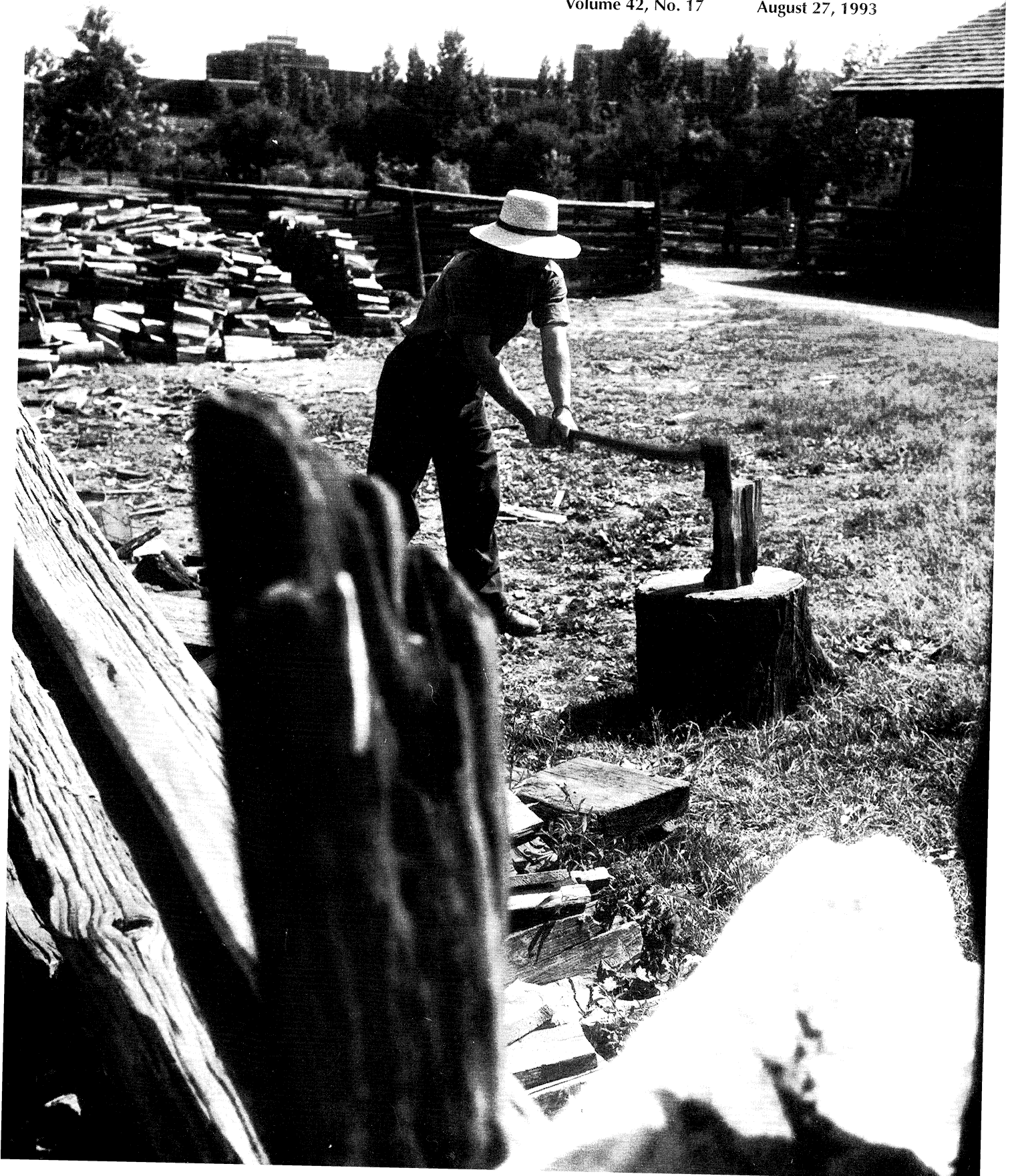
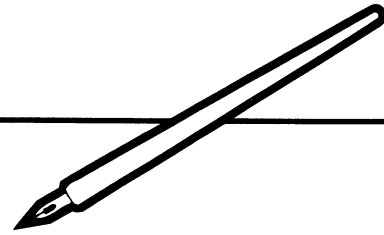


 **Clarion**  
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## Our daily calling?

Once again the first Monday in the month of September approaches. It is Labour Day. Actually, this is a misnomer, for the day is not dedicated to *labour* but to the *labourer*.

In any case, it means the end of the holiday period and the beginning of a season of more intensive labour, interrupted once in a while by another “long weekend,” but lasting until towards next summer many again enjoy some weeks in a row of freedom from their daily task.

The approach of “Labour Day” obligates us to reflect on our labour, on its nature, its goal, its sense. It gives us the opportunity to ask anew why we are working and what the sense of our work is. What do we aim to achieve when working?

Every time when attending a wedding ceremony, we hear it: “Work faithfully in your daily calling, that you may support your family and also help those in need.”

One might ask whether it is proper to speak of a “daily calling.” Who called us then to the work we are doing? Did we not choose our profession, our daily work, because we like it best of all or because we could not get what we really wanted, or, perhaps, because it is the best-paying job? Who can speak of our “daily calling”?

Yet what we say in the Form for the Solemnization of Marriage is correct. We may also refer to Lord’s Day 49 of the Heidelberg Catechism. It points out that our work, our job is not just something to fill our days or an opportunity to make money so that we can fulfil our desires. It is a calling, and this means that in our daily work we hear the voice of our God.

Certainly, we choose our work in the line of what we can do best and what we like to do best, yet we are to speak of a calling, because in our daily work we recognize the hand of our God and in the specific abilities we have for that work we acknowledge His goodness and mercy.

Although we should not take our *starting-point* in God’s predestination and eternal counsel, we are to be alive to the place which the Lord our God has given to each and every creature, as well as to the truth that our God with His decisions and gifts never follows after the facts but always is ahead of the facts. That is the reason why we can be certain that He will enable us to fulfil our task and to do our work.

The Lord does not provide someone with the specific abilities one needs *after* man has chosen his profession. He gives to each and every creature, man included, those specific qualities that are to enable man to fulfil the task that He, the God of heaven and earth has determined and chosen for that particular creature.

Although sin has brought about a distortion of everything in life, the goal that God set originally has remained. Of this we also make profession in Article 12 of the Belgic Confession: the Father, we confess, “has given to every creature its being, shape, and form, and to each its specific task and function to serve its Creator. We believe that He also continues to sustain and govern them according to His eternal providence and by His infinite power in order to serve man, to the end that man may serve his God.”

The task is given in accordance with the specific abilities one has. These abilities we have received from our Creator, from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And thus we recognize in the work we do, the job we have, for which we have received our personal abilities, the call of God.

It is He who has given us our place and task to serve Him and therein to work towards the completion of the development of creation and of history.

We choose our work, but God gave us the specific abilities for it. That is the reason why we chose it.

We may have arrived at our choice as a result of many factors and of unexpected developments, but in all these things, too, we acknowledge the providence, the fatherly hand of our God. And He calls us to give ourselves wholly, with all our mind and strength and heart and soul and will, with our whole person to the calling He gave us in life.

