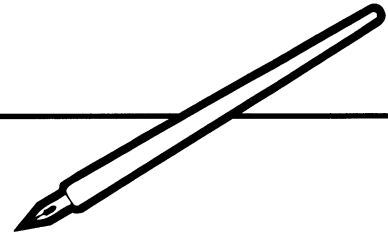




Clarion
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 41, No. 24 December 4, 1992



Are our men forcing our women into the office of elders and deacons by default?

The story begins in the consistory room somewhere in a vacant Canadian Reformed Church on a Sunday morning about twenty minutes before the service. The guest minister is early. The church bulletin is on the table. He reads it. No elder or deacon is present yet. In the bulletin the chairman of the Men's Society complains that in the past week again the meeting of the men's study society had to be cancelled because of lack of participation. Less than five members showed up in a congregation of more than three hundred and fifty members. It happens regularly. The manner in which the complaint was formulated showed the frustration of the chairman.

About five minutes later quite a number of the members of the consistory come in. Of course, they all, including the guest minister, wish each other a good (Sunday) morning in church with the blessing of the LORD. The brothers, too, start reading their Church News. One asks the attention of the others for that complaining chairman of the Men's Society. "Did you read that? Ha, ha. It is sure funny, the way he writes!" The remark is answered with the smiles and grinning of the other officebearers. Even though there may be concern in the heart, no one shows this. No one makes the remark that we have to do here with a serious situation. No, all the attention is focused on the manner in which the complaint is brought forward. And with this the matter is forgotten again. The brothers speak about something else. They discussed the fact that it had rained much during the past week. This was not nice for one of the brothers who just made a holiday trip.

Now it happened that in about five months a general synod was going to be held. This gives the guest minister the opportunity to make a remark about the forthcoming synod and to add the question: "Brothers, are you going to the General Synod with a special proposal?" A bit amazed about this unexpected question, the brothers respond with a negative answer. They wonder why this strange question is asked. The guest minister continues, "Oh, I thought that you request synod to open the offices of elders and deacons for the women in the churches." How in the world could that minister think this? The brothers are convinced of their staunchly Reformed stand! They would never do a silly thing like that! What is suddenly wrong with that minister? They do not get it. The minister helps them. He reminds the brothers of what they had just read with regard to the cancelled Men's Society meeting and says: "Don't you think that soon

our churches will have no men anymore who are able and willing to serve in the office of elder or deacon? If there is no interest in the study of God's Word and the confession of the church with the men in the congregation, and if they do not make the time for it, how can they be willing to make time for the work of elder or deacon? How will they be knowledgeable enough to do this work of an officebearer in the church?"

Why do I write this partly fictional story in our magazine? The reason is that this story came back to my mind a number of times during the last two months in connection with reading and hearing about cancelled Men's Society meetings. It still seems to be a recurring phenomenon. Is it more and more a common picture that the Women's Societies flourish; that our sisters study the Word of the LORD, the confession of the church and, perhaps, even the Church Order, while the men stay home (and watch television)?

Sure, one can bring in the explaining excuse that the women are mostly home and like to go out for an evening, while the men are working hard during the day and need some relaxation in the evening and do not like to go out again. But is this excuse a valid one before the face of God? When we stand before His throne and have to give account with regard to our life and our church membership, our being part of the communion of *saints*, will God say to us, men: "This is sure a valid excuse?" We know better.

Is it really such a strange question: Will the churches have men who are willing and capable to serve in one of the offices? If the men are unwilling to study, to make the time for it, in the communion of the congregation of Christ, will they be willing to accept a heavy, time consuming office in the church? And imagine that they are still willing for some reason, will they be knowledgeable? If one hardly or never studies God's Word and the confession, and the Church Order, as well as other matters that pertain to church life, one can have his own opinion about several matters, but are those opinions based on Scripture and confession? Are those opinions in accordance with the agreements set down in the Church Order? Or are they just personal opinions with no other basis than one's personal view, perhaps picked up somewhere outside the church?

How will one be able to test the sermons of the minister on their confessional and biblical contents? How can one lead the congregation when making family visits? How can one distinguish between what is Reformed and what is Roman

catholic or Lutheran or Baptist or general evangelical? It is very easy to lose sight of the differences, also between broadly Reformed in a modern general way and Reformed in the line of Calvin, the Secession, the "Doleantie," and the Liberation. It is very easy to go in a broad evangelical direction.

The older generation has to share its knowledge and insight with the younger generation. The younger generation has to be willing to learn what is Reformed biblical thinking from the older ones and work hard on it. All this must be done for the sake of the church of Christ Jesus who bought His church for the price of His precious blood, at the cross. If there is no willingness, here, no zeal for the Lord and for His church, no overcoming a selfish attitude of taking things easy with the faith, there can still remain some mysti-

cal emotion and feeling, some adherence to religious customs, but the power of a true living faith is gone. The faith is starving because it takes so little food. It is dying. And in our modern secular society a dying, powerless faith and a dying, powerless church do not last much more than just one generation or, maybe, two. Then the church will have become a secular religious club, if it is still there, as far as the men are concerned. What about the daughters of such fathers? Do we, men, with our attitude, force the sisters in the church to take over? Or do we, as men and women, continue the fight of faith together? It demands effort. It demands prayer. It demands the work of the Holy Spirit. Do we pray and work?



The Union of 1892 Today – Third Report

By J. Geertsema

Here follows the report of the third meeting organized by the Burlington Reformed Study Centre in commemoration of the Union of 1892. The aim of this commemoration was to ask ourselves in our present North-American situation as different Reformed church groups what we can learn from and do with the Union of 1892. The theme of the three public meetings was "Reformed Identity and Ecumenicity." The topic of this third meeting was "Ex-Christian Reformed and Canadian Reformed Churches – What should be done?" The two main speakers were Dr. C.P. Venema, Associate Professor of Doctrinal Studies at Mid-America Reformed Seminary and Dr. J. Faber, Emeritus Professor of Dogmatology of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton. The panel for the discussion after the speeches included Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff, teacher at the Guido de Brès High School and Dr. B.R. Short, minister of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church at Cambridge, Ontario.

Dr. C.P. Venema

Dr. Venema began with voicing his appreciation for the effort of the Burlington Reformed Study Centre to bring the different Reformed Churches closer together. He sees it as "our sacred duty before the Lord ... to give

concrete, visible expression to the fact that we are brothers who belong to the same house, but who have been separated and isolated from one another for too long." Dr. Venema ordered his speech "under three, distinct headings": he gave first "a characterization of the former Christian Reformed Churches"; then he presented "a description of the unity that we are obliged to seek"; while much attention was devoted to the question of the evening, "What should be done?"

