



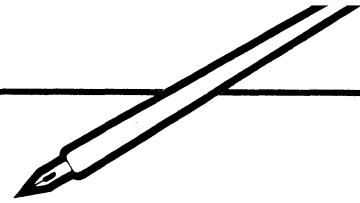
**Clarion**  
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# EDITORIAL

By J. Geertsema



## 1991 – A Blessed New Year

Once again we have entered a new year. At its beginning we wished each other a blessed new year. In this editorial I would like to ask your attention to an important aspect of God's blessing in our daily life: our daily work. Our daily work is a blessing and gift from God. This does not mean that retirement is a curse. Many who retire in health will keep themselves busy. The fact that having a daily task is a blessing is often recognized in a special way by those who are deprived of it in a situation of unemployment or through an accident or illness. Appreciation for something good grows when it is lost or lacking. Not being able to work (anymore) can become a heavy mental burden and cause of grief, of frustration, of depression, because of feelings of emptiness and uselessness.

For this reason those who would like to, but cannot, work need not only financial, but often very much mental and spiritual support. As healthy people, we should be aware that such inability to work can be a more difficult daily burden than have a "normal" job. At the same time, those who would like to but cannot fulfill a daily job may know that such a situation of inability in itself is a daily task that the Lord God puts on their shoulders. "Health and sickness, riches and poverty, indeed, all things, come not by chance but by His fatherly hand" (Lord's Day 10). Adversity holds a calling and task, too: to glorify God in it with our patient surrender to Him and trust in Him. If God wants to use us for the coming of His kingdom and the glory of His Name through our faith and trust, and for our salvation, in a condition in which we are incapable to work, shall we not still rejoice in Him in the peace that He gives and which surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:4-7)? If the Lord leads our life through such hardships, His blessing will be, first of all, such patient surrender to Him in faith and with joy in Him, or, to say it in other words, that we receive all that we need for the fulfillment of that task: to glorify Him in our suffering.

All this does not deny that having a daily job is a blessing and a calling. God has created man in His image and after His likeness (Gen. 1:26). This is connected with what follows: "and let them have dominion." Aspects of this dominion are worked out in a more specific way in Gen 2. God placed Adam in the garden of Eden and charged him "to till it and keep it." It is the charge to cultivate the earth, and to take care of it, to guard it (Gen. 2:15). In this task "to keep" the earth as place to live and to work, we have an excellent and basic guide against all pollut-

ing (about which I hope to write some other time). For now we concentrate on the first element: to till or cultivate, that is, to work.

Cultivating is working with a purpose. First of all, it means to prepare the ground that it may bring forth its fruits. Thus, both our daily work itself and its fruits have the goal to build up life. After the fall in sin and because of it, God pronounced his curse over the ground. Work would now become a toiling and struggling against literal (and figurative) thorns and thistles (Gen. 3:17-19). But the work itself and its purpose would remain: labour to build up life; to provide food, to take care, to develop the possibilities God gave in creation; all in the service of God, for the coming of His kingdom.

In creation God built something beautiful: heaven and earth; a place for man to live. In line with it, God gave man this very schedule for his life: six days of work, and a day of rest (Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 20:8-11). Thus we may conclude that to have and do one's daily task in life is a basic gift and calling from the LORD. The New Testament message of redemption shows that this is true even with respect to the daily work of slaves (Eph. 6:6-8, Col. 3:22-24).

This fact that our daily work is so basic means that we can connect it with practically all the commandments of the LORD. Since actively doing our daily work in faith and obedience is a command of the Lord, the fulfillment of our daily task is serving Him, and therefore a matter of the First Commandment. It is also obvious that this daily work is to be done in a way that is in accordance with His revealed will and that pleases Him, which makes it a matter of the Second Commandment. And since faithful and humble obedience to God in doing an honest, good job, as a Christian, is living to the glory of His Name, it is fulfillment of the requirement expressed in the Third Commandment. Although the Fourth Commandment's main point is that God's people are called to keep God's day of rest and worship, it also contains the indication that this day of rest is distinguished from the other days on which our daily work is to be done. Therefore, our conclusion can be that, if we do our daily work for the LORD, our Creator and Redeemer, with diligence, we serve Him and show our love for Him. Thus, doing our daily work, and this in God's way, is part of our Christian calling to live a life in which we love Him with our whole, undivided heart and soul and mind and strength.


A similar connection exists between our daily work and the second table of the law in which God requires love for the neigh-

bour. I shall work this out for some of these commandments. When God says in the Sixth Commandment that we are not to murder, that is, not to destroy life, this means, positively, that we are to build up life. This building is done, among others, in our faithful and responsible daily work. Work in the service of God, when done in accordance with His will and under His blessing in Christ, will result in diminishing the curse of sin. With our labours and their results we can build up both God's causes, His church, His kingdom here on earth, as well as the human society of which we are part. A few examples may show this. A farmer growing wheat produces food; a carpenter building a house makes a home for a family; a physician and a nurse trying to heal and restore health; a housewife and mother doing her housework builds a good home; a secretary working in an office helps a business to run smoothly. When these and other jobs are done in a truly Christian manner, through faith, God's name is honoured and the coming of His kingdom is promoted in this building life on earth and serving each other.

The connection with daily work is also present in the Seventh Commandment. When God created woman for man it was as "helpmeet," or "a helper fit for him." So woman was made to stand beside man in the fulfillment of the task, of being fruitful and filling the earth, and in having dominion. Scripture gives in this task to man and woman each an own place. For man it is first of all that of being the provider, for woman that of bearing children and taking care of her household, which implies quite a bit, if we listen to Proverbs 31. Thus both have their daily work as husband and wife, as father and mother. Marriage is a bond between two people who each have a task to fulfill in which they support each other and work together in the service of God on His earth.

It is evident that the Eighth Commandment, too, applies here. The opposite of stealing is that we ourselves work diligently in our honest daily task in order to sustain and build our own life, and in order to be able to support others who are in need. "If any one will not work, let him not eat," Paul writes (2 Thess. 3:11), rejecting "idleness." And in Eph. 4:28 he says, "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather, let him labour, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need." When a person is able to work or prepare himself in study, but spends his life in idleness or laziness, such a person becomes a parasite, living off society. He costs society money unnecessarily, and in this way, in fact, is stealing from others. He is a destructive, instead of constructive, element in society.

Therefore, we may conclude again, that when we place our daily work in this light of God's revelation, in His commandments, in which He regulates a proper life in our relation to Him and our fellow-men in church and society, and when we do our work with the best of our ability, God giving us the capability, we show our active Christian love also to the neighbour. And love is the fulfillment of the law.

Thus, reader, may you have a blessed new year! May God bless you with the gift of daily work, and with health and strength to do it. May God bless you with Christian zeal and diligence in your work, with love for Him and for the neighbour. May He bless you with fruits on this labour. May God bless you with providing work when you become unemployed, even if it is not completely the work you would like to do. May God bless you when you cannot work through a handicap or illness by giving you the strength and trust to fulfill this difficult task for Him, every day. If you are still going to school as a student, may God bless you in your studies. And when you enjoy retirement, may he bless you in it, granting you relaxation after years of hard work. 



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# REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By R. Schouten

## The measure of a woman

Fair is fair. Last time we looked at what can be expected from Christian men. Today we want to do the same with respect to girls. What should a fellow expect in a potential girlfriend/financee/wife? To put it more strongly, what should a fellow look for when he seeks a partner?

Proverbs is one book of the Bible that has a lot to say on this subject. The choice of a partner is a very important part of human life and God has not left young men without advice in this matter! If you want to find a good wife for yourself, read Proverbs!

First of all, we can notice that Proverbs is very upbeat about marriage. "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favour from the LORD," we read in 18:22. Choosing and finding a mate is something to which no shame is attached. God created the desire for marriage. Marriage and sexuality are treated with openness and dignity in Proverbs. Today it can be noticed that many young men are very interested in the beautiful girl (for sexual reasons), but very few reflect a healthy desire to find a wife with whom they can share life.

But how then do we go about finding the right partner for ourselves? Well, whenever we make selections out of multiple possibilities, we need criteria (I know this sounds a bit clinical, but let's pursue it anyway). Let's start with the matter of appearances. What does Proverbs say about the importance of looks? Listen to ch. 11:22: Like a gold ring in a swine's snout is a beautiful woman without discretion. In the ancient near east, women often wore rings in their noses (sounds a bit strange, but we wear them in our ears). If you would put such a ring on a pig's snout, you would have something really strange and laughable. A pig and a gold ring just don't match.