Our daily work is our daily calling indeed.

When fulfilling our calling, we shall not seek what the unbelievers seek, for our heavenly Father knows what we need.

We shall seek the Kingdom of God by being faithful and diligent, dedicated and trustworthy in our daily calling. What we are doing is not just a “job,” it is work in the Kingdom.

And all things shall be added unto us.

That is a promise.

Have a blessed “Labour Day.”



# Had a Good Holiday?

By C. Van Dam

Everyone I know enjoys going on a holiday! Holidays are great! On returning, people ask, "Did you have a good holiday?" The answer that is given is often determined by the weather that was experienced. It was a great holiday if it was sunny and a bad one if rainy and wet.

But really, what constitutes a good holiday? In our day and age, we almost take holidays for granted. We have them all through the year and especially in the summer many people can have an extended period of relief from their daily work. It was not always this way. And yet holidays are nothing new. God's people, living under the Mosaic law in Old Testament times, did enjoy many of them. It may be good to pause for a moment and reflect on this.

## Many vacations from God

God was and is no slave driver. He came to set His people free from bondage! Out of Egypt He called them, away from the backbreaking labour of making bricks for a despotic Pharaoh who did not even supply the straw. En route to the Sinai He reminded them of the blessing of the Sabbath, by making it impossible for them to go out to get manna on that day, for there was none. They had been instructed to get twice as much the day before and rest on the seventh day (Ex. 16:23-30). And at the Sinai the LORD renewed His covenant with His people and, among other things, gave His people holidays to celebrate!

When one stops to think about it, the number of holidays Israel had was truly astounding. Besides the weekly day of rest, there was a monthly day of rest called the New Moon (Num. 10:10; 2 Kings 4:23; Amos 8:7), and analogous to the Sabbath, every seventh year constituted a Sabbatical year when the land and the vineyards were not to be worked for an entire year (Ex. 23:11; Lev. 25:1-7). Furthermore, every fiftieth

year, the year of Jubilee, was to be celebrated which like the Sabbath year meant, among other things, that Israel was released from working the land (Lev. 25:8-18). Annually three pilgrimage feasts had to be observed when all the males were expected to go up to the place which the LORD would choose for the Passover (which was immediately followed with the seven days of the feast of unleavened bread), the Feast of Pentecost, and the seven day Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. 16). Furthermore, there were the annual Day of Atonement (Lev. 16) and the Feast of Trumpets (Lev. 23:23-25).

It is significant that all these feasts, as God ordained them, involved rest and

a break from the routine struggle of work in a fallen world. Also, in all these feasts God was telling or reminding His people in one form or another of His salvation and redemption. For example, the Passover spoke of God's delivering His people from the bondage of Egypt, but it also reminded the people of that great deliverance from sin that would come through the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God. That salvation and redemption included the promised rest for His people. For the rest that was promised in the land of Canaan was to be in anticipation of that glorious perfect rest to come (cf. Heb. 3:7-4:10).

It is therefore also significant that the Lord remembered the disadvan-



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Editor: J. Geertsema  
Coeditors: J. De Jong, C. Van Dam  
and W.W.J. Van Oene

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taged in Israel when He legislated feasts for His people. They too had to share in the joy of their Lord and experience something of a foretaste of that beautiful rest that was waiting for the people of God. In all the struggle of the old creation, His people could know that debts would be erased every fiftieth year and families could return to the inheritance of their fathers (Lev. 25). And if they had become enslaved because of unpaid bills, they would be set free in the seventh year (Ex. 21:2) or in the Jubilee (Lev. 25). The poor could celebrate and share in the bounty of God's blessing of food and drink during the feasts (e.g., Deut. 16:11, 14).

One could summarize by saying that God gave His people many days of rest and celebration in which He reminded them of the gravity of their sin, but also of the redemption that was theirs. The rest they could enjoy, pointed to the future rest!

### Holidays are holy days

It is clear that Israel's holidays were holy days, days dedicated to the Lord and His service. Historically this is also how we got the term "holidays." "Holidays" means holy days. In medieval Christianity, no distinction was possi-

ble between a day of rest from work and a day of celebrating one sort of feast or another. Without wanting to go back to the "holy days" of that era in which one saint after another received a special day, it is good to remember, living as we do within a secular society, that we do well to honour the origin of the term "holiday" in the sense that it literally means holy day. While society as a whole does not want God at the centre of things, we still do, do we not, and are our vacations then, like the rest of life, not to be holy to God with all the consequences this brings with it? We will also remember some of the riches of the Old Testament for this subject.

### What is the sense of a holiday?

In our society people often live for the weekend. In our neo-pagan society this means the Saturday and the Sunday (although in the Christian calendar Sunday is the first day of the week and should never be included in the "weekend" by Christians). When the warmer weather comes, they live for the long weekend, which includes the Monday and they start counting down the days to their holidays of a week or more.

As Christians we may also look forward to periods of rest from our daily

labour, but we will do so differently. What constitutes a good holiday? Merely being physically or mentally refreshed? That is an important element, but it is only the beginning of the benefits that can be accrued! The Lord never gave His people holidays and feasts only for physical relief. He always included a reminder of the larger picture; namely, that He as covenant God was busy working salvation for His people and this salvation includes removing the curse from work and from life generally so that the real rest, the full rest would come. It can also mean (where this is possible) to help those with special needs, as was done in Israel within this context. Think of the blessings realized in participating, for instance, in Anchor camp in Ontario for the handicapped.

Holidays are therefore an excellent time to ponder and reflect on the great things God is doing for His people and to take more time than may be available otherwise to share and discuss the great things of God at leisure in the family circle. Holidays should be a time not only of physical or mental refreshment but also of spiritual rejuvenation and renewal. The key holiday we may enjoy is of course the Sunday. We may start each week with a celebration of the great things God has done in Jesus Christ and the new creation He is raising up. Let us never underestimate the great blessing of the Sunday! But when the Lord in His goodness gives us more and more days off from our daily work, let us not abuse this gift by simply putting ourselves in the centre of it, but treat them as holy days which are holidays to be used with the Lord in mind, for is it not for Him that we live? Let us thank our God and give Him the glory also in the manner in which we holiday by using the many opportunities to more and more realize our richness in the God of life who is taking us to His eternal rest.

Had a good holiday? The best holiday that one could have is the one in which you come back refreshed and reinvigorated, not only physically and mentally, but also spiritually in the Lord, ready to do one's task in a fallen world. For those refreshed spiritually will have had another foretaste of that joyous rest to come, the rest that still remains for God's people (Heb. 4:9), the rest in a perfect world where there will be no more struggle against sin or the brokenness of a fallen world, but where all will be whole and beautiful before the sight of God and His people. C

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# Elder and Blessing

By J. De Jong

Should an elder be permitted to raise his hands and use the same words that a minister uses in the salutation and benediction of the worship service? Or should he change the word “you” in the benediction to “us”? These matters have been dealt with in the past at various ecclesiastical assemblies among us. They have also been extensively discussed at the last few synods of our sister churches in the Netherlands. Local churches among us have also made various decisions on these matters. The discussion has also raised the question as to the authority of the elder *vis à vis* the minister, as well as the relationship between all the offices.

