Western world. Children seem to get whatever they want. It all appears rosy. Indeed, it seems small wonder that this century has been called the century of the child.

Dr. G. Van Bruggen, a Dutch pediatrician who has also served for years in a refugee camp in Thailand, has spoken up to declare that a veritable disaster for children is taking place in the Western world. Her words and keen insight demand a hearing. What follows is based on an extensive report (in *Nederlands Dagblad* of 4 October 1988) of a speech that she delivered this past fall.

The problem

The future of the child does not look very rosy. The reality is that a disaster for children is under way. According to Dr. Van Bruggen, the reason for this disaster is that parents no longer seem to realize that their children need them. When television reports on catastrophes in the Third World, haggard children with tears on their cheeks are shown. But, as those children are the victims of poverty, so children in the Western world are victims of prosperity.

Dr. Van Bruggen pointed out that concepts about children are changing. No longer can it be taken for granted that children are brought up by both parents. That happens less and less. Yet, a child wants to know where he or she comes from. Children are materially well-provided for today; but, that's far too often where it's left at. Indeed, because parents take such good material care of their children, they often think that they can make all kinds of demands on them. Their child or children must be accustomed to meet the demands of the parents. This attitude on the part of the parents brings the message that children are there for the parents and not the parents for the children. Children sense this and feel rejected. Their hurt shows itself in more

vandalism, more pregnancies, more suicides, and more cases of anorexia nervosa (prolonged loss of appetite leading even to death) and alcoholism among youth. Parents in turn more often than before feel inclined to give up their role as parents when problems surface. There is no room in their world for difficulties with their children. The result is confusion for children who realize that they who have been conceived and born have no guarantee of receiving the social and psychological care that they need.

The way out

The Bible tells us that central to the task of raising children is the commandment to honour your father and your mother. The concept of authority is central here. However, also Christians often have difficulty understanding what that means. Often power and force are confused with authority. The issue is not: who is the strongest, but who is responsible for who? The goal of Christian upbringing is to guide to maturity. This implies (cf. Heb 5:14) that the child learns to distinguish between what is good and bad. The current understanding is that good is whatever makes you feel good. However, according to the Bible, good is to fear God.

Other points

Dr. Van Bruggen continued by noting that in 1875 scientists discovered that a child originates from the union of a sperm cell and an ovum. This is in line with the biblical thought that father and mother need to be at the beginning of new life together. This is a principle that is often neglected with artificial insemination. As a result the child becomes unsure of its origin. The results of this will become evident within the next ten years.

Another thought that Dr. Van Bruggen mentioned is that a pregnancy does not last nine but eighteen months. After birth the child is still completely dependent on the mother. It isn't until nine months later that the child can move independently of its mother.

Children and parents

The child must not be seen as something on which one can place his demands. Children need to be accepted as such. When parents place all kinds of basically selfish demands on their children, then our Christian families become suffocating places to be.

Furthermore, parents must give guidance by their own example of life. In this way children must learn what faithfulness, love, and holiness mean. When all sorts of problems surface among young people, for example, wrong attitudes to marriage and sexuality, then one must ask, what kind of parents do they have? Have these things never been discussed in a biblical way?

Another point is, of course, that if parents have faithfully instructed their children in the ways of the Lord, then the time comes to step back. It is possible that one's child makes mistakes; but then children have to have the possibility of making mistakes. The pediatrician added that when people come to her with a child that is not able to or will not walk, then the cause is usually that they have not had a chance to fall.

These items from the speech of Dr. Van Bruggen give much food for thought. Children need parents, both of them. The parent-child relationship should not be based on the parents' needing the children or using them for their purpose. The calling of parents is a beautiful and holy one. It is also difficult and crucial. No matter how good the Christian education may be that our children receive outside the home, the education they receive inside the parental home is normally decisive for their well-being in the deepest sense of the word. That could be a frightening thought which could lead to despair were it not for the fact that our children are also God's covenant children. And He will hear the cries of those who seek their guidance and strength from Him alone, also for this area of life, even at the end of the twentieth century, when society sometimes appears set on destroying itself in its attitude to what is still called the family unit.



By W.W.J. VanOene

Shall we begin this time in the east? No, not the far east or the near east even, but plainly the east of our own country. I am happy that I can pass something on which concerns Lower Sackville. Too little information from there reaches us here out west.

The Kroeze family has arrived in Lower Sackville, and the consistory wrote a letter to the Hamilton Church, thanking them for their willingness to have their missionary serve them while he is awaiting their visa for Brazil. Since the days of their institution the brothers and sisters in Lower Sackville have never had the privilege of having a minister in their midst for months in a row. Now they have one.