The fact that individual members, families, and congregations have separated themselves from the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) (from February 1991 to February 1992 a total of approximately twenty-seven hundred members) shows evidence of decline and deformation in this church. This presents a new situation to the Canadian (and American) Reformed Churches (CanRCs). Before, during the sixties, the attention was focused on the CRC's failure "to render a judgment concerning the 'Reformation' in 1944 in the Netherlands and the liberal influences of the GKN (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) upon the CRC." The ex-CRC have implicitly recognized the warning of the CanRCs against the deforming influence of the GKN in its increasing liberalism and its "synodicalism." Among the formerly CRC congregations one

can distinguish between three groups, the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches (OCRC), the Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC), and the Canadian Alliance of Reformed Churches (CARC). Dr. Venema made a few remarks about each of them.

The OCRC adopted a "Declaration of Separation and Return," and a revised form of the Church Order of Dort based on the Church Order as in force in the CRC still in 1956, as well as a clear subscription to the Three Forms of Unity. By doing so "these churches have formed a federation with its own character and history," which claims "to be a communion of churches which are 'in the historic line' of the faith and practice of the Christian Reformed Church." For the relation with the CanRC this means, on the one hand, "a fundamental unity of confession between the two federations." On the other hand, the two federations have a different history and emphasis in relation to the CRC, and "the *existence of the OCRC as a federation reflects something of a negative judgment on the desirability and prospects for unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches*" (italics from the speaker).

The ARC is not a federation of churches but "a loosely organized fellowship of churches" of which some are still part of the CRC while others

have seceded from it. The churches in this alliance want “to give testimony to the truth of the Word of God as it is set forth in the historic Reformed Creeds ... and to assist member churches in promoting ecclesiastical unity and biblical obedience among the people of God.” In 1991 the ARC “agreed to sponsor the Confessional Conference” which seeks to address “four key points of doctrine (hermeneutical principles, egalitarianism, evolutionism, and ecclesiology).” Those sponsoring this Conference also “aim to forge a realignment of confessional Reformed and Presbyterian churches in North America in a new federation.”

The CARC is a sub-group of churches within the ARC which are all independent and seek to help each other and cooperate together. “Thus far, this Alliance has rejected the idea that it should become an alternative or replacement for the ARC or the beginnings of a new Reformed denomination.” For this reason “prospects for fruitful contact” with the CanRC appear greater.

The second question was about the obligation or responsibility of these Reformed churches to seek unity. The calling “to give *concrete, visible* expression to this unity” is clearly required by the Word of God (John 17, Eph. 4). Dr. Venema stated (with emphasis): “*My thesis is that, if these churches are united in their submission to the Word of God, in their subscription to the ‘Three Forms of Unity,’ and in their willingness to honor a Church Order adopted by common consent, then they should be united in a single federation of Reformed churches.* Anything less than this would amount to sinful departure in our practice from the requirements of the Word of God and our confession of the ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.’”

“The unity of the church ... is always a unity born out of mutual submission to the one Word of God as this is expressed in terms of a common confession.” It is only on this basis that “any possible federation between former Christian Reformed and Canadian Reformed churches may be realized. ... Any other basis for unity among our churches would only be pretense and a denial of our confession concerning the church.”

A second “indispensable and necessary requirement for unity among the churches” is the adoption and sharing of a common Reformed “Church Order, spelling out the fundamental principles



The unification of 1892 was a remarkable event

of the government of the churches, the authority and relations between the churches and church assemblies, the task and activities of the churches, and the admonition and discipline of the churches.” This Church Order must be based on the Word of God and the Reformed Confession.

Now it is possible that churches which are “united in confession and in the fundamental principles of church government, can refrain from joining together in a federation ... (because of) national, lingual, or other cultural hindrances.” However, “differences which are *largely based upon long-standing prejudices, differences of theological emphasis, or unresolved ‘sins of the past,’* should not be regarded as unsurmountable obstacles to unity.” Speaker saw, therefore, no unsurmountable obstacles for unity between the former CRCs and the CanRCs.

Dealing with the third point, “What should be done?” Dr. Venema gave the following recommendations: “*Cultivate a spirit of humility, patience, and mutual forgiveness.*” This first recommendation is foundational for the others, since “‘patience,’ ‘gentleness,’ ‘self-control’

(Gal. 5:22-23) are ‘fruit of the Spirit.’” These points were worked out briefly. The second recommendation was... “*Pursue several forms of ‘inter-church contacts.’*” Such contacts are needed to take away “our lack of understanding each other” as consequence of our isolation from each other, our separate histories, and our prejudices caused by “historical incidents and anecdotal stories.” Unofficial meetings like the present one can be very helpful in this respect. However, there is also a need for “more official avenues of contact between the churches ... at the local level, between officebearers..., between congregations, ...and at the level of church assemblies (eventually leading to pulpit exchanges) and alliances.”

The third recommendation was: “*Distinguish clearly between ‘confessional’ and ‘extra-confessional’ or theological matters.*” Dr. Venema pointed here to what happened in 1924 in the CRC and what was done in 1944 in the synodical GKN. “We must be unconditionally bound to the authority of Christ, speaking through the Holy Scriptures. We must also be thoroughly united in our sub-

scription to the confessions,...But we must remain *free from any abuse of ecclesiastical authority in which consciences are unlawfully bound beyond the confessions!*

The fourth recommendation was the *"Mutual adoption of a common Church Order."* Even though our Church Orders have the same root, we have grown apart in the practice of our church life. We have different translations of the confessions, different Bible translations, different Psalter-hymnals. Another point is a different view on the matters which should and should not be regulated in a Church Order. According to Dr. Venema, we should have a Church Order based on the one of Dort but less prescriptive in certain areas.

The fifth recommendation of Dr. Venema was that the CanRCs would accept their *"particular responsibility."* We should be willing *"to take the initiative in pursuing further contacts with former Christian Reformed churches."* The first reason is: With the former CRCs there is still *"a great deal of confusion, even weakness and uncertainty,"* while the CanRCs are *"in a much more stable position from which to initiate ecumenical contacts."* The second reason is that *"the general consensus among these (former CRC) churches is that the Canadian Reformed churches are not open to contact and eventual federation with them...."*

The sixth recommendation stated that *"New federations/denominations should not be formed prematurely."* One way to prevent this from happening would be intensive contact. This leads to the seventh recommendation: *"Mutual recognition of local churches."* Dr. Venema suggested: *"Local church councils...must establish forms of contact that will lead to mutual recognition."* The integration of local congregations of Secession and *"Doleantie"* (A and B) did not always take place smoothly after the Union in 1892. Immediate merger would not be wise nor required by Scripture. A last recommendation had to do with the name. Both church groups should be willing to give up their present name. He suggested as *"a new name: 'The Reformed Churches of North America.'"*

In conclusion Dr. Venema said that he was convinced that *"we simply do not have the choice to refuse the requirements of God's Word and our Confessions. And so let us resolve to work to give greater expression to our*

unity together in the faith. May the Lord have mercy upon us and grant us His blessing."

