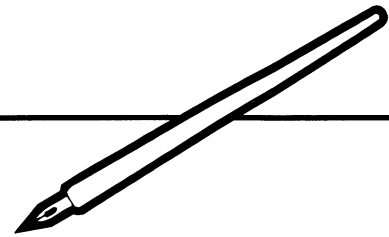




Clarion
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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The Significance of our Reformed Church Order in our Reformed Church Federation

Vacant churches are not falling apart

There are, at this moment, thirteen vacant churches in our federation. It is not easy for a consistory and for a congregation to be vacant for a longer period. Especially after a while the need for a minister can be felt as quite urgent. Nevertheless, the statement placed at the beginning of this article is true: these vacant churches are not falling apart. We may ask: why not?

This question is legitimate. For it has happened in the past and continues to happen that a congregation disintegrates when its minister leaves or passes away. One can see this happen on our North American continent, in particular when an eloquent and enthusiastic preacher gathers a congregation around himself. When he leaves or dies, the congregation has lost its center.

Although we can notice this often in the evangelical world, I would like to take two examples on this point from the history of the Reformed Churches. My first example is the congregation of Rev. H.P. Scholte in Pella, Ohio, U.S.A., in the previous century. Rev. Scholte, one of the two first leaders of the Secession of 1834 in the Netherlands, emigrated to Pella in 1847, together with others who sought freedom of religion on this side of the Atlantic Ocean. Still in the Netherlands, he did not favour an abiding by or return to the Reformed Church Order of Dort after the Secession. And in Pella he established an independent congregation. When Scholte passed away, his church was disintegrating already.

Rudolph Van Reest (pen name for K.C. van Spronsen) writes:¹

Scholte was a pious man in the good sense of the word. But in his person and work is shown that piety alone is not sufficient. In the end, always again, it is the wrong insight in the Word of God, a wrong thinking about church and church federation, a wrong concept of the office in the church, which can cause the misery

and, eventually, the destruction of the local church.

In particular the ecclesiastical independentism played a destructive role in the work of Scholte. In the *Officieële Stukken (Official Documents)* he writes:

It could certainly not be expected from me that, after the Secession, I would subject the Word of God to any ecclesiastical system of doctrine, or that I would bind the congregation that had received a new freedom to a church order of more than two hundred years old."

Van Reest adds:

This deficient insight remained with Scholte until his death. But he had to experience the disastrous and church destroying consequences of it both in the Netherlands and in Pella.

Scholte loved the Lord and His people. He worked hard and gave his life and possessions for the people whom he served. And yet, when he died his congregation died away with him. The cause was, that, in spite of all his good intentions, the freedom which Scholte took with respect to binding to the doctrine of the church and in particular Scholte's aversion against a strict binding to the (Reformed) Church Order, or a specific church organization. In other words, his independentism meant that he gathered a congregation around himself, binding it, in fact, to his person.² This has as consequence that such a church will break down when its center is gone.

A second example can be taken from the more recent history of our Canadian Reformed Churches. Around the year 1965, with the Synod of Edmonton, the ideas of Rev. C. De Haan in Winnipeg and those who followed him were rejected. Rev. De Haan did not want to bind himself to the Confession because he considered this a binding to a new law, while Christ had made us free from the law. The rejection of a binding to the Church Order is included here.

We see the same consequences. Rev. De Haan and those who went with him formed their own separate congregation, breaking away from the majority of the consistory. Soon the disintegration began and worked through. Although he did not intend this, here again the rejection of a binding to the Confession and the Church Order was, in fact, a binding to the person of the minister.

These examples show the answer why our vacant churches are not falling apart. Our Reformed Churches are not churches gathered around a specific minister. Not a minister is in the center, but the Word of God is, as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity: Scripture and Confession. We are churches with confessional standards. This means: not a human person, but the truth about, the unity of faith in, the triune God as our God as the churches confess Him in the Reformed standards is our basis and binds us together. This is the strength of the Reformed Churches. This is why they do not break down when a minister is gone.

Of course, there are more factors. According to the instruction of the Scriptures and, based on them, our Reformed Standards and Church Order, the churches have their consistories, the elders and deacons. It is also not denied that ministers in the Reformed Churches can have a great influence. However, the main thing is that the truth binds us together and holds us together, and not some leaders, however gifted they are. A truly Reformed church and church federation will examine what their leaders say with Scripture and Confession as the norm, and with the Reformed Church Order in the hand.

The function of the Church Order

It is for this very reason of preserving the congregations by God's Word and truth that the Reformed Churches have adopted a church order as an accord of cooperation for their organized federation. The Church Order is meant

to help each other as churches to remain faithful to Scripture and confession. In the Reformed Church Order the life of the churches is organized according to the Word of God. For that reason we have an Article 26 about the requirement that all office bearers are to subscribe to the Reformed Confessions. Also practical matters, as the manner of organizing church life in a federation through broader assemblies, are agreed upon. But this, too, is done to provide stability and uniformity, aimed at maintaining the unity of faith in obedience to the Word of the Lord. All things are to be done in good order to preserve the peace in the unity of faith.

In this context the churches have adopted also what is stated in Art. 37 C.O.: "The classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the regional synod has over the classis, and the general synod over the regional synod."

In this article we have what is called "second hand authority." It is noteworthy that this article does not speak of the jurisdiction of the consistory over the congregation. The authority of elders over the congregation is clearly stated in Scripture. It is, thus, directly from Christ. Therefore, here the authority is "first hand." When Art. 37 speaks about jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical assemblies over each other, this is by mutual agreement of the churches in a federation. The churches, who want to live together in the unity of the true faith, and want to support each other, have given to their (own) broader or major assemblies the authority to make binding decisions. Thus these major assemblies have jurisdiction by mutual agreement.

Can that be done? Certainly. As long as this mutual agreement makes sure that it can never be a binding in conflict with Scripture. That is why Art. 31 precedes Art. 37: "...and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, *unless* it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order." We must be faithful, first of all, to the LORD, and so to His Word.

However, when we make mutual agreements for living together, it is also fully obedience to this Word, that we keep those agreements in faithfulness to each other. This is commanded us by the Lord on a personal level. But this "your yes be yes, and your no be no" counts also for churches living together.

If what is expressed in Art. 37 (in combination with Art. 31) is not maintained, we should not engage in a federation. Independentism makes living together impossible and leads to chaos in which every one does what is good in his

own eyes. Sometimes one can see that a federation of churches allows local congregations to go independently their own way. The divergencies that come into existence in this way seem to be only small. However, those divergencies grow easily into deviations and aberrations, which, then, also are tolerated. One is on this route of freedom and toleration, anyway. The end result is chaos in practice and in doctrine.

In situations where people are opposed to binding each other to the Church Order and to the confession because it restricts the individual freedom, it is often said: we are bound to Scripture alone. This sounds nice but simply does not work, for two reasons. In the first place, this nice-sounding statement serves to cover up the refusal to be bound to the confession and the Church Order. In the second place, it allows the individual to come with his own, often deviating, interpretations of Scripture.

Therefore, in order to remain faithful to the LORD as churches together, let us abide by His Word. And in order to do this, let us abide by our Reformed Forms of Unity. And in order to accomplish this, let us be faithful to each other by abiding by the adopted Church Order in which this goal is stated and for which reason the churches gave, by mutual agreement, jurisdiction to the broader assemblies with the promise to consider

their decisions for settled and binding, on the condition of the "unless" of Art. 31.

Church history teaches that independentism is destructive in the end, whereby not the truth but a person, often the person of the minister, dominates.

Therefore, as ministers, too, let us watch ourselves that we do not bind the congregation to our person, or to our personal likes or dislikes, or personal impulses, but let us serve the well-being of the churches, locally and in the federation, binding ourselves and the churches to what we have adopted: confessional standards and the order for our life as churches together. In this way of abiding by the Word of the Lord, churches will continue not to fall apart, even when vacant.

¹ See the brief biography about Rev. Scholte with which Van Reest introduces the Dutch translation of a biography on Scholte's second wife, written by one of the daughters, *Een Vreemdelinge in een Vreemd Land (A Stranger in a Strange Land)* by Leonora R. Scholte; Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1960, p. 71f.

² See further H. Bouwman, *De Crisis der Jeugd. Eenige Bladzijden uit de Geschiedenis van de Kerken der Afscheiding*, Kampen: Kok, 1914. On p. 45 we read that after 1840 Hendrick de Cock and Scholte did not meet again. De Cock "soon noticed...that Scholte would not unconditionally agree with the doctrine as this is expressed by the Reformed Churches in their standards.... De Cock judged also, contrary to Scholte, that it is beneficial for the church to have, beside the pure administration of Word and Sacraments, a good organization."



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REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta

And how are they to hear without a preacher?

God is your Creator. Several very important things God gave you are ears, lips, and a heart.

Why did He give you ears? So that you could hear things. Why did He give you lips? So that you could speak. Why did He give you a heart? So that you would be able to believe. God, the all wise Creator, made us in such a way that we would be able to hear the good news of Jesus Christ with our ears, believe it with our hearts, and confess what we believe with our lips.

It starts with hearing.

But what if there is no one from whom we can hear the good news? What if there is no one to proclaim it? If there is no preacher, how can we hear the gospel of salvation?