The Synod of Ommen, the general synod of our sister churches in the Netherlands meeting this year, has decided that also in services in which no minister is present to lead the service, salutation and benediction may be spoken and administered without any changes. In other words, the elder may use the word “you” as it stands in both the greeting and the blessing, and he may raise his hands just as a minister does. According to the Synod of Ommen, as far as this part of the worship service is concerned, it does not make any difference if the one leading the service is an elder or a minister.

## The traditional custom

Most of us have experienced reading services at one time or another. Generally the custom has been as follows: the elder comes to the pulpit, does not raise his hands, and inserts the word “us” in place of “you” in both the salutation and benediction. Why was this change made? Here the elder identifies himself as part of the congregation, and also acknowledges that it is not in his authority as an elder to administer a blessing, either at the beginning or at the end of the wor-

ship service. In other words, he makes clear by his words and manner that he is essentially not qualified to administer the Word in a worship service but does so only out of necessity, due to the fact that a minister is not available. Another feature which brings out the limited authority of the elder in this regard is that he always “reads” a sermon published by a Reformed minister in the churches. Hence the name “reading service.”

## The tradition reviewed

The traditional practice has been in discussion for some time. Already in 1973, Prof. Trimp suggested that the words spoken by the elder in a reading service should be left unchanged.<sup>1</sup> He argued that it is not proper to change the words of Scripture just because a minister is not present. Should the blessing become a prayer just because there is no minister? He also appealed to the character of a Reformed worship service. It is a meeting between Christ and His congregation. The minister may be absent, but Christ is present. Therefore the “reading service” is not a “half-service” or a social affair (*onder-ons*). It is a regular worship service, and all may count on the presence and blessing of Christ upon His congregation.

Trimp also stated that leading a service was a part of the elder’s task. It is not simply an “extra-ordinary” duty that he fulfils beyond the call of duty. An elder on the pulpit should not be seen as a fish out of water. Leadership is part of the elder’s duty, and if necessary, this also applies to the worship services.

## Other voices

A different line of argument was presented by Dr. A.N. Hendriks of Amersfoort. He argues that the distinction of the offices required a change in

the wording of the salutation and benediction. He agreed that this changes the character of both salutation and benediction. A blessing becomes a prayer. But he said that under the circumstances there is no other way. Thus, Hendriks favours the maintenance of the older custom.

Others argue that the churches should move further in a *new* direction. For example, the successor to Prof. Trimp, Prof. C. De Ruiter, has asked: why cannot an elder administer the sacraments? This, I would assume, is a logical consequence of the approach taken by the Synod of Ommen. If the elder can raise his hands and administer the *blessing*, why cannot he administer the *sacraments*? Trimp cautioned against the elder taking on allusions of being a minister. But today a new generation appears to be more prepared to move in this direction. And this development is to be expected, since the Reformed churches have always tied the *blessing* to the *preaching* and the *sacraments*. All of these acts have the character of *administration*. If one of these public liturgical acts can be taken on by an elder, why not the others?

## Blessing or prayer

For many the decisive argument to leave the words unchanged is that the elder automatically changes the words of a blessing to a prayer when he substitutes the word “us” for “you” in the salutation and benediction. It is then asserted that while the congregation actually receives the blessing with the presence of the minister, it only prays for a blessing when the minister is absent. Personally, I question whether this is what happens in the change of “you” to “us.” We must not see a minister as one empowered to bless. He is only an instrument through whom God gives His blessing to His people. And he also

only expresses a wish, or prayer.<sup>2</sup> It is the LORD who blesses His people, using the words of the “liturge” as His vehicle or instrument.

In what way then does the change from “you” to “us” alter the character of the salutation and benediction? Normally, the function of an ordained “liturge” is to speak on behalf of God and on behalf of the people. In the benediction and salutation, the sermon, the reading of Scripture and the law, the liturge acts on behalf of God, speaking for God to the people. In prayer and confession, he speaks on behalf of the people to God. In a reading service, all this remains unchanged, except that salutation and blessing acquire the character of *confession* rather than *administration*. In changing “you” to “us” the elder places himself among those who belong in the pew, i.e., with the congregation that calls a minister, and is called to supervise the minister’s preaching. To bring out this distinction of offices, he speaks on behalf of the congregation to God, both at the beginning and end of the service. Yet this does not mean that his words represent a prayer for a blessing that is as yet absent. His words, like those of the minister, assume the presence of Christ, and the certainty of the blessing of God administered in public worship. But while the “reading elder” *confesses* God’s blessing, the minister *administers* it. This is a matter of the distinction of the offices.

### The distinction of offices

The matter of the difference between the offices belongs to the Reformed tradition, and is also grounded in Scripture. For example, S. Maresius says:

Elders is our name for those who along with the pastors, as their assessors or like the Levites of old along with the priests, are at the head of the Church’s government in the censorship of morals, except that they do not labour in the word and in teaching.<sup>3</sup>

One notices that just as the blessing is limited to the priests in the old covenant, so the Reformed saw it as limited to the ministers in the new covenant. Maresius also says:

This may also be added to the differences between the pastors and these elders that the latter may bind themselves only for a time, but the former have devoted and bound

themselves to God for life. The former have also the right to preach and dispense the sacraments, the latter not.<sup>4</sup>

To these references – which speak for themselves – many more could be added. Without losing sight of the unity among the offices, the Reformed have always maintained the proper distinction between the offices.

### Synod Ommen 1993

This raises the question whether the course of action chosen by Synod Ommen is a wise route to follow. Since the Acts have not been published, it would be premature to extensively review this decision. Yet one may raise the question whether all this is a matter for a general synod. Our churches have always maintained that while uniformity on liturgical practice is advantageous to the churches, it remains the prerogative of the local consistory to decide how things will be done, and what order of worship will be followed, and so on. Thus, we have some churches where the elder uses “you” in a reading service, while others still use the old formula for a reading service. Is this not a matter of the freedom of the churches?

Ommen decided that an elder *may* use “you” in salutation and benediction, and raise his hands at the same time. He is not required to do so. In a sense, this leaves the matter in the freedom of the churches. But did the churches ac-

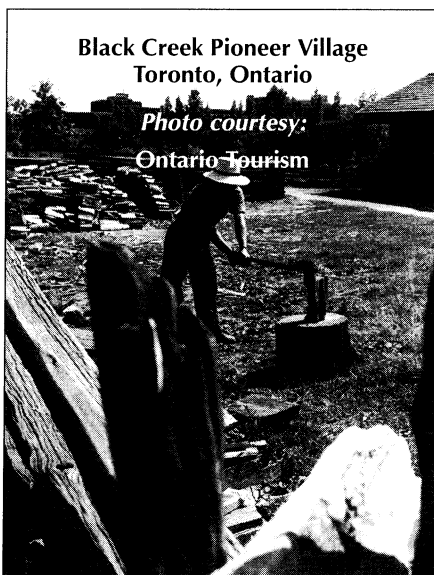
tually need this regulation? Or should the matter simply have been left to the local churches in the first place? In my view, it is wiser for the churches not to make a general regulation, but simply deal with individual cases that come forward in the proper way.

