

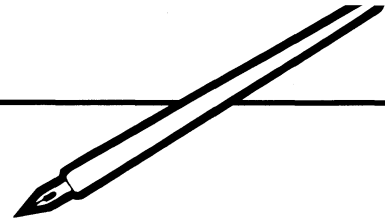


# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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## Will We Get Together?

### A Letter to the Editor

We received the following "letter to the editor" from Rev. Jelle Tuininga of the Christian Reformed (CRC) in Lethbridge, Alberta, to which we like to respond. The letter reads as follows:

### Dear Mr. Editor,

May I have a little space in your magazine for a letter to the editor?

With developments in the Christian Reformed Church being what they are, it is understandable that concerned members are asking the question: What next? It's one thing to separate from the CRC, but then the question comes: Now what?

At a recent meeting of the Christian Reformed Alliance, Prof. Van Dam pleaded with the concerned not to start another church, but to amalgamate with an existing one - in this case, the Canadian Reformed Churches. I could appreciate what he said, and that is why I wrote as I did in the *Christian Renewal* too (quoted by Van Dam).

Frankly, I was somewhat hopeful of a possible merger with the Can. Ref. Churches. Surely that is one option open for us. But of late my hopes have been diminished somewhat. I see too many things in the Can. Ref. Churches that are going to make it very difficult for us to get together, and the purpose of this letter is to say that publicly and hopefully alert the members and especially the leaders to this very real problem. Let me put it this way: The Can. Ref. Churches are going to have to meet us halfway. The movement may not be and will not be in one direction only. There are some concessions to be made on both sides.

I have been encouraged by remarks made in *Clarion* by Prof. Van Dam and the Rev. Van Dooren. But I have been discouraged by some others. Just today I again received a letter from a brother from Holland who is Vrijgemaakt, but who visits in Canada on a regular basis. It's the same old story: We are the true church and you have to come our way. The fault is all on one side and the virtues are all on the other. I find this attitude among too many Can. Ref. people, and I believe this is going to have to be acknowledged and dealt with.

I have said before that there is a sectarian spirit present in the Can. Ref. Churches. I say this with no spite at all, but just as a statement of fact. And that spirit manifests itself in different ways, not the least in a certain attitude of superiority and self-righteousness on the part of some Can. Ref. people. Let me cite a few more examples:

- A Can. Ref. member refuses to pray with a Chr. Ref. minister.
- A member of the "false church" leaves the latter and within a month is an elder in the "true church."

- To the question: Where would Christ write a letter today were He to send it to \_\_\_\_\_ (a place where there is no Can. Ref. Church). Answer from a Can. Ref. minister: "geen adres."
- Members leaving the Can. Ref. congregation for a Chr. Ref. one are announced as "having left the church of Christ."
- Does Rev. de Boer believe that there is only one true manifestation of the church on earth today? I get that impression from what he writes about the RCUS. We don't have to accept A. Kuyper's "pluriformity" notion to realize that there are a "plurality" of true churches today, sometimes even in the same town. (*Clarion*, Jan. 4, 1991). In the same vein I find the letters directed to Prof. Van Dam very revealing. Who ever taught this notion that there could not be more than one true church in the same locality.
- I've heard it said more than once concerning a true believer who stays in the Chr. Ref. Church all his life, that at death "the Lord takes hold of him and forcefully places him in the 'true church'" (a theory born of desperation in order to maintain some preconceived notion about the church).

Brothers, I could say much more, but I won't. Many of these theories and attitudes are widespread in the Can. Ref. Churches, and there is no doubt that ministers of the past and present have been and are teaching these things. I ask you in all sincerity: Brothers, tackle this issue head on! Unity will not be possible without that.

For Reformed ecumenicity,  
J. Tuininga

### Response

In the first place I would like to say that it is my strong desire to have contact and to come to unity in one church, since I am convinced that we belong together. It is a cause of great grief and of indignation to see that liberalism is in the process of destroying (a once) Reformed federation of churches of Christ Jesus for which He gave His blood. I suppose that we agree that this liberalism is not a sickness but rather a deviation from God's Word and, therefore, disobedience to the Lord.

On the other hand, it is a cause of thankfulness and rejoicing that in the CRC a number of members stand up and for the sake of God and His Word and people, struggle against this liberalism and accept it no longer. It is our constant prayer that the LORD may grant that those who belong together may come together. It was for us a great joy when in a place where I served such unity was realized when a number of families joined us; no, not because they joined "US," but because we found each other in the same faith, the same love for the Lord, the same desire to be faithful to Him, to His Word, to the Reformed standards. It is a joy when meeting CRC members here in Ontario, who find in us brothers and sisters who want to be faithful with them, so that a (house) congregation

could be formed, in which both Canadian Reformed and Christian Reformed members joined and rejoice together. Again, is this because they join "US," the only true church? No, but it is because together they want to be true church of Christ Jesus, according to what we confess in agreement with the Scriptures.

You understand that, in line with this, it was a reason for thankful gladness to read what you wrote in *Christian Renewal* about a possible getting together of concerned CRC members and CanRC people. It is just as much a reason for sadness to read in your present letter that your positive thoughts are less strong because of the things you see and hear. You want us "to meet you half-way." For "the movement may not be and will not be in one direction only. There are some concessions to be made on both sides." As far as this formulation is concerned, I find it somewhat strange. I would like to say: we can and should find each other on the one legitimate basis for Reformed Churches: Scripture and Confession with the Reformed Church Order as rule for our life together as churches. Stating the basis is positive, speaking about concessions that are to be made I find a negative approach.

### The general point

Going now to the context of your statement, I get the impression that your grievance is basically only one thing, since the points mentioned are just specific, concrete actions or words which you see connected with the "sectarian" attitude of the Can. Ref. Churches which think that they are "the only true church in Canada, the only good ones." Must I conclude from this that your demand and condition is that our coming half-way is that we declare that we are NOT the only true church? Or is it something else? It is not clear to me.

It should be clear that our churches have never officially stated in any decision or pronouncement that these Canadian Reformed Churches are the only true churches. If I go by official decisions, I could point to a pronouncement of the Synod of Coaldale 1977, in which the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches were recognized as true churches of the Lord (*Acts*, Art. 91, p.41).

However, we do speak in terms of true and false churches, such in accordance with Articles 28 and 29 of the Belgic Confession. And we do stress the calling to seek the unity of the church in joining the true church of the Lord. In this connection, let me ask you a question. Would you be willing to be member of the same church together with Dr. K. Schilder, if he still lived? Dr. Schilder always worked hard for unity between Reformed Churches, also in his polemics. He wrote that, if at a certain moment, in the same area, there are (as a possible reality) two true churches (showing both the marks of the true church), and one of them refuses to seek unity, this church becomes illegitimate, "onwettig," because of disobedience to the revealed will of the Lord, as expressed in the Scriptures, e.g. John 17. I suppose that you are familiar with K. Schilder, *De Kerk*, Vol. I-III. You can find Schilder's writing on this point especially in I, pp. 61-100, 186-194, 233-240; III; pp.297ff. The norm is that two (or more) true churches are to seek ecclesiastical unity. It means that staying separate for illegitimate reasons is disobedience to the Lord. Schilder learned from God's Word that faith means obedient submission to what is written, i.e., the written, revealed will of God. God's will is the norm for our thinking and acting. It is this normative thinking, which led K.S. in his thinking and speaking and writing. He sought the unity of the church, of all the believers. It is basically this same thinking that led us (Liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and in Canada) now already for many years to seek unity with the Free Reformed Churches, so far without positive result. It is for this reason

that our churches have sent an appeal to the CRC in 1963 and 1977. It is this same thinking that made colleague Van Dam go to Chicago, and say what he did: it is not good to establish another denomination.

If you (plural) merge with us, what do you merge with? A perfect church? Far from it. A church in which members have



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their own views and opinions and ideas on a number of things? And where the one does not always and in everything agree with the other? Certainly. But you are also merging with a church where no one is bound to some private opinions and views, but where everyone is bound to Scriptures and to the Reformed confession, to this completely and to this only; no less and no more. "Geen boven-schriftuurlijke binding," no binding above Scripture.

A little history may serve as an illustration. When the Doleantie took place in 1886 and following years, voices in the churches of the Secession said; we are, according to our confession, the true church, so you people of the Doleantie are (were) wrong in setting up your own churches; you ought to (have) join(ed) us as the true churches in the Netherlands. One of the obstacles on the way to union was this point of seeing the church. Nevertheless, in 1892 a merger did take place: obedience to God's Word made the members of the two church groups, from both sides, overcome the obstacles, on the understanding that only the Scriptures and the Confession were binding. Regrettably, a number of Christelijke Gereformeerde members did not join, among others, because of Kuyper's "wrong" (pluriformity) thinking about the church. The others (the joiners) said (and all agreed on this) that no one was bound to anybody's particular views on certain points, but only to Scripture and confession. Points of difference could and should be discussed in a sphere of brotherly care and love.

