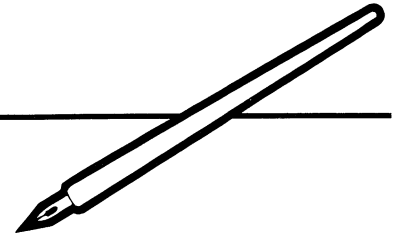




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Easter 1991: Resurrection to New Life?

We, as Christians, celebrate the feast of the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead unto new life. We also believe that this resurrection, after His death as a ransom, a payment, for sin, has an enormous, life-giving effect. Believers confess that Christ's resurrection provides them with the following three benefits which includes the whole salvation:

By His resurrection He has overcome death, so that He could make us share in the righteousness which He has obtained for us by His death.

Then,

by His power we too are raised up to a new life.

And, in the third place,

Christ's resurrection is to us a sure pledge of our glorious resurrection.

The reader recognizes here his confession in L.D. 17 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

The new life which Christ obtained and gives is clearly a life that is restored in fellowship with God. By His death Christ made propitiation; He appeased God's anger because of sin. With His blood He made expiation for sin and covers the sinner's guilt. In this way He worked reconciliation of the sinner with God, clothing him with His obtained perfect righteousness. God restores His relation with man. In that restored relation man can truly receive life back. Through the Holy Spirit people who were dead in their trespasses and sins are made alive again. They are raised up to a new life with Christ. This promise of the gospel is pictured and sealed in the sacraments, both of the Lord's Supper and of baptism, compare, e.g., Romans 6:1-11.

However, when we look at our world, we do not see much of that resurrection unto new life. Many people in Africa and Asia, but also in North and South America, and in Europe, live in miserable circumstances, in hunger, without an own home, in refugee camps, under oppression, without health, and so on.

Listening to the radio makes clear that great misery is also hitting the people in Iraq. After the lost war against the allied forces, there is now civil war (at the moment of writing these lines). Many more, especially more civilians, are now becoming victims of an inside power struggle. Not only are they killed by weapons, but many also are hit by lack of the bare necessities of life, especially in the cities.

The bombardments of the allied forces destroyed not only military targets, but also sewage systems, drinking water lines, and other elements without which life in a modern city becomes impossible. Was this destruction meant to prevent a new building up of arms, because civil institutions have to be restored first? In this connection the good law of the LORD in Deut. 20:19,20 comes to my mind:

When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them; for you may eat of them, but you shall not cut them down. Are the trees in

the field men that they should be besieged by you? Only the trees which you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down that you may build siege works against the city that makes war with you, until it falls.

Thus, what is a source for food has to be retained. Life goes on, also after a siege. Food will be needed. Therefore, its sources have to remain intact. This is God's care for man. God is the God of life. Therefore, His people have to protect life, as much as they can, also under war circumstances.

I found it striking that, as soon as the war of the allied forces was over, one could hear about efforts of Western nations, involved in the war, to receive a share in the work of rebuilding Kuwait (to begin with). It was said that the gain through restoring the damage could be bigger than the cost of the war. It makes one wonder about self-interest.

What has all this to do with Easter, and with the restoration of the gift of new life through Christ? It can be said that we have to do here with opposites. So much in this world is a matter of a struggle for power, politically or also economically. The two often go together. Money means power, and power means money. The hunger for power was displayed by Saddam Hussein as well. It shows so clearly the truth of the characterization which Christ gave of life in this world, when He taught His future apostles, who, at that time, still showed the same worldly tendency.

When the disciples James and John, the sons of Zebedee, with and through their mother, asked Jesus for a place of honour (and might), the other disciples became angry. This showed that they were after the same thing. Christ said:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.

The two verbs used here indicate an oppressively keeping down and exploiting those under power and authority. Christ adds:

It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave.

Why is this so? Why must there be such a total and absolute difference between the world and the church? This is so because the church belongs to Christ and is called to show the light of Christ. Christ continues:


Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mt. 20:25-28).

Why is there so much hunger for power and wealth, or in the reverse order, for wealth and power? Why is there so much exploitation of, lording it over, and victimizing others? Why is there so much selfishness, and so much lack in serving others? We can also say: why is there so little of that new life that Christ obtained and will work and give in the hearts and life of people? The answer is clear. The cause is the lack of a living faith in Him who is the Risen One. For this new life through the living Christ Jesus can only be received in the way

of faith in Him, a faith in which the believer surrenders himself and his life to this only Saviour and Lord.

Thus, we can clearly see our calling as Christians in this world: show our faith in the living Christ Jesus as our Lord, and do that by serving. The new life which Christ obtained and works in His people, and which is received through faith, is a life in fellowship with Christ as Lord, and with God as Father. This new life is, at the same time, a life of serving the neighbour in Christian, self-sacrificing love, as Christ did.

There is in our world an enormous mountain of dark misery, not only in Iraq, but also around us. If we have, and keep, our eyes open we can see it. In this situation it is such a great calling to show to the world the light of Christ. It is great

when the world can notice the truth of what characterized Christ Jesus, when He was on earth: being the S-e-r-v-a-n-t of what was lost. It is great when the world can see this truth in those who bear the name of Christ. It is great when that which characterized Christ Jesus now also characterizes them: being servants, always ready to help others, those in need, those who are lost. It is great when this serving is done, first of all with the proclamation of the gospel of salvation for sinners through Him who died and rose again, and who went to the heavenly throne in order to, from there, restore life on earth, but when this serving then also is done with a loving heart and a giving, helping hand, both ruled by Christ. 

The Invisible Church and Open Communion¹

By N.H. Gootjes

When the Lord's Supper is celebrated, who can be admitted to the table? Our Church Order mentions in art. 61 a number of restrictions:

"The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister-churches shall be admitted on the ground of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct."

Three restrictions are given here. 1. Those who participate must have made public profession of faith. Those members of the church who have not yet publicly professed their faith, will not be admitted. 2. Those who participate must lead a godly life. The members of the church who commit a public sin and do not repent, will not be admitted. 3. They must be a member of the local church or one of its sister churches.²

However, not all churches have the same rules the Canadian Reformed Churches hold to. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church does not have general rules concerning the admission to the Lord's Supper, especially not concerning persons not belonging to the congregation. This is left to the freedom of the local churches. As a result there are differences between the local churches. Some churches will only allow guests under the same conditions that apply to the members. Other churches are not

as strict in their policy. In these churches guests are admitted to the Lord's Supper at their own risk. They are warned that they eat and drink a judgment upon themselves if they participate while persisting in a sinful life.

This practice of warning is called the "fencing of the table." The Reformed Churches also "fence the table." We find this in the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper: "Therefore, according to the command of Christ and of the apostle Paul, we admonish all those who know themselves to be guilty of the following offensive sins to abstain from the table of the Lord...." But within the Reformed Churches this fencing is applied to the members of the church. Within some OPC churches, however, it is also applied to all those from outside the church who wish to participate. A strong worded warning is, in fact, the only restriction for those who do not belong to the local congregation.

The ILPB has now published a brochure on this topic, written by Rev. B.R. Hofford, entitled *Open Communion in the OPC*.

Historical background

To understand the content of this brochure it will be helpful to know something of the history behind it. The booklet itself consists of three letters Rev. Hofford wrote to his congregation in June 1985. That was after he and his

congregation seceded from the OPC (in June 1983) and before they joined the Canadian Reformed Churches (in March 1987). The reason for the secession from the OPC was the practice of the fencing of the Lord's table in the OPC, especially with regard to visitors.

It is understandable that the practice in the OPC continued to concern them, even after they had seceded. The confessions of the OPC and of the Canadian Reformed Churches were studied and compared. From this study the conviction grew that the difference in confessional statements between the OPC and the Reformed Churches was the reason for the difference in attitude towards the Lord's Supper. And this led Rev. Hofford and his congregation to the conclusion that they could no longer accept the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, but had to accept the three Forms of Unity of the Reformed Churches instead. In *Open Communion in the OPC* we see them moving away from the confessional standards of the OPC and go in the direction of the confessions of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

The main thesis

The main content of the three letters that make out the content of the brochure can easily be summarized. It is this reasoning. The Westminster Confession and Catechisms confess God's eternal election. Rev. Hofford has no

problems with this; election has been revealed in Scripture. But according to Rev. Hofford, election becomes all pervasive. Every part from the confession is approached from election, and brought into relation with the elect. Everything is discussed from the perspective of God's eternal decree.

This prominence of election leads to the concept of the invisible church. The church is seen from the perspective of God's secret will. And therefore the church is defined as the total sum of the elect.

This in turn leads to the practice of open communion. The answer to the question, who can be admitted to the Lord's Supper, begins with the elect. The elect are members of the invisible church. They belong to Christ. Thus, we may not refuse to share with them the bread and the wine.

Three things are connected, according to Rev. Hofford: the prominence of election, the concept of the invisible church (which are both in the Westminster Confession) and the practice of open communion (in the OPC).

"For us, the most significant consequence of this emphasis on election and the invisible church is open communion.... From the perspective of the Westminster Standards it is not difficult to see how this position is arrived at and defended. If the elect are members of the invisible church, that is, they belong to Christ, then who are we to refuse to give them the sign and seal of their union with Christ?", p. 7.

More matters are discussed in the brochure, of course. But the connection between the invisible church and open communion is clearly the central message. This appears also from the fact that it is repeated time and again (pp. 12, 13, 17, 19ff.)