### Our situation

Are the older customs wrong? Do we need changes in this area? That some of our local churches have decided that elders can use “you” in greeting and benediction is understandable. After all, is it correct to change the words of Scripture? As far as I know, none of the churches have empowered elders to raise their hands either at the beginning or the end of the service. Yet I think it is more a matter of failing to understand the rationale for the older custom, rather than a need for a new custom. Even the change from “us” to “you” breaks the traditional triad of blessing, word and sacrament. The elder who uses “you” speaks as a minister. As one distinguishing himself from the congregation, he speaks a word of blessing to the congregation. This deviates from the traditional order, which limits this right to a minister, i.e., one called to the congregation.

Another concern on this matter is where the end will be of following a new direction. For example, Prof. De Ruiter has also suggested that the work of the deacons can be called a *means of grace*. He has suggested that Reformed dogmatics reconsider the whole matter of the means of grace in the light of the work of the deacons. While this is a different office, the idea is the same. If the elder can administer the means of grace, why not the deacon? It seems as if the classical Reformed position on the distinction between the offices is lost sight of in this approach. All of which only confirms that before the “ancient customs” are cast overboard, we ought to be aware of what they were meant to convey. C

## OUR COVER



<sup>1</sup>C. Trimp, “De ouderling en de vacante preekstoel” *De Reformatie* Vol. 48, (1973) pp. 179-180.

<sup>2</sup>Hendriks, quoting a Hebrew scholar, mentions that the so-called Aaronic blessing in Num. 6:22-26 expresses a wish, according to the Hebrew text, cf. “De ouderling en de zegen” *Dienst*, Vol. 27, (1979) pp. 4-9.

<sup>3</sup>H. Heppé, (ed), *Reformed Dogmatics. Set out and Illustrated from the Sources*. (E.T. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids: 1978), p. 680.

<sup>4</sup>H. Heppé, p. 681.

# REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By R.A. Schouten

## Working on Worship<sub>2</sub>

*In a previous article, we observed the joyful attitude in Scripture toward worship and compared this to the present situation in which we sometimes hear about dissatisfaction and boredom in worship. We ended last time with a section about God-centered style of biblical worship.*

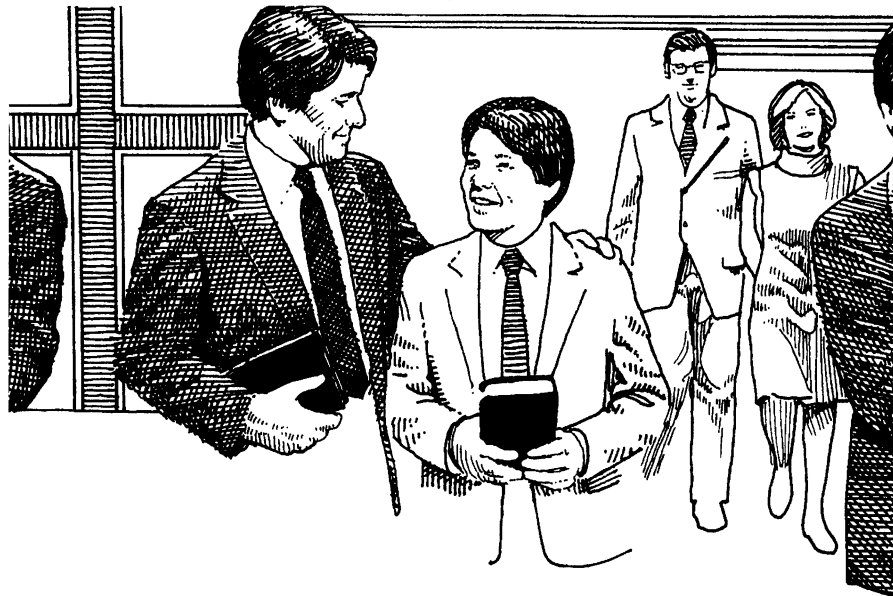
### Attitudes in worship

Once the underlying issue of the nature of worship is understood, certain other consequences become clear. In the first place, we may speak about posture and dress. When people draw near to God, the right attitude is obviously one of reverence and awe. Obviously, most important is the attitude of heart and mind. However, what lives in the heart will also be seen on the outside. For example, slouching just doesn't fit the atmosphere of godly reverence. Nor does a fixation on the girl or boy beside you.

Also our dress needs to conform to the nature of worship. It's true that our churches do not prescribe dress codes. Still, would it not be true that a sudden change of habits with respect to clothing indicates also a change in attitude toward worship? Not every one need to look the same, but surely there can be agreement that church dress is formal dress. We meet in a formal way with the Lord of heaven and earth. Would it not be simply natural to show this in neatness and dignity of dress?

People say that styles change. Of course they do. But still, even with the progressive change of styles, there remains a distinction between formal and casual dress. When formal and casual merge into one styleless mode of dress, haven't we lost something? Haven't we given in to the secularization of life so that no holy moments are left?

When people come to church dressed as though they mistook the



pew for a strip of sand on the beach and the pulpit for a hot-dog stand, doesn't this say something about a changing idea of worship? Doesn't it indicate that we want to feel more casual about worship? But worship is never casual. Even in the new creation, it won't be casual. Normal, yes, relaxed, surely, but casual? Never. Instead, worship is always characterized by the reverent fear of God our King.

We need to remember that we are not equals with God. Yes, He is our God. True, He does love us. Still, He is holy and infinite, while we are small and unholy. We need to be deeply aware of our unworthiness to come before Him. Of course, we are able to come before Him. We can be confident in Christ. The temptation, however, is that this confidence becomes presumption. A Christian sense of unworthiness and awe, it seems to me, does not promote leisure dress for worship. . . .

### Hunger for novelty

Apart from those who find worship plainly boring, there are also some who

hunger for liturgical renovations. First of all, it can surely be conceded that some liturgical variety is possible. There is variety in song, in prayer, in Scripture reading and in text for sermon. There could also be more variety in salutation and benediction. A call to worship preceding the actual service could not be forbidden. A congregational "Amen" answering the sermon would likely be an improvement. We could recite the Creed together. We could have an elder reading the Scripture passage and the Law. We could consider to read the baptismal form only once a month in large congregations with frequent baptisms. We could separate the prayer of penitence and the prayer for illumination. And so forth. . . .

However, the variations I've mentioned here are basically circumstantial. They do not challenge the basic essence and order of worship in the Reformed churches and may therefore at least be considered. However, I'm thinking now of those who want to jazz up the worship service in more

significant ways. They want things to be more lively.

For some people, lively worship means contemporary music and songs, especially sentimental songs which speak about our human feelings and experiences. It may imply shorter, sweeter sermons. Candlelight services may seem appealing to this mindset, as would children's sermons, hand-clapping, spontaneous Hallelujahs and Amens as well as sporadic jumping for Jesus. "Livelier" worship may result in use of filmclips, guest speakers, live testimonials, and overhead projectors. The goal is to have a greater "human dimension." Basically, such people are often suspicious of fixed "forms" of worship in general. Spontaneity and variety is the thing, while fixed liturgies smell like death to their sensitive nostrils.

Another way to analyze this is to say that some desire more sense-appeal in the worship service. A Word-centered liturgy does not thrill them in the least. It cannot captivate them and hold their attention.