This is what the apostle Paul wrote about in Romans 10. Paul wrote that if we confess with our lips that Jesus is Lord and if we believe in our hearts that God raised Christ from the dead, then we will be saved. For we believe with our hearts, and in that way we are justified before God. We confess what is in our hearts with our lips, and so we are saved. Because, everyone and anyone who calls upon the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved.

But, how can we call upon Christ if we do not believe in Him? And how are we to believe in the Lord if we have never heard of Him? And how could we possibly hear about Christ if there are no preachers? If there are no preachers, we are in trouble. For faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching which speaks of Christ.

That is the way the apostle Paul reasoned in Romans 10.

Why do I write this? Well, if you are Canadian Reformed and interested enough to read this magazine and this article, then you are a person who is well enough informed to know that we are running an awful deficit—of preachers. At the moment of writing the deficit stands at 30%. Thirteen of our forty-three congregations do not have pastors. The lack of preachers is especially acute in the eastern part of the federation where ten of the thirteen vacancies are.

The gospel is still proclaimed twice every Lord's day on each of our pulpits.

We have retired ministers and professors who gladly preach in the vacant congregations. Failing that, the elders or a gifted brother of the congregation leads the services and brings the Word of God by reading a sermon from *Preach the Word*, booklets of sermons prepared by our ministers. So we are not suffering the worst case scenario as described by the apostle Paul.

Yet something is wrong. Why do so few of the brothers desire to be preachers of the good news of Jesus Christ?

It is a beautiful task.

Allow me to tell you about it. Please keep reading. Not just the young brothers! I would ask the young sisters and the older brothers and sisters to keep reading as well. Perhaps you can urge a hesitant but gifted young brother, a son or a boyfriend, to consider the ministry.

What does a minister do? He speaks the Word of God so that people may hear with their ears, believe with their hearts and so be saved, and confess with their lips what they believe.

A minister's first calling is to preach the Word of God. He preaches the Word on the Lord's day in the public worship service. All week long he has studied certain parts of the Bible. Few are as privileged as he in that he is busy with the revelation of God all day long, all week long. He has struggled with the Word. The Word has confronted him. It has accused him. Once again it has shown him what a miserable sinner he is, worthy of nothing but eternal damnation. But the gospel has come shining through all that. He has heard the gospel of the Saviour who has saved us from all our sins. And the Word has taught him how the children of God are to respond with obedience to the grace of God. Then on the Lord's day, the high point of a preacher's week, he can bring the fruit of his labours to the congregation and feed them with the refreshing Word which gives life.

During the week he is busy with the Word as well. He teaches the catechism classes. God has placed him in a position where he can shape and mould young minds and lives with the Word. What an opportunity!

A minister also has the beautiful task of baptizing the lambs of the flock and those whom God has converted to the Christian religion. He may distribute the body and blood of the Lord for the strengthening and encouragement of the members of the church. Serving as the voice of the congregation, he leads in the public prayers.


He visits the sick, the lonely, the widowed, the depressed, and the handicapped in the congregation. He comforts them with the Word of God. This can be a little scary at first. But as long as he brings the comforting promises of God, his visits will be good. An especially wonderful visit to make is to welcome new lambs to the flock by visiting them and their mothers shortly after the Lord has given them. Often a minister's first visit to a maternity ward is when he goes in the official capacity of a minister. That can be a little frightening. But don't worry. The sisters are very forgiving. The maternity ward is a happy place. The mothers there will hardly notice as you nervously stumble and bumble along.

Together with the elders of the church, who, by the way, will support him and encourage him in his work, the minister will visit the members and families of the congregation. Together they will bring the Word into the homes. They will teach, encourage, comfort, admonish and call to repentance. If there is a prevailing sin in the life of a member or family, the minister with the elders will show from the Word how dangerous it is to live apart from Christ and how beautiful it is to walk with Him.

A minister is also called upon to do other things: Voice of the Church broadcasts, speeches for league days, articles for magazines, duties for the federation of churches.

The task is very diverse. But in the midst of the variety there is unity. The Word of God unites all the different tasks. The Word of God is the centre, the focal point of a preacher's life. He has the beautiful task of dipping into the Word and refreshing the souls of those who hear him.

But how are they to hear without a preacher?

Young man, is this for you? 

Invisible Church and Open Communion

A Response to an Article in *Clarion*, March 28, 1991

With great interest I read Dr. N.H. Gootjes' review of the Rev. B.R. Hofford's brochure, *Open Communion in the OPC*. Unlike Dr. Gootjes I happen to agree basically with Rev. Hofford's main thesis in the aforementioned brochure that the relatively widespread practice of "open communion" in the OPC has everything to do with the manner in which the Westminster Confession has been formulated and applied, especially with respect to the church. Rev. Hofford also wrote, by the way, about the doctrines concerning election and the covenant, matters which he integrally related to the doctrine concerning the church.

After I read Dr. Gootjes' review, I was left with the nagging question: if the practice of "open communion" (followed in many Presbyterian Churches) does *not* stem from a specific view on the (invisible) church (as given in the Westminster confession), *from where then does this practice come?* Unfortunately Dr. Gootjes did not address this vital issue.

I agree that taking a starting point in the doctrine of the "invisible church" does not necessarily have to lead to a practice of open communion. But such a way of speaking certainly makes it easier to arrive at this practice!

Dr. Gootjes introduces a number of witnesses (John Calvin, Zacharias Ursinus, among others) from the sixteenth century to prove that speaking about an "invisible church" does not have to lead to "open communion." On the contrary, he shows that especially those who wrote in this way strongly defended a proper fencing of the Lord's table. Good point. But is the ecclesiastical situation in the sixteenth century to be compared with our present circumstances, after significant developments during four centuries? Were Calvin and Ursinus faced with the same denominationalist and pluralistic thinking as we are today?

Moreover, I have the impression that the examples cited by Dr. Gootjes deal with those who were members of a local visible church subject to church discipline and *not* with those who belong to

various and different denominations, as is presently the point under scrutiny in Rev. Hofford's brochure. The historical references simply do not apply to the present situation. The man Berthelier, to whom Dr. Gootjes refers, had been suspended from the Lord's table for more than a year and the resulting issue in Geneva was not "open" versus "restricted" or "closed" communion but whether a known unrepentant sinner could be *re-admitted*.

When one studies the Report of the Advisory Committee of the General Assembly of the OPC in 1982 which dealt with Rev. Hofford's complaint (contained as appendix in the Acts of General Synod Burlington, 1986), it becomes clear that the OPC did not want to adopt a policy of "closed communion" precisely because this would mean "denominational exclusivism." We read also these lines, "Presbyterian church government emphasizes the universal communion of the saints (WCF, XXVI). This communion 'as God offereth opportunity is to be extended unto all those who in every place call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus' (WCF, XXVI:2; cf. the proof texts: Acts 2:44,45; 1 John 3:17; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Acts 11:29,30.) The government of the Church is therefore manifested at different levels: the house-Church, the city or regional Church, the Church *universal*. Christians visiting in other areas can claim the ministry of those gifted and recognized as Church officers, and Church officers *ought* to recognize in turn their obligation to minister to those who come within the practical scope of their ministry and who respect their calling" (Acts, page 166, italics mine, C.I.S.).

From the Westminster Confession (Article 25:1) it can be learned that by the "universal church" is also meant the *invisible* church. The inference is quite clear: when people present themselves to be admitted to the Lord's Supper and testify that they are believers, they ought to be admitted because they belong to the church universal or the "invisible" church.

I fully realize that the Westminster Confession also calls the *visible* church "catholic or universal" (Art. 25:2). There is in the OPC fortunately a good understanding that someone must also belong to a visible (more or less pure) "evangelical" church. But the starting point here lies in the doctrine concerning the invisible church.

A devoted Presbyterian elder, whom I greatly cherish, once explained it to me as follows: we may not refuse the fellowship of the table to anyone who says and shows that he is a true believer, for who are we to deny other Christians who are members of the (mystical c.q. invisible) body of Christ? It is not the table of a certain church, he said, but the table of the Lord who alone knows who are His (the elect)! Therefore, "closed communion" is out of the question, for it displays an exclusivist and sectarian ecclesiology. If this is true, we may as well get rid of Article 61 of the Reformed Church Order which stipulates that only communicant members in good standing and members of sister-churches with a proper attestation may be admitted to the Lord's Supper.

I find it rather remarkable that the same Prof. John Murray, who criticized the use of the term "invisible church," as Dr. Gootjes mentions, also strongly advocated restricted communion and pleaded for strict supervision by the *session* over those who might attend the table (Collected Writings II, page 381 ff.), also over those from other denominations who could be excluded for specific reasons even though the session would like to admit them.

I agree with Dr. Gootjes that some in the OPC prefer to speak about "restricted" communion rather than "open" or "closed" communion. I refer for example to what Rev. G. I. Williamson remarks in his explanation of the Westminster Confession of Faith, "...closed communion is not scriptural today for the simple reason that some denominations (and congregations) have ceased to be true churches, on the one hand, and because no single

denomination alone is 'the true church,' on the other. Open communion is wrong because it would admit members of false churches without evidence that they are Christians, and closed communion is wrong because it would exclude members of true churches without evidence that they are not Christians" (page 229). Rev. Williamson concludes, "The proper administration of the Lord's Supper is therefore *restricted communion*."

