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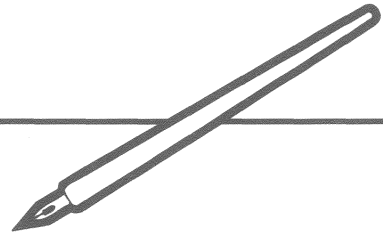
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 43, No. 1

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By J. Geertsema



A New Law or Law-lessness in Ontario?

We begin this first issue of our magazine with expressing grave concern for the future of the province of Ontario and, at the same time, for our country. The future can bring difficult situations for those churches that seek to be faithful to God's Word. The cause of this concern is Bill 45 and Bill 55 which have had second reading already at this time of writing which is the middle of December. This editorial will first present the two Bills, followed by a letter of Rev. G. VanDooren. A few remarks will conclude it.

The two bills

Bill 45, 1993

An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to Sexual Orientation

HER MAJESTY, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, enacts as follows:

1. Subsection 2 (2) of the *Human Rights Code* is amended by inserting after "creed" in the sixth line "sexual orientation."
2. Subsection 5 (2) of the *Human Rights Code* is amended by inserting after "creed" in the sixth line "sexual orientation."
3. The definition of "marital status" in subsection 10 (1) of the *Human Rights Code* is amended by striking out "of the opposite sex" in the fourth line.
4. This Act comes into force on the day it receives Royal Assent.
5. The short title of this Act is the *Human Rights Code Amendment Act (Sexual Orientation), 1993*.

Bill 55, 1993

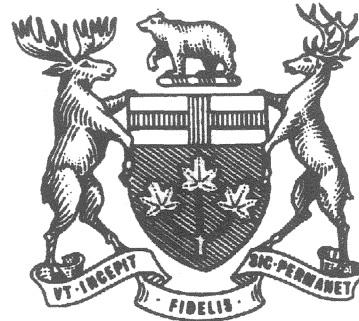
An Act to amend the Human Rights Code

1. The *Human Rights Code* is amended by adding the following sections:

7.1 Every person has the right to equal treatment without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or handicap in any public communication made by another person.

26. 1 The right under section 7.1 is infringed by a person who makes a public statement or publishes, sells or displays or causes or permits the publication, sale or display of any written material or visual representation that,

- (a) ridicules or demeans a person or class of persons because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or handicap; or



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- (b) discriminates, incites discrimination or expresses hatred against a person or class of persons because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or handicap.

2. Section 44 of the *Human Rights Code* is amended adding the following subsection:

1.1 Every person who is guilty of an offence for contravening an order made in respect of the infringement of a right under section 7.1 is liable, on conviction, to a fine not more than \$50,000.

3. This Act comes into force on the day it receives Royal Assent.

4. The short title of this Act is the *Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 1993*.

Letter of Rev. G. VanDooren

Many have written letters to the government. This is what Rev. VanDooren wrote:

To the Honourable Premier Bob Rae
the Honourable Minister Marion Boyd
Rosario Marchese

Re: Bill 45 and Bill 55

Now that the Government of Ontario may be on its way to legitimize relationships between lesbian and gay people as equal before the law, contrary to the divinely created ordinance of marriage between a man and a woman,

— and now that the free speech of normalcy is about to be curbed, even criminalized, it is time to remind the Government of the law and of the Word of God.

I have been advised to be "cautious about using quotes from the Bible," but as a minister of the Word for more than half a century I have no other instrument or recourse. It is the Bible upon which you as Government swore allegiance.

The so-called **sexual orientation** of gays and lesbians has always contributed and hastened toward the downfall of a culture. At the end of the Canaanite culture "the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities" (Genesis 19:24).

When the Roman Empire started to break down, the apostle Paul wrote this verdict,

So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honour Him . . . Claiming to be wise they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images . . . Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves . . . Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. (Romans 1:18-27)

It's all there, then and now, gays, lesbians, aids . . .

What is the Government now planning? To help these "victims" of their errors? Of course! But if Bill 45 and Bill 55 become law, this Government would find its image in Romans 1:32, "Though they know God's decree, that those who do such things deserve to die, they . . . **approve those who practice them**" (stress mine), by removing the divine ordinance of "the opposite sex" from the definition of marital status. And by doing this, the Government would make it a crime for any one to *disapprove* of such lifestyles.

I urge you to defeat and do away with Bill 45 and Bill 55. As Government you ought to keep in mind that the same God is still there, and that He, and His Word, are still the same.

Respectfully submitted by,
G. VanDooren

Total equality

At this moment the "Human Rights Code" states, "Every person has the right to equal treatment without discrimination because of race, . . ." and so on. "Sex" is included, too. Male and female are equal for the law, as are white, brown and black people, married and unmarried. So far the term "sexual orientation" is missing. The bills mean to include this "sexual orientation."

If these bills become law, gays and lesbians have "the right to equal treatment without discrimination." This "equal treatment" is not just in court but in all of society. With these Bills the Ontario government wants to press the so-called multi-cultural society upon all of us. There has to be total equality of all Ontarians.

What about Christian employers and schools?

Ontario labour law (Ontario is on this point, too, the first province) has been amended already. It is the so-called "employment equity law." The enactment took place in December. This law is expected to be proclaimed in the beginning of this new year. It forbids discrimination in any form in hiring employees, and it requires the employers in the province to hire not only women but also visible minorities and peo-

ple who have disabilities. By the way, guidelines for employers can soon be expected, for the Ontario government wants to set up an extensive campaign to educate the people of the province, since the minister anticipates that there will be a lot of opposition. Of course such a campaign will cost the tax-payers millions and millions of dollars.

When Bills 45 and 55 become law, the employers could be compelled no longer to discriminate against gays and lesbians in their hiring. They have the right to equal treatment, which is to be acknowledged by all who live in the province. What will be the result for Christian employers? How about Christian schools? The result could be that employers are not free anymore to hire whom they want, but can be compelled by law to hire people who practice and preach homosexuality, even though these employers themselves reject such a lifestyle on the basis of God's Word. If such a compulsion becomes reality because of demands of those who feel discriminated against, it could mean that a number of employers pack up and try elsewhere or retire. It can certainly not be said that such laws will promote employment in the province of Ontario, while such employment through private businesses is what Ontario appears to need the most. The New Democratic Government could be digging the economic grave for the labourers in this province and for business. No, the economic future of Ontario does not look very bright.

A socialist government wants to regulate everything from the top, forcing total equality upon all the subjects and taking away their freedom. For those who refuse to be made totally equal, for instance for religious reasons, there is no place left, just as in a communist society. Are not communism and socialism sisters, both strongly anti-christian? After communism failed in many countries of what was called the eastern block, will we now see that socialism with the same effect is pressed on the western nations? Let me give you a quotation from the book of William D. Gairdner, *The War against the Family* (p.16;cf the review in our magazine of Nov. 19, 1993, pp.499f). He writes, "When a U.S. political observer just heard the news of Ontario's swing to the hard left, he opined that Canadians must be a rather strange people, for they seem to think that when the Berlin Wall was torn down, all the Germans ran to the East."

What about Christian freedom?

For the churches the future could become difficult too. Section 26.1 stipulates, that Ontario residents are not allowed to publish or sell, and so on, anything that "ridicules or demeans a person or class of persons because of race . . . sexual orientation . . ." and so on. Indeed, we should not publicly ridicule any person or speak about him (this includes 'her') in a degrading manner. However, the question is how the term "demean" will be interpreted. Is saying in public that practicing homosexuality is wrong also "demeaning"? The Bible clearly states, as pointed out by Rev. VanDooren, that homosexual practices are wrong, even an abomination, in the eyes of the Creator (Lev. 18:22), for He made man (= human beings) male and female (Gen. 1:27). The Creator also said (Gen. 2:24, cf. Mat.19:5 and Eph. 5:31) that "a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife" (to that person of the other gender who had legally become his wife). Are we not allowed to say this anymore publicly from the pulpit? Will the Word of God be-

come a forbidden book that cannot be sold openly in the bookstore anymore, unless it is censored by the government and unless passages that are offensive (demeaning) for gays and lesbians have been removed?

To raise these questions becomes even more urgent when we look at section 26.1 (b). We are told that we infringe the right of a person when we make a public statement, orally or in written form, that "discriminates, incites discrimination or expresses hatred against a person." If one would read publicly in church that practicing homosexuality is an abomination in the eyes of the Lord, the Creator of all things, will this be considered discriminatory? And if a minister of God's Word, or a reading elder, publicly reads from the sermon what God's Word says, will this be considered inciting discrimination and hatred? Will this mean that the courts will fine that minister or elder up to the amount of \$50,000? In our modern society everything is possible in this respect.