Dr. J. Faber

Dr. Faber began his address with saying that the question of the evening, *"What should be done?,"* emphasizes our human responsibility. With such an emphasis *"we should remind ourselves of God's sovereignty. (For) it is good Reformed to speak of human responsibility in the light of God's sovereignty."* The unity of which we are speaking is a unity of faith, which is not our own doing but a gift of God (Eph. 2:8, 4:3-6). It is true also on this point that it is not by human power but by God's Spirit (Zech. 4:6, cf. Ps. 127). We do not establish the unity of the Spirit. *"The church of God is not a man-made construction."* However, this sovereign work of God brings along our human responsibility. *"There is no contrast between the invisible unity of the Spirit and the visible manifestation thereof."* Christ's prayer that His disciples be one (John 17) *"evokes our calling."* The test of our willingness to have this unity is our prayer. *Is this unity important for us? Do we pray for it?*

But *"pray and work."* *"What steps should be taken?"* The first step is that

"we should learn to know and to acknowledge one another as Reformed churches. Reformed churches are recognized by their creeds and confessions and by their Church Order." In this regard Dr. Faber stated also that *"we need a good historical consciousness."* We share not only the creeds and the confessions and the Reformed Church Order, but also the same reformational background of the sixteenth century and of the Secession (1834), the *"Doleantie"* (1886) and the Union between the two (1892) in the nineteenth century. In the light of this history we are very close.

In the light of such a historical consciousness, Dr. Faber suggested that the former Christian Reformed churches call themselves simply independent Christian Reformed Churches, showing with that to hold on the good they had in their past by liberating themselves from the wrongs in the present CRC. Then there remains, for instance, a clear view on the value of a church federation. The fact that we do not read in the New Testament about a federation as the Reformed Churches have adopted it should not be the end of the discussion. The New Testament does also not expressly speak about infant baptism. But the Reformed churches



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know about the unity of the Scriptures and the biblical principles. Therefore, we acknowledge “the federations of Reformed churches ...as historically determined and nevertheless as based in Scripture.” Dr. Faber stressed that the Reformed Church Order of Dort “comes forth from and is subservient to the unity of faith.” We should avoid both hierarchy and independency; not only synodo-cracy (the lording it of synods over the churches) but also domino-cracy or consistorio-cracy (the lording it of a minister or of a consistory over the church).

In this context of historical consciousness Dr. Faber advised the independent CRCs “to come together in provisional classes and a provisional synod and to reorganize their church life according to the principles of Reformed church polity as they had them. “This will preserve their internal unity,...underline their claim of remaining what they were, ... strengthen their appeal to those ... still under the CRC hierarchy, and it will help to bring about unity with the CanRCs.

In this same context of historical consciousness, Dr. Faber spoke against the development of the Alliance in its Confessional Conference, seeking to unite a number of Reformed and Presbyterian church groups. Dr. Faber finds this “aiming for a bridge too far,” at this time. For the present time Reformed churches with the Reformed standards should seek unity.

“For a good balance,” Dr. Faber reminded the Canadian Reformed in the audience of the principal of the Liberation to reject a “supra-scriptural binding.” We were against a binding to the doctrines of Kuyper. We must also not bind to the teachings of Schilder. As in the Union of 1892, we must bind each other only to God’s Word and the Three Forms of Unity, and together adopt a Reformed Church Order. Not less and not more.

Dr. Faber hastened to add “that historical consciousness makes us also aware of the fact that the reformational movement in the Netherlands during the thirties mostly bypassed the Christian Reformed Churches.” Aspects of this movement are strict exegesis of the Scriptures according to the original languages, redemptive-historical preaching, attention for God’s covenant, the church, the cultural mandate, awareness and rejection of the influence of false philosophy on dogmatic formulations and

aversion against subjectivism. It should be possible to share these things with each other, while “the Canadian Reformed people should be also open for enrichment and correction from the side of ex-CRC brothers and sisters.”

As for the question what concrete steps could be taken, Dr. Faber said that conferences and alliances can be helpful, but that “merger of congregations and federations can only take place in an ecclesiastical manner.” On a local level, congregations (in congregational meetings) and consistories should be involved. And joined meetings of study societies could take place, in which the riches of God’s Self-revelation as the triune God and His work in creation, redemption and sanctification could be studied. Besides, as Burlington-West proposed to the Classis churches, and they to the General Synod, synodical deputies should be appointed. (Synod Lincoln decided to do so!).

For unity Dr. Faber distinguished between matters of primary and of secondary importance. It is clear that matters of primary importance are “unity of faith, based on the Word of God, expressed in our common creeds and confessions, and maintained in accordance to our common Church Order.” Matters of secondary importance are first of all the name. Then, Dr. Faber suggested that two sister church federations could be formed, one in the United States and one in Canada, the former with Mid-America Reformed Seminary

and the latter with the Theological College in Hamilton. As for the liturgy, Dr. Faber pleaded for maintaining the Psalms and Hymns as adopted in the CanRC, while allowing for a transition period in which the “congregations continue in their liturgical customs.” As for the text of the creeds, he would not object that we go together back to the old Psalter Hymnal.

In conclusion, “Harmony of mind should lead to harmony of mouth....Our unity serves God’s glory.”

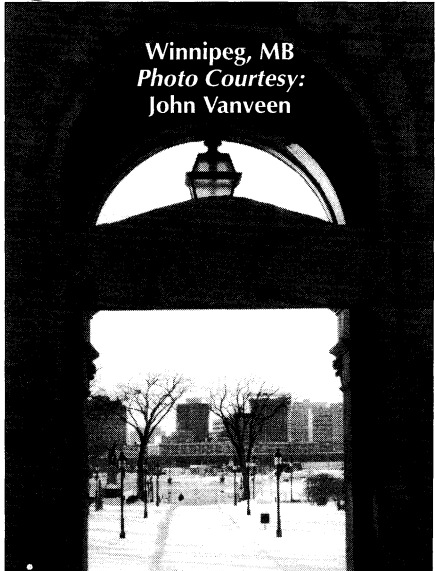
The panel

Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff, in her reaction, said that she virtually agreed with both speakers. She worked this out, stressing that we should show each other true love and recognition, and should help and support each other.