The question is warranted, however, if *in practice* the method of fencing the Lord's table is not more "open" than "restricted" in many OPC congregations. Our Committee for Contact with the OPC reported to General Synod Winnipeg 1989, (comparing the Scottish FCS and OPC methods of fencing the table), "We also wondered whether the variety in methods within the OPC and the *most frequently used method* of issuing only a general warning is not due to the influence of American individualism." The most frequently used method, our Committee tells us, is basically one of "open communion," the only "restriction" being a general warning. Rev. B.R. Hofford knows this from personal experience and therefore *properly* titled his brochure the way he did: the OPC practices *open* communion or allows such practices.

The Canadian Reformed Churches have repeatedly voiced concern about the matter of fencing the table in the OPC. General Synod 1986 spoke about a "serious confessional divergency which is a major issue of mutual concern" (Acts, Article 132). Such a divergency is more than a matter of "American individualism."

Rev. Hofford attempted to show wherein this *confessional* divergency exists and where it leads to. Does the matter of church discipline not have everything to do with the doctrine concerning the church and how this doctrine is *applied*? Seeing Dr. Gootjes' extensive review, rejecting Rev. Hofford's main thesis, I would appreciate it if Dr. Gootjes is willing to explain from where this OPC practice with respect to the fencing of the Lord's table does come. That would be a real contribution to the discussion.

Cl. Stam

Invisible Church and Open Communion

Answer to Rev. C. Stam

By N.H. Gootjes

I am grateful to Rev. Stam for his extensive reaction to my article. He writes that he basically agrees with Rev. B.R. Hofford. Also others said to me that they

had always thought the doctrine of the invisible church was responsible for the way the Lord's Supper is celebrated in the OPC. The opinion which Rev. Hofford propounded, seems to be a fairly common one in the Canadian Reformed Churches, something I did not know when I wrote my review. All the more reason to carefully consider the arguments which are brought forward. That is what I want to do in this second article.

The heart of the matter

First we have to get the matter straight. Rev. Stam writes: "I happen to agree basically with Rev. Hofford's main thesis...that the relatively widespread practice of 'open communion' in the OPC has everything to do with the manner in which the Westminster Confession has been formulated and applied, especially with respect to the church." However, this is not Rev. Hofford's main thesis, with which I disagreed. Rev. Hofford wrote: "For us, the most significant consequence of this emphasis (in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms) on election and the invisible church is open communion." (*Open Communion in the OPC*, p. 7). Rev. Stam weakens considerably the strict reasoning of Rev. Hofford.

Rev. Hofford's reasoning is this: The Westminster Confession approaches everything from the viewpoint of election. Therefore the church is in this confession defined as the totality of the elect, as the invisible church. The result for the Lord's Supper is, that fencing becomes impossible.

In my article I argued that the doctrine of the invisible church DID NOT lead to open communion. I have quoted from the writings of Calvin, Ursinus and others. They define the church in terms of election, they speak of the invisible church. Yet they do not advocate open communion, but are strict in fencing the table. And my second argument was, that the traditional doctrine of the invisible church COULD NOT lead to open communion. For the sacraments are in the theology of the 16th and 17th Century connected, not with the invisible, but with the visible church. This second argument does not reappear in the article of Rev. Stam.

In my first article I have already given several quotations to prove this point. After I had written the article I came across another quotation which shows that in the view of the OPC, the sacraments belong to the visible church. Since it is an important point, I will give it here. The quotation is taken from the Directory for Public Worship of the OPC, chapter 4, section 3:

Since the sacraments are ordinances of the *visible church* (emphasis mine,

NHG) they are not to be administered except under the oversight of the government of the church.

It is perfectly clear, that the official statements of the OPC on the invisible church do not lead to "open communion."

The OPC Report

But what about the reality? Did the OPC not use the doctrine of the invisible church in such a way, that it led to "open communion"? Rev. Stam implies this when he quotes from the Report of the Advisory Committee of the General Assembly of the OPC which dealt with the complaint of Rev. Hofford. He gives from this Report the following quotation: "The government of the Church is therefore manifested at different levels: the house-Church, the city or regional Church, the Church *universal*." According to Rev. Stam, this word "Church universal" also refers to the invisible church in the Westminster Confession, 25, 1. "The inference is quite clear: when people present themselves to be admitted to the Lord's Supper and testify that they are believers, they ought to be admitted because they belong to the church universal or the 'invisible' church."

However, this interpretation cannot be correct. When we read the whole passage we can easily see that the report here is speaking of the visible church. The quotations belong to part C.2, which begins as follows: "It is true that there are false Churches in the world, both Churches that were once true and have become apostate (e.g., Unitarian) and Churches that never have been Churches of Christ, although claiming the name (e.g., Mormon). It is also true that we must apply the marks of the Church to distinguish between true and false." It is obvious that the Report here speaks about visible churches. The distinction between true and false church can only be used for the visible church.

But the Report not only indicates that it speaks of the visible church, it says so explicitly. Between the first and the second quotation Rev. Stam gives, the OPC Report states that we may not "deny the Supper to those who are joined to Christ and to His Church visible (*Acts General Synod Burlington, 1986, 165*). There can be no doubt that the Report in discussing the fencing of the Table is dealing with the *visible church*."

This is also clear in the broad quotation Rev. Stam gives: "Presbyterian church government emphasizes the universal communion of the saints (WCF, XXVI). This communion 'as God offereth opportunity is to be extended unto all those who in every place call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus.'" This is not a

reasoning on the basis of the invisible church. Then they would have spoken of “all those who have been elected to eternal life.” But the expression “all those who in every place call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus” shows that “universal church” here is a local concept. This is confirmed by the texts which are quoted: Acts 2:44, 45; 1 John 3:17, 2 Corinthians 8:9, Acts 11:29, 30. They emphasize that the believers have to help their brothers financially, not only in the place they live but also in other places. (By the way, “communion” in the quotation does therefore not refer to the sacraments but to financial aid.)

I do not mean to say that I agree with the reasoning of the OPC Report. Actually, I do have objections against their report. But at the same time: It cannot be maintained that the Report argues on the basis of the doctrine of the invisible church. Whether individual members of the OPC will defend the position of the OPC on the fencing of the Lord’s Supper on the basis of the invisible church, I do not know. But this is certainly not their official position.

Calvin and Ursinus

Next, Rev. Stam questions my use of Calvin, Ursinus and other theologians of the 17th Century. “Is the ecclesiastical situation in the sixteenth century to be compared with our present circumstances, after significant developments during four centuries? Were Calvin and Ursinus faced with the same denominationalist and pluralistic thinking as we are today?” Rev. Stam seems to imply that these theologians wrote at a time so much different from ours that their words do no longer apply to our situation of denominationalism.

In answer I would like to draw attention to three things. In the first place, the contention of Rev. Hofford was that the Westminster Confession with its emphasis on election and its doctrine of the invisible church leads to “open communion.” This confession was made during 1646 and finalized in 1647. The quotations from Calvin, Ursinus and the professors of Leyden University date from the same time. It is surely not strange or out of tune to elucidate the teaching of the Westminster Confession with quotations of theologians from the same period. If in these theologians the doctrine of the invisible church does not lead to slackness in fencing the table, it follows that the doctrine of the invisible church in the Westminster Confession cannot be held responsible for “open communion” in the OPC.

In the second place, the underlying thought of the criticism seems to be,

that the ecclesiastical situation of the 16th and 17th Century was simple, compared to the complexity we are faced with today. This is not true, however. We are accustomed to distinguish only three churches in the 16th and 17th Century: Roman Catholic, Anabaptist and Reformed. But in reality many churches and groups existed side by side. Not only was the Anabaptist movement split up in many different groups, the 17th Century also saw the beginning of the Baptists. The Libertines were divided into several groups. There was an anti-trinitarian group. The Lutherans were not united, but split in several factions. The Zwinglians existed for a time separate from the Calvinists. Then there were Arminians and Antinomians. In the United Kingdom there were Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Independents, who soon went different ways. And in Scotland it was different again.

The confession about the church functioned already in the century of the Reformation in a complex ecclesiastical situation.

In the third place, even if Calvin and Ursinus were not faced with the same denominationalist and pluralistic thinking as we are today, does this mean that we can no longer apply their thoughts today? But what would be the result for the Belgic Confession, which dates from the same time? The result would be that we can no longer apply the article on the true and the false church in our situation with denominationalist and pluralistic thinking.

However, our professor J. Kamphuis, has shown that Art. 29 is not limited to the situation of the 16th Century but

should be applied to the situation of today too (*Verkenningen* 1, ch. 1, pp. 7-20; the same issue was discussed by J. Geertsema in *Clarion*, Vol 31 (1982) no. 1, 2, 5). Then we can also still work with Calvin, Ursinus and other theologians of that time. What they thought about the sanctity of the Lord’s Supper can directly be applied to our situation.

The nagging question

If the practice of the OPC does not have its origin in the doctrine of the invisible church, from where does it come?, asks Rev. Stam. “Unfortunately Dr. Gootjes did not address this vital issue.”

This criticism is somewhat unfair. I did not volunteer an article on: The origins of the OPC practices concerning the fencing of the Table. I was asked to write a review on a brochure in which as reason was given the doctrine of the invisible church in the Westminster Confession. I could not agree with the reasoning of this brochure, and I have given my arguments for it. In this context there was no need for me to come with my own view regarding the practice in the OPC.

