

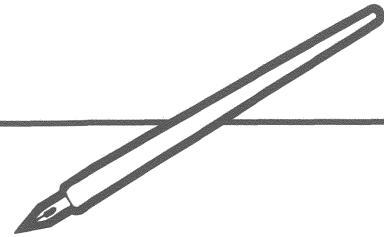


**Clarion**  
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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By J. Geertsema



## Be a Hand and a Foot to Each Other

The time in which we live is tough for many. The word "recession" comes from many a mouth and is on even more minds. It is not a theoretical problem but hard reality experienced day and night. In general, the more east one goes in Canada the more the financial pinch is felt. Businesses have closed their doors and the buildings are for sale. Men and women are seen wandering about. They have no employment. The tensions at home increase. This situation is reflected in church bulletins and school newsletters. Not enough money is coming in to meet the budgets and the fees are not paid. Individuals, families, schools, churches, are struggling to make ends meet. No, this is not the picture everywhere. But it is a present reality.

This reality was presented in a letter from which I quote quite a bit. It pictures a husband and wife working hard in their own small business. Here is part of this picture:

Those of us who own (along with the bank) our own businesses are experiencing the economic recession on a daily basis. Many are teetering on the brink of survival, barely eking out an existence and plugging away at making ends meet (and when you think you're there someone moves the ends). There are also no company pension plans, dental plans, or paid vacations for the self-employed.

And

As my life and business partner juggles the books with a frown on his brow, I wonder which strategies he's planning next! Some nights he tosses and turns and mutters under his breath no doubt in conversation with his friendly but unyielding bank manager!

A month goes by very quickly and the landlord knows no mercy. Ma Bell encourages us to let our fingers do the walking but could we in passing sign a cheque for the monthly bill and yellow pages? Could there be an ulterior motive when she tells us to "reach out and touch someone"?

Further, the writer says that they are not working "in a unionized environment." They also want to keep the Sunday as day of rest and worship. This, too, is cause that their paycheque is "meagre." Their business would very much profit by being busy on Sunday because the "Sunday is a very popular day for entertaining and hosting events. It is not easy to turn away business when one so badly needs it."

The letter presents also a question and a suggestion. The question is:

What are we as communion of saints doing in this time of economic recession to help to alleviate our brother's burden? When we are in need of a service do we look to our own?

The suggestion is:

I don't think one should patronize a business out of pity or even compassion, but if the product, price, and service is competitive one should consider it (Ga 6:10).

The demands are many as we all try to support the church, various levels of education through membership and/or tuition fees plus a host of other worthwhile causes.

A bouquet goes to several enterprising people in the Burlington area who are compiling a Business Directory which we hope will prove beneficial to all concerned.

This reminder that we take care of each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord is important. Here is clearly not someone who seeks to abuse the communion of saints by offering an inferior product and still demanding that the brothers and sisters buy it. The letter speaks of "the product price, and service (being) competitive." Here is also not a request for pity or compassion. It is the request that we look after each other in the church as we ought to do because God's Word, the Gospel of Christ, tells us that this is a matter of Christian love. We support our local church, also as it is part of the federation, and a variety of schools. We do this together. This means that we also help each other in supporting church and school by making use of each other's services and products.

The letter refers to Gal. 6:10, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." Another text is here in Philippians 4:4, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interest of others."

This not just being on the alert for one's own interest but also for the interests of others, especially in the household of faith, can become more difficult in days of economic stress and financial hardship, when it is hard to make ends meet. But faith shows itself genuine just when it becomes harder. We read this, for instance, in Rom. 5:3-5, Jam. 1:1-4 1 Pet. 1:6-7. Peter writes to Christians who are suffering various trials, in order that the genuineness of their faith more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Is the praise of Christ worth a few dollars? If we know brothers or sisters in the Lord who offer services or a certain product that is good, but cost a few dollars more, and if we are able to pay a few dollars more, does then "business" (our own interest) rule us or the brotherly Christian care? Let us not forget either the promise of God that when we look after each other and help each other, we build up treasures in heaven. C

# Catechism Preaching<sub>2</sub>

By N.H. Gootjes

*The main question has now been answered: catechism preaching cannot be rejected for the reason that only Scripture should be preached. More objections, however, have been brought in against catechism preaching. In this section I would like to discuss two objections stating that catechism preaching is not feasible for practical reasons.*

## Dry doctrine

It is sometimes thought that catechism preaching is by definition impractical. The doctrines are preached but they are separated from real life. Catechism preaching has no application to the life of the hearers.<sup>9</sup>

It is always one of the greatest challenges for the preacher to preach in such a way that the hearers understand the implications of God's Word for their lives. Preaching should be directed to people in their circumstances. It should touch the heart of the listeners so that they realize the importance of the message for themselves and know what they should do with it. This is, however, a general aspect of preaching. The requirement that the sermon should apply to the listeners is not limited to catechism preaching, it is a requirement for all preaching. When a minister preaches a specific text he faces the same requirement. Preachers will, from time to time, fail to show the relevance of the sermon for the listeners. That does not mean, however, that it is in general impossible to apply the text to the lives of the people.

Is it, then, by definition impossible to preach the catechism in such a way that the importance of the doctrine for daily life is highlighted? Everyone who knows the Heidelberg Catechism will say: No. That has to do with the way the doctrine is explained here. In the Heidelberg Catechism the application is given in the explanation of the doctrine.

The Heidelberg Catechism sets the tone in its famous first question and an-

swer: "What is your only comfort in life and death? That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. . . ." This is very personal and very applicable. It tells me that I am not left on my own. I need not face life and death all alone. Jesus Christ has bought me with His blood. He takes care of me.

When the catechism next discusses what I need to know, we do not receive a dry table of contents. I have to know, first, how great *my* sin and misery are; second how *I* am delivered from all *my* sins and misery; third, how *I* am to be thankful to God for such deliverance. This determines the manner in which the doctrine is explained. In all

subsequent answers the catechism discusses how I am personally involved.