Before this time of Doleantie and Union, a wise decision was made by the Christelijke Gereformeerde Synod of Amsterdam 1866, namely, to admonish the ministers in their midst (the one was condemning the other because of different views on baptism and what it sealed and to whom) to speak carefully, and only use the terminology of the confession, as much as possible. Here was the same principle: we are not bound to private ideas, but to what the confession, in obedience to the Scriptures, says. Again, it is this confession that binds us together. (cf C. Veenhof, *Prediking en Uitverkiezing*, pp. 82-87.)

### The details

Now the details: does the fact that a member of the CanRC refuses to pray with a CRC minister form an impassible stumbling block on the way to unity? I do not know the circumstances nor the reasons. I have not attended, and I am not planning to attend, a CRC worship service. I do not belong there, because I belong in "my" church of which I am convinced that it is true church of Christ, where He calls me to worship in obedience. Some ten years ago your colleague Piersma told me that some thirty years ago this thinking based on church consciousness (vanuit kerk besef), according to what we confess, was also the common thing in the CRC. Further, I have prayed together with CRC members outside CRC worship services. But does that make any difference? Is this a norm? Is this what makes us a true or a false church? I hope not. Also my praying together with a CRC member, or even minister, does not make the CanRC correct or incorrect.

If the second point means that a concerned CRC member who became a member of a CanRC, and was chosen to become elder there in such a short time, I agree with you that this seems rather quick. But I do not know the circumstances, and, perhaps, there was a good reason for it. When a member of the CRC joined the congregation which I served last, he was after a rather short time elected to become elder. Consistory and congregation, knowing him for a longer time already, were aware of his gifts and his fulfilling the biblical requirements for office bearers, and they made clear in this way:

you are fully accepted by us as member in full rights and with all duties.

Point three: If this means: there is at a certain place no church that shows the marks of the true church as confessed, no, then there is no address there as church, even though there can be believers. But individual believers are not automatically a congregation, a church.

Point four: I know about a case too, where a Canadian Reformed consistory writes to a member that left and joined a local CRC what you write. Is the Canadian Reformed consistory justified to call the congregation over which it has oversight church of Jesus Christ? Should it not do so? Now imagine the for me totally hypothetical situation that this member you are writing about had a quarrel with the consistory and did not get his/her way. In such a case, such a member is wrong in leaving the true church of Jesus Christ, isn't (s)he? Is one allowed, because of some quarrel with the consistory, to just leave and join a different church? Is church membership a matter of what we like and where we can get our way?

An additional point is, of course, that this person joined a CRC. Are you convinced that the CRC, as a whole, is still exhibiting the marks of the true church of Christ Jesus? Does the fact that there are still many true believers left in a church, make it true church? If now a Canadian Reformed congregation is convinced to be true church, and if some member leaves to join a congregation which is part of the CRC, must the consistory say: it is alright? It does not really matter where you have your membership? If such a consistory would do this, is it taking its charge to admonish and exercise discipline serious? Must we accept denominationalism? Would you, in the present situation, advise a Canadian Reformed person to leave his church and join the CRC? Further, a point might be here also, that when one says: "leave the church of Christ," many have in mind the invisible church. But when a Canadian Reformed consistory speaks of: leaving the church of Christ, it has in mind the local visible true church of Jesus Christ. Leaving from it is sinful and against our confession, Art. 28 B.C. I am convinced that basically you agree, since Art. 28 is also your confession.

Point five: I don't think that Rev. de Boer would formulate things the way you do: "there is only one manifestation of the church on earth" (which then is the Canadian Reformed Church). Does this speaking of the visible church as a manifestation of the church on earth not come from Plato with his teaching of the eternal, spiritual ideas behind the earthly, visible, manifestations of that idea? I don't think that this formulation is found in Scripture or in the Reformed confessions. What I think is that Rev. de Boer seeks to support the RCUS brothers in their aim to be and remain faithful.

Point six: Also this is possibly said. But this particular, private way of speaking is not the doctrine of the CanRC.

### Some additional questions and remarks

I have another question. Imagine the following to happen: You separate from the CRC, hopefully with your congregation, because the CRC is hardening itself in allowing apostasy from God's Word and disobedience to it. Imagine further that you with your congregation, in that situation, will say: we are here the legitimate continuation of the Christian Reformed Church, true church of Christ. In the first place, does this then mean that, according to you, there are no true believers left in the CRC from which you separated? I hope that your answer is: there are still such true believers in the CRC. Does this fact that there are still true believers left make the CRC (from which you seceded in order to remain faithful and obedient to God) a true church of Christ? If this were so, you would be forbidden to leave. But how can an unfaithful church that hard-

ens in its unfaithfulness be true church of Christ? Will you then, after you have separated in order to remain obedient to God by not having part in the sins of others, call the other believers to come out, too, and to join you who are now (convinced to be) in that place the true church of Christ Jesus (supposing that there are no other faithful churches in the place where you have your residence)? I hope you will act in this way, since, again, this is in accordance with Art. 28 B.C.


When there is a local, non-Can Ref. church that shows the marks of the true church as we confess this in Art. 29 B.C., I have no objection to acknowledge such a church as such. But when this local church is and remains in a deviating federation, it connects “yes” and “no.” And doing so, it is disobedient in this respect to the Lord by placing itself in a wrong company where good mores are destroyed. With staying in such a church continues, too, to share responsibility for what is wrong, in spite of its protests.

Now if a church goes the way of obedience to God’s Word and separates from what is outspoken, decided, clear deviation (not sinful weakness), but afterward does not want to seek union with (an) other true church(es), I agree with K.S., such a church becomes eventually illegitimate, because it disobeys the call of the Lord for unity. This counts also for ourselves.

On the other hand, when a congregation, faithfully holds on to God’s Word in preaching and teaching, using discipline to punish those who live in disobedience to God’s Word, and for that reason comes in conflict with the deviating ruling bodies of the federation and separates from what is un-Scriptural, such a church shows itself true church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It does not become true church, it is this. Our confession in Art. 29 B.C. does not point to a specific federation of churches or a specific local congregation saying: this specific church is true church. Thus, our confession does not say that the Canadian Reformed Churches are, per confessional definition, the only true churches of Christ. Our confession confesses what the Scriptural marks are of the true

church. Therefore, where those marks are found, there is Christ’s true church. And if, at a certain moment, there are two such true churches in one place, it is their calling to join or merge, as discussed above. And when one congregation is part of a federation that is disobedient to God’s Word and hardens itself in its sinful ways, such a congregation has the calling (e.g. Rev.18:4) to separate from such a federation.

When we say: there cannot be two (or more) true churches of Christ in one and the same place, this “cannot” does not mean: it is not possible; it means: it is not allowed to remain this way as an acceptable status quo. Don’t you agree with this?

I come back to your statement or condition for unity, namely that we have to come half-way? Do we have to make compromises with the teaching of Scripture or with the confession: You do not mean that, I suppose. Or must we give up our heritage, our insights in Scripture and confession which we gained through the teaching of men like K.S. and Holwerda, and others? Let me be frank again. It is not meant to be condemnatory. I say this in love and because I care. I seek the oneness with you in one faith and in one church, in together listening to God’s Word in humble submission. I do not want you to come half-way. I want you to be faithful to Scripture and Confession. Is not speaking of coming half-way, the language of compromise? Does it not rather show irritation and frustration, than that it shows: thus says the LORD; this is what Scripture says. This is what our confession says. Esteemed colleague, you want to love and serve the Lord, according to His Word and bound to the Three Forms of Unity. This is what I want, too. Let us get together on that basis, as brothers in the Lord. And when there are things, views, opinions, on either side with which we do not agree, let us try to act and speak together in accordance with the exhortation of Synhardod Amsterdam 1866: let us as much as is possible use the language and terminology of Scripture and confession as the accepted norm and as the tie that binds us together. 

## PRESS REVIEW

By C. Van Dam

# The OPC and the International Conference of Reformed Churches



In the March 1991 issue of *New Horizons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, Rev. G. I. Williamson gives a candid account of how he, as an Orthodox Presbyterian, experienced the meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) in 1989 and why the OPC last year decided to apply for membership in this body. Since this is a matter of great interest to us, the full article of Rev. Williamson follows herewith.

### G. I. Williamson on the ICRC

The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) came into being a few years ago. Some of the found-

ing churches had previously belonged to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES), which was recently renamed the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC). It was my privilege to attend the second assembly of the ICRC in 1989 in Langley, British Columbia, Canada (as an observer from The Orthodox Presbyterian Church), and to join in recommending that our church apply for membership in it. Our last General Assembly adopted the recommendation.

Having previously attended the last three meetings of the RES/REC, I could not help but be impressed by the differences between the two organizations.

The REC is much larger both in terms of the number of member churches and the size of those churches. The REC churches come from all over the world, whereas few of the ICRC churches come from the so-called third world. At the gathering in Langley we saw only one representative from Korea and another from the Philippines. All the rest were people of European descent. Ten other churches sent observers, but none of them came from third-world churches. So it was quite natural that we who came as observers from the OPC after a long association with the RES, considered this a deficiency in the ICRC. Why then

were we unanimous in our recommendation to the last General Assembly?

There were several reasons, but the underlying one was that The Orthodox Presbyterian Church is committed to worldwide ecumenicity. If there were no Reformed ecumenical organization, it would be our responsibility, along with others, to establish one.