Homosexuality or "sexual orientation" belongs to a different category than all the other persons or groups. Even if

one does not want to reckon with the Creator who made man male and female, the fact of people being male or female in physical appearance testifies against men having a sexual relation with men and women with women.

No, we should not ridicule or demean, nor express hatred against the homosexual neighbour. We are called to love him or her, but with a true Christian love. This Christian love does not want them to live in what God calls sin bringing God's wrath upon them. Christian love calls to acknowledgment of sin and to repentance from sin, in order that the sinner may be saved from God's wrath. What Rev. VanDooren quotes from Romans 1 about God's wrath being revealed from heaven is not only applicable for Paul's days. It applies also for our time. God's wrath is being revealed also in our time when people are given over to impurity, in their unnatural lust.

May God be merciful to our country. May His Word, the Gospel of Christ Jesus, continue to be heard and received in faith. Only in this way is there hope for Ontario and Canada, not only spiritually, but also economically. **C**

Alliance of Reformed Churches

November 16-18, 1993 Lynwood, Illinois

The Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC) met in Lynwood, Illinois from November 16-18, in the Lynwood Independent Christian Reformed Church building. (Lynwood is just south of Chicago). An invitation was sent to the Deputies for the promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity of the Canadian Reformed Churches. As a result the undersigned attended the meeting of the ARC.

Opening and initial business

The meeting is opened in a Christian manner by the chairman of the Interim Committee, Mr. Peter Moen. Mr. Peter Moen is elected as chairman of this meeting, Rev. Ray Lanning is elected as vice-chairman, while Rev. Jerome Julien continues as stated clerk. The ARC is comprised of churches which are still in the Christian Reformed Church and those who have become independent from the CRC. Present at the opening of the meeting are 130 official delegates from fifty-nine CRC's and Independent Churches; fifteen official observers from ten CRC's and Independent Churches

and other Churches; and seventeen fraternal delegates and official observers or representatives from the following: Canadian Reformed Churches, Christian Presbyterian Church (recently launched in California), Free Reformed Churches, Mid-America Reformed Seminary, Orthodox Christian Reformed Church, Pacific Island Ministries, Protestant Reformed Churches, Reformed Church in the United States, Reformed Presbyterian Church General Assembly, Urban Nations and Westminster Theological Seminary (West). Delegates from these bodies are given an opportunity to address the ARC during the course of the meeting. Observers are also given permission to attend the committee meetings. The chairman reads the Form of Subscription and all official delegates demonstrate their agreement with the subscription form by rising from their seats in unison.

The stated clerk, Rev. Jerome Julien, mentions a number of items that he had to deal with during the past year. One matter of interest to the Canadian

delegates is that Rev. Ray Sikkema received permission to officiate at weddings in Ontario because of his affiliation with the ARC. This is important for ministers of independent churches who need some sort of recognized ecclesiastical basis in order to receive the right to officiate at marriages. The meeting establishes six committees to deal with the large number of agenda items. The Canadian Reformed delegates pay special attention to the committee which dealt with the structure of the ARC, that is, whether the ARC would now move in the direction of federative unity.

The first evening of the Alliance meeting is designated as an inspirational evening. Rev. J.R. DeWit from the Reformed Church of America delivers a speech on Ephesians 2. He applies the words of the apostle Paul to the situation of today by encouraging the churches in the ARC to strive for federative unity. These words are alluded to a number of times during the rest of the meeting and appear to be taken to heart.

Request for membership by the RPCGA

The Reformed Presbyterian Church General Assembly (RPCGA) requests membership within the ARC. The RPCGA subscribes to both the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity. The request cannot be granted as made because the ARC has no structure for welcoming federations or assemblies into it. However, the Alliance wholeheartedly encourages the sessions of the RPCGA to pursue membership in the ARC as individual congregations, according to the established guidelines set forth in the constitution.

Federation and change of purpose for the ARC

Overtures from the Wellandport Orthodox Reformed Church and the Orthodox Reformed Church of Edmonton request the ARC to recognize the need of the independent churches within its midst to federate while continuing their relationship with the Alliance for mutual benefit and support. Accordingly those churches in the ARC which are independent should be able to hold separate meetings to accomplish that purpose. Meanwhile those churches still in the ARC could also have their separate meetings to address their special needs. Observers would be welcomed at each other's meetings. These overtures are adopted.

Church order

A number of churches make overtures regarding a church order for the currently independent churches. Some of the overtures are very positive about such a common church order. The following decision is made:

1. That the Alliance of Reformed Churches appoints a committee of independent churches to draft a provisional church order. The Church Order of Dort should be the point of departure for such an undertaking, with special focus being given to more carefully and explicitly guarding against hierarchical abuses.

2. That the committee be mandated to give due consideration to the church orders of other Reformed denominations, and the materials already processed by the Confessional Fellowship of the Reformed Churches study committee, and the materials presented by Rev. R. Leestma at the May 1993 meeting in St. Catharines, Ontario under the title: "Church Order Alliance of Re-

formed Churches," and the *Cambridge Platform*. The committee is, of course, free to use other materials as well, but should not ignore the work others have already done.

3. That the committee report to the 1994 Alliance meeting.

A committee is also appointed at this time with Rev. J.S. Gangar as convenor.

Regional fellowship

Three churches overture the ARC to encourage the independent churches to form regional classes. The Alliance responds by indicating that such a structuring of regional fellowship, though important and beneficial, needs to be of a provisional and interim nature, until the ARC eventually adopts a church order, at which time integrally structured regions or classes would find their proper place. Regional fellowships are seen as necessary at this time, and in keeping with the Alliance's Statement of Purpose, so that churches in one area may help each other in the area of pulpit supply, disciplinary matters, candidate and ordination exams, etc. Therefore the following decision is made:

that the Alliance of Reformed Churches encourage its member churches to cooperate in the for-


mation of Regions or Regional Fellowships as is suitable and feasible for the purpose of enhancing church life for the glory of God and the coming of His Kingdom.

Contacts with outside organizations

There are four overtures which request the ARC to contact several ecclesiastical conferences and churches. A committee is appointed of the independent churches of Calgary, Edmonton and Lethbridge, Alberta, and mandated to do the following:

1. Contact the International Conference of Reformed Churches, the International Reformed Fellowship, and other Reformed fellowships, to investigate their membership, goals, and confessional foundations, and determine whether fellowship with them is feasible or desirable.

2. Contact the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Free Reformed Churches, the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, the Protestant Reformed Churches, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Christian Presbyterian Church, and the Reformed Church in the United States, requesting some official communication from them to see whether they are interested in working



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toward federative unity with the independent churches, and if so, according to what procedure they would suggest such federative unity be sought.

Bible translations

The Independent CRC of London overtures the ARC to appoint a committee to study and make recommendations regarding different Bible translations. The Alliance responds by pointing out that such studies already exist, and it is the task of the local consistory to decide which translation is most faithful and appropriate.

Hymnal

The Independent CRC of London also overtures the ARC to appoint a committee to recommend principles for praise, psalm and hymn selections and reliable music books. One ground adduced is that the Biblical and Reformed content of some of the psalms and hymns presently in use is questionable. While appreciating these concerns and encouraging interested churches and individuals to offer help to the London congregation, the Alliance decides that a committee would be premature, and discussions on these matters should begin in the local church.

Calling church

The Trinity Orthodox Reformed Church in St. Catharines overtures the ARC to eliminate the Interim Committee, and allow a local church to call or convene meetings of the Alliance instead. Past experience in the CRC demonstrates that such a permanent body as the Interim Committee could influence, sometimes negatively, the decisions made by an assembly. This overture gives rise to a lively debate. Those opposed to the overture do not believe the work presently done by the Interim Committee could be handled by a local church. The Alliance decides not to accede to this overture, on the ground that convening by a local church does not eliminate the concerns expressed, and it is possible for an Interim Committee to function in a proper way.

Processing of protests

The Protest and Appeal Committee has drawn up guidelines for processing of protests in and among the churches. These guidelines follow the rule of Matthew 18:15-17 and the lines of the Church Order of Dort. At this

time, local congregations can take note of these guidelines and use them, but a final decision whether to adopt these guidelines will go hand in hand with the adoption of an entire Church Order.

Westminster standards

The Christian Reformation Church of Grand Rapids overtures the ARC to restudy its 1992 decision to include the Westminster Standards in the "Purpose of the Alliance" and the "Basic Confessional Statements" on the ground that sections 1 and 3 of Chapter 31 of the Westminster Confession of Faith allow, for instance, the right of a synod to discipline the elders and deacons of a local church. The Alliance decides to table the whole matter.