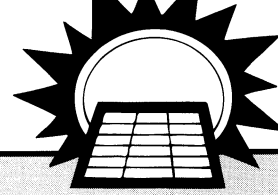
Dr. B.R. Short spoke a word of caution. For him the view of Dr. A. Kuyper on baptism was a heresy. A union should not be made on a shallow, formal basis. Before we talk union, we must talk theology. We should not just say that we have the same confession, it should become evident that we truly confess the same. As example he mentions the union, some years ago, between the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and the Presbyterian Church Evangelical Synod to which he belonged. The latter, smaller church group was taken up in the former larger group, because they had the same confessional standards and basically the same form of government. However, when the joining and union had become a fact, many were of the opinion that they had done the wrong thing. There was not really oneness in confession on many a point. In his response Dr. Venema did not think that truly confessional differences are separating Canadian Reformed and former Christian Reformed people. This view was shared by the other members of the panel and showed also in the answers given to the questions. Dr. Faber concluded with saying that we can wish that we could bring about more unity, but we cannot do this on our own. God has to give it. May He do so.

Tapes of these three evenings are available from Audio Craft Productions, 1232 Thorpe Road, Burlington, ON L5S 2B2. These addresses will also be published in booklet form. It will include many questions that were asked and the answers. Further information will follow.

OUR COVER



Winnipeg, MB
Photo Courtesy:
John Vanveen



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen *And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as at this day.*

Deuteronomy 6:24

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Every Sunday morning in church, the minister reads the Ten Commandments. We have heard them so often, that most of us know them by heart. It is good to hear God's commandments every week again; it is also good to know them, because God's holy law is the law of life.

There are more laws in our lives. There are rules or laws that we have to keep at home, or at work, or when we travel on the roads. The rules on the road are very important. If they were not there, it would be a big mess on the highways. The traffic rules are there to help us. Travelling is safer and faster because of the rules. Nobody can drive a car unless he or she first learns the rules.

That is how it is with God's laws as well. They are there to help and protect us. When we hear them on Sundays, we are reminded that the Lord is our God. He tells us that He is the one and only God, who made the heaven and the earth and all that is in and on it. And then God tells us what we have to do in order to live our lives for Him. Nobody can live as God's child unless he or she knows His laws.

When some people talk about the Ten Commandments, they say that they are old-fashioned; they were given to the Israelites, but now we don't need them anymore. Other people think that it is a heavy burden, that law. They think that life would be much more fun if we could forget about the Ten Commandments. But all those people are mistaken.

God gave the Ten Commandments to the Israelites after He had freed them out of Egypt. From Mount Sinai they heard the God of the covenant speak to them. He promised them to be their God. As long as the Israelites would keep His commandments, they would be free from their enemies. It is still the same with us. Like the Israelites, we have been freed as well. Our Lord Jesus died for our sins, and so freed us from Satan's slavery. The devil does not control us anymore to do his will. God in Christ through His Spirit renews us so that we begin to do His will.

Every Sunday God comes to us and says, listen to my law of the covenant. Jesus Christ paid for your sins, and so you are no slaves of Satan anymore. My law is for your good, to keep you free.

Wherever God's law is obeyed, God is present with His blessing. The result of disobeying God's law is lying, stealing, killing, and other terrible things. Those people who refuse to accept Jesus as their Saviour, and who do not accept God's commandments are still living in slavery to Satan.

We all are tempted by Satan to disobey God's commandments. That is why they have to be read to us every week, so that we are reminded of our freedom. We are freed from Satan, and free to serve God and love our neighbour.

When we keep God's commandments we show that we are different, a special people, God's covenant people. When we listen to the commandments we are also reminded of our sins, because we often sin against those commandments. Yet we may know that Christ Jesus paid for our sins. And so we may pray that God works faith into our hearts through His Holy Spirit. At the same time we will thank the Lord that He has given us His covenant law so that we are reminded every week of His love and faithfulness to us.

*The fear of God is clean;
A fountain most serene
It will forever be.
His ordinances, too,
Are righteous and are true,
For everyone to see,
To be desired far more
Than gold, much fine gold, or
What can be bought for money.
They are far sweeter than
Whatever sweetness man
Receives from combs with honey.*

Psalm 19:4

There are no birthdays in the month of December.

Daniel Stroop's mother wants to thank everyone who sent a birthday card to Daniel. He keeps them all in a scrapbook, and enjoys looking at them over and over again.

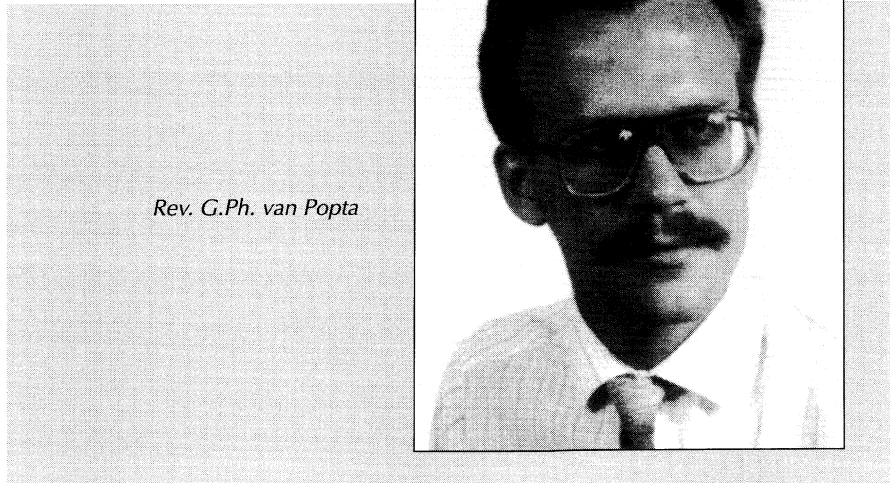
Until next month,

*Mrs. R. Ravensbergen
7462 Hwy 20, RR 1
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0*

Installation of Rev. G. Ph. van Popta

On July 5, 1992 the young congregation at Taber, Alberta could rejoice in the installation of its first minister of the Word, the Rev. G. Ph. van Popta. Rev. J.D. Wielenga conducted the morning service, and had as text 1 Timothy 1; 12-20. In the sermon, Rev. Wielenga explained that our new minister will proclaim to us the same Word Timothy was to proclaim in Ephesus, a gospel worthy of believing, defending and fighting for. The sound preaching of the Word does not break up, but rather builds up the congregation. The text was explained under three points: Paul encourages Timothy to his task by claiming the trustworthiness of God's Word in:

1. The Confirmation of that Word in Paul's conversion.
 2. The Preservation of that Word in Timothy's Ministry
 3. The Defamation of that Word in Hymanaeus and Alexander's Apostasy.
- Jesus was sent into the world by the God described in verse 17 – The King of the Ages, who alone is worthy of all trust and obedience. Jesus entered "enemy territory" when He came into this world, to save sinners from their enmity to God, and from their eternal doom. He came to overcome evil for them, and to change sinners from enemies of the Eternal God to His children instead of evildoers servants of the immortal, invisible, only God, the King of the Ages. That is the glorious gospel entrusted to Paul! Paul is evidence of the trustworthiness of that great gospel. He describes how he was determined to kill every Christian – man, woman and child. He was the organizer of the great Christian Holocaust, and states that no sinner is greater than he. He accepts full responsibility for what he was. Paul brings that past up in this chapter to impress on Timothy the mercy of God,



for that is what Timothy must impress on the people – the incredible grace of God. Instead of the worst punishment God could mete out for his terrible actions, Paul had received mercy and forgiveness, and not just a low place in the back of the church, but at the front – in the pulpit, even apostleship. We were exhorted to remember that to those whom the Lord shows mercy, he give glorious gifts of overflowing grace, faith and love and power for the work in His service. Rev. Wielenga explained that there were two reasons for the mercy shown to Paul:

1. That he had acted out of ignorance, and blindness, and this left room for mercy. When he knew his sin, he had not hardened himself, but by the grace of God, repented.
2. The mercy shown to Paul, the worst of sinners, Jesus displayed His perfect patience. The miraculous conversion of Paul, and his preaching of the gospel is an example to us of the grace of God. Preachers may

look at Paul and know that they are never too unworthy or too sinful to receive mercy and grace, and they may also proclaim the great comfort to the flock.

Paul reminds Timothy that God has called him to the glorious work of the gospel. He commits this charge to Timothy accordance with the "prophetic utterances" which had pointed to Timothy. The Lord had inspired prophets/prophetesses in his home church of Lystra to realize that the Lord needed Timothy for the gathering of His church. The Lord made it clear through these "prophetic utterances" that He Himself appointed Timothy to the glorious service of the gospel. Also today, God calls ministers, elders and deacons to their office in the church. God still uses the congregation to appoint men he chooses to their offices through the processes of nomination and voting. Officebearers are not accountable to the congregation, but to the Lord who has appointed them. The ministry in the

church is not for the timid, but is in the front lines – the battlefield, but knowing that he is called by the Lord, the minister can be bold, despite opposition, resistance or unpopularity.

Paul instructs Timothy that the “good warfare” must be waged by holding on to faith and a good conscience. Faith is a life close to the Lord and a good conscience is a walk of life in accordance with faith. Holding on is a matter of perseverance, and he must be of irreproachable conduct. Paul uses the examples of Hymanaeus and Alexander, who made shipwreck of their faith by silencing their good conscience. By using their names, Paul makes it clear that they have nothing to do with Christ, but everything to do with the enemy, and for the sake of the church, everyone must be able to identify them as such. Then, no one will be able to slander the church because of these two men, who are not Christians at all. The whole purpose of Paul’s letter to Timothy is that we might know how to behave in the church, which is the house of the living God. God wants the world to see that indeed, Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and that the Word is indeed sure. Therefore, a good conscience and irreproachable behaviour is necessary in the minister and the congregation, that the glorious gospel not be slandered. We were instructed finally to pray much for ourselves, each other, and our leaders in the good warfare.

After the service, Rev. Wielenga extended congratulations on behalf of Classis Alberta-Manitoba. Letters of congratulation received by the consistory were read, and Br. J. DeHaas of Edmonton Providence spoke. Chairman of the consistory Br. J. Bareman expressed appreciation to Rev. Wielenga for his help and support as counselor since the institution of the church at Taber in January 1991.

In the afternoon, Rev. van Popta had the joyful task of administering the sacrament of baptism to two children of the covenant before delivering the sermon. He chose as text 2 Timothy 2:19. He preached on three points; God’s firm foundation which stands:

1. This foundation has solidity.
 2. This foundation gives security.
 3. This foundation demands of us purity.
- The firm foundation Paul writes about is pure doctrine; the true preaching of the good news of Jesus Christ. This preaching calls upon us to live in obedience to Jesus Christ. Paul stresses in many ways

in this letter that Timothy must remain on the firm foundation, and build on it. He warns Timothy of men such as Hymanaeus and Philetus, who believed that the resurrection was only spiritual. The resurrection of the BODY is a cornerstone of the Christian doctrine, and the teaching of these two men was like gangrene – destructive. Rev. van Popta explained that false teaching in the church spreads like gangrene, no matter which point of doctrine is denied. Before long, any falsehood spreads from the pulpit into the lives of people.

But, as we read in the text, God’s firm foundation stands. The first inscription on the foundation, “The Lord knows those who are His,” gives us security. We read of this certainty in the story of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram which we read in Numbers 16. The Lord has always known those who are His. We are reminded of that fact weekly in the preaching of the Word, and it is a comfort to us. The coming of a minister to the congregation is to confirm us ever more solidly in the firm foundation of the true Christian faith.

The second inscription on the foundation demands of us purity. “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.” 2 Timothy 2:19b. Verse 27 of Numbers 16 describes how the congregation fled in terror in the face of the judgment upon Korah, Dathan and Abiram. The FINAL judgment of the living God is coming, and to be ready for it demands that we live holy, pure lives. We must show by our lives that our confession is true – it is not empty. The faithful preaching of the Word encourages us to that holy living. Rev. van Popta expressed the wish that by the grace of God he may proclaim the gospel faithfully, and that as

congregation we may receive it, and reminded us that God’s firm foundation, upon which we stand, will remain long after all else is gone.

It was a Sunday of special joy for the congregation of Taber. We are very thankful that our heavenly Father has granted to us a shepherd and teacher. May He continue to gather His people through the work of Rev. van Popta in this congregation, and wherever His Word is faithfully proclaimed.

Welcome evening for the van Popta family

A very enjoyable welcome evening was held on Monday, July 6 for Rev. van Popta and his family at the Parkside Manor, the building which the Taber congregation rents for worship services.

The evening was opened with the singing of Hymn 60:1 and 5, after which Brother John Bareman read Psalm 145 and led in prayer.

The master of ceremonies for the evening was Br. John Tams, who introduced the family officially, giving the details of their family history including their education, wedding date, births of the children etc.