I think that they are pulled into two directions: on the one hand they will be most happy when it takes a long time for the visa to be received; on the other hand, however, they see the need for the work in Brazil and thus will hope for an early arrival of the required documents.

Going back to Hamilton, we pass on that "Prof. Dr. J. Faber informs the consistory that his retirement has been changed to January 1, 1990." This, I understand, refers to his retirement as minister of Hamilton.

A short hop from Hamilton brings us to Burlington East.

The Committee of Administration "is looking at the remuneration paid to the caretaker for work performed for weddings. This should be paid by the couple getting married, but is sometimes overlooked."

I am happy that some attention is paid to this point. However, I have my difficulties with it, as with a "remuneration" for the minister (Don't forget him!).

I always wonder whether it is correct to charge church members for special things. I have never dared to do it. If couples asked me what my "fee" was, I always answered that I never charged anything. In some instances all I got was a "Thank You" at the end of the festive celebration of the wedding. In quite a few instances the couple remembered me by means of an "envelope with contents," as it is commonly called.

I know that marriages — like funerals — are private matters and should be conducted as such, as we provide in our Church Order. Is there any church or minister that "charges" for funerals? When I conducted one in another congregation, either the consistory or the family remembered the extra cost and time which I gave to this service to the bereaved family. But I have never heard yet that a minister received extra remuneration for a funeral in the congregation which he was serving.

Is it, then, proper to make it obligatory for weddings?

Mind you, I do not wish to deprive any colleagues of a very welcome financial bonus, and I am convinced that the bridal couple, who gladly spend I don't know how much on dresses, suits, flowers, dinner, and whatever else is connected with these things, should show their appreciation also for the extra work that the minister did. And I do not think that any couple will have to cut their honeymoon short because of what they gave to the officiating minister.

What is good for the goose is good for the gander also, which in this case means that the bridal couple should also remember the extra work which the caretaker has in connection with a wedding ceremony.

But my difficulty lies somewhere else.

Is not a minister supposed to do everything which is connected with his being a minister of that particular congregation? Is it not so that a minister is registered as one authorized to solemnize marriage *because* he is a minister of that church? Do not weddings belong to his sphere of activities just as much as funerals?

The same applies to the custodians. Is it required of the families of deceased members to remunerate the caretaker extra for the work done in connection with the funeral? By the same token: is it required of bridal couples that they shall give some extra remuneration?

There is another point: Oftentimes consistories charge for the use of the facilities when a wedding takes place or a wedding reception is held in the churchbuilding or annex. Apart from the question whether a consistory would be permitted to charge for the use, being a charitable organization which enjoys the privilege of freedom from taxes, my difficulty has been for long whether it is correct to demand of members who fulfil their financial obligations towards the service of the Lord that they shall pay extra for the use of facilities when they get married or celebrate a twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. I do not recall ever having heard that it is done for a funeral, which is just as private a matter as a wedding.

In any case, by the above remarks I have given you some food for thought. May your thoughts be pleasant also towards the one who raised these points!

The Yearbook will be appearing within the foreseeable future. Let me now already mention that, generally speaking, there is growth among us. One church, however, has exactly the same number of members that it had at the beginning of 1988. This is Orangeville. Let, therefore, no one think that they forgot to pass the information on to Winnipeg when it appears that their total has remained the same.

In Burlington South the Building Committee reported that "A price has been set on the property that the committee has made an offer on. The committee expects to table a proposal at the next meeting."

Yes, we again heard from Chatham, too.

It appears that it pays to shop around for the best deal when it comes to mortgages and loans.

The Chatham consistory's information "from the Bank of Montreal Accountant revealed that the renewal for five years would be at 14% interest plus \$300.00 in renewal lawyer's cost. The Trust Company charges us 11¾% for five years and \$100.00 renewal cost. When we continue to pay \$898.00 monthly as we did in the past four years, the mortgage will be paid off in 7½ years instead of eleven years. It was also advised and decided to continue the \$898.00 monthly."

The Church at Chatham was "convening church for the Classis of December 14. At first we had not received any matters which necessitated the convening of a classis. Classical regulations state that if no such material has been received, one classis may be skipped if the convening church and its neighbouring church so decide. After the deadline was passed, we still received an appeal which we knew should be dealt with by classis. In consultation with the neighbouring church we convened a classis after all."

Is it not a sad thing that all the brothers had to be taken out of their daily work, that all the money had to be spent on traveling and meeting, all the time had to be taken out for it because of one appeal?