Examination for ordination

The Dutton Independent Reformed Church of Caledon, Michigan, overtures the ARC to include certain specific items in the examination for ordination. Dutton includes proposed specifics in their overtures. What is being proposed is a lengthy and thorough examination. The rationale for such a thorough standard examination is to have uniformity among Alliance churches regarding the examination of those who are to enter the ministry. After a slight change to the proposal of Dutton, the overture is adopted.

Conclusion

There was a good and harmonious spirit at this meeting of the Alliance of Reformed Churches. There was a clear desire to listen to one another, and to base all decisions on the Word of God. It was certainly good for your delegates to be there, to talk with so many of the brothers, and to be received and heard as well as we were. Within the Alliance there were some very good developments. The churches represented at this meeting demonstrated a clear inclination to resist the spirit of independencism, to seek unity with each other along classical reformed lines, and to see whether this unity could be accomplished with other Presbyterian and Reformed Churches. It also became clear that for many, the ARC as it functions now, has a facilitating but transitory nature to it. Clearly for some independent churches there is the desire to have the Alliance turn into a federation rather than an umbrella group along the lines of the

ICRC. It will take time for such a federation, built around a Reformed church order, to be realized. It will take time for the independent churches to talk with other Presbyterian and Reformed brothers to see whether a broader unity could be realized among us. But the efforts and the desire to submit to the will of God among the brothers at the Alliance are laudable, and we pray that the Lord will bless them in the year which lies ahead. With His blessing this will be a very fruitful and prosperous year.

Based on the decisions made at this meeting of the ARC, more contact with these churches can be expected on the deputy level. It is our hope that there will also be an intensification of contacts at the local level. It was clear to your deputies that the churches associated with the ARC want to be faithful to the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions. The Canadian Reformed Churches wish to do the same. May this unity of faith eventually also be expressed ecclesiastically in accordance with the desire of the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ.

*R. Aasman
C. Van Dam* **C**



Text of a Short Speech as Observer at the ARC 1993

By C. Van Dam

Esteemed brothers,

Thank you for your kind invitation. We count it a privilege to be in your midst as official observers of the Canadian Reformed Churches and we pass on the greetings from these churches. The Canadian Reformed Churches are vitally interested in what is taking place here these two days. This is no wonder.

Let me briefly introduce the Canadian Reformed Churches. They were established in the early 1950s by immigrants from the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands. The establishment of the Canadian Reformed Churches was however done with some reluctance and it was a last resort; for, there was a strong desire not to needlessly multiply the number of "denominations." We felt a duty to join the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). After all at that time we were so recently (as Dutch sister churches) brothers in one ecclesiastical home and Christ does not want His church divided. However, joining the CRC proved to be impossible without denying the ecclesiastical struggle we had just gone through in the Netherlands, a struggle which in several respects is similar to your present one. Yet, although we could not in good conscience join the CRC, this church was not lightly dismissed. Synod after Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches dealt with this church and our relation to it. Two appeals were issued, in 1963 and in 1977, warning about the damage that their sister relationship with the synodical church in the Netherlands was having and would have on them.


The current secessions from the CRC about the same basic issues that concerned us therefore raises hope in Canadian Reformed circles about the ecumenical possibilities that present

themselves. We have yearned for the removal of barriers with the CRC for many years. Perhaps after all these years of separation we can still experience ecclesiastical unity with each other on the basis of Scripture and confession. We earnestly hope that a united Reformed church may emerge under God's grace.

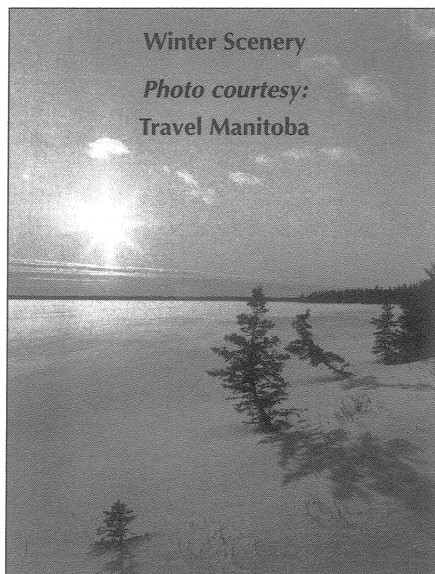
There is therefore considerable sympathy and interest in our circles in you who are still struggling within the CRC and you who as churches have seceded from the CRC in order to remain Reformed. Indeed, because of overtures coming from the churches, our last held synod (Lincoln 1992) decided to appoint six deputies for the promotion of ecclesiastical unity (both from the east and the west of our country). Rev. R. Aasman of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church in Edmonton and I are two of these deputies. It

should be noted that since our Synods only meet once every three years, the Canadian Reformed Churches took the first possible opportunity to establish this committee for ecumenicity. Our mandate includes representing the Canadian Reformed Churches at a meeting such as this. Also in a more general way, our mandate includes being available for providing information and consultation. Our mandate is limited however, for we place a high premium on the independence of the local church. Local contacts between the independent churches and Canadian Reformed Churches have started in various locales and we wish these initiatives well.

Brothers, you have a large agenda and we do not wish to take too much of your time at this moment. We do hope and pray that your meetings may be blessed. As observers we do not want to meddle in your agenda, but because we in a world that is consciously turning its back to the Word of God, we hope that you as seceded churches may decide to federate in some form. This will facilitate unity among the independent churches and with others desiring ecclesiastical unity. Please do not go the route of independentism. We also hope that you may appoint deputies for ecumenicity. There are matters of general concern that can only be properly discussed on a more general level such as that of deputies. Ecumenical discussions should start that fragmentation in the Reformed community be prevented.

In conclusion, alluding to Ephesians 4, may your work here serve the preservation of the unity in the Spirit in the bond of peace. May we all as Reformed churches grow in Christ our Head (cf. Eph. 4:3, 15). 

OUR COVER



Winter Scenery

Photo courtesy:
Travel Manitoba

Abuse₂

By D.G.J. Agema

In the preceding instalment three forms of abuse were discussed: alcohol abuse, wife abuse, and child abuse. In this second instalment the question will be dealt with how an abusive situation is maintained and how abuse destroys.

How is abuse maintained

Why is it that the cycle of abuse is so hard to break? Why is it that people who live in abusive situations seem to be unable to walk away from it? To answer these questions let me refer to something I read about alcoholism in this regard:

“Alcoholism is like a dinosaur in the living room. To an outsider the dinosaur is impossible to ignore, but for those within the home, the hopelessness of evicting the beast forces them to pretend it isn’t here. That’s the only way they can coexist.” (Forward, *Toxic Parents*, p.73)

If you cannot change the problem, then change your perception of it. Say to yourself it does not exist, or that it has a reason, or it is not that bad. The victim begins to rationalize and minimize the existence and effects of the abuse.

Let me mention some of the things that play a role in the lives of those who live with abuse which prevent them from dealing with it (from Murray, *Loving an Alcoholic*, part I):

- There is shame: for a long time you think it is only a little problem, but as time goes on you become aware that it is much greater. You feel ashamed of it. You feel the condemnation of the whole community.
- There is anger: you realize the situation and the frustration makes you angry. Usually the anger is deflected. There is anger at self, because you made a mistake; anger at the abuser, if he really loves me he would quit; and anger at others, such as the parents of the alcoholic.
- There is the feeling of guilt: I have caused the whole thing. This ingre-

– dient is one of the most powerful things to keep a person in a situation of abuse. The abuser puts initially the blame on the victim. After some time the victim comes to believe it as well: “It is my own fault, I deserve it, if only I had been better it would not have happened.” And because the victim fails to solve the problem the only way she can carry the burden of guilt is by seeing it as the punishment she deserves. The abuser knows how to control this guilt feeling very cunningly. He will use the guilt feeling to manipulate the victim and remain in control.

- There is denial: you tell yourself, he had a reason to do this, or it is only temporary, and he is really trying to quit the drinking. The victims easily fall for false promises and hopes. Denial is one of the most basic defense systems of a person. The denial can become so great that all other problems in the relationship are subjected to it, e.g. that all the other problems will go away if only the drinking problems will be over. This is not so, for, once the substance is gone then the other problems will rear their heads even more painfully. The abuse has hidden all these relationship problems.
- Last but not least there is fear: fear of being discovered, of taking actions, of reprisal from your family, and friends, being afraid of the future, ending up alone, or making the same mistakes again.

In making up excuses the victim accepts the abuse. Therefore these excuses do not help; on the contrary they make the abuse worse, for they convey to the abuser, it works and he goes on.