But other churches – including other former members of the RES – have already gone ahead with this task and established the ICRC. It would be improper to start another Reformed ecumenical organization alongside of – and even in competition with – this one. We are convinced that the ICRC wants churches from all over the world to join if they are genuinely Reformed. And that is the bottom line. The RES was once such an or-

ganization, but the larger churches in it broadened its definition of *Reformed* to the point that it was meaningless. The sad demise of the RES/REC led the OPC to withdraw from it. By contrast, a refreshing commitment to the Reformed faith prevails in the ICRC. This was always evident in the 1989 meeting.

It is no accident that the ICRC chose the term *conference* rather than *synod*. A synod has authority that a conference does not. The RES never quite had the powers of a synod, even though it used that title. And, at this stage of things, it is probably wise for the ICRC to claim only to be a conference. Nevertheless, it is my own personal hope that the noble ideal put forward in the old RES constitution – that of a synod with worldwide representation – will still be our ultimate

goal. Do we not believe in one holy, universal church? And should that church not come to visible manifestation? It is our hope, at any rate, that the God-given technological wonders of this modern age may by His blessing facilitate greater – though not really new – unity among His people.

The one word that was often heard in our delegation of observers to the ICRC meeting in Langley was *refreshing*. After difficult and heartbreaking years of trying to cut through the double-talk from delegates to the RES from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, it was wonderful to take part in discussions where the Bible really was taken seriously. May the Lord wonderfully bless the ICRC.



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## What Does the Bible Say About Incest?<sup>5</sup>

By R. Gleason

*This is the fifth part in the series on sexual abuse.*

In this article I want to focus upon a New Testament text which points the church of Christ to important attitudes and actions and then move on to speak about the fifth commandment. In cases of sexual abuse it is often this commandment that poses the most difficulties for the victim(s).

On the one hand, they are told that they are to be obedient to those God has placed in authority over them. On the other hand, it is quite often those very people who are the abusers. It does not take much imagination to see what serious difficulties and contradictions this poses for the victim.

So let us begin this installment by looking at 1Corinthians 5:1-8.

### 1 Corinthians 5:1-8

The situation is rather well known. The Corinthians allow a man guilty of incest to remain in the communion of the church without taking any disciplinary steps. Interestingly enough, Paul directs his words to the Corinthians just after

having dealt with the contentions and divisions that existed among them.

Beginning at the third chapter, Paul addresses these dissensions and speaks of their fleshly nature.<sup>14</sup> Paul upbraids them for their presumption and excessive confidence. He then proceeds to name, specifically, their disease, the knowledge of which should have had a *humbling* effect upon them.<sup>15</sup>

There was a type of fornication in their midst which was not even heard of among the Gentiles. Paul does not mean that the Gentiles had never heard of incest, but that the incestuous relationship was abhorrent to all propriety and natural decency. Incest of this type was held in detestation by the Gentiles<sup>16</sup> as a shameful and abominable monstrosity, for it is a beastly lust, which destroys natural modesty.

The Corinthians are accused, not because one of their number has sinned, but because they encouraged by connivance a crime that was deserving of

the severest punishment! What was that crime?

A *particular* fornication. The word which Paul uses involves all violations of the seventh commandment.<sup>17</sup> The Heidelberg Catechism summarizes this for us when it calls upon us to confess that we are taught by the seventh commandment "That all unchastity is cursed by God."<sup>18</sup>

The words "his...father's wife" in 1Cor. 5:1 are a scriptural paraphrase for "step-mother." This relationship was forbidden under the regulations found in Leviticus 18:8. The Christians in Corinth had neglected their duty in the name of Christ. Paul exhorts them to purity in language borrowed from the Mosaic law respecting Passover. The Christian life should be a perpetual paschal feast, all malice and hypocrisy being banished from the hearts and assemblies of believers.

Paul continues with this motif in the sixth verse. The Corinthians were boasting of their spirituality when, in reality,



they should have been sorrowful for their transgression of God's law. In the midst of this horrible sin that was not even found among the Gentiles the Corinthians were boasting of their religious state.

Paul asks them this question: "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" The leaven spoken about is not a person but sin! It is the nature of evil to diffuse itself. A single sin, however secret, when indulged, diffuses its corrupting influence over the whole soul. It depraves the conscience and alienates from God. It strengthens all other principles of evil.

Therefore, the apostle inveighs heavily against tolerating this sin in their midst. Church discipline is the answer to this situation. It appears that the Corinthian church followed Paul's advice and that the sinning brother repented. The main point is: the sin was dealt with in a biblical fashion. It was not allowed to go on. It was a violation of the word of God and therefore was not to be tolerated.

What would it be like in our time if such sins against God's Word were known and not dealt with? God's Word is clear to His people. He has given us trans-temporal and trans-cultural truth to guide us (Ps. 119:105).

We need to ask ourselves if there are cases of sexual abuse that are not dealt with in a biblical (God-fearing and God-honouring) manner. The solution to this problem is to start dealing with the cases as they present themselves to the church.

Is it the case that certain cases of abuse are known and are being "hushed up"? I hope and pray not. The victims have enough to cope with without a "cover-up" on top of everything else. Victims need to be able to tell their story to those who can help them and be believed.

Will there be cases of false reporting? Are we now trying to instigate a "witch-hunt" or an "Inquisition"? Let's look at these questions in turn. In all likelihood there will be false reporting and false accusations on the part of some. I contend that these cases will be few and far between and that counselors will be easily able to detect the true from the counterfeit.

With the questions regarding a "witch-hunt" or an "Inquisition" we must firmly answer No. We do not intend to have people frantically running around trying to uncover sordid details about someone else's life. We do want to create an atmosphere wherein victims can come forward and tell to the appropriate persons what has happened to them and who the abusers were.

I want to look at some of the particular difficulties victims have in this re-

gard. In order to do that, we shall now focus our attention on the fifth commandment.

### The Fifth Commandment

There are minor differences between the wording of the fifth commandment in Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16. The Heidelberg Catechism summarizes this fifth commandment for us in a most beautiful fashion.

Where the difficulties come is when those in authority over people misuse that authority and turn it into a tool for promiscuity. It is an abomination when God's Word written is abused in this way.

Each person has particular needs. The needs are altered or abandoned as we grow older. As children, we are dependent on our parents to meet our basic needs of being loved, being approved and positively reinforced, being fed, sheltered and clothed. As we grow older we encounter others who are able to meet certain needs. These are all relationships of trust. It is human nature to have to have a certain level of trust in a person before I will allow them to respond to my need(s).

To trust someone also means that I make myself vulnerable. I am allowing another person to be in a position to hurt or to take advantage of me if he or she chooses. All of us share this general vulnerability since it is only right and proper to count on our parents, grandparents and most intimate relatives and friends. No child should experience a violation of that trust and vulnerability.

Tragically, children are often victims of the ones who are the closest to them.

Their abusers have been Dad or Mom or Grandpa (Opa) or Grandma (Oma). The abuser's invasion of childhood (innocent, dependent, needy children) and his or her manipulation of a child's vulnerability wreaks havoc that takes years to undo.

To the abuser it might be just a fleeting lust. It may be the desire to satiate lustful (sinful) appetites, but the effects are devastating and long-term.

When children are sexually abused they experience confusion about their rights, abilities and responsibilities, their emotional and physical boundaries, and even about what is real. They are confused about what is happening to them, about things they do not like when the abuser is often telling them that they should; about what they can do to stop it, about how to say "no" and about who is responsible for the abuse.

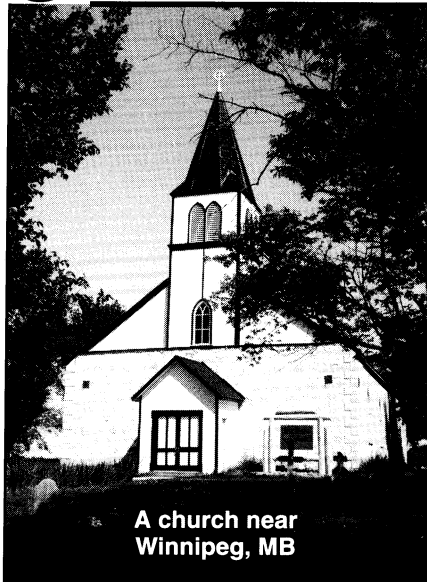
One of the tasks of childhood is to learn to recognize and trust authority. Adults, in general, have authority over children. They have the power to tell children what to do, to force, if necessary, children to obey, to punish them if they disobey and to disregard children's feelings. Any adult is a powerful force for a child to contend with. An abuser misuses his or her authority and confounds their victim's perceptions and judgment.

The theme of children's powerlessness is a repeated theme among victims. When one compounds the general authority mentioned above with the very specific divine authority which is recognized in Christian families we can readily see a potentially dangerous situation. I do not mean that the Word of God is dangerous. Quite the contrary! (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

What I do mean is that an abuser can use the Scriptures as a lever to further weaken the already weak and vulnerable position of the child. Let me give just one example of what I mean. If a child chooses to confront the abuser in the presence of others a very awkward situation arises. It is amazing how many victims are simply not believed when they tell their story. Let me give you this example: One child, who became pregnant as a result of sexual abuse, said she tried to tell her mother that her father had done sexual things to her. Her mother, in turn, confronted her father who denied responsibility. He used the word "penetration" in his denial and the child was unable to counter his denial because she did not know the meaning or significance of that word. Her mother believed the father.