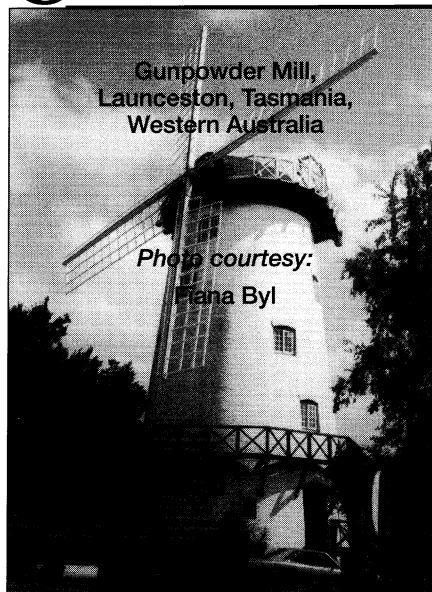
It is, no doubt, an important question. But it can only be solved by much historical investigation. The practice of the OPC is not that of the Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, so we have probably to look to America for a reason. But where did it begin? Was this the way it was done in the OPC right from the beginning? Did they take it over from the Presbyterian Church from which they separated?

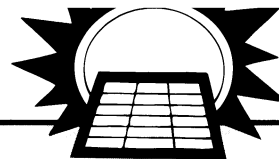
Several solutions are possible:

- The origin of their way of fencing the Table can be in American denominationalism. The word “denomination” does not occur in the original Westminster Confession, but occurs in the American revision of Ch. 23,3. Then the practice goes back to America of the 18th Century.
- It can have its origin in revivalism and evangelicalism. There it is more important that you are “born again” than to which church you belong. If that is the case, we have to study the 19th Century.
- It can also have to do with American individualism, as Rev. Stam quotes from the Report of our Committee for Contact with the OPC. Only a thorough historical investigation can solve this problem. But the popular opinion that it has its origin in the doctrine of the invisible church as stated in the Westminster Confession can be proven to be mistaken.

We have to argue for the right cause with the right arguments.

OUR COVER





By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Those who have to live with a physical or mental deficiency, are used to being looked at, or stared at, and sometimes not being accepted by other people. The society calls all those people "handicapped." There are two groups of people: those who are handicapped, and those who call themselves "normal." The first group of people have a much more difficult task in the world than the second. They are limited in physical activities, in moving around, in finding a job, in communicating with others, in being independent and having families of their own.

The second group wants to be called "normal."

For many people that is the most important rule of life: stick to the norm. Which norm? The norm set by society, the world around you. But to stick to that norm is not easy. You are always afraid that you will do something "abnormal," with the result that people will look down on you. Those who think that sticking to the norms of the world is the main task in their lives, have a most difficult task. That norm is not always and everywhere the same. It changes from culture, to country, to century. It moves constantly, because those norms are set by people, and people never stay the same. Things that were very "normal" 100 years ago, are not accepted by today's society. If you travel to the eastern countries, you can very easily make a fool of yourself, because you are not familiar with the norms of that country.

This is exactly what everyone wants to avoid: to make a fool of himself. When you deviate from the norm, from what is "normal," people look at you, laugh at you, and make you feel very uncomfortable. But when you have to do what everyone else does, trying to be "normal" becomes very dangerous. The motive for doing something becomes, "Everyone does it." The kind of clothes you wear, the things you do at home or when you go out, what you eat or drink, the kind of language you use, it is all decided by the norm of the society.

In itself there is nothing wrong with a norm. It is good that there are rules and regulations, otherwise life would become a chaos. But who often sets the norm? The unbelieving world does. And who is behind it? Satan is. Now we know why it is dangerous. Now we know how difficult and dangerous the task is for someone who wants to be "normal." We cannot and may not be normal to the sinful norms of the world.

As a Christian you have to abide by the norms which the Lord has set. We know those norms from the Bible, and from the ten commandments. They are stable: they were the same for over three thousand years, and in every country of the world. Everyone who sticks to those norms is "normal" in the eyes of the Lord. Maybe the world categorizes you as being handicapped, because you are blind, or deaf, you can't speak, or walk, or maybe you cannot always exactly understand everything that is going on because your intelligence is below the norms. But God's norms are not too high or too difficult. The Lord's norms are so that all His children are normal. So let the world use its own judgment.

Maybe you are not seen as normal because of the way you walk, or you don't watch T.V, or you have to go to a special school or workshop, or you don't drink, or you live in a group home, or you don't dress according to the latest fashion, or you sit in a wheelchair, or you don't laugh at dirty jokes, or you have to read braille and cannot go anywhere on your own, or you don't go out on Sundays but go to church twice. There are so many reasons why the world would see you as deviating from its norms. So, what? It does not matter at all. As long as the Lord sees you as His normal child, not deviating from His norms. And we can all do that. It does not matter what kind of limitations we have as a result of a physical handicap. God knows. He created us. He knows what we can do, and He will help us too! Nobody has such severe limitations that he cannot serve the Lord and do what He wants us to do. To be normal in God's eyes is most difficult for those who want to be seen as normal by the world.

You want to be the same as everyone else. But how can you try to be the same while you are so different. When God chose us to be His covenant children, when the sign and seal of His covenant with us is on our foreheads, we cannot be the same. We have to be proud of that, and we have to show that by being different. We have to show to the people around us that God's norms are more important than the world's. We have to show to the world what is normal! Then we can see a foreshadow of the life to come, where we all will be the same, like we are now the same in God's eyes. He sent us His Son, who saved us from slavery to worldly norms—which means Satan. Let us then rejoice in Him and give thanks to our heavenly Father, because to Him, we are all normal. And that is what counts!

*In Thy commandments I take great delight;
They are the subject of my meditation.
The path marked by Thy law I'll keep in sight
And guard myself against all deviation.
Thy holy word I'll not neglect or slight;
Thy statutes are the cause of my elation.*

Psalm 119:6

From the mailbox:

The sister of Joan Koerselman sent me a change of address (mailbox number) for Joan. Unfortunately the June birthdays were already at the printer's when I received the letter. I hope the mailman still sent the letters to the right mailbox? We hope to do better next year.

Birthdays for August

August 5

PHILIP SCHUURMAN

"Anchor" Home, 30 Road

RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0

Phil hopes to celebrate his 32nd birthday.

August 9

ROSE MALDA

Oakland Centre, 53 Bond Street

Oakville, ON L6J 5B4

Rose is going to be 34.

August 18

FENNY KUIK

38 Rizzuto Bay

Winnipeg, MB R2C 3Y8

Fenny will have her 39th birthday.

August 23

JACK DIELEMAN

307 Connaught Avenue

Willowdale, ON M2R 2M1

For Jack it will be his 19th birthday.

Congratulations with your birthdays, may you all have a very happy day with lots of mail.

Until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

74 62 Highway 20, RR 1

Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

Minister's Workshop in Hamilton

By P. Aasman

At this workshop, June 3, 1991 it was a pleasure to receive not only many of our own ministers, but also about a half dozen guests. The main address was given by Professor J. Geertsema on, "The Theme of the Letter of James: Be Perfect as your Father in Heaven is Perfect."

Professor Geertsema began by showing how past studies have either passed this letter off as a gathering of material loosely collected around several general themes, or, they have tried to discover integral unity in the letter, but failed because they had been misled by liberal scholarship.

Then the speaker delved into a technical analysis of the first verses of the letter, showing that they climaxed in the words, "that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." It becomes clear that James is working out the teaching of the Lord Jesus when he said:

"You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

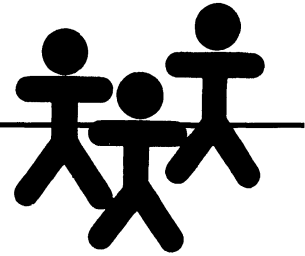
This thesis was not left to stand by itself, but was subsequently traced through the whole letter. Thus in one hand, we are able to grasp the whole message of James which otherwise seems so diffused. In the discussion which followed the speaker ably defended his thesis in the face of lesser and greater challenges.

In the afternoon session, Rev. Boessenkool addressed the assembly on the topic, "Black Theology in Southern Africa." Rev. Boessenkool is minister of the Word in our sister churches of South Africa, and is presently serving the Lord in the church at London. He began by showing that Black theology in Southern Africa has its origins in the U.S.A. and Latin America. It developed through three phases. The first phase may be called Black Consciousness. It arose

during the American Civil War where blacks not only fought, but changed the outcome of the war, so that they were emancipated. This gave rise to a greater sense of dignity in their race and a stronger desire to struggle together for equality in society. Black Consciousness gave way to Black Power which by the late 1960s saw blacks making radical demands of whites in their struggle for equality. This has given way to Black Theology, especially under the influence of such men as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Gustavo Gutierrez. Black Theology has transformed orthodoxy, robbed the Saviour of His atoning riches and made the Lord into a Jesus that loves the poor and powerless and hates the rich.

After a brief discussion, the meeting was concluded with the hope of meeting again, the Lord willing, on January 6, 1992.





