

*For with Thee is the
fountain of life; in Thy
light do we see light.*

Psalm 36:9

1992 Year End Issue



A Stamp of Christmas in 1992?

By J. Geertsema

At Christmas few Canadians may still celebrate the birth of Christ Jesus, the eternal only Son of God. Few still rejoice that God's eternal Son took on our human flesh and blood to be our brother in order to save us from our sin and from our guilt before God because of sin. Does this sound pessimistic? Our Canadian government seems to abandon and reject any link to Christianity. I don't think that we can blame this situation on the policy of multiculturalism only. For our government gives me the impression that it sees something good in the salvation of the New Age.

I am referring to the images portrayed on the Canadian Christmas stamps. The 84 cents stamp shows the "Weihnachtsmann," a German word for the "holy-night man" or Santa Claus. This stamp is to present our country across the oceans. The "Weihnachtsmann" holds a cutoff Christmas tree in his one arm, while he holds a bag with presents with his other hand. The 42 cents stamp for use within the country shows Santa on his sleigh drawn by a horse. Santa has a pipe in his mouth. The horse has a star attached to its head while at the top and at the bottom of the picture moon sickles and stars are visible on a black background. I wonder whether this is taken from what so often is linked with the zodiac as used in horoscope and with the occult. The stamp of 48 cents, for the United States, shows us a witch flying on her broomstick through the skies with a bell and a bag with presents.

When I bought a few of these stamps in the drugstore and gave some comment, the lady apologized. It was not her fault. She told me that another customer who bought stamps before I did had returned those with the witch because she did not want to put this witch stamp on her letters at Christmas time. When I came home and looked into the *Globe and Mail* of the day (Saturday, November 28) I read two "letters to the editor" which commented on the stamp portraying Santa with a pipe. They objected to this pipe in Santa's mouth, for smoking can cause cancer.

Now I am opposed to smoking, too. Knowing that this habit can endanger our health and cause our death means that we cannot justify our smoking before God who gave us life and health. However, the "message" of the pipe is much less dangerous than that of the witch on a Christmas



stamp. I find it a sad thing that Canada Post thinks it has to connect Christmas with witches. The commercializing of the celebration of the birth of Christ is one bad thing. Mammon overpowers the message of salvation. The connection of this celebration of Christ's birth with the occult is another bad thing, and I would call it worse.

This year, Canada Post, and in fact with it, our government, proceeded from the commercial to the ideological. Or should we say from the old-fashioned Christianity to the modern contemporary occult. It is obvious that October's Halloween has its roots in the occult. Has the occult with its witches now also conquered Christmas in the post office? By issuing these Christmas stamps our government proclaims to its citizens, and its southern neighbours and to the world in general that our country is leaving Christianity behind and is advancing to the new religious spirituality of the occult. The age of the fish in the zodiac belongs to the past. The age of Aquarius has arrived.

Am I overstating the case? Did those involved not have all these things in mind? It is possible. On the other hand, it is very remarkable that on a Canadian stamp two opposites

are combined: the celebration of the birth of Christ Jesus and the occult. Our conclusion must be that, as a country, led by our multicultural-thinking government, we have left Christianity behind us. I heard about a conversation of students at a college about the Christmas celebration. One of the students told the others that in some schools the Christmas celebration has nothing to do anymore with the birth of Christ Jesus but is made into a festival of light. I hope that this story is nothing but unfounded hearsay, although such a feast of light would fit very well in many a modern mind and in our modern society.

It is true, the Christmas celebration has its root in a pagan festival of light. The pagan tribes and nations of Europe in the days of the apostles had their festival of light during the darkest time of the year, when the days began to lengthen again. This festival had to do with pagan idolatry and magic powers through which the new period of light and life was secured. The early church maintained this pagan feast but changed it from a festival of light into the celebration of the birth of Christ Jesus, the true Light for the world.

However, whether this story about some public (government) schools may be true or false, the stamp of Canada Post, linked to our Canadian government, carries the subtle message that in our multicultural society the gospel of salvation through Christ Jesus belongs to the past and is to be replaced by a new gospel: that of beneficent witches who, with Santa, give presents to mankind.

Should we now start a big fight in order to retain Christmas as a truly Christian feast? I do not see this as necessary. We would try to correct a symptom while the illness remains. Already for a long time Christmas has not been the celebration of the birth of Christ but a commercial exploita-

tion, sadly lacking in true spiritual value. What our nation needs is a return to the preaching of the true gospel. What it needs is preachers of this true gospel. It needs the call to repent. Let us realize that the true God and His Christ in heaven see this blasphemy on our Canadian stamp.

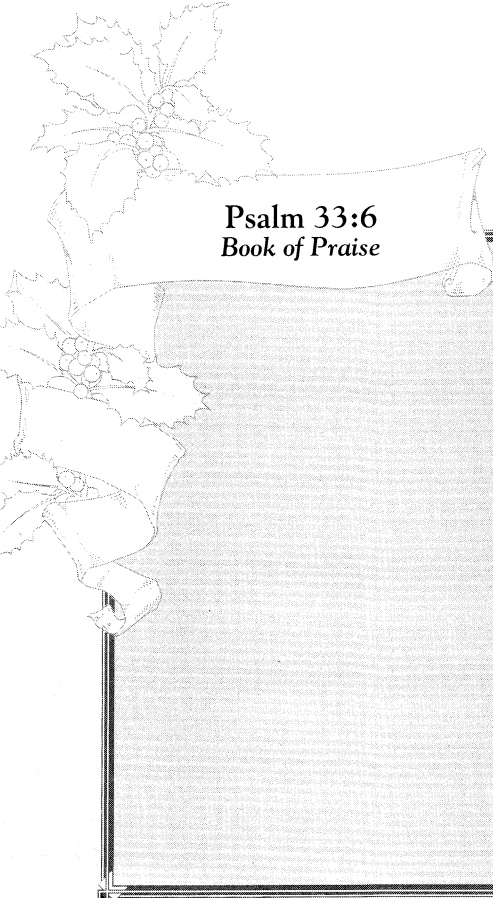
What can we do? First of all, we must continue to find our riches not in Christmas but in Christ Jesus Himself and His salvation work. In the second place, we must be visible and audible witness of Christ in this Canadian nation that shows how it is running away from the true Light into the terrible darkness of the occult, of unbelief and sin, of idolatry and guilt, of God's wrath and everlasting judgment.

There is a better message than that of witches that bring presents. It is the message of great joy for sinners who are lost in great misery. The Saviour was born as a weak human baby in order to become our great High Priest. He offered Himself to God as a satisfying sacrifice for our sins. He rose from the dead and went to the heavenly throne to send out His Word and Holy Spirit to gather for Himself His church as His bride. Believe in Him and you will be saved.

How great is God's grace in the gift of this Saviour, and how great is the gift of faith in Him. How great is it also to share these gifts.

*For unto us a Child is born,
To us a Son is given,
And on His shoulders He shall bear
All power in earth and heaven.
The Wonderful, the Counsellor,
The Mighty God is He;
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace
His holy Name shall be.*

Hymn 15:2



Psalm 33:6
Book of Praise

*Our soul awaits the great Redeemer;
Our help and shield, Him we acclaim.
Our hearts rejoice in Him and glory,
For we trust in His holy Name.
So we humbly pray Thee,
Let Thy steadfast mercy,
LORD, upon us be,
And in love deliver
Us, Thy flock, forever,
As we hope in Thee.*



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The Virgin Birth by Grace Alone

By N.H. Gootjes

When Christmas approaches the mighty acts of God again present themselves to us. We see God at work through many centuries to protect Israel out of which the Christ would be born. And we see the incredible greatness of God in the miracle of the virgin birth. We praise God for His mighty deeds in the history of Israel, and above all in the life of the young Mary. As Mary sang to the glory of God:

For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His Name, we join her in glorifying God.

At the same time man is humbled here. The people of Israel could not protect themselves from the attacks of the enemies. And no earthly man could bring about the virgin birth. Our Saviour had to be a man, but mankind could not bring Him forth. Already at the moment where He began His human life, man was excluded effectively. The virgin birth is the death of all human pride that wants to take part in our salvation.

But the old man does not die easily. He has his pride, and tries to get away from this humiliating message. One of the ways out has been to emphasize Mary, the mother of Jesus. The human father may have been excluded, but a human mother will carry and give birth to the Saviour. Did she not contribute to our salvation? Is the coming of our Saviour not partly dependent on Mary and her cooperation?

Roman Catholic theology has always emphasized the role of Mary. Especially since 1850 much of this has become the official position of the Roman Catholic Church.¹ This attention for Mary has also led to attributing to Mary a decisive role in the birth of Jesus

Christ. She is seen as cooperating in His coming into the world. In this article we will briefly present the Roman Catholic position on the virgin birth. Is this a biblical development or is the biblical teaching damaged?

The Roman Catholic position

There are three stages in the Roman Catholic doctrine concerning the virgin Mary giving birth to Jesus Christ. The first is that Mary gave her consent so that the Son of God could be born from her. The words which Mary said in answer to the angel: "Let it be to me according to your word," are understood as Mary giving permission (to God!) to use her for the birth of the Saviour. "When the eternal Son of God willed to assume the nature of man for the redemption and honour of man...He did not do so before His chosen mother had given her free consent."²

This will lead to the second step: a very exalted position of Mary. Just as no one may go to the Father except through the Son, in much the same way no one can go to the Son except through Mary. Mary is exalted over all men and all angels. Of all creatures she is closest to Christ. She even receives the title of mediator: "She is the one of whom Jesus is born, ...and for that reason the worthy and most beloved mediatrix with the Mediator."³

Calling Mary a mediator between God and men presents a great problem for Roman Catholic theology. Paul writes to Timothy: "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," 1 Tim. 2:5. How can Roman Catholic theology square this text with the title "mediatrix" for Mary?

The solution is, to distinguish between the roles of Christ and of Mary

as mediator. Jesus Christ earned salvation for men by fulfilling God's justice. But He chose Mary as His associate for the work. Jesus Christ has *earned* all gifts with His death. Mary has, by her participation in Christ's work, received the right to *distribute* His gifts.⁴

But there is a third important element in the consent of Mary to carry the Son of God. She was at that point of time "in some way impersonating the whole human race."⁵ What happened, therefore, in the virgin birth was this: The Son, representing God, wanted to become incarnate. And Mary, representing mankind, gave permission. Undoubtedly God is the origin and beginning of our salvation through the virgin birth. At the same time mankind, in the person of Mary, cooperated by giving permission. Salvation is not just the work of God, but, subordinate to the initiative of God, it is at the same time the work of man.

And suddenly we have now arrived at one of the central issues in the conflict between Rome and the Reformation: is our salvation "by grace alone" or not? According to Rome we are not saved by grace alone, man has to contribute to salvation by giving his cooperation. Over against this doctrine Luther maintained that salvation is by grace alone.⁶ The question whether Mary gave permission to God for the virgin birth forms part of a larger question: Does God save us, or do we humans in some way contribute to our own salvation? Is the virgin birth uniquely God's work, or is it a cooperative effort between God and Mary?

The words of the angel

We now have to turn to the Scriptures to find an answer to this question. How is the virgin birth presented in

Scripture? Is the role of Mary in the conception and birth of Jesus Christ described as a cooperating role? The answer of the Bible is clear: the coming of the Saviour is solely the work of God. Several elements in the text show this.

In the first place, the first words of the angel are not a question, but an announcement. The angel does not ask: "Are you willing to conceive in your womb and bear a son, who will be called Jesus?" He tells Mary what will happen to her: "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son," Luke 1:31. The whole conversation between the angel and Mary shows the same pattern. Mary is never asked for permission, she is confronted with a certainty.

In the second place, we have to pay attention to the question of Mary. She asks, how she can bear a son since she is not yet living with Joseph. Then the angel does not divide his answer over the role of God and the role of Mary, he only speaks about God's work. God will do this through His Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God," v. 35. This conception is the work of God, and of God alone.

In the third place, neither does Mary's final answer contain a note of cooperation or consent. She calls herself a servant, a slave. She is not in the position to say yes or no. Undoubtedly, it will be difficult for her to give birth to this child. What will the people say? And what shall Joseph say? But her answer shows that she does not grudgingly submit to what she cannot escape anyway, but that she accepts God's decision over her in faith: "Let it be to me according to your word," v. 38.

The text of Luke 1 does not support the Roman Catholic doctrine that Mary cooperated in the conception of Jesus. But this does not deter the Roman Catholic Church from teaching it. Their doctrine is not based on Scripture alone, but on the understanding of Scripture in the process of the tradition. The church through its tradition knows more today than is actually expressed in Scripture. And one of the best examples of the progress the church has made in understanding God's revelation is the doctrine of Mary. It is not really necessary for the Roman Catholic Church to prove its doctrine from Scripture. The Mariology of the Roman Catholic Church is usually proven from tradition.⁷ The Roman

Catholic doctrine of "not by grace alone" is supported by their doctrine of "not Scripture alone."

Conclusion

What does the virgin birth mean for us? Mary asks the angel how her Son, who will reign on David's throne, can be born. The angel answers that God will bring this about, through His Holy Spirit. The miracle of the virgin birth is exclusively the result of God's working in Mary.

This is a humiliating message for us. No one, not even the best of us, could bring about the birth of the Saviour. His coming is not the result of our work, it is the work of God alone. This hurts our self-esteem, no one wants to accept this from himself. We want to contribute something to our salvation, if only in Mary. We do not like to be totally dependent on God. It will never be easy to accept in faith the biblical teaching of the virgin birth.

But this doctrine, once it is accepted in faith, gives us great comfort. It shows the character of God's salvation work. God alone paved the way to the coming of the Saviour, and no man had an active part in it. God is guarantee that it will infallibly be fulfilled. The work of salvation is in God's hands, but it is safe there. He will fulfil what He began.

The virgin birth leads us away from the praise of Mary, and, for that matter, from every praise of man. God alone should receive all honour:

*To God on high the glory
and peace on earth to men.*

¹This upsurge in the official teaching about Mary began in 1854, with the proclamation of Mary's immaculate conception. Just as Jesus Christ was born without original sin, so everyone has to believe that Mary was born without sin. The provisional end was the proclamation in 1950 of Mary's corporeal assumption into heaven. Just as Jesus Christ was taken up into heaven, everyone has to believe that Mary did not die but went to heaven. The second Vatican Council (1961-1965) did not add a new chapter to this developing Mariology.

²See the translation of the official documents in *The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English Translation* (edited by John F. Clarkson S.J. and others; Rockford: Tan Books and Publishers, 1973). The quotation in the text can be found on p. 209 and 211. See also on p. 210: "(Mary) with her wonderful consent received the message of the mystery of peace brought to earth by an angel." The word "consent" seems to have been taken from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, 30, art. 1, 4.

³See *The Church Teaches*, pp. 209, 210. In the years preceding the second Vatican Council there was a movement to call Mary co-redeemer next to Jesus Christ, but this was not officially adopted at the Council, see John H. Miller C.S.C. (ed.) *II Vatican: An Interfaith Appraisal* (Notre Dame & London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966) p. 311, 328ff.

⁴See *The Church Teaches* p. 210 (from the Encyclical *Ad Diem Illum*, from 1904). The Second Vatican Council came back to this question in its Dogmatic Constitution on the church, III, 60, see A.P. Flannery, ed. *Documents of Vatican II* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 418.

⁵*The Church Teaches*, p. 209, a statement dating from 1891; the statement was repeated in 1896 (see p. 210) and in 1943 rephrased as: "in the name of the whole human race she gave consent," p. 211. This expression, too, goes back to Thomas Aquinas: "She was in some way impersonating the human race," p. 209.

⁶This is correctly noted by the Roman Catholic scholar M. Schmaus, in his *Katholische Dogmatik, V: Mariology* (München: Max Hueber Verlag, 1955, p. 312ff), and by the Protestant scholar C.A. De Ridder, *Maria medeverlosseres?: De discussie in de huidige rooms-katholieke theologie over de medewerking van de moeder Gods in het verlossingswerk* (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Evangelische Maatschappij, 1960) p. 122.

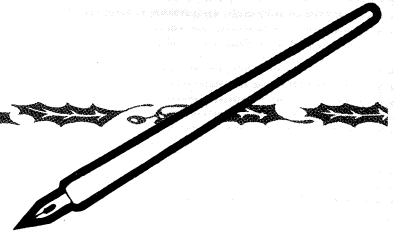
⁷See e.g. the answer given by Medina on the question: How could you illustrate the doctrine of tradition, because tradition plays an important part in Mariology, in *II Vatican: An Interfaith Appraisal*, p. 329ff.; see also C.A. De Ridder, *Maria medeverlosseres?*, p. 130, 144ff.

Hymn 16:2 Book of Praise

*The Word became incarnate –
Made flesh, yet very God.
The angels hailed His coming
With songs o' re fields abroad.
Repeat the song again:
"To God on high the glory,
And peace on earth to men!"*

EDITORIAL

By W.W.J. VanOene



At the Demise of a Hero

Recently I was struck by a heading in our weekly newspaper: "Superman Bites the Bullet." The subtitle read: "Man of Steel was too nice for hero-hungry comic crew."

To put the minds and hearts of our readers at ease, I am happy to state that I am not a regular reader of comic strips. I have more important things to do. If I have a chance to look at them, I confine myself to "For Better or Worse" and one or two more of the same genre. However, our local weekly newspaper (and that is the only one we subscribe to) does not bring these strips, and so I don't have much of an opportunity to read them. With "Superman" I am not acquainted at all.

Yet the heading with large and bold letters drew my attention, and I read the brief article about the demise of Superman. The Doomsday issue, which now sells for \$2.95, is expected to be worth \$6.00 within a month.

This was not what made me read the brief item, for I have no stake in either the life or the death of Superman. I, and I am sure we all, do have a "stake" in the remarks that were made in connection with it.

As for the death of Superman, one of the distributors "figures the changing times are reflected in the world of animation, too." He further added: "Superman is just too nice; he goes through all the proper channels. People want dark, gritty heroes." As an example of what people want he mentioned "Such as Shadow Hawk, a super hero whose specialty is crushing spines." Another distributor added: "The cops were more warped than Superman. I think he was an obsolete character and it's time he was wiped out."

Is it not scary? The above lines were not written to introduce our readers to the world of comic strips, as you will have understood. Besides, for this you would have to consult someone else. They were written to draw the attention (once again) to the danger to which especially our children are exposed. What was quoted above shows anew that there are theories behind what may seem to be the most innocent presentation.

Whoever writes wants to promote the concepts he himself stands for and which he wants others to accept and follow. No one writes for the pure joy of putting words on paper, but everyone who writes pursues a goal.

It is not any different with the cartoonists. Political cartoonists want to expose abuses or to ridicule politicians for statements they make, or actions they undertake, or principles they adhere to. The writers of comic strips also have their concepts, their philosophies, and their aims. They do

their best to shape the minds of their readers to conform to the writer's or artist's thinking.

Everyone who writes also carries a heavy responsibility. He must realize that he makes a certain impression on his readers, and that he is also responsible, for his part, for the manner in which his readers follow up the ideas he tries to make them accept and make their own.

Recently a group of three young people, two of them armed with sawed off shotguns, entered a gun shop and stole rifles and so many rounds of ammunition, the owner said, that they could start a complete war. He added that the manner in which they executed their "raid" was very amateurish and reminded him into details of a certain comic strip.

It is a sad thing that "because Superman is just too nice; he goes through all the proper channels," it had to be decided to discontinue the strip. I do not know whether the evaluation was correct, as I do not know the strip. I do know that it is sad and disturbing that what apparently is decent and abides by the rules has to be replaced by crookedness and cruelty. Instead of educating the readers (and viewers) the warped thoughts of the readership are the gauge by which the writers have to go.