To give one more example, the doctrine of the Trinity. That our God is three persons is a reality, a fact, but does it have significance for our lives? The Catechism speaks about the Trinity in connection with the Apostles' Creed. It confesses the fact of the Trinity on the basis of revelation: "Since there is only one God, why do you speak of three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Because God has so revealed Himself in His Word that these three distinct persons are the one, true, eternal God." But already before that the catechism has shown the importance of the three persons for us: God the Father and our creation; God



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the Son and our redemption; God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification (Lord's Day 8). God is as triune God involved in our lives.

Because of the practical character of the Heidelberg Catechism it is easy to preach the doctrine in a way that is directly relevant for the hearers. Beginning ministers often have experienced that the application is easier in the catechism sermon than in the text sermon.

It must be admitted that the tone of the Westminster Shorter Catechism is different. This may well be the reason for the objection related above that preaching the doctrine would be irrelevant. The Shorter Catechism does not bring the doctrine close by speaking about you and me; its goal is to give a crystal clear explanation of the doctrine. Man usually is referred to in the third person. Consider for example the rightly famous first question and answer.<sup>10</sup> "What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." Here, however, the application is not far away. If it is man's chief end to glorify and to enjoy God, then I have to aim at glorifying God and living close to Him. We are also helped here because the second question and answer, by exception, addresses us: "What rule has God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him? The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him." Taking this into account a sermon that addresses the hearers can easily be made on this doctrine.

It will be more difficult, to be honest, in other instances. Take for example the Trinity, question and answer 6: "How many persons are there in the Godhead? There are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory." The catechism does not give any indication why this doctrine is important. Yet the presupposition, also of the Westminster Catechisms, is that these confessed truths are important in the lives of the believers. All the more there is reason to remind the congregation, not only of the fact, but also of the importance of these doctrines. Already the older explanations on the Westminster Shorter Catechism show the practical relevance of the confessed truths.<sup>11</sup>

It cannot be maintained that catechism preaching is by definition preaching without application.

### Catechism preaching repetitive

The second practical objection brought in against catechism preaching is that it is repetitive. The Heidelberg Catechism was, after it had been completed, divided into 52 Lord's Days, with the expressed purpose to be preached through on the 52 Lord's Days of a year. Calvin's catechism was divided in 55 Lord's Days. Unless they had a longer year in Geneva that means that preaching the catechism would stretch out over 13 months. Today the churches that maintain catechism preaching are somewhat more free<sup>12</sup> but I think that in most congregations the catechism preaching will have come full circle in a year and a half. Is this repetition not deadening? Most listeners have already heard it over and over again.

The first answer to this objection is that those who made the regulation of catechism preaching thought the repetition an advantage, instead of a disadvantage. They saw a need for repeating the doctrine over and over again, so that the church members would know it thoroughly. And when we think about it we have to agree. The catechism deals with the summary of the doctrine of God and His great works in history: creation, promise of redemption, Christ's work, salvation, sanctification, renewal of all things. These should be repeated since they are the central tenets of the Christian faith.<sup>13</sup>

## OUR COVER



It is common experience that a firm grasp on things tends to disappear without constant repetition. You may have learned at school all 50 States of the United States but unless this knowledge is refreshed it will over time become very hazy. Imagine, – and it is not an imagined example, things like that have happened – that someone who has a friend in Los Angeles asks someone going to New York to deliver a parcel to his friend. Or, even worse, someone who goes to India is asked to deliver something in Indonesia. Unless the knowledge acquired in geography class is refreshed things become blurred.

This should not happen to the knowledge of God. When we pray to Him we should know who He is. When we praise Him we should know what He did for us. When we ask things from Him we should know what He promises us. Daily we live before Him, and have to know His will in order to do it. To live with God we need constantly to be reminded of God's revelation.

The things of the faith bear repeating. Paul says it in Phil. 3:1: "To write the same things to you is not irksome to me, and it is safe for you." Paul had taught these things before. But he knows how easily they are forgotten, snowed under by the many things that happen daily. He therefore puts them in writing so that the congregation can go back to these truths, (see also Phil. 3:18).

In much the same way the basic content of Scripture should be repeated so that we do not lose sight of it. Catechism preaching is an important means to keep fresh the basic knowledge of the mighty works of God. We have to live in Christ "rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith just as we were taught," Col. 2:7.

### Preaching a topic

As a final remark I would like to point to the fact that ministers often feel the need to preach on a topic. I would not be surprised if not a few ministers preach a kind of private catechetical sermon from time to time. I have heard that kind of sermon, but let me give an example that I did not hear. A minister realizes at a certain moment that his congregation needs more instruction on baptism. So he decides to take as his text Mt.28:19. In his sermon he discusses all the places of the New Testament where the word "baptism" occurs. He deals successively with 1. the baptism of John the Baptist, 2. the

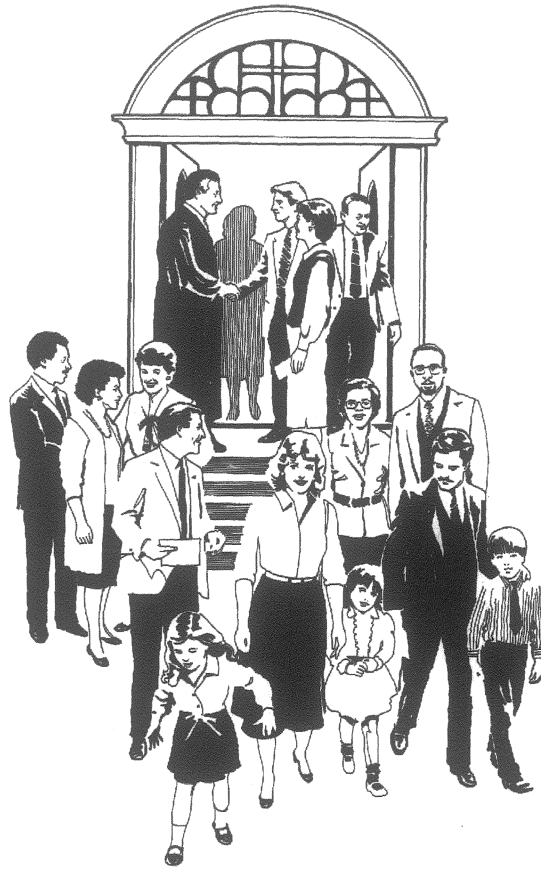
baptism instituted by Jesus Christ, and 3. the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

This is, obviously, not an example of a textual sermon. Mt. 28:19 may officially be the text, but it only serves as occasion for the sermon. This can easily be seen. In this text the relation between the Trinity and baptism is central, but this connection does not function in the sermon. The sermon only uses the word "baptism" from the text. Actually, the sermon looks like a sermon on the section on baptism from the catechism. Yet, it is not a catechism sermon, either.