This child did not feel knowledgeable or strong enough properly to assert herself. Her attitude towards adults' author-

## OUR COVER



A church near  
Winnipeg, MB

ity had been firmly established from a very early age. This example is taken from secular society. How much more has that authority been driven home in Christian circles where obedience to parents is a *divine* command?

Even when children try to stop the abuse they are at a disadvantage both physically and emotionally. One woman remembers trying to avoid contact with her sexually abusive uncle, but there was family pressure to be nice to him. When she refused to go near him, the adults around her ridiculed her.

Other survivors who told adults about the abuse were met with disbelief or denial; one was advised "not to rock the boat"! These responses leave children with the feeling that they have no right to protest and no alternative but to go along with what the abuser wants. Again, in Christian circles the abuser can easily enough make a glib appeal to Scripture and the young child has little or no counter-argumentation.

Adults must realize that with the great privilege to receive children from the Lord we are also to nourish, teach and protect them. They are weak. They are vulnerable. They are susceptible. They are innocently trusting. Their whole view of human trust is tied up on the parent-child relationship. We must *never, never* violate that trust!

Children are called upon to honour, love, and be faithful to those in authority over them. We who have been given that responsibility must exercise it in a godly fashion. It is God's will that we be governed by the ones in authority over us.<sup>14</sup> God's revealed will has a great deal to say about the relationship between the (powerful) ones in authority and the (powerless) children. Part of our self-examination as Christians is to discern from God's Word whether all our thoughts, words and actions are in accordance with His infallible Word.

<sup>14</sup>1Cor.3:3,4: "For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men? For when one says, 'I belong to Paul,' and another, 'I belong to Apollos,' are you not merely men?"

<sup>15</sup>J. Calvin, *Conn.Cursives*—RG

<sup>16</sup>Cf. Cicero, *Pro Cluentio* 5:6, 14 and Galus, *Institutes* 1:63.

<sup>17</sup>Compare C.K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*; J. Calvin, *1 Corinthians*; F.W. Grosheide, *De Eerste Brief van den Apostel Paulus aan de Kerk te Korinthe*; C.H. Hodge, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*; A. Schlatter, *Paulus, Der Bote Jesu and T.Zahn, Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*.

<sup>18</sup>*Book of Praise*, 521.

<sup>19</sup>Lord's Day 39.

# REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta

## AIDS: Are you at risk?

A recent article in the *Ottawa Citizen* reported on a national conference on youth and AIDS held in Toronto. One young woman who contracted HIV infection six months after she first had sex at age 21 said, "No one is at low risk for AIDS. You can get AIDS if you're human. Period."

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) have reached the young people of our countries. The Federal Centre for AIDS in Ottawa reports that as of March 4, 1991, eighteen Canadian youths aged 15 to 19 have contracted AIDS. Of these, six have died. The Centre estimates that as many as 50,000 Canadians are HIV positive. This estimate includes hundreds of young people. When we consider that eventually, all HIV positives will go on to develop AIDS, the proportions become staggering.

You probably know what AIDS is. It is a viral infection passed from one person to another through blood or semen. It attacks the body's immune system, rendering it incapable of fighting infection or disease.<sup>1</sup>

Until recently, the infection was confined to homosexual and bisexual men, IV drug users who became infected through dirty needles, and prostitutes who had homosexual or bisexual men as customers.

The youth of our nation thought they were safe. As long as you weren't gay, didn't do drugs or weren't a prostitute, you were not one of the high risk people. You wouldn't get AIDS.

Things are different now. The rules have changed. Heterosexual young people can no longer "sleep around" believing themselves to be exempt from danger. AIDS has managed to break out of the "high risk" groups and has begun to infect the teenaged population.

Considering how promiscuous our society is, it was only a matter of time for the misery of AIDS to find its way into the teenaged segment of society. Sexual contact between young people and the "high risk" groups served as a bridge for the illness. Six young Canadians have already died because of AIDS. That many more of your young fellow citizens will die as a result of it cannot be disputed.

What is the message for young people? How is society supposed to help you? How are you going to defend yourself from acquiring this deadly sickness?

What do the speakers at AIDS conferences say? What advice do the Youth-

Link counsellors in our inner cities give? What do the various AIDS societies demand? Condom-dispensing machines in the schools. The answer, they say, is improved access to precautions. The message is that teenagers have the full right to be sexually active, and it is society's responsibility to give them the necessary means to protect themselves from getting AIDS. "You see," say the speakers and counsellors, "you can get AIDS if you're human. Period. There is no such thing as high risk or low risk."

Read that last sentence again. Do you know what? That's a true statement. There is no such thing as high risk or low risk. It is only a matter of *high risk* or *no risk*.

A young unmarried person who is sexually active is at a high risk. Because, anyone who sleeps around "sleeps" with everyone his/her present partner has slept with – and everyone they have slept with. And anyone who is HIV positive must be considered capable of passing infection on to others (Scholtens, p. 24).

Every sexually promiscuous young person is at high risk. Every married person who indulges his/her flesh in extramarital sexual activity is at high risk. Without a doubt!

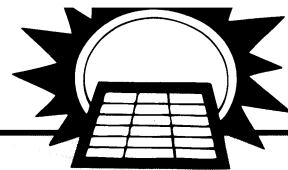
Anyone and everyone who follows the standards God gave for sexual activity is at no risk. In the seventh commandment, You shall not commit adultery, God commands us to live chaste and disciplined lives both within and outside of holy marriage (see *Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord's Day 41). I know that that's old fashioned language. And yet, my young brothers and sisters, it's the only correct answer. Condom-dispensing machines are not the answer. Living chaste, holy, pure lives – whether we are married or single – is the answer.

As in every situation in life, the answer is to obey God's commandments. God has told us in His Word that people are to be sexually active only within the marriage relationship. If we follow that commandment, we will be at no risk of being killed by AIDS.

AIDS: are you at risk? It depends upon how you live.

<sup>1</sup>For an excellent article dealing with the medical aspects of AIDS, please see "AIDS, the plague of the 20th century," by H.A. Scholtens, M.D., in *Reformed Perspective*, vol. 8, no. 8, pp. 23ff.





By Mrs. R.W. Ravensbergen

*Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labour in vain.*

Philippians 2:14-16

## Dear brothers and sisters,

When two people get married, they exchange rings. These rings symbolize their promise made to each other. We often use symbols (e.g. signatures) to bind ourselves and each other to a promise made. In spite of these "guarantees," promises often fall apart in the world as well as in the church. But God's promise is sure. God does not need signs or symbols: "and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever," (Psalm 117). Yet God, who knows our weaknesses, gives us signs. The Bible is full of them: Noah, Gideon, Hezekiah, the shepherds. Jesus Himself shows many miracles and signs, which were recorded by the Apostles "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20).

Abraham receives promises "I will make of you a great nation," and "To your descendants I will give this land," and "And by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves." Abraham has to wait very long for these promises to come true. He receives several signs and finally the Lord appears to him and gives him the sign of circumcision. That sign of circumcision, of bloodshed, pointed forward to the day of the Lord. "So shall my covenant in your flesh be an everlasting covenant" (Gen. 17:13).

Israel received more signs of bloodshed: the sacrifices of animals. For 2000 years they had to know: without purification no forgiveness of sins. "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb.9:22). There were very strict rules for the temple service. Only men without blemish were fit for priesthood. There was no room for any kind of handicap, nor among the priests, nor among the animals to be sacrificed. The Lord could only tolerate what was perfect. The way the Lord created heaven and earth, is how He wanted to see everything in the temple service, so that it could point forward towards Christ who as the only perfect Priest would bring a perfect Sacrifice for us. Jesus, who also partook in the temple ceremonials, knew that there was no forgiveness of sins through the blood of animals. How significant were Jesus' words, "Drink you all for *this* is the blood of my covenant." With those words He announced the end of 2000 years of the outpouring of blood. With that He also declares the sign of circumcision outdated. With Jesus' fulfilling the law we enter a new period, baptism will replace circumcision. From then on everything will point forward to the Day of His return. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." (Isaiah 1).

The Lord did not tolerate any imperfection in the temple service - no handicaps among the priests or among

the animals. (Lev.21) Yet we know that the Lord takes special care of handicapped people. The sojourner (someone in need of protection), the poor, the blind, the deaf are often given special attention: "He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence He redeems their life; and precious is their blood in His sight" (Psalm 72). The Lord made many laws, teaching His people how to take care of the needy. The handicapped sons of the priests were also well taken care of: "He may eat the bread of His God, both of the most holy and of the holy things" (Lev.2). This also points to the coming deliverance: Through the period of circumcision and temple sacrifices to the great High-priest Jesus, and after His sacrifice on the cross, through the period of baptism to the Day of His return. Then He will take away all the consequences of sin. There will be no handicaps anymore. Many tears are shed here on earth. But then "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Rev.21). The deaf will hear, the blind will see, the lame will walk, and those with limited mental capabilities will understand. And what will they hear and see? "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived. What God has prepared for those who love Him" (1Cor.2).