The Christian Character of a Reformed School

Editor's Note:

The following contribution, a 2nd installment (the 1st appeared in *Clarion*, Feb. 1, 1991), by Mr. G.M. Spyker, a foreword and translation of an article by Dr. J. van Bruggen of the Theological University in Kampen (the Netherlands), is taken over from the magazine of the Australian Free Reformed Teachers' Association, April 1991. Where applicable references to the church has been changed to the Canadian Reformed Church. (a.w.)

One of the major points which came to the fore was that a Reformed school needs to be Reformed continually in order to remain a Christian school. The Christian character is summarized in the three elements: faith, conversion and prayer. The first element has been dealt with, the other two form the main sections of the second part of the article. The headings are: Commandment (conversion in conformity with the norm of the Ten Commandments) and Prayer (as taught in the Lord's Prayer).

Commandment

The Christian character in all our actions is measured by the norm of God's law, as it is summarized in the Ten Commandments. To acknowledge this is not difficult. But do we put into practice what we preach?

Some decades ago, a clear and generally accepted Reformed code of morals and ethics regarding many practices existed. These morals were the result of a collective conduct in subjection to God's commandments. After the Second World War many of those who call themselves Reformed, lost interest in these Reformed morals. With Canadian Reformed people some of these morals are disappearing as well. In the Netherlands those of Reformed-synodical background openly and brazenly protested against the existence of this morality, a Reformed code of conduct. However, in

Canadian Reformed circles this protest is hardly heard. There this morality threatens to die a silent death.

It is noticeable in various ways. One way is a constant and silent *erosion of values* with hardly any or no protest at all. Playing cards is accepted. Theatre is selectively accepted. Cabaret is discussed at school. What is lacking here and in similar cases, however, is an honest justification of this change of code. Certain practices of the "fathers" may be changed, but they deserve to be dealt

**"Therefore let
anyone who thinks
he stands take heed
lest he fall"**

1 Corinthians 10:12

with fairly and responsibly. Those who do not render an account of changes soon will lose all understanding of morality.

Apart from this constant erosion of values there is also a *lack of maintenance*. Past rules still exist, but a common code of conduct is hardly ever developed for new phenomena. The general consensus of opinion regarding the cinema is still rather negative, but this consensus hardly exists regarding the use of the television, the Sunday observance with the increased availability of cars, and the spending of our holidays.

The combination of this constant erosion of values and the lack of maintenance result in *inconsistencies*. Do not participate in sporting activities on Sunday, yet watch them on T.V.

In lieu of a Reformed morality one hears today the often repeated motto that the mature Christian has his own freedom and responsibility. We are

obliged to respect each others opinions and decisions. From the collective framework of the church community one quickly and easily changes over to the individual development of a style of living. Only with a seeming reference to Romans 14 or 1 Corinthians 8-10 one tries to give this idea a biblical foundation. The New Testament, however, addresses us collectively regarding our walk of life in the freedom of Christ. He addresses us as *one* body, where all members line up together. If we want to walk in Christ, common consultation is of paramount importance. Then we can decide upon our common ways of life, so that we can support each other and nobody gets lost.

It is high time that within the Canadian Reformed Churches proper attention is paid to the Reformed values of Christian living. Standards and often empty slogans ought to be closely checked. Only half the truth is said when one states that we have to discern between norm and tradition, that we should not equate commandment and value, and that tradition and morals always ought to be judged in the light of the norm, the commandment. But tradition and morals are not only determined by the norm, but also by the practice. In our way of life, which is subjected to the commandments, we must be practical people. Much of our past values can be deleted as non-obligatory if we are only guided by the norm, while in practice morality has had a preserving, supporting and unifying effect. There are thousands of things which are not mentioned in the Bible, yet it would be wise to either keep them or leave them.

If we want to restore our values and morals, we must understand what effect our attitude and conduct has on others. When one thinks he has the freedom to break up camp on Sunday evening, then he must remember that this affects the owner of the caravan park. When one serves beer at a party of high school

students, then he can say that it is the other parents' own business whether or not they wish to serve a beer as well. However, life is made very difficult for the others. Do those parents who have set rules for the benefit of their children have to think then that their code of conduct is nothing else but an individual preference? And all this happens if parents do not endeavour to draw a common line.

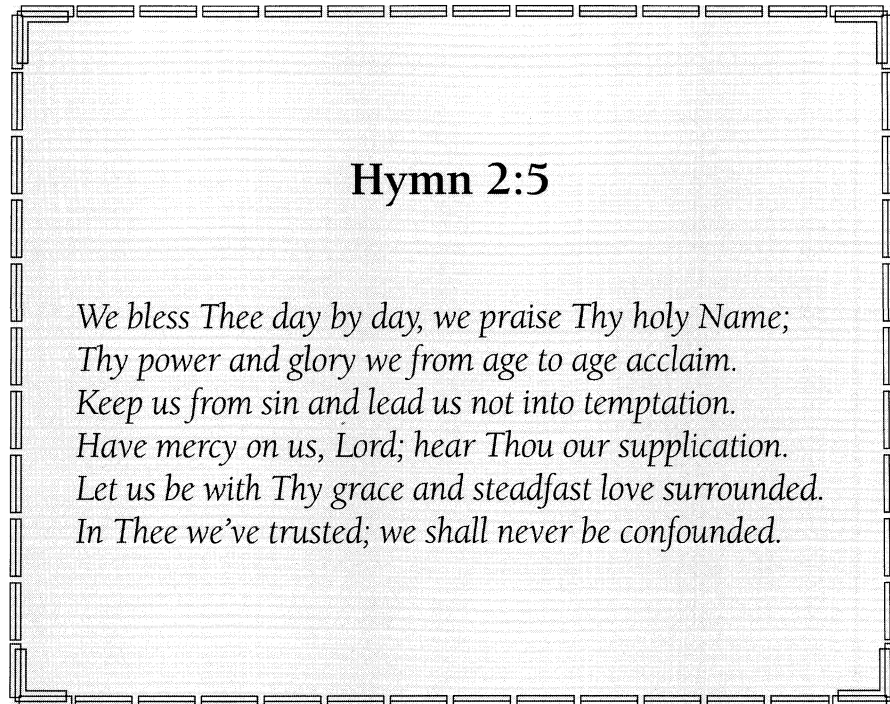
But a school is a community within a community: the authority and possibility to influence are small. However, a collective way of life as one community will get lost when everyone who has some authority does not execute it. The school should not be afraid. It has its own authority to shape life according to God's commandments in concrete guidelines and objectives. We should not be afraid if others call us fault-finding or rigid. It is true that at school we should not have students who as sheep unthinkingly follow set rules, but we are not allowed to forget that the students are all sheep of one flock and have to act accordingly.

One of the high priorities at a Reformed school is that teachers have one common opinion regarding recommending certain books, newspapers and magazines. How in the world will students learn to be careful with and help each other while Reformed teachers are not able to develop common goals and adhere to them?

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that there should not only be rules like how to place bikes in the racks, but also regarding playing cards in the school, how to fight the misuse of God's Name in our society, also in literature, and guidelines with respect to parties, and so on.

(Much of what is said in the following paragraphs applies to the Dutch situation. However, we have to be careful that we are not caught into the trap of too many parties as well. "Therefore let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall"-1 Corinthians 10:12. GMS)

I want to mention another point: The school is allowed to express her opinion, regarding spending of leisure time by the young people, isn't she? True, the organization of camp-weeks is the task of the students and their parents, yet the staff of the school knows that today we live in a kind of moral vacuum. Many parents during their youth did not experience so many study-weekends or fun-weekends and parties. They often discover that it is the school that organizes camps and most expensive school trips for the young people, who are already so used to camping and holidaying. These parents feel ill at ease. Especially when they notice in hindsight that there are even



Hymn 2:5

*We bless Thee day by day, we praise Thy holy Name;
Thy power and glory we from age to age acclaim.
Keep us from sin and lead us not into temptation.
Have mercy on us, Lord; hear Thou our supplication.
Let us be with Thy grace and steadfast love surrounded.
In Thee we've trusted; we shall never be confounded.*

camp and parties which are organized by the young people themselves without any input from the school.

An important question is how much is gained morally by a modest use of leisure time and money. But how much is lost? Who is responsible for what? So often parents have hardly any influence on what happens during class parties of high school students. It is the task of the school (board and staff) together with the parents to consciously consider the question what is permissible within the field of education and instruction and what has to be excluded. When there is no consultation within the society of school and parents, then the child will suffer. Some parents have a certain opinion, some teachers a different one, while other parents think differently again: there is no common opinion. Everybody knows better. Because of the multitude of advisers the child is lost, while it could have been saved if there would have been proper consultation.

At the present it seems that some people are really scared to make rules of conduct regarding Sunday observance, spending one's leisure time, holidaying in times of courtship or engagement, birthday parties and so on. It is quite normal that in the school the commandment "*thou shalt not steal*" is changed into the preventative rule "*thou shalt not leave money in thy pocket*." It is remarkable that the use of the commandment "*thou shalt not commit adultery*" as a protective rule for engaged couples not to go on holidays together is looked upon as fussing over others. (On

purpose I take this example from the generally accepted Reformed norm.)