Two differences can be noticed. In the first place, this approach confuses words with concepts. The impression is given that the biblical teaching concerning the sacrament of baptism can be received by collecting all the texts that use the word "baptism." It can easily be shown, however, that this is not correct. To understand the biblical teaching on the sacrament of baptism the precursor of baptism, circumcision, also has to be considered. Since the material was collected around the word "baptism" these texts cannot play a role. The word-method leaves out many texts that should be taken into consideration. On the other hand, too many texts are included. The two texts mentioning baptism with the Spirit contain the word "baptism" but do not speak about the sacrament of baptism. A sermon on baptism based on the word, is on the one side too inclusive, on the other too limited.

The second problem with this type of preaching is that it neglects what the church has learned about the doctrines during many centuries. The church has been preaching and teaching baptism for centuries, and in the course of this learned to avoid pitfalls and misleading expressions. The church has been exposed to heretical teaching and has consciously rejected that on the basis of Scripture. All this is neglected, the minister starts all over again on his own as if we still live at the end of the first century. When a topic is preached it is better to use the wisdom the church has garnered through centuries of teaching. In other words, when a topic is preached it is better to do so according to the catechism. Catechism preaching is the best kind of topical preaching.

Actually, strict textual preaching and catechetical preaching form an ideal combination, in my opinion. Text preaching teaches the specific meaning of a specific text. It is as varied as the Scripture is varied. It can highlight



a detail from God's work that took place thousands of years ago, or an aspect of the law of God. Preaching on texts gives a kaleidoscopic variety. It is always new, and always surprising. In addition, specific needs can easily be addressed by choosing specific texts.

The congregation, however, should not lose sight of the great themes, the underlying structure of the Bible. This prevents unintentional one-sidedness, and gives resistance against false teachings and the vanities of our own time. The faith of the congregation needs a backbone. This is provided by the catechism.

Catechism preaching, then, is a good means for the congregation to remain "obedient to the standard of teaching to which you were committed," Rom. 6:17.

<sup>9</sup>See the second objection to catechism preaching in the article of D. Macleod, "Preaching and Systematic Theology": "Furthermore, confessions and catechisms present doctrine abstracted from its existential context – the life-situation of Scripture – and thus obscure its practical relevance or tempts us not to apply it at all," in S.T. Logan, Jr. *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986) p. 269.

<sup>10</sup>See on this the article of B.B. Warfield, "The First Question of the Westminster

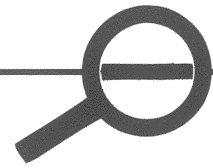
Shorter Catechism," in *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work* (Repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) pp. 379ff.

<sup>11</sup>See e.g. the monumental explanation in two volumes of Th. Boston, *Commentary on the Shorter Catechism* (repr. Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books, 1993). See for the Trinity: vol. 1, pp. 142ff., with brief indications for the application at the end.

<sup>12</sup>The Church Order of the Synod of Dort 1618/19 took over the earlier regulation that the ministers everywhere, according to the rule, must explain briefly the summary of the Christian doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism in the afternoon service "so that it can be concluded yearly," see the text in Th. L. Haitjema, "De prediking als catechismus-prediking," p. 291. Synod Utrecht 1905, allowed more freedom by adding: "as much as possible" (can be concluded yearly), see Joh. Jansen, *Korte verklaring van de kerkenordening* (Kampen: Kok, 1923) p. 296. See also W.W.J. VanOene, *With Common Consent: A Practical guide to the Use of the Church Order of the Canadian Reformed Churches* (Winnipeg: Premier, 1990) pp. 247ff. Catechism preaching was assigned to the afternoon service because traditionally the teaching element was more prominent in this service.

<sup>13</sup>See also E.G. van Teylingen, "Der Katechismus in der Predigt" in L. Coenen (ed.) *Handbuch zum Heidelberger Katechismus* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1963) pp. 192-194. C

By C. Van Dam



## Assembly Notes Free Reformed Synod

The Synod of the Free Reformed Church of North America met on June 2-4. From the official press release published in *The Messenger* of July/August, 1993, we pass on the following.

*The five overtures to Synod requesting that a committee be set up to study and give guidelines on the matter of the various English Bible translations and our continued use of the King James Bible in our churches as established at our Synod of 1974 were not adopted. . . .*

*It was decided in accordance with two overtures sent to Synod that the official name of our denomination will be changed from The Free Reformed Church of North America to the Free Reformed Churches of North America. . . .*

*Synod agreed to enter into a relationship of restricted correspondence with the Bethel Reformed Church of Monarch (formerly Fort McLeod, Alberta), one of the Reformed Alliance (Gereformeerde Bond) Churches. Among other things, this allows for pulpit exchange with this church and our churches.*

I would assume that the decision involving the change of name to Churches was prompted by the fact that although all the churches are federated together in one federation, they maintain their independence. There is no hierarchy. As Canadian Reformed Churches we can identify with that reasoning.

As for the decision to enter into a relationship of restricted correspondence, I understand that this particular congregation is geographically quite isolated within the Reformed Church and is very conservative. But questions arise. The chief one is this. Would the cause of the unity of God's people not have been better served by refusing to resign to a *status quo* such as this decision appears to do, but rather seek to

truly bring together ecclesiastically those who belong together? Can the Free Reformed Churches really be happy with this? They themselves seceded from the church of which the *Gereformeerde Bond* is still part and the conservative churches within the Reformed Church of America remain co-responsible for the direction of that church.