Let us all go on then. We have a common goal. Even when sometimes the workload is heavy, or the burden is almost unbearable, let us look ahead. With God's help we will make it, for Jesus Himself prepared the way.

## Our Birthday Calendar for June:

### Joan Koerselman

Box 624, Coaldale, AB TOK OLO

On June 17th Joan hopes to celebrate her 34th birthday.

### Daniel Stroop

193 Diane Dr., Orangeville, ON L9W 3N3

On June 20 Daniel is going to be 10.

### Beverly Breukelman

Box 666, Coaldale, AB TOK OLO

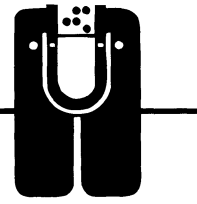
On June 30 Beverly will celebrate her 29th birthday.

Congratulations to all three of you. I wish you a very happy birthday!

Till the next month,

### Mrs. R.W. Ravensbergen

7462 Highway 20, RR 1  
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0



By W.W.J. VanOene

While I was busy making notes for this newsmedley, I received a visit from a brother and sister belonging to the Carman Church. They came not only to visit us, but also gave us a present: a cassette containing the recording of the organ dedication evening. It was not long after they had left that we listened to it. We did listen to it again later on, and we must congratulate the congregation of Carman with the acquisition of this instrument. We must also congratulate them because they have members who are able to play so well and to accompany the congregational singing in an edifying manner.

The instrument Carman acquired is one of the best of its kind. Our readers know that I am not an admirer of electronic organs, since they lack colour and a distinct sound. Every sound and every stop is basically derived from the same source, whereas with a pipe organ each pipe has its own distinct voice and produces its own distinct sound. But if a congregation cannot afford a pipe organ, the choice which Carman made is a wise one. Their present instrument will serve them well and it is a vast improvement over their previous organ which sometimes sounded as if it came straight from the Wailing Wall.

As for the financing, "a donation of \$1700.00 was received from the Birthday Fund for the purchase of the new organ. Also a donation of \$1000.00 was received from an anonymous donor for the new organ." And the consistory "received a letter from a lady residing in Carman with an expression of appreciation for the organ evening. Included was a cheque of \$100 as a donation toward the organ." Keep going!

The Carman church is the first one of which I read an evaluation of the suggested new melody for the Apostles' Creed. It appears that not many are favourably impressed by it. The consistory received a letter that "included a request to discontinue the singing of the proposed new version of Hymn 1A at the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This request was also voiced at various home visits and at the congregational meeting. The consistory decided earlier to sing this version because the words are consistent with the adopted version of the Apostles' Creed. Not sufficient time has been given to come to a proper conclusion on this, so it will be continued." It is wise not to make a hasty decision, but from the above it is clear that apparently a considerable number of members would rather see the practice discontinued. What is also clear, I think, is that I was not far off the mark when stating that it was my impression that the "new text" was more an argument than the "old melody."

The consistory decided that Rev. DeBoer and elder J. Kuik, who attended the Northern Plain Classis of the Reformed Church in the U.S., will also visit the synod of these churches, to be held in April. The decision that these two brothers should attend was made, the Rev. DeBoer wrote, "because the decision of our sister churches in the Netherlands to offer sister-church relationship with the RCUS and our contact with the RCUS will be discussed at this synod."

Thus far the news from Carman. By the way, did you notice that I persistently wrote "Carman" and not "CarmEn," as some bulletin writers are still continuing to do?

Where shall we turn next, East or West? Going north first won't help, for we have to face the necessity to make a choice at one time or another. Well then, let's go East first.

We start there in Grand Rapids. At the latest Classis Ontario South the Rev. Kingma received the high approval to retire by the end of May. The Grand Rapids consistory set the date for the farewell sermon: May 26. Another vacancy coming up.

Although the school itself has been closed, the Watford school society is still very much alive. "Gobble, Goble! Turkey catching is and remains a good fundraiser. Last Monday and Tuesday evening, thanks to an excellent turnout, we could raise \$1,015.00 in approximately four hours."

The Rockway "consistory decided that the Apostles' Creed (Hymn 1A) shall be sung at least once a month, and to leave the timing up to the minister/elder."

Nearby Lincoln received "a letter from the Canadian Reformed Church of Hamilton (why not simply: "the Church at Hamilton"? VO), asking our cooperation to have a health and dental plan for all active ministers and professors in our church federation. The plan is to be included in the Foundation for Superannuation." Brrr! There is, however, I believe, a mixup here. I do not think that this plan would have anything to do with the Foundation for Superannuation. The very term "active ministers and professors" precludes any Foundation participation.

What is also a mixup, but then of a different kind, is the following: "The church at Lincoln has appealed the September 1990 classis decision with respect to denying the request of brother A.... in speaking the edifying word in the churches." This "appeal" was not directed to the forthcoming Regional Synod, but to the next classis. And here we find a mixup of a more serious nature. *One cannot appeal a classical decision to the next classis.* An appeal has to be directed to the major assembly, i.e. a regional synod.

I found the same mixup in the bulletin of another church, where we were told that the consistory would seek "revision" at the next classis of a classical decision made on an appeal against a consistory decision. If a consistory feels that it has been wronged by a classical decision on an appeal that concerned this consistory, it is completely wrong to go to the next classis to ask for "revision." In case the consistory cannot accept the decision, the only way open is an appeal to the next regional synod. Let's stick to the proper ecclesiastical behaviour.

The Hamilton consistory received two replies to their communication sent to the Christian Reformed Churches in the neighbourhood. The reply from the Mount Hamilton Christian Reformed Church "leaves the way open to further contact in the future." This is encouraging, and it is much different from the reaction received from the First Christian Reformed Church "declining any further contact." Is the latter one not the one that uses the church building that was almost completed by the Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton and which was taken along when what called itself the "First Canadian Reformed Church of Hamilton" was received into the federation of the Christian Reformed Church as an autonomous church in 1959?

"It might interest you," we read in Hamilton's bulletin, "to know that a 'visitation team' from Hamilton is scheduled to visit the Kroeze family in October of this year, the Lord willing. This team will also visit the Latin American Mission Conference to be held around that time in Recife." It will be a support for the Kroeze's when they experience that there is a community behind them. On the other hand we should remember that all this travelling requires a considerable sum of money and that we are to be very careful with our spending of the moneys contributed towards the cause of the mission. It is the money of the Lord, and we are to keep this in mind with all the financial resources collected and assigned in the midst of the churches.

In Burlington a report was issued by the committee for the Voice of the Church. It appears that at present the program is aired on seven radio stations. In total eight time slots per week are used for the program. It is being investigated whether the Maritimes can be included in the work.

Another avenue that is being explored is the use of cable television. For this we go to the West for a moment, and quote from the Abbotsford consistory report: "The Voice of the Church Broadcasting Committee asking for advice for wider coverage on radio time, further that they are investigating the possibilities of broadcasting on T.V. The council is in favour of this proposal; the committee will be notified." The Surrey consistory came to a similar conclusion, for it stated that it "is in favour of the Voice of the Church possibly pursuing television broadcasting."

Back to the East. Burlington East is using its new pipe organ, and we expect that we shall read a glowing report on it in *Clarion*. In Burlington West "the need for a second minister for 'West' will be discussed in the meeting of April 30th." If I recall correctly, the consistory was convinced of this need a few years back already, and thus I do not expect the discussions to last more than five seconds.

The Rev. J. Mulder preached again on March 10. He is making visits, but does not teach catechism classes yet. "Taking into account the advice of the doctors, council considered it advisable that for this season I would not teach these classes."

The last-received bulletin of Burlington West contained a little note. I think I recognized the handwriting! This little note was written in reaction to what I remarked about the "face-lift" that the bulletin of Burlington South had received. The note read: "What about MY 'face-lift'?? Don't like it? Must look somewhat familiar to you (!) coming from Fergus!"

Rest assured, beloved, I do like the cover. Here you have the difficulty again: if I comment on too many things, it is said that I want to put (and keep) my finger in too many things; if I do not comment on certain matters, it is surmised that I thereby express lack of appreciation or even aversion. Thus it is best that I simply continue in my own way.

Continuing, then, brings us to Orangeville. On February 10 the first service was held in Chatsworth, and it was reported that in the morning service there were some 150 persons present, while the afternoon service was attended by an even larger number. The Chatsworth Bible Study meeting was attended by approximately twenty-six brothers and sisters, we were told.

As there are a number of former members of the Christian Reformed Church that have joined the Chatsworth house congregation, particular difficulties are being faced, although none of them serious. "Seeing that quite a few members are unfamiliar with the Genevan tunes, a decision was made to start this coming Sunday with the singing of the Psalms in consecutive order beginning with Psalm 1."