In the same way, a woman who is beautiful but who doesn't know how to conduct herself in the light of the Word of God, is a kind of monstrosity. Don't we see all too many such pitiful creatures in the entertainment world? We see creatures with perfect bodies and perfect

faces but who live unspeakably bad lives. They are like gold rings on pig snouts.

In this rather funny way, the Bible wants to tell people to look past the end of their nose. Look beyond the surface. Beauty is only skin deep. We can think here, too, of what Peter writes in chapter 3 of his first letter. He is addressing especially those wives who became Christians while their husbands remained in unbelief. But what he says applies to all of us. He says to the women: Let not yours be the outward adorning with braiding of hair, decoration of gold, the wearing of fine clothing. Walk into a mall and you will see that women's priorities haven't changed: hair-dressing salons, jewellery stores and fashion boutiques are still the order of the day!

Peter, of course, is not saying that women should not make themselves attractive (see a previous column, "Looking Good"). He does not prohibit a perm or a nice dress. He does not say that they should neglect outer appearance, have messy hair and wear shabby clothing. But Peter argues for a sense of values and priorities. The outer appearance of a woman, he says, is not nearly as important as her inner character.

The youthful body and the perfect face idolized by our culture quickly fade. Christian women should avoid the world's futile search for outer beauty and instead look for lasting, deeper-than-

skin beauty. And young men should not look for glamour, but for the beauty which can't be bought at any store, the beauty which comes from the heart. Peter says that women should adorn themselves (that is, make themselves beautiful) with the "imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious."

A gentle and quiet spirit. That is what God considers beautiful. And young men should learn to use the same yardstick as does God when they seek out a partner. They should not look for a woman who is enslaved to fashion or to the "body culture" of our day, not for one who flaunts her sexuality with tight-fitting and suggestive clothing, but for the woman who quietly rests in God. Then you get a beauty that will still be there even after the inevitable wrinkles have appeared.

Yes, look for a woman who adorns herself "modestly and sensibly with seemly apparel" (that is, not extravagantly in order to make a display of herself). Be impressed with the woman who adorns herself with "good deeds, as befits women who profess religion" (1 Tim. 2:9).

After all, what will be the purpose of a marriage that might emerge from your first phone call? The purpose will not be just to look good, but to build up a life in the service of God, a life in which your home can be a center for the progress of God's Kingdom. Together you want to be servants of God and coworkers of Jesus Christ.

The warning of Proverbs against vain beauty is very timely. Today, the female form is everywhere exposed. For some people, modesty is an incomprehensible concept. Just look at the beach dress of even so-called Christian youth. God is not pleased about the lack of discretion. Young men's minds are easily filled with images of beautiful and so-called "sexy" girls. Also through pornography (whether on TV, video, magazine or movie), minds are led to fixate on impure images. This cannot help young men in "abstaining from unchastity." This kind of deviance will not aid the young man who wants to choose "a wife for himself in holiness and honor, not in the

### OUR COVER

Eugenia Conservation Area,  
Eugenia Falls, Ontario

*Photo courtesy:*

Marnix Sikkema  
of Fergus, ON

passion of lust like heathen who do not know God" (1 Thess. 4:4,5).

Our culture is saturated in lust. And so let the young women ensure that they do not contribute to this by focusing on the external. Let them develop what pleases God: a quiet and gentle spirit.


And let them develop the kind of skills necessary for managing a Christian household. Proverbs 19:14 speaks of the "prudent wife." We might also translate: the sensible wife. By sensible, Proverbs means a wife who can truly help her husband. She is not lazy or nagging (cf. verse 13), but upbuilding in all she does. She encourages her husband in everything, making him a better man.

Proverbs 14:1 tells us that homes are made by the wisdom of women! You need a woman like that – one who is a home builder. She has the daily task of creating a happy and comfortable place for a family to live. Would the girl you have your eye set on be content to be a

"home worker (Titus 2:15)?" This does not mean, of course, that she may not have an education. She may be very highly educated and have all kinds of beautiful abilities. But do you think she sees it as her God-given task after marriage to be "busy at home?" Does she have a positive attitude toward the bearing and raising of children?

You want a woman who is capable. To be a "wise woman" means also to have the necessary skills (or at the very least an eager desire to get those skills!). The wise woman has the know-how for running a home. You want a wife who is able to ensure that the family gets proper and nourishing food, who knows how to clothe her family, who is able to keep her home clean, who is hospitable and kind to others, who has the necessary resolve to discipline and teach little children. You don't want a woman who has always been preoccupied with external matters and who can't think of anything

deeper to talk about than some empty-headed TV hero. Such a woman may be beautiful but as a wife she is bound to be a dud! Her presence in your life will be like the continuous leaking of water going drip-drip-drip. She will complain about her job in the household, tell you how bored she is all the time, and generally drive you crazy (19:13). Life would become unbearable, so much so that you'd rather retire to the attic than share your house with her (21:9,19).

In summary, then, the Bible has high expectations of women. And none of them center on appearance. They have more to do with woman's God-given task of being a help to her husband and of building up a Christian home. Let's conclude with these words: "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised" (31:30). Let that be the yardstick by which young men measure women. 

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## Contact with the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)

By P.K.A. de Boer

Recent issues of *Clarion* reported that the Synod Leeuwarden of the Gereformeerde Kerken (*vrijgemaakt*) entered into a sister church relationship with the RCUS. In his comment about this decision (*Clarion*, vol. 39, no. 18, p. 381) the Rev. W.W.J. VanOene writes that "If there is a church in our midst that is convinced that contact should be taken up with a specific federation or church in another country, this church has itself to do the investigation and come to the sister churches with well-documented proposals." Because the question of contact with the RCUS rightly arises in our midst now that our Dutch sister churches have made this decision, it might be good for all the sister churches to know that the Canadian Reformed Church at Carman has been doing exactly this. At the present, the consistory of the Church at Carman is not ready to present proposals to the major assemblies for contacts with the RCUS, but local contact, with the sincere desire to come to such a point, will continue. In the meantime it may be wise to inform the sister churches about the work that has been done. A number of reports on the visits with them have been presented to the consistory and

handed out locally to the members of the congregation. This article is written with the permission and encouragement of the consistory. However, the undersigned author assumes full responsibility for what is said and the evaluations which are made.

### History of the RCUS

The roots of the RCUS are found in the reformation from the Roman Catholic Church which took place in Germany. Many, fleeing persecution and state-controlled churches, escaped to America. Concerning the RCUS as it is today, it is of special interest to note the wave of immigration of German people from Southern Russia during the years 1870 through 1902. They settled mostly in the Dakotas.

In America, and in particular in New Amsterdam, (present-day New York) contact was established with Dutch immigrants and through them with the churches in the Netherlands. They instituted their own churches, the German Reformed Church, but had close ties with the Reformed (Hervormde) Church of the Netherlands. Until 1793 these German Reformed Churches received ministers from classis Amsterdam of the

Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. Some difficulties arose between the Dutch and German churches concerning ordination of ministers and the state control of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. In order to ordain their own ministers and because of language differences, the two churches went their own ways.

An event which took place in Europe in 1817 had quite an impact on the German Reformed Churches in America. In that year the Lutheran and Reformed Churches of Prussia merged, forming the Evangelical Church of Germany. It put a lot of pressure on the German Reformed Churches in America to seek a similar kind of ecclesiastical unity. As a result a new constitution was adopted in 1819 and the Heidelberg Catechism was received as the exclusive confessional standard. It was also around this time that the name was changed from German Reformed Church to the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS).

The teaching at the seminary was influenced much by what was happening in Europe. This seminary was first located on the campus of Dickinson College,



Carlisle, PA, from there it was moved to York, PA and finally to Mercersburg, PA. The seminary was influenced by the Barthian approach to speak about God's Word in distinction from the Bible. The result was that the Bible was no longer considered to be God's word and the reformatioal *sola scriptura* was no longer maintained. The teaching from this seminary became known as the Mercersburg theology.

Many, especially in the Dakotas, objected to the direction the men at the seminary had taken. It was especially in this area that objections were made to the Mercersburg theology because a new periodical, *Der Waechter (The Watchman)* edited by Rev. J. Stark and later by Rev. H. Triek, was well received here. This paper promoted the theology of Dr. H.F. Kohlbruegge. Dr. Kohlbruegge emphasized that salvation is a free gift, but he was weak when it came to covenantal obedience. Although he had contact with the churches in the Netherlands and even preached in the church where Dr. A. Kuyper was minister, it never came to an official recognition because of this weakness. However, till this day, especially among the older members, Dr. Kohlbruegge remains the champion who defended the truth against Barthian liberalism.