But, I am doubtful whether open communion is indeed connected with the concept of an invisible church.

Calvin

Let us begin by considering what Calvin wrote, and what he did in connection with the Lord's Supper. It is well known that Calvin, in his explanation of the church in his *Institutes*, used the distinction of visible and invisible church. He takes his starting point in the confession of the church in the Apostles' Creed. The expression: "I believe the church" refers, according to Calvin, not only to the visible church, "but also to all God's elect, in whose number are also included the

dead" (*Institutes* 4,1,2. p. 1013).³ Calvin refers here explicitly to election. It is a comfort in a time of persecution to know that the church cannot be destroyed. "We must leave to God alone the knowledge of his church, whose foundation is his secret election" (p. 1013). Calvin connects the word "catholic" in the Apostles' Creed with the invisible church:

"The church is called 'catholic,' or 'universal,' because there could not be two or three churches unless Christ be torn asunder — which cannot happen! But all the elect are so

learn even from the simple title "mother" how useful, indeed how necessary, it is that we should know her" (*Institutes* 4,1,4, p. 1016).

It is clear, then, that Calvin uses the terms "invisible" and "visible church". According to him, they are both meant in the article on the church in the Apostles' Creed. Does that lead in Calvin to the practice of open communion?

Certainly not. Calvin speaks in his *Institutes* also about unworthy partaking of the Sacrament. He warns those who "without any spark of faith, without any

"It is well known that Calvin, in his explanation of the church in his *Institutes*, used the distinction of visible and invisible church. He takes his starting point in the confession of the church in the Apostles' Creed."

united in Christ that as they are dependent on one Head, they also grow together into one body, being joined and knit together as are the limbs of a body." (*Institutes* 4,1,2, p. 1014).

Actually Calvin goes back and forth between the invisible and the visible church in this part of the *Institutes*. After having explained the invisible church in connection with the word "catholic," he speaks about the visible church in connection with the word "communion of saints."

"This article of the Creed also applies to some extent to the outward church, in that each of us should keep in brotherly agreement with all God's children, should yield to the church the authority it deserves, in short, should act as one of the flock" (*Institutes*, 4,1,3, p. 1014).

Next, he speaks again about the church from the perspective of election: "... even if the whole fabric of the world were overthrown, the church could neither totter nor fall. First, it stands by God's election, and cannot waver or fail any more than his eternal providence can" (*Institutes* 4, 1, 4, p. 1015). But a page further he is back at the visible church again: "But because it is now our intention to discuss the visible church, let us

zeal for love, rush like swine to take the Lord's Supper" (*Institutes* 4,17,40, p. 1417). The minister has a duty here. He "should excommunicate all who are debarred from it by the Lord's prohibition" (*Institutes* 4,17,43, p. 1421).

How serious Calvin took this can be seen from an event which took place in 1555. Someone called Berthelier was barred by the consistory of Geneva from partaking in the Lord's Supper, because of drunkenness. He refused to repent from his sin, and therefore he had been under church discipline for a year and a half. Then Berthelier's friends in the city council decided that it had been enough: they lifted the ban. It became now a matter of authority: Who decided on the admission to the Lord's Supper: the city council or the consistory of the church. Calvin, who as minister had to lead in the service in which the Lord's Supper was celebrated, stated publicly that he would rather be killed than hand out the bread and the wine to a public despiser of the name of the Lord. When the Sunday of the Lord's Supper came, the atmosphere in the church was very tense. If Calvin would refuse Berthelier it could cost him imprisonment, or another exile. But Berthelier did not participate, and the city council did not undertake any action against Calvin.

We see, therefore, that in Calvin the doctrine of an invisible church does not lead to open communion.

Other examples.

Let us consider some more examples. First, what about Ursinus? He was very much involved in the making of one of the Forms of Unity of the Reformed Churches, the Heidelberg Catechism. He wrote afterwards a commentary on it. How does he speak about the church?

Ursinus explains several divisions that should be applied to the church. In the first place: the church is either true or false. But a false church is not really a church; it uses the name without having the right to call itself a church. Then, speaking about the true church, Ursinus distinguishes between the triumphant and the militant church. The triumphant church is in heaven, but the militant church is fighting in this world against the devil, the flesh and the world.

This militant church is either visible or invisible. (Here it appears that Ursinus' view of the invisible church differs from that of Calvin, but we will leave that for now.) For us it is of particular interest what Ursinus has to say about the invisible church. "The *invisible* church consists of those who are chosen unto eternal life, who are also regenerated, and belong to the visible church." 4 So Ursinus teaches an invisible church, which consists of the elect within the visible church.

But the Catechism also has a question and answer on the admission to the Lord's Supper. It is question 82: "Are those also to be admitted to the Lord's Supper who by their confession and life show that they are unbelieving and ungodly?" In his explanation of the answer Ursinus says that it is wrong to participate in the Lord's Supper without repentance. This is directed against those who for some reason would like to participate without faith. But according to Ursinus it is also wrong to administer the signs of the covenant to these people. Not only those who take to themselves the signs of the covenant while they are impenitent, are profaning the covenant; also those who knowingly and willingly administer the signs to such persons as God has excluded from the covenant, profane it (p. 430). So also for Ursinus it does not follow that the idea of an invisible church leads to open communion.

After these examples from Switzerland (Calvin) and Germany (Ursinus), let us now consider an example from the Netherlands. In 1625 four theological professors teaching at Leyden Universi-

ty, together published a dogmatic handbook. The book therefore dates from the time immediately following the Synod of Dort (1618/19) which dealt extensively with the doctrine of election. Actually, three of the four writers of this handbook had been present at the Synod and had played an active role in the discussions (Polyander, Walaeus and Thysius).⁵

About the church they write: We divide the church into visible and invisible. "The invisible church is called the totality of the believers and elect, who in particular congregations as well as in all churches and places of the whole world are visible in God's eyes" (438).

Does this lead them to open communion? Not at all. In discussing the Lord's Supper they state that it is an abuse to eat and drink without discerning the body (528). But this requires not only self examination. According to them barring from the table should take place in two cases. In the first place, when someone who has committed a grave sin, repents and promises to change his ways. However, he should still be barred as long as the fruits of repentance have not yet become visible. In the second place, when someone does not repent, but there is hope that he will repent, he should be barred only (without beginning the process of excommunication) (584ff.).

This dogmatic handbook maintains not only that sinners have to examine themselves, but also that there is a duty for the consistory to examine and to say whether anyone is worthy to partake. And yet it teaches the invisible church!

After this the practice of the churches in Great Britain will not come as a surprise. Not many churches there have officially adopted the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. But churches that hold to these confessions, do have restricted communion. An example: The Free Church of Scotland has adopted the Westminster Standards, with its teaching of the invisible church. At the same time the elders have a special duty to screen those who want to participate in the upcoming celebration of the Lord's Supper. This screening is even more personal than our practice.

Rev. Hofford sees open communion as a direct result of the concept of the invisible church. But historically speaking this cannot be correct.

The Lord's Supper and the visible church

We could have expected this result. When traditional Reformed theology uses the distinction between the invisible and the visible church, it organizes the sacraments under the *visible* church.



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There is no direct relation between the concept of the invisible church and the Lord's Supper. A few quotations will prove this.

Let us begin again with Calvin. According to him, Holy Scripture speaks of the church in two ways. "Sometimes by the term "church" it means that which is actually in God's presence." In that case "the church includes not only the saints presently living on earth, but all the elect from the beginning of the world." There is also another sense, however. Then the name "church" designates the whole multitude of men spread over the earth who profess to worship one God and Christ." And it is in connection with this church that Calvin speaks about the sacraments: "By baptism we are initiated into faith in Him; by partaking in the Lord's Supper we attest our unity in true doctrine and love." But in this church are many hypocrites, says Calvin (*Institutes* 4,1,7, p. 1021). Baptism and the Lord's Supper belong clearly to "church" in its second sense, to the visible church.

The same can be found in Ursinus. He distinguishes in the militant church between the invisible and the visible church. About the visible church he says: "It means an assembly of persons, who embrace and profess the entire and uncorrupted doctrine of the law and gospel, and who use the sacraments according to the appointment of Christ, and profess obedience to the teachings of God's word" (p. 286ff.). The sacraments are again mentioned in connection with the visible church.

The Westminster Confession stands in this tradition. Ch. 25 speaks about the church. The first paragraph is devoted to the invisible church, the second to the visible church. The third paragraph continues to speak about the visible church: "Unto this catholic visible Church Christ has given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfection of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world: and does by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto" (25,3).

This article speaks about the preaching of the Word and of the sacraments, as appears from the prooftexts added to it (1 Cor. 12:23; Eph. 4:11-13; Matth. 28:19,20; Is. 59:21). Again: the sacraments are mentioned in connection with the visible church.

This is the background of the confession about the Lord's Supper: "Our Lord Jesus, in the night wherein he was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of his

body and blood, called the Lord's Supper, to be observed in his Church, unto the end of the world" (29,1). The Lord's Supper belongs so closely to the visible church that the Westminster Confession emphasises that bread and wine should be given "to none who are not then present in the congregation" (29,3). And it forbids explicitly to hand out the bread and the wine in a private ceremony (29,4). We can connect this with an expression the Westminster Shorter Catechism uses about baptism:

To whom is Baptism to be administered?

Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the *visible* Church, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to Him; but the infants of such as are members of the *visible* church, are to be baptized" (Q. and A. 95, emphasis added).