### **The General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)**

The 60th General Assembly of the OPC met from June 9-16. Among the agenda items, the following are of special interest (as reported in *New Horizons*, August/September 1993).

Mission work (both home and foreign) is a regular matter of reporting and discussing. It was gratifying that the former work in Ethiopia could now continue in the newly independent country of Eritrea.

*On the foreign missions front, we were reminded that Hailu Mekonnen is scheduled to begin teaching theology in Ethiopia by year's end. A stirring letter from Rhonda Telfer was read, and it indicated God's blessing on the new OPC work in Eritrea. Her letter was a great encouragement to the entire Assembly. Former foreign missionary Art Ateltzer recalled how we were forced to recall our missionaries from there years ago when Anna Strickwerda was murdered and Debby Dortzbach was kidnapped.*

On the ecumenical front, the report indicated that

*The OPC maintains special fraternal relations with Reformed and Presbyterian denominations in North America and abroad. These relations may be called "ecumenical" despite the bad connotations that the word has acquired among Bible-believing Christians. Our concern for visible unity among Chris-*

*tian churches arises from Christ's prayer (and command) for unity. It has nothing in common with the doctrinal laxity found among some who call themselves ecumenical. The Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations has been especially active in communicating with the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), the Reformed Church in the U.S., the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the Canadian Reformed Churches.*

When the issue of the CRC came before the General Assembly, the speech of the CRC fraternal delegate was polite and non-confrontational and stressed that both the CRC and the OPC had problems in an increasingly secular world.

*When it came time to deal with the portion of the Committee on Ecumenicity's report that focused on the CRC, the apprehensions of the OPC were more decisively before the Assembly. We have been in the awkward position of maintaining ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC while sympathizing with CRC members who have withdrawn or are considering withdrawal from that church. The Assembly adopted a pastoral letter to the CRC which stated that while we do not encourage precipitous withdrawal from that denomination, we cannot ignore the deep concerns of those who are withdrawing.*

Stricter measures with respect to the CRC failed to carry in the assembly.

With respect to the Canadian Reformed Churches, after an agreeable fraternal speech from the representative of the Reformed Church in the U.S.A., the report notes the following.

*The Canadian Reformed delegate's remarks were also agreeable. There*

are three major issues separating the Canadian Reformed federation from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church: (1) the conditions under which visitors may receive the Lord's Supper, (2) whether we should require all church members to adopt the confessional statements that we require for church officers, and (3) OPC relations with the CRC. The OPC does not demand that every local congregation practice a highly restrictive policy in admitting visitors to the Lord's Supper, nor do we insist that candidates for church membership adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith as a statement of their own belief before they are received as church members.

Mr. Feenstra maintained good humor in his address and mentioned divided opinion among the Canadian Reformed people over their recent Synod's decision to establish fraternal relations with two denominations outside North America. These denominations have the same basic views on administering the Lord's Supper and confessional membership as the OPC. Thus, the

Canadian Reformed federation has apparently adopted a double standard by not extending the same recognition to the OPC. Later in the Assembly, a decision was made to discontinue the Committee to Study the Method of Admission to the Lord's Supper. This committee had been erected to address the Canadian Reformed concern over OPC practice. Its dissolution can be interpreted as a response to the seeming double standard on the part of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

According to an observer who was present, the action of the OPC in discontinuing their special committee on admittance to the Lord's Supper was actually prompted by the fact that this committee had finished its work and answered Canadian Reformed concerns about the Lord's Supper. It may therefore be assumed that the OPC will continue to talk to our committee on the other issues before them. In any case, it is clear from the press report of this assembly that there are frustrations within the OPC and this is understandable. The Canadian Reformed Church-

es should be drawing to a close the official discussions with the OPC that have been held for many years with a view to establishing a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship. At our last synod we have been able to offer a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship to the Korean Presbyterian Church and the Free Church of Scotland. The latter church even has congregations in geographical proximity to ours. Both of these churches have, with some variations, a similar tradition respecting admittance to the Lord's Supper and church membership. Is offering such a relationship with the OPC then not overdue? After all we have had a far longer and more intense contact with them and our synods have expressed appreciation for these discussions. Furthermore, we should keep the issues that are now being discussed with the OPC in perspective (namely, the issues of confessional membership, and the manner in which admittance to the Lord's Supper is regulated). Could these not be differences which we can live with and accept from each other due to different histories and traditions? **C**

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## Admission of Guests to the Lord's Table

By G.Ph. van Popta

*This is an expanded version of a presentation given by the author, minister of Taber Canadian Reformed Church, at a consistorial meeting held on June 23, 1993, in Coaldale, AB. In attendance were the consistories of Trinity Independent Reformed Church of Lethbridge and of the Canadian Reformed Churches of Coaldale and Taber.*

Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) are often accused of being too narrow, even sectarian, because of their practice of a "closed" Lord's Supper table. In the CanRC, although there is some variety of local policy, the rule is that the table is open to communicant members of that congregation and to

guests who are communicant members in good standing of sister churches. This, we are told, especially in conversations with (former) Christian Reformed people, is too narrow.

What may be of interest to both Canadian Reformed and (former) Christian Reformed people is that the general rule regarding the admission of guests to the Lord's Supper followed in the CanRC is very close to the official position of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) of only 20 years ago.

To further the discussion on this I would like to address (a) the question of the admission of guests to the Lord's Supper, and (b) the official position of the CRC in 1973, on this matter and the change made in 1975.

### Church Order, article 61

In article 61 of our Church Order, "Admission to the Lord's Supper," we have agreed upon the following:

The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life.

Members of sister-churches shall be admitted on the ground of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct.

As churches we have agreed upon two things by way of this article. First, baptized members of the congregation or new members are admitted to the table only upon having made a public pro-

fession of the Reformed faith and who show a godly walk of life. Second, members of sister churches are admitted by way of a good attestation from their consistory about their doctrine and conduct. We simply admit them on the basis of that testimony, no questions asked, no interview held. We honour the word of the elders of the sister church.