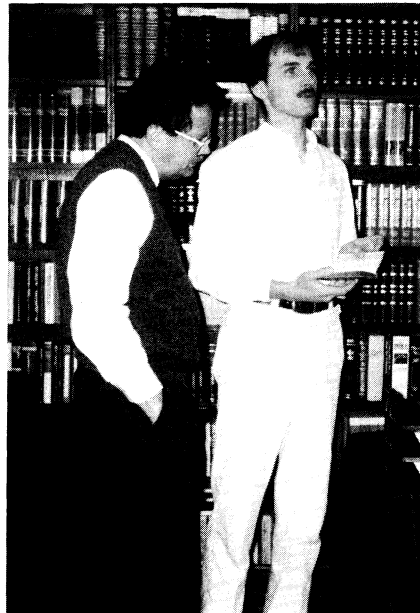
The whole matter came to a head when plans of union with various churches were made. It is not necessary to go into details as to which churches were all involved because some of them backed out. However, a union was agreed upon between the evangelical Synod and the RCUS. The result was that on June 26, 1934 the Evangelical and Reformed Church came into being.

All the classes of the RCUS had voted in favour of this union except the Eureka classis. Eureka is a town in South Dakota near the North Dakota state border. This classical region continued as the RCUS along with a few churches from other classical areas which joined them. Until 1986 they called themselves the RCUS Eureka Classis, but in that year they divided themselves into four classical regions and established a synod.

Presently (1988 statistics) the RCUS consists of thirty-two churches, 2,876 communicant members and 3,720 members in total. This works out to an average of a little less than 117 members per congregation. The largest congregation is at Manitowoc, PA, with 409 members and the smallest congregation is at Colarado Springs, CO, with 12 members. Most congregations are small, under 100 members and when visiting them one is truck by the fact that most members are quite old. There are very few youth among them.

## Confessional standards

As already mentioned, the RCUS maintains the Heidelberg Catechism as their only confessional standard. Before the new constitution of 1819 was adopted they had also used the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort as confessional standards. Although some investigation was done, nobody seems to know exactly why these confessional standards were dropped. Efforts have been made to re-adopt them. A vote held at classis May 2-8, 1984, although a majority was in favour, was insufficient. There seem to be two reasons for not



Rev. P.K.A. de Boer and Rev. Robert Bas

re-adopting these confessions, namely, many do not see a need for more confessions besides the Heidelberg Catechism and secondly, many churches have an unchangeable article in their local constitutions to the effect that they only accept the Heidelberg Catechism as their confessional standard. The adoption of other confessions would constitutionally mean their demise.

In order to maintain their confessional standards the RCUS have their licentiates, (candidates) ministers of the Word, and teachers of theology sign a subscription form. In this subscription form they testify that they "honestly and truly accept the doctrine of the Heidelberg Catechism as in accordance with the teaching of the Holy Scriptures." Note that this wording is a little weak. It could mean, the system of doctrine as found in the Heidelberg Catechism, and thus leave room for criticism of what the catechism actually says. This weakness

seems to be covered by another article of their constitution which states that "The Heidelberg Catechism is received as an authoritative expression of the truths in the Holy Scriptures, and is acknowledged to be the standard of doctrine in the Reformed Church in the United States."

Before entering the ministry or granting permission to proclaim God's Word, the candidates undergo a classical examination similar to what we are used to in our churches. Unlike us, the students who intend to study for the ministry are examined by classis concerning their intentions and upon successful examination receive ecclesiastical and financial support. The constitution specifies that "A student for the ministry shall not be eligible to the pastoral office."

Moreover the RCUS constitution states (Articles 3,4,5,6) that the Word of God as confessed in the Heidelberg Catechism is to be taught in the worship services and to the youth of the church with the view to confirmation of their faith. Catechism classes are held for the youth.

The other office-bearers, elders and deacons, do not sign a subscription form.

Along with the Heidelberg Catechism, the Apostles' Creed is received as a confessional standard. No mention is made in the constitution or elsewhere of any other creed. Upon questioning, verbal assurance was given that the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds are also maintained.

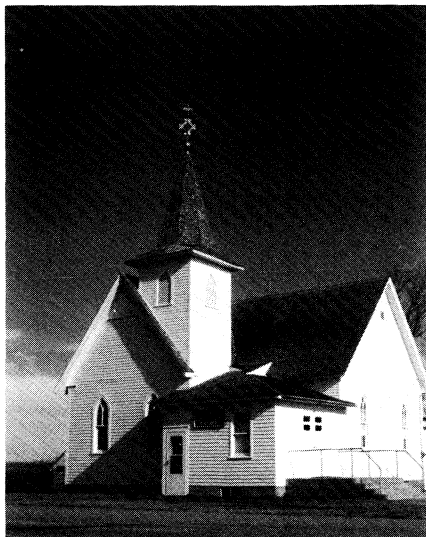
The members of the congregations who make public confirmation or confession of their faith commit themselves to the Word of God as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism. They make this distinction, "confirmation," referring to those who were baptized members, and "confession" for those who come from elsewhere. They do not seem to attach any further importance to this distinction.

The intention is certainly there to maintain the Word of God as confessed in the Heidelberg Catechism and there is some ecclesiastical policy in place to preserve it. However, as will be shown, there are a number of areas which need further attention and more discussion.

## Theonomy

A little earlier it was said that Dr. H.F. Kohlbruegge has had a lot of influence through the periodical *Der Waechter* and that he emphasized salvation as a free gift but was weak when it came to covenantal obedience. The RCUS has suffered on account of this weakness. They themselves admit that in the past they have taken too much an attitude of either we are elected or not. Those elected are saved. Those who are

not elected are condemned and therefore the way of life is not all that important. While expressing sincere concern about this kind of laxity, some ministers defended theonomy. Theonomy is the teaching that the law of God, as revealed in all of Scripture, continues to apply. It is combined with post-millennialism to speak about the establishment of God's kingdom on this earth. Thus, David Chilton, an extreme theonomist, teaches that the world is directed more and more toward submission to all of God's law until man, in its civil government, again has his rightful dominion over this creation. He himself refers to it as dominion theology. The ministers in the RCUS do not go to this extreme and are



generally more careful. The most avid defender of theonomy among them suggests that the Belgic Confession before the seventeen words were removed from Article 36, was theonomic. These words state, as part of the duty of the civil government to maintain order that "all idolatry and false worship may be removed and prevented, the kingdom of the antichrist may be destroyed." Those who defend this teaching tend to stress the activity of the civil government for the establishing of God's kingdom and one is left with an impression of anabaptist leanings.

The RCUS has officially rejected theonomy. From the documentation it is very clear that they really struggled to come to a clear definition of theonomy. At their synod of March 30 - April 2, 1987 it was agreed that "2. It is the position of the RCUS that the Heidelberg Catechism teaches that the ceremonial and judicial laws instituted by Moses have been entirely abolished and done away

with by the coming of Christ, as far as it relates to obligation and obedience on our part. The moral law, however, has not been abolished and it respects obedience, but only as it respects the curse and constraint." The synod decision did not go as far as the study committee proposed it, namely that "No one shall in the future be licensed in the (RCUS) ...who espouse theonomic views as outlined in the Report on Theonomy...."

The result is that even though theonomy is "officially" rejected, there are those who still hold this position within the RCUS. Moreover, there seems to be a real lack of a good balance between confessing election to salvation and living in covenantal unity with the Lord. This is an area which certainly needs more attention.

### Using pictures of the Lord Jesus

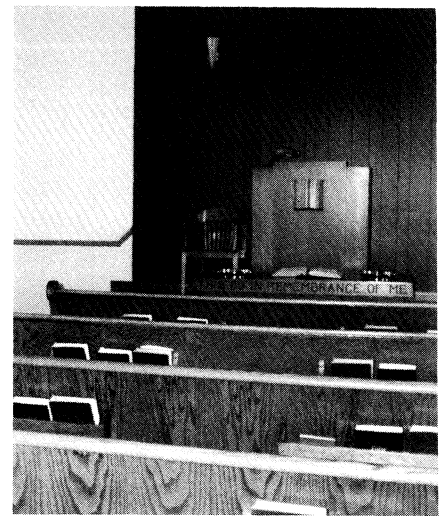
This a point which is really stressed by the RCUS and may be an obstacle for them should we seek closer contact. One of their translations of Lord's Day 35 Q.A. 98 is interesting. It reads: "But may not pictures be tolerated in churches as books for the people?" They argue that the use of pictures of the Lord Jesus in kindergarten and Sunday school is much like using books for the laity during the Middle Ages among the illiterate. Such a picture of the Lord Jesus, they insist, is only half a truth because the Lord Jesus was not just man but also God. Some more discussion on this matter should prove fruitful and perhaps we should re-examine our use of such pictures.