Alcohol abuse

The alcoholic so manipulates and controls the situation by his drinking that all involved in his life have to serve him. At the same time he uses their ser-

vice as an excuse to continue his drinking. He has two mighty weapons to maintain his power. He can arouse the anger of the others, which in turn justifies his drinking, and he can arouse the anxiety of the others. Thus the family members become his slaves. As long as they give in and make up excuses for the alcoholic, the family reinforces the alcoholic’s conviction. In his point of view it works.

Wife abuse

When the first warnings of abuse come, then it may be a seemingly insignificant incident which sets off a fit of anger and the victim is subjected for no reason at all to an unreasonable attack on her character. The anger is not at all in proportion to the mistake made. At that time the victim often chooses to rationalize his behaviour. He could not help it, because he had a busy day, or, he is right the house is a mess, I should have cooked a better supper, etc.

There are certain factors that help this rationalization, for instance the unpredictability of his behaviour. Between bouts of anger he is liable to be as charming as in the beginning. To the outside world the abuser can be a very friendly and considerate person. Such change makes her think that the bad is only a dream, not the real him.

Another factor in rationalizing the situation is that the victim blames herself. If he can be so wonderful at times, then his anger must be her fault. Thus she accepts responsibility for what he does. She has stepped into his system of thinking.

A woman stays in such a relationship for several reasons:

- She has come to think that by not questioning his behaviour she loves him. For her to love him means to do as he tells her.
- Because of psychological abuse: scare tactics, insults, yelling temper tantrums, constant criticism, implied threats, verbal attacks, unrelenting criticism. In addition, subtle

manipulation: I don't remember it, or denial: no that is not how it happens, rewriting history and shifting the blame, it was you who did it. If that is kept up she will believe this in the end.

- Because of physical abuse: usually the result of extreme jealousy and possessiveness. Such an attitude spells danger and should be taken seriously.
- There is the hope that one day it will change.
- There is the fear, and the guilt, she believes she deserves it, and she believes her version of reality. He is only doing it for her improvement.

In explaining the abuse she accepts these attacks the door is open for more and more serious ones.

Child abuse

What keeps a child hooked on such a situation and what prevents it from speaking about it? In answering these questions we come upon the same symptoms as in the previous points. The child has come to rationalize and minimize the abuse.

There is, in the first place, the blame, I deserved it. Once a child has accepted the view that the parent is always right, the situation deteriorates. For if the parent is right, then the child can only blame the abuse on itself. The child believes it deserved the abuse. The abuse is explained and accepted as normal. "My parents do it for my good."

Next, is the fact that a child has a great sense of family honour, you do not betray your family. Often this type of abuse occurs in families where there are more problems, where there is no communication. The children are afraid of talking about the abuse because of what this may do to their own family. They will be blamed for the possible break-up of their family.

Further, there is distrust for all grown-ups and the question of credibility. Who will take the word of the child when it comes to his word over against the word of the parent? And do not underestimate what the unpredictability of ambiguity does. There are good times between the bad. These good times cause uncertainty. Abuse and love is a bewildering combination.

The abuse is maintained by threats and blackmail. These threats can be that the abuser will take the life of the victim, or that the abuser will take his own life, or that the family will fall apart. To the child, to talk about its pain will cause pain for others.

How it destroys

All these elements we just mentioned tend to become a vicious circle, or a downward spiral. The abuser must more and more abuse his power in order to get satisfied, the victim must more and more live in the defense systems. This makes that neither abuser nor victim can see the real issues. What both sides do not realize is that in the long run this destroys the family, the relationships.

Alcohol abuse

The family allows the abuser to be the "little god" he wants to be, and so the situation gets worse. The alcoholic has placed the guilt on the other side, the people living in that situation must accept that guilt and accept the abuser's system of thinking or life will become impossible. The victims do not realize that in accepting this blame they open themselves up for more and worse abuse.

There is here yet another element. It is a recognized fact that mood altering substances as e.g. alcohol will in the long run do physical damage to the person. It effects the brain and can also lead to death. I have not even mentioned then that because of a black-out or accident someone's life can come to an end. For our topic it is of importance to note that substance-abuse affects the relationships in which we live.

Wife abuse

Once the abuser has control he will systematically curb her life and make her dependent on himself, destroying her self-esteem in the process. He criticizes and belittles her abilities as a housewife or mother. He criticizes her behaviour, her dress and physical appearance, often in front of others. He may use his earning power as a weapon to control his partner, she gets only so much and if she spends it in a way he does not approve of she will be punished, or, she must beg and beg for a bit of money. She is only allowed to have certain friends of which he approves. He will make social contact so unpleasant that you prefer to stay home rather than go out and get hurt again. He will also control contact with the family. He takes her personality away. She has to renounce her own feelings if she wants to have any peace at all, thus opening up herself to more and worse abuse again.

In addition it must be said that eighty-five percent of domestic murders is men against women.

Child abuse

Also with regard to this type of abuse we see how in the long run the personality of the child is destroyed. It is not allowed to have its own personality.

Sexual abuse is even more destructive. I point to two elements. It is the betrayal of trust between a child and an adult and it makes use of legitimate feelings. The first one will be obvious. A child trusts an adult, it depends on an adult, and therefore when the adult slowly but surely does what causes pain and confusion and the child is told not to tell anyone, the child's world is turned upside down.

The other element is that sexual abuse involves legitimate physical feelings and reactions. The Lord has so made our bodies that we have sexual feelings that can be stimulated and enjoyed. In situations of sexual abuse these feelings are misused. The child cannot stop its own feelings and is confronted with emotions it cannot handle, thus it starts to distrust its own body. For the women and men abused the enemy is certainly the abuser, but the greatest enemy is the longings of their bodies. Their bodies betrayed them.

We can now see some of the damage done by this abuse:

- There is the feeling of powerlessness: The sexual contact was never wanted or invited. It seems impossible to stop what has begun. This in turn leads to doubts and despair.
- There is the sense of betrayal: the one who was betrayed assumes that she could have prevented the betrayal if she was less needy and naive. In her opinion nobody can be trusted, especially not herself. It leads to loss of hope and intimacy. A relationship can neither be enjoyed, trusted, nor be expected to last.
- There is the sense of ambivalence, that is, feeling two contradictory emotions at the same time. How is it possible to experience pleasure in the midst of agonizing physical pain and crushing relational betrayal. The very thing that was despised also brought some degree of pleasure. As a consequence the child makes pleasure suspect and dangerous, and develops a hatred towards longing and passion. They can begin to have contempt for the body.

This damage makes it extremely difficult for a child to speak about it. The child does not trust its own feelings, even denies it

has happened. The safest thing is to hide it all. The child has been told all along that its feelings are wrong and nonexistent, so why tell someone else? In addition, who believes a child, when its word stands over against the word of the abuser? To minimize what the child says can mean for the child to be sent back to an abusive situation which in turn can lead to suicide. There is no excuse for sexual abuse. In God's eyes it is a terrible sin.

Summary

In summary we note two things. In the first place, abuse runs deep, and in the second place, abuse is cunning. The first, that abuse runs deep forces us to take it seriously. Abuse is not just a disagreement between a husband and his wife, or between a parent and a child. Simple solutions, such as, "she is not an easy woman to live with," or, "the child must have deserved it," do not solve the

problem but only harm the situation. It is better first to listen and try to understand the situation before coming with our answers and solutions.

Abuse is cunning. It can remain hidden for many years. In opening up the victim takes a tremendous risk. If the abuser finds out, worse abuse will follow. The abuser can present himself as a very pleasant person to others, but as soon as the others are gone things are different. **C**

NEWS MEDLEY

By W.W.J. VanOene



As our column has always had a more or less personal character, it will not be taken ill of me, I hope, when I start with a personal note.

We could, of course, have placed an advertisement in *Clarion*, but not every one reads the advertisements every time, and therefore I use this opportunity to address all our readers, and especially those who have let us know that they rejoiced with us in the privilege the Lord gave of having been spared for one another for fifty years and of having been allowed to serve in the ministry for that same period of time.

On the occasion of our celebrations we have received very many cards, letters, and other communications from all over the country and even from Australia. I may, also on behalf of my wife and family, express our heartfelt gratitude for all these proofs of Christian love and communion. Thank you also from the heart for the encouraging comments and for the wishes expressed. We cherish every one of them.

Several brothers and sisters made known their wish that I should continue to contribute to our magazine for as long as the Lord gives strength and ability. From what Prof. Geertsema wrote about the change in membership of the Editorial Committee you will have learned that this is the case, indeed.