Why, then, do they who speak about the invisible church, still reject open communion? The reason is that they do not approach the sacraments from the viewpoint of the invisible church, but from the viewpoint of the visible church. Our conclusion must be, that the doctrine of the invisible church is not the background for practising open communion.

In conclusion

In the preceding I did not intend to advocate the idea of the invisible church. We must, however, admit that this concept is in our own historical background, as has been shown from Calvin, Ursinus etc. It is also in the historical back-

ground of the OPC, as can be seen in their Westminster Confession and Catechisms. In our century the concept of the invisible church has been severely criticized. In the Reformed Churches this was done by K. Schilder, in the OPC J. Murray criticized it. We will have to take note of this criticism when we speak about the church. But whatever can be said against the idea of an invisible church, one cannot argue that this concept caused open communion in the OPC.

At this point one more thing should be said about the brochure of Rev. Hofford. The title is *Open Communion in the OPC*. But, is this title correct? I do not know enough about the practice in the OPC, but there are local differences. But, whatever the practice, is it open? Is there not any restriction? According to the description on p. 17 there is no church completely without restriction. The problem with the celebration of the Lord's Supper appears to be whether the admission to the table is sufficiently restricted. Since the title does not reflect the actual situation it would have been better if another title had been chosen.

At the same time, the quotations from our common heritage, given above, provide sufficient reason to continue discussing with the OPC proper rules for admission to the table.

¹This is a review article of the brochure of Rev. B.R. Hofford, *Open Communion in the OPC*, London ON: ILPB, 1990. There are a number of misprints. One should be mentioned here since it affects the meaning of the whole paragraph. On p. 20, line 9 "true church" should be "false church."

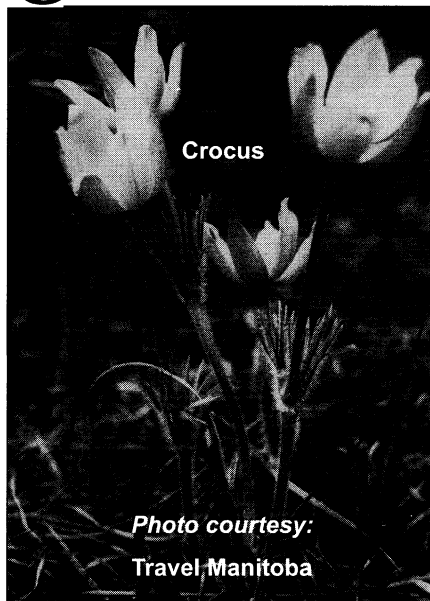
²See on this the article of J. Geertsema, "The offense of a closed Lord's Supper Table" in *Clarion* Vol. 39, No. 24. 514ff.

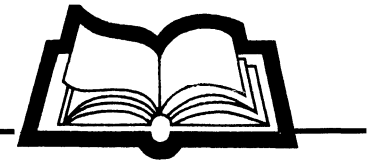
³We will quote the *Institutes* in the translation of F.L. Battles, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* (2 Vols.; ed. J.T. McNeill; Philadelphia: Westminster Press). The pages refer to this edition.

⁴This is in the explanation of L.D. 21, Q. and A. 54. I used the English translation of Ursinus' explanation: R.G. Williard, *The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*, repr. Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, n.d. the quotation is on p. 286ff.

⁵The Latin title is *Synopsis purioris theologiae*, it was written by J. Polyander, A. Rivetus, A. Walaeus and A. Thysius. The sixth edition was published by H. Bavinck, Leiden: Donner, 1881. The quotations in the text refer to this edition.

OUR COVER





By J. De Jong

“Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel ...”

2 Tim. 2,8.

The Pivot Point

“He is not here, He is risen, as He said.” That message of the angel on the morning of the resurrection filled the disciples with wonder and awe. Indeed, so great was the impact of the resurrection, that the disciples hardly believed it. It took some time before the reality of the resurrection sank in, and it was not until His imminent departure that the truth of what had happened began to sink home. The wonder of God’s work does not easily penetrate into the human heart.

Yet here Paul says to Timothy that the wonder of the Easter event must be the central element in the mode of life of the church. The apostle gives this injunction in the context of his charge to Timothy to see to it that the truths of the gospel are passed on to succeeding generations. So it becomes a rule for all time. He then encourages Timothy to endure suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, adding that he must not look to immediate gain but to the lasting reward.

Then he brings to his attention the culminating example of faithful obedience in office — the example of Christ Himself. He was fully rewarded for His obedience, at the proper time. Paul says: “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead!” And the form of the word in the original wants to say: keep holding the picture of the victorious and risen Lord in your mind, in all you do! This is a key that explains His entire life on earth, all His wonders and deeds.

For the earthly life of the Lord exhibits a two-fold line, one apparent, the other hidden. These two lines are characterized in the expression, “of the offspring of David.” The apparent or outwardly visible line shows the Son in His humiliation and suffering. In all His deeds He was *true man*, like His brethren in all things, except without sin. He slept, He wept, He ate, He drank, He suffered pain and knew joy as all men do. He shared our weaknesses. But then there is the hidden line, which was not really uncovered until the hour of exaltation: in everything He did He was a royal Son, the long awaited Messiah. His was a divine work! So He is also *true God*. It appeared as if the cross was His low point; in fact, it was His high point, for here He fulfilled the will of the Father for our redemption. And the resurrection proves that all along He was the righteous Servant, the beloved of the Father!

This, for the apostle, is the heart of the apostolic preaching. Timothy must continually keep in mind and so proclaim the Lord Jesus as the victor over sin and death. He must see and hold fast to Him as the one who rose

from among the dead, that is, from among spirits in prison who tried to rob and hold Him. Of David, Peter says, “His tomb is with us to this day,” Acts 2:29. Of Christ, Peter says, “But God raised Him from the dead, having loosed the pangs of death, for it was not possible for Him to be held by it.” Acts 2:24.

This knowledge has many practical consequences for every believer today. For Paul himself was in prison, suffering like a criminal. Yet his faith in the resurrection dominates all his actions: “The Word of God is not fettered!” Even though He would die, the Word lives, and will carry on its triumphant course in the world, even through His death. That was also the encouragement and comfort that Timothy needed. For in the midst of suffering and hard work, he had to be sure that the triumphant course of the Word of Christ would continue.

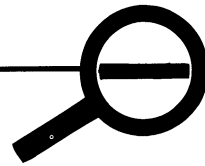
This can only be seen in true faith. So it was for the disciples. Ultimately they had to believe before they could really see that it was the Lord Jesus. And so it was for Timothy. In every hardship and trial he had to hold firm the knowledge and reality of the *risen Lord*. When death draws near, He reaches in! Resurrection faith keeps the risen Saviour in view in every situation!

This is also the duty of the Church today. In all our work we must keep the risen Saviour in full view. For no one can be saved by his own power. Our own efforts will never bring us to the goal. But the gospel message says it clearly: hold firm the victory of Jesus Christ, and keep Him and His victory in your mind as your only strength. Then we may be sure that through faith we will inherit the lasting reward.

“He is not here; He is risen!” In effect the wonder and surprise of the disciples must be permanent in the Church. This is what Paul enjoins upon our faith. And in actual fact, this wonder is permanent. For of ourselves we are prone by nature to discount the reality of the presence of the risen Lord in all our trials. We soon stop expecting His help, and all too soon rely on our own strength. But to all who turn to Him, He appears. He answers their pleas even before they ask them, and He shows that where we have forgotten Him, He never forgets those for whom He died.

“He is not here; He is risen!” It is through the wonder of the presence of the risen one through His Spirit that we, too, may rise up to new obedience and follow the Master who in all His suffering proved that He was the true Son of David, God’s eternal King!





Is Theistic Evolution An Option?

The issue of Bible and science is once again a topic of vigorous discussion within the Christian Reformed Church. The immediate occasion is the release of the long awaited report on this subject. This report appears virtually to equate the authority of special revelation (the Bible) and general revelation (creation and man's interpretation of it). If one puts these two means of revelation on virtually the same level, the old question arises whether the theory of evolution is not right after all. Could God not have used evolution to create heaven and earth? It has rightly been pointed out that this idea of theistic evolution denies the authority of Scripture as fully containing the will of God (Belgic Confession Art. 7). Science must interpret creation in the light of Scriptures. In that case it is difficult to see where in Scripture one can manage to find the billions of years which are necessary according to evolutionary hypotheses. (See also on the relation of special and general revelation, N.H. Gootjes, "Does the Belgic Confession Teach 'Not the Bible Alone?'" *Clarion*, Oct. 26 and Nov. 9, 1990).

In the February 1991 issue of *The Outlook*, Dr. T. Plantinga, professor of philosophy at Redeemer College and Dr. C. Venema, professor of Doctrinal Studies at Mid-American Reformed Seminary show that theistic evolution is also against the Three Forms of Unity, creedal statements that all professors at Calvin College officially subscribe to. Because of the importance of this issue, their summary of their article, printed as nine theses, follows in its entirety.

Evolution, Original Sin, and our Creeds Nine Theses by Prof. T. Plantinga and Prof. C.P. Venema

1. The theory of "theistic evolution" is incompatible with the teaching of the Three Forms of Unity (the *Belgic Confession*, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, and the *Canons of Dort*). The creeds to which the Christian Reformed Church subscribes, in their summary of what the church believes the Bible teaches, do not permit us to accept the theory of evolution as an account of man's origin.