I do not know what the appeal was or from whom it came; nor do I know whether the appellant's cause was upheld or not, but I wonder whether in case the churches did not give any reason to have a classis, the cost for convening a classis should not be borne by the appellant, in any event when he "loses" his case. The churches should become more and more aware of the extra burdens which the seemingly endless "appeals" place upon them, and should not feel compelled to convene a classis if they themselves did not consider it necessary to have one.

Jumping from the south of Ontario to the center, we read in the Ottawa bulletin that "Rev. VanPopta reported on progress made at catechism classes. It is concluded that progress is, indeed, positive."

I am wondering whether the brothers could inform me as to when progress is *negative*.

Another point from the Ottawa bulletin is that the "consistory has decided to implement the use of envelopes for the regular voluntary contributions of the families and single communicant members of the church."

Neerlandia, too, started with numbered envelopes. "The purpose of numbered envelopes is to keep your donations confidential to the treasurer only."

Using numbered envelopes is an excellent way of receiving and keeping track of voluntary contributions.

I have only one question in connection with Ottawa's decision to use them for "families and single communicant members."

This question is: "Why only single *communicant* members?"

We have to make *all* our young people aware of the fact that they, too, belong to the church of Christ. This is a fact whether they have made profession of faith or not. I recall the look of pride and satisfaction in the eyes of ten- or twelve-year-old noncommunicant members who deposited each month one or more dollars into their *own* envelope, money which they gave from their paper route earnings. Why should we give food to the impression which oftentimes exists with our younger, noncommunicant members as if they are not counted in with the congregation, as if they do not rate, and as if they mean something only once they have made profession of faith?

Make them feel included in the number, make them feel wanted, make them feel appreciated, make it clear to them that they belong to the church of Christ from their early days on and that they, too, are allowed to build together with the whole congregation. It is not in the first place or mainly their money that we are after when giving them their own set of envelopes. It is in the first place their interest, their cooperation, their love and dedication that we want.

It is for these reasons that I think it to be wrong when only those who have made profession of faith are to be the recipients of envelopes for the regular voluntary contributions.

The last place we visit in Ontario is Elora.

"The committee has been able to purchase an organ for the church. Our two regular organists have practised on it during the past week, but they maintain that it will take a number of weeks before they are able to play it (more or less) flawlessly." I think that the very last word refers more to the registration than to the actual playing which — if I recall correctly — is very good already.

Let's stop over in Carman.

"From the church at Surrey an appeal addressed to General Synod about the word confessions in the liturgical forms. Since all material for General Synod should be directed to the convening church all appeals should follow the proper



channels. Declared inadmissible."

I don't know what kind of church polity they adhere to in Carman, but the above certainly is not "flawless," to use an earlier expression here, too.

In the first place: From Rev. G. H. Visscher's "Letter to the Editor" it is evident that Surrey did *NOT* send an "appeal." Another time I already expressed my relief when I read in Lynden's Consistory report that it was and is a request, a proposal to General Synod.

Why did several consistories not read well when they took note of Surrey's submission? Are we so used to alleged "appeals" that we colour every submission with that paint? Why did several consistories — including Carman's — wrongly call Surrey's proposal an appeal? One of the first requirements is that we read well.

IF it had been an appeal, Carman would have been right: copies of appeals do not belong at consistory tables. They are to be sent only and directly to the assembly to which the appeal is directed. Copies of appeals sent to consistories should be returned to sender.

But since when is it so that "all material for General Synod should be directed to the convening church" and is to be declared inadmissible at the consistory level?

Are the churches not vitally interested and involved in all that will be dealt with at the general synod which is to be held? Is it not of utmost importance that the churches know what will be discussed and dealt with?

If our readers would care to consult previous volumes of the *Canadian Reformed Magazine*, they will discover that in "olden days" the matters that would be dealt with at general synods were discussed extensively in the press and that the membership were informed beforehand about these things.

I have sadly missed this lately.

No, rest assured, I am not advocating that our consistories or that those writing in our press should act as if they were a general synod and as if they had to decide about these things. But with the general synod less than three months away, what does the membership know about the matters that will be dealt with? The scant information which we get from consistory reports does not enlighten us to any extent.

I am happy that there is an opportunity to express this concern.

Carman — as apparently all the churches — received a “letter from the Korean Theological Seminary requesting funds for the operation of their seminary.”

It is only in Carman’s consistory report that I read that the Koreans asked for support, but it is not unlikely that the same request was contained in the letters to the other churches.