We cannot expect that we shall be able to change the pattern or this development. It is symptomatic for the whole way of thinking in our age: when the people no longer accept a certain pattern, the pattern has to be changed; when the people no longer accept a rule of law, the law has to be changed to reflect the changed attitude.

While I was writing this brief article, the radio mentioned that a man tried to get custody of his two sons born of an incestuous relationship with his daughter. Such a relationship, he is said to have claimed, should not be labelled a criminal offense when it is one between two consenting adults.

Although we shall not be able to change this pattern, we can take measures so that we and our children do not fall into that satanic trap.

Thus parents should make sure that their children are aware of the dangers that lurk also in comic strips and in television programs. The children should be told why many of these strips are not good and why they do not promote a way of thinking that is approved of by the LORD. The poison is administered therein a drop at a time, but it is poison and remains poison.

If one picture is worth a thousand words, how much poison has entered the hearts and minds of our children? **6**

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta

Disciple

Since the very early days, Christians have been known by a variety of names. From the book of Acts we know that Christians were called: *Those who belong to the Way, Disciples, Brethren, Saints, Believers, Friends, Nazarenes, and Christians.* Last time I wrote about the name "One who belongs to the Way." Today I would like to reflect upon the name "Disciple."

When we speak about "the disciples," we usually mean the twelve men whom the Lord Jesus called to follow Him throughout His earthly ministry (Luke 6:13-16). However, the Lord had more disciples than the Twelve. From Luke 6:13 we know that the Lord chose the Twelve from among His disciples. He had many disciples. From among the very large group of men and women who followed Him, who hung on His every word, who loved to hear Him teach, He chose twelve.

In the gospels "disciples" is used in two ways. At times it refers specifically to the Twelve. At other times, it is used in a general way to refer to the people of the land who came out to hear Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth teach.

In the book of Acts the word "disciple" occurs often in its general sense. Ananias of Damascus was a disciple (9:10). Tabitha of Joppa was a disciple (9:36). Paul of Tarsus (9:26), Timothy of Lystra (16:1), and Mnason of Cyprus (21:16) were all disciples. These people, who clearly did not belong to the Twelve, were disciples. Further, there are many instances in the book of Acts where the body of believers is called "the disciples" (e.g., Acts 6:1,2,7).

The background of this name lies in the gospels. It was the special name for those who gathered around the Lord Jesus during His ministry. He was the teacher or master: they were His disciples.

In the Ancient Near East, students would gather around a certain teacher. They would learn from him, and take

over his philosophy, practices and way of life.

Many people gathered around the Lord Jesus. They came to learn from Him (Matt. 5:1,2). They believed in Him (John 8:30). The Lord said to them: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples" (John 8:31).

A disciple of Christ continues in the word of Jesus Christ. He learns from Christ, believes in Christ, and abides in the word of Christ. He adopts the teaching of the teacher as a way of life.

"What about you? Are you following the Lord?"

A disciple also forsakes the world in order to follow the teacher. This was very strictly true of the Twelve. They had to leave behind their jobs (Mark 1:18, 19), their parents (10:29), their earthly possessions (10:28), take up their crosses and go forward even to death (Matt. 10:38). Jesus Christ said that those who would follow Him had better first consider the cost.

Christ does not call us to follow Him in the same way as the Twelve did. That is simply not possible since He is no longer physically upon the earth. However, that Luke carried the name "disciple" over into Acts to describe all Christians tells us something. The use of this name in Acts for those who did not know Christ during His earthly ministry teaches us that the relationship of the following generations

of Christians to the ascended Christ is essentially no different from that enjoyed by the disciples who walked with Him on the earth.

We may not brush aside the solemn sayings of our Lord regarding the nature and cost of discipleship. We must be willing to give up everything we have for the sake of obedience to Him. We must love Christ above all – above parents, above husband or wife, above children, above brothers and sisters, even above one's own life. That is hard. But it's what the Lord requires.


Because the teaching and the call of the Lord reaches so far into our lives, many cannot handle it. Many defect. Before He was taken up from us, "...many of His disciples drew back and no longer went about with Him" (John 6:66). Today as well, many who once followed the Lord have drawn back. They are no longer with us. They have abandoned the teaching of Christ and the way of life He demands.

What about you? Are you following the Lord?

Follow Him. There is no one else to whom you can go. He has the words of eternal life. He is the Holy One of God.

Disciple is a common term for Christians in the Acts: however, it disappears completely from the rest of the N.T. Disciples was no more adequate as a permanent title for Christians than teacher or rabbi was for the ascended Christ exalted as Lord and King at the right hand of God the Father. However, the synonym "to follow," used regularly in the gospels to refer to the activity of disciples, occurs in Revelation 14:4.

The 144,000 who have the name of the Lamb and of His Father written on their foreheads, i.e., the full number of the redeemed, are described as those "who follow the Lamb wherever He goes."

Follow the Lamb of God. He gave Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin. He alone is worthy of our reverence, our worship, our adoration. 

Zwingli on the Unity of the Church

By R. Faber

Introduction

One of the leaders of the Reformation was Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531). As pastor of the Great Minster church in Zürich, the gifted Swiss preacher advanced the cause of the church in several ways. Especially in the controversies over the doctrines of baptism and Lord's supper Zwingli served to strengthen the Reformed position. The two sacraments receive careful attention in Zwingli's treatises and letters. This is not surprising, for it was Zwingli who in 1525 replaced the papal mass in his congregation with the Reformed celebration of the Lord's supper. And concerning the doctrine of baptism Zwingli clashed with the Anabaptists, who in 1523 introduced to the people of Zürich their conviction that only adults should be baptized. The sacraments are at the centre of Zwingli's theology precisely because proper use of them was hotly debated in Switzerland in the first half of the sixteenth century.

Despite the division which the doctrines of baptism and the Lord's supper caused among many who professed to be Christians (Lutherans, Anabaptists, Reformed, etc.), Zwingli reminded his contemporaries that one function of the sacraments is to express the *unity* of Christ's catholic church. "The unity of the church," notes Peter Stephens in the now standard work on Zwingli's thought, "is something fundamental in Zwingli's theology."¹ In this article I shall suggest that Zwingli's concept of the church is linked closely to his concept of baptism and Lord's supper. To Zwingli baptism is more than a sign of the remission of sins in Jesus Christ and a sign of the covenant which God establishes with His people; it expresses



Huldrych Zwingli

the bond which the believer has with all those who have been engrafted into the covenant since Abraham. More importantly, in baptism the believer is called to live in unity with all who are members of the covenant.

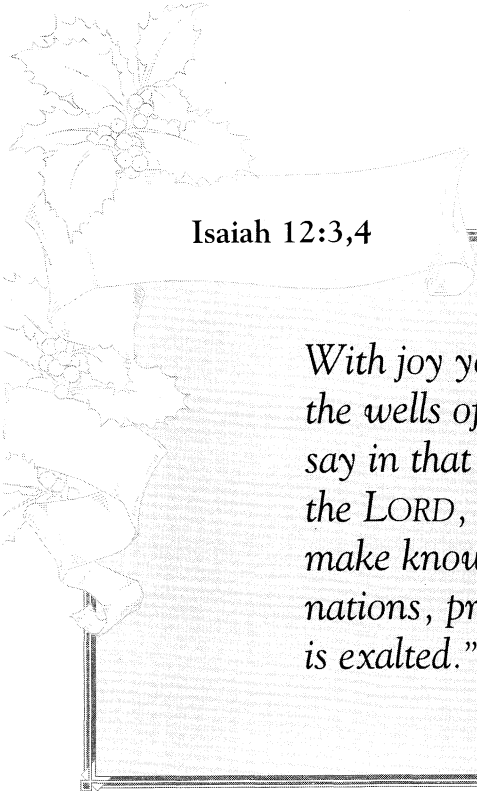
Similarly, Zwingli maintains that the Lord's supper is more than a sign of Christ's sure promise that He gave His body as atonement for the sins of all who believe. Participation in the Lord's

supper is a celebration of the *one* faith which distinguishes the true church. In other words, the table of the Lord displays the unity of the body of Christ. Moreover, argues Zwingli, it expresses an *undertaking* by the believer to become one with all others who share the faith. At a time when Reformed churches in North America reconsider what the unity of the church means for them, it is fruitful to recall what one of the leaders of the Reformation wrote about the oneness of Christ's catholic church.

Baptism

We recall from our Form for Baptism that we are conceived and born in sin, and that the impurity of our souls is washed away only through Jesus Christ. And baptism is a sign of the bond which God has made with His people. All who are baptized into the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit belong to the covenant which God had established first with Abraham, "the father of all believers." Following Augustine's emphasis on the continuity of the covenant, Zwingli views baptism as a sign of the covenant between God and His people throughout the ages. For Zwingli the covenants of the old and new dispensation are essentially identical. The believers of the second dispensation are united with those of the first dispensation in one covenant.

Baptism, we further recall from our Form, replaces circumcision, which was the sign of the covenant in the old testament. Yet while the *sign* is changed, Zwingli shows, the *thing signified* is not. About this continuity of the first covenant he states, "we are in the covenant that God made with Abraham" (Z IV.596.1-2); about our rela-



Isaiah 12:3,4

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: "Give thanks to the LORD, call upon His Name; make known His deeds among the nations, proclaim that His Name is exalted."

tionship to God's people in the old dispensation he writes, "we are one people and one church with them, even though they came before us a long time into the vineyard" (Z VI.i.166.3-5). Baptism is a sign of the eternal covenant of grace.

Zwingli's statement that a link exists between believers of the first and second dispensation forms part of his rebuttal of Anabaptism. The Anabaptists tended to depreciate the value of the Old Testament. To them Zwingli points out that just as in the first dispensation infants received the sign of the covenant (circumcision), so too in the second dispensation should infants receive the sign of the covenant (baptism). There is one covenant and one people. Jesus Christ altered the sign of the covenant, for He presented the one sacrifice of His blood on the altar of the cross. In the new dispensation the covenant remains unchanged, although the sign thereof is different.

Jesus Christ is at the centre of the covenant, for all people who are baptized confess that He died for their sins. Zwingli observes that in Matthew 3 "Christ, the very Son of God, took to Himself baptism in order that He might give us an *example of unity*, that we may all enter under the one sign."² The members of the covenant are brought together in Jesus Christ. There is a "corporate" aspect in the sacrament of baptism. Baptism is not only a personal sign which God gives to believers and their

children to assure them that their sins are washed away, but also it is a sign which brings together all who have faith in Jesus Christ. Zwingli writes to his Anabaptist opponent Hubmaier: "Infant baptism is a *source of unity* and a clear, comforting sign of assurance that by virtue of the testament our children are certainly God's" (Z IV.641.24-26). We are all united with Christ in His death and resurrection (Romans 6:5). Zwingli quotes Ephesians 4:4-6 too as proof that baptism expresses the unity of the church. There Paul writes that "there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all."

Zwingli employs this text (and others; e.g., Luke 3, Matthew 3) to show that baptism is also a pledge to strive for unity. Baptism, he argues, is an undertaking (he reminds us that *sacramentum* means "oath") whereby we "bind ourselves to God, testifying the same to our neighbour by means of the external signs, and not withdrawing ourselves in any way; for if we do the result will be a sect and not a faith" (*On Baptism* 45). Zwingli directs these words at the Anabaptists, who, in denying baptism to infants, did not join in expressing the one-ness of Christ's church. "The Anabaptists," writes Zwingli, "will not recognize any Christians except themselves or any church except their

own. And that is always the way with sectarians who separate themselves on their own authority" (*On Baptism*, 75-76). Baptism of infants is a sign by which we show that we are members of the catholic church and strive to become one with all who have faith in Christ Jesus. Let us not forget that in Art. 27 of the Belgic Confession we profess one catholic church, which is a gathering of believers who "are washed by His blood, and are sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit."

Lord's supper

Concerning the doctrine of the Lord's supper Zwingli contented with the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutherans. Like baptism the Lord's supper was a divisive issue during the sixteenth century, and Zwingli discusses it frequently and at length. Briefly put, Zwingli observes a two-fold function of the sacrament of the Lord's supper: it is a sign whereby God assures us that Jesus Christ truly died for our sins, and it forms a pledge whereby we show other believers that we promise to strive for unity with them. The believer's faith in the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ is a faith he shares with all who sit at the table of the Lord.

Zwingli observes that the unity of the church is manifest in the communal meal celebrated by believers everywhere. 1 Corinthians 10:16-22, which speaks about the participation in the body and blood of Christ, is one passage Zwingli quotes to show that the supper of the Lord, like baptism, is a "corporate" sacrament. The reformer rightly interprets the words, "because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17), to mean that the catholic church, comprising many members throughout the world, expresses its unity when believers worldwide partake of the body and blood of the Lord. The bread and wine are symbols of the body and blood of Christ which were given as remission of sins. As we confess in Lord's Day 29 of the Heidelberg Catechism, Christ gave this sacrament as a sign and pledge that "we share in His true body and blood."

Zwingli interprets the "body of Christ" as the church. The many grains which form the bread, and the many grapes from which the wine is pressed, are analogous to the many members of the one catholic church. Therefore, Zwingli writes, "when you offer thanks with the cup and the bread, eating and

drinking together, you signify thereby that you are *one body and one bread*, namely, the body which is the church of Christ....³ In eating the bread and drinking the wine, the believer testifies that he shares with others the belief that Jesus Christ gave His body and blood as a “perfect sacrifice, once offered on the cross.”⁴ The sacrament is a sign of the *one* faith which unites Christians.

Zwingli also states that those who participate in the table of the Lord thereby become united (*coalescere*) with others who profess Christ to be their Saviour. In the Form for the Lord’s supper we read that by the Spirit “we are also united in true brotherly love as members of one body.” Zwingli points out that this fellowship of believers is evidenced by the communal eating of the bread and drinking of the wine.⁵ The Form reminds us, “we all, incorporated in Christ by faith, are together one body.” The celebration of the table of the Lord binds all who believe in the saving work of Jesus Christ. Therefore the Lord’s supper is also called “communion.”

More importantly, argues Zwingli, when we participate in “the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, we *undertake* to become one body and one

fellowship” with other believers.⁶ We *pledge* “as by a holy undertaking to join into one army and special people of God” (Z III.282.31-32). In his Letter to Matthew Alber Zwingli writes that the Lord’s supper is called a “sacrament” because it is an oath whereby we swear to become one with our fellow believers in “one body, one bread, and one profession.”⁷ The sacrament is not only a pledge by Christ that by His death He has atoned fully for our sins, but it is also a promise by us that we will unite with all who confess that they are baptized by one Spirit into one body (1 Cor. 12:13). Zwingli would exhort us to fulfil the promise expressed in the sacraments to strive for the unity of Christ’s church.

In connection with the sacrament of the Lord’s supper Zwingli adduces what is perhaps the most important text for the unity of the church: John 17:21. There the Lord Jesus Christ prays to His Father that those who believe in Him may all be one. About this text Zwingli writes: “Christ wills that His own shall be one, just as He is one with the Father, and for this union He has given us the sacrament” (Z III.124.27-125.15). The Lord gave the supper to believers as a sign of the one-ness of His body, the

church. Together with the Head of the Church let us pray to God the Father for all His covenant children: “...that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know...” (John 17:23).⁸

¹W.P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford: 1986), 205.

²*On Baptism* 97 (italics mine), quoted from G.W. Bromiley’s English translation in *Zwingli and Bullinger* (Philadelphia: 1953), 167. Subsequent citations of this treatise refer to chapter divisions in Bromiley’s text. Unless noted, other quotations from Zwingli’s works derive from *Hylde Reich Zwingli Sämtliche Werke* (=Z; edited by E.Egli et al.; Berlin: 1905 -).

³*On the Lord’s Supper* 91 (italics mine), quoted from Bromiley, 237.

⁴Elsewhere Zwingli writes that participation in the body of Christ is participation in His church: “...cibus et potus corporis Christi est societas corporis et membrorum suorum in ecclesia sancta” (Z XII, 144.37-38; cf. Z III. 347.13 - 351.9).

⁵Z III.348.11-15: “...qui hunc panem edant et poculum hauriant, cum reliquis fratribus in unum corpus coalescant, quod quidem corpus Christi est, eo quod corpus Christi hoc est, quod carnem auctoris sui pro se maetatum et sanguinem eius fusum esse credit.”

⁶“...ein sacrament des lychnams und blütes Christi, *damit wir uns allen menschen bezügend einen lychnam und ein bruderschaft sin*” (Z III.125.12-14. italics mine).

⁷Z III.348.20. The oneness of the church is underscored by the repetition: “...secum in unum corpus, in unum panem, in unum professionem coaluisse.”

⁸Further reading: a good introduction to Zwingli is G.R. Potter’s *Zwingli* (Cambridge: 1976); on Zwingli’s theology Stephens’ book (see note 1) is recommended; for readers of Dutch two works by Reformed authors are readily accessible: W. Balke et al., *Zwingli in vierderlei Perspectief* (Utrecht: 1984); H. Veldman, *Huldrych Zwingli* (Goes: 1984).



To Our Readers:

“Adorn the Doctrine”

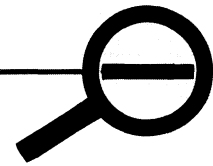
This phrase can be found in Titus 2:10. The apostle Paul urges Titus, his “true child in a common faith...to teach what befits sound doctrine.” Paul, himself a slave or servant of God, commands other slaves to be submissive to their masters so that in all their deeds the teaching of God is adorned, enhanced, made attractive.

This Scripture passage is as relevant today as it was then. For in all our activities as Christians in this life we must strive for the same adornment of the doctrine of God. The adornment, our walk of life, and the doctrine, the teaching of God our Saviour, go together. But it is the teaching that is preeminent, not the adornment. Man-made attractions and/or fanciful additions do not constitute the teaching of God. One must first “hold firm to the sure word as taught,” and a life of godliness must follow. The letter of Paul to Titus speaks very concretely to us about this walk of life. Please take a moment to read it.

The ecclesiastical events taking place on all continents caused me to reflect on this aspect. However, this Word of God is true not only on such a large scale, but also locally and within the family. Each one of us must adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

The editors of *Clarion*, this year again, have provided us with their contributions to help us in this. Thanks go out to our editor-in-chief, Prof. J. Geertsema, and coeditors Prof. J. De Jong, Prof. C. Van Dam, and Rev. W.W.J. VanOene. They were assisted by many others. We continue to rely on our faithful coworkers, including you who subscribe to and advertise in our magazine. On behalf of all contributors, I send you Christian greetings and close this year-end message with the apostle Paul’s words of Titus 2:11-14: *For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Himself a people of His own who are zealous for good deeds.*

W. Gortemaker



Disciplining our children

How does one discipline children and bring them “into line,” the line of God’s demands and norms? In this day and age when the boundary between necessary discipline and child abuse sometimes becomes somewhat blurred, the subject of discipline surely merits attention. Indeed, what constitutes correct discipline of our children?

Una Sancta, a periodical published for our sister churches in Australia, recently published (in the issues of October 10 and 24) an address by Mr. D. Pot on this subject.

What is discipline?

Some people incorrectly think that discipline is synonymous to punishment. Yet, these two – discipline and punishment – are distinctly different. Punishment focuses on past misdeeds and inflicts a penalty on the child for a particular offence, whereas the overall purpose of discipline aims at promoting future growth. It leads the child to maturity. Solomon teaches us in Proverbs 13:24:

He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

Indeed this text refers to physical, that is corporal punishment. Even though corporal punishment is an important part of discipline, it is but one aspect. Whenever we use the word discipline in biblical context we are to think of *teaching, admonishing, instructing as well as correcting*. So in the first instance discipline refers to training. The word disciple is linked to discipline and has the idea of follower or learner. Then secondly there is that notion of submission to particular rules.