2. The theory of "theistic evolution" goes beyond the boundaries of legitimate scientific theorizing by developing a comprehensive understanding of reality, making claims about its current status, its uniform mode of operation at all times and places, and its ultimate origin.

3. The theory of "theistic evolution" cannot be supported by an appeal to "general revelation" or to God's revelation through the creation. "General revelation" refers to God's disclosure of His "power and divinity" through the creation itself (*Belgic Confession*, Art. 2; Romans 1:18-32). Under the conditions of sin this "general revelation" only serves to render man inexcusable in his suppression of the truth; it cannot be said to authorize the scientific theory (speculation) of "theistic evolution."

4. It is only by means of the "more clear light" of the Scriptures that we are able to "see" again what God reveals concerning Himself through His creation. The Scriptures are the "spectacles" by which alone we are able to "see" what God's general revelation reveals to us. We cannot know anything aright of God and His will apart from the standpoint of the clear and sufficient revelation given us in the written Word. Therefore, any theory which conflicts with Scriptural teaching cannot be warranted by an appeal to "general revelation."


5. The biblical teaching that Adam (and Eve) was created in God's image, good and in a state of perfect integrity before he fell into sin, is incompatible with the theory that Adam (and Eve) was a descendant of evolutionary forbears. The idea that a "primate mother" gave birth to a baby possessing the image of God or capable of sustaining fellowship of the sort God would seek in His image-bearer is not in line with what our creeds (summarizing Scripture) say and presuppose about the creation of Adam and Eve in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:16-17; 3:1-3; Ezek. 7:29; *Belgic Confession*, Arts. 15-16, 23; *Canons of Dort*, III/IV, 1; *Heidelberg Catechism*, Q & A 6,7).

6. The biblical teaching of man's fall into sin is incompatible with the theory of "theistic evolution" which says that man gradually (over a lengthy period of

many millions of years) evolved from a "lower" to a "higher" status. Theistic evolution cannot be shown to be compatible with the biblical teaching that Adam, our first parent and covenant head, fell from a state of rectitude and excellence into a state of sin and rebellion. Nor can theistic evolution account for the biblical teaching of original sin, that by the sin of the one man all his posterity have become guilty before God and corrupt in nature (Romans 5:12ff.; I Cor. 15:21-22; *Belgic Confession*, Arts. 14,16; *Heidelberg Catechism*, Q & A 6, 7, 20; *Canons of Dort*, I. 1, 7; III/IV. 1, 2, 3, 16).

7. The theory of "theistic evolution" confuses the doctrines of creation and providence by speaking of a process of "ongoing creation." The *Belgic Confession*, following Scripture, clearly distinguishes these two works of God (Art. 13; compare *Heidelberg Catechism*, Q & A 26-27).

8. The argument for "theistic evolution" which appeals to "general revelation" undermines one of the pillars in the historic defense of Christian education and Christian schools. Historically, "Scripturally-directed higher learning" has meant that any "theory" within the special sciences must be compatible with the written Word of God. A Christian perspective is demanded in every field of inquiry because it is only in the "light" of God's Word that we see the light. "Theistic evolution," however, seeks to account for the origins of human life and many features of God's cosmos without any direct appeal to Scripture. It is even willing to adjust our reading of Scripture to make it compatible with the fallible findings of "science."

9. The theory of "theistic evolution" has far-reaching consequences for our doctrines of creation, the fall into sin, the person and work of Christ ("the second Adam"), the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, the resurrection of the body, and the "creation" of a "new heaven and earth." None of these doctrines is compatible with the operating assumptions of theistic evolutionary science. 

What Does the Bible Have to Say About Incest?³

By R. Gleason

This is the third part in the series on sexual abuse.

In this installment we shall direct our attention to three Biblical texts that speak to the issue of incest. I shall not be able to give an exhaustive exposition of each of the texts, but I do want to point the texts out to the reader and speak to some of the most important features of those texts.

My plan is to deal with Leviticus 18:6-30 and Leviticus 20:11-21 in this article. In the next installment I shall continue to look at Scriptural data as we turn our attention to 2 Samuel 13:1-22, 1 Corinthians 5 and the fifth commandment.

We shall have more to say about the fifth commandment for it often poses a dilemma for the victim. They are told to submit to all those in authority over them. Some adults misuse this commandment in very many ways, not the least of which is the sexual abuse that takes place in the name of the fifth commandment.

For now we shall turn our attention to the texts in Leviticus.

Leviticus 18:6-30

The sixth verse in the third book of Moses is a direct command from God. *"None of you shall approach any one near of kin to him to uncover nakedness. I am the LORD."* Without going into the technicalities of translating certain words or why Moses chose to use two different words for "flesh" ⁵(kin), I want to point out some of the most important aspects of these words from God to His people.

The manner in which these laws against incest are introduced points to the prohibition that lies in the unnatural nature of these sins. More on that in a moment. "None of you shall approach to any flesh of his flesh, to uncover nakedness." "Any flesh of his flesh" refers to a blood-relation or kin.⁶

Sexual intercourse is called "uncovering the nakedness" of another. That this has a very spiritual side is clear from Ezekiel 16:36; 23:18 and Hosea 2:8.

If we make a quick reconnaissance through these verses from God's Word in

Leviticus we find that eleven cases are specified in which intercourse (married or unmarried) is forbidden. It is forbidden with (1) a mother, (2) step-mother, (3) sister or half-sister, (4) a granddaughter, the daughter of either son or daughter, (5) the daughter of a step-mother, (6) an aunt, the sister of either father or mother, (7) the wife of an uncle on the father's side, (8) a daughter-in-law, (9) a sister-in-law, or brother's wife, (10) a woman and her daughter, or a woman and her granddaughter and (11) two sisters at the same time.

It is interesting that in this list no specific reference is made to having sexual relations with a daughter, full sister or mother-in-law. We do find a specific reference to the last in Deut. 27:23, *"Cursed be he who lies with his mother-in-law."* One commentator has suggested that the reason why the first — sexual relations with a daughter — is not expressly noticed is because the crime was regarded as one that never could occur!⁷

How serious were these sexual offenses in the Old Testament? The numbers 1,2,3,8 and 10 above were punishable by death because they were accursed crimes.⁸ In the case of crimes committed under the numbers 6, 7 and 9 the punishment was that those who committed such crimes should bear their sin or die childless.⁹

The cases noticed under numbers 4 and 5 are passed over in Leviticus 20, though they no doubt belonged to the crimes which were to be punished by death.¹⁰

Just a quick rendering of these verses shows us how seriously God takes these unnatural sexual abominations. The Old Testament church was not to "cover up" these sins and pretend they never occurred in their midst. They were to deal with them Biblically.

In terms of the punishments attached to these sexual aberrations the New Testament allows an alteration. That alteration — they are no longer punishable

by death — does not mean that God condones or in any way approves of these heinous sins. Neither does it mean that the New Testament church is not to deal with the abuser in a Biblical fashion.

We confess that one of the marks of the true church is the exercise of church discipline where necessary.¹¹ We must not shrink back from our God-given responsibility at this point. We must not shrink from it in the first place because we are to glorify God in all things. The forms of incestuous relationships that have gone on and are going on now are not honouring to God. We must not shrink from it in the second place because of the abused. There are victims who are suffering under shame and guilt and who need true Biblical love and spiritual healing. The church needs to be a support system for them. We must not shrink from it for the benefit of the abusers who need our help as well.

That's right! They need help, understanding and love, too. Discipline is to save the sinner not to cause them to be rejected. They need confession of their sins, forgiveness from God and then the acceptance and healing from the Christian church. If they do not receive help they may abuse again. Church discipline, properly and lovingly administered, may be a great deterrent for others who might suffer from the inclination to this sin. Again, the church is called up to heal and not to hide.

Leviticus 20:11-21

Leviticus 20 reiterates the punishments for the sins described in the chapters 18 and 19. In Lev. 20:11-21 we are presented with a list of sins that are punishable by death. In certain cases the death penalty is not held out but that "they shall bear their iniquity." Verse 20 states that they shall "die childless."

There is no "one-to-one" correspondence between the chapters 18 and 20. For example, in chapter 20 no reference

is made to intercourse with a mother or granddaughter. That is because,

... it was taken for granted that the punishment of death would be inflicted in such cases as these; just as marriage with a daughter or a full sister is passed over in the prohibitions in chap. xviii.¹²

These words in Leviticus are the very words of God to His people. There are people who have totally disregarded these words and have turned normal, healthy children into those who are ashamed of themselves and confused about life.

These words carry with them a great literal meaning as well as a spiritual and psychological one. To transgress them has various implications and they are all far-reaching.

May I be allowed a few personal words at this point? To the victims I would say these words of God were giv-

en to protect you as young, growing children. Those who abused you were transgressing the very Word of God. It is a gracious word given to man that he might not sin. It is a word to correct and reprove. *What happened to you was not your fault!* I cannot stress this strongly enough! It was and is the fault of people who were going directly against what God *strictly and clearly* prohibits.

To the abuser I would say these words of God were given to protect you from yourself; from the power of indwelling sin in the Christian. Satan, the world and our own flesh are formidable spiritual enemies. These words of God are medicine for your soul. Take them and apply them to your life. Accept the responsibility to confess your sins which accompanies the great privilege of being a true child of God.

God is not merely the Author of the words of Scripture. He is the Author of

the totality of our lives. He is the God of our spiritual well-being and healing. He is the God of psychology. He is both able and willing to heal. For the sake of Christ I urge you to let the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you and come to know the great spiritual healing in its wings (Malachi 4:2).