There are no difficulties here. As churches we have agreed how we, in our local churches, will open the table to non-communicant or new members of the congregation, and to communicant members of sister churches.

### Admission of guests from a non-sister church

The questions arise when we consider the admission of a guest from a non-sister church. Understandably, the Church Order does not address this. The Church Order is a series of agreements between sister churches living in federation. We do not expect the Church Order to say things about members from other churches nor about other church groups.

However, this does not automatically exclude guests from non-sister churches. The freedom exists within the CanRC to admit such guests according to local arrangement. They can be admitted as long as a basic principle is guarded.

This basic principle is that the elders as representatives of Jesus Christ, who have been given the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:17-19), as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1; cf. art. 30, 31 B.C.) must be the ones who exercise final judgment on who shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper. The elders are obliged to guard the sanctity of the table (Form for the Ordination of Elders). Further, the Lord has given this sacrament to the local congregation, not to some vague, undefined "invisible" church. The sacrament is a visible expression of the unity and fellowship of the local congregation, which is the church, the ingathering of God's people at that time and place. Christ calls the elders to watch that the sacraments are not profaned in that local church. And so it cannot be the guest who exercises final judgment concerning his participation, but the elders.

As long as this basic principle is upheld it would seem good to admit a guest under the following conditions:

1. He is at that time, and probably will be for some time, unable to celebrate communion in his home church or in a church of "his" church federation.
2. He makes request to the consistory at the earliest possible opportunity, preferably some time during the week preceding communion, so that the consistory or a delegation of it may be able properly to investigate the faith and conduct of the petitioner.
3. The consistory is satisfied that the petitioner meets the criteria explained in the three parts of self-examination.

*ad 1.* In practical terms this means that the elders would not open the table to a guest who is a member of the CRC or of a Lutheran Church. He would not be admitted because of his own choice and conviction regarding church membership. He has ample opportunity to celebrate communion at that place where he is convinced he belongs. To open the table to him in a CanRC would be disorderly and dishonest. Why should the barriers and the "denominational distinctives" which we insist upon and stubbornly refuse to remove suddenly fall away when we prepare the communion table?

On the other hand if we had a visitor from Greece who was a member of the Greek Evangelical Church on a temporary work or study term attending the services at our church regularly and functioning as part of the congregation, the table could and should be opened to him, even though he would be going back to Greece and his own church. If he showed by his faith and conduct that he was an heir of the grace of God in Christ, it would be orderly and honest for the elders, in the name of Jesus Christ, to open the Lord's table to this guest.

Bringing it closer to home, if a communicant member of a Free Reformed Church were living temporarily (for work or study) in Alberta where there are no Free Reformed Churches and was faithfully attending a CanRC and functioning as a part of the body, it would be honest and orderly to open the table to him, even though, as federations, we have not yet succeeded in sorting matters out between us.

This is the approach that Reformed churches have always taken in the matter of admitting guests from other church federations to the table. To veri-

fy this, let the reader consult H. Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, vol. 2 (Kampen: Kok, 1934) pp. 390-392; F.L. Rutgers, *Kerkelijke Advieses*, vol. 2 (Kampen: Kok, 1922) pp. 156ff. (advice No. 126), pp. 159-166 (advice No. 130).

*ad 2.* This condition stresses the responsibility of the elders to exercise final judgment in opening and closing the table and enables them to do this task. We may not hand out the tokens of the body and blood of the Lord in a cafeteria style to all and sundry. Furthermore, if the greeters meet the guest at the door minutes before the service begins, inform him that communion will be celebrated and invite him to participate, the visitor has no opportunity for self-examination. This flies in the face of the command of the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 11:28): *Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.* And thus another biblical and Reformed tradition would fall by the way.

*ad 3.* This condition will satisfy what our confessions in Lord's Days 28-30 and article 35 of the Belgic Confession as well as the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper teach about partaking in a worthy manner.

### Official position of the CRC in 1973

This view and practice is not far removed from what was only a short time ago the *official* position of the CRC.

In 1973, Mr. Roy Van Kooten appealed a decision of Calvary CRC, Pella, and Classis Pella (Acts 1973, art. 86 [pp. 93ff.]). The church had, for some time, been admitting guests to the Lord's Supper by way of an announcement printed in the bulletin and read from the pulpit which said:

At worship this morning we will commemorate the suffering and death of our Lord by partaking of the Lord's Supper. To all who believe in Jesus Christ as their only Savior and Lord and who are professing members in good standing of evangelical, orthodox Christian churches; to all who are truly sorry for their sins, who have repented of their wrongdoing to Christ, and who earnestly desire to lead a godly life, we extend a sincere invitation to come with gladness to the table of the Lord and to take part in this celebration of the Lord's Supper.



Mr. Van Kooten appealed to synod to declare this practice wrong. The synod sustained his appeal. The synod judged:

That the practice employed by the Calvary Church does not adequately implement the concern of Article 59 of the Church Order with regard to supervision of admission to the Lord's Supper.

Although Article 59 of the Church Order does not speak directly about the admission of visitors to the Lord's Supper, it does require of the consistory that it admit to the Lord's Supper only those who are *known* to have professed Christ and who give evidence of true faith and godliness.

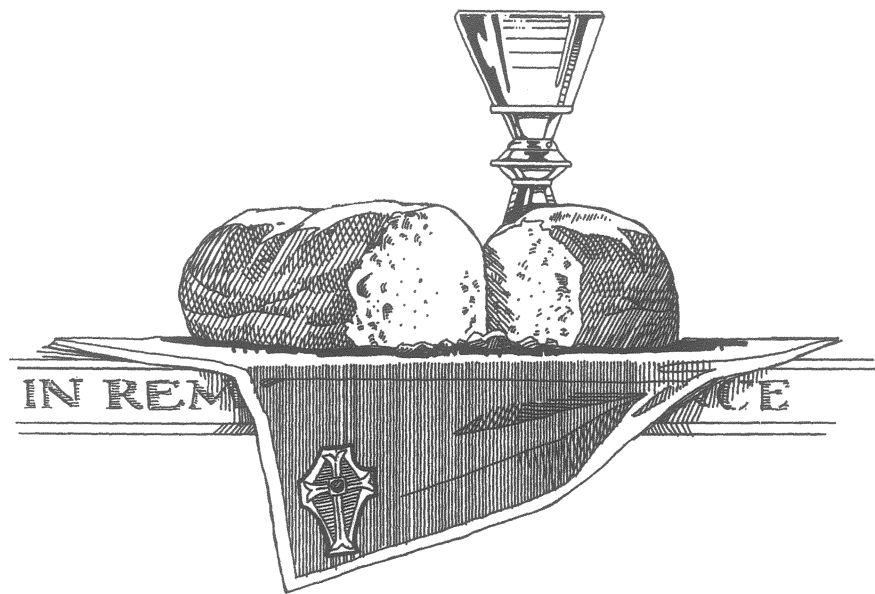
This is very close, if not identical, to the practice of the CanRC.