### The doctrine of the church

It may seem that we stumble into this question time and again, but it certainly is important to remain faithful to the Lord in this respect. Perhaps this question keeps coming up because ever since the World Council of Churches was established there seems to have been pressure for ecumenical unity above ecclesiastical faithfulness. The RCUS suffers from a denominationalist or pluriformist thinking. It comes out in the RCUS constitution which speaks in article 4 about "other branches of the Christian church" and in article 5 where members who move away are urged to "unite with another congregation of the Reformed Church, or another Orthodox Protestant Church...."

This pluriform way of speaking about the church has many practical consequences. Thus a person who leaves the RCUS for another church (denomination) is admonished and warned, but given a certification of dismissal (attestation). During discussion it became clear that such transfer of membership is

granted to members going, for example, to a Baptist Church. Those who leave are admonished and warned, but in the sense of leaving a more faithful church for a less faithful one. The RCUS constitution makes provision for ministers to make such moves as well. Recently, the minister with whom we have had most of our contact and who was the chairman of their committee relation churches abroad as well as having been elected president of the RCUS synod, left for another church (i.e. another denomination). The details of the circumstances and reasons for this move do not have to be made public, but the point is that this pluriformist thinking about the church certainly has its practical consequences,



*Interior of the Upham, North Dakota church building*

such as moving from church to church, and, as will be shown in separate sections, also has a bearing on how the sacraments are used and discipline is exercised.

Some of their own ministers suggest that this easy transfer to other churches (denominations) is perhaps the main reason why the RCUS has remained so small and has few young members. Many have moved to "bigger" churches or to places where there is no RCUS and have given priority to better employment opportunities while being content with a somewhat less faithful church.

When visiting with office-bearers and members of the RCUS there are many who really show a desire to love the Lord according to His Word, but our concern is whether this is really maintained in their teaching and practice. The pluriform way of teaching about the church leads one to go to the church of one's own choice rather than where the Lord calls His people together. This makes the

church into a human religious organization instead of confessing it to be the Lord who gathers His people by calling them to the assembly where His Name is proclaimed. This is certainly an area which needs much more discussion and attention.

### Worship services

Worship services are held every Sunday in the RCUS. As a rule there is only one worship service per Sunday. These worship services are generally held in the morning. The preaching of God's Word is kept central in the worship services. The RCUS constitution states in article 178 that the "essential parts of public worship are an invocation, singing, prayer, reading of the Word, preaching a sermon, giving offerings, and the benediction."

No preaching of God's Word as summarized in the catechism, the way we are used to it, is done. Some of their ministers think it may be a good idea to introduce a second worship service where God's Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism can be proclaimed. Generally there is too much resistance to this idea among the membership. This resistance seems to reflect a Kohlbrueggean emphasis on election without covenantal obedience. The emphasis is that one is saved by God's providence and therefore hearing and knowing God's Word is considered to be less important.

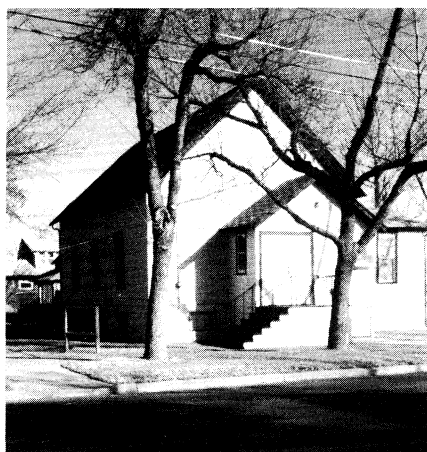
### The use of the sacraments

Baptism is administered to infants of believing parents and unbaptized adults upon confession of faith. From their side they were happy to hear that we believe baptism to be a sign and seal of God's covenant promise and not of election.

The RCUS constitution, article 2, speaks about "full communion with the Church by confirmation, profession of faith..." which leads to the question whether baptized children are considered to be full members of the church. In conversation we received assurance that children are considered full members of the church, but are told that they do not receive all the blessings, such as participation at the Lord's Supper.

Concerning the celebration of the Lord's supper, baptized members who have confirmed or confessed their faith may attend. For confirmation or confession the candidate is examined concerning his faith in the presence of the whole congregation.

Concerning guests who are invited to attend the Lord's Supper, they emphasize their position to be *restricted* opposed to *closed*. By *restricted* they mean that the local consistory supervises who



RCUS Minot church building

may attend the Lord's Supper. The RCUS constitution (article 189) says that "Members, in good standing, of other denominations holding the essential doctrines of the Gospel, should be invited to participate in the observance of this sacrament." In discussion they admitted that "essential doctrines" is a vague expression. In practice, we are told, this means a member of the Baptist Church who is known by a member of the congregation and accepts Christ as Saviour and shows it by his life, is invited to attend without being questioned about his church affiliation. In discussion it was acknowledged that this way of inviting members from other denominations has everything to do with considering these denominations to be other branches of the church.

### Church discipline

Church discipline receives attention in the RCUS constitution. Generally speaking the approach is more like a court of law speaking about trials, prosecutors, witness and judgments. The constitution only speaks about Matthew 18 in connection with "alleged personal injuries." In conversation it became apparent that disciplinary action is taken very rarely.

Concerning ministers of the Word, the constitution in article 30 makes it possible for ministers to resign. When there are difficulties in the congregation this is a course of action that is usually followed. Such resignation must have classical approval. This article does not say anything about reconciliation by way of repentance on either the part of the minister or the congregation. It speaks about the "desire" of the pastor and the joint consistory. In practice it becomes an easy escape without due call to repentance.

The practice of "erasure" undermines much discipline in the RCUS and some

of the ministers consider it to be a big problem. Erasure simply means to erase someone's name from the membership list. In the Canadian Reformed Churches erasure is an exception. To the best of my knowledge it is only practiced when someone leaves without a request for an attestation and his location becomes unknown. Even then, his name is not quickly erased, but time is given in the hope of return and repentance. Such circumstances may eventually be considered silent withdrawal from the church.

The RCUS constitution speaks about erasure in several articles. Thus article 119 states that "If a member is negligent in partaking of the Holy Communion, or refuses to contribute to the support of the Church, or continually absents himself from public worship, such conduct, in one or all of these requirements, shall be regarded as an offense against the Church, and he shall be admonished by the pastor and elders. If after admonition he continues in such negligence of duty, the Spiritual Council (i.e. minister and elders) shall notify him that he is no longer in good and regular standing. If after not less than six months and not more than one year of such suspension he continues in such neglect of duty, the Spiritual Council shall erase his name." In article 33 we read: "If the minister against whom the charges are pending shall have abandoned the ministry or declared himself independent, his name shall be erased, or he shall be deposed or excommunicated, as the case may be."

The ministers admit that erasure is used much more than discipline. The negligent members are admonished by the minister and elders, but do not receive the benefit of being called back through church discipline in the way in which the Lord has instituted it. May the Lord grant courage and strength to those minister among them who would like to correct this matter. It is not always easy to agree upon constitutional changes which will help in this respect.

### Relations with other churches

At this time the RCUS is no member of any ecumenical organization. They have made inquiries about the ICRC and sent an observer to the last meeting held in Langley, B.C.

The RCUS has fraternal relations with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the Reformed and Presbyterian Church of North America (RPNA), and the Reformed Church in Zaire (RCZ). This means that they recognize each other as true churches, have pulpit exchanges, receive each other's attestations and send delegates to each other's ecclesiastical meetings.



There is no formal relationship with the Christian Reformed Churches, but there has been some informal contact. One of their ministers teaches at Mid American Reformed Seminary (MARS). For the time being, the theological students of the RCUS are directed to this seminary.

### Church Order

Instead of a Church Order like we have, the RCUS has a constitution as a "denomination" as well as local constitutions. Generally speaking these constitutions seem to be a mixture of Reformed and Presbyterian church polity.