The Christian character of the Reformed school will become the more obvious when boards, principals and staff members together would develop uniform rules of conduct regarding our morals. The argument exists that we must prevent that the rules of conduct are identified with God's law or are interpreted as rigid rules. I do not deem it necessary to elaborate on these often one-sided arguments. We should not fight windmills. It will rarely happen that the rule to leave no money in pockets is interpreted as a rule that promotes hypocrisy or is identified with the sixth commandment.

Prayer

Finally we must mention prayer as a characteristic of the Christian school. It is really the most important characteristic: "*the most important part of thankfulness.*" It is obvious that in our school much is said about how the teacher should pray in the classroom and how the students are taught and shown how to pray reverently and with a childlike trust. However, I fear that prayer in the Reformed school receives a somewhat neglected position. It is not forgotten. True. It suffers because we are so used to it. We have a certain tradition; a day is commenced and concluded with prayer, like at meetings and meals. A very good tradition indeed which brings into practice the commandment to thank the Lord in everything we do.

Under the section *commandment* we saw that traditions can suffer when neglected or when there is a lack of maintenance. This lack of maintenance is often the case in high schools. Over the years we have experienced many changes in these kind of schools. Also the change from a common school day to a cafeteria type of timetable. Throughout the day students arrive and leave. The first lesson for one student could be the third for another. The school day does not have a common start or conclusion. This means that our old tradition of a common prayer at the start and at the end of the day does not fit anymore in this new rhythm. One can try to keep this tradition; however, it causes great problems. Students who travel a long distance are allowed to come ten minutes late: they are allowed to miss out on prayer, not on the actual lesson. Obviously nobody is happy with this development. The good intentions to keep prayer in our schools prevents it from disappearing. However, we must ask the question whether for the sake of prayer at school the timetable should be organized in such a way that we keep this tradition.

The order of "prayer at the start and at the end of the day" can be easily kept in the primary school, because all classes generally start at the same time. However, schools which do not have a common start or conclusion of the day for all classes and all students in the various classes could consider to take over the pattern of some foreign institutions: at a specific time during the morning attention is being paid to prayer, singing and Bible reading. All classes could do it straight after morning recess. Perhaps it is possible that special attention is paid to prayer during lunch time. In this way the wearing off of prayer and thanksgiving before and after lunch will be prevented and the good habit to eat lunch at set times instead of at different times during the morning will be promoted. When the Reformed school has not been an example in acquiring proper eating habits and has not taught properly to pray reverently during lunch times, how will young people ever eat their lunch in a Christian manner, after prayer to God, when they work in offices, factories or study at tertiary institutions?

If it is not possible to include prayer in the timetable, but it receives the appropriate attention and reverence, also by teachers who do not have to start the day with prayer three times in a row with different classes anymore, then it will be easier to pay proper attention to lunch time prayer, whether it coincides with the daily devotion or is separated from it.

Parents who are of the opinion that work at school cannot commence without prayer, should be asked whether they in their own family circle do their utmost to pray with the child at the breakfast table before it leaves for school. True, we do ask for a blessing before we start our daily work, but first of all this must start at home. During parents' evening or by means of the school paper the school could emphasize this matter. When school starts at an early hour it is possible that a certain slackness develops in families as well. An integration of a family worship service in the morning and a reverent prayer at school will strengthen the bond between home and school.

Conclusion

We have discussed a few practical elements of faith, conversion and prayer in a Reformed school. Will this school show its Christian character and continue to show it? That is in God's hands. It is only by grace that this happens and that our schools receive true Christians as teachers. We will not be able to keep these schools without being born again. A gradual disappearance of the Christian character of the school could be a punishment from God for the parents and congregations.

However, the school exists because of the churches. Therefore it is so important for the school that the church, that the families live in faith, in an obedient way of life, in communion with God. In the church prayers are sent up for the education in the schools. For the proper existence of the schools it is necessary that in those schools, prayers are sent up for the congregations and all her baptized members.



CHURCH NEWS

CALLED

To Ancaster, ON

Rev. G.Ph. van Popta

of Ottawa, ON

* * *

CALLED

To Grand Rapids, MI

Rev. P.G. Feenstra

of Guelph, ON

* * *



THE THEOLOGICAL
COLLEGE OF THE
CANADIAN REFORMED
CHURCHES

The Seventeenth Convocation and the Twenty-second Anniversary Meeting of the Theological College

will be held, D.V. on
Friday, September 6, 1991
at 8:00 p.m.

in the auditorium of
Redeemer College
(Hwy. 53, Ancaster)

Dr. J. De Jong
as the featured speaker.

More details will follow.



MAILING ADDRESS CHANGE:

**Canadian Reformed Church
at Ancaster**

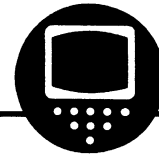
c/o Mr. S. VanDelden
109 Oneida Blvd.
Ancaster, ON L9G 3C7

This is a temporary change due to changes at the post office. A new post box will be rented when available.

* * *

The Theological College

will be closed for summer recess
from July 22 till August 13, 1991.



Regional Synod West, May 28, 1991 at Cloverdale, BC

1. *Opening.* On behalf of the convening church, the Church at Cloverdale. Rev. J. Moesker calls the meeting to order. He requests the brethren to sing Psalm 90:1, 8, reads Proverbs 10:1-22 and leads in prayer. In welcoming the brothers delegates he also welcomes as guests the Rev. K. Jonker from Australia, who is on his way to Winnipeg, and a group of students of the William of Orange School.
2. The *Credentials* are examined by Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar and Rev. C. Van Spronsen. It appears that Classis Alberta-Manitoba as well as Classis Pacific are lawfully represented. Of Classis Alberta-Manitoba one minister and three elders have been replaced by their alternates.
3. Regional Synod is *constituted*. The following brothers are chosen to serve Synod as officers: Rev. J. Visscher as chairman, Rev. M. VanderWel as vice-chairman, and Rev. G. Wieske as clerk. The chairman thanks the convening church for the work which had to be done to prepare this Synod.
4. *Adoption of the Agenda.* After a letter from the Maranatha Church at Surrey and the appointment of Deputies ad Art. 48 C.O. as items have been added to the provisional agenda, the agenda is adopted.
5. *Correspondence.* Synod received *two appeals*: one by Br. D. Houweling against an answer from Classis Pacific, April 3, 1990, concerning a doctrinal matter, and one by the Consistory of the Church at Carman against a decision of Classis Alberta-Manitoba, October 9, 1990, concerning the examination of credentials. The appeals are respectively read and discussed. Two committees are appointed to study the appeals further and to formulate an answer to each case. In order to give the committees some time to do their advisory work, Synod is adjourned till after lunch.

Synod is re-opened after the singing of Psalm 107:1, 12. The reports of the committees are discussed. In answer to the appeal of the Consistory of Carman,

Synod decides to deny the requests of the Church at Carman on the following considerations:

1. Synod (1989)'s phrase "the lack of a specified procedure in the Regulations" does not imply the need for more specific regulations, but is used by Synod as a defense against the observation of the Church at Coal-dale.
2. Classis Alberta-Manitoba did not give any grounds for its decision. However, it is within the jurisdiction of Classis to decide that further detailing of its regulations is not necessary.
3. Carman requested Classis to clarify its regulations, whereas it is also within the jurisdiction of the Church at Carman to propose changes to the Classical regulations. In answer to the appeal of Br. D. Houweling Regional Synod judges that
 - a. Br. Houweling's interpretation of the Scripture concerning our relationship to the Law is incorrect;
 - b. the Consistory of the Church at Lynden has dealt with Br. Houweling's complaints according to Scripture;
 - c. Classis Pacific therefore correctly supported the answers given by the Church at Lynden.
6. The Church at Abbotsford *overtures* Regional Synod to insert in its Regulations as yet the decision which has been made by Regional Synod, Smithers, 1979, and which is mentioned in Art. 6 of its Acts. Synod decides to do so.
7. *Reports.*
 - a. The Deputies ad Art. 48 C.O., Rev. P.K.A. de Boer and Rev. J.D. Wielenga, report on their attendance of the peremptory examination of Cand. W.B. Slomp.
 - b. Br. H. Lubbers of Coal-dale reports on the finances of Regional Synod over the period of October 1988 till December 31, 1990. A report on the auditing of the books of the treasurer is included. On recommendation of the treasurer Synod raises the claim for loss of wages for those who are delegated to General Synod to \$100.00 a day up to \$500.00 a week. The

remuneration for travel expenses of delegates is raised from 22 cents to 27 cents per kilometer. The reports are accepted and the treasurer is discharged from his duties for this period.

8. *Appointments.*
 - a. The Maranatha Church at Surrey objects to the idea that this Regional Synod will already appoint delegates to the General Synod which will be held in the Fall of 1992 at Lincoln. Synod agrees with this objection. The appointment of delegates to the General Synod as well as the nominations for the Board of Governors of the Theological College are therefore left up to the next Regional Synod.
 - b. As deputies ad Art. 48 C.O. are appointed: Rev. P.K.A. de Boer, Rev. J.D. Wielenga, Rev. B.J. Berends and Rev. J. Visscher; as alternates: Rev. C. Van Spronsen and Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar.
 - c. Br. H. Lubbers is re-appointed as treasurer.
 - d. The Providence Church at Edmonton is re-appointed as church for the archives.
 - e. The Immanuel Church at Edmonton is re-appointed for the inspection of the archives.
 - f. The next Regional Synod will be convened by the Immanuel Church at Edmonton. Date: June 16, 1992. The convening church will do well to inform the treasurer as well as the church for the archives and the church for the inspection of the archives of this date in advance.
9. A *Question Period* is held. *Censure ad Art. 44 C.O.* appears not to be necessary.
10. The *Acts* and *Press Release* are read, and adopted.
11. *Closing.* As this may have been the last Regional Synod to which the Rev. M. VanderWel has been delegated, the chairman, Rev. J. Visscher, thanks him for his work and wishes him the best in his upcoming retirement. After the singing of Hymn 40: 1, 4, the chairman leads in prayer of thanksgiving and Synod is closed.