### The change of the official position in 1975

CRC Synod 1973, also appointed a committee to study the matter of supervision of admission of visitors since there were more questions about it. This committee reported to Synod 1975 (Report 37, pp. 471-487; "Supervision of Guests at the Lord's Table," majority and minority reports; article 101 [pp. 102ff.]).

The majority report continued in the historically Reformed line by stressing that the elders exercise final judgment regarding who may attend the table. It also, correctly, underlined that Christ gave the sacrament to his local churches. It went so far as to say ". . . that to partake of the Lord's Supper while there are factions and divisions is blasphemous. There must be fellowship *before* we can celebrate communion together" (Acts 1975, p. 478).

The majority report concluded that a Christian who belongs to another denomination may be admitted on the condition that he be interviewed by the consistory and ". . . be confronted with the consequences of his desire to participate in the communion service to which he is welcomed" (Acts 1975, p. 482). By "the consequences," the committee meant that there is a ". . . great need for every Christian to come to grips with the terrifying brokenness of the church. . . . We must confront him (the guest) with the fact that there is no church in the sky as a panacea for all our sinful divisions and schisms" (Acts 1975, pp. 479-80). Admitting a guest and participating as a guest implies, said the majority of the committee, that



we not leave the brokenness of the church for what it is but that we strive for tangible and visible unity (Acts 1975, p. 478).

Sadly, CRC Synod 1975, rejected this report in favour of the minority report. The author, C.E. Zeilstra, proceeded from the view of the church espoused by Abraham Kuyper in his 1898, Princeton Lectures. Kuyper said that since the church consists in the *congregation of believers*, the absolute character of every visible church (i.e., confederation of churches) is annihilated. Each church is, in some way or other, a manifestation of one holy and catholic church of Christ in heaven (Acts 1975, p. 485 [more Plato than Paul -GvP]). The minority report also quoted Arthur Barnes favourably who said: "Though (Christians) are divided into different denominations, yet they will meet at last in the same abode of glory" (Acts 1975, p. 485). This led the minority report to conclude that denominational affiliation is irrelevant in the matter of admitting guests to the Lord's Supper.

Following the reasoning of the minority report, CRC Synod 1975, adopted the following guidelines for the supervision of guests at the Lord's Supper (art. 101, Acts 1975, p. 103):

- a. It is the responsibility of the consistory to identify guests in order to supervise properly the Lord's Supper.
- b. It is the responsibility of the consistory to inform guests as to the re-

quirements for participation in the Lord's Supper and as to the consequence of partaking in an unworthy manner (1 Corinthians 11: 27-29).

c. It is the responsibility of the consistory to invite guests "who are truly sorry for their sins, who sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus as their Savior, and who desire to live in obedience to him," to come to the Lord's Supper (Form 3; Heid. Cat., L.D. 30, Q. & A. 81).

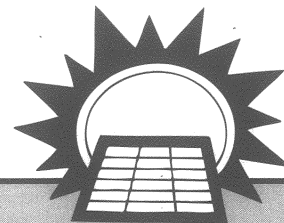
In 1975 the CRC *officially* changed its stand on the admission of guests to the Lord's Supper.

The consistory was no longer to exercise final judgment on who may attend the table. The task of the elders became one of simply *identifying, informing and inviting* guests. After the elders had identified, informed and invited a guest, the guest was to exercise final judgment.

If this procedure is followed, one wonders whether the elders are fulfilling their calling to guard the sanctity of the table.

### Conclusion

The CanRC have often been accused of narrowness and sectarianism because of their policy and protocol on admission of guests to the Lord's table. However the CanRC stand in the old Reformed line on this point stressing the task of the elders to watch over the table and to admit only those whom they *know* are sound in faith and godly in conduct. **C**



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

*But according to His promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

*2 Peter 3:13*

## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Bible is very old. It tells about people who lived thousands of years ago. It also tells us about things that are going to happen. Everything that is written in the Bible is really true. Nothing is made up. Nobody has ever written a book like it. The Bible is the Word of God.

What are we doing with this Book? Are we just putting it on the bookshelf with all the other books? Maybe, we lend it out to someone to read? Maybe, we read it two or three times like we do with any other good book? But no, for the Bible is a very special Book. It does not just tell us some nice stories. It has a message for us. It gives us comfort and hope. It tells us what we have to do and how we have to live. Therefore the Bible should be the book in our house that we read the most.

The Lord God Himself gave us the Bible. He designed it. He made sure that everything we need to know for salvation is in the Bible. We are not allowed to take anything out; we are not allowed to add anything to it. God decided that what it is like, that is the way it should be.

When Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree, the Lord punished them, but the Lord also gave them the promise of the Messiah. What we read in the Old Testament shows that the Lord is working towards the fulfillment of that covenant promise. It points to the Saviour, Jesus Christ. And in the new Testament we read about the life of our Saviour when He was on earth. While He was on earth Jesus Christ showed that He wanted to be our Comforter in all difficult situations of our life. He also showed to us how He did comfort. He started with the very beginning. He removed the cause of all our misery and grief. He took our sins upon Himself, and as a result He can remove our illness, fears, handicaps and anxieties as well.