And now we had better come to "brass tacks," as one of my colleagues used to say. That is the news from the churches.

Much of the news this time regards expansion.

We quote quite extensively from the Burlington West bulletin. The size of this growing congregation was mentioned in an earlier newsmedley. Now the membership stands (stood?) at 683. Even when no one comes in from another church, there are the children that are growing up and begin to attend the worship services in increasing numbers. I was struck by the remark Rev. J. Visscher made in his Year Review, that the regular increase in membership of the churches will amount to one new church every year.

In any case, the consistory of Burlington West discussed future development.

"Considerable time was spent on this. Many members feel the congregation is becoming too large, which nega-

tively affects the fellowship aspect of church life . . . A proposal was made and accepted unanimously to accept two resolutions.

1. To divide our present congregation into two distinct geographical areas/wards (for purposes of discussion, Flamborough and Burlington West) as evenly and as practically on a membership basis as possible.

2. The aspect of splitting the congregation can be allowed to develop and be discussed when deemed feasible. This matter will be a point of discussion at a future congregation meeting."

A committee was appointed "to review the ward divisions also with a view to council decision (above) and also to possibly come up with a proposal for a possible boundary between the two wards/eventual congregations."

The committee went to work, and a subsequent bulletin told us:

"The results of committee work show that it will be difficult to find a suitable boundary between a Burlington N/Waterdown church and a Carlisle/Millgrove church and that the latter section would be significantly smaller also in the future as the Town informs us that development is all slated for the former area. A letter is also received from a member of the congregation. In light of all this, it is decided to appoint a committee to explore more thoroughly ways in which some of the Burlington North members might be shifted to the churches at Burlington East and South."

When I read this, I got the same shock that apparently several members of the Burlington West church felt. Fears were allayed, however, by Rev. G.H. Visscher, when he wrote: "Certainly it is not the intention of council to 'shift' anyone involuntarily to the East or South church. The concern simply is whether it is responsible to start a fourth congregation in the Burlington area when it seems that at least one of the present congregations could use a larger membership. . . . We'll have to wait for the committee to do some work and for subsequent discussion in the council and with the congregation."

Perhaps people will be more reluctant to leave when they use the "beautiful new park benches at the rear of the building . . . donated to the church."

May I express one wish? That the problems the Burlington churches already have with "boundaries" be not increased when another church is instituted.

Winnipeg, too, reported that "Church development is discussed and will be continued at the next consistory meeting, after which a congregational meeting will be held to discuss this matter."

Calgary was considering purchase of a property, as our readers may recall.

"The Building Fund Committee reports that two offers were made and rejected on the Conrich property. No further action is recommended by the Committee at this time."

The Rev. Schouten commented: "The vendor had no problem with the moneys offered (as per the congregational meeting, but did have a problem with the closing date. The Committee sought a closing date of mid-January, to allow time for re-zoning application to be considered by the Rockyview Municipality. The vendor, however, was firm in asking for a Nov. 01 closing date. As the situation stands now, the Committee is no longer pursuing this property, but is continuing its search for something else."

Taber has other problems. The "Committee of Administration reports that the Board of Parkside Manor has denied our request to rent their facilities for 1994. They have allowed us to stay till the end of March 1944. The Committee is instructed to find alternate facilities."

At the latest Classis Pacific favourable advice was giving for the institution of a church in Aldergrove. Thus matters have come full circle. When, in 1954, the membership of the New Westminster Church had grown to such an extent that another church could be instituted, this church was established in . . . Aldergrove. Later on it moved to Langley, and, still later, to Cloverdale, when Abbotsford was instituted. Then Langley split off the Cloverdale Church. And now Aldergrove split off Langley again.

By the way, if you intend to spend a Sunday in Surrey and attend services in the Maranatha Church, remember that starting January 1994 the afternoon services will be held at 2:00 o'clock instead of at 4:00. It is hoped that also thereby the afternoon attendance will improve.

Port Kells tells us that "Plans for a building that will have to accompany a request for re-zoning are still being laboured over."

From the Vernon news we mention that "The Organ Committee reported that no objections were received regarding the purchase of the organ. The Organ Committee will now proceed with the purchase of the used Johannus Opus 240."

Although in various places the discussions with Free Reformed Churches, Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, and others are being continued, from no place have I yet learned that more concrete steps are being considered.

Langley is different. The Langley consistory did have several meetings with the one of the Free Reformed Church of Aldergrove. Now matters have proceeded so far that "Because of the positive nature of this discussion, as well as previous discussions, the respective councils will look at further ways to promote the unity of the Church. A consensus emerged to the effect that both churches should overture their upcoming Synods to appoint a joint committee to deal with merger."

We are to be thankful for this. Lengthy discussions without any concrete steps do not mean much. Now some action can be anticipated, and that's what we are aiming at, are we not?

Many members asked me at one time or another whether we were planning to publish another book with daily meditations. My answer was: "No, for it is so extremely difficult to get a sufficient number of ministers to commit themselves to participation that I am not going to undertake something like that again."

Efforts were undertaken in Australia to come to such a book. To show you how difficult it is to get the promise of cooperation and the actual cooperation itself, I mention that the copy for this book that is being prepared had to be in by November 1, 1992!! Now we write almost 1994.

To my joy I read "Work is also progressing well on a book of Daily Meditations. Ministers from Australia, Canada, and the Netherlands have contributed." Although, once again, it is impossible to have it ready before the beginning of the new year, there is something we can look forward to.

Also from Australia came an envelope with a Birthday Calendar. In an accompanying letter I was told "On behalf of 'Eucalypt' (Free Reformed Association Assisting Those with Special Needs) we provide you with a sample birthday calendar, which has been produced to raise money for 'Eucalypt.' The drawings were sketched by a local member artist . . . We enclose this 'gratis' calendar in the hope that you will 'meddle' (or should it be 'peddle') with it."

Each page contains a drawing of a church building of one of our Australian sister churches. The drawings are done very well and accurately. Unfortunately, I have not been able to discover what the price-tag is of such a calendar. Perhaps it goes by donation.

I do not know whether any of the ex-Australians in our midst would be willing to co-ordinate the sale of these calendars in our circles. If so, you may let me know or write directly to the Association: P.O.Box 320. Kelmscott 6111, Western Australia.

Don't flood my mailbox now with requests for recommendations! I thought to make an exception in this case, seeing the purpose for which the calendars are offered.

Herewith we have come to the end of this medley.

Wishing you all a blessed new year, I sign off

Faithfully Yours
VO

P.S. From one brother I received a (personal) letter in connection with what I wrote about Regional-Synodical Deputies with the admission of a church to the federation. I intend to respond to that in the near future. It appeared that I goofed on one point. More about it later.

P.S. 2. There is a peculiar habit to which I want to draw attention. Reports of our ecclesiastical meetings are almost exclusively written in the present tense: "The chairman opens the meeting . . ." etc. "After brother A. leads in prayer, the chairman closes the meeting."

This, I think, is Dutch. According to me it should read: "The chairman opened the meeting . . ." etc. "After brother A. had led in prayer, the chairman closed the meeting." In a press release we describe what *did* transpire and are not describing an *ongoing* action.

Could anyone expert in the field of grammar tell me whether I am wrong in this?

Thanks. VO 

Once Again Art. 31

– A Response

By J.D. Wielenga

Correct representation?

Rev. VanOene did the churches a disservice by writing his article “To be or not to be (present)” in *Clarion*, Nov. 19, 1993. He has every right to disagree with the decision of Synod Burlington 1986, Acts art. 85. He has no right to misrepresent that decision. He quotes the decision correctly, but reads it incorrectly when he draws the conclusion (third column, second last paragraph) that Synod decided not to draw up rules for the admission of churches that want to join the federation. Synod did not decide not to *make* rules, Synod decided not to *review* the existing rules. Synod decided that there are rules in existence which are sufficient for the purpose which the church of Ottawa had in mind, and Synod formulated those rules in the considerations to which the decision implicitly refers. Considerations are no binding decisions, says Rev. VanOene, but he overlooks that these particular considerations return in the decision.

Suppose that Rev. VanOene is right that the consideration of Synod was false, suppose Synod was mistaken and that there were in fact no rules in existence for the churches in common (for which the church at Ottawa asked and which request Synod positively addressed), then still Synod, by its decision, judged that those are the rules it wanted in place, and which Synod would have put in place if they were not already in place according to Synod. Only legalistic opportunism would support the opinion that Synod 1986 decided not to draw up rules and therefore did not bind the churches of the federation to the rule that concurring advice of deputies Art. 48 CO is needed in the case another church requests admission to the federation.