### **Worship and outreach**

In connection with the last thought, it is sometimes alleged that Reformed worship services have little power to compel the interest of potential converts. An unsuspecting non-believer, we are told, would only encounter a lot of apparent

munbo-jumbo. Again, it can surely be acknowledged that we could do a lot better in making guests feel welcome and at home. For example, it would help to have printed copies of the liturgy with brief explanations available. Above all, wouldn't it be wonderful if all guests were greeted with believable warmth instead of that embarrassed attitude of "I wonder what he (the visitor) thinks of us Reformed people?"

On the other hand, if we set out to alter the worship service so that it has more appeal to ungodly people who don't know the Lord, we would be acting dangerously. The spiritually uncommitted are in no shape to judge what is appropriate for worship. Catering to potential converts with emotional songs, hand-wringing appeals and superficial effusiveness will surely transform worship into entertainment. After all, that's what unbelievers naturally prefer! Worship is not intended primarily to attract people but rather to be a sweet-smelling offering to the Lord. If we attract Gentile people to join us by a man-centered style, their last state may well be worse than their first. They will have joined a church that exists to satisfy the self-defined needs of man rather than to praise God.

Perhaps we have underestimated the evangelistic power of true, regulated worship. Fervent singing, solid, un-

compromising preaching, intense prayer and an overall atmosphere of reverence and sincerity will not be without impact. When the heathen hear the worshiping church declare the mighty deeds of God who called us out of darkness into His glorious light, will this not be powerful to draw in the elect of God?

Indeed, the very existence of a praising community is a testimony to the world. The culture of the world is narcissistic. The world's praise is for man and his works. But in church we are preoccupied in the praise of God and His acts. We speak great things of the Holy One. Therefore, worship is in itself a form of evangelism. Our praise calls the whole world to make a joyful noise to the Lord (cf e.g. Psalm 66:1).

The Lord needs no entertaining gimmicks and no spiced-up worship to call His own elect to Himself. He can impress them with His own holiness as His Name is lifted up and revered by His people!

On the other hand, if a stranger were to observe sleeping young people, snoozing old people, half-hearted singing and lack of interest in the preaching, he may well conclude that it would be better to stay home next week to mow the lawn.

– *To be continued* 

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# **Third Assembly of the ICRC**

*By M. van Beveren*

On Wednesday, September 1st the Third Assembly of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) will begin in the city of Zwolle, the Netherlands, and is scheduled to last 10 days.

Originally, the meeting was planned to be held in Korea, but due to unexpected delays in the construction of new facilities there, the Dutch churches agreed to host this year's Conference in their country.

Because our churches participate in the ICRC, General Synod Lincoln of

last year delegated three of our members to attend the Conference, namely, the Revs. Cl. Stam, J. Visscher and Prof. N.H. Gootjes, while Prof. J. Faber as an advisor, br. H.A. Berends as the treasurer, and the undersigned hope to be present as well.

The churches in the Fraser Valley remember the previous Conference very well since the meetings were held in Langley and almost forty delegates from several churches and various countries were lodging with families of the congregations there. This time our sister

church in Zwolle will receive close to sixty delegates in their families.

From the beginning of the ICRC the Canadian Reformed Churches have taken an active part in all the proceedings. Their delegates participated in the Constituent Assembly in Groningen in 1982 together with their four Reformed sister churches at that time and four Presbyterian churches. At that meeting the differences between the Reformed confessions (Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort) and the Presbyterian



Westminster Standards were extensively discussed. We still remember the joy of the Assembly when a Constitution was finally agreed upon.

Thereafter the ICRC met in Edinburgh in 1985 and in Langley in 1989 where the number of churches that had joined the ICRC stood at eleven. Those member churches are, besides our federation, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Free Church of Scotland, the Free Church in Southern Africa, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, the Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia, the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin), the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated), and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Over the years the interest in the ICRC has been growing steadily. It is more and more understood that the ICRC was organized to encourage and assist the Reformed and Presbyterian churches in their resistance to unreformed influences and to promote cooperation where possible, especially in mission. In Zwolle four churches will apply for membership, namely, three churches that are well-known to us through contact with our churches: the Free Reformed Church of North America, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Church in the United States. The fourth church requesting membership is the Free Church of Central India, a small church which was established through missionary work of the Free Church of Scotland.

While in Langley nine observing churches were represented, there may be twice that number in Zwolle. Some of those churches are seriously considering to join the ICRC in the future, especially the smaller churches and those in underdeveloped countries. They often live in isolation and in a hostile environment, such as the churches in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Zaïre, etc. Churches like that need our help. Not just financial assistance. It is important for them that other churches share with them the riches and encouragement of the Scriptures. A small church wrote some time ago, "Our great concern is to raise a clear biblical and Reformed witness in the midst of confusion, compromise and apostasy. We have little to offer at this point to a wider fellowship

of Reformed churches, though, we admit, much to gain from the input of such a group." We are thankful that our latest General Synod confirmed that "the ICRC is a suitable organization for sharing our wealth, experience and manpower with young churches in the 'third world.'"

The list of observing churches is not definite. But it is almost sure that the following churches will be represented: the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (North America), the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, Gereja Gereja Mashi Musyafir (Timur) (Indonesia), the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil, the Netherlands Reformed Churches, the Reformed Church of East Africa (Kenya), the Reformed Church in Japan, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, the Reformed Churches in South Africa ("Doppers"), the Reformed Presbyterian Church (General Assembly) (U.S.A.), the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan. We also expect four Independent Reformed churches (recently seceded from the Christian Reformed Church), namely, from Edmonton, Lethbridge, Telkwa, and Wellandport. Those four Independent congregations have not yet joined a federation and can therefore be lawfully represented at the Conference. We hope and pray that their presence will promote the visible unity of Christ's church, which after all is the first purpose of the ICRC.



**CALLED and ACCEPTED to  
Yarrow, B.C.**

**Candidate C. VanderVelde  
of Hamilton, ON**

\*\*\*

**CALLED to Grand Rapids, MI  
Candidate J.G. Slaa  
of Orangeville, ON**

On the agenda of the Conference we find first the reports. Interesting is the report from the Committee on Theological Affirmation. That report deals with the proposal of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia "that the Conference aim to develop an agreed statement on what is a 'true church.'" The report, however, points out that there is already a remarkable consensus in this respect between Presbyterian and Reformed churches that adhere to either the Westminster Standards or the Three Forms of Unity. The Committee then concludes that there is no need to make a new "agreed statement" as requested.

Another report is from the Committee on Missions. The Committee has gathered information on the missionary activities of the member churches in order to probe the possibilities of cooperation and coordination. The purpose of the report is of course not that the Conference decides which churches should cooperate in mission. Not the Conference but only the individual member churches or "sending churches" can make decisions about working together. There are already areas in which churches cooperate in some way or another on the mission fields.