Since we have visited Carman already, we now proceed to Edmonton. It is the Immanuel Church that we are paying a visit. The consistory had another meeting with the consistory of the Orthodox Reformed Church (Rev. Cecil Tuininga), and it was called an "open meeting." The hearts are turned towards each other. "In the discussions, however, it appears that there are still many things to be dealt with. Time and again it comes down to the understanding of the confession concerning the Church, especially the point as to whether all believers are already members of the church or whether they only become so when they join a local congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ. In one of our letters to the Orthodox Reformed Church we indicated that it is one thing to theologize about the Church. The question, however, becomes: how do you and must you act with respect to the church-gathering work of Jesus Christ. We stressed the normative, covenantal approach as it applies to joining the faithful local assembly, and when it comes to such things as Lord's Supper practices, and having ministers from other denominations preach in one's church. If the normative approach is pushed aside, you so easily make all sorts of subjective judgments about people and individual congregations. We emphasize time and again that for our ecclesiastical activities we may not reason out of God's election, but must act according to what God has revealed concretely in His Word. All in all, however, it should be said that these meetings are fruitful, in that we have a chance to clear up misconceptions about the Canadian Reformed Churches, and are able to show that we do not have strange practices but are simply walking in the Reformed way."

The consistory of the Immanuel Church made some far-reaching decisions concerning services during the change of year.

"New Year's Eve/Day services. It is decided to abolish this custom. Grounds:

- i. Scripture specifies only Sunday as the day of worship.
- ii. C.O.53 mentions only special days commemorating important events in salvation history. New Year's Eve/Day does not fall under this.

iii. What is commemorated in this service is already dealt with on other occasions (e.g. Thanksgiving, Prayer for Growth and Prosperity), and can also be remembered on the Sunday before or after New Year's Day."

It will be understood that I have a few questions. My first question is where Scripture specifies the Sunday as the day of worship. Don't misunderstand me: I am wholeheartedly in favour of coming together on the first day of the week, but when a consistory makes statements, it should also be able to back them up. We would be able to adduce much stronger proof over against the Seventh Day Adventists if we could point out to them what the Immanuel Consistory asserts. That there are indications that the New Testament church did come together for worship on the first day of the week (but even these indications are scanty) is not yet the same as "specifying only the Sunday as the day of worship."

Further, our Church Order does not mention "special days," as the Immanuel consistory asserts. The inscription does read indeed "Days of Commemoration," but in the article itself only *facts* are mentioned, "high points," so to speak, in the work of our Saviour. This was done on purpose so as not to bind the churches to certain days.

It is striking that in the very same bulletin I read "Good Friday service will be held, the Lord willing, on March 29, at 10:00 a.m." I would much rather have returned to the practice of the Church at Voorthuizen with Dr. W. Van den Bergh, which church for many, many years did not observe the "Good Friday."

As for the last-mentioned argument, I find it a little far-fetched to connect Thanksgiving and Prayer for Labour and Harvest with the last or first day of the year. And I know that it is only a matter of feelings and sentiments, but I always liked the New Year's Day service, as much as I dislike a New Year's Eve service. Although it is always a joy when one can proclaim the Word of God or listen to it, I will conduct a service on New Year's Day with much joy, for I find it a beautiful thing to begin the new year together as the congregation of the Lord; but I cannot produce this joy for a New Year's Eve service. If you ask for arguments: I have none that could convince someone.

If, however, a consistory decides not to have any other services than those on the first day of the week, that is this consistory's full right. My questions and criticism concerned only the arguments adduced as grounds for the decision.

I can find myself much better in another decision made by this same consistory. "The decision of the Providence Church and the Church at Burlington West to call a day of prayer in light of the war in the Gulf region is discussed. It is decided to inform these churches that we do not accept this, since it is not in accordance with Art. 54 of the Church Order."

It is my conviction that by calling a special day of prayer in connection with the Gulf War these two churches have "cheapened" the whole concept of a day of prayer, as they also did when calling for such a day in connection with the abortion issue a few years ago. Our readers will recall that the Rev. Wielenga wrote some critical remarks about the action of these churches as well as about the request of ARPA to call such a day. I fully agreed and do agree with my colleague.

Was the pressure of the abortion issue felt throughout the churches? I don't believe a word of it. On the Sunday that had been designated as a day of prayer for this specific purpose I attended a service in one of our churches, but the minister hardly mentioned the whole issue in his sermon, and referred only briefly to it in his prayer. But that is not the purpose of a special day of prayer! It shows that there was no great need for humbling ourselves and asking for mercy upon us.

Was the pressure of the Gulf War felt throughout the churches? I did not notice any indication of this. So to speak, "we lived on happily ever after." Yes, we were busy with it; we did remember it before the throne of grace. But the war was many thousands of kilometers away and our country did not experience any other effect than that some members of our Armed Forces were sent to the Gulf. Here was definitely not a case such as Article 54 of our Church Order refers to. It would be good if our readers re-read Rev. Wielenga's "Letter to the Editor" on this point.

If the present trend continues, we can expect a call for a day of prayer for all sorts of reasons. Thus the value is greatly reduced and it becomes a "cheap" gesture.

Immediately after the outbreak of the Gulf War I did remember both the church and the world as well as the specific situation in the Gulf in the prayer in the midst of the congregation. Besides, the text for the sermon was chosen with a view to the whole situation. Thus we did have a special prayer right after the outbreak of the war. And although there was no published decision, the consistory of the church where I conducted the services on that first Sunday as well as on the second one after the outbreak did not deem it necessary to comply with the message from the two appointed churches. We did it already, was their judgment, and that is sufficient. This, too, proves that there was not sufficient reason to call a day of prayer. There was neither great affliction nor great calamity the presence of which was felt throughout the churches. Let us abide by what we have agreed upon and not "cheapen" our actions by what I consider to be not-sufficiently-considered calls for a special day of prayer and humbling ourselves before the throne of God's most high Majesty. In what respect did we have to humble ourselves and ask the Lord for forgiveness in connection with the efforts to drive the Iraqi army out of Kuwait and to restore Kuwait's freedom? I would not know. Yet this must be clear to every one, if we are to call for such a special day.

We have paused long enough in Edmonton and move on to Houston. The manse has been sold and the Slomp family has found temporary shelter in the old manse of the Christian Reformed Church. In the meantime the building committee has received the mandate to build a new manse. Concerning the contact with the Christian Reformed Church in Houston it can be mentioned that a combined meeting was held on February 27th.

The consistory decided that "the consistory at Smithers will be invited to an elders' conference to be held some time in May. Rev. Marren will be the guest speaker." I would have loved to see the deacons invited as well, but perhaps this was the intention after all.

The Home Mission Committee "is reminded that all material relating to public evangelism be cleared by the consistory first. The consistory also advises the committee that any showings of the Dobson Film Series is not desirable for public evangelism." I hope that all our consistories and home mission committees will take good note of this decision by Houston's consistory. I, too, am fully convinced that the showing of all sorts of film series is undesirable and that it is even wrong to do so when it is the intention to bring people into the flock. To evangelize is still to bring the glad tidings of the victory of Christ and to issue the call to submission to Him and to obedience to His Gospel. To evangelize is not to present solutions to all sorts of problems or to raise the level of family life to a higher plain. It is to proclaim the Gospel and to call to repentance and obedience. This cannot be done by others who do not show this very obedience themselves. They do not need my approval, but I do wish to state that I applaud Houston's decision.

The Smithers consistory met with the consistory of the Telkwa Reformed Church. The bulletin contained a lengthy report on that meeting, but since above I already quoted extensively from another similar meeting, we shall forego this pleasure at this point.

"Regarding prayer in the consistory room before and after the services, it is decided to discontinue this practice, so that we do not become repetitious in our prayers and also that the minister can go straight to the door to greet visitors and church members."

The Fraser Valley is our second-last stop before we move on to Australia.

The Abbotsford consistory received a "letter from the church at Langley in regards to future church development in the Aldergrove area, stating that the church at Abbotsford will be kept informed as to any progress."

The "future retirement of the minister has the attention of the meeting," the same consistory reported. Another vacancy coming up.

In Port Kells the search for property is going on. And in Vernon "the Building Committee reports that the rezoning of the property has been approved." Shortly we shall be able to see some activity on the property, I think.

Now we hop down the Pacific Ocean. Reaching Kelmscott we read that the "Consistory resolves to remove the ashtrays from the church building." A move long overdue!

There is in the midst of our Australian sister churches an Australian Reformed Christian Party as well as a Calvinistic Political and Social Association. These two organizations issue a *Newsletter* every month and this periodical has now entered its second year. For those who are interested in this publication we refer to our *Yearbook* where they can find the relevant addresses.

The churches in the Armadale region are faced with a particular situation, a situation which to my knowledge has never

presented itself in Canada. Let me quote what the Rev. Bouwman wrote under "Byford."

"Armadale Highschool saw need for a chaplain on campus to provide some sort of Christian counter-balance to the secularism now rampant at the school. By state law, it is possible to have a Christian chaplain at the school. To get a chaplain in a state school, however, all the churches in the school's catchment area must be asked to cooperate in finding a suitable chaplain. The churches which are willing to cooperate form a 'district council' which will advertise the opening, screen applicants, liaise with the appointed chaplain and provide his salary. It ought to be noted that if even one church on the district council is unhappy with an applicant, that applicant can – by law – not be appointed.