Parents and teachers, who are called to train God’s covenant children in the fear of His Name, do

well to have a Scripturally based view, a biblical vision of discipline. That vision is not only unique, but at the same time is taken as foolishness by the very world in which we live and in which our children are growing up.

Modern thinking

The new gospel for education and society of today claims: freedom for the individual! No interference from anybody, hence no authority, no indoctrination, no religion and therefore no discipline either. Authority is traded for equality of parents, teachers and children alike.

• • •

Without realising it, parents as well as teachers are influenced by these unscriptural and often anti-Christian philosophies and thoughts. Let us not pretend to be immune to these humanistic influences as they are more often than not very appealing to the human mind and our sinful flesh.

We know that any philosophy and teaching which does not honour the Lord and His Word is to be rejected by us. It is God Himself who has set out very specific guidelines for us as to how God wants to have our children disciplined:

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.
(Prov. 22:6)

Modern thinking assumes that a child is by nature good and is free to choose what is good. However, according to Scripture, a child left on its own will make wrong choices (Prov. 22:15; 29:15) and therefore parents have a divine mandate to guide, discipline and correct their offspring. Think of Prov. 23:13-14: “Do not hold back discipline from the child; although you beat

him with the rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with the rod and deliver his soul from Sheol.” The baptismal vow to bring up our children in the nurture and fear of the Lord must also be mentioned here.

Brother Pot continues by noting

it is the true, genuine love which we as parents have for our children which demands that we discipline them. Even though we are inclined to be affectionate and compassionate towards our children, our own flesh and blood, we should not neglect our duty to discipline them if the situation demands it. It may even hurt us and cause us pain. As long as we have the opportunity to discipline our children, as long as we have the chance to correct them, we should do so. How many parents aren’t deeply sorry for having walked in the paths of Eli by lamenting now: That’s what we SHOULD have done, but now it is too late!

Again Proverbs gives us guidance: *Discipline your son while there is hope; do not set your heart on his destruction* (19:18). It is better to hear your child cry for a little while now (and it may be painful realising that you are the cause of that pain), but it hurts even more to know that your children may weep and wail eternally in hellish agony.

In that context one can understand the words of Prov. 13:24. “He who spares the rod, hates his son.”

A matter of concern

I think it is far to suggest that – in general – parental support in disciplinary matters taking place at school is gradually waning. That in itself is a serious matter and a cause for concern. Especially many of our younger parents seem so have diffi-

culties with discipline. It can indeed be very frustrating not knowing how to deal with your own children. Several of these parents are far too tolerant, they lack consistency and are not firm in their discipline. After a lot of "whining" on the part of the child, the parent's "no" changes into "yes" and the "yes" becomes "no." The result? The child rules the parent, the children "reign" in the families. These kind of children often are "selfish" and unpleasant little creatures who always want it their way. Yes, authority in reversed order.

Within the Communion of Saints, let us build one another up and remind each other of the Scriptural values, biblical principles and Scriptural truths, also in regards to disciplining our children. We certainly are not immune to the worldly philosophies, worldly thoughts and ideas of our day.

Practical guidelines

In the last part of his address, br. Pot gives practical guidelines. Firstly, children should know what they are up to. The rules must be clearly and explicitly spelled out. Secondly, discipline must be administered consistently.

Without doubt this is the most significant but also the most difficult aspect of discipline. In theory we may agree that we ought to be more consistent in our approach, more consistent in disciplining our children, and yet bringing this into practice is definitely not an easy assignment. If we on the one occasion, when a child oversteps the mark, react quite harshly, while only a couple of days later a similar offence occurs and we turn a blind eye, then we act very unwisely. Inconsistency makes children feel insecure. They do not know what to expect.

Thirdly, discipline must be firm, but fair.

Parents are to be clearly in control, should not waver, back down or water down their demands. Paul teaches us in Ephesians 6 as well as in Colossians 3 that *children are to obey their parents for this is right*. This kind of obedience is at the same time an honouring of God. Children must learn already from an early age to obey promptly.

Furthermore, discipline must at all times be fair. In other words when we set guidelines, these guidelines and rules must be rea-



sonable and when we do apply corrective measures, we must remember that the punishment must fit the crime. Not for nothing does Paul add in Ephesians 6: *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger...*

Not provoking means, among other things, do not overprotect your children and hem them in with far too many rules. Also, do not show favouritism, discourage, neglect, or be cruel to them.

Fourthly, discipline should be exercised out of love. And fifthly, discipline should lead to self-discipline. Children must receive responsibilities and grow to maturity. Pot also notes that "a lot of self-discipline is caught from good models rather than taught. Acting as a living model yourself often has more impact on children than teaching them with many words."

Finally, since we have then been called to nurture children in the fear of the Lord, let us be aware that we cannot do this in our own strength. We do not have to do that either. God will guide us by His Word and Spirit. He has promised us that *if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives to all men liberally* (James 1:5).

If we carry out our task faithfully and diligently in dependence upon the Lord, we have the rich promise that when the child is old he will not depart from the way he should go.

May God grant us as parents and teachers much wisdom to discipline our children in such a way that they are trained *well* for this life and for the life to come, that they may be trained for Kingdom's service, trained for God and for eternity. **6**

Impressions Synod 1992

By C. Van Spronsen

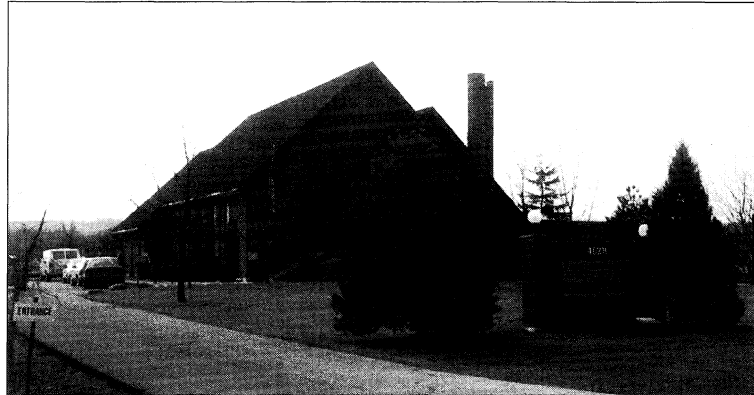
Synod Lincoln 1992 grinded to a halt Wednesday evening, November 18th, after twelve days of intense activity in dealing with the matters the churches had put before this ecclesiastical assembly of sixteen delegates. Having been requested to jot down some impressions, it is with some trepidation that I proceed to do so, fully aware of the limitations and the subjective nature of "impressions." For a more complete report on decisions etc., we may refer you to the *Press Release* while, of course, the *Acts* will give you a complete account.

The convening church of Lincoln did an excellent job of preparing this synod, taking care of the delegates and providing us with the tools to do our work. The four committee rooms were all equipped with computers, while a central "Synod Office," the clerks' domain, also housed a high quality printer. A fast copier assured that all material, reports and drafts were readily available to all delegates while a fax machine provided a fast link to the outside world, whether that be for ecclesiastical or business use.

The town of Lincoln must have noticed some things happening on John Street. At regular intervals a number of men hiked down the narrow roads, rain or shine (mostly the former), busily gesticulating and debating, trying to convince one another. In spite of the clear sign in front of the church building identifying this event as the "General Synod 1992," the *Lincoln Post Express* preferred to refer to it as a church "Sit In." Some public lectures in Reformed Church Polity may clear up the matter.

The agenda

Although the convening church had faithfully provided us well in time with all the material they received for the



agenda, the delegates were not impressed when upon arrival they found an equal large stack of papers which had not arrived in time to be sent in advance. Obviously many did not take into consideration the guidelines adopted by Synod '83, specifying that "all appeals should ordinarily be at the convening church at least one month before synod convenes." (*Acts Synod '83*, p. 28). Unless valid reasons were adduced for this tardiness or the contents were of such a nature that it could easily be fitted into the agenda, a number of these late arrivals were declared inadmissible. Some were so voluminous and complicated in nature that it could not be expected of delegates to work themselves into the material on such short notice and do justice to the appeals.

Ecclesiastical orientation

One of the characteristics of this particular general synod undoubtedly was its preoccupation in charting its place and connections on the ecclesiastical world map. The bulk of the agenda was formed by the reports of the Committees on Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (CCOPC) and the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) and related matters.

Two fraternal delegates from the OPC shared a number of days with us as well as an observer from the Reformed Church of the U.S.A. (RCUS). We tried to familiarize ourselves with the brotherhood across the border, Korea, Scotland, Holland, Australia and even Zaire entered the picture. Decisions were

made which may have far-reaching consequences and change the ecclesiastical map for years to come.

It is a reason for gratitude that amidst all the bad world news that reaches us, we may also hear that the Good News is being proclaimed worldwide, and that there is much evidence of Christ's church gathering work in many parts of the world. The circumstances and cultures may vary greatly, yet there is unity in a faithful adherence to the Scriptures as the Word of God.

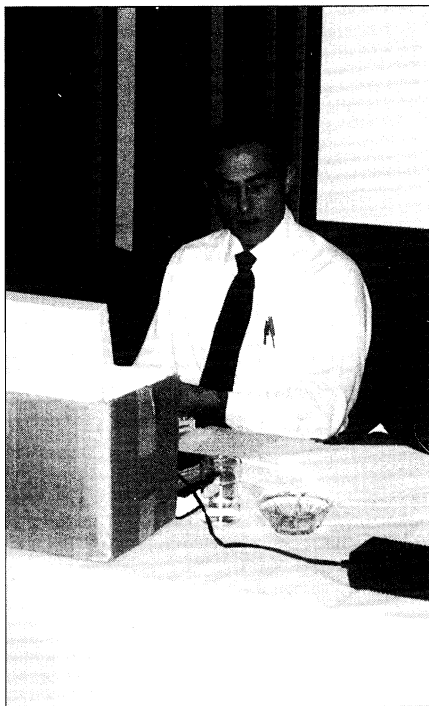
Much of the discussions centered around the question whether the differences between the Westminster Standards and Presbyterian Church Polity on the one side and the Three Forms of Unity and the Reformed Church Polity on the other side were of such a nature that they formed impediments to "Ecclesiastical Fellowship" or not. ("Ecclesiastical Fellowship" is the term for the relationship which previously was known as "Sister Church Relationship" or "Full Correspondence.") Synod concluded that previous synods always maintained that they were no impediments even though there are differences which deserve further discussion. This has been the historical approach since the time of the Reformation. Once this was established in our discussions concerning the OPC it set the course for some other relationships as well.

Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Besides the report from our Contact Committee, synod had to deal with a number of letters from the churches as well, many of which were negative about our relationship. However, synod decided to continue the contact and gave the Contact Committee a clear and much more defined mandate, expressing the fervent wish that this temporary relationship may soon come to fruition so that full Ecclesiastical Fellowship may be enjoyed. Matters that remain to be resolved are the question of "confessional membership," supervision of the Lord's table and the OPC's relationship with the Christian Reformed Church. Other divergencies can remain a topic for discussion once Ecclesiastical Fellowship is established.

The Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK)

For many years our churches have had contact with this faraway Presbyterian Church. Communications remain a difficulty although it has improved as of late. Synod decided to accept their



Rev. S.L. Phillips

invitation to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with them and thereby we have joined the ranks of our sister churches in the Netherlands and Australia. Next time you go to Korea take a travel attestation along!

The Free Church of Scotland

Synod also decided to offer the same relationship to the Free Church of Scotland with whom the Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad (CRCA) has had contacts since 1986. An added interesting feature is that there are a few of their churches in Canada as well, in Toronto and P.E.I.

Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)

The Dutch sister churches have already established a relationship with this small group of Reformed Churches in the U.S.A., who have adopted the Heidelberg Catechism as their standard. They requested an official relationship with us as well. Synod decided to give the CRCA the mandate to investigate this church further with a view to entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

Orthodox/Independent Reformed Churches

A Committee for Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity was appointed with three members from the East as well as the West to represent our churches in

the contacts with the Orthodox and Independent Reformed Churches which have broken ranks with the Christian Reformed Church, in order to promote the unity among Reformed believers.

American Reformed Church of Denver, CO

Synod had to deal with a number of appeals against the decision of Regional Synod West of June '92 upholding the decision of Classis AB/MB of March '92 not to receive the American Reformed Church of Denver into the federation. No clear-cut judgment was made by general synod. Because of the temporary and undefined nature of our present relationship with the OPC different procedures may result. However, it was felt that in view of the decision of Synod of Coaldale, '77 to recognize the OPC as true church of Jesus Christ, as well as taking into account the remaining difficulties, there should be mutual consultation between the ecclesiastical assemblies on both sides. The ecclesiastical way of dealing with difficulties should be honoured.

Other matters

Many other matters were dealt with as well. Some may be considered staples, such as the Theological College, *Book of Praise* and ICRC. The committee for Bible Translations will have its hands full again as well since its mandate includes investigating the NIV, NASB and NKJV versions as possible replacements for the RSV. You will find it all in the *Press Release* and the *Acts*.

A number of personal appeals were on the table as well. It is sad to read how members of the church of Jesus Christ can treat one another and make it difficult for each other. At the same time it reminds us of God's mercy that His church gathering work continues in spite of so many shortcomings of officebearers and other members alike.

Two and a half weeks at synod is a great experience, a real learning experience as well. It is a privilege to be allowed to concentrate on matters pertaining to Christ's church and Kingdom and work in close cooperation with fellow officebearers, in committee format as well as in plenary session. A good, Christian spirit prevailed and all things could be dealt with in a brotherly harmony even though we did not all agree on all things.

May the Lord bless the work which was done and may it promote the coming of His Kingdom.

Suffering and Care of the Soul

By Steve Foster

*Why art Thou so far from helping me,
from the words of my groaning?
O my God, I cry by day,
but Thou dost not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.*

Psalm 22:1b,2

Suffering: God and Satan

The reality of suffering in this world is a brutal fact of life. Many suffer in their body and soul. Many experience feelings of despair, depression, hopelessness and meaninglessness. The attitude: "If you are a true believer and love the Lord, then you would not suffer from these feelings" is very far from being the case. Faithful Christians do suffer. Those who love the Lord are not spared misery in this world. People who have the above attitude sup-

press people from honestly expressing their hurt.¹

Scripture testifies to the reality of suffering in this world. So often we can read of complaints and of cries of utter desperation from the faithful who are trying to understand why they are suffering. Anger in Job, anguish in Lamentations, despair in Ecclesiastes, all testify to the fact of suffering. The reality of pain is not absent from the Scriptures any more than it is from our daily life. Yet, faith in God prevails over suffering. When Job's wife suggested he "curse God and die" (2:9) Job replied that in this life we will receive good and evil from the hand of God (2:10). A great deal of mystery is involved here. "For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it"

(Job 33:14). Job points out that we receive good from God, shall we not receive evil? (Job 2:9). Job is telling us that the ways of God are inscrutable. He is not referring to the general condition of subjection to futility where everything suffers under the consequence of sin, and all deserve condemnation. Instead, when he speaks of evil he refers to a *specific* evil fallen on a *specific* person without that person knowing *why* he or she is suffering. Just as God delivers specific blessings to *specific* people and not others, which are not based on their works, but are part of the adversity which God sends us (cf. B.C. Art. 13; L.D. 9).

The fact that God allows evils to develop (Lam. 3:38; Deut. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6-7) is combined with the fact that they are all under His control. But from the human perspective the reasons for *specific* evils can be incomprehensible making it impossible to see what end they serve (Job 42:2-3). That the whole world is susceptible to the power of the evil one means that the reality of evil is taken very seriously by the Scriptures (1 Jn. 5:19; Rev. 2:9-10). Still, we are assured that evil is under God's providential control, and for us remains the mystery of "lawlessness" (2 Thess. 2:3-11).

Biblical thought is not concerned with escaping evils or suffering, but with living right with God and avoiding sin. As Christians we are to endure suffering, without rebelling against our God who has sent it (Rom. 5:3-4; 1 Thess. 3:3). But we also have this assurance: "I have said this to you, that in me you have peace. In the world you have tribulation" (Jn. 16:33). The temptations and evils of Satan are things God hates and His wrath is poured out on the evil ones in the judgment to come. To suffer evil from Satan, under



Revelation 21:6

And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment."



the providence of God is a mystery. We called it the mystery of lawlessness, and it is. The wrath of God is not equated with evil. Evil and temptation are from Satan. Wrath and testing are from God. These are very different from one another. Wrath comes from a Hebrew word denoting anger. This is specifically *holy anger* against what is evil in the sight of the Lord. It is significant to note that whenever the term wrath appears with the name of God in the Scriptures, the name used is Yahweh, the covenant LORD.²

There is an intimate relationship between the wrath of God and the election of the covenant people and this points to the intimate relationship of love and suffering, so clearly demonstrated in the life of Jesus Christ. With God we are tested for our steadfastness and trust in His Promises. Satan tempts us away from the Promises, deceiving us about what is the Truth. Wrath falling on the just and unjust is undertaken in Holiness and Love for the purpose of Life, whereas evil has as its purpose "works of death." These can affect us directly, through our own personal sin, or directly through the actions of others where we are the victims of their sinful desires, this falls under the aspect of social sins (Is. 59:1-21; 2 Pet. 2:4-22). Personal sins and social sins are the result of giving in to the temptation from Satan.

When we do experience suffering because of social sins, we wonder *why*

God allows this to happen. We admit with Jeremiah, "*O LORD; remember me and care for me. Avenge me on my persecutors. You are long-suffering – do not take me away*" (Jer. 15:15, NIV). Jeremiah tells us that although God waits for the right time to punish the evil doers, we must pray that we do not succumb to our suffering in the meantime. Our suffering can be a result of God's long-suffering.³ However, evildoers will not escape God's wrath: "*The LORD is slow to anger and of great might, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty*" (Nahum 1:3).

Being hopeful, helpful and helped

Remaining faithful to God during times of suffering is the work of the Holy Spirit, but this does not mean there will be an absence of struggles. And even though trials are meant to strengthen us, in the process our faith can be temporarily weakened on the road to being strengthened. Meaning, trials can make steadfastness in faith difficult. We must persevere in our trials, as Jacob wrestled and persevered. During the process of struggling with the angel of the Lord, Jacob discovered his own weakness and learned that he could not rely on his own strength, but with the blessing of God he would rely on the Lord's everlasting strength (Gen. 32:26-28). This captures the continual difficulties of spiritual living.

We are continually reminded that we will suffer many trials (James 1:2,3;

1 Pet. 1:6) and we are told to be glad in this, to "rejoice" and call it all "joy." We can call it all "joy" and "rejoice" in our suffering because of the Promise we receive of eternal glory in Christ. We suffer for our greater glory.

Peter exhorts us:

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you. Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, establish, and strengthen you."

1 Peter 5:6-10

But what if *right now* my suffering is too great? What if right now I am being "devoured" by Satan? What comfort is it for me that my brothers and sisters in Christ are suffering around the world when my pain and suffering are too much? There are those within our Christian community which express words such as these in response to the words of Scripture because of the great physical or spiritual struggles they are in. They are suffering emotionally, and psychologically. This, in turn, affects them spiritually. Are we aware of the spiritual needs and suffering of those around us? Are we aware of our own spiritual needs? Are they taken seriously?

There are cases where suffering can so cloud an individual that they do not know where to turn. It is not enough to simply say to these people "pray to God and place your troubles on Him." Undoubtedly this is necessary and God ultimately is our Helper and Saviour. In the community of saints, it is our further responsibility to help these people. It is our task and calling to be available for the downhearted and distressed, and for those in pain.