For the Regional Synod,
M. VanderWel

Classis Ontario North, June 14, 1991, held at Rehoboth Church, Burlington

1. On behalf of the convening church, the church at Lower Sackville, the Rev. G.Ph. van Popta calls the meeting to order. He reads Hebrews 13:7-21, invites the delegates to sing Ps. 91:1,5, and leads in prayer. He speaks words of welcome to the delegates and to the deputies of regional synod.
2. The delegates of the church at Guelph examine the credentials. They report that all the churches are duly represented.
3. Classis is constituted.
4. The officers suggested by the last classis take their respective places:
Chairman: Rev. W. den Hollander
Vice-Chairman: Rev. G.Ph. van Popta
Clerk: Rev. P. Aasman
The chairman opens the classis with some fitting words of thanks to the convening church, Lower Sackville, and the hosting church, Burlington West. He also recalls the classical memorabilia. He introduces the delegates, welcomes the deputies of regional synod and the visitors.
5. The agenda is adopted.
6. *Proposals or instructions from churches.*
 - a. Burlington West asks advice reference the retirement of the Rev. J. Mulder ad Art. 13 C.O. The relevant documents are read. After some discussion, classis and the deputies of regional synod state that there are no objections to the request of Burlington West to grant the Rev. J. Mulder the honourable status of minister-emeritus as of Sept. 1, 1991. A declaration of release is read by the chairman and signed by the executive of classis and the deputies of regional synod. The chairman and the deputies of regional synod speak appropriate words of thanks to the Rev. J. Mulder and Mrs. Mulder. Rev. Mulder responds with some well chosen words. After this, the deputies of regional synod leave the assembly. Rev. G.Ph. van Popta is appointed to represent classis on Sunday, Aug. 25, when Rev. Mulder will, D.V., preach his farewell sermon.
 - b. The church at Burlington East requests the approbation of the call which it extended to the Rev. G.

Nederveen. All the required documents are present. The call is approved. Rev. W. den Hollander is appointed to represent classis on Sunday, Aug. 25, at the installation of Rev. G. Nederveen.

- c. Burlington East proposes that future classical meetings be convened at the premises of Ebenezer Church on Dynes Rd. This proposal is adopted. The church at Burlington West is thanked for the hospitality it has shown by hosting the classical meetings of past years.

- d. Brampton requests classis to appoint the Rev. G. Nederveen as its counsellor. Classis so appoints. Brampton requests pulpit supply one Sunday per month as of September. This request is granted. Rev. Nederveen is given the task of coordinating pulpit supply in the vacant churches. The following schedule is approved:

Brampton:

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------------|
| 1991 | Sept. | – Aasman |
| | Oct. | – Gleason |
| | Nov. | – Feenstra |
| | Dec. | – Huijgen |
| 1992 | Jan. | – Gleason |
| | Feb. | – van Popta |
| | Mar. | – Nederveen |
| | Apr. | – Huijgen |
| | May | – Feenstra |
| | June | – Aasman |

Elora:

- | | | |
|------|------|-------------|
| 1992 | Apr. | – Feenstra |
| | May | – Nederveen |
| | June | – van Popta |

7. *Question Period ad Art. 44 C.O.* One church asks for some advice in a matter in which it needs help. Advice is given.

8. *Reports:*

- a. The committee for fund for needy churches submits a report which includes financial statements. The committee also requests the churches to be diligent in contributing their respective assessments.
- b. The committee for fund for needy churches reports that it has received a request for financial aid

PLEASE NOTE

Next *Clarion* issue, nos. 15 and 16, will be our summer holiday issue. This combined issue will be published on August 2, 1991.

from the church at Elora. After discussion, classis decides to defer a decision on this request to Classis September 13, 1991, since the churches have not had time to discuss the financial implications of granting this request.

- c. Reports of church visitations made to the churches at Burlington West, Burlington East, Toronto, and Fergus are submitted.
- d. The church at Burlington South reports that it has inspected the classical archives and found all to be in good order.

9. *Appointments:*

For next classis:
Convening church - Orangeville
Date - Sept. 13, 1991
Place - Burlington East
Chairman - Rev. P.G. Feenstra
Vice-Chairman - Rev. P. Aasman
Clerk - Rev. W. den Hollander
In light of the upcoming retirement of Rev. Mulder, the following appointments are made:

Coordinator of examinations - Rev. P.G. Feenstra
Examiner in doctrine and creeds - Rev. R. Gleason

10. *Question Period:* Several brothers make use of the opportunity given.

11. *Censure ad Art. 44 C.O.* There is no need for any member to be censured.

12. The Acts are read and adopted. The press release is read and approved. The chairman invites the delegates to sing Ps. 134:1, 2, leads in prayer of thanksgiving, and closes the assembly.

G.Ph. van Popta
Vice-Chairman, *e.t.*

Meeting of the ILPB and the Administration and Promotion Committees

April 5, 1991, London

Representing the Men's League:
George Helder, Keith Sikkema
Women's League: Martha DeGelder,
Lise Schutten

Young People's League: Joe Poppe
Promotion Committee: Johan VanderJagt

Administration Committee: Thea Heyink, Tim Hutten, Rennie Pieterman, Elaine Spriensma, Heather Van Middlekoop

1. The Chairman, G. Helder, opened in the usual Christian manner. He welcomed all present.

2. Agenda was established.
3. Minutes of previous meeting were adjusted and adopted.
4. Progress was reported:

Galatians - M.J.C. Blok: is ready for typesetting. To go to printer as soon as possible.

Romans - Joh. Francke: is also ready for typesetting. Promises to be a large book, exceeding 250 pages. Should be ready for sale by late summer. Advertising should begin immediately to ensure study societies are aware this will be ready, D.V., by new study season. It was decided not to proceed with hard cover, but go with a sewn soft cover. Tentative price was discussed. Will include Cataloguing in Publication Data.

Philippians - K. Deddens: should be received very soon from the editor. Will be typeset as soon as possible.

Church in the Last Judgment - B. Holwerda: is still being re-edited.

Luke Vol. 1 - C. Hagens: still being re-translated (revised) to fall in line with the style of translation of Vol. 2.

Acts Vol. 1 - C. VandenBerg: is translated. An editor needs to be found willing to work on this manuscript.

Acts Vol. 2 - C. VandenBerg: is being translated.

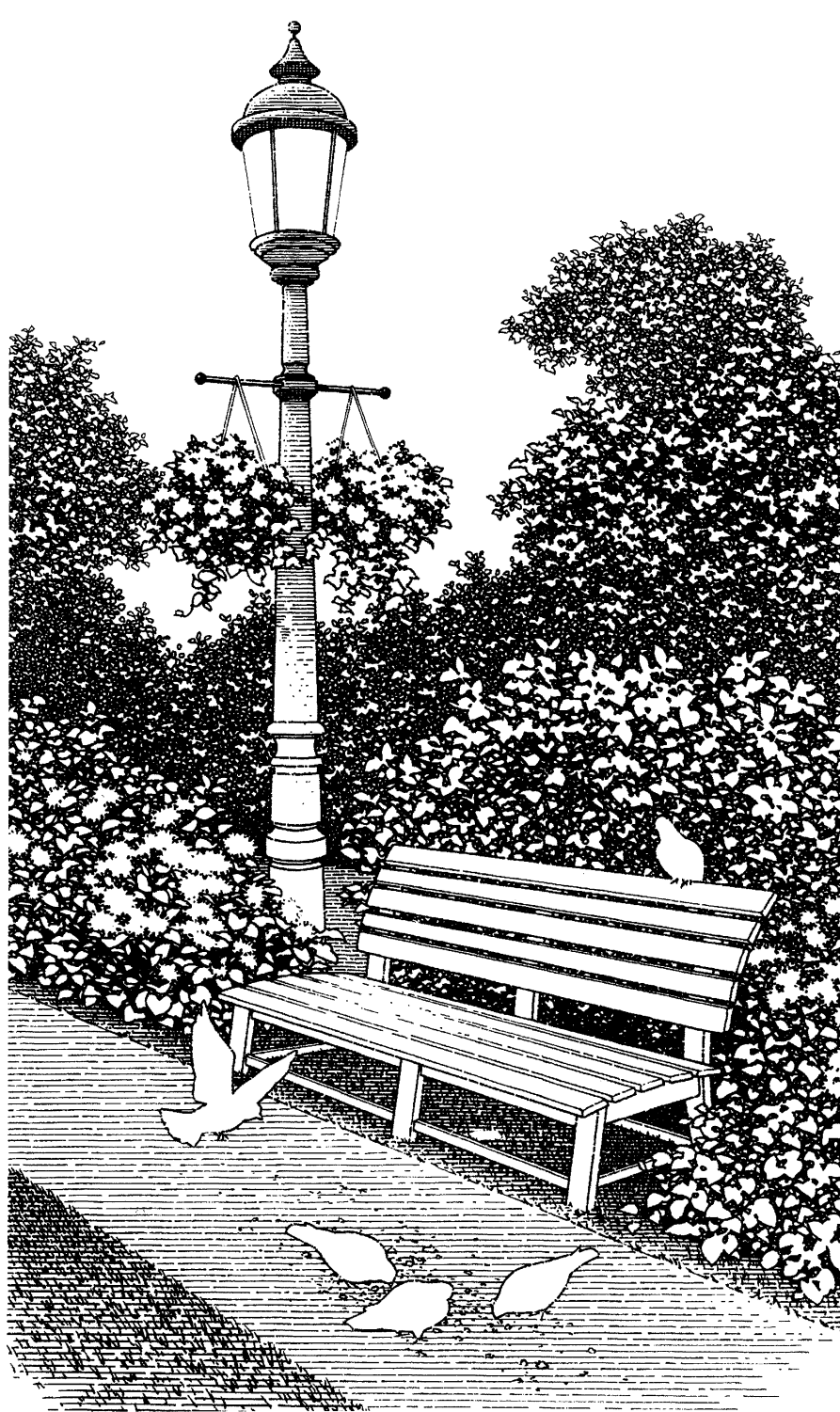
Believe and Confess - C.G. Bos: no change.