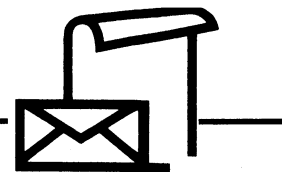
"The consistory discussed at length the point of whether or not participation on this district council – with 'churches' who do what they will with the Word of God – would in any way require us to compromise the truth of God's Word. We arrived at a negative conclusion. At the same time the consistory realizes that the person representing the church of Byford will not have an easy task on this council. In fact, it may be that our church is 'squeezed out' of the district council before an appointment can be made. Yet we felt that we ought to do what we can while the opportunity was there, and ask the Lord for His blessing."

More could be quoted, and we expect that we shall hear more about it in the future. Meanwhile we wish the brothers much wisdom and strength, much circumspection and insight.

Methink it is about time to conclude our medley. Many topics have been touched upon, much food for thought has been given. May you all digest it well.

As always  
Yours very truly  
VO  
C

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Dear Sir,

It is with great dismay and concern that I read Rev. Schouten's column "Remember Your Creator" in the Jan. 4 issue of *Clarion*. After having discussed the "Measure of a Man" in the previous issue, Rev. Schouten finds it only fair to similarly discuss what ought to make a true woman in the eyes of young Christian men looking for a successful marriage. It is the last paragraphs of this second article that I wish to refer to.

Although Rev. Schouten quotes many texts from Scripture for purposes of illustration, I find the tone of these paragraphs to be in very poor taste and not at all in line with the overall message that the Bible conveys concerning marriage and the role of husbands and wives within it. Any young man reading these paragraphs and using them as his

guideline in preparation for marriage will most certainly be entering that state with "one arm tied behind his back."

As Rev. Schouten concedes, the Bible does indeed set high standards for women, and men, within marriage. But providing the young man with what reads like a shopping list of capabilities that the young woman must possess, and en-

### CORRECTION:

In the *Clarion* issue of March 15, 1991 (vol. 40, no. 6) Dr. C. Van Dam's name appeared as author of the article "A Schilder Symposium."

This should have been the name of Dr. J. DeJong.

We apologize for this mistake.

The Editor

couraging him to expect these as a matter of course within the marriage, is to sentence him to great unhappiness. The sad truth is that no one, not even the most ambitious and well meaning individual will be able to consistently live up to such expectations. No young person, man or woman, will be able to judge how their intended will perform in a role with which they have had no previous experience. And no one knows what trials of physical or mental disability will appear to hinder either of them in fulfilling their role. They are going to have to help each other.

In light of the great demands placed on each in marriage, the young man may well look at the young woman and ask himself, as Rev. Schouten points out, whether she will truly be a help to him, encouraging him in every way, making him a better man. Because he

will certainly need her help in fulfilling his role. But then he must take those same words and apply them to himself, asking himself if he loves her enough to be able to truly help her, and encourage her in every way, making her a better woman. Because she will most certainly need his help and encouragement in fulfilling her role.

Rather than simply focusing on what the other should be able to do in the marriage, young persons would be better advised that they will have to play an ongoing and active part in their partners' fulfilling of their roles. And they should never be misled into feeling justified in describing their partner as a "dud," or to be "generally driven crazy" by them, or to feel the right to "retreat to the attic" when things don't turn out quite as they had expected. Too many marriages, Rev. Schouten, have gone this route already.

Sincerely,  
J. vanTol  
Burlington, ON

## Response

I appreciate the time taken to air feelings. Sr. vanTol objects first of all to the "tone of my last paragraphs." But the tone is derived from the Scripture of which, in some cases, I gave a paraphrase. Just read Prov. 19:13, 21:9, 21:19. If you don't like this tone, that is (in a sense) your prerogative. But don't blame me. It's in the Bible.

Secondly, an objection is registered against the "shopping list of capabilities that the young women must possess." Frankly, I am a little tired of women sighing about God's job-description for them when they are wives and mothers. Whenever reference is made to say, Prov. 31, or to some of the passages referred to in my article, eyes roll, snickers are heard, and someone is sure to comment, "Oh, but nobody can live up to such a standard." In this way, the biblical "job-description" is dismissed out of hand as impossible to fulfill.

But as I read through the biblical data again, I must confess that I know many women all over the country who very adequately fulfill these criteria. Nor are they superwomen. They are ordinary people who, despite setbacks and frequent weariness, strive to fulfill their office as housewife. God never asks what He does not also give. He asks us to fulfill certain roles, and certainly also gives us strength to do so.

Therefore, it is fully justified that young men have clear expectations concerning a potential partner. Many mod-

ern girls have no interest in being a "housewife" and my advice to young men is to be wary of that attitude. Of course, one doesn't go out with a shopping list. But as one goes out into the sometimes confusing world of dating and courtship, it is only wise to be sensitive to the commitment of young women to a biblically-defined role. At the risk of

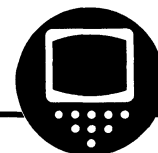
sounding crude, I would say that you will save yourself a lot of frustration.

With other points of this letter I am in complete agreement. For example, the point that husbands and wives must help each other in fulfilling mutual roles is well taken. But this was not the point of the article.

Rev. R. Schouten



## PRESS RELEASE



### Classis Ontario-South March 13 and 14, 1991

#### Opening

On behalf of the convening church, the church at Smithville, elder R. Jager called the meeting to order. He requested that Ps. 25:2 and 6 be sung and read Ephesians 1, after which he led in prayer.

He welcomed the delegates, wishing them the blessing of the Lord in working through the agenda.

#### Credentials

The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. Special instructions had been given to its delegates by the churches at Rockway and London.

#### Constitution of Classis

Classis was constituted. Officers were: Rev. Cl. Stam, chairman; Rev. J. VanRietschoten, clerk; Rev. D. Moes, Vice-chairman.

The chairman welcomed all the delegates, especially the deputies of Regional Synod. He congratulated Rev. Feenstra with the call he had received from the church at Ancaster. He noted the fact that the church at Rockway was present at classis for the first time. We welcomed Rev. Mike Pollock from Denver, Colorado, who was present as an

observer. Rev. Pollock with his church of thirty-five members had recently seceded from the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). At the moment, they are an independent church, looking for whom they ought to officially affiliate themselves. Rev. Pollock was given the floor to address classis.

#### Adoption of Agenda

After some changes, the agenda was adopted.

#### Retirement Rev. P. Kingma

The necessary documentation for the retirement of Rev. P. Kingma was received from the church at Grand Rapids. Classis with the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod had no objections whatsoever in granting Rev. Kingma his retirement and therefore gave it to him in the most honourable way.

As personal friend, colleague, and deputy, Rev. J. Mulder addressed Rev. Kingma with some kind and appreciative words. These were reiterated by the chairman of classis, after which all the delegates rose and sang Ps. 134:3. Rev. Kingma responded with some well-chosen words.

#### Question period ad Article 44 C.O.

The chairman asked the relevant questions. Two churches had questions and three churches had requests, one of the requests concerning a matter of discipline.

#### Proposals from the Churches

No proposals from the churches were received.

#### Correspondence (1)

1. A letter from the church at Lincoln was received. Classis took note of the contents of this letter.

2. An appeal from two members of the church at Ancaster as well as an appeal from the church at Lincoln was dealt with in closed session.

## CHURCH NEWS



CALLED BY:

Surrey, BC

for Mission work in Brazil

Rev. E.L. van 'tFoort

of Drachten, the Netherlands



### Reports

Reports of church-visitations brought to the churches at London, Ancaster, Blue Bell, and Laurel were read and received.

### Acts (1)

The Acts up till this point were read and adopted.

### Adjournment

The chairman bade farewell to Rev. Pollock, asked the delegates to sing Hymn 40:1 and 4 and led in prayer. He then adjourned classis.

### Reopening

The chairman reopened classis by asking the delegates to sing Ps. 141:2 and 4 after which he read Galatians 6:1-10 and led in prayer. He welcomed the delegates to this second day of classis, especially those delegates who were present as alternates.

### Correspondence (2)

1. Appeals from two members of the church at Watford were dealt with in closed session.

2. An appeal from four former members of the church at Grand Rapids was dealt with in closed session.

3. An appeal from one former member of the church at Grand Rapids was dealt with in closed session.

### Appointments

1. The church at Watford was appointed as the convening church for the next classis to be held, D.V., in Smithville on June 12, 1991. The suggested officers are: Rev. D.G.J. Agema, chairman; Rev. Cl. Stam, clerk; Rev. J. Van-Rietschoten, vice-chairman.

2. Classis decided to maintain Rev. P. Kingma as examiner of doctrine of

the church up until the upcoming June classis.

### Personal Question Period

This question period was made use of.

### Censure ad Art. 44 C.O.

The chairman thankfully noted that this censure was not necessary.

### Acts (2) and Press Release

The second installment of the Acts were read and adopted. The Press Release was read and approved.

### Closing

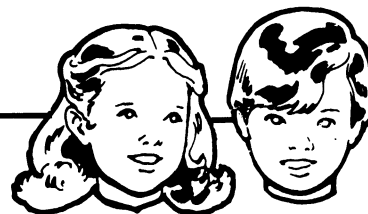
The chairman requested Psalm 122:2 and 3 to be sung, after which Rev. P. Kingma led in prayer and the chairman closed classis.