It is hard for me to understand how the Koreans still dare to ask for financial support and then from our rather small federation which has to carry quite a heavy burden already.

The consistory of Carman also was asked for advice “how much money should be sent to Cloverdale each year for Mission Aid. Cloverdale will be contacted to see if there is an assessment per communicant member.”

The same question was asked by us when we became members of the Abbotsford Church. In Ontario we were used to paying a certain amount per communicant member per year, based on a budget that was presented by the Toronto Mission Aid Board.

To our surprise we found that as far as the Mission Aid for Brazil is concerned, there was no budget, there was no indication as to how much we were supposed to contribute per year. Abbotsford just held a collection every Sunday afternoon and sent money whenever some was requested.

We found this strange and to a certain extent also irresponsible, for now there was no control at all on our end of the line.

What should be done regarding Brazil as well is: send a budget to the participating churches or rather to their Mission Aid committees for their comments and suggestions, so that we all know what is going on and how much money is needed, and so that local committees have a chance to have some input with respect to plans, setup and execution of plans.

I am happy about Carman’s question, only I am afraid that the consistory cannot help them to any extent, since Mission Aid is not a directly ecclesiastical matter. Perhaps the meeting which is to be held in April will bring about a better arrangement.

First to the south of Alberta.

I am thankful that apparently the sending of bulletins from Coaldale has been resumed. From one of the latest bulletins we learn that the consistory received a “letter from a brother and sister in Taber regarding instituting a church in that area. It is decided to inform them by a personal visit that at this time it is felt that the institution should come from the church members of the area and that they should come to council with a proposal or a request for advice.”

The brothers and sisters in the Taber area now can be assured that they have the consistory’s approval if they take some action or try to get support for their goal of having a church instituted in the Taber region. Undertaking any such action without express approval could — in the worst case — be regarded as something undesirable or even damaging to the life of the congregation as a whole. Now there is a possibility of healthy development.

Rev. Wielenga also dedicated some lines to the fact that prayer of intercession in the midst of the congregation must be requested and definitely is not something which may be expected to come automatically.

“In general, there must be a special occasion, of a serious nature, either joyful or sorrowful. Occasions like birth and death are selfevidently reasons for remembering the members concerned by name. For the rest, let us realize that it is not so that, for instance, the mere fact of staying in the hospital is automatic reason for being remembered before the throne of God by the whole congregation in worship, although it will be done gladly, if so requested.”

He points to the fact that there may be brothers and sisters ill at home whose illness is more serious or comprehensive than that of those who are in the hospital, and whom we do not

remember by name unless this is requested.

It is good when prayer-by-name is requested. It also prevents that it is taken ill of the one who conducts the service when he does not remember anyone by name if there are no requests to that effect. If he does remember some members by name although no specific request has been received, and does not mention others, serious complaints or worse may be expected.

Calgary had a Boxing Day dinner which must have been good.

The consistory decided “that the building fund will be used towards the acquisition of a church building or for land for that purpose.”

In Edmonton the manse of the Immanuel Church is nearing completion. Rev. Kampen wrote that they may be moving in towards the end of February. Will that ever be a happy day!

The Immanuel consistory “decided to send a letter to the upcoming General Synod to express concern about the seemingly endless minor linguistic changes. Also concern will be expressed that the changes proposed to especially Art. 19 and 45 are not linguistic but substantial.” The consistory refers to changes proposed in these articles of the Church Order.

Here is another point at which I deplore the fact that matters are not discussed more in our press or in bulletins, for that matter. Regarding a few changes I have expressed my concern to the committee, which was so kind as to send me a copy of the relevant proposals. And I agree with the Immanuel consistory: unless it is absolutely necessary we should not make changes every time a general synod is held.

Now that the Neerlandia church building has been completed, they held an auction of all materials which were not or no longer needed. One way of letting the knife cut on both sides!

“The Committee of Administration has received the mandate from the consistory to look into the possibility of purchasing additional land and to price out a manse.”

When trying to visualize the situation around the new church building, I don’t know whether it will be possible to purchase more property adjacent to the piece on which church building and manse find a place at present. Mind you, the consistory decision does not speak of property next to the present location, so we’ll wait and see what they come up with.

If special donations are mentioned, this certainly is not done to minimize the faithfulness of the brothers and sisters who come before the Lord with their regular offerings. Yet I cannot but tell you that Vernon was again surprised by a special gift. “With gratitude special note was taken of a donation of \$4,000.00 towards the building fund.”