The van Popta family was welcomed by the younger children of the congregation in song. The Boys and Girls club presented a “Welcome Wagon” of the many food products grown and processed in the Taber area. Each item was described with a short poem. Mrs. C. Bareman spoke words of welcome on behalf of the Women’s Society, after which two members of the society took the van Popta family on a “Hot Air Balloon” ride, describing where each family of the congregation lives and works.

Mr. M. Bareman spoke on behalf of the Men’s Society. We then enjoyed the “Men’s Choir” singing Psalm 93 and “How Great Thou Art.” They were accompanied by Mr. C. Hoogerdijk on the organ and Mr. D. Daniels on the trumpet. These brothers also played other beautiful organ and trumpet duets throughout the evening.

After the program, Rev. van Popta expressed thanks on behalf of the family for the welcome they had received, both in this evening, and in offers of help and hospitality since their arrival a week earlier. The memorable evening ended with a time of “gezelligheid” and refreshments.

A. Veenstra



WITHDRAWN from the Ministry of the Word of God in the Canadian Reformed Churches

M.K. Marren
of Smithers, BC

Ordination and Installation

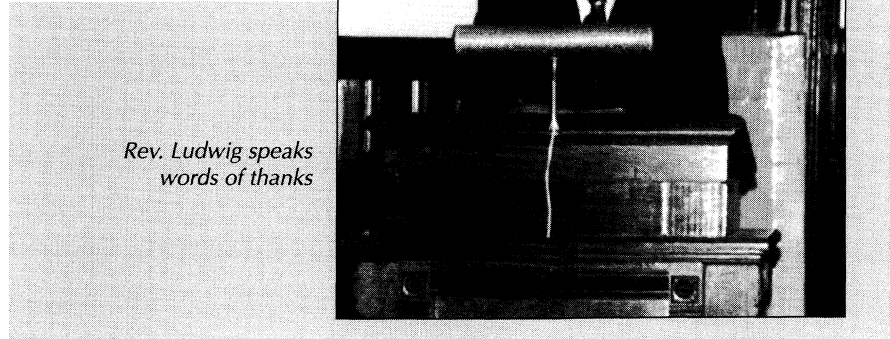
Rev. J.E. Ludwig

It was a beautiful autumn day, October 4, 1992, when the London congregation gathered in the Calvary United Church building. The occasion was the ordination of J.E. Ludwig, after a vacancy of four and a half years. The congregation was joined by many guests, expanding its numbers to well over 400 worshippers.

The ordination/installation service was led by Rev. Cl. Stam of Hamilton. The Scripture reading for the service was Colossians 1:21 - 2:10. The text was Colossians 1:28, 29. Rev. Stam proclaimed the Word of God under the theme, "The apostolic testimony of the beauty of the ministry." The three points were:

1. Comforting core of the ministry
2. Prime purpose of the ministry
3. Bearable burden of the ministry.

Paul teaches that the central pre-eminence of Christ is challenged when the Christians of the early church believed a mixture of philosophies along with the gospel. Paul emphasizes that Christ made peace through His sacrifice on the cross. Christ is the core of every sermon, the point of every pastoral visit, and the centre of all catechism lessons. Rev. Ludwig must also proclaim Him only, and build the church on the foundation of Jesus Christ. The prime purpose of the ministry is to bring the believers mature in Christ. The minister must warn and admonish every man that he is not exempt, he needs Christ as his Saviour. He must show how everyone is to live in the covenant, so that Christ is glorified in our lives. The work of the ministry is meant to bring the hearers to spiritual maturity in Christ, with the promise of perfection and glory. The task of the minister is described as splitting rocks with an axe, very draining and agonizing work. It is very burdensome for a young man to be held accountable for the believers. The officebearers must assist in the carrying



Rev. Ludwig speaks words of thanks

of this burden. Christ knows what it is to be afflicted with the agonizing the minister experiences for the peace of his people. Christ gives the strength to perform impossible tasks in His name. The congregation is urged to do their best to receive the Word and to cooperate with the officebearers. The work of the ministry is bearable, and can be done with joy in Christ.

The form for ordination and installation was then read, and after Mr. J.E. Ludwig answered in the affirmative, the officebearers and visiting ministers were invited to come forward for the laying on of hands. The congregation prayed for and with the new minister.

After the service was concluded, opportunity was given to congratulate the congregation of London and their new minister. Rev. D. Moes spoke for the region of Classis Ontario South and the neighbouring church of Watford. He spoke words of encouragement and congratulations. Brother John Koster spoke on behalf of the congregation of Chatham, Brother D. VanAmerongen for Lincoln, and also as a relative of Rev. Ludwig, on behalf of the family, Brother K. Jager for Smithville, and Brother W. Smouter on behalf of Ancaster. Letters of congratulations were read from the consistory of Attercliffe, the Theological College, Tri-County Church of Laurel,

MD, our former pastor, Rev. J. Moesker, a former member Miss G. A. deHaan from Holland, and finally our guest minister in 1991, Rev. and Mrs. W. Boessenkool from South Africa.

The inaugural service was conducted later that day by the newly ordained Rev. Ludwig. The Scripture reading was Isaiah 8:1-9:1, and the text was the verses 16-18. The theme of the sermon was: Despite His coming judgment over Judah, the Lord preserves a faithful remnant through the preaching of His servant Isaiah. This was developed by three points:

1. the content of this preaching – revealed by God
2. the fruit of this preaching – worked by God
3. the purpose of this preaching – decreed by God.

The historical situation of the time of Isaiah was pictured, as a nation no longer preoccupied with the service of the Lord, but preoccupied with the political and military pressures of the day. The Lord sent word by His prophet Isaiah not to be alarmed at the posturing of the anti-Judah forces, and underscored this message with the birth and naming of Isaiah's sons. He keeps a faithful remnant of disciples to which the prophet proclaims the Word of God, revealed by God. Therefore the content of this

preaching is the revealed testimony, sealed from the unbelieving, and sealed to the believing. Isaiah's preaching was not only judgment, but also salvation. He pointed to the coming Messiah, the bringer of the gospel of salvation. A minister today has the same mandate; to proclaim the immeasurable riches of God's grace in the redemption secured by Christ Jesus. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. The congregation does not only sit back and receive the preaching, but also has a responsibility. We must pray for the minister, listen attentively, use the sacraments and be strengthened. Today we live in the reality of Isaiah's hope. The prophets two sons were indeed signs of God's judgment and grace. But the text also speaks here of spiritual sons, the family of God through Christ. Being a child in the Spirit is not a matter of flesh and blood, but a matter of the Spirit and of office. Christ was not ashamed to call us brothers. That is God's purpose; to enjoy eternal life with the children He has giv-

en His Son, those washed in His blood and sanctified by His Spirit. Let us be part of that multitude, clothed in white, standing before the throne and let us hear Him say, "Here I am, and the children Thou has given me!"