Hebrews - Revised - L. Selles: revised version is ready for editing.

5. Sales Report was tabled:
 - a. Sales are steady.
 - b. Handling charges will apply at 3%, minimum \$1.00.
 - c. Future sale packages will be exempt from normal discounts.

6. Financial Report was tabled and discussed:
 - a. Financial statements were discussed and adopted.
 - b. Financial situation continues to look bleak, unless sales triple.
 - c. Inventory is too high—if more movement could be encouraged, situation would also improve.

7. Promotion Report was tabled and discussed:
 - a. Input into marketing strategies is encouraged.
 - b. Updates continue to be sent to congregational representatives.
 - c. Analysis will be made of the performance of each representative. Perhaps some personal contact could be made.
 - d. Restored policy for bookstore discounts was adopted. Those bookstores which also act as reps will



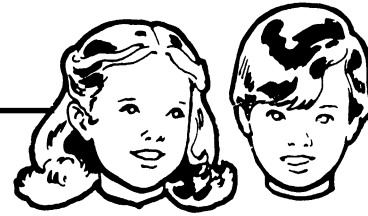
- e. New reps are needed for the following congregations: Chatsworth, Langley, Neerlandia, Orangeville, Port Kells, Rockway. Other congregations will be reviewed.
8. Mileage remuneration was reviewed and adjusted.
9. Young People's Board member's term is up. The YP league is encouraged to keep involved by sending two reps to all meetings. Their input is important and vital.
10. J. Poppe led in thanksgiving and the meeting was closed.

T. Heyink, Administrator



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

How do you celebrate Canada Day?
Does your family plan a picnic?
That's a fun way to enjoy our country's 124th birthday!
A birthday is always a day to give thanks, right?
And we give thanks for freedom, for beauty, for plenty
that we may enjoy in our country!

FOR YOU TO DO

When Canada was "born" at Confederation in 1867,
someone hoped it would be a great country "from sea to
sea."

When did this dream come true?
When did the last province join Confederation?
What province was this?



For your reward, send your answers to

The Busy Beaver Club
c/o Aunt Betty
Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5



One Exciting Day!

...On April 13...I went to my best friend Evelynn.
We went on bike rides and had lots of fun. We also
looked at the pretty flowers in their yard. And the same
day was the walkathon. You had to walk 15 km. I
walked with my friends and the boys. One of them had
some change in his pocket. When we walked past the
"Yarrow-Stork" we didn't walk past. We walked in. We
all got a piece of gum! Later, as we kept on going we sat
on the steps of the Mennonite Church. We were des-
perate to be last because the first and the last get a
chocolate bar, also other people who did special things.
And that afternoon my Mom had the baby! His name
was Glen. What an exciting day that was!

by Busy Beaver Sharon DeVries

Quiz Time!

FRIENDS OF THE LORD JESUS

Can you fill in the blanks with the names of some of Jesus' friends?

1. _____, _____, and _____ were the only witnesses at both the transfiguration (Mat. 17:1-13) and the prayer at Gethsemane.
2. _____ sat at Jesus' feet and listened to Him.
3. Jesus raised _____ from the dead.
4. _____ expressed her belief in Jesus. (John 11:24)
5. _____ helped bury Jesus.
6. The tomb the Lord was buried in belonged to _____.
7. _____ pointed his followers to the Lord Jesus.
8. Jesus befriended _____. (Luke 19:5)
9. _____ spoke to the Lord in the garden, thinking Him to be the gardener.
10. Jesus shared a meal with friends at the home of _____ . (Mat. 26:6)

(See answers)

NAMES WORDSEARCH

by Busy Beaver *Janine Vander Hoeven*

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

Find:

Lisa	Liz	Ron
Alice	Sophia	Mark
John	Angela	Sherri
Amos	Betty	Julie
Karen	Ken	Amy
Andy	Keith	Ben
Herman	Henry	

When you are finished, there should be 17 letters left. You can make a sentence with the letters. Try to figure out what it is and write it on the line.

RIDDLE FUN!!

By Busy Beavers *Vickie Aikema, David Aikema and Esther Horczyk*

1. In which state would Noah feel most at home?
2. Why is it hard to carry on a conversation with a goat?
3. Which is better, an old ten dollar bill or a new one?
4. What kind of stars go to jail?
5. What jam can't you eat?
6. Why are mailboxes so unhappy?
7. Why don't astronauts answer the phone at noon?
8. What did the little man say to the big man when it was raining?
9. Why did the house call the doctor?

(Answers below)

July

We all join in wishing these Busy Beavers a very happy July birthday! We hope you have an excellent day celebrating with your family and friends. May our heavenly Father bless and guide you every day of the year ahead.

Brenda Oosterveld	3	Eric Brown	19
Joanna Vink	3	Angela Dijkstra	19
Natalie Veenman	5	Denise Hoeksema	20
Linda Verhey	5	Karen Terpstra	20
Heather Muis	6	Margaret Nyenhuis	21
Richard Schouten	6	Vickie Aikema	23
Sara Plantinga	7	Cecilia Barendregt	25
Donald Van Leeuwen	7	Trina Jelsma	26
David Aikema	9	Charmaine Swaving	26
Andrea Van Vliet	10	Colin Meerstra	27
Janine Swaving	12	Julie Van Sydenborgh	27
Jeremy Koopmans	14	Nicole Roodzant	30
Henrietta Breukelman	15	Michelle Peters	31
Rachel Wierenga	15	Evellyn Bos	31
Andrea Feenstra	17		

ANIMAL WORDSEARCH

by Busy Beaver *Joanne Jans*

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

goat	pig	peacock
fish	mouse	chicken
beaver	sheep	horse
muskrat	bird	calf
cat	eagle	cow
robin	dog	water rat



FROM THE MAILBOX

Thanks for your letter, *Michelle Peters*. How is your cross-stitching coming? Did you get it framed on time? How was your graduation? Have a great summer, Michelle. Bye for now.

Have you seen the bear and her cubs again, *Elisa Vandergaag*? And did you get your chickens? That will help keep you busy this summer! Thanks for the puzzles, Elisa.

I see you are a good puzzler, *Gerald Bartels*. Keep up the good work! How are you planning to keep busy this summer, Gerald?

Thank you for the puzzle, *Jodie Lodder*. I hope you enjoy today's puzzles in *Our Little Magazine*, too. Here's hoping you have a good holiday, Jodie.

Hello, *Benjamin Bartels*. It was good to hear from you again. Did you learn about the seasons at school, Ben? Or did you have to look up your answer? Have a great summer!

I like your poem, *Rachel Wierenga*. Keep up the good work! How are you planning to spend your holidays, Rachel? Bye for now. Write again soon.

That was a very interesting letter you sent, *David Burger*! I will have to give that quite a bit of thought and some study, too, I think. It's good to keep learning. And it's good to have holidays, don't you think, David? Here's hoping you and your sister have a good summer.

Thank you for your letter and other "goodies," *Vickie Aikema*. I think the Busy Beavers will enjoy them! You'll have no problem keeping busy during the holidays, I guess, Vickie. Bye for now.

Hello, *Joanne Jans*. It was good to hear from you again. Thank you for the puzzle. Enjoy the holidays, Joanne. Write again soon!

Answers:

Friends of the Lord Jesus. 1. Peter, James and John 2. Mary 3. Lazarus 4. Martha 5. Nicodemus 6. Joseph of Arimathea 7. John the Baptist 8. Zaccheus 9. Mary Magdalene 10. Simon the leper
Riddle Fun. 1. Arkansas 2. The goat always butts in. 3. An old ten dollar bill, rather than a new one 4. Shooting stars! 5. A traffic jam 6. Because there are no female boxes. 7. They're out to launch. 8. "I'm a bit under the weather." 9. It had a window panel

Bye for now, Busy Beavers.
Hope to "see" you all next time!

Love to you all, Aunt Betty