With sadness we mention that Rev. and Mrs. Meijer of Brazil had to go to the Netherlands in connection with the impending birth of a baby. Special treatment and medical care will be needed. We express the fervent wish that the Lord may make everything well by His power, in order that the work which is *His* work may be continued.

Things can change fast: the one moment there is the possibility that no fewer than four missionaries can work in the same foreign country; the other moment there is no one there.

The task of the Mission Aid workers is thereby becoming much more comprehensive and difficult. May they receive the special ability needed to continue as much as they can possibly do.

May also the visa for the missionary families of Hamilton be issued soon, that the day of Christ be brought nearer.

For this time we have to leave it at this.

Yours in Christ
VO

By Rev. W.W.J. VanOene

Synod 1905

The Synod of Utrecht 1905 drew near.

Various submissions were sent to be dealt with by this synod, dealing with the points mentioned in the *Five Theses*.

One proposal be inserted here in full. It came from the consistory of the Church at Hoorn.

"The consistory of the Reformed Church of Hoorn feels itself burdened by theses which are being taught in the Reformed Churches, such as justification from eternity, presumptive regeneration at baptism, immediate regeneration, and the supralapsarianism;

"It judges these theses to be in conflict with the Confessional Formulas of the Reformed Churches;

"It considers that the Ministers of the Word by subscribing to the Forms of Unity have bound themselves not to teach anything that conflicts with these Forms;

"It requests your assembly to take such decisions that these theses will no longer be preached and taught."

From the consistory of Groningen (A) a proposal was received to appoint a committee with the mandate to serve the churches with advice concerning these doctrinal differences so that the next synod — if necessary, to be convened earlier — would be able to take a decision.

At the synod, all documents regarding these matters were given into the hands of an Advisory Committee, to which the professors M. Noordtzijs and H.H. Kuyper were added as advisers.

The committee came with a report which was signed by all its members, having been adopted unanimously.

One of the brothers, Elder Rijpstra, declared "that he had cosigned the report for the sole reason that he wishes to see in it a basis for pacification."

As for the proposals of the committee, after various changes had been made, even Prof. L. Lindeboom could go along with the conclusions, whereupon synod unanimously adopted them.

The fact that the conclusions were adopted *unanimously* refutes any claim as if the teachings of Dr. A. Kuyper Sr were sanctioned by them or raised to a status of legitimacy. If this had been so or even if this could have been legitimately concluded from these conclusions, it would have been a complete turn-about for Prof. Lindeboom, to mention only him. It is inconceivable.

There was a difference between the Advisory Committee and Prof. Lindeboom among others, in that Lindeboom c. s. were convinced that the theses of Dr. A. Kuyper Sr. came into conflict with the confessions, whereas the committee considered the differences to fall within the framework of the confessions.

However, since only the *conclusions* were debated, not the committee's report or considerations, Lindeboom could go along with them.

The Report

The report of the committee contained statements with which Prof. Lindeboom definitely would *not* have been able to go along.

The reader can judge this for himself from the following part of the report.

"Now your committee proceeds to dealing with the contents of the gravamina, and it is of the opinion that it is neither necessary nor desirable for a General Synod to make a definite pronouncement regarding these differences, yea even that a Synod is not able or allowed to do so. "It is **not necessary and not desirable**, because, if only mutually all exaggeration is avoided, the differences meant here do not concern any point of our confession at all, any fundamental dogma of our Church, but only regard a difference of opinion, a difference of presentation, a difference of name. Your committee deplores it that by some harsh expressions, by the use of uncommon terms, by pushing some doctrinal presentations to extremes, occasion has been given to the action which at present disturbs our Churches; on the other hand, it equally deplores it that the impression has been given to our Churches as if the issue here was a battle against such a deviation from the precious Confession, delivered to us by our fathers, whereby the purity of doctrine was endangered and a new doctrine was introduced into our Churches. For to everyone who knows the history it is clear that the doctrinal theses to which objections have been raised can either wholly or partially be found with the most eminent teachers

of our Church, a Calvin, Beza, Ursinus, Guido de Brès, Gomarus, Voetius, Comrie, Holtius, and others, and that in the age in which Reformed theology flourished our Churches never even thought of accusing them or condemning them for that reason because of deviation from the Confession, but, on the contrary, esteemed these men of God very highly. And although it is perfectly true that the Synod of Dort issued the warning that 'one is not to judge the faith of the Reformed Churches from private or special statements of some old as well as new teachers but from the very public Confessions of the Churches,' so that it would not be allowed to appeal to the statements of these teachers in order thereby to present any private sentiment as **the doctrine** of the Reformed Churches, yet, on the other hand, your committee considers it incorrect both exegetically and historically, when with the explanation of the Confessional Formulas the spiritual climate from which these Confessional Formulas have come forth is not taken into account; because, if this is the case, one would, with an appeal to the **words** of the Confession assign to it a sense and meaning which our fathers never intended it to have.