Welcome evening

The following evening, Monday, October 5th, the congregation gathered together to officially welcome their new minister and family to London. Although the Ludwigs were a little late, due to a wrong turn in the unfamiliar city, the evening got underway promptly at 7:30!

Brother J. Schouten, chairman of the consistory opened the evening by reading Psalm 146, and these words were sung in the rhymed version. He spoke words of welcome and expressed the congregation's joy and thankfulness, that our prayers for a pastor and teacher had been heard and answered by the Lord.

The children of Covenant Christian School sang several selections, also a

specially composed song for this evening to welcome the pastoral family.

On behalf of the Bible Study Society Brother W. McConnell encouraged the ministerial couple to embarrass themselves by matching husbands and wives. We noticed that Mrs. Ludwig was more adept at matching than her husband.

The eldest member, Brother C. Lindhout spoke welcoming words on behalf of the seniors of the congregation.

Sister M. Meinen recited a poem of welcome she wrote for the occasion.

A selected group of young people sang a lovely version of J. Pachelbel's "Canon of Praise."

The Men's Society was represented by Brother P. Engbers, who presented the Ludwig family with a much needed(!) set of maps showing the way around London, with church members residences pinpointed.

The choir "Deo Cantamus," under the capable direction of Sister M. Vandebos, presented several selections.

The Women's Society was represented by Sister T. Heyink, who pointed out that the majority of the congregation is connected together through Mr. C. Lindhout. Even the Ludwig family was not left out, for several connections could also be found to Rev. Ludwig. An award was presented to Mr. Lindhout in honour of his position of "Father of Us All."

Finally, Brother Engbers, on behalf of the consistory presented the ministerial couple with an unexpected token of esteem on behalf of the congregation, with the wish that this token would help fill some of the empty rooms in the spacious manse.

In closing, Rev. Ludwig spoke humorous words of appreciation, also on behalf of his wife, to all who helped them during the time of transition from Hamilton to London, from student to minister. He led in closing prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

The evening was tremendously enjoyed by all present, with much praise also by the singing of psalms and hymns. It was several hours later, after a social in the downstairs meeting room, that the last members finally made their way home.

It was a joyful beginning of a time of renewal among the members of Christ's church at London. All praise to our gracious God, for in His time, He again provided us with a servant to minister to the congregation!

T. Heyink

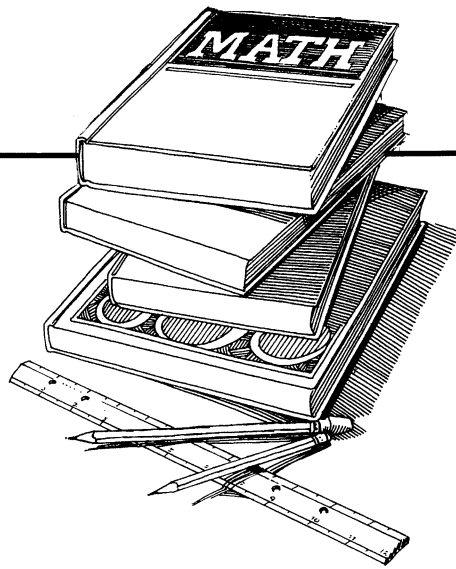


Grades 1-4 Covenant Christian School children



Choir "Deo Cantamus"

News from the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies



On September 25th, the league held its first meeting for the 1992-93 school year at Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College in Hamilton. The following are the main issues discussed that evening.

Forum on Teacher's Training

At the meeting, a proposed format and agenda was presented for the upcoming "Forum on Teacher's Training." In the orientation, three speakers would inform the participants of background information such as perspectives on teacher's training, historical development, government policies and directives and field perspectives. With this information, the participants would brainstorm various matters relating to teacher's training and League teaching requirements. The end goal would be to develop a position paper that would give the long desired feedback to the Teachers' College. In addition to delegates from all school boards, the Ontario Principals' Association and the C.R.T.A. would also be represented. A tentative date has been set for Saturday, December 5.

Curriculum assistance for Reformed education

C.A.R.E. continues to build up the new Resource library. It has received excellent response from the publishers which provide student textbook material free of charge. Although this "Central Resource Center" is at the Teachers' College, it is a League sponsored service that is available to all our schools. Mathematics '92: This past summer, C.A.R.E. organized a workshop with the aim to provide further insight into various and

varying theories and methodologies in teaching and learning mathematics. It was well attended, enthusiastically received and is being field tested in the classroom. Mathematics '92 discussions will continue during the year and will be the focus in a speech on January the 8th and at the Math workshop at the C.R.T.A. convention. Mathematics '93, a follow-up summer workshop, will focus on the discussion re "Strand or Spiral Curriculum."

Government Contact Committee (G.C.C.)

During the 1991-92 school year, this committee requested the league to develop policies in the areas of a) Funding for Private Schools, b) Bible Credits, c) School Inspection and d) Staff Development. In this way our schools, through the league would be prepared with policy statements to be used by the G.C.C. in its participation in the Forum of Independent School Societies (F.I.S.A.) and in consultation with the government. Since June 5th, the boards have had the opportunity to discuss these reports, which in turn will be discussed at subsequent league meetings.

On August 4, 1992, Mr. Justice Anderson of the Ontario Court's General Division ruled that the "rights of Christian school supporters were being violated. The Government of Ontario's policy of not funding independent religious schools infringes on the parents' freedom of religion as well as the equal treatment provision of the Charter." However, stating that also in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Section 1) there contains an escape clause for Governments: Civil Rights and Free-

doms are subject to "such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society." Therefore, in ruling against funding of independent schools, the government was not irrational, even though discriminatory. Both the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools have filed appeals to this decision and as such bring the funding issue to a higher judicial level.

The Alliance of Christian Schools is also in the process of filing a court action to stop the Ministry of Education's discriminatory policy regarding religious instruction credits.

Ontario Principals' Association

The National Principals' Conference is to be held, D.V., from November 18 to 20th in Langley, B.C. The conference program will focus on leadership functions and skills development with Drs. Messelink, as principle speaker. Other speakers are Dr. H. Van Brummelen and Dr. J. Visscher, who will address the subject of child abuse.

The Principals' Association has also discussed at length the reports on school inspection and staff development. Their input will be voiced when these reports are tabled for discussion at the next league meeting.