Praiseworthy Classis?

Rev. VanOene did not serve the churches properly either by withholding from the readers that Regional Synod Lincoln, October 1987, judged that the decision of Classis ON-South, March/April 1987, was wrong, on the ground that “a procedure has been formulated by General Synod 1986.” I trust that nobody will counter with the legalistic remark that General Synod 1986 did nothing of the sort, etc. *See above.*

Rev. VanOene praises Classis ON-South, which Classis in conflict with Art. 31 CO dismissed a Synod decision with which it disagreed. I praise Regional Synod Lincoln which honoured the agreement of Art. 31, one of the two pillars of Reformed Church Polity.

The point is not even so much that the grounds of Classis are unconvincing, though they are: the consideration that the Church Order does not explicitly state the necessity of concurring advice of deputies, is irrelevant. The Church Order is a bundle of Synod decisions, and its articles can be changed by any Synod by due process (Art. 76 CO). Every rule decided by Synod, like the one of Synod Burlington 1986, is as binding on the churches as any article of the Church Order. This particular rule of Synod of 1986 is simply an addition to what had been already earlier agreed upon concerning deputies of Regional Synod, in Art. 48. A next revision of the Church Order should add it to the bundle of rules in an updated Art. 48. It is not so that the rule becomes binding only when it is in the Church Order. The rule becomes binding as soon as it has been adopted by Synod decision.

The point is not so much either that it is hard to see how Classis would have come into a conflict of conscience by requesting the concurring advice of

deputies. Would Classis have sinned by doing what it deemed not necessary or unwelcome? It was not against the Church Order and it was not against the Word of God.

This is the point that Classis did not carry out a Synod decision, without judging it to be in conflict with Church Order and Word of God. If Classis judged the rule of Synod 1986 wrong for any other reason than conflict in the above sense, it ought to have observed the rule, and request a next General Synod to rescind the rule. As it is, Classis simply ignored its promise given with Art. 31 CO. What Classis did, can lawfully be done, e.g. in the Netherlands Gereformeerde Kerken, where Art. 31 CO has been changed in an independent direction (*buiten-verband kerkrecht*). But it cannot be lawfully done in the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Rev. VanOene praises Classis ON-South, March/April 1987. I wrote at his address before that the water is equally deep on the right as on the left side of the church-ship. We must not lean towards independentism out of reaction against hierarchy.

Rejectable rule?

It is regrettable that there is no universal sympathy in the churches for the rule of Synod 1986. Rev. VanOene writes that classis is the beginning of the federation. No doubt. But it is not the end.

The argument is heard that churches like, e.g. Vernon, were admitted into the federation without the concurring advice of deputies. One forgets that the rule of Synod 1986 applies to “churches of a different historical background and development.” The church at Vernon was born within the federation, consisting of members with attestations

valid throughout the federation, and was instituted under the supervision of a consistory in good standing within the federation.

Is involvement of the broader federation by means of deputies of Reg. Synod such a needless exercise? Why limit it to the approval of ministers of the Word? Are the other office-bearers of the new church without any impact on the whole federation? Could they not be delegated to the broadest assemblies to help steer the course of the whole federation? And does the very existence of a new church not have a potential impact on the whole federation? Rev. VanOene knows that at the last classis of AB/MB a request from

ON-South was announced for financial help in support of needy churches in its resort. The broader federation was not allowed to have a say in the admission of another church, but the federation is good enough to help out when classis runs into difficulties on account of the very decision it took with deliberate elimination of help from the federation. The rule of Synod Burlington 1986 has merit.

“To be or not to be”

Rev. VanOene does not want to say anything else about the Denver case than what he has already said before, and repeats literally. It would have been more helpful, and he could have

helped the discussion further, if he had responded to the criticism of these statements, specifically by explaining how the norms of Scripture, Confession and Reformed Church Polity should function when judging a request for affiliation with the federation.

Rev. VanOene concludes his article with what I take to be an attempt at word-play and not a really serious concern: to be or not to be. Indeed, that is the question. The answer to that question depends on whether or not the churches faithfully adhere to Confession and Church Order, and pay more than lip service to their normativity. Otherwise there is reason for really serious concern. **C**

News from Support MERF Committee

Donations received

With thankfulness we may report that throughout the past year donations have continued to come in faithfully. A total of \$23,000 was sent to MERF in Cyprus; \$14,000 in May and \$9,000 in November. Each time we indicated that the funds were to be used specifically towards the cost of radio broadcasting.

The following are excerpts from newsletters we received during the past half year:

Biblical training at the study center

During September, MERF's Evangelical Study Center was the venue for two Augustine Program study terms for Arab medical doctors, dentists and pharmacists active in their local churches. . . professionals committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. In the men's study term, instruction was given by Rev. Neil Tolsma of Milwaukee (USA) and Rev. Tony Nap of the Netherlands. Using the major

themes from the Book of Acts, Rev. Tolsma challenged the men to see the power of Christ at work in the gathering and building of the Church, in the midst of great trials and powerful waves of persecution from both Jews and Gentiles. Rev. Nap took the group through the main themes of the Old Testament, showing how the incarnation and obedience of Christ represent the heart of Scriptures.

The second group of trainees were women medical doctors. They were instructed by both Dr. Peter van Gorp of the Netherlands (formerly ministering in the Free Reformed Churches of Australia) and Rev. G.I. Williamson of Iowa, USA (formerly ministering in the Reformed Church of New Zealand). Dr. van Gorp made use of his vast Biblical knowledge and pastoral experience to guide these ladies to a proper understanding of the redemptive historical scheme of the Bible. Rev.

Williamson used one of his latest publications to lead the women to a fuller appreciation of Reformed doctrine and life.

Opportunities for church planting in Gaza

The apostle Paul exhorts to pray for peace and stability for the sake of the Gospel (1 Timothy 2:1-3). The town of Gaza is mentioned in the Bible 20 times, from Genesis 10 to Acts 8. In the Old Testament, Gaza represented enmity to the Lord and to His people. In Acts 8, it is identified with extension of the Church to the ends of the earth and to all people, as represented in the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. Today, Gaza is one of the most populated parts of Palestine. It has also been one of the most unstable violence-stricken parts of the Middle East. Political, ethnic or even religious inspired murders occur in Gaza on almost a daily basis.

The recent peace accords between the Israelis and the Palestinians are based on a settlement which begins with the autonomy of Gaza. It is important, however, to remember that Gaza does not have one single believing Christian congregation. The city is almost 100% Muslim. Moreover, Gaza constitutes one of the strongest centers for Muslim fundamentalist activism. Evangelical missionary endeavors have not had much success in the city. Very little contact has been established with the very few believers who live in the area and until recently no personalized follow-up of the growing number of radio listeners has been possible. One of the men trained at MERF's Study Centre in 1992 was a Presbyterian elder, Mr. Atiya, whose job required his relocation from Cairo to Al-A'arish, just inside the Egyptian border and only a short distance from Gaza. Brother Atiya has been conducting evangelistic Bible studies and worship services in his own flat in Al-A'arish. He has also been fervently praying for an open door to outreach among the Palestinians of Gaza. Please pray that the Lord will use this brother and other Arab believers towards the discipling of many and the establishing of the Church in Gaza.

Sudan update

Despite recent international attention upon the large scale injustice and persecution in Sudan, the Su-

danese authorities have defiantly declared the matter to be an internal affair, refusing to change course. In a recent radio interview, one of the most powerful members of the Sudanese government accused the Western nations of attempting to undermine the "successful advance of Islam in the Sudan and all of Africa." He added, "It pleased Allah to give us the honor of promoting that advance. This we shall do come what may. . . ."

First hand reports from Khartoum speak of signs of a new Muslim offensive being planned for the winter months. The strategy of the new offensive is based on taking advantage of added economic pressures of the cold winter conditions which will be encountered by poor and needy tribes of southern Sudan. Please do continue to pray fervently for the Lord's people in the Sudan.

Encouraging response to radio broadcasts

For several years MERF's Arabic Gospel broadcasts have borne encouraging fruit in countries throughout the Muslim Middle East. There is special joy in seeing people from countries where there is no existing indigenous Christian church find saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by hearing the gospel over the radio. In the grace and providence of God, this is happening more and more. Recent letters confirm the fact that the numbers of secret believers are growing, not only in Saudi Ara-

bia and Kuwait, but also in Yemen. . . . The Yemeni population is Arab Muslim. The country is very undeveloped and the great majority of the people are illiterate. So, radio plays an important role in their lives. Certainly they have almost no other means to hear the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. There are indications that thousands of Yemenis are listening regularly to the Gospel broadcasts. The following quote is from a recent letter: Thank you for helping me understand the truth about God's love (in Christ) and his provision for the forgiveness of my sins I am eager to learn more and grow deeper in the knowledge of the Redeemer . . .