One of the great features of the Reformed Church is that we are to return to the original calling given in the New Testament church to be caretakers of one another. This has been lost in the authoritarian structure of many churches. Remember Paul's words: "*But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior part, that*

there may be no discord in the body, but that members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all are honoured together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor. 12:24-26). There should be no such thing as isolation in the church, especially in suffering. It is so often said that not everyone is gifted in such a way to help in the care of the suffering, thereby excluding some from this work. In fact, Paul says in the verses which follow those which we have just quoted, that there is a difference of gifts in the church. Not *all* are "healers and helpers." There is no doubting this. But just as important is the fact that everyone in the community of saints makes up the church as the "body of Christ." As such, whatever the individual gifts, *all* create the supportive environment, no matter how far removed they may seem, for the proper care souls need within the church. "As each has received a gift, employ it for one another as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Pet. 4:10; L.D. 21, Q&A. 55). As Christians we receive faith through grace, this allows us to hope for life in Christ, which gives us peace, and this allows us to love. The apostle says the greatest gift is love (1 Cor. 13:13). The kind of love (Greek *agapē*) Paul is talking of here cannot be separated from the deep meaning of caring. In the "priesthood of all believers," what better way is there to express this kind of love than to pray "with faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6) for each member of the church, especially for those who suffer and who counsel the suffering?

The meaning of care of souls

Often little attention is paid to the meaning of "care." To care (Greek *merimnaō*) in Paul's text points to an unselfish concern through love (*agapē*) under the influence of the gospel. Through it we are freed from the anxiety and anguish of this world, and brought to a healthy existence in one another through Christ. Our English word care is derived from the Latin *cura*, which equally means "care" and "cure." To care is to work for the health of the whole church. It is to work toward spiritual growth. If any one is suffering we must care for this person and so help cure the suffering church, meaning pray and work toward purging it from sin. This dual aspect of "caring" and "curing" is fundamental to a healthy life in

the communion of saints and gets its direction from Christ, who is the physician of our souls. Following this understanding, we use the concept *care of the soul*.

Paul tells us to care for one another. Peter tells us to cast all our anxieties on God for He cares about us. We must attempt to mirror God's caring within Christ's church.

Being realistic

The Apostle Paul says:

"We know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us."

Romans 8:28;35:37

As Christians we know the Scriptures are true. We know God will work for the good in our lives of suffering as the Apostle says. We know that suffering will not separate us from Christ. We know that to survive trials in our suffering makes us conquerors. It is true and we know this. But there are those who suffer among us who *feel* like there is no purpose in their anguish. They can *feel* like tribulation or distress is separating them from the love of Christ. It can *feel* as if they are not conquerors, but the conquered. In relation to physical affliction and pain resulting from this James tells us: "Is any among you suffering? Let him pray" (5:13). There are those among us who suffer, who pray in hope for relief of their anguish, and yet they still suffer. We are called to endure, but this should never have to be a private endurance. At times a suffering person will need to rely on your faith, and your faith does affect others (Lk. 5:18-20).

When the Scriptures speak of trials and suffering it often does so in such a general way, that many find it difficult to apply them to their *specific* situation. This is troublesome. The idea is that "tribulation" in the world means to be ready for *anything*. To speak of trials and suffering in general is not to preclude any possibility.

Some suffer because of a general lack of significance or meaning to their life living the "meaninglessness" (vanity) of Ecclesiastes (Eccles. 1:2ff.) without the Promise of deliverance. However, often there is a recognizable cause

for suffering. Abuse, in the form of self-abuse (e.g., alcoholism, drugs) or from external causes such as, physical beatings, sexual assault, child neglect, putting children down constantly as incompetent, as well as emotional (psychological) torment resulting from broken homes, incurable illness, divorce, loss of work or death all have a recognizable cause. Spiritual depression can arise out of any of these cases.

The care someone needs will depend on the cause of their grief. Suffering will happen to Christians alike, "throughout the world." But obviously not all suffer through the same kinds of things. *How* one suffers will depend on how Satan attempts to "devour" them, and what *specific* evil comes upon them. Any suffering, by anyone – believer or non-believer – is trying to say the least. For a Christian, suffering has the unique characteristic of knowing God is There. Whereas for the non-believer this hope is absent (Eph. 2:12). The Christian questions *why*? It has been said that in all Job's suffering his greatest test was to endure suffering without knowing *why* he suffered (Job 33:13). The test of trusting God, that some greater good is to come out of this, without knowing *why me*? *Why this specific evil*? This is perhaps the greatest trial. These are tough questions. They are real questions which some say we have no right to ask. But we do ask them, as Job asked them. Concerning the story of the lame man at Bethzatha (John 5:1-18). Augustine observed that of all the multitude which lay suffering from infirmities, Jesus chose just one to heal. Why only one? Why only one, asked Augustine, when with His word He could have raised them all up?⁴

Christians cannot hide from the suffering in the world or in the church. By pursuing this issue we are not denying trust in God. We are not giving in to doubt about the saving action of Christ. We are facing the facts of life in this world, which involves our difficult calling in the church to minister *care to the souls* while we are suffering in hope for things to come.

¹Rev. W. Pouwelse, *Like Living Stones*, (Premier Publishing: Winnipeg, 1985) p. 64.

²Cf. Ex. 32:1-10; Deut. 11:16-17; 29:16-18; 2 Kings 24:20, for example.

³Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, (Reformed and Free Publishing Association, reprint 1985) p. 117.

⁴*Tractates on the Gospel of John 17*, in P. Schaff, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st sermon, p. 111, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956). **6**

1992

The Year in Review

By J. Visscher

It hardly seems possible but here we are at the end of another year. "Where" you ask, "have the past twelve months gone? How could they have passed by so quickly?" The adage that "time flies" seems to have much truth to it. Nevertheless, the fact that the days speed by should not be viewed only from a negative angle, for as Christians we should at the same time place the matter of time within the context of Christ's coming again. On the negative side this means that we are one year older, but on the positive side we are also one year closer to the return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Yes, and once He comes in all of His glory, the swift passage of time will no longer be something to lament or to reminisce about. Then time itself will be transformed and become immaterial.

The 100th Anniversary of the Union

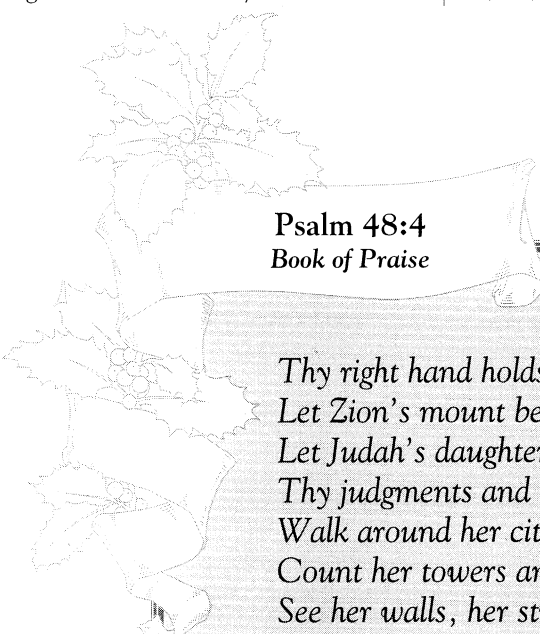
Only we are not there yet and that means that we can still review the events of the year of our Lord 1992. In so doing there are two events that have probably received more attention than any other. The first is that this past year marked the 100th anniversary of the Union of 1892. For those of you who know your church history, you will be aware that in 1892 there was in the Netherlands a great union of the churches which had come out of the First Secession of 1834 and the Second Secession of 1886. That union in turn laid the basis for the establishment of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, out of which the Canadian Reformed Churches would emerge in the middle of the next century.

This 100th anniversary received quite some attention. Dr. J. DeJong, our

Professor of Church History, spoke about it to church members in both the eastern and western parts of the country. In the Hamilton area, a series of three meetings were organized around this event. Among those participating from our churches were the Revs. J. Mulder, Cl. Stam, and G.H. Visscher, as well as the Drs. J. DeJong, J. Faber, and F.G. Oosterhoff. Participants also came from the Christian Reformed Church, the Free Reformed Church, and the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church. From the reports received, these public meetings were attended by thousands and

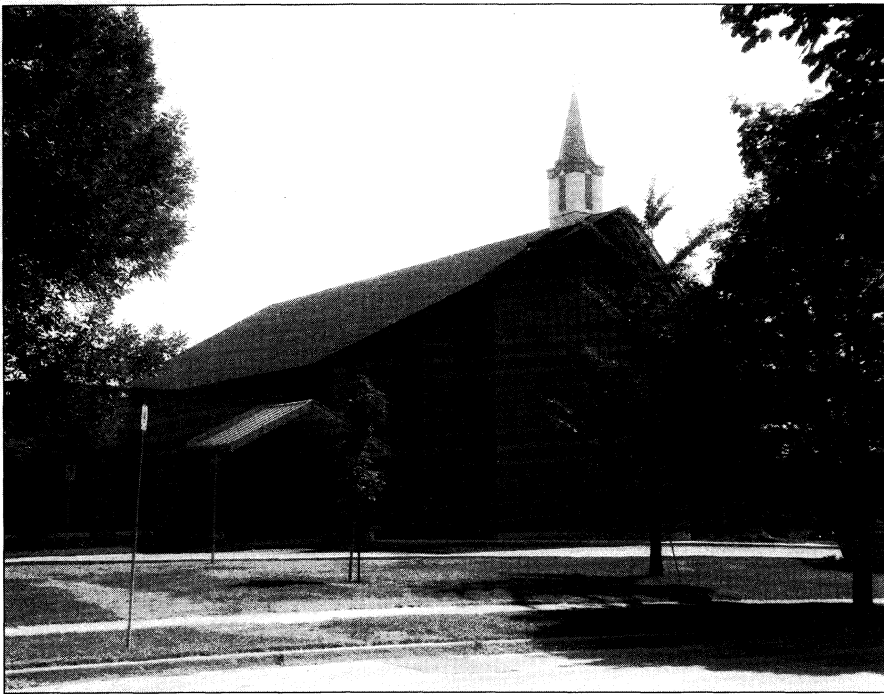
served to put the matter of the unity of the church in the spotlight.

And indeed, that is where it belongs. Contrary to what so many believe in our day, the unity of the church does matter. It is not justified to relegate this to the spiritual realm only and to say, "as long as we are one in the Spirit, it does not matter what we do locally as churches of Jesus Church." The church must always listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd and conform her life to His wishes, and surely it is His wish, as well as His prayer, that the church should be one (John 10; 17; Eph. 4). As Canadian Reformed



Psalm 48:4
Book of Praise

*Thy right hand holds the victory;
Let Zion's mount be glad in Thee!
Let Judah's daughters with rejoicing
Thy judgments and Thy truth be voicing.
Walk around her citadels,
Count her towers and crenelles,
See her walls, her strong foundations,
Tell the coming generations:
This is God, who leaves us never;
He will be our Guide forever.*



Church building – Burlington East

Churches, it has always been one of our emphases that we are open to union with all those who desire to stand fast on the same basis of the Word of God and the Confessions of the church. May that remain so and may we, for our part, do whatever we can to remove whatever stumbling blocks we may have placed in the way.

General Synod 1992

Another general highlight during this past year was the fact that 1992 was the year when a general synod convened in Lincoln. For quite some time already the convening church has been busy preparing for this event. In turn the churches became involved when they received the provisional agendas, as well as the various reports and submissions that would be under discussion.

Seeing that elsewhere in this issue, as well as in subsequent issues, more will be said about this synod, it is not necessary to say too much about it here. If I am allowed (as past chairman) a few remarks on this event, it would be to as yet convey public thanks to the church at Lincoln for their marvellous efforts in organizing, hosting and feeding the delegates. In addition, this is perhaps also the place to express appreciation to the members of synod for the excellent way in which they did their work. They did it all with a maximum amount of effort and cooperation.

To them goes the credit for this being one of the shortest synods on record.

Churches

During this year the number of churches increased from 43 to 44. The Canadian Reformed Church at Chatsworth, Ontario, was instituted and joined the ranks of the federation. A request was received from the Christ Church in Denver, Colorado, to join but it did not meet with the approval of Classis Alberta-Manitoba.

With regard to the growth in number of members, the most recent *yearbook*, as well as past *yearbooks*, reveal a steady but not spectacular increase. At the close of 1992 the total membership is expected to be about 13,500.

Locally, churches were faced with various situations of either growth, decline or holding steady. Among some of the smallest churches, such as Lower Sackville, Laurel, Blue Bell, and Ottawa, there is a strong desire to see more people join the church and thus make them more viable and eventually self-supporting. Other churches, such as Abbotsford, Burlington-West, Carman, Edmonton-Providence, Langley and Winnipeg have the opposite problem. Their membership is either so large, or growing so fast, that the buildings can hardly contain them.

In Burlington, it has been decided to discuss the current catchment areas for

the three congregations. This may, or may not, lead to some realignment in the future. In the western part of the Fraser Valley of BC, there has also been some discussion about areas; however, the absence of any fixed boundaries between the churches makes for a more fluid situation.

Ministers

During this past year there was quite some movement as far as ministers is concerned. Rev. J. de Gelder moved all the way from the Netherlands to Smithville, Ontario. Rev. P.G. Feenstra left Guelph for the newly established church at Chatsworth. Rev. E. Kampen went from Edmonton to Port Kells, B.C. Rev. G.Ph. van Popta exchanged Ottawa for Taber, Alberta. Rev. C. VanSpronsen moved from Vernon to Surrey. Rev. G.H. Visscher left Surrey for Burlington-West. Rev. C. Wieske returned to Ontario and took up his service in the church at Chatham.

In slightly different situations, Candidate R. Sietsma of the Netherlands, was called by the church at Hamilton for missionary work in Brazil. He passed his classical examination in Ontario-South and has since become Rev. Sietsma. The Rev. T. Hoogsteen was received and examined as a minister and officially began his work in the Rockway congregation. Candidate J. Ludwig was ordained as minister of the Word and commenced his work as pastor of the church at London, Ontario. The Rev. E. Venema of the Netherlands accepted a call to serve the church at Surrey as missionary in Brazil. Rev. J. VanRietschoten retired from active service in the church at Chatham and has moved to Carman, Manitoba where he and his wife hope to enjoy their sunset years.

On a sadder note, 1992 was also the year when the Lord visited the Rev. Cl. Stam family with grief. In His infinite wisdom He took unto Himself, Edward Martin Stam. At the same time He spared the life of Richard Stam and is blessing his return to good health. May the Lord continue to strengthen Rev. Stam, his wife Margaret, and their children.

In far away Brazil there is another matter that requires our attention and that is the ill health of one of our missionaries. The Rev. R.F. Boersema experienced difficulties with one of his eyes and required surgery. Because of complications he flew home to Canada and was operated on twice without much success. The latest news is that he will require a third operation. Let us



Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College

pray for its success. Rev. Boersema already has limited vision in his one eye, so the loss of the other could have serious implications for his life and work.

Finally, there is one more minister that should be mentioned, namely the Rev. M.K. Marren. For various reasons which do not need to be mentioned here he resigned as missionary to the native people in the Bulkley Valley region of Northern BC. This action inflicted a serious blow on the mission work. At the same time, it shocked many members of our churches in Smithers and elsewhere. We do not know what the future holds for him and for his family, but may our prayer be that in due time and in the proper way they will come back to the church of our Lord.

Calls

I did not keep a log of all of the calls extended in 1992 by vacant churches to ministers and candidates at home and abroad. Let us just say that many were extended. The result of all of this activity is that some churches were blessed with a new pastor and teacher, while many others remained or became vacant. Among the ranks of the latter are the churches at Abbotsford, Ancaster, Brampton, Burlington-South, Edmonton-Emmanuel, Elora, Grand Rapids, Guelph, Lower Sackville, Neerlandia, Ottawa, and Vernon. Not all of these churches are in a position to call, but they are all without a minister. Hopefully, this situation will change for many of them in 1993.

Buildings

The church at Vernon moved into its new premises earlier in the year. After some years in rental facilities in various parts of town, they acquired a very suitable piece of property and built a fine building for themselves. It is even flexible enough to accommodate all the visitors that flock to their area during the holiday months.

The church at Coaldale met for most of 1992 in the gymnasium of the Coaldale Christian School; however, towards the end of the year they moved into their new building. I have not seen it but I have been told that it is an impressive and functional building. May it

serve its intended purpose for many, many years.

The church at Port Kells bought a large and comfortable home for the Rev. E. Kampen and his family. There is enough property with it that plans are being made to erect a church building some time in the future.

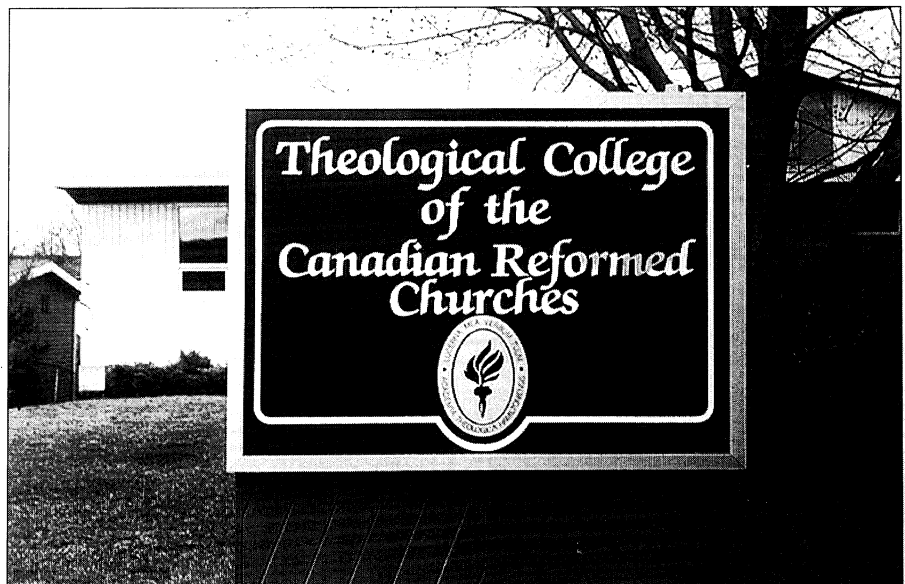
No doubt there are other building projects that were finalized over the last twelve months, but seeing that this scribe has only limited sources of information, news of them cannot be passed on to you.

Theological College

Our Theological College in Hamilton, ON, continued to serve the needs of the churches during the past year. Although only one student graduated in 1992 and entered the ministry, the increase in enrolment to fifteen students is a good sign for the future.

The Professors DeJong, Gootjes, Geertsema and VanDam did their work diligently and were blessed with good health. Special mention should be made of the fact that Prof. J. Geertsema was granted the status of a professor-with-tenure by General Synod 1992. This means that his probationary period is over and he will hopefully be able to serve the churches in his special capacity for many years to come.