That message is written throughout the Bible. When we read the Bible, the Lord is talking to us. Who would not like to hear those words of promise and hope? Everybody looks forward to a visit from a friend. When the friend knows your

worries and your sadness, how nice it is when he or she visits you and cheers you up or helps you solve your problems. When you have a friend who can do that, he/she can never come too often! That is how God visits us through the Bible. Therefore we read the Bible very often, we use it to find words of comfort and hope and to find a way to solve our problems. It is good when God's children always have the Bible ready for use. They read the Bible as the true message of the living God, so that they are able to go on with their lives, even when everything around them looks dark and gloomy.

How fortunate that through the work of Jesus Christ, we are children of God. And that, as His children, guided by the Holy Spirit, we are able to read and hear all those words of comfort and hope. The Bible will help us along to the day when all God's promises will come true. When all the earthly suffering will come to an end, and when there will be no limit to the eternal happiness and glory. We know this, for God has told it to us in His Holy Word, the Bible.

*If you but let the Father guide you,  
Relying on His faithfulness,  
He will be evermore beside you  
In all your sorrow and distress.  
He who on God most High depends  
Builds not his house on shifting sands.*  
Hymn 48:1

## Birthdays in November:

**Wilma Van Drongelen** will celebrate her birthday on the 3rd of November.

306-33375 May Fair Avenue  
Abbotsford, BC V2S 2M7

**Adrian DeJong** will celebrate his birthday on November 27th.

RR 1, Site 6, Box 9  
Barrhead, AB T0G 0E0

I wish you a happy birthday!  
Until next month,

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

# GRADUATION

## Parkland Immanuel Christian School – Edmonton

### May 28, 1993

The Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church was the setting for a festive occasion; eleven students graduating from Parkland Immanuel Christian School.

After the singing of Hymn 41:1, Mr. VanDelft, principal of the school, opened with the reading of Philippians 4 and led in prayer. In his opening remarks, Mr. VanDelft paid special attention to verse 9 of Philippians 4. "What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will go with you." "The emphasis in graduation tends to be on the past, and at the same time, beliefs are presented about the future. That is a microcosm of what graduation is all about; reflecting fondly and thankfully on the past and looking forward with hope in the Lord to the future. Included in this, is the fact that all things must be done for the glory of the Lord; the very essence of our lives."

The guest speaker for this evening was Mr. J. VanderLinden, a teacher of ten years at Parkland Immanuel Christian School. This was Mr. VanderLinden's last year of teaching in Edmonton, since he has accepted a teaching position at John Calvin School in Armadale, Australia. After expressing thankfulness to the students for inviting him to speak at their graduation, Mr. VanderLinden continued to expound on the meaning of graduation in the light of the text chosen by using an interesting analogy. With the model of a lab report, and all the necessities of a good scientific experiment, it was shown how all the earth is the Lords' and how all that is learned must be used in our life of service before Him.

Mr. W. Noot, chairman of the board, then congratulated the students on behalf of the board and society; and expressed the fact that all thanksgiving must be directed to our heavenly Father who grants us the opportunity to educate our children at a Christian School.

Thankfulness was also expressed by singing Psalm 19:3,6.



Front Row: l to r: Mary Jane Helder, Sylvia de Leeuw, Gloria Bredenhof, Annette de Jong, Anne VanOrizande, Kerri Marko  
Back Row: l to r: Darryl Hofsink, Jason Veldkamp, Aron VanDelft, Richard Veldkamp, Dave VanRaalte

The class historian, Aron VanDelft, presented the circumstances surrounding their education at Parkland in a rather humorous light. Events described included those from kindergarten (days consisting of, recess, snack time, nap time, a sand box, and best of all a two day work week) to grade 12 (government exams and graduation).

The class valedictorian, Richard Veldkamp, also expressed thankfulness to the Lord for the opportunity given to receive a Christian education. After graduation, the students may also continue in the assurance that the God of peace would be their guide. "As students they have learned everything from tying their shoes to synthetic division. Now as students they have to use what has been learned to the praise and glory of our Father, and He will continue to teach us for years to come, revealing Himself in His Word and creation."

The next item on the program was the presentation of awards and diplo-

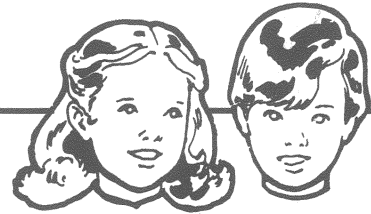
mas. Mr. P. Lindhout presented an award on behalf of the Christian Credit Union to Aron VanDelft. Mr. L. Bredenhof presented the VanderLand Memorial Scholarship to Annette DeJong. The Students' Council Award was awarded to Richard Veldkamp.

Mr. C. Meliefste led the assembly in closing prayer, after which the gathering sang "O Canada."

Then it was off to the beautifully decorated school gym, where a delicious meal prepared by the Ladies Aid was enjoyed by all. This part of the evening was opened by the M.C., Mr. J. Kuntz. After the meal, Mr. Kuntz introduced the students in an "accurate" and humorous fashion. The grade 10 and 11 class presented their own amusing and entertaining production of a day in the life of the grade 12 class. After closing prayer, students, staff and parents had the opportunity to thankfully reflect on another graduation evening.

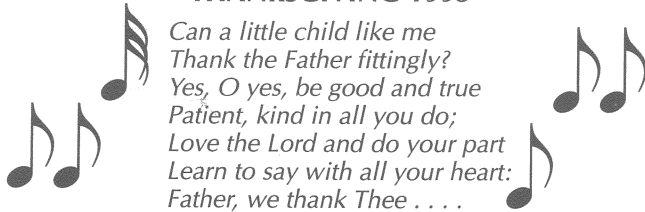
An Observer **C**

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

## THANKSGIVING 1993



*Can a little child like me  
Thank the Father fittingly?  
Yes, O yes, be good and true  
Patient, kind in all you do;  
Love the Lord and do your part  
Learn to say with all your heart:  
Father, we thank Thee . . . .*

I thought about that, Busy Beavers.  
And I thought, "What am I most thankful for?  
"Well," I thought, "We have lots to eat!"  
"I have a warm winter coat hanging ready."  
"Our furnace is fixed."  
"I enjoyed my bike ride."  
"There are still pretty flowers in the yard."  
"We can go to church and school."  
"Oh yes, very important! We are all healthy."  
"Even more important . . . God loves me."  
When I think of that, then I can sing  
"Father in heaven, we thank Thee."