"And further, as far as these doctrinal theses themselves are concerned, your committee is of the opinion that it certainly would have to be disapproved of if a General Synod of the Reformed Churches in our days condemned as being in conflict with the Confession what has been taught by the best Reformed theologians, or forbade someone also now still to champion these sentiments. It was rather the Remonstrants who tried time and again to throw these points of difference, specifically regarding infra- and supralapsarianism, into the midst of the Reformed; but something from which it can appear most

clearly how determinedly our fathers refused to see any fundamental difference in this respect is the answer given by the Reformed at the Conference in The Hague in 1611 Your committee wishes to take the same stand.

"It does so the more boldly because it not only can refer for this to the history of our Churches, but is also convinced that a General Synod **neither can nor may** make a definite pronouncement about these controversies. For the difference of insight which underlies these doctrinal differences finds its cause in the limitation of our human cognitive faculty. When, on the one side, emphasis is laid on God's sovereignty, the eternity and immutability of God's counsel, the almighty operation of God in the work of grace and the solidity of the covenant of grace; and, on the other side, the attention is asked more for the guilt of man, the execution of God's counsel in time, the means which God uses in the work of grace and the personal appropriation of the benefits of the covenant, both these presentations find their basis in Scripture, ought to complement each other in order to prevent any oneness; and a cutting off the one series of these presentations at the cost of the other would cause damage to the knowledge of God, the salvation of the souls, and the practice of godliness. For this reason our Reformed Churches in all countries and in all ages have maintained the *libertas prophetandi regarding these controversies, showing precisely thereby in what manner maintaining the Confessions can, at the same time, go together with broadness of insight and breadth of vision, whereby the Churches are being kept from oneness and the way remains open for further development of the theology. This freedom ought to be preserved also in our Churches, even though your committee considers that the warning given by the Synod of Dort to all ministers of the Gospel is to be taken to heart also in our days, namely that 'with Scripture they not only are to have sentiments but also are to speak according to the measure of faith and are to refrain from all such modes of speaking which exceed the limits of the right sense of the Holy Scriptures put before us.'*

"Even though for the abovementioned reasons your committee judges that it is not advisable that your Synod make pronouncements in principle regarding these controversies, yet it is of the opinion that it is advisable, in order to put the consciences at ease and to prevent all oneness in the presentation of some doctrinal points, that Synod give a brief explanation regarding the four abovementioned points."

What to Think of It?

To everyone who reads this part of the report attentively it is clear that Prof. Lindeboom could never give his vote to it.

Many statements are made in it which could never stand closer scrutiny. One hears Dr. A. Kuyper Sr.'s voice and manner of "proving" statements when reading about "the most eminent teachers of our Church," a statement which may impress many but is made without any proof. Mentioning big names does not yet mean that these great ones in the history of the church did teach indeed what they are said to have taught. Reducing the controversies to "oneness" was a little too easy and a very superficial treatment of the matter.

Besides, even though elements of Dr. A. Kuyper Sr's theories or similar expressions may be found with those mentioned, this does not yet mean that they cherished the

same ideas or propagated the same ideas or even that they meant exactly the same by those expressions as Dr. Kuyper understood and used them.

We'll find the same manner of speaking of "on the one hand . . . on the other hand" back in synodical reasonings and publications in the years around 1942.

However, since not the report of the committee but only the conclusions were adopted by synod, and since it was evident that therein clear hints were given in the direction of Dr. A. Kuyper Sr and his pupils, the brothers who agreed with Prof. Lindeboom were satisfied with the conclusions. These were adopted after some changes had been made.

In light of the development in the thirties and forties of this century we may be wondering how the brothers could give their vote to these conclusions. We are, however, to bear in mind that they regarded these conclusions as a formula for pacification. They considered that therein sufficient safeguards were given to curb Dr. A. Kuyper Sr's views. Although the committee stated that the controversies were *not* a matter of coming into conflict with the confessions and Prof. Lindeboom and the brothers who agreed with him were of the opinion that it was a matter of coming into conflict with the confessions, the brothers left the committee report for what it was and confined themselves to the conclusions adopted by synod.