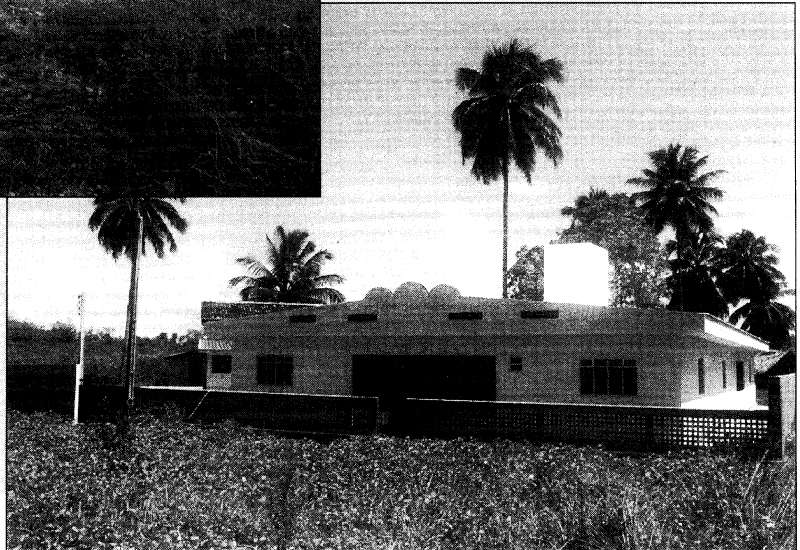
General Synod 1992 made some other decisions that have a bearing on our College. It approved a sabbatical policy for the professors. In brief, this means that once a professor has served for twelve years he will be entitled to a sabbatical year. Naturally, there are some conditions attached to this in





◀ Church building at Kawagit

View of the nursery complex in São José da Coroa Grande, Brazil ▶



terms of finding suitable replacement help, as well as having whatever project he plans to work on approved by the Board. It is expected that this will lead in the future to more publications coming from the pens of our professors.

The Women's Saving Action continued to collect funds from across the country and to use it for the expansion of the library. Our sister churches in Australia also continued their generous support.

Mission

The churches remained active in the area of foreign mission. The Rev. H. Versteeg is our only labourer on the mission field in Irian Jaya. For a good part of 1992 he was on furlough with his wife and children and visited family members in different parts of the country, as well as visited the supporting churches in Ontario. He hopes to return to Irian Jaya in the new year; however, complications have set in with the result that the government may no longer permit entry to missionaries and their families. More may be

known about this development by the time that you read this. In any case, our fervent prayer should be that the Lord will continue to create an opening for this work to proceed and to become more firmly established.

In Brazil, where our other missionaries and mission aid workers are busy, there appear to be no visa problems at the moment, except of course for a lot of red tape. As mentioned already, Rev. R.F. Boersema has not been able to do all of his regular work. Rev. P.K. Meijer continues to enjoy good health and is making plans to spend some years in Recife. Rev. E. Venema will be leaving for Brazil as soon as the papers are in order. Rev. J. Kroeze is busy trying to establish a missionary foothold in Maceió, as well as getting ready for the arrival of the Rev. R. Sietsma and his family.

The mission aid workers in Brazil, br. and sr. G. Glas and br. and sr. J. Kuik spent a lot of their energy during this past year on the new nursery. An appeal for more financial help has gone out to the supporting churches in Western Canada and will hopefully result soon in a nurs-

ery that will be fully functional. Mention should also be made of the fact that for the very first time one of our schools sent volunteers to Brazil. Esther Bergsma and Tyler VanVliet traveled to the mission field as representatives of Credo High School in Langley, BC.

Native Mission

The church at Smithers continued its efforts to spread the gospel among the native people in its area. As previously mentioned, the departure of its missionary has set this work back. Nevertheless, there is every indication that the work goes on and that efforts are being made to look for a suitable replacement for the Rev. Marren.

Evangelism

In many of our churches the work of evangelism continued to have the attention of consistories, committees and members. Vacation Bible Schools were run last summer in many parts of the country. Radio broadcasting went on under the auspices of "The Voice of the Church." Magazines like *Evangel* and

various pamphlets were and are being distributed. Use is also being made of the Bible course produced by the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce. Various churches banded together and advertised its availability in local newspapers.

The Taskforce also approached the churches for assistance in publishing a brochure that will introduce our churches to others. If sufficient funding comes in, publication will take place and the churches will have yet another instrument at their disposal for letting their light shine.

Education

Nineteen-ninety-two was a difficult year for our Teachers' College in Hamilton in the sense that expenses remained ahead of income. A drive has been organized throughout the supporting community which should serve to bridge the gap. In the meantime, the College continues to train teachers for our Christian schools. From all accounts received, it is doing an excellent job.

Besides the financial hurdle, there is another one that continues to have the attention of the College, and that deals with government recognition. The provincial government in Ontario has never been found willing to consider such a step, and the present New

Democratic administration appears to be even less so. As a result, the possibilities for recognition are slim and that means that graduates will continue to have limited options as far as being hired across the country are concerned.

A number of schools either underwent renovations during this year or else renovations took place. The William of Orange School in Surrey experienced a considerable interior face-lift. More work may be undertaken in the new year. Credo Christian Elementary in Langley added some classrooms and a gym. John Calvin School in Yarrow was also extensively remodeled. In other parts of the country schools experienced the same as enrolment went up, space declined and facilities suffered wear and tear.

One further remark needs to be made and that is that the financial health of our school societies across the country does vary. Much of this is connected to whether or not government funding is available. Across the West, where schools received various levels of financial support, most of our schools are able to function fairly well and to budget for most of their educational needs. In Ontario, however, the situation is different for there the schools are forced to do with a lot less. The refusal of the government to even recog-

nize the existence of Christian schools means that no funds are forthcoming at all. Indeed, it is a deplorable situation when the citizens of a certain province are taxed for the public system and at the same time have to finance completely an alternative system.

In closing

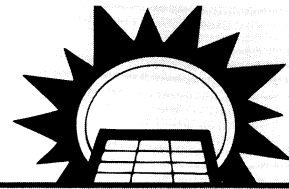
It would appear that we are in danger of closing this year-end review on a downward note. Nevertheless, that should not be the case. For in the midst of economic recession and other difficulties, we must not lose sight of the many blessings that we have received over the last twelve months. The Lord has sustained us as a federation. He has been good to us, even if He has put us to the test from time to time. Let us continue to beseech Him for His mercy and blessings also in the new year that we are about to enter. For remember that each of our years must be seen and placed within the context of our Lord Jesus Christ and His coming again. One day He will appear and then He will remove all the tears, all the temptations, all the struggles, all the sins of His people and establish us forever. What a confidence can be ours today! What a hope we have for tomorrow!

6

Watford's Memories!



A family fiesta fun day was held on June 6, 1992 at Boersema's place. Young and old joined in playing games, with a wiener roast in the evening.



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is Christmas time again. The Lord gives the world another opportunity to believe the truth of Christmas, and to turn their hearts to Him. This Christmas could be the last one, for we are coming closer and closer to the day of Christ's return.

The church is also given the opportunity to concentrate on Christmas, even though we remember it all through the year. Every Sunday we confess, "I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son our Lord. Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary..." That is the message of Christmas, which we can hear every week.

When Jesus, the Son of God, was born many years ago, there were not many people who celebrated His birth. Joseph and Mary did, but it was not easy for them, for things were not like they had expected. Jesus was born in a stable, only the shepherds came to worship Him. Later on some rich, wise men came to worship Him; they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. Shortly after that Joseph and Mary had to flee with Jesus to Egypt, because King Herod wanted to kill Him. And when Joseph and Mary took Him to the temple, the house of God His Father, there was nobody there who recognized Him, not even the priests and the highpriest. Yes, there were two very old people, Simeon and Anna, they knew who He was. But not many paid attention to the words of those old people.

How was it that Simeon and Anna knew and believed that this baby was Jesus, the promised Saviour? How was it that Joseph and Mary still could believe that Mary's baby was God's Son? How is it that we still may hold on to the truth that Jesus saved us from our sins, and that He will return on the clouds one day?

Simeon and Anna knew it, because the Lord worked that knowledge in their hearts through His Holy Spirit. It says in Luke 2 that Simeon was "inspired by the Spirit." With Anna it was the same way. And so the two of them saw the baby and knew and believed through the Holy Spirit that He was Christ the Lord.

Joseph and Mary knew it very well, for the angel had told Mary about the special child that she was to get. The Lord had told Joseph, too, that Mary would be the mother of Jesus, God's Son, and that he, Joseph, had to take care of them. When everything became very confusing for them, they received faith and strength to believe through God's Holy Spirit.

And with us it is still the same. We have the Bible that tells us everything about the history of God's church. From God's promise of the Saviour to Adam and Eve, until the final fulfillment of His plan on the day of Christ's return. But knowing all those things is not enough, we have to believe it. For that we need faith, and faith is worked in our hearts by God's Holy Spirit. We have to pray for that every day. Only with God's help under the guidance of the Holy Spirit can we stand up against all the dangers in the world that pull us away from the Lord. We are special people, children of God's covenant, and God will never forsake His children.

Joseph and Mary had a difficult road to go, and yet they believed that God's promises were sure. That is how it is with us, too, even when our life is very difficult at times.

Such a difficult road was also given to Herman Wemekamp. Herman had multiple sclerosis, and as a result he was handicapped for many years. It was very difficult for him to sit in a wheelchair, or to be bedridden. Yet he knew that Christ suffered for our sins, much more than he, and that gave Herman comfort. On October the 27th the Lord has taken Herman out of his suffering into His eternal glory. We pray the Lord to be with Herman's wife, who also had a difficult road to go all these years, in taking care of her husband. We pray that she may expect God's strength and comfort now that she is alone, and has to get used to the big, empty spot in her life. She wants to say "thank you" to all of you who sent cards to Herman for his birthday on May 21 in the past years. She writes that those cards really gave them a "Ray of Sunshine" every year.

From the mailbox:

The parents of Adrian Dejong want to say "thank you" for all the cards (over 300!) that he received throughout the year. Adrian still receives Chemo therapy till January '93. Yet he is able to attend school full time, and he enjoys that very much. We thank the Lord for hearing our prayers in that Adrian is doing so much better.

The new year starts off with an impressive list of birthdays:

January 2: **Liz Koning**

Dicken's Field, Extended Care Centre, Room 210
14225 - 94th Street, Edmonton, AB T8E 6C6

January 7: **Christine Breukelman**

Box 666, Coaldale, AB TOK 0L0

January 10: **Robert Wierenga**

Box 115, Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0

January 17: **Henry Driegen**

72 Ross Road, RR 1, Abbotsford, BC V2S 1M3

January 17: **Grace Homan** and

January 19: **Janine Smid**

For both ladies the address is:
"ANCHOR" Home, 361 30th Road, RR 2
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0

January 27: **Hank Orsel**

705 Surrey Lane, Apt. 1201, Burlington, ON L7T 3Z4

Liz will be 32, Christine 21, Robert 12, Henry and Grace 37, Janine 23, and Hank, as the oldest of our corner 62. Happy Birthday to all of you!

Until next month,

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

General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches,

held at Lincoln, Ontario, November 3-18, 1992

1. Opening

On behalf of the convening church at Lincoln, the Rev. G.A. Snip called the meeting to order, requested all present to sing Psalm 146:1 and 3, read Deuteronomy 4:1-8, and led in prayer.

He extended a cordial welcome to the delegates and expressed the wish that the work of synod may be to the glory of God and the edification of Christ's church. The meeting sang Psalm 119:40.

The credentials are examined by the convening church. Present as delegates to synod are:

From Regional Synod East: Rev. D.G.J. Agema, Rev. W. den Hollander, Rev. P.G. Feenstra, Rev. Cl. Stam

and the elders H. Faber, J. Schouten, W. Smouter, and A. Witten.

From Regional Synod West: Rev. R. Aasman, Rev. C. Van Spronsen, Rev. J. Visscher, Rev. J.D. Wielenga, and the elders P. Meliefste, P. Vanderugten, P. vanderPol (alternate) and J. Werkman.

All delegates sign the attendance list.

2. Constitution of synod

The following officers are elected:

Chairman: Rev. J. Visscher

Vice-chairman: Rev. Cl. Stam

First Clerk: Rev. R. Aasman

Second Clerk: Rev. D.G.J. Agema

Synod is declared constituted, and the executive takes its place. The chairman, Rev. J. Visscher thanks synod for

the confidence expressed in the executive and expresses the wish for a blessed synod.

3. Time schedule and procedures

Synod adopted the following:

a. Final date for incoming mail is set for November 4, at 12:00 p.m. E.S.T. Time schedule: Monday-Friday (9-12, 2-5, 7-9). On Mondays synod will be opened at 9:30 a.m. Synod will not meet on Saturday, November 7 and 14.

Rev. G.A. Snip is seated as advisor to synod. It is noted that Rev. S.L. Phillips and Rev. G.I. Williamson will be present as fraternal delegates from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, while Rev.



Top row (l to r): Rev. C. Van Spronsen, A. Witten, Rev. J.D. Wielenga, P. Meliefste, P. Vanderugten, A. Kingma, (Clerk-secretary), Rev. P.G. Feenstra, Rev. W. den Hollander; middle row: Rev. S.L. Phillips (OPC), J. Werkman, J. Schouten, W. Smouter, H. Faber, P. vanderPol; seated: Rev. Cl. Stam, Rev. J. Visscher, Rev. R. Aasman, Rev. D.G.J. Agema

F. Walker will represent the Reformed Church in the United States as observer.

4. Agenda and advisory committees

The agenda is finalized and adopted. The following advisory committees are appointed:

Committee 1: Rev. J.D. Wielenga (convener), Rev. D.G.J. Agema, Elders A. Witten and P. Vanderugten.

Committee 2: Rev. W. den Hollander (convener), Rev. J. Visscher, Elders J. Werkman and J. Schouten.

Committee 3: Rev. P. Feenstra (convener), Rev. R. Aasman, and elders P. Meliefste and H. Faber.

Committee 4: Rev. C. Van Spronsen, Rev. Cl. Stam, and elders W. Smouter and P. VanderPol.

5. Theological College

Synod appointed as Governors of the Theological College the following active ministers and their substitutes:

From Eastern Canada: Rev. D.G.J. Agema, Rev. W. den Hollander, Rev. P.G. Feenstra (substitutes: Rev. G. Nederveen, Rev. P. Aasman, Rev. D. Moes, in that order).

From Western Canada: Rev. B.J. Berends, Rev. C. Van Spronsen, and Rev. J. Visscher (substitutes: Rev. R. Aasman, Rev. J. Moesker, Rev. P.K.A. de Boer, in that order).

The following non-ministers are appointed:

H.J. Sloots (nine years), K.J. Veldkamp (six years), A. vanEgmond (six years), H. Buist (three years), and C.G. Heeringa (three years).

Synod received the report of the Board of Governors for the period 1989-1992. Gratitude is expressed for the work of the retiring governors: Rev. P. Kingma, Rev. Cl. Stam, A.L. vanderHout, Rev. M. vanderWel, and Rev. J. van Rietschoten. Synod also expressed gratitude that the work at the College could continue without interruption and that "all instruction given is in harmony with the Word of God and in agreement with the confessions of the Canadian Reformed Churches."

Prof. J. Geertsema is appointed as Principal of the College for the period from September 1993 to August 1996, while Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes is designated as Principal for the period from 1996-1999.

Synod adopted a By-Law clarifying the retirement of Governors. Another By-Law (regarding a Publication Committee) is referred back to the Board

with suggested changes. A "sabbatical policy" for professors, presented by the Board, is approved.

Synod sustained an appeal from the Senate regarding the confidential procedure followed in appointing new professors.

6. Bible translations

Synod received the report of the Committee on Bible Translations. The committee is thanked for its work. It is decided to continue the committee with the mandate "to do a comparative study of the NASB, NIV, and NKJV, making use of past studies, in order to determine which one translation can be positively recommended for use by the churches, whereby the criteria are: faithfulness to the original text and linguistic character of the translation."

The committee is also to give "due consideration the decision of Synod

Bedfordale, WA, 1992, regarding Bible translations."

7. Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity

In answer to the overtures of the church at Vernon, BC and Classis Ontario North, synod decided to appoint Deputies for the promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity, consisting of an equal number of committee members from the two Regional Synod districts, "to promote the unity of Reformed believers who have left the Christian Reformed Church." These Deputies receive the following mandate:

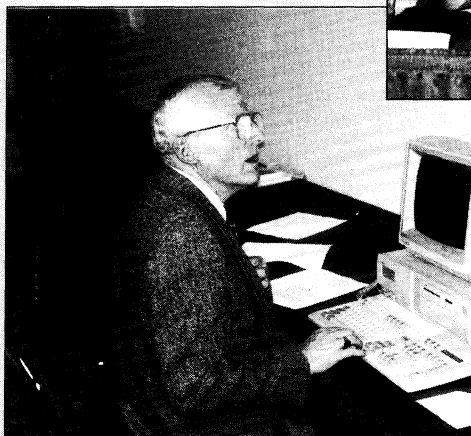
- a. To make their presence known for the purpose of information and consultation;
- b. To represent the churches, whenever invited, at assemblies or meetings held for the purpose of coming to ecclesiastical unity;



Rev. Cl. Stam



Rev. R. Aasman



Mr. W. Smouter

- c. To report on its activities to the churches and to the next general synod.

8. "Book of Praise"

Synod dealt with the report of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*, gratefully acknowledging the work of the committee. It was decided to send a letter to sr. J.G. van Huisstede expressing the appreciation of synod for the work which her late husband did for the churches.

From the new mandate of the committee, it may be mentioned that the committee was asked to update the general Preface to the *Book of Praise*, to prepare an introduction to the Church Order, to insert the Preface to the Canons of Dort and one for the Heidelberg Catechism.

It is the task of the committee to see to it "that the *Book of Praise* remains available to the churches at a reasonable price," to make the "necessary arrangements with printers and others for the publication of the *Book of Praise*" and "to maintain its corporate status in order to be able to protect the interests of the Canadian Reformed Churches in all matters pertaining to the *Book of Praise*."

It may be noted that synod also asked the Standing Committee to serve the next synod with "a detailed evaluation" of the "alternate melody," the "Teitsma adaptation" and the "Schoof version" of Hymn IA (The Apostles' Creed).

9. Relations with churches abroad

Synod dealt with the report of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA).

Synod decided to continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, and the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, according to the adopted rules. Appreciation is expressed to the sister churches in Australia for their support of the Theological College.

The committee is mandated, if possible, to attend the meeting organized by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to discuss concerns regarding the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

With respect to the proposed rules for "Ecclesiastical Fellowship," the following rules are adopted by synod:

- a. The churches shall assist each other in the maintenance, defence, and promotion of the Reformed

faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy, and be watchful for deviations,

- b. The churches shall inform each other of the decisions taken by their broadest assemblies, if possible by sending each other their Acts or Minutes and otherwise, at least by sending the decisions relevant to the respective churches (if possible, in translation).
- c. The churches shall consult each other when entering into relations with third parties.
- d. The churches shall accept one another's attestations or certificates of good standing, which also means admitting members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of that attestation or certificate.
- e. The churches shall in principle open their pulpits for each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted in the respective churches.

In exercising these relations, the churches shall strive to implement also the following:

- f. When major changes or additions are being considered to the confessions, church government or liturgy, the churches shall be informed in order that as much as possible consultation can take place before a final decision is taken.
- g. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to participate as much as local regulations permit.

10. Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

With respect to the contacts with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, synod decided to continue the Committee for Contact with the OPC. In response to a question of this committee, synod decided "to conclude from previous synods' decisions that the divergences evaluated in 1971 and in 1986 have been sufficiently discussed to confirm that these are not impediments to ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC, but may be discussed within the framework of church unity."

Synod decided to continue the discussion with respect to divergences which "are considered to be impediments to ecclesiastical fellowship, and to see whether these divergences stem from ecclesiological and/or historical differences."

The OPC will be informed that the matters "which still require resolution for the establishment of full ecclesiastical fellowship" are:

- a. The matter of confessional membership;
- b. The matter of supervision of the Lord's table;
- c. The matter of the relationship with the Christian Reformed Church.