Instead of speaking about "ecclesiastical assemblies" they speak about judicatories and the whole system is set up much like a civil legal system. The consistory is the lower court and the synod is the higher court.

There are four judicatories in the RCUS. They are the consistory (pastors, elders and deacons), the spiritual council (pastor and elders), classis and synod.

The office of minister and elder is considered to be a life-time calling. Not ministers, but elders take periods of rest. During these periods they are referred to as "inactive elders." Inactive elders can be called upon for advice and in emergency circumstances. They can also become active again.

It is the consistory's task to take care of the daily affairs of the congregation, including the calling of a minister, his support, keeping church property and records, taking care of the congregational finances, etc. Some of these things can only be done after consultation with and agreement from the congregation.

The task of the spiritual council is to "watch over the members of the congregation, to guard the doctrine of Christ, and to maintain wholesome discipline." (article 72 of the constitution.)

Classis is considered to be an ecclesiastical judicatory which is convened at intervals or when necessary. It continues from one meeting to the next as is clear from the wording in the constitution. In article 79 of the constitution we read about "the annual meeting of a Classis" and that "the ministers residing within a district designated by Synod" are its members along with "elders delegated by pastoral charges situated within these limits." Classis has its own executive consisting of a president and stated clerk who are assigned certain tasks while classis is not convened.

Synod is much like classis. The only difference is that to classis only ministers and delegated elders of a certain district are sent, while to synod all the ministers and an elder from each congregation are delegated. Synod meets in two ways, in

"general convention" and in "delegated body." In the latter form the delegates are there as representatives of their local congregations.

Like classis, synod has its own executive which continues to perform certain functions while synod is not convened. In article 101 of the constitution we are told that "The Synod shall diligently prosecute the work of Home Missions, of Foreign Missions, of Christian Education, and of Ministerial Relief by committees, which are to be elected and governed in their proceedings by rules established by Synod. At the annual meeting of the Synod each committee shall submit a report of its operations and a statement of its present condition."

Although church polity is not necessarily a matter of faithfulness and unfaithfulness and we agree in our Church Order that on "minor points of Church Order and ecclesiastical practice churches abroad shall not be rejected." We see here a need for further discussion.

### Conclusion

The Church at Carman will continue local contact with the RCUS with the

## CHURCH NEWS



#### CALLED TO:

Port Kells, BC:

**Rev. P.G. Foenstra**  
of Guelph, ON

#### CALLED TO:

Burlington East

**Rev. Dr. J. Visscher**  
of Langley, BC

#### CALLED TO:

London, ON

**Rev. B. Hofford**  
of Laurel, MD, U.S.A.

#### CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

**Rev. D.G.J. Agema**

RR 1

Dunnville, ON N1A 2W1

Phone: (416) 774-1482

#### WORSHIP SERVICES:

**Rockway Canadian  
Reformed Church**

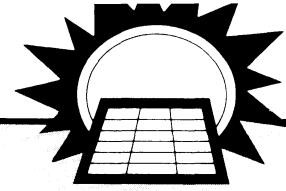
Worship services held at the St. John's Anglican Church, Regional Road 81 and Mackenzie Drive, Jordan, ON

Services: 9:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.

stated objective of coming with a request to the federation to recognize the RCUS as true churches of Christ Jesus. We do not have to be hasty and may certainly reserve judgment for some time while discussions and attempts to convince each other continue. In this whole matter we may not overlook that our federation has churches in America, and the question of how these churches are to be united in a practical way, should they be recognized may not be overlooked either. It was for this reason that our deputies at Synod Leeuwarden have rightfully reminded our Dutch sister churches to first consult with the Canadian Reformed Churches before extending a sister church relationship to the RCUS. Now that Synod Leeuwarden has made this decision, it does not mean that we as Canadian Reformed Churches must feel pressured into making a hasty decision concerning this matter.

A note of disappointment must be added. In 1987 the consistory of Carman made the first contacts with the RCUS. We were received in a very hospitable way and words of welcome were expressed. They expressed much appreciation for having visited with them. We have made a number of visits and reports, but we have seen and heard very little initiative from them. Only one official return visit was made by one of their ministers. Perhaps they do not have the same resources, but we are often left with the impression that if we no longer make contact with them, we would not hear much from them. This is perhaps also related to their way of thinking about the church in a pluriform way. They seem to be content with being a denomination and see no urgency to strive for ecclesiastical unity.

One more thing must be added. The RCUS is very diverse within itself. Ministers have come from many different colleges and backgrounds and each brings with him his own opinions. It is difficult to make a fair evaluation. The opinions of the men we spoke to differ on certain points. In this article, the official papers were consulted as much as possible. However, the congregational life cannot be overlooked either. The average age of the membership is high. The ministers we spoke to expressed concern about finding suitable elders to serve in the churches. Those to whom we spoke appeared to be very faithful and dedicated and offered up much for their dedication to the Lord. To judge the hearts of men belongs to the Lord. It is our task – also in ecclesiastical contact – to examine whether we are and remain faithful to God's revealed Word. With Him in mind we will continue our work.



By Mrs. J. Mulder

*"Be still and know that I am God. I am exalted among the nations.  
I am exalted in the earth."*

Psalm 46

## Dear brothers and sisters,

At the beginning of another year we are reminded of time's swift flight. There is always too much to do. So many things ask for our attention. There are also our concerns about the future. We live in a time in which Satan is intensifying his attacks on the Church of Jesus Christ in a final attempt to destroy her.

We hear and read about injustice, corruption, about recession and threats of war. And so easily we are swept along in the daily treadmill of life. Too occupied and busy with all kinds of things, that we neglect to consider who is behind all that is happening.

In the midst of all this hustle and bustle the Lord addresses the Church of all ages: "Be still and know that I am God". That means: "Stop talking so much, stop worrying so much, Honor Me as your refuge and strength, for I am God, the Almighty One, in whose hands you are saved. Believe my promises that I will never forsake those who put their trust in me."

Our God is like a mighty fortress into whom man may flee in times of trouble and be safe. He is also our strength, for He enables His people to cope with and conquer the dangers that might assault them. For He is "exalted among the nations and exalted in the earth."

Men in their ignorance and depravity refuse to recognize the fact that there's one true God who is in charge. They dare to challenge the Living God and His Anointed: "Let us burst their bonds asunder and cast their bonds from us" (Psalm 2:3). But the Lord will show His power to all those who ignore Him. He will make kingdoms totter and make wars to cease to the end of the earth (vs. 6,9).

The Lord speaks to us in His Word, "the Gospel of salvation." He reveals Himself as a God of wondrous might and redeeming love. He, who saved us through Jesus Christ, will also preserve us for an eternal and unfailing inheritance. Why then should we fear? "If God is for us, Who shall be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, will He not also give us all things with Him?" (Romans 8:31,32)

## From the mailbox

Ginny VanderHorst (nee Koning) sent me the new address of her sister Liz. She also gave me the following information about her sister: "Liz is not only mentally handicapped, but also suffers from epilepsy and is virtually wheelchair bound. This is not to say that she is helpless, because she works part-time at a sheltered workshop and gives us as a family a lot of love and pleasure. What gives her a big thrill is mail and her scrapbooks are the envy of the ward." Thank you for your letter, Ginny! It was good to hear from you!

## Our birthday calendar for February:

### ALBERT DORGELOOS

199 Westwood Road, Unit 16  
Guelph, ON N1H 7S1

*Albert will be 32 years old on February 12th.*

### CONNIE VAN AMERONGEN

Russ Road, RR 1  
Grimsby, ON L3M 4E7

*Connie's birthdate is also February 12th. She will be 26 years old on that day.*

### CORA SCHOONHOVEN

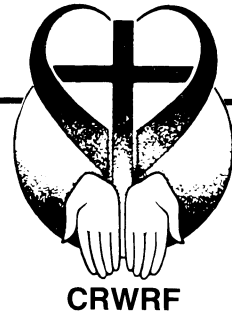
24 James Speight  
Markham, ON L3P 3G4

*Cara hopes to celebrate her 40th birthday on February 18th.*

Congratulations to all three of you!

"Be still and know, all you who bide Me,  
That I am God, and none beside Me.  
I am exalted, and My might  
Makes haughty nations flee in fright.  
In all the earth I am exalted;  
By Me your enemies are halted!"  
The Lord of hosts is on our side;  
With Jacob's God we safely hide.