⁵Those interested may consult C. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. I, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d., pg. 412.

⁶Compare verse 17 in the Hebrew text=flesh-kindred.

⁷Keil & Delitzsch, *Comm.*, I, 412.

⁸Comp. Deut. 23:1; 27:20,22,23.

⁹Leviticus 20:19-21

¹⁰Keil & Delitzsch, *Comm.*, I, 413.

¹¹Cf. Matt. 18:15-20; Belgic Confession, Art. 29.

¹²Keil & Delitzsch, *Comm.*, I, 428.



Congratulations

Rev. and Mrs. G. Van Dooren!

By C. Van Dam



In all quietness, but with great joy and gratitude to God, 55 years of marriage and ministry of the Word were celebrated by the Rev. and Mrs. G. Van Dooren recently. The Lord has done great things! Also by means of the pages of *Clarion*, we wish to offer our congratulations and to join in thanking our heavenly Father for His goodness.

Fifty-five years is a long time! On March 1, 1936, the Rev. Van Dooren was ordained in the ministry of the Word in Mussel, the Netherlands. After serving in Wezep, Enschede, and Orangeville, Burlington became the place where the Van Doorens have served the longest, — since 1955. In congratulating our brother and sister we also wish to acknowledge our thankfulness to the Lord who enabled Rev. Van Dooren to serve not only Burlington, but also the federation of churches so well for so long. With respect to the latter, I am thinking especially of his labours as editor of *The Canadian Reformed Magazine* (which later became *Clarion*) from those early formative years in the Canadian Reformed Churches, 1954 to 1966, as well as his serving as lecturer in the Diacological disciplines at the newly established Theological College in 1969 until



his retirement in 1983 (at the age of 71). Everyone who knows Rev. Van Dooren will agree that in all his diverse labours for the church, he was always foremost a pastor and teacher of the flock. This was the task of his first love and one in which he was most ably supported and assisted by Mrs. Van Dooren.

As can be expected, both the Rev. and Mrs. Van Dooren are experiencing some of the frailties that come with advanced age. They, however, also continue to experience the goodness of the Lord in many ways. In the midst of the

critical shortage of ministers in Ontario, Rev. Van Dooren continues as much as possible the task he was ordained to do 55 years ago, namely, to preach the gospel and visit those with special needs. Surely a blessing of God to so yield fruit in old age (Ps. 92:13)!

We thank our faithful Father in heaven for the many gifts He has granted through Rev. and Mrs. Van Dooren, and still continues to give so graciously. May He also continue to bless and sustain them by His grace. Praised be His Name!



Institution of Rockway Church

By J. Koolsbergen

On December 31, 1990, the new Reformed Church at Rockway was instituted. On December 28, we could enjoy a farewell evening. It was the last time that we were all gathered as one congregation in Lincoln. The need to separate became evident as the basement was overflowing.

Br. H. DeVries opened the evening in the proper Christian manner. Br. L. Rozeema, the "Master of Ceremonies", then took over the floor. After everyone was welcomed a letter was read from our former Minister Rev. Wieske. We could again see the wondrous work of our Lord in that He preserved the Church at Lincoln: It started with 230 members in 1970 and now, in 1990, we had 570 members. Rockway will have 221 members. We thank God that we may go on with joy in His service by letting our (His) light shine in our surrounding, through the mandate given, to send the message to the world by this expansion to a new location, yet remaining one in faith. The town of Rockway is the geographical centre of the area where the members of the new congregation live. We may interpret the name as an appropriate one: Jesus is our "Rock" and is the only "Way". We were entertained by two slide presentations by brothers of the congregation about the construction of Lincoln's basement and they were enjoyed by all. It was noted that some brothers still had hair back then.

After the singing of Psalm 127:1 (the dedication psalm for Lincoln's completed building) Br. J. VanderHoeven, representing Attercliffe, encouraged us by stating that if we remain faithful, God will bless. The talents in our congregation then had the floor. Mrs. Jill Middel read a touching thank-you poem. Mr. Bert Hopman sang "The Voice in the Wilderness" and the women's societies spelled out the word Welcome. Welcome to the Federation of Churches. Becky Heemskerk and Teresa Oosterhoff sang "Love one another". After the singing of Ps. 133:1, Br. Ouwersloot and Sr. Lydia Schulenberg gave us a history lesson of Lincoln. After closing words and the



singing of Psalm 134:2 and 3, Br. W. VanSydenborgh led in prayer. It was an evening of mixed emotions. Sadness at leaving (some members had been instrumental in the institution of Lincoln) and yet gladness and thankfulness at instituting another congregation.

On Sunday, December 31, 1990, Rev. D. Agema led the morning service in which Rockway was instituted. He read Matthew 16:13-28; the text was verse 18. The gathering of the Church is the work of our Lord Jesus Christ and we are part of this work. We need the Lord's blessing for we cannot do this work on our own. The Son of God builds the Church of God. The first point was the foundation of the Church (v. 18a) and the second point the salvation in the Church (v. 18b).

In verse 18 Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God. Jesus then tells Peter that God revealed this to him and on this Rock Jesus will build His Church. Christ will work through His servants to preserve the church. The gospel will find a permanent dwelling place on earth. Church institution and installation of office bearers go together in building the Apostolic

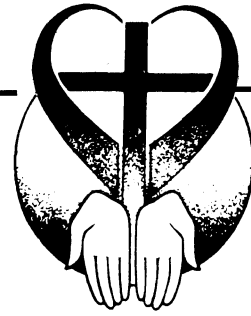
Church of Christ. The apostolic teachings are the work of the Living God.

Secondly, when we are bound to this foundation we will have salvation. God's age-old work is still going on. High on the rock He safety will provide (Ps. 27). Thus, we are safe with the Lord, protected by His salvation which is His gift to the Churches built on His foundation. He will protect us, whether it is in Lincoln or when we go to Rockway. We are not a new church, but continue a line all the way from Paradise. Although we work in weakness here, our disabilities will be taken away when Christ comes. Come Lord Jesus, Maranatha!

After the sermon, we witnessed the installation of five elders and three deacons. Br. H. DeVries, as chairman of the Church at Lincoln, read the Form of Subscription for elders and deacons, which was then signed in public. Br. DeVries congratulated the new consistory.

Congratulations were received from many sister churches. Via the telephone from Grand Rapids and via letters from Laurel, Watford, London, Ancaster, Smithville and from the Theological College. We closed with the singing of Psalm 27, verse 4.





Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund

Until mid-1989, CRWRF was pleased to support an Agro-forestry Project in Somalia. Initiated and run by Michael and Oetje Madany, the project impressed us as an example of truly appropriate technology — designed to meet the people's needs, raise their standard of living, and enable them to become more self-sufficient.

Since '89 when the Madanys were forced to leave, the situation in Somalia has become increasingly volatile. Rebel armies have recently smashed the rule of Siad Barre's government, yet thus far have not replaced it. The bloodshed has been great; anarchy reigns. No one knows what Somalia's future will be, but it does not look hopeful. It is sad to see yet another African nation in disarray, death and destruction at every hand.

Since their departure from Somalia, the Madanys have been living in Nairobi, Kenya from where they broadcast a nightly Christian radio program into Moslem Somalia. As before, they work through World Concern.

Though we are unable to support this new work (it is outside of our mandate as a world relief organization), we do continue to contribute in a minor way i.e. we have agreed to cover travel costs from Nairobi to Somalia so that Michael can continue, if and when conditions permit, to occasionally visit Somalia to monitor the agro-forestry program and to encourage those still involved. Thus far he has been able to visit only once.

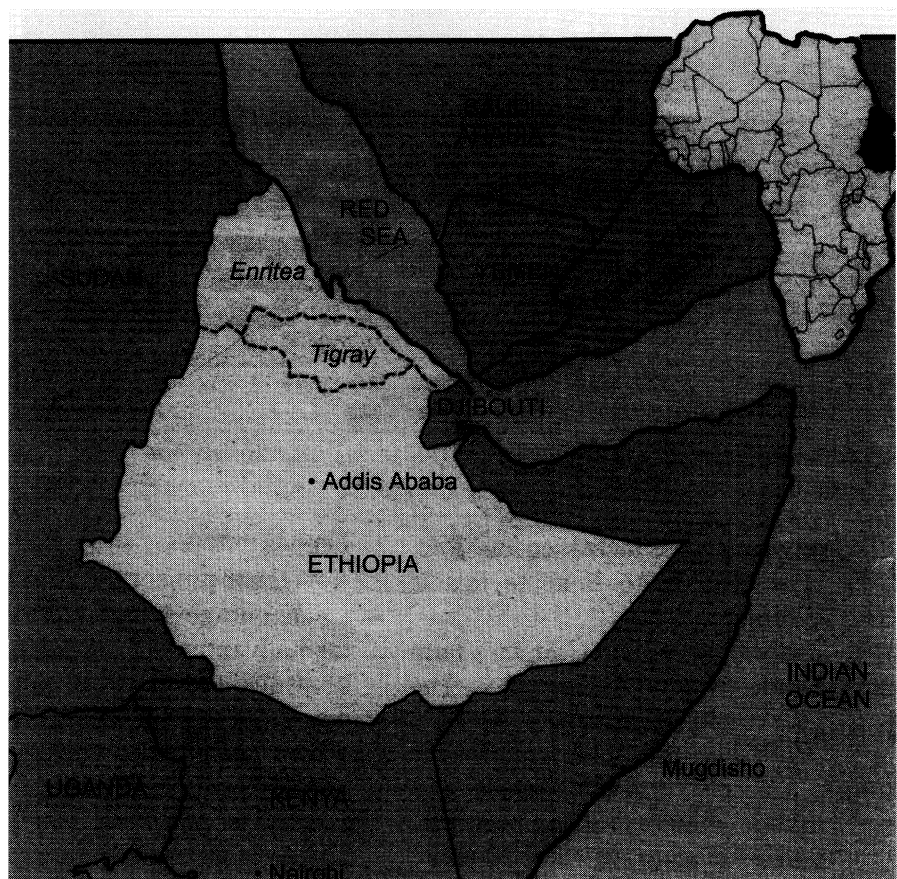
We also maintain an interest in the Madanys' present work and accordingly receive their newsletters along with monthly accounts of listener response to the broadcast "A Voice of New Life." It is encouraging to see that the number

of listeners who respond by mail is increasing (this in spite of civil war in their country), along with requests for the tracts, Bibles and Bible correspondence courses are offered. A good percentage of the correspondence courses are returned for grading. Other listeners request counsel or more information on particular aspects of Christianity.