With respect to a question regarding the admission of former OPC congregations into the Canadian Reformed Churches (while the OPC and the Canadian Reformed Churches have recognized one another as true churches and function in a "temporary ecclesiastical contact relationship"), synod considered, on the one hand, "in the interim, it is understandable that when requests for admission reach the Canadian Reformed Churches, these cannot be rejected simply by stating that the OPC has been declared a true church," but added, on the other hand, "that the Canadian Reformed Churches – given their recognition of the OPC as true church – must exercise greater caution when considering admission of congregations which have separated themselves from the OPC, and first engage in open consultation with the ecclesiastical assemblies involved."

Synod expressed the fervent wish "that the (outstanding) matters may be resolved so that the way to ecclesiastical fellowship, in accordance with the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, may be realized."

The fraternal delegates of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church participated in some committee discussions, while Rev. S.L. Phillips addressed the plenary session of synod on behalf of the OPC.

11. Contact with the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) and the Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire (ERCZ)

Synod accepted the recommendation of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad to mandate the committee "to investigate the RCUS with a view to entering into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, making use of the findings of the church at Carman."

Gratitude was expressed for the desire of the Reformed Church in the United States to establish fraternal relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches. Rev. F. Walker addressed synod on behalf of the Reformed Church in the United States.



The Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad was also mandated to investigate the African sister church of the RCUS in Zaire, the "Église Réformée Confessante au Zaire," and to report to the next synod on its findings in this respect.

12. Presbyterian Church of Korea (KOSIN) – PCK

Synod invited Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes, professor of dogmatology at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches and formerly professor at the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church of Korea at Busan, to provide information with the respect to the PCK.

With respect to the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin) synod decided to note with gratitude that the obstacles to Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the PCK have been removed and that the offer of ecclesiastical fellowship with the PCK may be joyfully accepted.

The Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad was given the following mandate, "to inform the Presbyterian Church of Korea of our acceptance of their requests for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, using the adopted rules." The committee is "to formalize this relationship in a manner satisfactory to both church federations."

The chairman of synod noted that "this is a historic moment for the Cana-

dian Reformed churches" in that the Presbyterian Church of Korea is now "our fourth sister church." The hope was expressed that God will bless this relationship to benefit both the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Presbyterian Church in Korea.

13. The Free Church of Scotland (FCS)

Upon recommendation of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad, synod decided "with gratitude to recognize the Free Church of Scotland as a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ" and "to offer the FCS, including the FCS congregations in Canada a relationship of Ecclesiastical fellowship, according to the adopted rules."

The committee will convey the decision of synod to the Free Church of Scotland and will advise the churches and the next synod of the response of the FCS.

The chairman of synod at this point expressed thankfulness that a sister church relationship could be extended to the Free Church of Scotland. He expressed the hope that this decision, also, may serve to edify both the Free Church of Scotland as well as the Canadian Reformed Churches.

14. International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)

Synod received the report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad with respect to the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). Even though some of the "constitutional amendments" which the Canadian Reformed Churches had proposed to the ICRC Langley 1989 were not adopted, synod accepted the explanation given, noting "the advisory character of the ICRC."

Synod decided that the Canadian Reformed Churches "continue to participate in the ICRC" and that the churches "be represented at the next meeting of the ICRC, Zwolle 1993" by two delegates. Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes will be delegated as advisor to this meeting (with Dr. J. Faber as alternate).

15. Mandate of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad

The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) recommended to synod that its mandate could be better fulfilled if it could respond to the various requests received, as well as invitations extended, if feasible.

Synod decided to give the committee the following mandate:

- a. To investigate diligently all requests received for entering into ecclesiastical fellowship;
- b. To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches;
- c. To report on its findings with suitable recommendations to the next general synod.

This mandate allows the CRCA to further investigate also the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) and the Église Reformée Confessante au Zaire (ERCZ).

In connection with these growing contacts and the cost involved, synod decided "that the CRCA submits to Synod 1995 a financial statement and budget" for its activities.

16. Appeals

Synod considered various appeals from churches and/or persons. The following may be noted.

With respect to appeals against a decision of Regional Synod West, June 16, 1992, upholding a decision of Classis Alberta/Manitoba of March 17-19, 1992, not to grant the request of the Christ American Reformed Church at Denver for affiliation with the Canadian Reformed Churches, synod considered that the decision of classis "does not sufficiently reflect appreciation for the difficulties resulting from (the) temporary and undefined relationship" (i.e. temporary contact relationship with the OPC). Synod also considered that "it is regrettable that a motion for (proper) investigation (of the request at Denver) was defeated by classis." Synod referred to an earlier decision that such requests "be dealt with in open consultation with the ecclesiastical assemblies involved." The matter was thus referred to the minor assemblies.

With respect to an appeal against a decision of Regional Synod East, November 13 and 14, 1991 about the use of tapes (of non-Canadian Reformed origin) in catechetical instruction, synod considered that "a major assembly may sustain an appeal against catechism instruction when it is proven that this instruction (whether this deals with the instructor, method of instruction or contents of instruction) is contrary to the Scriptures, Confessions and the Church Order." Synod decided that in this respect Regional Synod East 1991 exceeded its jurisdiction. At the same time

synod considered that "a minister must not give the appearance of abdicating his duty as an instructor and must be sensitive to the fact that the use of a large number of tapes could call into question the performance of his duties."

17. Miscellaneous

In the course of its proceedings, synod dealt also with the following items:

- a. Inspection of the General Archives: found to be in good order.
- b. Report of the church at Carman re the General Fund: \$1.00 per year will be levied per communicant member for the next three years.
- c. Report Address Church: three requests for information were received; two were answered.
- d. Finances General Synod 1989 Winnipeg: the books were audited by the church at Carman and found to be in order.

18. Appointments

Besides the ones already noted above, the following appointments were made:

- a. Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad: Rev. Cl. Stam, Rev. J. Visscher (convener), Rev. C. Van Spronsen, Rev. E. Kampen, and the brs. H.A. Berends, A. Nap, J. VanderStoep, and S.H. de Boer.
- b. Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity: Eastern Canada: Rev. W. den Hollander, Dr. C. Van Dam (convener) and br. H.T. van derVelde.

Western Canada: Rev. J.D. Wielenaga, Rev. R. Aasman, and br. P. Van Woudenberg.

- c. Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*: Dr. J. De Jong, Rev. G. Nederveen, Dr. W. Helder (convener) and br. M. Kampen.
- d. Committee on Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church: Rev. D.G.J. Agema (convener), Rev. P.G. Feenstra, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, and the brs. T.M.P. VanderVen and G. Nordeman.
- e. Committee on Bible Translations: Prof. J. Geertsema (convener), Dr. C. Van Dam, Rev. P. Aasman, Rev. G.H. Visscher, and br. W. Smouter.
- f. Churches for days of Fasting and Prayer: the churches at Burlington West (Ontario) and Edmonton (Providence).
- g. Church for the Administration of the General Fund: the church at Carman, MB.
- h. Church for the Archives of General Synod: the church at Burlington East (Ebenezer), ON.
- i. Church for the Inspection of the General Archives: the church at Burlington West, ON.
- j. Church to audit the finances of General Synod 1992: the church at Rockway, ON.
- k. The Address Church: Canada: the church at Burlington East, ON. U.S.A.: the church at Grand Rapids, MI.
- l. The Committee for the Printing of the Acts: the first and second clerks of General Synod 1992.
- m. The convening church for the next General Synod 1995: the church at Abbotsford, BC (mid-May 1995).


19. Closing


The agenda having been completed by synod, the chairman, Rev. J. Visscher spoke a few words of gratitude for the good harmony in which the work could be done. He expressed the wish that the decisions of synod may be blessed by the Lord. The church at Lincoln and the ladies' committee are presented with tokens of appreciation.

The vice-chairman, Rev. Cl. Stam, thanked the chairman for his able and charitable leadership. He requested the delegates to sing Hymn 58:1 and 2, and led in thanksgiving and prayer.

On Wednesday, November 18, 1992, at approximately 9:30 p.m., General Synod Lincoln 1992 was closed.

For General Synod Lincoln 1992,

Cl. Stam, vice-chairman e.t. 


CHURCH NEWS

DECLINED to Edmonton Immanuel
Rev. J. Moesker
of Cloverdale, BC

CALLED to Abbotsford, BC
Rev. C. Bouwman
of Byford, W. Australia

Inauguration of the Coaldale Canadian Reformed Church Building

The Coaldale congregation, along with many guests and interested persons, assembled on the evening of October 30, 1992 for the inauguration of the new church building. Joy and humble thanks filled the hearts of those present. This happy humility was reflected in the events of the evening.

The dedication service was led by Rev. Wielenga. After singing and prayer, Rev. Wielenga read from Acts 16:6-26 and delivered an address on Acts 16:13. His words took us back to the beginnings of the western church at Philippi 2000 years ago. Then the place of worship was under the open sky on the riverbank and the congregation consisted of a few women. Yet God, through Paul's preaching of Jesus crucified, built the church. Today we have a beautiful new building on the prairie of southern Alberta. Quite a change! Yet it is essentially the same – the apostolic Word is still being preached, the people are still gathering to hear and the foundation is still the cross of Jesus Christ. He is our cornerstone. The cross on the roof of this new church building testifies to that.

The early church in Philippi was ready to give, even though they did not have it easy. They, in fact, were one of the first persecuted churches. Paul and Silas' imprisonment makes that clear. Although the earthquake God sent to free His servants earned a degree of respect and tolerance from the government authorities, the church in Philippi received no approval or support from them. This did not hinder the church in Philippi in their readiness to give. Lydia opened her home, Paul and Silas gave up their freedom and eventually Paul gave his life. We, too, are God's servants and we are seated here under



Coaldale Canadian Reformed Church building

the cross, the symbol of Christ's self-sacrificing love.

Tonight, Rev. Wielenga said, we give this building and this organ to God's service. However, if our freedom is taken away, if governments change, we still must be ready to give – be it without a building, without an organ. Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns to God in prison! Let us be ready, if necessary, to follow their example.

The early Christians did not begin to experience freedom to worship until after the year 312 when Constantine saw the appearance of a cross in the sky, "By this sign, conquer." The result

was that the cross was accepted as the symbol of Christianity and Christianity became the world religion. Later, God brought the church overseas to America. Rev. Wielenga pointed out that 500 years ago the sails on Columbus' ships displayed the cross.

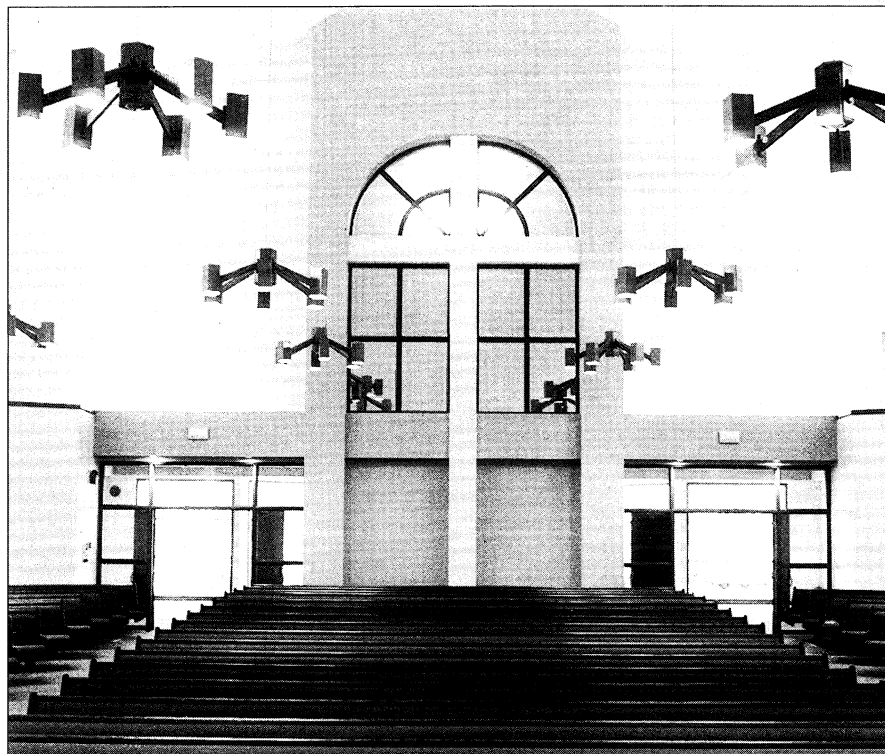
The cross, Rev. Wielenga concluded, is also the sign of our hope. The empty cross is a sign of victory over the world, over sin and over death. At the end of days, the sign of the Son of Man, the cross, will again appear in the sky. It will be seen far and wide, visible to all. Then we will not need the basilica, for we will go to the city of our King!

Then came the dedication. Everyone stood. These words were spoken: "Herewith we declare this building, received by God's favour, pledged and dedicated to His service" and the audience responded in unison, "Amen." Singing and prayer ended this part of the evening and br. C. Van Seters took the floor as M.C. for the remaining portion.

In his opening comments, br. Van Seters thanked and praised God, our Creator and Maker, for bestowing on us so many gifts and skills which have made this building possible. Acknowledgment of the efforts of numerous persons and organizations was then made. Br. Van Seters ended his introduction by repeating these lines from the opening song (Psalm 150);

*Hallelujah! Praise the LORD!
Sing His praises! Hallelujah!*

And His praises were sung! The audience heard boys and girls from the Junior Choir, a male quartet and the adult choir "Rejoice in the Lord" sang numerous beautiful pieces. These performances were interspersed with presentations of keys. Br. H. Lubbers, on behalf of the building committee, presented a symbolic key of the building to the church consistory. Rev. Wielenga in return expressed appreciation to the committee for their time and effort.



The organ builders, Mr. Jacob and Jan VanderVeer (father and son) presented a key and a name plaque for the organ. They expressed wishes, too, that the organ might be used for many years in God's service.

Various representatives were then given an opportunity to speak. We heard congratulatory messages from: Rev. Tuininga (by letter) – *Trinity Reformed Church – Lethbridge*
Br. Meyer – *Providence Church, Edmonton*
Rev. van Popta – *Canadian Reformed Church, Taber*
Mayor Hann (also a church member) – *Town of Coaldale*
Mr. H. DeVlieger of *Venture Holdings* (the contractor)
Br. H. Veenendaal – *church choir*
Reeve Mr. Heinen – *County of Lethbridge*

These speakers not only shared our joy but expressed wishes that we continue to praise God (from whom all blessings flow), that we be a light in this world and a testimony to those around us. One representative commented that the building, being situated on a main highway, is a witness in itself.

The ceremony was closed with the singing of Psalm 43:3,4 and prayer. All those present could then stay a while longer to enjoy fellowship and refreshments in the spacious church lobby. It was a beautiful evening – another highlight in the memories of the members of the Coaldale church and, we hope, a blessing to the many others who attended.



Interior of the Coaldale church building

Hilda Tams 

Institution of the Canadian Reformed Church at Chatsworth

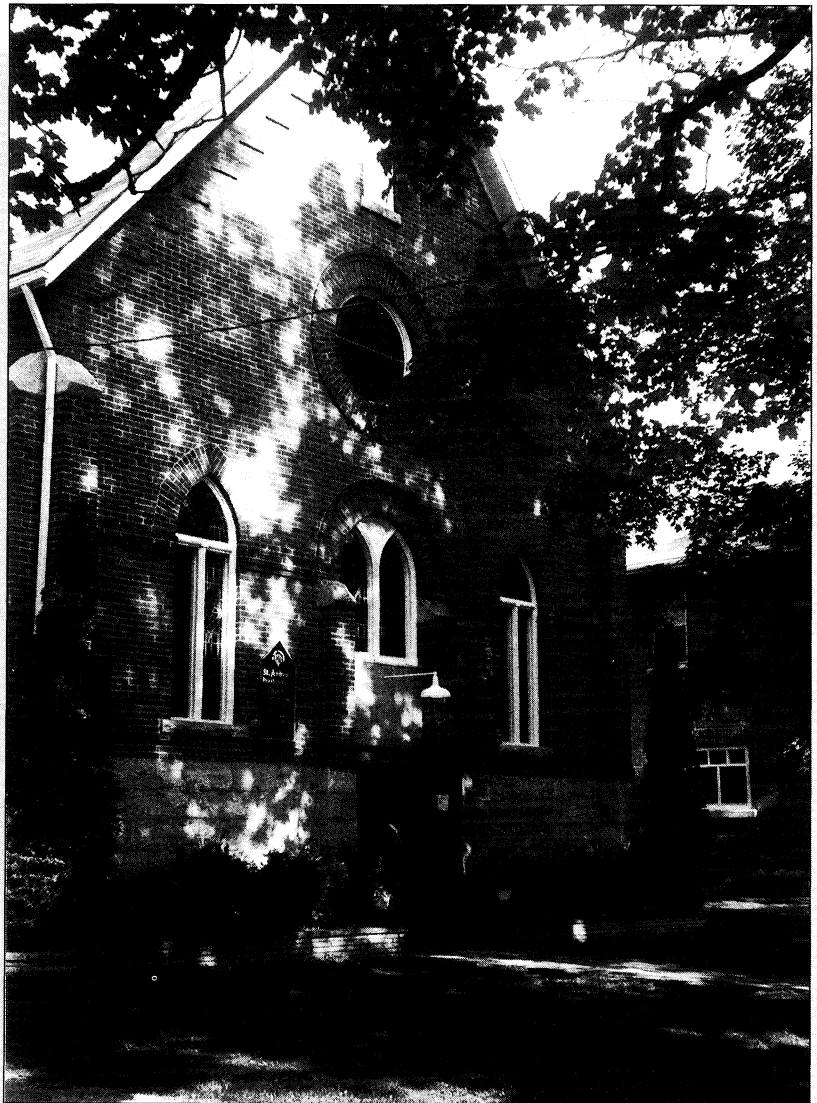
On July 5th, 1992 in the afternoon service, only because of the Lord's work, the House Congregation meeting in Chatsworth, was officially instituted. The service was held at the Chatsworth United Church, a larger building than our regular meeting place of the St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. All of the 400 plus seats were filled to capacity with friends, family and visitors eager to witness this historic occasion. Rev. W. den Hollander, who had been very active in the House Congregation led the service. The theme for the sermon, based on the text "Ephesians 2:19-22" was:

The church as Holy Temple of the Lord

1. The foundation of this temple;
2. The growth of this temple;
3. The purpose of this temple.

In his sermon, Rev. den Hollander emphasized that the church will last and endure solidly and firmly only if Jesus Christ is the only Cornerstone; also that in order to be faithful the church must rely on the Word alone and the Word completely. The growth of the church depends on it. We must become living stones, in the service of the Lord. There is so much work to be done in order for the church to be a dwelling place of the Lord. The congregation was exhorted and reminded that not one of us may be idle and that we must work together in harmony in all our endeavours.

It is by God's grace and good pleasure that the work in Chatsworth was blessed by the institution of the church. We were also reminded that we must pray that He will continue to keep us faithful and bless the ongoing work in this congregation, so that from this



Meeting place – St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Chatsworth

humble beginning, greater things may be done to His glory.

Following the sermon the installation of two elders and one deacon took place. After the benediction the subscription form was read and signed and then all those desiring to speak were given the opportunity to do so.

First of all, Rev. den Hollander and br. C. Knol presented to the congregation on behalf of the Orangeville congregation, a "Cornerstone" with the text and the date of the institution service inscribed on it. Next, Rev. J. Huijgen spoke some congratulatory words on behalf of Classis Ontario North. Following this, br. C. Lindhout spoke words of congratulations and gave a brief history of the formation of a house congregation in this same area 40 years ago. Then, br. P. Broekema spoke a few words on behalf of the church of Elora from which several members had originated. A letter was also read from the church at Grand Valley.