A considerable part of the Conference time will be devoted to subjects introduced by respectable speakers. The topics are "Prophecy Today" by Prof. W. Norris S. Wilson, Ireland; "Reformed Mission" by Rev. C.J. Haak, the Netherlands; "Catechism Preaching" by Prof. N.H. Gootjes, Canada; "Recent Criticisms of the Westminster Confession of Faith" by Rev. Rowland S. Ward, Australia; "Tolerance" by Prof. J. Kamphuis, the Netherlands; "Christology and Mission" by Prof. Alasdair I. Macleod, Scotland; "Redemptive Historical Preaching" by Prof. H.M. Ohmann, the Netherlands. The speeches will be delivered in the evening sessions so as to enable members of local congregations to listen too.

Prior to the Conference, in the evening of Tuesday, August 31st, the host church will convene a prayer meeting to implore the Lord for His guidance. For the churches can assist each other only when they expect their strength not from human insight or from great numbers but from Him alone.

May then the Lord bless the Conference to His glory. **C**

# NEWS MEDLEY

By W.W.J. VanOene



This time the news medley will be sort of a combination news medley-article. Also the other times several remarks were inserted when passing on news, and I realize this, but the news prevailed. This time it will be a little different, because there hardly is any news. Yet, every time anew I am asked why there was no news medley in *Clarion*, which shows that our readers expect something. I cannot disappoint them.

As for the news, the churches at Houston and Smithers came to the conclusion that they should not use the funds for spreading the Gospel to their neighbours to defray the cost of radio broadcasts.

In Houston "The (Evangelism) Committee recommends, on the basis of lack of response to this program, to discontinue it, and to look for alternative ways of reaching out. The recommendation is adopted."

As Houston maintained this program together with Smithers, a letter was sent to this sister church. When the letter was received, "this is agreed to and the evangelism committees are encouraged to search out other alternatives."

Although we can be certain that there are people who listen to the programs, yet I can understand it when the decision is made to discontinue it since never any reaction has been received. We do not have to "shake off the dust" for lack of response, but the question certainly has to be faced whether it is justified to continue spending money on a certain endeavour if it appears that no fruit can be seen. In any case : the people have heard it.

Concerning this "reaching out," we did mention before the "Singing in the Park" in Burlington. Now I read : "This year on request we have added some Psalms and Hymns from the *Book of Praise*. We shall probably sing these 'a capella,' because Genevan tunes do not lend themselves very well for guitar accompaniment."

I am happy to read that tunes from the *Book of Praise* will be added, but not so happy about it that this was done "upon request." I would have appreciated it more if the committee had come to the conclusion that also when we speak to those who are without we have to preserve and show our own character. If *that* is not what attracts the people, we might as well forget about it.

When others hear "Jesus loves me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so," they do not notice any difference and do not learn *why* we, too, try to reach them.

Be it far from us to pretend that we are better or purer than others. But if it is not the Reformed, scriptural nature of both the songs and the message that attracts people, we have lost the battle even before we start it. Meeting the world

or various religious groups on their level and using their methods is the shortest way to total defeat.

This should also be remembered with the use of tapes, either audio- or video-tapes. More and more use is being made among us of tapes produced by persons who are not Reformed. Our people have to be warned against that and I shall keep on doing so.

Recently I received a letter from a brother who within his circles is fighting against Arminianism, and he gave supporting evidence to what I wrote about tapes a previous time. Please refute the notion that many have that people who are active in evangelism are less Reformed and promote a sort of watered-down truth.

As for the accompaniment, I do not know whether trumpet-sounds will be permitted in the Park. Most likely this will not meet with any objections. I presume that the Salvation Army uses these means. Or, if no brass instruments may be used, there are small keyboards available nowadays that will admirably fill the gap.

People who on their travels stop over in Winnipeg should be aware that four services are conducted per Sunday: 9 and 2; and 11 and 4.

The Calgary church is growing slowly but steadily. There is the fervent desire to have property and also to establish a school of their own. "The Building Fund Committee submits a report on properties being considered." No decision has been made as yet.

South-east of Calgary we find Taber. "Reports on a letter from Anchor who run a home for the handicapped in Ontario. They request financial assistance. Decided to continue to support Rehoboth."

I was kind of sad when I read this. As far as I am aware, Rehoboth, as well as Bethesda in British Columbia, are institutions supported by persons from various religious communities. Besides, at least the British Columbia organization receives generous government support.

On the other hand, Anchor in Ontario provides shelter only to members from "our own" churches and is supported solely by our own membership without any assistance whatsoever from the provincial government. Taking also into consideration the economic situation in Ontario, I find it sad when a request for support from Anchor is refused.

I realize that many people do not know what sort of an undertaking "Anchor" is. Perhaps my years in Ontario make me more aware of the situation in that province, and I like to let others benefit from it. Most of all I like "Anchor" to benefit from it. If our deacons can spare some funds, let them remember this organization.

The Coaldale consistory received a letter "from the Coaldale Police, re: our request for patrol of the church property. They have agreed to patrol our property. A letter of appreciation will be sent to them by the clerk."

The same consistory "received a message from a brother who has recently worshiped with us stating that he had lived here in the early 50s and at that time could not afford to pay the church and has at this time donated an amount by cheque. Council appreciates this fine gesture."

Something to be followed. I gather that the brother could not pay at that time what was asked of the members; it is hard for me to visualize that one cannot pay anything. In such cases the words of Haggai 1 come to mind.

Rev. J.D.Wielenga wrote some lines about the contact they, and Taber, had with the Trinity Church at Lethbridge. The desire for closer contact and cooperation shone through, he remarked, and the obligation was recognized. "The approach was different however. My impression is that the brothers of Trinity want to serve the Lord churchwise on their own at least for the time being, in the safety and quietude of independence from existing Reformed federations. From this position of 'splendid isolation' they would like to reach out to all who desire to serve the Lord, for many and varied forms of contact and combined action, short of federative unity. Of the latter (Reformed federation) they still have a bad taste in the mouth, given the grievous experiences they had to swallow in recent years. We have to have understanding for that.

"Nevertheless the brothers do not entirely dismiss the idea of federative unity in accordance with the principles of Reformed church polity, but seem to shrink back from pursuing it and reaching out for it, and rather push it to a more distant horizon, as if too hot to touch, having just been burned by it.

"We hope the brothers realize that one can freewheel only for so long. Time goes on, reality does not let itself be denied, and one may inadvertently end up where one never intended to be, independentism, evangelicalism, who knows.

"As Canadian Reformed Churches we also know what it is to be abused by a hierarchically deformed federation. Yet the 'liberated' churches immediately reorganized as Reformed Federation, indeed continued as such, shaking off the deformation of a good thing. The difference between our churches and the Independent Reformed churches may be that our churches were thrown out of the federation, while they voluntarily stepped out of it. An element of independentism may be given with their origin, born with an independentistic gene, so to speak. Time will tell."

A brief look into history will teach us that congregations that stayed on their own either came under the hierarchical "dictatorship" of one man or split into various groups that fought each other tooth and nail, or gradually disappeared as a result of error and indifference.

The question whether the deacons belong to the consistory has received much attention for many, many years. I presume that my conviction in this respect is well-known.