It is not easy for those within the Moslem world who seek to know more

about the Messiah. Most listen, write and study in secret. Even for those living outside a strictly Moslem country, it can be difficult (as the Madanys' letter illustrates)

We thought it would be worthwhile to print the following account sent to us by the Madanys — to increase our awareness of the difficulties such believers experience, and to encourage us to be in prayer for them.





Dear Friends

Michael and I hadn't heard anything from B. since 1983. He had worked in the years before then with World Concern in a refugee camp in southern Somalia. A few months ago he called us on the telephone and we asked him over for lunch. B. had our number from a mutual friend of ours who still works in Somalia. The latter had been in Nairobi for a training course and had run into B. in the Somali neighbourhood of Eastleigh. When B. called us he was in town doing business for his father who runs a shop in a border town in extreme N.E. Kenya.

At lunch, we talked about all sorts of things, but later B. said he had something very important to tell us, that he had never told anyone. He said that he had decided to follow Jesus Christ and that he had been reading a Bible for the last three months. He explained how this came about:

When he had worked for World Concern in 1981 - 1982, he had heard plenty about Christianity and the Bible but wasn't interested at all. In 1983 he went to work for another relief group and shared a room with a Somali Christian. C/R had witnessed to him for a long time, but again, B. was not interested. When C/R was transferred to a new location, he tried to persuade B. to begin to read the Bible and to join him in his faith. Since they were close friends, B.'s refusal hurt C/R deeply. This made a deep impression on B. and for the next six years he was plagued by dreams.

B. was actually not very religious and certainly not a devout Muslim. Finally, he suffered a nervous breakdown. He had married in the meantime, had a good job and a small farm with a diesel pump on the Jubba River. However, the recurring dreams bothered him, and his wife had three stillborn children. After his breakdown in 1987, he and his wife left all their possessions and went back to B.'s father in Mandera — just across the border. B. tried to become a devout Muslim: ritual prayers, reading the Quran, attending the mosque — in order to achieve peace of mind. B.'s father and brothers are very religious. B.'s father is the second most powerful sheikh in N.E. Kenya and some of his brothers are part of a Saudi Arabian-financed movement known as Salaam-Aleykom.

B.'s dreams continued, and he was told to read the Bible. Early this year, he borrowed a New Testament from a down-country Kenyan stationed in Mandera. As he read, he came slowly to peace and to faith in Christ. At this point, B., asked us advice on what to do now. His family was very fanatic and he was financially dependent on his father. His wife, K., was over six months pregnant. He was also worried about his father's temper; he still had a scar on his forehead from when his father hit him during a Quran lesson (he had dozed off) as a small child. We could give B. no easy answers, but we read Scripture and prayed with him. Michael had been planning to hear a Palestinian evangelist and invited B. to accompany him to a nearby church. B. went along, and took a Somali New Testament that we gave him. From attending the service, B. began to think about why he never openly testified of his faith in Christ. He thought of this that evening as he read through the Bible.

The next morning, while B. was in the shower, his brother discovered the Testament and ripped it up. After a heated argument he was thrown out of his brother's house. That man (a sheikh in the most fanatic mosque in Eastleigh) went throughout the neighbourhood and told all of the clan and B.'s friends of his apostasy. B.'s father was informed by telephone and he became furious. He disowned B. and told his pregnant wife to get out of the house.

We learned all of this on the following Tuesday. B. actually seemed relieved in a way, since his decision of whether or not to remain hidden had already been made for him. His greatest concern was for his wife. He had a plan to move to another town in N.E. Kenya, where he could get a job as a teacher. This town had a greater percentage of non-Muslims, so he felt it would be safer for them there.

B. left Nairobi and we didn't hear from him for 14 days. He called to tell us that, enroute to Mandera, he had to detour when he heard his mother was quite ill (his father had divorced years ago). She lived in a tiny hamlet a four days walk from the nearest road. She had suffered a stroke and he persuaded his half-brothers to put her on a camel and try to make it to the nearest hospital. She died half the way there. B. spent a week at the funeral; the entire event was emotionally and financially draining. After a few days, B. moved his wife and youngest sister from Mandera to what he hoped would be a safer town. Since the funeral had exhausted his resources, we sent him some money to help with the move.

A week later, B. arrived in Nairobi, to take care of some business and to see us. His faith seemed to be growing, and he seemed to understand that the sufferings of this world were temporary, but there was hope of eternal life with Christ. He hoped to teach his wife and sister about this faith. We introduced him to a Kenyan evangelist that lived in the same town in N.E. Kenya to which B. had just moved. This was very encouraging for B.

Unfortunately, B. received a telephone call the next day that his wife was in the hospital. He rushed back to that town and we received a letter from him a few days later that their son was stillborn. B.'s wife blamed it all on B.'s new Christian

friends. This, too, was very emotionally and financially difficult — another funeral. B. was comforted in this through his faith.

A week later we received another telephone call. B. was crying. He was back in Mandera. His mother-in-law had arrived from Muqdisho to see B.'s father. She forced her daughter to divorce B. because he had left Islam. She took her daughter back to her house in Muqdisho. B. said, "I love my wife, but I cannot leave my Jesus religion for her." B.'s father tried to sabotage his efforts to work as a teacher in a village in the district by arranging a huge alimony payment. After managing to find money to settle this matter, B. left for a tiny hamlet west of Mandera to begin teaching.

Last week, a fellow teacher called to say that B. had been jailed in Mandera. He was released on bond and called us to tell that his father, brother, and three other men had accused him of embezzling money from his father's shop back in July. We have stayed in contact with B. in the past days with daily phone calls and have tried to encourage him. We have notified the Kenyan evangelist in the same province in hope that he can help B. through his contacts. B. was beaten Saturday night by three men who urged him to return to Islam. They go to court tomorrow. Tonight we expected to hear from B. again, but apparently his time out on bail is over.

Prayer requests from this account are pretty obvious; however, pray especially that B.'s faith will grow despite the seemingly overwhelming difficulties that he is going through.

Sincerely yours,
Oetje and Michael Madany

P.S. Since writing our last letter, we heard nothing from B. for nearly a month. We were quite happy to receive a call from him last week. Several of his uncles had assisted him by selling three camels, so B. was able to pay back most of what his father claimed he owed him. Thus, he did not have to go to jail (although he did lose his teaching job). B. has made contact with several Christians in his town.

An incredible one in six of the world's population is Moslem, and the numbers continue to rise. We need to pray regularly for the Christians in these countries and seek opportunities to reach Moslems with the Good News of Jesus Christ — which alone can save.

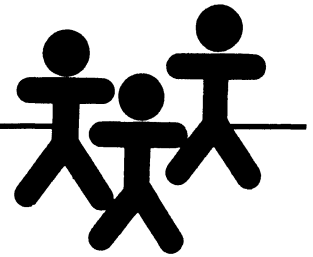
The Madanys request prayer for the safety of Christians in Muqdisho, Somalia, as the fighting in that city intensifies and many suffer and die. No doubt by the time this article is printed, much will have changed. Perhaps the fighting will have ended and rebuilding will have begun. If so, given the factions that exist and the destruction that has occurred, the needs will be tremendous.

We at CRWRF will, if given opportunity, seek to show the compassion of Christ also in this situation. We also hope and pray that the development work we have supported in the past may continue and contribute to improving the lives of many. Especially we pray that God will be with this troubled land and that many hearts may be turned towards Him.



SCHOOL CROSSING

By A. Witten



The Need for Kindergarten

Editor's Note

Many Reformed School Societies operating grade 1-8 programs do not offer kindergarten. Practical and legal considerations may be important, relevant, reasons for this situation. For those (re)considering extending the school society's mandate to include kindergarten the ideas expressed by the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed School Society of Langley for the benefit of their society members, are taken up in this column. The Board in question recommended to the society "to offer the members the alternative of our own Christian

Kindergarten Program" (Jan. 13, 1991) a.w.

The following information is provided for your consideration in coming to a conclusion concerning the necessity and viability of a K-program at CCES. A meeting will be held shortly to deal with the question and to get the membership's approval to proceed further.

In response to a number of requests from parents, the board mandated the Education Committee to study the matter of a K-program in our school and to come with a report. Most of what follows has been taken from this report. We

urge you to read it carefully and to consider the matter closely so that, together, we may reach a responsible decision.