Although with reservations, they could go along with these conclusions in the hope that thereby the rest and peace in the Churches would be served and promoted.

Initially this was the case.

Now we first look at the conclusions adopted by Synod Utrecht 1905.

The Conclusions of Utrecht 1905

Although it was mainly the Conclusion about presumptive regeneration which played a part in the struggle of the 1940's, we shall for completeness' sake insert all of the Conclusions.

This is the more advisable since all the Conclusions were object of discussion between the deputies of the Canadian Reformed Churches and those of the Christian Reformed Church during the late 1960's. In view of the later history it is advantageous to include also the remarks which the Canadian Reformed deputies made in their submission of December 1966. This will prepare the reader for a further analysis of the Conclusions.

From Page 4 on the submission of the Canadian Reformed committee reads as follows.

DECISIONS OF SYNOD:

A. INFRA- OR SUPRALAPSARIANISM

In regard to the first point, infra- or supralapsarianism, Synod declares:

that our Confessional Standards admittedly follow the infralapsarian presentation in respect to the doctrine of election, but that it is evident both from the wording of Chapter I, Article 7, of the Canons of Dort, and from the deliberations of the Synod of Dort, that this is in no wise intended to exclude or condemn the supralapsarian presentation;

that it is hence not permitted to present the supralapsarian view as **the doctrine of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, but neither, to molest anyone who personally holds the supralapsarian view, inasmuch as the Synod of Dort has made no pronouncement upon this disputed point.**

— To be continued

LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Dear Mr. Editor.

Upon receipt and reading of the issue of January 2, 1989, I was greatly disturbed.

My concern is about what I read in the Press Release of the Regional Synod East of October 19, 1988, points 6, 7, and 8.

These points should have been dealt with in closed session.

What is worse is that these points were inserted in the Press Release.

Since this Regional Synod no longer exists, I cannot communicate anything to it.

But to the brothers who formed that

Regional Synod I have to say: That you allowed these points to be published is terrible. It is against the will of our Lord who teaches us in His Word that love covers all offenses, Prov. 10:12; 1 Pet. 4:8; that we are to protect each other and each other's reputation as much as possible and that we are to do what we can to protect the honour of our brothers and sisters. See Lord's Day 43.

When confession has been made and the matter is finished, is it then proof of true Christian love to make a publication, not just to the congregation but in the press, for the "general public?"

It is also against what we have agreed

upon in our Church Order which speaks of announcements to the congregation only and then only in case there is hardening in sin.

This publication is completely in the line of what several ministers allowed themselves to do: write publicly in their bulletins about something which should not even have been commented on at all.

Here true Christian love was completely absent.

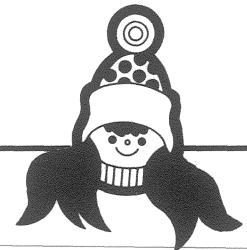
I register a profound protest against such an un-ecclesiastical and un-Christian publication.

Mr. Editor, thank you for the room allowed me.

W.W.J. VanOene

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Hello Busy Beavers,

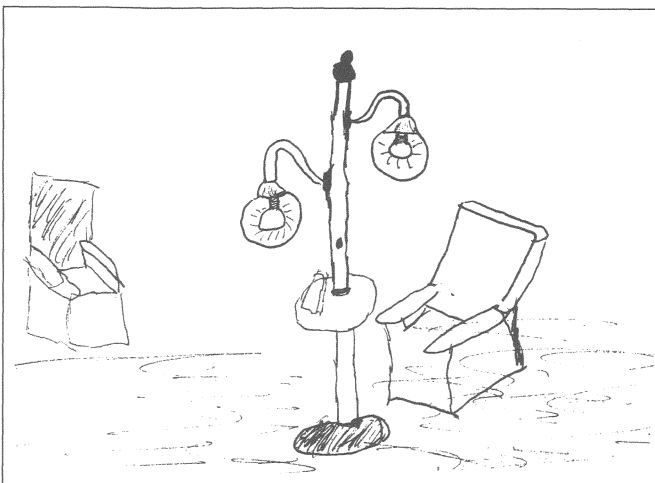
This story is our "good-bye" to winter!

"When I go outside, I like to make snow forts. My little brother and I made a really nice one, but overnight it was really stormy so it broke and it's covered with snow.