In the consistory report of the Byford W.A. church I found the following. Two brothers

"present their Discussion Paper re the difference between the Church Order and the Belgic Confession on elders and deacons forming the Council of the Church. The two brothers conclude that the Church Order needs to be adapted to agree with the Belgic Confession, so that deacons are recognised as part of the church council and not an appendix (as suggested by the phrase 'Consistory with the Deacons.' Consistory decides :

" i. not to follow the recommendation of the brothers to alter the Church Order;

ii. to instruct the brothers to come with a proposal re what terms to give to meetings of elders only and meetings of elders and deacons together, since it is recognised that the expression 'consistory with the deacons' does make the deacons look like an appendix."

However thankful I am that efforts are being undertaken to return to the original stipulation that the consistory is formed by ministers, elders, and deacons, I must disagree with the statement that the term "consistory with the deacons" makes the deacons look like an appendix, or even "suggests" this !


When we say that a congregational meeting is a meeting of the consistory with the congregation, does this, then, suggest or even give the impression that the congregation is just an appendix ? It simply states that two different "groups" meet together: the consistory with the whole congregation. Similarly the expression "the consistory with the deacons" simply means that there is a combined meeting. One must do some mental gymnastics to come to the conclusion that here we have some sort of an "appendix."

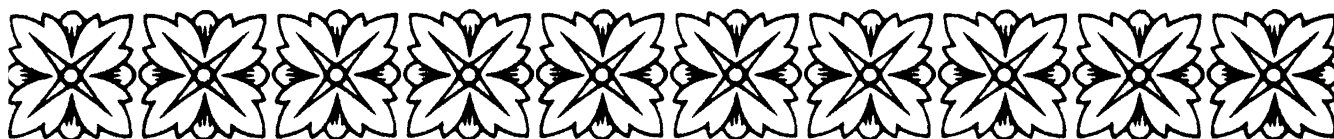
Concerning the point in question I would like to remark that there is no objection to the term "council" as long as this term is used exclusively for the consistory as consisting of all officebearers together, and *not* in distinction of "consistory" as allegedly being composed only of the minister and the elders.

*In case* the term "council" replaces the term "consistory," it would be proper, in my view, then to speak of Council or Consistory when all the officebearers meet, and of "the elders will meet" and "the deacons will meet" when separate meetings are conducted.

Sometimes I read this sentence in a bulletin: "There will be an elders' meeting. . . ." No objection to that. When matters are "solved" in this manner, there is no need whatever to replace the age-old term "consistory" by what has come up only in later years : "council."

I told you right at the beginning that there would be more "contemplation" than "facts." May you yet have enjoyed hearing from me again. In any case : I have given you some food for thought again, and wish you a very fond good afternoon.

As always  
VO 



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# News from Support MERF Committee

## Great thankfulness

It is with great thankfulness to the Lord that we may report that contributions have continued to come in regularly over the past half year to support the work of bringing the gospel to the Middle East. As a result we were able to send \$14,000 to MERF in Cyprus in May. As before, we asked that the funds be used towards the costs of radio broadcasting.

The following are excerpts from newsletters we have received during the past months.

## Response to radio broadcasting

About 90 million North African Muslims can easily tune in to hear the Gospel on the weekly broadcasts beamed especially into this Arabic-speaking region via the powerful and popular AM (medium wave) Radio Monte Carlo. While the response is encouraging from throughout the region, listeners from Algeria are expressing unprecedented interest in the gospel. (The population of Algeria is almost 100% Muslim, with a great deal of support for Muslim fundamental extremists.) The record numbers of letters arriving from Algerian listeners reflects a growing fear of Islamic oppression and a strong quest for viable alternatives. Many are opting for a western style amoral secularism. Others are enchanted with reemerging anti-western pan-Arab politics. Those who are looking for a spiritual or religious alternative come from a cross section of the population. Unlike many Muslims, listeners who indicate keen interest in the Christian faith do not seem to have much difficulty in distinguishing Christianity from the modern western culture and values. "Anba' on Sarra" (Cheerful News), MERF's Arabic broadcasts are written and produced to present the Gospel relevantly to

such Arabic-speaking listeners. There is much cause for thanksgiving for the Holy Spirit's work in preparing the hearts of listeners and in guiding the broadcast staff. The Lord is clearly at work in the lives of many in the heart of the Muslim world.

## Sudanese Christian ministry opens in prisons

We praise God that Dr. Mamdouh Nasif, MERF's Sudanese Vice-Chairman, reports that the Sudanese government recently requested the Presbyterian churches of Northern Sudan to provide pastoral care to prisoners of Christian background in the jails. Until recently these inmates were subjected to organized pressures to Islamize. Instead of resulting in mass conversions to Islam, these pressures stirred ethnic Christians inmates' zealously to organize their own Christian prayer meetings and other religious activities. The prison authorities thought it better for such activities to be handled by the organized church. As a result, the churches have received permits to provide regular weekly services, pastoral visitation and literature distribution in the prisons. . . . Dr. Nasif reports that the services and Bible studies are very well attended. . . . It is estimated that close to three thousand inmates of Christian background are in the jails of the northern provinces. Most of them are jailed for minor offences. There are also a number of political prisoners who are known to sympathize with the southern liberation movement.

Other reports from Sudan indicate some softening of the authorities' persecution of the Christian tribes. There are still, however, organized and well-financed endeavours to manipulate the physical needs of the refugees in order to cause them to seek attractive aid available if they become Muslims. Reports continue to indicate major Iranian and Saudi Arabian roles in

these operations. In the meantime, Christians in the southern provinces continue to suffer greatly because of the civil war and the government's policies of applying Muslim Shari'aa (Islamic law) on them. There continues to be much hunger, disease, and even death in many parts of the ethnically Christian south.

## Growing violence against Christians in Egypt

The conflict between the Egyptian authorities and extremist paramilitary Muslim groups continues to escalate with a rising human and economic loss. The Muslim groups seem more determined than ever to overthrow the government and forcefully take over. There have been assassinations of government officials and security personnel, in addition to the bombing of public places, especially in the tourist sector. These fanatical Muslim groups have also targeted church buildings, Christian businesses and outstanding Christian professionals and community leaders. A recent wave of attacks aimed at a religious purging of villages and towns in upper Egypt. Muslim terrorists killed more than twenty professional and businessmen of Christian background in upper Egypt. Several villages and small towns and even sizable Christian communities have been subjected to violent threats to force them to abandon homes and businesses.

Also, Christians have been experiencing intimidation and threats at their work places in major cities, such as Cairo and Alexandria. Church buildings are now being guarded by security men. Most disturbing yet are the indications of growing sympathies for extremist Muslim groups, even within the lower ranks of the security forces, the army and government employees. The government is regarded by these people as decadent, pro-western and corrupt.

The economic conditions and Middle East regional political scene are aiding these fanatical groups to gain the support of more and more people among the Muslim population. Many Christians are now finding themselves under increasing pressures and fears in their workplaces and neighborhoods. These concerns call for fervent prayers of the large Christian community in Egypt.

How privileged we are that we may live in a part of the world where we may still enjoy peace and prosperity and also

have the opportunity to help those who are in that respect less fortunate than we are. Please continue to support the work of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship so that the Good News may continue to be heard on the radio waves throughout the Middle East.

**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



# OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



**Hello Busy Beavers,**

I was jealous of Arlene. It was the first day of school and she had a beautiful, new yellow dress with a row of black buttons.