But how about the things we're NOT thankful for?  
The sad things, the hard things that make us NOT, no, NOT  
thankful at all.  
Our Father in heaven wants us to talk to Him about that, too!  
Because He knows our life. He has a plan for our life.  
Father in heaven we thank Thee!  
We thank Thee we can talk to Thee . . .  
about everything in our life!



## Quiz Time!

### COLOURS

Joseph had a coat of many colours.

Which colours are needed to finish the following?

Sometimes the name of the colour has taken on a different meaning!

1. the \_\_\_\_\_ Sea
2. "Who are these arrayed in \_\_\_\_\_ robes?"
3. "He makes me lie down in \_\_\_\_\_ pastures."
4. ". . . you can not make one hair \_\_\_\_\_  
or \_\_\_\_\_."
5. Lydia, a seller of \_\_\_\_\_ .
6. Do not look at wine when it is \_\_\_\_\_ ."
7. "\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have I none," said Peter.
8. "Lo, in her mouth was an \_\_\_\_\_ leaf."
9. ". . . though your sins are like \_\_\_\_\_ , they shall  
be as \_\_\_\_\_ as snow; though they are \_\_\_\_\_  
like \_\_\_\_\_ they shall become like wool."
10. "So now send me a man skilled to work in \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
\_\_\_\_\_ , bronze and iron, and in \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
\_\_\_\_\_ , and \_\_\_\_\_ fabrics. . . ."

(See answers)

### PAIRS

Can you match the Bible names that go together?

- |              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Esther    | a. Jonathan |
| 2. Alexander | b. Sapphira |
| 3. Ruth      | c. Timothy  |
| 4. Saul      | d. Rufus    |
| 5. David     | e. Mary     |
| 6. Bathsheba | f. Mordecai |
| 7. Martha    | g. Solomon  |
| 8. Rachel    | h. Naomi    |
| 9. Jacob     | i. Peninah  |
| 10. Ananias  | j. Samuel   |
| 11. Hannah   | k. Joseph   |
| 12. Paul     | l. Leah     |

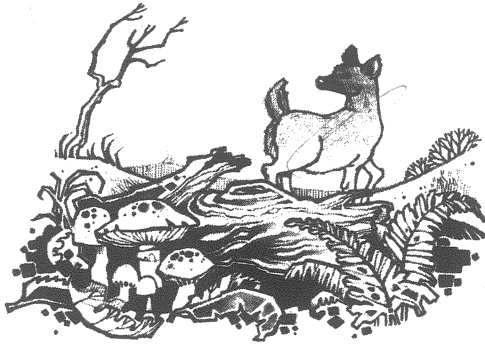
## ANIMAL WORDSEARCH

By Busy Beaver *Robert Vandergaag*

Can you find all these?

cat	mouse	fox	lynx	hen
fish	rabbit	ox	cow	<del>goose</del>
spider	wolf	deer	horse	
dog	elk	coyote	bird	
bear	moose	pig	ducks	

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



## TONGUE TWISTER

How many times can you say this quickly and correctly?

FRED FED FURRY FRANK FOOD  
From Busy Beaver *Pauline Boeve*

## FOR SENIOR BUSY BEAVERS Halloween or Reformation Day?

How come they're on the same day?  
Is there a connection?  
Can you find out?

Clue: Why did Martin Luther pick October 31 to post his 95 theses on the church door at Wittenberg in 1517?

All answers win a reward.

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

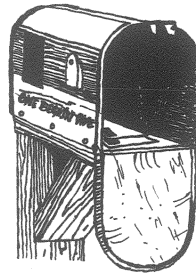
## RECESS GAME

Busy Beaver *Vickie Aikema* wrote: "Sometimes we play this other game. We pick teams and decide who gets which part of the game court. The game court looks like this"



Then we try to get the ball all the way across the game court. If it gets past the end of the game court we get 1 point."

Maybe you and your friends would like to try this game. Have fun!



## FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Jonathan Janssens*. Thank you for sharing your poem code. I see you are a real Busy Beaver already. Keep up the good work, Jonathan!

Welcome to the Club *Charlene Barendregt*. Thank you for your letter. I'm happy you have a goal to work for,

Charlene. And I'm looking forward to that puzzle you promised to send.

And a big welcome to you, too, *Tamara DeJong*. I'm glad you had such a good time traveling during your summer holidays. Maybe you will write us a little story of how you went on your long trip, Tamara?

How do you like your new computer, *Pauline Boeve*? And how is your new bike? I liked your picture, Pauline. Was that you riding the horse?

Thank you for an interesting puzzle, *Marian Wierenga*. I'm glad you enjoyed your camping trip this summer. I would have enjoyed the swimming, too, Marian!

Hello, *Melissa DeBoersap*. It was nice to hear from you again! Thank you for a pretty letter and a code! How was your summer, Melissa?

**Answers:** She was Mr. Smith's sister.

*The Scientist's Brother:* The famous scientist was a woman.

Sarah must be nine.

sica. So he is eight. And Greg, who is a year younger than

Sarah, Sarah is ten. Kevin said he was a year older than Jes-

She is now seven. So, if she's three years younger than

*The New Kids:* Jessica said she would be eight next month.

*Last time's solutions:*

! 12. c.

*Pairs:* 1. f 2. d 3. h 4. j 5. a 6. g 7. e 8. l 9. k 10. b 11.

crimson 10. gold, silver, purple, crimson, blue.

ple 6. red 7. silver, gold 8. olive 9. scarlet, white, red,

*Colours:* 1. red 2. white 3. green 4. white, black 5. pur-

Those are the answers! How did you do?

Bye for now, Busy Beavers

Have fun keeping busy!

Love to you all,  
Aunt Betty