Over the last number of years 95% of our society members with K-aged children have enrolled their children in Kindergarten programs. Based on this information alone the question as to whether the parents feel the need to have their five-year-olds in a K-program at all may be considered redundant; they obviously do. The following may be considered arguments that suggest that a Christian kindergarten program is superior to a Public School K-program.

1. In our families we are all under obligation to serve God and to praise Him in our daily walk of life to the best of our ability. The little children are under that obligation just as much as the adults. In Deut. 6 Moses instructed the church as follows:

Hear O Israel, The Lord your God is one God, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart, and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you sit down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The school our children attend has to be as much as possible an extension of our homes where we "...teach (God's Word) diligently...when we sit...or walk by the way...or lie down...or rise."

2. This is especially true where it concerns our little children who are so much more impressionable. It is a fallacy to believe that it doesn't matter when the children are very little. Five-year-olds have common characteristics which should be carefully taken into account. Some of these are:

socially they

- enjoy approval and praise,
- like playing with others or in a group,
- need guidance about sharing, taking turns, etc.,
- move from being unable to see the needs of others,
- toward cooperative play and recognition of rules and fairness,
- value friendship and loyalty,
- need guidance in listening in a group situation,
- follow the crowd without thinking,

emotionally they

- like to feel secure,
- are pleasant, helpful, and naturally happy,
- continue to have strong ties with home,
- develop self-concept; want to feel good about themselves,
- look for adult attention and approval,
- dislike being withdrawn from the group or "left out,"

intellectually they

- are imaginative and begin to see the difference between real and make-believe,
- enjoy concrete experiences,



- learn by doing, experimenting, handling, etc.,
- cooperate and compromise to come to appropriate solutions to problems,
- begin to draw realistically.

3. The Public School Curriculum does not aim to lead our children to God. Its explicitly stated goal is self-fulfilment; the service of man. Public School Kindergarten Curriculum has such goals as:

- to develop in students the ability to analyse critically, reason and think independently,
- to develop in students a sense of self-worth and personal initiative,
- to develop a sense of social responsibility and tolerance and respect for the ideas and beliefs of others,
- to assist in the development of citizens who are
 - * creative, flexible, self-motivated and who have a positive self-image.
 - * capable of making independent decisions,
 - * cooperative, principled, and respectful of others regardless of difference.

As purpose for schooling in general, it states that it should ultimately produce citizens who contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy. It advocates the acceptance of alternate lifestyles and family units; the philosophy that man determines for himself what is right or wrong. All of these goals have an inward and self-serving direction and do not help the children to become servants of God and the neighbour. By merely leaving God out of the curriculum the Public School teaches that man is all there is, and all that counts.

4. A Kindergarten program inherently focusses on values, much more than

on academic knowledge or skills. The saying goes: "All you got to know is what you learned in Kindergarten." It is crucial that our children be taught **Christian** values of love, service, charity, patience, respect, kindness, justice, compassion, humility, thankfulness, holiness, sacrifice, etc. as opposed to the pursuit of one's rights, success, wealth, self-actualisation, absolute equality and independence, etc.

5. As parents we are committed to the Christian education of our children from grade 1-12. We have good Christian motives for operating our Christian school. If these motives apply to the education of 6-17-year-olds, so much more to that of five-year olds.

6. Children need consistency in the values they are taught in their environments and by their models. It is sensible that, if children are to attend a K-program anyway, they be included in our present grade 1-7 program. This will integrate the learning goals of our current curriculum into that of the K-program, to make it a unified Christian plan of education for our children from age 5-17.

7. Having a K-program at CCES will help provide a uniform entry level for our grade 1 students, whereas now a student can have 0-1 1/2 years of Kindergarten at various different schools before entering into CCES.

We feel that the start of a Kindergarten program at CCES would in no way put the parents in our community under the obligation to enroll their children if they prefer to keep them at home. Five-year-olds do not have to attend school. All parents have the prerogative of keeping their K-aged children at home, just as they may keep any of their other children at higher grade levels at home for home schooling.



Press Release of the General Board Meeting of the Canadian Reformed Association for the Handicapped, "ANCHOR", held on Feb. 22, 1991 in Burlington, ON.

The Chairman, Mr. A. VanOverbeeke, opened the meeting with the reading of James 2 and prayer.

Minutes of the meeting of Nov. 30, 1990 were adopted. Minutes of the Executive Board meetings of Nov. 12 & 19, Dec. 10 and Jan. 4 were approved. A question was asked about the proposed increase of fees, from \$20.00 to \$25.00 a month. The membership has not increased in numbers. Do we not lose more members by another increase? An increase in membership is certainly the answer, but very hard to achieve. In order to change the fee structure, a proposal will have to be brought to the Board.

The Directors report of the last 3 months tell that everything is well at Anchor Home. Several birthdays could be celebrated, in which families and friends participated. The Ministry of Health was contacted in order to obtain a raised toilet seat and commode for Derek Kok. Mr. VanderHeiden also reports on various staff meetings, which are very informative for all concerned.

A question was raised about the local committees. Those committees exist too often of just one person. With the increase in work, especially as local Treasurer, all representatives are urged to increase the local committee with more members, in order to spread out the workload.

The meeting was closed with prayer.

For the Board,
Mrs. Nel Hart

Press Release of Classis Ontario North, March 8, 1991

1. On behalf of the convening church at Guelph, Rev. P.G. Feenstra calls the meeting to order. He requests the brothers to sing Hymn 35:1. He reads from Philippians 1:12-26 and leads in prayer.

2. The credentials are examined by the delegates of Grand Valley. Four churches have an instruction.

3. Classis is constituted. The appointed officers are: Rev. P. Aasman, chairman; Rev. G. Nederveen, vice-chairman; Rev. G.Ph. van Popta, clerk.

4. The agenda is adopted.

5. Reports

a. Report by the treasurer of Classis for 1990. Opening balance: \$7019.03. Closing balance: \$3,045.62. For 1991 the churches will be assessed at \$5.50 per communicant member which includes \$1.50 for Regional Synod.

b. A report from the church at Burlington South for the inspection of the archives was not available. Will be tabled for next classis.

c. Report on Church visitation to the church at Grand Valley.

d. From Burlington West an update report on the Classical archives.

6. Question Period according to art. 44 C.O.

a. The church at Burlington South seeks advice with regards to voting procedures in calling a minister. Advice is given.

7. Proposals and instructions

a. The churches at Elora, Lower Sackville and Orangeville request pulpit supply. Orangeville asks pulpit supply for the house congregation at Chatsworth. Classis decides that Elora receives pulpit supply 12 Sundays per year; Lower Sackville 6 Sundays per year; Chatsworth 6 Sundays per year.

b. The church at Elora requests financial support. Classis judges this request to be premature. This request should come with a report and recommendation from the Committee for Needy Churches according to the Regulations of Classis.

c. A request for financial support by Lower Sackville is granted.

d. The church at Ottawa seeks advice in a matter of discipline. Advice is given.

8. Correspondence

The church at Toronto requests a revision of the decision of Classis Ontario North, December 14, 1990. This request is declared inadmissible.

9. Appointments

a. Convening church for the next classis: Lower Sackville. Date: June 14, 1991 at Burlington West.

b. Suggested officers for the next classis: chairman: Rev. W. den Hollander; vice-chairman: Rev. G.Ph. van Popta; clerk: Rev. P. Aasman.

10. Several brothers made use of the question period.

11. Censure according to art. 44 C.O. was not necessary.

12. The Acts are adopted and the Press Release approved.

13. The chairman requests the brothers to sing Psalm 19:1 and leads in closing prayer.

For Classis Ontario North
March 8, 1991
G. Nederveen, assessor e.t.

Press Release of Classis Alberta/Manitoba held on March 12, 1991 in the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church at Edmonton Alberta

1. *Opening:* On behalf of the convening church, Rev. P.K.A. de Boer calls the meeting to order. He requests the singing of Psalm 93:1,4. He reads Psalm 55. He expresses gratitude that the Lord has heard the prayer to which the churches were called for an end to the war in the Gulf region. From the Psalm he read, he points out that even though this one war has ended the war between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent continues. It continues not just in far away places, but close to home. In view of this continuing war we must place our trust in the Lord for victory.

He leads in prayer.

He welcomes the delegates. Special welcome is given to the delegates from the Church at Taber which has been instituted since previous classis. He congratulates Rev. Aasman and Rev. Kampen with the additions to their families. He also congratulates Rev. Schouten with the calls that he has received.

2. *Constitution:* The delegates of the convening church report that they have checked the credentials and found them to be in good order. They note that there are two alternates and that two churches have instructions. Classis is constituted and there being no objections the officers as arranged by previous classis take their positions: chairman, Rev. R. Aasman, vice-chairman, Rev. P.K.A. de Boer, clerk Rev. G. Wieske.

3. *Agenda:* The agenda is finalized and adopted.

4. Reports:

a. The Providence Canadian Reformed Church report that they have audited the books of the classis treasurer and found them to be in good order.

b. The report of classis treasurer is received and he is thanked for his work.

c. The Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church report that they have inspected the archives and found that there were some documents missing of the October 9, 1990 classis, otherwise

the archives were found to be in good order. A copy of the missing documents will be located and put into the archives.

d. Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar gives an oral report on a visit to the Dakotas Presbytery of the OPC. A written report of this visit will be prepared for a future classis.