Finally, br. R. Kruisselbrink spoke on behalf of the newly formed congregation. He expressed our gratitude to the Lord for enabling the Orangeville Council, and in particular Rev. den Hollander and br. Knol, to work so diligently among us, and also that the Orangeville Council as well as all those



Institution service

present would remember this new congregation in their prayers.

After closing with song and prayer all those present enjoyed an hour of coffee and refreshments.

In conclusion, we may know that all the honour, glory and praise be given to our heavenly Father for His wonderful work in the Chatsworth area.

Installation service for Rev. P.G. Feenstra

On Sunday October 18, 1992 we could with much joy and thankfulness, witness the installation of Rev. P. Feenstra. Our counsellor and previous minister of the house congregation, Rev. den Hollander, conducted the installation. As text he chose John 1:43-51, Christ calling His apostles, Philip and Nathaniel.

He preached under the heading "Jesus Christ the Son of God calls Nathaniel to witness the Christ of Scripture." The main points were 1) this call is prepared by God the Father, 2) this call is revealed by the Son of God, and 3) this call is proclaimed by the Christ of God.

In the first place he showed how God prepared all the circumstances and situations leading up to Nathaniel's calling. Similarly, circumstances in Chatsworth, developed under God's guidance in such a way that, after two years, a church of Christ could be instituted. God's church gathering work continues even where in man's eyes it seems impossible.

In the second place he showed that as Christ knew Nathaniel's inmost thoughts and intentions so He also knows us. When Nathaniel doubted



Rev. W. den Hollander, Rev. P.G. Feenstra, Rev. G. Nederveen

Philip's word about the Christ, Philip does not try to convince him, but only said "Come and see." This shows that we are required to reveal only God's true Word to others, rather than trying to convince men with human rationale. We are not able to soften man's hardened heart, but only the Holy Spirit is able to turn men to Christ.

In the third place he showed that as Nathaniel confessed Christ to be the Son of God, so we too must confess and witness to Him in this world. Christ sits at the right hand of God and sends His angels to guide us in our lives. The angels are at work in God's servants who are sent out to preach the gospel. God has today provided us with one such minister who will proclaim God's Word in our midst, and labour in God's church gathering work to His honour and glory.

In the afternoon service Rev. P. Feenstra administered the sacrament of holy baptism. As text for his inaugural sermon he chose John 4:34-38, God's fields are ripe for the harvest. He preached under the heading "The unity of service between sowers and reapers in God's field." The main points were 1) their task is different, and 2) their goal is the same.

In the first place he showed how the spreading of the Word is not the task of one man but is the task of all. Men cannot win hearts for Christ, they only reap the harvest that God has sown. Each person has their different task in life, some reap and some sow. If there is no sowing being done then the harvest will lack also, therefore all must carry out their task diligently. These tasks will continue until the final harvest.

In the second place our goal is to work towards the final harvest. We need only proclaim the Word for it will not return empty, but will fulfil its purpose which God has made. Our work in God's kingdom is not judged according to the number of people that believe, but according to how true we were in the proclamation of the Word. God's kingdom work is to be a priority in our lives and God will provide us with everything else that we need. We should pray that God will make us faithful labourers in His field, working towards the final harvest.

After the sermon Rev. Nederveen was invited to speak on behalf of Clasis Ontario North. He expressed the hope and prayer that Rev. Feenstra would be a blessing in our midst and that we would be a blessing to him.



Rev. and Mrs. Feenstra and their family enjoying their meal

Brother W. Feenstra expressed congratulations on behalf of Elora, and Rev. den Hollander expressed congratulations on behalf of Orangeville. He also added a few words to what was already said in the morning service. Rev. den Hollander then officially presented Rev. Feenstra with the key of the church building.

Elder R. Kruisselbrink thanked Rev. den Hollander for all his work in our midst in the past years, and welcomed Rev. Feenstra to the congregation.

Overall this was a beautiful day in which we could experience God's grace and faithfulness, by giving us a servant of the Lord. To Him alone be the glory.

H. Bosscher

Welcome evening for Rev. and Mrs. Feenstra and family

On the evening of October 23, the members of the Chatsworth congregation gathered in the basement of the St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. The occasion was to welcome Rev. and Mrs. Feenstra and their family among us. The consistory room was transformed into a nursery and the main hall into an all-you-can-eat smorgasbord. The room was crowded but the atmosphere joyous as members rubbed shoulders with one another. After a hearty meal we all gathered in the church auditorium for the entertainment portion of the program. The evening was lead by br. Henri Endeman and we opened with congrega-

tional singing. A group of children played the tone chimes and another group sang for us. A poem was read, giving clues about each family. When a family recognized themselves, they made their own introduction. We were then entertained with a couple of duets, one on wind instruments and one on the piano. We were able to stretch our legs and test our intellectual abilities during a matching game. The results were less than brilliant but we had fun doing it. The Young People performed a humorous skit depicting our joy to the news that Rev. Feenstra had accepted the call to Chatsworth, and an evening at Bible Study. Next, the Women's Choir sang for us. A fitting ending for the evening was the singing of "Now Thank We All Our God" by Sr. Cindy Kruisselbrink and Sr. Ricki Scheper.

Before going downstairs again, to socialize and meet with the Feenstra's, a few words were said. Brother Henry Pieffers expressed his appreciation to the former chairman of the consistory, br. Ray Kruisselbrink, for his dedication and commitment during the past year. Many events, including the institution of the Chatsworth church, lead up to this joyous occasion where we could welcome our own minister. Rev. and Mrs. Feenstra were presented with a welcome gift. Then, Rev. Feenstra spoke a few words before closing with prayer and thanksgiving.

A. Sandink **6**

Modesty, Western Style

Edmonton, Alberta

The word face-lift says it all and means renewal or in some cases younger looking. An item about face-lifts in the News Medley? Yes, it is about an old, tired church building; its stucco was cracked and holed, its doors let the wind blow through, its sound system was from the tube days and for the hard of hearing there was the air conduction airplane style earphones.

On a congregational meeting a plan to rectify most of these old age problems was presented as part of the budget and approved. New doors were ordered, a new sound system installed which included a new FM transmitter for the hard of hearing. Provisions for future video taping were made.

Now the work is finally done. The nine new oak doors are hung, the new stucco job makes the tired building look



like new. A special drive provided funds for a new 4' by 6' lawn sign and beautiful brass door handles. A new tape recorder arrived in August.

Being the best-looking church building in Western Canada it expects a lot of visitors to come and take a look. To take care of this influx the seating capacity has been increased by 68. This was done in a very novel way; inserts, two feet wide, were placed in the center of the existing benches. Matching the existing colour was impossible so now the benches have a Scandinavian look. Two Tone Wood! The nursery and toddlers space has been tripled. For 1993, air conditioning will be considered, and with that in place the transformation or face-lift will be complete.

So next time you travel, stop in Edmonton and visit the most up-to-date church building, i.e. the Providence Canadian Reformed Church. If there is anything to say to Edmonton's detriment, it is that it tends to exaggerate, or does it? You be the judge.

R. Winkel **6**

News Report

American Reformed Fellowship Palmetto, Florida

Introduction

In August, 1992, a news bulletin was published under the title FLORIDA WORSHIP GATHERINGS. The chairman of a steering committee, br. A.L. "Tony" Vanderhout, described how for quite some years now a group of Canadian Reformed "snowbirds" have been gathering at Palmetto, Florida. On the first day of the weeks from November to April they came together to listen to taped services or a guest minister speaking an "edifying word." He wrote: "The brotherhood in Florida want to serve the Kingdom of God in obedience to His holy and infallible Word as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity and maintained by the Canadian Reformed Churches and the American Reformed Churches. This is a legitimate and worthwhile cause and effort for which we are thankful, and we pray that the Lord will bless it. In time we hope to institute an American Reformed Church."

A public meeting was held at Burlington, Ontario on September 3, 1992. It decided to publish a Newsletter and "to request Dr. J. Faber to become the editor together with br. L.J. VanHof." The last mentioned brother reached the age of fourscore (congratulations!) and although the psalmist then mentions "reason of *strength*," br. VanHof asked to be relieved of this task. We understandingly ceded to his request and happily found a willing substitute in br. M. VanderVelde. He and I hope to alternate in taking care of this bulletin, which will be published at least in a two-monthly format. Since we alternate, we make one editor responsible for the contents of a specific issue and this time it is yours truly J.F.

Palma sub pondere crescit

Let me begin with a personal account. Some have wondered whether it



was right that I, a retired minister within the Canadian Reformed Churches, accepted responsibility for this publication. No Canadian Reformed or American Reformed Church has declared itself willing to organize worship services in Florida. It seems that this falls outside the "ministry at large," organized by the American Reformed Church at Grand Rapids and subsidized by Canadian Reformed Churches. A classis Ontario South deemed a "winter" church arrangement impossible. I for one regret this situation and hope that there will come a little bit more flexibility. As a young minister our family enjoyed some holidays on one of the islands in the Northern parts of the Netherlands. Churches in Noord-Holland and Friesland organized summer worship services: Den Helder was responsible for Texel, Harlingen for Vlieland and Terschelling and Dokkum for Schiermonnikoog. During some summers I served the last church for its work among the vacationers and did so with much pleasure. Now that for the first time my wife and I vacationed in Palmetto during a winter month, I was struck by the similarity. Why can we not have a similar ecclesiastical arrangement?

The church should be where the people are. More and more older Canadian Reformed people – and also younger ones – will spend one or more winter months or weeks "down South." This will be the case even in these times of recession and rising health costs. And is this not within the freedom of the Christians? If we do not forget our obligations with respect to our families – children and grandchildren – with respect to our home church and the nation to which we belong, should we not enjoy the light of the sun? Ecclesiastes 11 says: Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun. There are even some of us who by their physicians have been directed to Florida in winter time and they go there without doubt; they act in faith and are thankful to their Father in heaven. I would almost be inclined to state in the vein of Romans 14: Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind. But he who has doubts is condemned, if he vacations in Florida, because he does not act from faith.

Now acting from faith and seeing that in Palmetto there is no permanent Reformed congregation, brothers and sisters have sought one another in Sun-

day gatherings. Is this not how the office of all believers operates and how many churches began? Brother Vanderhout phrased it in a right manner: "The churches have not ecclesiastically legitimized the weekly gatherings in Palmetto. However, that does *not* mean that these gatherings are illegitimate." There is a Reformed fellowship in Palmetto. Let us hope and pray that the Sunday gatherings of this fellowship may become the beginning of an American Reformed Church with official worship services, the proclamation of God's Word and the administration of the sacraments. But even if this would not be the case, these gatherings in faith will not be in vain in the risen Lord.

Palmetto is the Italian form of a Spanish word. It is the diminutive of palm and, therefore, it indicates a kind of small palm.

When I read up on it in a dictionary, I thought of a Latin saying that I learned in my youth: *palma sub pondere crescit*. It goes something like this: a palm grows under a burden. Well, even a palmetto, a small palm, grows under the weight or burden of difficulties. My memory begins to fail, but if I remember well, the saying was even used for the seal of some Reformed churches. To bear burdens can be healthy, also for a small community or fellowship of Reformed believers. Let us not complain about inflexibility or inactivity of ecclesiastical assemblies but in the office of all believers do whatever our hand finds to do. Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. *Deo duce palma parva nostra sub pondere crescit*: under God's leadership our palmetto will grow even under a burden!

Information

The worship gatherings of the American Reformed Fellowship at Palmetto, Florida, will be held, the Lord willing, each Sunday from December 8, 1992 till April 30, 1993.

Place: Annex of the Palmview First Baptist Church on 49th Street. From Highway 41 one enters 49th Street at the corner where a 7-Eleven Store is located. The church building is immediately at the left, just across Skyview Village.

Time: 11 o'clock in the morning
2:30 o'clock in the afternoon.

Local information numbers

In case someone is not completely certain about place or time, it will be wise to phone one of the members of the Fellowship. We give three telephone numbers of "old-timers":

br. J. Oostdijk (813) 729-4863

br. L.J. VanHof (813) 722-5001

sr. G. Wildeboer (813) 955-4497

Steering committee

The officers of the steering committee are:

br. A.L. "Tony" Vanderhout, chairman

br. M. VanderVelde, secretary

br. L.J. VanHof, treasurer.

In the last meetings of this committee, brs. J. Oostdijk, J. VanderWoude and J. Faber were also present.

Fundraising

All those who are regular participants in the worship gatherings are heartily invited to set apart at least \$150.00 per year as regular voluntary contributions. Send it or have it sent to the treasurer of the American Reformed Fellowship at Palmetto, Florida. The address of br. L.J. VanHof during the months of December till April is at Skyview Village in Palmetto, Florida, U.S.A., and during the summer months 337 Stone Church Road East, Ebenezer Villa Unit 203, Hamilton, ON, Canada, L9B 1B1.


Ask your home church to regard this as a designated part of your normal church contribution and to send or transfer it to the American Reformed Fellowship. Probably it may then be included in your receipt of church contributions for tax purposes.

The funds are being used for the rent of a building for worship gatherings and of a dwelling place for guest ministers. There are further some expenses for administration (news bulletin, etc.).

Give with gladness and do not forget: *palma sub pondere crescit!*

Edifying words

During the month of February 1993 I hope, under the well-known condition of James, to speak an edifying word in the worship gatherings at Palmetto.

J. Faber 

Guido de Brès High School Commencement

Hamilton, Ontario – October 16, 1992

For sixty-four proud individuals “this night was a night like no other.” It began as the graduates were ushered into the Bethel Tabernacle, where seating capacity is sufficient to hold this popular annual event. The audience stood and praised God with the words of Psalm 100:

The LORD is good, and evermore

His love and mercy will endure
All generations He will bless
In His unchanging faithfulness.
Mr. W. Oostdyk, Chairman of the Board, officially opened the program with the reading of Proverbs 4:
Keep hold of instruction, do not let go;
guard her, for she is your life.
Thanksgiving was expressed to the Lord for the blessing of being able to operate this school another year, and for

the students who could receive an education that would equip them for a life of service.

Mr. J.G. VanDooren followed with words of welcome and congratulated the graduates on reaching a milestone. For these young adults this marked the beginning of a new era with new freedoms. Thus they were cautioned by their former principal to remain faithful. After he wished them the Lord’s blessing, the grade 10 choir sang about “the



Left to right: Back row:

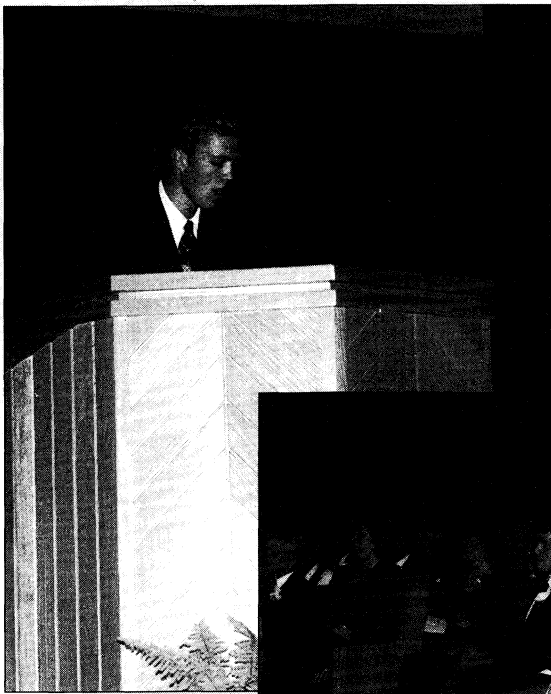
David Malda, Henry Post, Peter Oosterhoff, Tim Hofsink, Stephen Kampen, James Poort, Bryan Bos, John Dykstra, Anthony Vis, Dean Wanders, Trevor VanderWoude, Kevin Tenhage, Gerald Schuller, Peter Jans, Jonathan Zietsma, Theo Hopman, Nathan Helder, Paul VanHuisstede, Eric Ludwig, Bradley Dykema, Herman Breukelman.

Middle row:

Justin Linde, Richard VanderBoom, Clarence VanderWal, Peter Scholtens, Chris VanDooren, David Sipkema, Michelle Bartels, Cathy Ludwig, Denise Bos, Sharon Nordeman, Zwany Scholtens, Michelle Roodzant, Rolean Bosscher, Tanya DeJonge, Vera Jans, Debra DeBoer, Jennifer Smouter, Geraldine Schenkel, Melissa Bartels, Hendrik Alkema, Kevin Bos, Ron Nienhuis, John DeBoer.

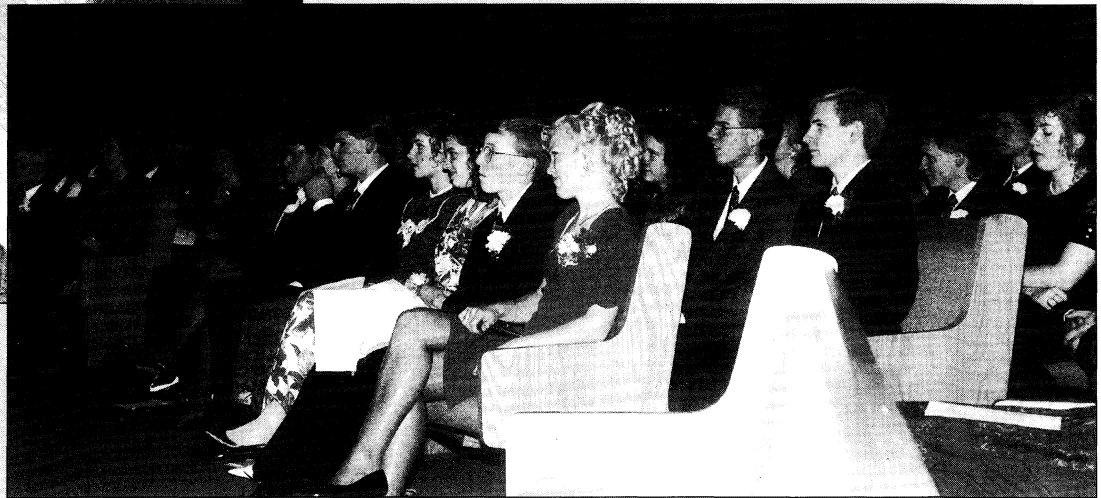
Front row:

Marsha Stieva, Tobi Hofsink, Hilary Scholtens, Anna Alkema, Helena VanderHoeven, Jackie Buikema, Arlene Postma, Sophia Vanlperen, Rebekah Heemskerk, Kristy VanMeeteren, Melanie Kingma, Beatrix VandenHaak, Lori-Ann Hordyk, Lois Lof, Heather VandenBerg, Christy Stoffels, Debbie Jagt, Jackie Verloop, Angelica Gritter.



◀ Jonathan Zietsma delivers his valedictory address

▼ The graduates listen intently



Mighty Power of God" and reminded us that "Like a Shepherd He will lead us."

Next came the presentation of the Ontario Secondary School Diplomas. One by one the graduates came forward to receive the certificate proving that they had completed twelve years of formal education. As the class of 1992 remained standing in front of the auditorium, the audience warmly applauded in recognition of this achievement. Following this, Rebekah Heemskerck, one of the graduates, very movingly sang about what was surely in their thoughts:

... this is where the road divides,
wish we didn't have to say good-
bye

The main address was given by Rev. G. Nederveen. He directed the graduates to the book of wisdom and highlighted Proverbs 4:23: "Keep your heart with vigilance." The heart is like a central processing unit. Therefore it must be protected against break-in and entry. We do not guard our heart because it is good in itself, but because of the treasures God has placed there. We must be on the lookout for danger and harm in order to guard this treasure. This requires wisdom, and the root of wisdom

is the fear of God. This wisdom is needed in the workplace, college, university, or wherever we are placed. We must dare to stand up and promote what is right, and have the fear of God as our guide. Rev. Nederveen finished by wishing the graduates Godspeed in all their endeavours. The audience responded by singing from Psalm 146:

Blest is he who has as helper . . .
Jacob's God, the LORD so faithful . . .
He forever faith shall keep.