Please continue to support the Middle East Reformed Fellowship with your gifts, but above all with your prayers. May many still come to know the one true God, also in 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.

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

J. Mulder, chairman

J. Van Dam, secretary



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

I would like to react briefly to Rev. van Popta's article in Clarion, Oct. 8, 1993: "Admission of Guests to the Lord's Supper Table."

One of the objections what the Canadian Reformed Churches have against the OPC is the "open Lord's Supper Table." Although I am aware that Rev. van Popta is not defending that, I cannot see that there is that much difference.

First of all: our C.O. has Art. 61, where with common consent the

churches have agreed that members of sister churches shall be admitted on the ground of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct. That is a clear statement. The church discipline is in full force here and rightly so. The officebearers have the supervision over the congregation and that includes the use of the sacraments by the congregation. Where does Rev. van Popta find that "within the Canadian Reformed Churches the freedom exists to admit guests (members from a non-sister church) according to local ar-

rangements to the Lord's Supper Table?" In doing so, we open the door for the "open Lord's Supper Table," for what guarantee is there that members from "non-sister churches" give a true profession by examination? It is only the guest who is heard. And what about our members who are somewhere else. Can we allow them to use the Lord's Supper in a non-sister church? If there is a visitor from Greece, member of the Greek Evangelical Church who is temporarily present in the congregation, why does that visitor not become a

member of the Canadian Reformed church at that place where he/she temporarily resides?

If a members of a sister church has no attestation that member shall not be admitted to the Lord's Supper Table because no attestation was requested from the home church, either by negligence or by not being aware that the Lord's Supper was to be celebrated in the church he/she is visiting. It is all interwoven: the true preaching of the Word of God, the administration of the sacra-

ments and the exercising of the discipline belong together.

Question: How can a consistory exercise discipline over one who is not a member of the church? In fact: consistory is not even aware how that visitor is standing in the home church.

Apparently, Rev. van Popta is defending pluriformity: "not a member of a Christian Reformed Church or Lutheran Church, but a member of the Free Reformed Church shall find the table open. Rev. van Popta says that "as federations we have not yet succeeded in

sorting matter out between us." Why is that so? Because of disobedience. That Free Reformed church member can "faithfully attend" the worship services in a Canadian Reformed Church, but is not faithful, for then there was no problem, but he/she would not be an attendant but a member.

Let us not, by not keeping what with common consent is accepted, place ourselves in a situation what was causing such terrible difficulties for the brothers and sisters in Blue Bell and Laurel.

W. De Haan **C**

Response

(Comments on Br. De Haan's letter)

By G. Ph. van Popta

The editor asked me to comment on Br. De Haan's letter. I will try to be brief since there is no reason for me to repeat everything I wrote in the original article.

Br. De Haan does not see much difference in the position I articulated and the "open table" position. There is a big difference. The "open table" position leaves the sole responsibility of participating in the Holy Supper with the individual whereas I said *repeatedly* in my article that the final responsibility of who may attend *must not* remain with the individual but with the elders of the local church. Br. De Haan mentions the struggle in the churches at Blue Bell and Laurel. If I understand correctly the struggles in these two churches the position I articulated is similar to what Blue Bell called "restricted communion" and Laurel called "close communion," neither of which are identical to the "closed communion" called for by br. De Haan. (See *The Controversy at Blue Bell OPC* as written by the Session of the Reformation Church at Blue Bell; *The Complaint of Barry R. Hofford et al. against the session of Covenant OPC [October 15, 1982].*)

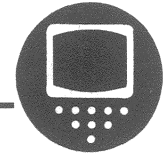
Br. De Haan says: "If a member of a sister church has no attestation, that

member shall not be admitted to the Lord's Supper Table, because no attestation was requested" No one will deny that the most proper way is for visitors of sister churches who would attend the table to present an attestation from their home church; however, I respectfully submit that Br. De Haan misunderstands the intent of Art. 61 of the C.O. The point of the second sentence of Art. 61 is that if a member of a sister church comes with an attestation, the consistory need not make any further inquiry of him or about him whatsoever in the matter of his eligibility to attend the table. The consistory simply accepts and honours the word of the sister consistory which prepared the attestation. By common consent we, as churches, have agreed that we will simply accept one another's word. That is the point and focus of Art. 61 of the C.O. It does *not* say that elders of a local church may *not* admit a member of a sister church who comes without an attestation. It is not the sister church which opens up the local table by way of its attestation; the elders of the local church, no one else, admit or refuse admission.

Br. De Haan wonders how I could write: "Within the Canadian Reformed Churches the freedom exists to admit

guests (members from a non-sister church) according to local arrangements to the Lord's Supper Table." Although I did not explicitly quote Bouwman and Rutgers, I gave the references to show that the position I outlined is the one the Reformed churches have taken for quite some time which is that members of non-sister churches may be admitted by local arrangement under certain carefully defined conditions. This position, which insists upon the elders exercising final judgment upon who may be admitted, has nothing to do with "the open table" where the guest exercises that judgment. Br. De Haan should interact with this data and judge whether the old position is wrong.

Br. De Haan tries to cast doubt upon my integrity by suggesting that I am a defender of the doctrine of the pluriformity of the church. I have never defended this doctrine and I never will. I believe it to be in disharmony with what we confess about the church in our Confession. By accusing me of defending this doctrine, Br. De Haan is no longer interacting with my article but simply trying to cast doubt upon what I say by pulling out the big guns. **C**



Press release of Regional Synod West, Dec. 8 & 9, 1993 held in the Cloverdale Canadian Reformed Church, Cloverdale, BC

1. Opening, Credentials and Constitution

Rev. Slomp, minister of the convening Church at Houston, calls the meeting to order and requests the delegates to sing Ps. 146:1,2,3. This is followed by the reading of Eph. 4:1-16 and prayer. He welcomes the delegates as well as the visitors, including a number of students from the William of Orange Elementary school. The credentials are examined. The delegates from Classis AB/MB are as follows: Ministers – R. Aasman, K. Jonker, R.A. Schouten, G. Ph. van Popta. Elders – C. Hoogerdyk, J. Kuik, T. Termeer, H. VandenHoven; from Classis Pacific: Ministers – E. Kampen, W.B. Slomp, C. VanSpronsen, J. Visscher. Elders – P. DeBoer, R. Fennema, C. VanSpronsen, J. VanderStoep, P. VanWoudenberg. Regional Synod is declared constituted.

2. Election of officers

The election for officers has the following results: Chairman: Rev. R. Aasman; Vice-chairman: Rev. E. Kampen; Clerk: Rev. R.A. Schouten

3. Agenda

The agenda for the meeting is established. It is decided to divide into four committees to prepare reports on the various items on the agenda. Synod breaks for committee work.

4. Appeals – closed session

In closed session Synod deals with three appeals.

5. Evening session

The chairman welcomes the many guests who are present for this session of Synod. The following are dealt with in the evening session:

- a. Appeals from the Churches at Edmonton-Immanuel and Neerlandia. These churches request Regional Synod to judge that Classis AB/MB, Oct. 12-14, 1993, erred in request-

ing the deputies of Regional Synod to be present and give concurring advice with regard to the request of the Christ American Reformed Church at Denver (CARCD) to be admitted to the federation. After discussion on the report of the committee, the report is referred back to the committee.

- b. Letter from the CARCD. It is decided that this letter will be received for information.
- c. Overture Church at Taber. The church at Taber considers it incorrect to postpone a Regional Synod when there are appeals on the table and thus requests that the Regional Synod regulations be adjusted so that the only reason a Regional Synod might be postponed is if there are no other matters than house-keeping matters. Synod decides that it is not incorrect for a convening church to postpone Regional Synod when there are no urgent matters, and therefore the regulations for Regional Synod do not need to be adjusted.
- d. Adjournment. The assembly is requested to sing Hymn 63:1,2. The vice-chairman leads in thanksgiving prayer. The meeting is adjourned till 9:00 a.m., Dec. 9.

6. Reopening; adoption of acts

Synod reconvenes at 9:15 a.m. on Dec. 9. Ps. 87:1,2,5 is sung. The chairman reads Mt. 11:16-30 and leads in prayer. Roll call is held. All are present. The Acts of the previous day are read and adopted. Synod breaks again for committee work.