Greetings, Mrs. J. Mulder  
1225 Highway 5, RR 1  
Burlington, ON L7R 3X4



# The Plight of Children

The First World Summit for Children held this past September at U.N. headquarters in New York, focussed the world's attention, however briefly, on the plight of children. An unprecedented gathering of seventy-one world leaders pledged a decade-long assault on the "quiet catastrophe" of child poverty, illness and death. Those present signed a declaration of principles endorsing a plan to greatly reduce childhood and maternal diseases by the year 2000. Whether the talk will translate into action remains to be seen.

The task is a daunting one indeed for the catalogue of death, neglect, degradation, and exploitation which children experience is discouraging in its length and breadth. The statistics are staggering. According to *Time* magazine sources:

- Every day, more than 40,000 children under the age of five die of preventable diseases such as measles or diarrhea.
- About 150 million under five are malnourished, 23 million severely so.
- More than 100 million children of school age, 60% of them girls, never step inside a classroom.
- About 7 million are refugees from war or famine.
- More than 30 million children live in the streets.
- In Central and East Africa, 10 million will have lost at least one parent to AIDS by the year 2000.

Examples of the world's most vulnerable being mistreated are legion. In cities such as Manila and Mexico, huge garbage dumps are home to thousands, perhaps half of them children. The youngsters live in cardboard or aluminum shacks in the midst of the stench and they spend their days hunting for saleable objects amongst the refuse.

In Hong Kong, 15,000 Vietnamese children together with their families, are crammed into nine fenced detention centres - prison-like structures where food and discipline are dispensed by the Hong Kong authorities. Since June, 1988 when the British colony stopped giving auto-



*A feeding station in the Horn of Africa*

matic refugee status, chances of resettlement have been virtually non-existent. Their future likely includes repatriation to Vietnam where the cycle of poverty and repression is expected to continue.

In India, an estimated 100 million children work (the official figure is 20 million) labouring on farms, in quarries, mines, carpet factories, etc. often in hazardous conditions. The employment of children under 14 is illegal, but the law is rarely enforced.

Not all of the labour is voluntary. As in many other countries, some children

are chattel slaves owned almost completely by their masters. Others are bonded labourers, forced to work to pay off debt incurred by their parents. Others are sold or kidnapped and forced to work long hours for almost nothing, often as prostitutes. Indeed, worldwide, there are more people treated as slaves today (most of them children) than there were when the international abolitionist movement first began.

In Brazil's large cities, large numbers of homeless children wander the streets, unwanted and uncared for, of-

ten drawn into lives of crime. Estimates of the number of teenage prostitutes in Brazil go as high as 500,000.

In Bangladesh, as in other third world countries, thousands of little ones die each year from diarrhea which, if not treated promptly, can lead to dehydration and rapid death. An estimated four million children die each year from this alone.

Youngsters ought not to have to live in such conditions, denied clean water, wholesome food, a loving home, education, and the freedom to be children. Yet the world seems to care little. "If 40,000 spotted owls were dying everyday, there would be outrage" said Peter Teeley, President Bush's representative on the Summit planning committee. "But 40,000 children are dying and it's hardly noticed." Those of us concerned about the large numbers of unborn babies annually aborted, are familiar with such tragic inconsistencies. The preservation and nurture of unborn life seems to come low on society's priority list, and if unborn life – then inevitably infants, children . . . the elderly. The progression, though not surprising, is profoundly disturbing.

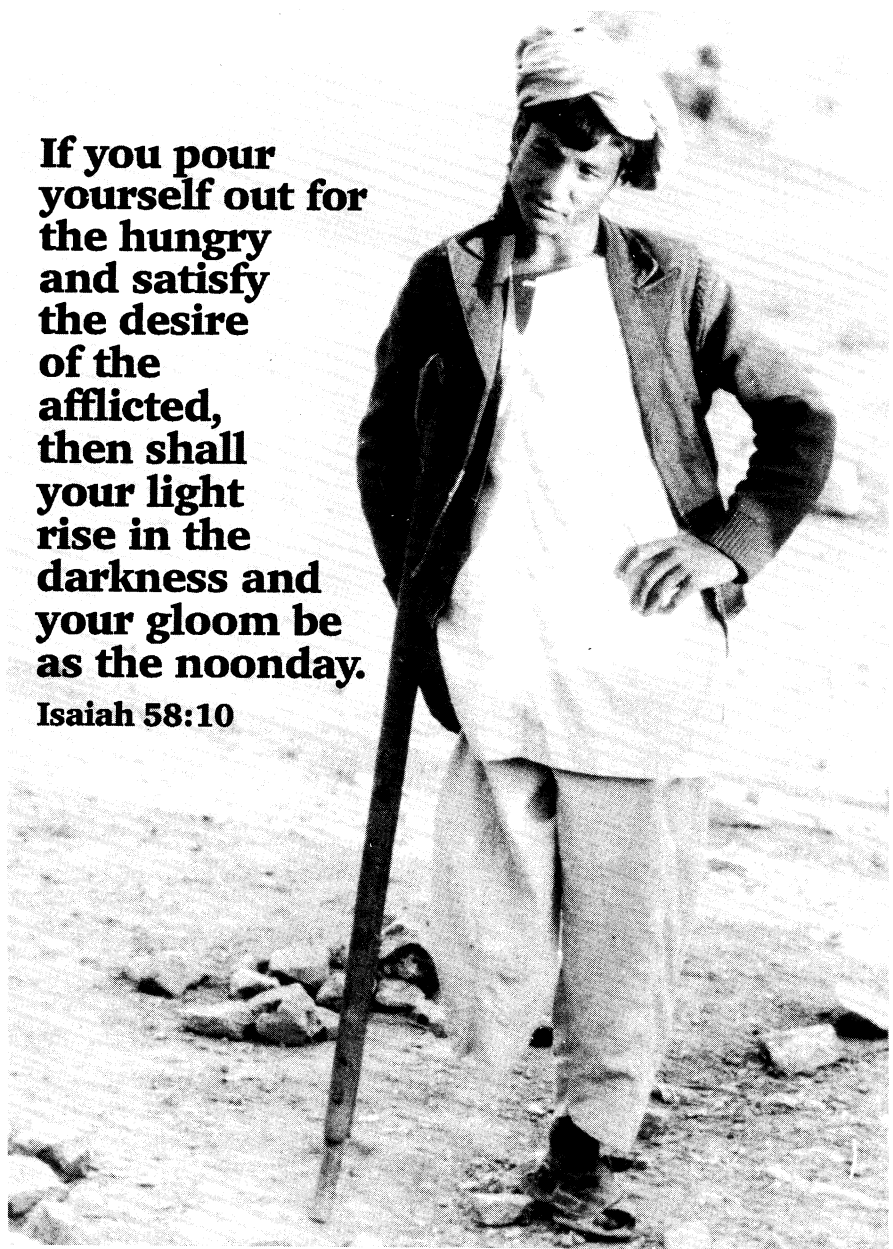
The U.N. Conference pointed blame for the plight of the children at a combination of onerous debt repayments and excessive military spending. A recent study done for U.N.I.C.E.F. discovered, for example, that in 1987, many black African nations spent a third or more of their revenues in these two areas. U.N.I.C.E.F. statistics point to \$178 billion in principal and interest payments spent on external debt in 1988 by developing countries, a figure three times the amount of aid received from industrialized nations. They would like to see a more humane approach taken to debt repayment in which priority is given to addressing national health and education needs regardless of debt burdens.

According to another U.N. study, in the 37 poorest countries, funding for education dropped 25% during the 80's. Some 40 countries saw their per capita income decline during the 80's – labelled the "lost decade" in respect to the health and welfare of their citizens.

Certainly, much of the hardship can be attributed to gross mismanagement, corruption, and even tyranny on the part of governments in the developing worlds. Solutions here are not simple. Nor did the conference address the responsibility of outlook and religion on such issues. Though intangible, surely one's values have a bearing on the lifestyle led and on what is considered acceptable for one's children. When society sees human life as sacred (as our society once did), priorities are very dif-

**If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.**

**Isaiah 58:10**



*An Afghan refugee boy in Pakistan, one of war's many casualties*

ferent. When one's religion, however, puts man on par with any living organism, human life becomes devalued and expendable.

Unless and until humanistic views crumble in subjection to a Biblical life-view, the problems will never be completely solved. For example, the all-too-common example of impoverished third-world parents abandoning or selling their children, will not disappear. Governments will not take the necessary action to really stop such horrors as the smuggling of little ones, or child labour. And tribal and inter-racial warfare which leads to so much hunger and misery, will not cease. We desperately need to

reach the world with the liberating truth of the gospel at the same time as we offer immunizations, clean water, and health care programs. Only when people adopt a Christian world view is man (and the child) treated with dignity and respect.