Many awards were then presented for various achievements. Anna Alkema, Jackie Buikema, Tanya DeJonge, Tobi Hofsink, Debbie Jagt, Ron Nienhuis, Hilary Scholtens, Dave Sipkema, and Jennifer Smouter received the Guido de Brès High School Participation Award. Theo Hopman, Bryan Bos, Dave Sipkema, Debbie Jagt, Melissa Bartels, Jennifer Smouter, Kevin Bos, Richard VanderBoom, Arlene Postma, and Gerald Schuller were recognized for academic proficiency. Scholarships were presented to Dave Sipkema, Theo Hopman, Kevin Bos, Melissa Bartels, Debbie Jagt, Jennifer Smouter, Clarence VanderWal, Chris VanDooren, Bryan Bos, Ron Nienhuis, and Richard VanderBoom. The prestigious Governor

General's Bronze Medal was awarded to Theo Hopman for his high academic achievement. Geraldine Schenkel was chosen as the Student-of-the-Year for her contributions to the school. Following this recognition of God-given talent, the grade 10 choir sang praises to the Lord with music composed by Mozart and Handel.

Jonathan Zietsma had the honour of being chosen by his classmates to give the valedictory address. He opened by stating that "tonight is a night like no other," a time of celebration and reminiscing. Some humorous events were recalled, but it was pointed out that their years at Guido taught them to realize that God rules all areas of life. By the grace of God, they were able to enjoy many experiences, and will share these memories forever. The teachers were thanked for their guidance and Christian instruction and the parents for making the necessary financial sacrifices.

The evening formally closed with prayer and the singing of our national anthem:

God keep our land
Glorious and free.

E.H. Baartman **6**

News from Support MERF Committee

Continued support

With gratitude to the Lord we may report that financial support continues to come in faithfully. During this past year we were able to send \$7,000 in May and a further \$6,000 earlier this month, both amounts to be used specifically towards the cost of radio broadcasting.

Since our last news report in *Clarion* earlier this year we have received a number of newsletters from MERF in Cyprus and we would like to pass on some items of interest to everyone.

Additional radio broadcasts

In June MERF was able to add a third weekly broadcast. In the May newsletter we read: *A third weekly broadcast will be on the air on Saturdays (at 21:45 GMT) as of June 6th, 1992. A new powerful medium wave transmitter, now being used by Radio Monte Carlo, allows us to get the gospel message across the entire North African region. Tens of millions of people can easily tune their radios to receive the powerful Radio Monte Carlo signal, in Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Chad, Mauritania, Morocco as well as Arabic-speaking people living in Spain and southern France. A special series of broadcasts on the subject of "Christ and Religion" will be aired, with a view to addressing the present turmoil linked to religious fanaticism.*

The other two weekly broadcasts, covering the rest of the Arab world are aired on Tuesdays and Thursdays (at 21:30 GMT). A recent study of Arabic broadcasting conducted by secular European experts noted that Christian broadcasts from Radio Monte Carlo have an audience exceeding 750,000 persons.... Much support is needed to keep up with the growing cost of the radio and follow-up work.

The September newsletter indicated that there has been an encouraging re-



MERF – supported Sudanese evangelists and their families

sponse to the Saturday broadcasts to North Africa.

Continuing difficult situation in Iraq

Iraqi believers continue to face many difficulties in their daily living because of the overall economic hardships compounded by the embargo. In addition, the church is in dire need of sound spiritual leaders. There is a great shortage of pastors and elders. There are serious concerns over the wave of unsound teachings introduced by groups bringing relief supplies via the Jordanian borders. A very recent report speaks of at least eight different unsound Western-sponsored groups seeking to persuade members of the Evangelical (Presbyterian) congregations to follow them. The views of some of

these groups are Pelagian and heretical. There are also concerns over the long-term consequences on the churches and believers of the strongly pro-Israeli line of Bible teachings brought in by some persons. Some have even brought in for distribution among believers Arabic tracts (translated from English) which project Saddam Hussein into the fulfillment of biblical prophecy and the "coming battle of Armageddon." It is feared that such activities may in the near or far future harm the respect and legitimacy enjoyed by the churches.

Growing sufferings of the church in Sudan

The pressures on Christians in both Northern and Southern Sudan continue to grow. Recent military successes against the rebel "Christians" in South-

ern Sudan have given the Islamic government (of the North) more confidence in pursuing its plans to completely Islamize the entire country over the next decade. Close to 900,000 people (mostly Christians) have had to abandon their towns and villages in the Southern provinces as Northern government troops closed in on them.... Thousands of Southern Sudanese Christian refugees in the Khartoum area have been forced to move to the desert by government trucks after their humble shanty town abodes were bulldozed. Recently, members of the Executive Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Northern Sudan, who have been coordinating ministries to these people, were arrested and detained for several days. One of the major Presbyterian church buildings hosting Arabic and several tribal language services is locked up by a government decree. Christians of all denominations continue to be intimidated by the introduction of more and more Islamic laws and decrees introduced regularly by the Islamic government which is determined to Islamize every aspect of daily living, regardless of the rights of non-Muslim citizens. In a recent interview, aired by

local regional radio stations, one leading member of the Islamic coalition which controls the present government declared: "Our ultimate goal is to stem out all activities which are aimed directly or indirectly at hampering the process of Islamization in the country. We consider this to be the beginning of the process of Islamizing the whole region. Christian missionary endeavours have no legitimate reason to exist in our societies and nations. They must and will be completely stopped.... A new era of Islamization has begun and no one can stop it; it is Allah's merciful will to restore us unadulterated Islam." Please pray fervently for the Lord's people and their needs.

Evangelical study center

The September newsletter reported that six study terms have been held, involving eight competent visiting instructors, from Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A., U.K., the Netherlands and Egypt. Dr. Istafanous, MERF's chairman ... reports a stream of expressions of gratitude from local pastors and churches for the training more and more members are receiving at the Study Center.... MERF's Executive Committee is now making

plans for introducing a special program for training elder candidates. A summary statement of biblical criteria for the selection and election of elders is now being prepared.

Please continue to support the work of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship with your gifts but above all with your prayers that many hearts may still be opened to the truth of the gospel before the great day of the return of our Lord and Saviour.

By way of reminder

If you would like to make a personal donation please make out your cheque payable to "Support MERF Committee" and send it to

Support MERF Committee
1225 Highway 5, RR 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3X4

Unfortunately, we are not able to give a tax receipt at this time because we are not a registered charity.

On behalf of the Support MERF Committee of the "Rehoboth" Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington-West,

J. Mulder, chairman
J. Van Dam, secretary



COLLEGE CORNER



The Faber-Holwerda Bursary Fund

We remind the readers of the fact that at our Theological College there is the Faber-Holwerda Bursary Fund. This fund was set up through a donation of Dr. and Mrs. J. Faber at the time of the retirement of Dr. Faber. The aim of this fund is to provide students with some aid when they need financial support, in particular when there are special circumstances or needs. The needs can consist, e.g., in illness at home so that suddenly a trip has to be made, or it can be the need of funds for the purchasing of necessary books, to mention only two possibilities.

The fund is set up in such a way that every year eighty percent of the interest is made available to support needy students. The other twenty percent will be added to the principal amount. This is done in order to give the fund some growth from year to year. It is not hard to understand that the growth from the one fifth of the interest every year will not be intense. We are thankful that we received additional donations in the meantime. The total amount from which interest is drawn at this moment is approximately \$21,000.—

A committee takes care of the fund. This committee consists of a member of the Faber family (one of the children), a member of the faculty of the College, and the treasurer of the College.

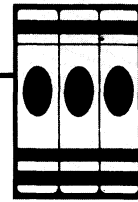
Although the aid for the students is not abundant, we are glad that we can help out somewhat in some cases. We would like to stress the fact that the fund is open for more donations, while we are thankful that since the beginning of the fund in 1990 more donations have been received.

For the Committee,
J. Geertsema



BOOK REVIEW

By William Helder



The Works of John Bunyan, edited by George Offor. Reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991. 3 vols., 2319 pp., \$116.95 (U.S.)

John Bunyan (1628-88), the traveling tinker who became a leading English Puritan minister, is best-known for his famous allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress*. By reprinting the only available standard edition of Bunyan's complete works, the three large volumes edited by George Offor and first published in 1853 and 1862, The Banner of Truth Trust has reminded us that this seventeenth-century author of several classics of English literature was in the first place a popular pastor-evangelist.


Volumes 1 and 2, both entitled *Experimental, Doctrinal and Practical*, are filled with numerous treatises and homilies. The adjective "experimental," as used in this context, refers to the approach epitomized in Bunyan's spir-

itual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. This account of his conversion portrays the anxiety, verging on despair, which he experienced throughout the long and agonizing process of searching his conscience for evidence confirming that he was indeed among the elect. *Pilgrim's Progress* and Bunyan's other allegorical writings are included in Volume 3, which bears the title *Allegorical, Figurative and Symbolical*.

For many generations Bunyan's works were to be found in almost every English-speaking Christian home. In fact, his *Pilgrim's Progress* has been so consistently popular that it has gone through hundreds of editions and has been translated into more than one hundred languages. A good many of the more recent editions owe their appearance to Bunyan's literary importance, for *Pilgrim's Progress* earned him the reputation of being "the first great ge-

nius in the handling of English prose in narrative form" (James Thorpe).

The three closely printed volumes which the Banner of Truth Trust has again made available are likely to appeal especially to readers who are already familiar with John Bunyan and his piety. In addition to being suitably edified, perhaps they will also derive incidental amusement from the florid nineteenth-century prose of George Offor's lengthy introductory "advertisements."

Anyone seeking to be informed about the Puritan heritage, which has so profoundly influenced Christianity in both Great Britain and North America, must not leave unread the more famous works by John Bunyan. We do well to keep in mind that to many people in the world around us this English Baptist exemplifies the essence of Calvinism. 



By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Long ago a little baby was born in the town of Bethlehem.
He ate and slept like any other baby in town.
Nobody could see He was really a miracle Child.
Mary and Joseph knew His secret.
You know it, too.
This miracle Child was God's own Son!
He was Emmanuel, "God with us."
His birth was the greatest miracle that ever happened!
"God with us!"
Angel choirs praised God.
Shepherds worshiped the Christ child.
Mary's heart was filled with awe and wonder.
And what about us?
Are we amazed at God's love?
Are we filled with wonder at God's goodness for giving
us His own Son as our Saviour?
Then we are ready to celebrate Christmas.
Because Christmas is the miracle of God's giving love.

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son,
that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have
eternal life..." John 3:16.*

CHRISTMAS DAY

An acrostic poem by Busy Beaver Lydia Viersen

C hrist, God's only Son
H as been born to us this day
R edeemer of ours
I s He.
S ent from God above
T o glorify His Father.
M ake Him your Saviour, too!
A nd glorify God on high
S erve Him, the One and Only!

D o not forget God's gift!
A nd remember all He's done!
Y ou are His child, too!



HOLIDAY GAMES

Here are some sociable games you can play with family and friends during the holidays.

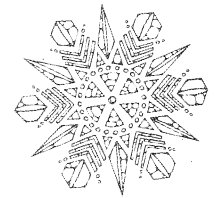
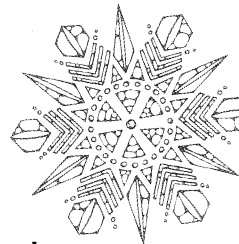
Nut Pitching

You need: a bag of nuts (peanuts in the shell are fine)
a dish pan
2 bowls or pans of widely different sizes, to fit into the dishpan.

Set-up: place bowls, one inside the other, in the dishpan.

Now let any number of players take turns trying to throw three nuts into the smaller centre bowl. Putting some water in the larger pans will make the target float. Interesting!

Scoring: 5 points for nuts that are thrown (and stay) in the center bowl, 3 for larger bowl, 1 for dishpan. Highest score wins.



Charades

This is a fast and exciting guessing game you can play together or in two competing teams.

You can act out sayings, names, song or book titles, and more!

You could try to act out these go-together words. Remember only actions, no talking!

1. salt and pepper
2. up and down
3. read and write
4. ham and eggs
5. soap and water
6. cup and saucer
7. long and short

8. bread and butter
9. black and white
10. first and last
11. give and take
12. stop and go
13. thick and thin
14. push and pull

Deep in the jungle

You need: enough seats for all but 2 of the players.

This game is like Musical Chairs, but it's played with partners. Each set of partners decides to be a particular animal. You could have a pair of monkeys, for example, a pair of anteaters, a pair of lions, etc.

The partners who don't have chairs (the "It" couple) walk about the room together, saying the names of different jungle animals. When their animal is called, those partners leave their chairs and follow "It" around the room. If the "It" partners say, "The jungle is quiet tonight," all partners join the line. If the "It" partners say, "The jungle is noisy," everyone runs for the seats. Partners must hold hands as they run and keep holding hands as they sit. This makes for some pretty interesting problems. Of course, the "It" couple tries to get seats, and the unseated couple becomes "It" next time around.

HAVE FUN!



THE BEST PART OF MY CHRISTMAS

by the Busy Beavers

The best part of my Christmas was we got to share almost the best part of the year with our family, Aunts, Uncles and so on. And sing songs to God.

The best part of my Christmas was when Henk and Edith got engaged. Edith is my sister...

The best part of my Christmas was opening presents but most of it is because we remember Christ was born.

When we went to our Grandma's place we walked in and took our coats off and we went to the living room and saw all the presents under the Christmas tree. We were excited and were touching all the presents, wondering what they were. We were begging and begging to open the presents earlier, but we weren't allowed yet. My uncle Eric and Uncle Harry went for a walk with a bunch of us... Johanna and I were sitting beside each other wondering what our present was. Until we opened our presents. I got Pictionary. It is a fun game!

I liked the part when I went to see all my cousins. I also like going to my grandparents' place. We watch videos, play games, and eat a big Christmas dinner. Then we open our presents.

The best part of my Christmas was going to church on Christmas Day to hear our minister preach about the Lord Jesus and the true meaning of Christmas. We always have to be reminded of that and not drag on the humanist view of Christmas. That should be the best part of Christmas every year, I think. Some people might not think that way, but I have thought a lot on what my favourite part is of Christmas.

The best part of my Christmas was when we went to the Christmas party. We opened all of our presents and played a whole bunch of games. It was fun being with everybody else.

We had a big Christmas party with our cousins. For supper we had a 23 pound turkey. We watched 3 movies. One movie was "Kabik the Wolf Dog." At the party we had lots of food. A few days after we went bowling. My score was 130. I beat my Dad.

Quiz Time!

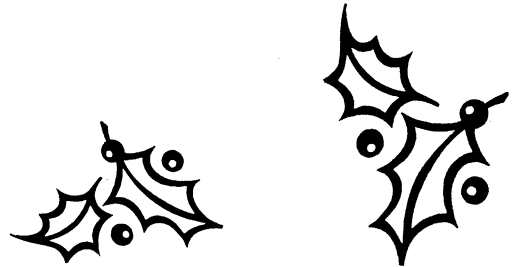


WINTER WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver Jeannette Jansen

Look for:

snow	hibernate
ski	sleigh
ice	scarf
sled	snowplows
Christmas	mittens
snowpants	hats
shovels	coats



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

Who enjoys the snow?

Look for the hidden word. Use the leftover letters, but not the 3Z's.

CHRISTMAS PICTURE PUZZLE

by Busy Beaver Amy Vanderhorst

A	☼	D	✱	I	✱	O	□	T	▼	W	◐
B	☼	E	✱	M	○	R	□	U	◆	Y	▮
C	✱	H	✱	N	■	S	▲	V	✦		

▼ ✱ ✱ ▲ ☼ ✦ ✱ □ ◆ □ ◐ ☼ ▲

☼ □ □ ■ □ ■

✱ ✱ □ ✱ ▲ ▼ ○ ☼ ▲ ✱ ☼ ▮

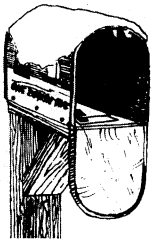


GUGGENHEIM PUZZLE

Can you fill in all the categories without using a book or atlas?

	ANIMAL	CITY	FLOWER	FOOD
H	Hyena			
O		Oslo		
S			Sweet pea	
P				Pizza
I				
T				
A				
L				

You can use the above Guggenheim frame to play an interesting game. Give each of the players a sheet with the framework. Have everybody fill in the blanks. Scoring: 5 points for a word no one else has, 3 points to players whose word was repeated only once, one point for a 3-person word, no score for all others. Highest points wins.



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Marian Vanderveen*. We are happy to have you join us. Thank you for sharing the jokes. I hope you'll write again soon, Marian.

Welcome to you, too, *Sharon Bartels*.

I'm pretty sure the Busy Beavers will want to try your recipe. Thank you for sharing. Bye for now. Sharon.

Welcome to the Club, *Melanie Muis*. We hope you'll really enjoy joining in all our Busy Beaver activities. Thanks for the puzzle, Melanie.

And a big welcome to you, too, *Katherine Wiersema*. Do you have quite a few of those funny Beverly Cleary books in your library? Thanks for the picture, Katherine. Keep up the good work!

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Sarah Bouwman*. I see you are a real Busy Beaver already sharing a puzzle and a great snack idea! I hope you had a good birthday, Sarah.

Thanks for your pretty letter, and the jokes and picture, too, *Felicia Oosterhoff*. Will you share your ideas about good books to read, Felicia?

How did you enjoy your birthday, *Richard Oosterhoff*? Do you have snow to play in? Thanks for your picture and letter, Richard. Keep up the good work!

How is your brother doing, *Amy Vanderhorst*? What do you think of your house being for sale? I hope you really enjoy your Christmas holiday, Amy. Bye for now.

Sounds to me as if you've been keeping very busy, *Francine Vanwoudenberg*. Have you decided which you like doing better, your 4-H Club baking or looking after pets? Thanks Francine, for your letter, and the "goodies," too.

Congratulations on your new baby sister, *Suzanne Schouten*. She has a pretty name. And she's lucky to have a big sister! I bet she loves it when you play with her and help look after her. I hope you have a great Christmas holiday, Suzanne.

So what have you made at clubs, *Carrie Schuurman*? I hope you'll write and tell us about your other club, too. Thanks for your great recipe ideas, Carrie. Bye for now.

Congratulations on your baby brother, *Andrea Vanderhorst*. I bet he's really cute and trying hard to talk. You're a lucky big sister! I hope you have lots of snow to enjoy during your holidays, Andrea.

How is "Freckles" doing, *Rachel Wieringa*. I'm sorry to hear about Cindy.

You must have been pretty upset.

Here's hoping you have a very good Christmas holiday, Rachel. Bye for now.

BIRTHDAY WISHES

"Happy birthday" and "God's blessing" to all the Busy Beavers looking forward to a January birthday. We wish you one super day celebrating with your family and friends.



Kerri-Ann Spoelstra	5
Christine VanderVelde	7
Anna DeVries	8
Sharalee VandenBos	9
Brad VanOene	9
Brenda Grim	12
Cindy Beijes	13
Michelle Meyer	17
Jennifer Postma	18
Irene Bikker	20
Karen DeBoer	20
Tanya Strating	20
Marian VanderVeen	23
Alisha Hummel	24
Sarah Vanderzwaag	25
Brian De Gelder	30

To all Busy Beavers, very best wishes for a blessed Christmas.

Also best wishes for a fun holiday from school!

With much love to you all,
Aunt Betty