At school we have a big skating rink. I like playing hockey on it. I like Playing on the pond at my place. Now there is way too much snow on it so We can't skate on it. There is so much snow on it that it is really nice for sliding down the great big hill by it."

by Busy Beaver Clifford Vandersluis

A picture by Busy Beaver Margaret deWitt

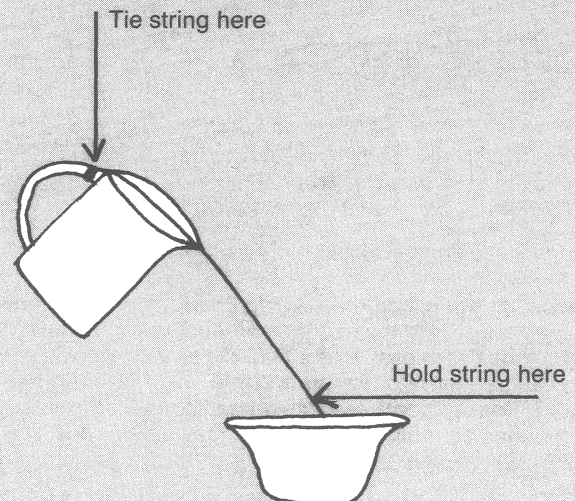


FOR YOU TO DO

Water on a String!

Watch water walk a string without falling off.

Tie one end of a string to the handle of a pitcher of water. Run the string over the spout and hold the other end inside a bowl. Stretch it tight. Hold the pitcher above the bowl and pour slowly and carefully. The water clings to the surface because of surface tension. Surface tension causes liquids to act as if they were held together by a stretchy, invisible cover.





FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Lydia Viersen*. We are happy to have you join us. Will you be going to your sister's wedding, Lydia? I see you are a real Busy Beaver already! Keep up the good work. I'm looking forward to your letters.

And a big welcome to you too, *Trina Jelsma*. Thank you for your letter and the riddles. Would you like some more samples of that "backwards" writing from the Busy Beaver who sent that in, Trina? Maybe she will send us some. What do

you think? You can look for a pen pal in last time's "FROM THE MAILBOX."

I see you're a good puzzler and artist, *Margaret DeWitt*. I was hoping you had included a poem for us! Did your sister enjoy her break from school, Margaret? Bye for now. Write again soon.

Hello, *Erin Siebenga*. It was really nice to hear from you again. Have you enjoyed the winter, Erin? Thank you for an interesting puzzle. The worm makes me think of Spring! How about you, Erin?

Quiz Time!

CODE

by Busy Beaver *Lydia Viersen*

1 13 15 10 2 7 8 3 14
 11 5 10 3 6 13 1 4 9 8
 11 5 14 4 10 12 4 1 3 2 9

12-V, 14-S, 10-L, 9-N, 2-O, 3-I, 1-T, 4-A, 7-R, 5-Y, 8-D
 6-G, 13-H, 11-M, 15-E

COLOUR WORDSEARCH

by Busy Beaver *Rebecca Stel*

FIND:
 red
 purple
 yellow
 blue
 brown

orange
 black
 gold
 silver

R	E	L	P	R	U	P	R	L
E	P	M	D	L	O	G	E	Q
D	M	K	C	A	L	B	V	U
E	G	N	A	R	O	L	L	X
N	W	O	R	B	Z	U	I	Y
W	O	L	L	E	Y	E	S	Z

UNSCRAMBLE

ROU TLTEIL MGINZAEA

from Busy Beaver *Christina Bredenhof*

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

by Busy Beaver *Maria Stel*

Picture clues

ACROSS

DOWN

Busy Beavers, I hope you all enjoyed our "things to do"!
 Keep busy.
 Let's hear from you!
 Bye for now.

Love,
 Aunt Betty



With much joy and thankfulness unto the Lord, we wish to announce the birth of our third child, a son

CURTIS JOHN

Born on January 22, 1989
 Brother for *Janice, Christina*

Proud parents
 Henry and Frances Hutten
 (nee Hutten)

Box 283,
 Elora, ON N0B 1S0

We are thankful to the LORD for the gift of another healthy son

CODY DRAKE

Born: January 29, 1989

Charlie and Sonja deBoer
 (nee Breukelman)
 little buddy for *Jesse*

3rd grandchild for
 Henry and Siena Breukelman
 St. Ann's, ON

29th grandchild for
 Derk and Christine deBoer
 Abbotsford, BC

33969 Victory Boulevard
 Abbotsford, BC V2S 1S9



With thanks and praise to God who made all things well we announce the birth of another son:

NICHOLAS JAMES

Born December 10, 1988

A brother for *David and Matthew*
 John and Irene Van Anandel
 (nee Vandenbos)

350 Queensdale Avenue E.
 Hamilton, ON L9A 1L6