That is our aim in C.R.W.R.F. Though our budget is small, indeed a mere drop when one considers the magnitude of the problem, it does positively impact the lives of many families and children and does so in a long-term fashion. For example, our children's homes, originally in Korea and now in Kenya, offer needy children food and shelter as well as a loving Christian environment in which to grow and mature.

In Bangladesh, one thousand families including *thousands* of children benefit from the community development program we fund, as their parents learn about nutrition, save co-operatively in order to initiate income-producing projects, and learn new skills designed to boost their meagre incomes. The children as well as their parents take literacy classes to enable them to rise above their impoverished state. And the Christian staff involved seek to share the love and truth of the Gospel with those they help.

The medical program which we support at Ban Vinai Refugee Camp in Thailand, invests heavily in training young Laotians in various health care professions so that they can assist their own people and have a professional skill with which to support themselves and their families.

All of our projects seek to bring the Word of God while showing His compassion. Even the emergency aid given, whenever possible, is distributed through churches and programs which make clear to those receiving it that the aid is sent out of a love for Christ and the neighbour.

So, rather than feel helpless in view of the enormity of the problem, we must start somewhere. Our efforts, thanks to your contributions, *are* growing. For example, a new home in one of Kenya's most impoverished districts, West Pokot, will soon open its doors to needy and



*Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong live in crowded fenced detention centres. Their future?*



*Immunization – the difference, often, between life and death. ZOA regularly has major immunization programs for the under-fives.*

homeless children. We are thankful for this new opportunity to reach children with life-sustaining bread and with the bread of life – and we ask for your assistance to enable C.R.W.R.F. to meet its present commitments and expand still more.

Certainly there are rays of hope on the larger world scene as well. It is encouraging to note that lives can and have been saved with mere pennies. The summit was told that additional annual expenditures of only \$2.5 billion worldwide (equal to what the Soviet Union spends each month on vodka and what the world's military establishments together, spend daily) could prevent 50 million deaths in this decade.

Great advances have also been made in preventing killer diseases through immunization. In 1980, no more than 10-20% of the poor countries' children were vaccinated. Today the figure stands at more than 70%. Much of the work has been done by UNICEF, but public and private agencies such as World Vision have contributed significantly.

Also, one of the biggest killers – diarrheal disease, which accounts for 28% of the 14 million deaths each year, can now be treated at low cost. The lifesaver

is a small square packet of salt, sugar and potassium which when mixed with water and administered in time, stops diarrhea and restores vital electrolytes. The ORT (Oral Rehydration Therapy) package costs less than ten cents a dose.

Still, the scene overall remains gloomy. During the 1990's, 1.5 billion babies will be born, and unless urgent action is taken, the death toll of the under-fives, the U.N.'s standard indicator of the well-being of children, will rise to 44,000 per day or 16 million a year – numbers awful to comprehend.

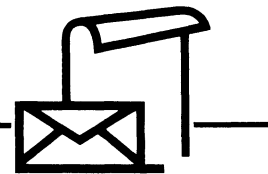
We need to *work* and *pray* and *give* to alleviate the suffering of these precious little ones. Let us also take the time to regularly remind our government of its commitment to help needy children in developing countries, *and* of its moral duty to protect the lives of little ones, including the unborn, here at home. May God bless all that is done to help the world's hungry, helpless and needy children wherever they are and to lead them to Him, for – of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.



<sup>1</sup>"Suffer the Little Children," M.S. Serrill, *Time*, Oct. 1, 1990



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



## Dear Editor:

After reading Dr. Van Dam's comments in *Clarion* (August 3, 1990) and subsequent editorial aimed at clarification (October 12, 1990), I am left with a sense of uncertainty with regard to his comments. Hopefully, the answers to two concerns will reduce this unease and confusion.

First, Dr. Van Dam mentions in the latter editorial that "because of the brokenness of sin, it is possible that more than one true church can exist side by side in one place." However, as Dr. Van Dam mentions himself, the Belgic Confession (Art. 29) only mentions *one True Church*. Are these other "true churches" then part of the one True Church? Furthermore, why should our "brokenness of sin" lead to the conclusion that there are multiple true churches?

Second, how are we as churches to determine whom to address as our brothers? Dr. Van Dam suggests that a consistory that wishes to consider aligning with the Canadian Reformed Church should be addressed as brothers. Furthermore, he notes two examples of correspondence with the Christian Reformed Church in which the term "brother" is rightly used. I am confused by this for two reasons.

First, it seems that our Acts of Synod normally refer to Canadian Reformed Church and sister church members only with the designation of brother or sister. Is this then wrong?

Second, there seems to be a real risk of subjectivity here. Are we presuming a relationship that may not exist? Are we as individuals or consistories making assumptions about the Church gathering work of our Lord Jesus?

Mr. Editor, let us not make such a judgement regarding Christ's gathering work. Let us avoid such assumptions. Let us call for the true believers who are at the wrong address to come and join the True Church of our Lord Jesus Christ and then welcome them with open, brotherly arms!

Hopefully, my uncertainty is clearly outlined here. My appreciation to Dr. Van Dam for dealing with this difficult issue! And I remain, with brotherly greetings,

Yours in Christ our Lord,  
R. de Haan

## Comments

1. It is possible that more than one true church exist side by side. Perhaps

to make this point clear, it is easier to take a historical example. From the nineteenth century liberal Hervormde Kerk ("state" church) the Lord led out His people, first in the Secession of 1834 and later in the *Doleantie* of 1886. Both events meant the formation of true churches who wanted to remain faithful to the Reformed faith. After 1886, many places had not only a church originating in the Secession, but also one from the *Doleantie*. That is, there was more than one true church. Of course this should not be so, and thus, in this case ecclesiastical unity was achieved in Union of 1892. This is just a historical example, but other contemporary examples, such as the co-existence of a Free Reformed Church and a Canadian Reformed Church can be given.

2. Scripture should be the standard for all our actions and speaking, also with respect to the issue of whom to call brothers. As I pointed out in the article referred to, according to Scripture all true Christian believers are brothers and sisters of each other in the Lord (Rom. 8:14).

With respect to the example mentioned, in both our appeals to the Christian Reformed Church (1963 and 1977) the term "brothers" was rightly and indeed very aptly used. Were we not precisely seeking ecclesiastical unity (the unity of Father's house) in the unity of the faith? As I pointed out in the article, using the address "brothers" also implies an obligation to seek such unity (cf. Mark 3:35; John 17:11b).

3. We should not try to systematize the work of Christ as He gathers the church by His Word and Spirit so that it is no longer necessary to say "I believe a holy catholic church." Questions will remain for we deal with the work of God whom we cannot fathom or fully comprehend.

All this does not mean that everything becomes fuzzy and ill-defined. No. We rightly confess that the true and false church "are easily recognized and distinguished from each other" (Art. 29, Belgic Confession).

4. Since this topic is important enough, may I refer you for further reading to J. Faber, *Essays in Reformed Dogmatics* (Inheritance 1990) chapters 8 - 11 which deal with the catholicity and boundaries of the church. Also, if you save old *Clarions*, see K. Schilder, "Theses Concerning the Church," and J. Faber, A Brief Introduction to Schilder's

'Theses concerning the Church', both in *Clarion* of August 19, 1972.

C. Van Dam

## Dear Editor:

With great interest I read the letter of Rev. G. Van Dooren in *Clarion* (Sept. 28, 1990), and the brief response by Prof. Van Dam about that letter. I fully agree with that response. But I had to rub my eyes a couple of times when I read Prof. Van Dam's article in *Clarion* (Oct. 12, 1990): "...it is possible that more than one true church can exist side by side in one place. It is not unrealistic to suppose that it is possible for a Free Reformed Church, an Orthodox Christian Reformed Church, and a Canadian Reformed Church to exist side by side." I think that our esteemed professor is too easy in giving the status of true church to the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church. Some years ago, by ecclesiastical decision, a church relation was established with the OPC. It appears that not every one was, or is, happy with that decision. Some say it was premature. I think we can say the same about the statement of Prof. Van Dam.

As far as I know, no attempt has been made by the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church to contact the Canadian Reformed Churches. In my eyes, this is reason enough to be, at least, very careful with the statement "true church."