D. Moes,  
vice-chairman e.t.



## OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



### Dear Busy Beavers,

It was a time of miracles! Three miracles in a row!  
The disciples were still filled with awe and wonder at the Lord's resurrection.

What a miracle!

And now, 40 days later...

Why they sort of...held their breath...waiting...

"Lord, will you now...?"

Again they watched with awe and wonder!

Another miracle!

Their Saviour was lifted up to His glorious heavenly home.

But He had told His disciples, "I will send my Spirit."

Yes, another, the third miracle!

They were altogether, praying, 10 days later.

It was Pentecost Day.

And that day their glorious Saviour sent His promised Holy Spirit.

How the Spirit changed those disciples!

They preached without fear!

First in Jerusalem. Then in Samaria.

From there they went everywhere, preaching the good news of the wonderful Saviour God sent into the world.

That time of miracles was long ago.

It happened far away.

But *we, too*, may share the same joy.

The Saviour died and rose for *us, too*.

He prays for *us* in His heavenly home.



His Spirit is promised to *us, too*!

Let *us* remember that always.

Then we can share the joy with others!

To the praise of our heavenly Father, who *still* works miracles!

# Quiz Time!

## Christian Missions

Some of the most thrilling reading for the Christian is the story of the spread of the early church. Fill in each blank with the person(s) in these mission efforts.

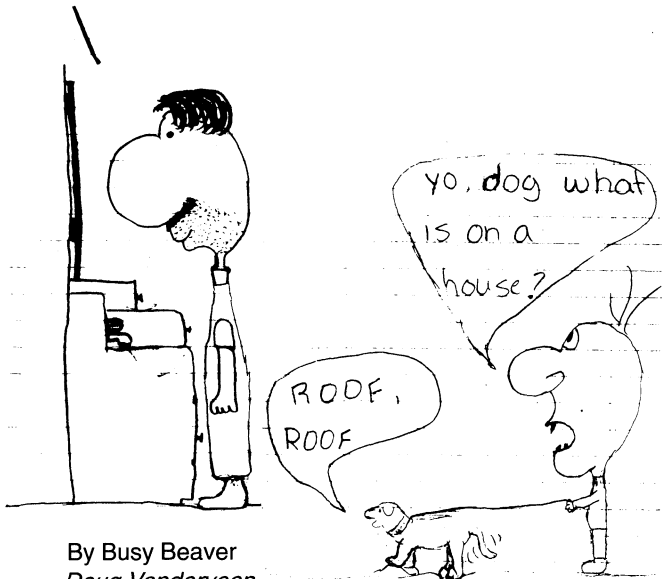
- \_\_\_\_\_ prayed with John that the Samaritans would receive the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:14
- \_\_\_\_\_ was sent by God to restore Saul's eye sight. Acts 9:10
- \_\_\_\_\_ witnessed to a eunuch in a chariot. Acts 8:26
- \_\_\_\_\_ sent Peter to Samaria to check on Philip's work. Acts 8:14
- \_\_\_\_\_ was stoned to death for his faith in Jesus. Acts 7:59
- \_\_\_\_\_ was the prophet the Ethiopian eunuch was reading. Acts 8:30
- \_\_\_\_\_ interceded in behalf of Saul after his conversion. Acts 9:27
- \_\_\_\_\_ caught Philip up, and the eunuch saw him no more. Acts 8:39
- \_\_\_\_\_ was blinded by a light on his way to persecute the Christians. Acts 9:1-3
- \_\_\_\_\_ wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:18

(See answers)

## Cartoons

Uh.... I got to shave uh..... a lot!

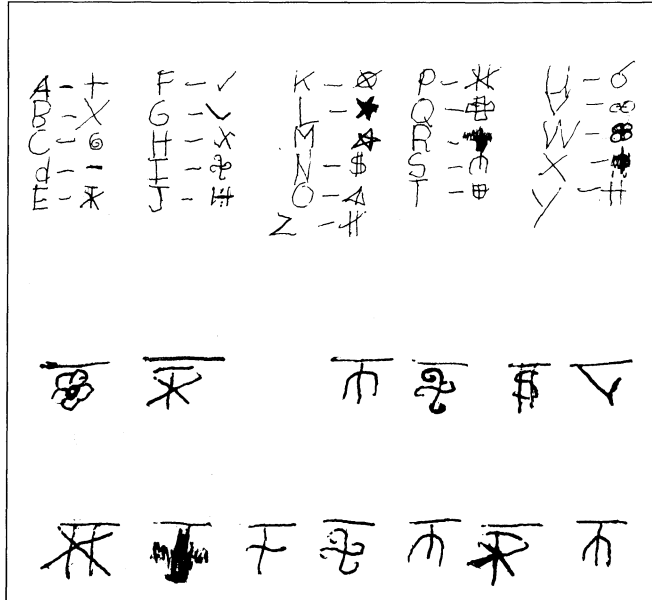
By Busy Beaver  
Dan Vanderveen



By Busy Beaver  
Doug Vanderveen

## Magic code

By Busy Beaver *Tesha Hopman*



## Search-a-word

By Busy Beaver *Erika Hopman*

Find the following hidden words in the puzzle:

house	furniture	roof	chimney
door	garden	windows	trees
flowers	bricks	driveway	birds
sidewalk	grass	light	
pool	sun	walls	

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



### From the mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Dan Vanderveen*. Thank you for sharing your cartoon with us. Keep up the good work! I know the Busy Beavers will enjoy it. Write again soon!

Welcome to the Club, *Doug Vanderveen*. I see you are a real Busy Beaver already, sharing your cartoon with us. Are you looking forward to moving, Doug? Bye for now.

Welcome to the Club, *Heidi De Boer*. We are happy to have you join us. In the #24 issue of *Clarion*, last November, and also in the February and March issues of "Our Little Magazine" you will find lists of people who would like a pen pal. Lots of success, Heidi!

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Joanna Vink*. Thank you for your letter. I think you will be a super writer! Bye for now, Joanna.

A big welcome to you, too, *Jolene Hulzebosch*. How is your kitten doing? Thank you for the poem, Jolene. Keep up the good work!

Welcome to the Club, *Trisha Van Woudenberg*. Do you have baby ducks on your pond, Trisha? Will you write and tell us? Do you practise on the organ every day, Trisha? Bye for now.

How is your dog doing, *Robert Vander Gaag*? I can understand why you let your dog in the basement that cold day, Robert. Thank you very much for sharing the puzzle. Bye for now.

Thank you for the picture and the puzzles, *Erika Hopman*. I think the Busy Beavers will enjoy them. I hope your dog hasn't been running away, lately. I hope the Busy Beaver stamp-collectors will try your suggestion, Erika.

Hello, *Tesha Hopman*. It was good to hear from you again! The Busy Beavers will enjoy your riddles and puzzles, Tesha. Thank you for sharing. And keep up the good work!

You're lucky to have a computer that will make cards for you, *Ann-Marie Vanden Oever*! Do you colour them with markers? Sounds as if you had a fun holiday, too. Are your new rooms ready, Ann-Marie? Bye for now.

Thank you for your story, and the riddles, too, *Trina Jelsma*. I see you've been very busy! Let me know how your Mother's Day card turns out, O.K., Trina?

### Mother's Day 1991

Are you making a card for your *mom* for *Mother's Day*?

How will you decorate it? With balloons? flowers? a border?

*Most important*...what will you write inside?

Do you know this children's hymn?

It has a Mother's Day message.

What is it?

When mothers of Salem (Jerusalem)  
Their children brought to Jesus,  
The stern disciples turned them back,  
And bade them depart.  
But Jesus saw them e'er they fled,  
And sweetly smiled and kindly said,  
"Suffer little children to come unto Me."



And here is the Mother's Day message for your card:

"Mom, I am thankful for the Christian home you and Dad give me."



Answers to "Christian Missions" :

1. Peter 2. Ananias 3. Phillip 4. the apostles 5. Stephen 6. Isaac 7. Barnabas 8. the Spirit of the Lord 9. Saul 10. Simon

Lots of success making your cards, Busy Beavers!

Love to you all,  
Aunt Betty

*O LORD how manifold are Thy works.  
Psalm 104:24a*

We give thanks to the Lord who has again richly blessed our family with the birth of a healthy son whom we have named

**BRENDAN KYLE**

Born March 5, 1991

Andrew and Arlene Leffers

A brother for *Karilyn, Darren and Kevin*

SS 1, Site 2, Box 33  
Houston, BC V0J 1Z0

*Marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well!*

*Psalm 139:14b*

We have again been blessed with the birth of a son. We have named him

**MORGAN JOEL**

March 19, 1991

Dick and Joanne Barendregt

*Alex, Hester, Calvin, Felicia-Amy, and Jeremy*

Box 174  
Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0

The Lord has entrusted to our care another of His precious children, a son, whom we have named

**DEREK PETER**

on April 6, 1991

Peter and Geraldine Bosscher  
(nee Vanderwoude)

A brother for *Alicia, Nadine, Krista, and Ian*

5209 Suncrest Road  
Burlington, ON