I was so jealous of Arlene's yellow dress that I can still "see" her!

Who will you meet on your first day of school?

Friends? Your *best* friend?

How do you feel about your teacher?

Do you think the first day of school is . . . different, special?

Some of our Busy Beavers have a new baby brother or sister at home. Can you tell they are happy and excited?

I know one Busy Beaver just moved and he's at a new school. How do you think he might feel about that?

A few of our Busy Beavers had an aunt who died of cancer. That brings sadness.

On that first exciting day of school who will you meet? Who will you *be*?

The Good Shepherd knows all the sheep in His flock. Good thing, too, right? They're so different!

## Quiz Time!

T-1	E-16
R-3	D-18
M-5	L-19
O-7	U-17
A-9	S-20
N-13	F-27
K-14	
H-15	

**Numbers!**

by Busy Beaver *Tineke Bouma*

1 15 9 13 14    1 15 16  
19 7 3 18    27 7 3  
20 17 5 5 16 3!

**Picture Code**

by Busy Beaver *Heidi Dehaan*

A = ★	G = ☺	M = . . .	S = S	Y = 3
B = ♥	H = #	N = B	T = 8	Z = 9
C = □	I = ○	O = φ	U = U	
D = Δ	J = O	P = x	V = 6	
E = ▭	K = ☺	Q = W	W = 10	
F = ⊙	L = 7	R = 2	X = 8	

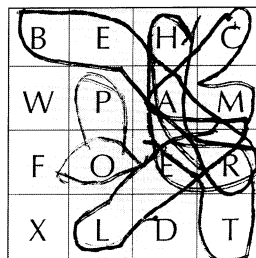
x 2 ★ ○ S ▭ 8 # ▭  
 7 φ 2 Δ ⊙ φ 2  
 ▭ 6 ▭ 2 . . φ 2 ▭

**A different wordsearch!**

by Busy Beaver *Hester Barendregt*

We are used to puzzles where the words are forwards, backwards, at an angle, from the bottom up, or from the top down.

In *this* puzzle Hester did the same with the *letters!* Tricky puzzle. Try it!



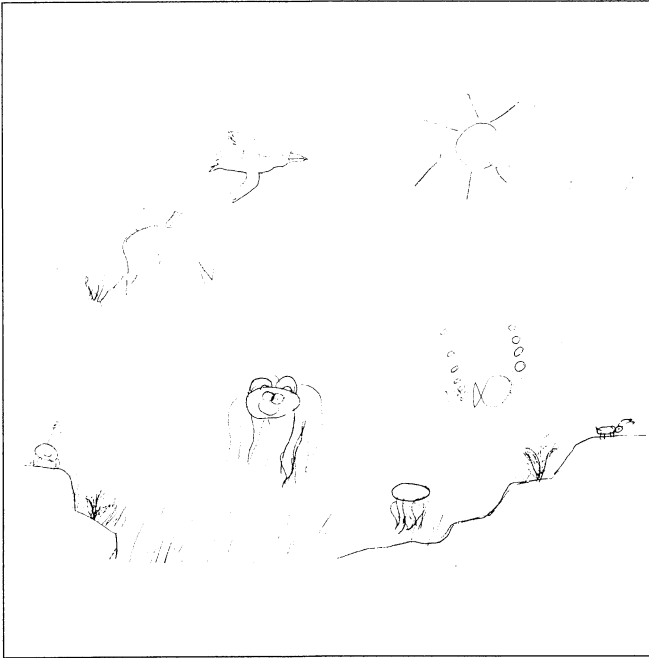
**Animals in the Bible**

Answers:

~~Bear, Camel, Hart,~~  
Leopard, Fox, Wolf

## Sea-side Picture

by Busy Beaver Lydia Penninga

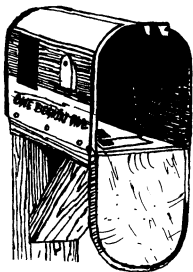


# September

## Birthdays List

We all join in wishing these Busy Beavers the Lord's blessing in the year ahead! We hope you have an excellent birthday celebrating with your family and friends!

Lydia Penninga	1	Marcia Rook	16
Kyle Lodder	4	Gerald Bartels	20
Anthony Nyenhuis	4	Nellie Beukema	22
Tineke Bouma	11	Sophie Witten	23
Joanne Jans	11	Breanne Meyer	28
Mary Vandeburgt	11	Cheryl Van Anandel	30
Alisa Krabbendam	12		



### From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club Rianne Lodder. We are happy to have you join us. I like the picture you sent me, Rianne. Is that you with the balloon? You didn't tell me what you are doing!

Welcome to the Club, Heather Grit. I think you're right about reading stories about people your age. It's great! Did you ever tell your friend you think she's bossy, Heather?

Welcome to the Club, Amanda Grit. I hope you soon find a faithful pen pal. It really is fun exchanging letters and ideas with someone your age. Would you write and tell us why you liked "Luke Baldwin's Vow" so much, Amanda?

And a big welcome to you, too, Tineke Bouma. Sounds to me as if you are having a busy, interesting summer, Tineke. Many Busy Beavers share your interest in baking. Maybe you will share your favourite recipe with them?

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, Andrew Bartels. We are happy to have you join us. Have you been away for holidays, Andrew? What would you like to do?

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, Laura Dalhuisen. How is "Patches" doing? What is your favourite computer game, Laura? Thank you for the picture!

And a big welcome to you, too, Brenda Dalhuisen. I see you have no problem keeping busy this summer. How do you get to your friend's house, Brenda? Thank you for sharing your recipes!

Yes, I had a beautiful holiday, thank you, Karen Terpstra. I really enjoyed beautiful Canadian scenery! I hope you have an exciting camping trip, Karen. And how was your birthday? Super, I hope.

Too bad you didn't get to go swimming on your camping trip, Deanna Wierenga. But it sounds to me as if you had lots of other excitement! Thanks for the quiz, Deanna. Have you sent in your entry in our Big Summer Quiz Contest?

I can see you'll be excited about starting school, Alisha Hummel. How was your summer? Have you tried the quizzes in our Contest? Bye for now, Alisha.

Thank you for that interesting little booklet you sent me, Laura Kanis. It looks like you worked hard at it! I liked the pictures and the words. Keep up the good work!

Congratulations on your baby sister Aileen Feenstra. I bet she smiles and laughs when you play with her. You're a good puzzler, too, Aileen. Keep it up!

I see you have been very busy, Alisha Dokter. I like your poem and picture. And you're a good puzzler, too! Have you tried the quizzes in our Big Summer Contest Alisha?

And you are another good puzzler, Cindy Beijes. Keep up the good work! And thank you for the puzzle. How was your summer, Cindy?

Thank you for your pretty letter and the puzzle, Hester Barendregt. How did your brother do selling his bunnies? Have you tried our Quiz Contest, Hester?

Did you have a good summer holiday, Lydia Penninga? I see you are a good puzzler. Have you sent in your answers to our Summer Quiz Contest? I hope you have an excellent birthday, Lydia.

Thank you for all your letters, Busy Beavers. I really enjoy them!

And now I want to wish you all

*Success  
in your  
New School Year!*

With love to you all,  
Aunt Betty