With brotherly greetings  
W. De Haan (Wardsville, Ontario).

## Comment

1. Please see all my comments above.

2. Being a true church is not dependent on having contacted the Canadian Reformed Churches. (Cf. Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession.) We profess to be true church of Jesus Christ. However, when we speak of the church our thoughts must never be self-centered, but Christ-centered. Let us by all means apply the marks of the true and false church for they "are easily recognized and distinguished from each other" (Art. 29, Belgic Confession).

In various places there is unofficial contact with Orthodox Christian Reformed congregations. The situation surrounding the concerned both within and outside the Christian Reformed Church is still in a certain state of flux.

C. Van Dam

# OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE



By Aunt Betty

## Dear Busy Beavers,

First let's wish each other a very happy New Year! Just think! A whole brandnew year ahead of us! What will it bring? What will happen in this brandnew year of 1991?

Maybe we are looking forward to something happily exciting! Or maybe some of us are *not* looking forward to something!

But whatever happens we know that our heavenly Father will guide us. He has given His firm promise always to be our Helper. We can count on that!

That's why we can say to each other Happy New Year!



## FIRE CHIEF FOR A DAY

Story by Busy Beaver *Miranda Krabbendam*

Today was very special for me. I was "Fire Chief for a day." The fire chief picked me up at school and they did a presentation. Then we went to a fire hall in Yarrow (that's the one that is closest to our school John Calvin.) Then we went to a fire hall in Sardis, and then to a hotel called the Holiday Inn, a new hotel in Chilliwack. We had lunch at MacDonalds with the mayor of Chilliwack and the army base commander and another commander. I went with them and I practised and watched how they put out a car fire with this foam. I got a certificate and went to the Number One fire hall and they let me ride a real fire truck. I got a fire hat but they spelled my name wrong, Krabbendam with one "b" instead of two. Then they brought me home.

## THANKSGIVING POSTER

By Busy Beaver *Benjamin Bartels*



## FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Cara Faber*. We are happy to have you join us. I liked your colourful poem, Cara! Keep up the good work!

And a big welcome to you, too, *Carrie Schuurman*. It sounds to me as if you had a great time at your friend's house! And how did your Mom like Holland, Carrie?

Welcome to the Club, *Ruby Knol*. You are a real Busy Beaver already. Thank you for the puzzle and the beautiful design! Do you read a lot of books, Ruby?

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Tesha and Erika Hopman*. I see you mean to keep the Busy Beavers busy, too! Thank you for sharing. Will you write again sometime and tell us about your family and hobbies? Bye for now.

Welcome to the Club, *Miranda Krabbendam*. I can understand that was a special day for you. Where did you put your hat, Miranda? I hope you get a pen pal soon. Did you look in the *Clarion* of November 23, 1990 (#24)?

A big welcome to you, too, *Heather Muis*. And thank you for the puzzle. You're right, you're lucky to have a baby sister. I bet she enjoys her big sister, too! Thanks for your *neat* letter, Heather.

Hello, *Florence Nijenhuis*. I enjoyed your picture. It had a lot in it! Keep up the good work, Florence. Thanks for sharing.

You're a good puzzler, *Michelle Hordyk*. And it was nice to hear from you again. Will you please let me know when in December your birthday comes? I really hope it was a very happy one for you, Michelle.

I see you've been very busy puzzling and drawing, *Esther Hordyk*. Good for you! Is your little sister happy to see you come home from school, Esther? And how did you enjoy your Christmas holidays?

Congratulations on your gold medal, *Jessica Dehaas*! You did a good job there! Did you train long for the race, Jessica? Please look in the #24 (November 23) issue of *Clarion* for a pen pal, all right?

I'm glad you had such an enjoyable trip to Ontario, *Melanie Peters*. Can you tell me what you enjoy about your new subject? I hope you enjoyed your Christmas holidays, Melanie. And thank you for all the puzzles.

Thank you for an interesting puzzle, *Elissa Faber*. And I like what you wrote about Reformation Day. Keep up the good work, Elissa. Bye for now.

Hello, *Rebecca Stel*. Have you finished your three books already? Which book of the twenty did you like the very best, Rebecca? Thank you for the puzzle. It is a very large one. I hope we have room for it very soon, because everyone likes doing *and* sending those! Write again soon, Rebecca.

Busy Beavers, here are two more people who would like a *pen pal*!

Miranda Krabbendam (age 10)  
9605 Paula Cres.  
Chilliwack, BC V2P 6H1

Jessica De Haas (age 8)  
Box 7, Site 3, RR 1  
St. Albert, AB T8N 1M8

# Quiz Time!

## UNUSUAL EXPERIENCES

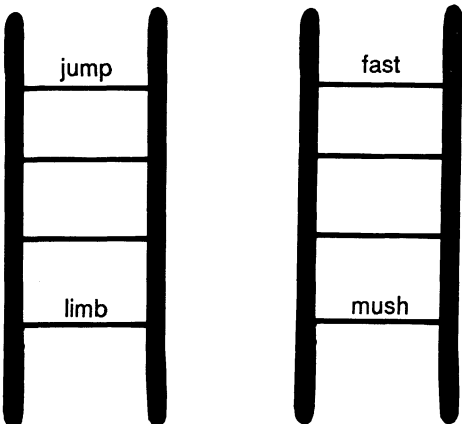
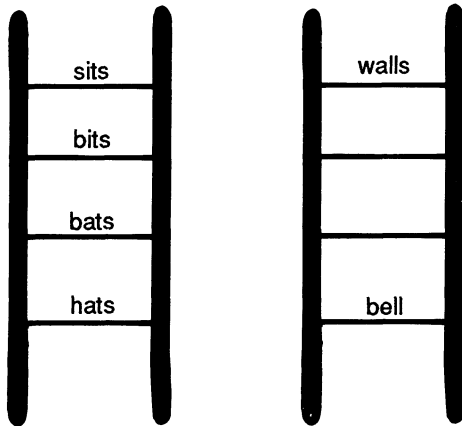
Some people experience the unusual. Match the person with his experience.

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 1. Moses     | a. stoning mob (Acts 7:59)               |
| 2. Paul      | b. parting sea (Exodus 14:21)            |
| 3. Jacob     | c. wet and dry fleece (Judges 6:36-40)   |
| 4. Stephen   | d. talking donkey (Numbers 22:29)        |
| 5. Joshua    | e. burning bush (Exodus 3:2)             |
| 6. Balaam    | f. reversing sundial (2 Kings 20:10)     |
| 7. Elisha    | g. dipping in muddy water (2 Kings 5:11) |
| 8. Hebrews   | h. blinding light (Acts 9:3)             |
| 9. Naaman    | i. fighting angel (Genesis 32:24)        |
| 10. Hezekiah | j. sun standing still (Joshua 10:12)     |
| 11. Gideon   | k. swimming axe head (2 Kings 6:1)       |

(Answers below)

## LADDERS

Do you remember how to do the *ladders*? The first one is done as an example



## HOLIDAY WORDSEARCH

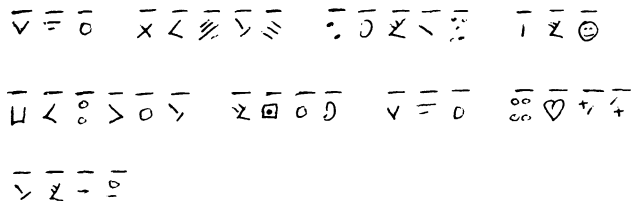
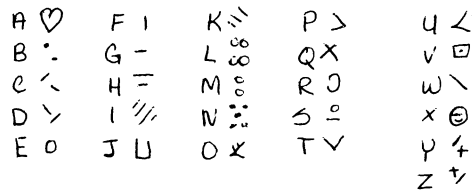
By Busy Beaver *Nicole Aasman*



- |                |              |            |
|----------------|--------------|------------|
| Birth          | Thanksgiving | Easter     |
| New Year's day | Mother's day | Valentines |
| Parties        | Christmas    |            |
| Good Friday    | Father's day |            |

## PICTURE CODE

By Busy Beaver *Melanie Peters*



What is so unusual about this puzzle?

### Answers

*Unusual Experiences:*  
 1.e 2.h 3.i 4.a 5.j 6.d 7.k 8.b 9.g 10.f 11.c  
*Picture Code question:* It has all the letters in the alphabet.

Hope you enjoyed the puzzles, Busy Beavers!  
 How did you do?  
 Bye for now.

Love to you all,  
 Aunt Betty