The league has been informed that Mr. Gelderman has resigned after many years of service as administrator for the league. We thank God that Mr. Gelderman has so willingly and co-operatively fulfilled this task to the furtherance of Reformed education and to the glory of God.

By Aunt Betty



Hello Busy Beavers,

I was really happy to get your letters.
 I love to hear how you are doing!
 I'm so proud of your hard work sending puzzles and pictures to share with the others.
 I'm really glad to hear good news about your new baby or a great school concert.
 I get excited when you tell me about your best friend or your trip somewhere.
 Keep up the good work, Busy Beavers!
 It's great to share!

Quiz Time!

BIBLE SEARCH

by Busy Beaver Sharalee Vandenbos

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

Look for all these words!

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| anew | kingdom | reap |
| believed | leper | Sabbath Sabbath |
| Bethesda | living water | salt |
| blasphemy | love love | Samaritan |
| bronze | meal | scribes |
| Cana | money changers | sea |
| Capernaum | Moses | serpent |
| cliff | mother-in-law | Spirit |
| fulfilled | Nicodemus | Sychar |
| Galilee | official | synagogue |
| God God | pallet | temple |
| heaven | paralytic | wedding |
| Jesus | peacemaker | well |
| Jews | Peter | whip |
| Jacob | poor | wine |
| | | world |

PUZZLE SQUARE

We have done these before.
 Do you remember?
 Start with the starred * letter.
 Go left, right, up or down.
 The letters in their right order
 will make a short sentence.
 Give it your best shot!

G	N	H	A
Y	I	U	V
R	Y*	O	E
T	N	U	F

MAGIC SQUARE

by Busy Beaver Jeremy Dehaan

1	2	3
2		
3		

1. relative of pig
2. first number
3. to receive

WORKING LIKE A DOG!

Do you have a dog?
 Does it bark and wag its tail to greet you after school?
 Does your dog also *work* for you?
 Can you match these working dogs with the jobs they do?

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. border collie | a. pulling dog sleds |
| 2. Siberian husky | b. guiding a blind person |
| 3. German Shepherd | c. search and rescue work |
| 4. Beagle | d. police work |
| 5. Labrador retriever | e. herding sheep |
| 6. golden retriever | f. sniffing out foods in suitcases at international airports |

P.S. Do you have a favourite book of dog stories? Would you tell the Busy Beavers about it?

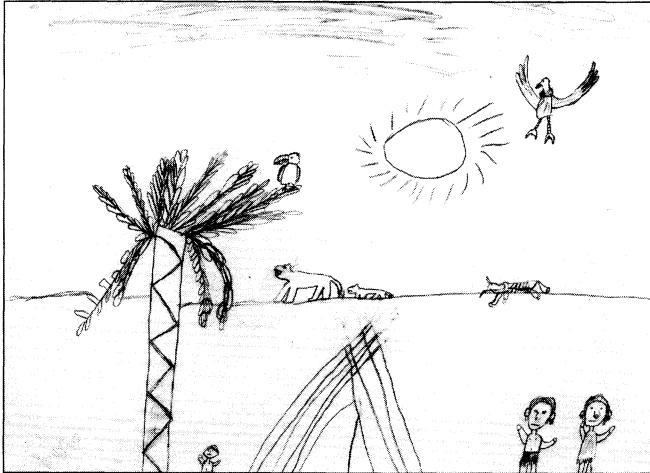
NONSENSE RHYME

by Busy Beavers Tesha and Erika Hopman

Uncle Jone
 Phoned Home
 And this is what he said
 Oh my dears, you must go to bed
 But do you know why?
 Well, neither do I!"

PICTURE OF THE SUNNY SOUTH

by Busy Beaver *Tony Van Oene*



NEW CONTEST

We Busy Beavers are great puzzlers. Do you have an interesting puzzle to share with the rest of us?

Can you make up a tricky puzzle to stump us?

Can you find a mind-boggling puzzle to share with us?

Then you are ready for our new **Quiz Contest**!!

Send in your puzzle (or puzzles!) to:

Quiz Contest
c/o Aunt Betty
Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Alyson Bosch*. We are happy to have you join us. I'm glad you like your new home. Thank you for your letter and picture. Maybe you'll share another picture with the Busy Beavers sometime, Alyson?

And a big welcome to you, too, *Bradley Bergsma*. Thank you for your letter. You're a good writer! Bye for now, Bradley.

Welcome to the Club, *Andrea Dehaas*. We hope you will really enjoy joining in all our Busy Beaver activities. How did you enjoy your class trip to Science World? Write again soon, Andrea.

Sounds to me as if you had a good time working with your Dad, *Heidi De Haan*. Sounds as if you had to do careful work! What part of the day did you like best, Heidi?

Hello, *Jeremy Dehaan*. It was nice to hear from you again. I see you like to keep busy yourself, and the other Busy Beavers, too! Thanks for the puzzle, Jeremy.

What a fun way to start school, *Lydia Penninga*! Has Samson stopped chewing on his dog house? Congratulations on winning the poetry prize, Lydia. Keep up the good work!

Thank you for your letter, *Nelena Bergsma*. I'm glad you had such a good day on Thanksgiving. Have you had some snow fun already, Nelena?

Hello, *Sharalee Vandenbos*. Thank you for the puzzle. It was good to hear from you again. I hope you'll join in our new *contest*, Sharalee. Bye for now.

Busy Beavers we need *pen pals* for these two people:

David Deboer (age 10)
103 May Avenue
Richmond Hill, ON
L4C 3S7

Tim Sikkema (age 8)
Box 155, Group 2
Smithville, ON
L0R 2A0

Bye for now Busy Beavers!

Love to you all,
Aunt Betty



Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.

1 John 3:1

With joy and thankfulness to our heavenly Father who has made all things well, we announce the birth of our daughter

BREANNE NICOLE

Born October 4, 1992

Andy and Brenda Vandervelde
(nee Bartels)

4034 Aberdeen Road
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B6

This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. Psalm 118:23

Our heavenly Father has richly blessed us and entrusted into our care another covenant child. A healthy baby girl whom we have named

JESSILYN ANNE

Born September 10, 1992

A sister for *Michael* and *Nicole*
Paul and Rita VanAndel
(nee Buist)

4124 Jordan Road, Box 152
Jordan Station, ON L0R 1S0

Psalm 127

The Lord has again richly blessed our family by giving us another son and brother, our seventh child. We named him

CALEB PIETER

Born October 18, 1992

Dick and Joanne Barendregt
Alex, Hester, Calvin
Felicia-Amy, Jeremy and
Morgan

Box 174
Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0