5. *Instructions and proposals:*

a. The Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church requests classis to honour Article 44 of the Church Order concerning the frequency of church visits now that the appeals of classis and regional synod west concerning this matter have been denied. They also suggest that more ministers be appointed as church visitors and that the church visit guideline not be followed slavishly. Classis decides to accede to the request of the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church and decides to increase the number of church visitors to four.

b. In closed session the Church at Calgary requests and receives advice in a discipline matter.

c. The Church at Taber requests pulpit supply for once a month. This request is granted and Rev. Wielenga is

appointed to make a schedule. Rev. P.K.A. de Boer is exempted from this schedule in view of previous arrangements made with the Church at Winnipeg.

6. *Appointments:*

a. The Church at Coaldale is appointed as convening church for next classis.

The proposed officers for next classis are: chairman: Rev. R. Schouten; vice-chairman: Rev. R. Aasman; clerk: Rev. P.K.A. de Boer. Date for next classis: June 11, 1991, alternate date: October 8, 1991. Place for next classis: Providence Canadian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta.

b. Regional Synod delegation is reviewed. The following are delegated:

Ministers: Rev. E. Kampen, Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar, Rev. J.D. Wielenga, Rev. G. Wieske. alternates (in order): Rev. P.K.A. de Boer, Rev. R.A. Schouten.

Elders: A. De Leeuw, C. Hoogerdijk, C. Meliefste, C. Van Seters. alternates (in order): M. Hooimeier, J. De Vries, J. Van Assen, J. Voorhorst, I. Veurink.

c. Additional church visitor: Rev. G. Wieske

7. *Question Period* (ad. Article 44 C.O.):

a. The Church at Calgary requests advice concerning the use of the communal cup at the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Opinions of the delegates are given.

b. The Church at Carman gives notice of appeal to Regional Synod of a previous classis decision.

8. *Personal Question Period:* Some delegates make use of this question period.

9. *Censure* (ad. Article 44) The chairman expresses gratitude that censure is not necessary.

10. *Press Release:* is approved.

11. *Acts:* are adopted.

12. *Closing:* The Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church, especially the ladies who served, are thanked for their hospitality. After together singing Psalm 56:5, the chairman leads in closing prayer. C

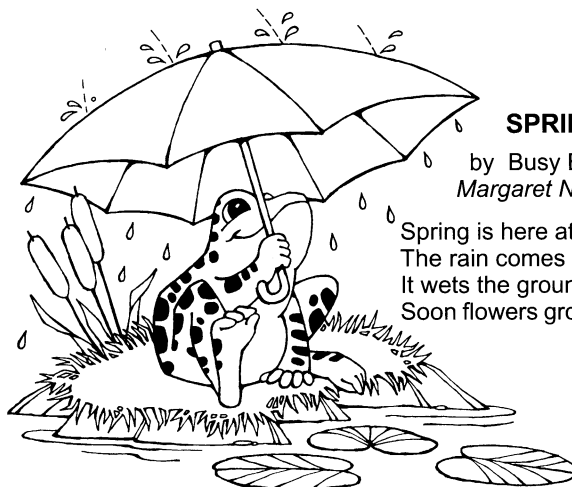
OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

What do you like best about Spring?
Cold winter winds are gone.
Now we have soft spring sunshine!
Gone are the snowdrifts.
Now we have bright spring flowers!
Aren't you thankful for Spring?



SPRING

by Busy Beaver
Margaret Nijenhuis

Spring is here at last,
The rain comes with a blast.
It wets the ground,
Soon flowers grow all around.

AROUND BOBBY'S HOUSE

by Busy Beaver Hilmer Jagersma

One day when Bobby was looking around his house he saw a snake. It was a garter snake. It had black and yellow stripes. Bobby kept on walking around his house when he noticed a little movement beneath his feet. It was a worm. The worm was a dew worm. It looked nice. Bobby saw a goat and a calf. The calf was a nice calf, and so was the goat. Then Bobby came back to where he started. Bobby liked his house.

SPRING FROM OUR FATHER!

from Busy Beaver Laura Aasman

The Spring comes at the break of winter,
Melting ice and snow.
Then the sun and rain make flowers,
And the grass you have to mow.
All these things come from our Father,
That is very great to know,
Let us watch the Springtime come,
And watch the tiny seedlings grow.
Let us praise our heavenly Father,
And use the blessings He'll bestow.

Quiz Time!

UNSCRAMBLE!

by Busy Beaver Margaret Nijenhuis

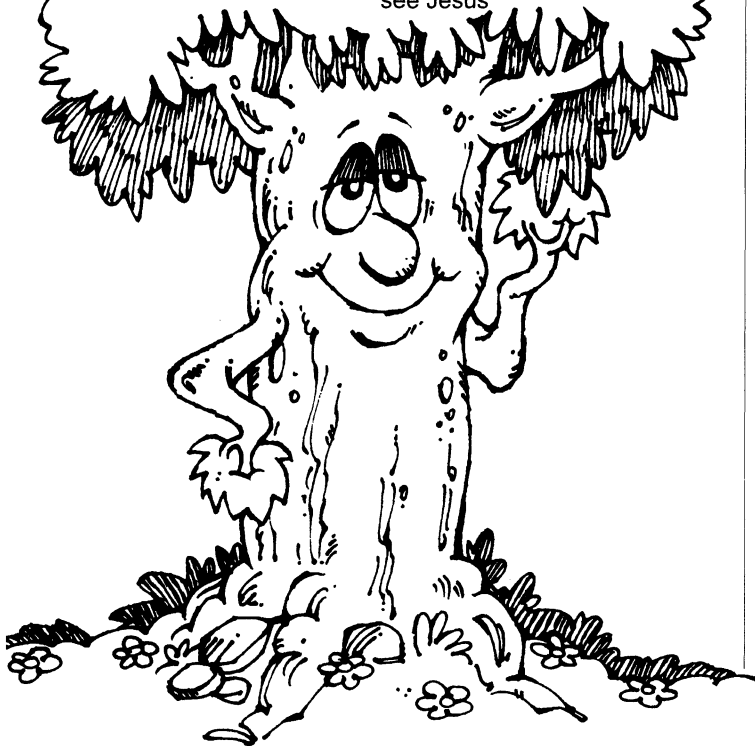
Things to do at the park

1. RERMONDRUGOY _____
2. DSELSI _____
3. SSNIGW _____
4. ROTERETETETT _____
5. XADNBOS _____
6. SROKANBMEY _____

TREES

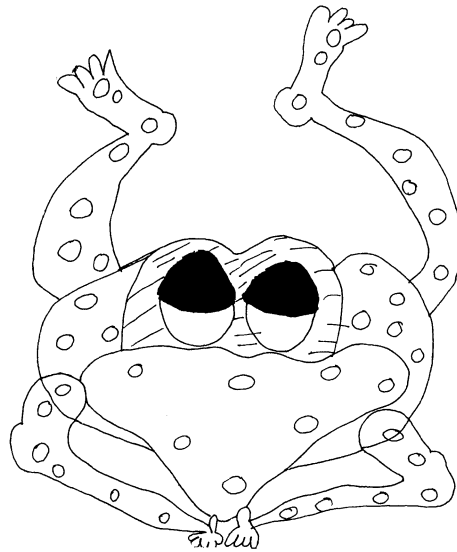
Trees are always important in history. Match these trees with the happenings below.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. Cedar (1 Kings 6:2,9) | a. used to show rapid growth |
| 2. Oak (2 Sam. 18:9) | b. good shade like oak and poplar |
| 3. Fir (Ps. 104:17) | c. Jesus used to teach a lesson |
| 4. Sycamore (Luke 19:1-4) | d. Elijah sat under when he fled from Jezebel |
| 5. Bay (Ps. 37:35) | e. used in building the temple |
| 6. Mustard (Mark 4:30-32) | f. Jesus used it to show the growth of His kingdom |
| 7. Elm (Hosea 4:13) | g. Absalom caught his head in one |
| 8. Juniper (1 Kings 19:2-4) | h. storks build nest in |
| 9. Fig (Matt. 24:32) | i. Zacchaeus climbed one to see Jesus |



"FROG"

from Busy Beaver Esther Hordyk



SPRING WORDSEARCH

by Busy Beaver Trina Jelsma

B K J M L S N T R M Z T
 P U D T B I R D S U W N
 U M O R O B I N S A L S
 D B M E L R Y U R R U V
 D R M E K N M M Y U V U
 L E K S R O T U L I P S
 E L R H S U N S H I N E
 S L O U F L U V U M G O
 R A S G E L S U N A R T
 O B J U S H O I U N E S
 S A N D A L S W I I A U
 E B E A S T E R E A T L
 P P I K S L U V I R M O
 V W Z Y S C L O U D S P

FIND:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| sunshine | sandals |
| rain | trees |
| flowers | clouds |
| warm | tulips |
| puddles | robins |
| birds | umbrella |
| skip | Easter |



FOR OLDER BUSY BEAVERS

We talked about Spring sunshine!

Why IS the sun warmer in spring than winter?

Please find the answer to this important question. Maybe you can make a diagram to explain your answer better.

The best answer I receive wins a prize!

I hope you all enjoyed this Spring issue of Our Little Magazine.

And I'm looking forward to getting letters about the border you made around the Easter hymn, and of course the puzzle for the OLDER BUSY BEAVERS.

Bye for now!

Hope to "see" you all next time!

Love to you all from
Aunt Betty