7. Appeals Edmonton-Immanuel and Neerlandia (con't)

Synod considers that "The decision of Classis AB/MB of Oct. 12-14, 1993, to seek the concurring advice of deputies Regional Synod in the matter of admitting the CARCD is in harmony with the consideration of Art. 85.III.B.I of Synod 1986. This consideration forms an integral part of the Synod decision. In their appeals the churches at Edmonton-Immanuel and Neerlandia

have difficulty not with the fact that Classis applied the principle of Art. 85 of Synod 1986 but with the article of Synod itself." Synod decides not to accede to the appeals.

Synod breaks for committee work.

8. Evening session, December 9 – I

The chairman again extends a welcome to the many visitors. Ps. 111:1,2 is sung. Roll calls shows all are present.

- a. Conflict between decision of Classis AB/MB of Oct. 1993 and advice deputies Regional Synod.

Deputies Regional Synod were unable to give concurring advice to Classis AB/MB of Oct. 1993 in the decision to admit the CARCD into the federation. Regional Synod is thus called upon to judge whether the decision of the deputies is to be sustained or not. Synod considers:

1. "General Synod said that 'The temporary contact relationship' implies that an ecclesiastical unity has not yet been achieved. Therefore, in the interim, it is understandable that when requests for admission reach the Canadian Reformed Churches, these cannot be rejected by simply stating that the OPC has been declared a true Church. Such situations may arise until substantial agreement is reached on the outstanding issues and the temporary contact relationship has led to ecclesiastical fellowship." (Acts 1992, Art. 72.IV.A.2.c.ii – p.51) It is deplorable that the Synod did not explain how one can accept groups which bypass the OPC without sacrificing the integrity of our official ecclesiastical contact relationship with the OPC. General Synod did not make a judgment on the appeals dealing with the CARCD. (Art. 127)
2. As a consequence of this ambiguity, the matter of the CARCD was raised again at Classis AB/MB, March 1993, at which time the investigative committee was appointed.
3. Although nothing completely new was uncovered by the investigative committee, a fuller picture was obtained of the origin and character of

the CARCD. Classis concludes that the basic reason for the request of the CARCD to join the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches is that they are convinced that they share the same "confessional concerns" (Consideration J-Acts Classis). The CARCD is also firmly convinced that the OPC is an unfaithful church. Based on the above the Classis of Oct. 1993, came to a different conclusion than the Classis of March 1992. However, it has been neither stated by Synod, nor proven by Classis Oct. 1993 that the divergences between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the OPC are confessional in nature.

4. Seeing the nature of the concerns of the CARCD with respect to the OPC, it should consider whether it is compromising its position by seeking to join the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches. The Canadian Reformed Churches also should consider whether they would compromise their official stand vis-a-vis the OPC by accepting the CARCD, notwithstanding that a number of local churches share some of the same concerns as the CARCD.
5. The consideration that it could be pastorally unwise to send the CARCD to the OPC gains credence by the fact that it is suggested not only by the writers of the majority report, but also by a representative of the POD of the OPC. (Majority Report to Classis, p. 4).
6. It is true that it remains an open question as to whether Rev. Pollock's vows within the OPC obliged him to follow a process of appeal. However, a church should not be judged by its minister.
7. The decision of Classis does not promote the pluriformity of churches in Denver but simply recognizes the sad reality of this hopefully temporary situation.
8. Alleged wrong and sinful practices (e.g. local disunity – Majority Report) are not in themselves sufficient reasons to refrain from joining a recognized true church.
9. There is indeed no unrestricted right of access to the federation for any church. Each request must be evaluated on its own merits. (Acts General Synod 1992, art. 72:IV.A.2c.vi –p.52;cf. also Acts 1992 Art. 127.IV.C-p.89)

Synod decides "to grant concurring advice to Classis AB/MB in its decision admitting the CARCD into the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches and to draw the attention of the CARCD and the churches in the federation to the foregoing considerations."

b. Appeal from the church at Taber re: Decision of Classis AB/MB Oct. 1993, to admit the CARCD into the federation. Synod decides to send the previous decision (8a) as an answer to the church at Taber.

9. Evening session December 9 – II

a. Report Deputies Regional Synod: Rev. P.K.A. DeBoer and Rev. Wielenga report on their attendance at the peremptory examination of Br. C. VanderVelde. It is noted with gratitude that they could give concurring advice to admit Br. VanderVelde to the ministry of the Word.

b. Treasurer Regional Synod: Report is given on income and expenditures. Gratitude is expressed for the work done by the treasurer. The treasurer asks all the churches in Regional Synod West to take note of his address: H. Lubbers, 1906 – 9 A St., Coaldale, AB. T1M 1B2.

c. Appointments: It is decided to maintain the appointments of the last Regional Synod. Due to the movement of ministers, changes are necessary with respect to the deputies ad Art. 48 C.O. Appointed from Classis Pacific are: Rev. C. VanSpronsen and Rev. J. Visscher. Alternates: Rev. E. Kampen and Rev. J. Moesker. Appointed from Classis AB/MB are: Rev. P.K.A. DeBoer and Rev. J.D. Wielenga. Alternates: Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar and Rev. R. Aasman.

d. Next Regional Synod: Convening Church – Edmonton – Providence; Date – Dec. 6, 1994.

e. Censure ad. Art. 44: The chairman notes with gratitude that the meeting could take place in a brotherly atmosphere and no censure is necessary.

f. The Acts are read and adopted. The Press Release is read and approved.

g. The chairman expresses appreciation for the excellent care of the ladies who gladly and cheerfully looked after the meals and related matters, as well as for the many people who willingly worked in the background to enable the Synod to do its work. He wishes the brothers a safe journey home. After the assembly sings Hymn 65:1,3, he leads in thanksgiving prayer. Regional Synod is closed.

For Regional Synod West,
Dec. 8, 9, 1993
Rev. E. Kampen,
vice-chairman at that time.

Press Release Classis Pacific, December 7, 1993

1. On behalf of the convening church of Langley, Rev. J. Visscher asked those present to sing Ps. 107:1, 12, after which he read Isaiah 25 and called upon the name of the Lord in prayer. He welcomed those present, especially Rev. C. Vandervelde who was present for the first time as newly ordained minister of the Word. Thereafter, he remembered that Rev. J. Huigen declined a call from the church at Abbotsford; that Rev. C. Bosch declined a call from the church at Smithers; that Rev. and Mrs. VanderWel celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary; that Rev. and Mrs. VanOene celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary as well as the 50th anniversary of our brother's ordination to the ministry of the Word; and that Rev. Venema moved to Brazil. After the delegates from the church at Houston had examined the credentials, classis was constituted. As moderator, Rev. W.B. Slomp served as chairman, Rev. D. Moes as vice-chairman, and Rev. M.H. VanLuik as clerk. The agenda was adopted.

2. As main item on the agenda, classis dealt with the request from the church at Langley regarding the institution of the church at Aldergrove per Article 40 C.O. After a brief discussion, this request was granted.

The church of Vernon requested the advice of classis regarding a letter it had received from the church at Ancaster concerning financial support for the needy churches for Classis Ontario-South. After having expressed its sensitivity to the request conveyed in the letter, the church at Vernon was advised to send this letter to the other churches of Classis Pacific to see if any of these churches would be willing to come with a concrete proposal at a next classis.

A church visitation report to the church at Lynden was read and accepted.

3. Question Period ad Art. 44 C.O. was made use of. Advice in a discipline case was asked and received.

4. The church at Lynden was appointed as the convening church for the next classis. The suggested date was set at April 12, 1994; the alternate date at June 7, 1994; place: Langley; suggested officers: Rev. D. Moes – chairman, Rev. M.H. VanLuik – vice-chairman, and Rev. C. Vandervelde – clerk. Rev. J. Visscher was appointed as counsellor of the to-be-instituted

church at Aldergrove. The church at Lynden was appointed to represent classis at the institution of this church. Classical preaching arrangements were made for the church of Smithers and the to-be-instituted church at Aldergrove.

5. Personal question period was well made use of. A question was asked concerning the allocation of the money in the Fund for Needy Students. This money will be allocated to the General Fund of Classis. A question was asked concerning the credentials of the dele-

gates to Regional Synod West of Dec. 8, 1993. No further action was required. A question was asked regarding final questions of the church visitors. This was left to the discretion of the church visitors. A question was asked regarding the criteria for establishing whether a church is a needy church or not. Some of the criteria are: budget, own means, increase in budget, and the number of needy churches. A request was made to receive the last report of the Fund for Needy churches. This request was granted. A question was asked about the re-

port of the deputies for examinations. This report will be given at a next classis. A remark was made about the timing of ordinations of ministers and institution of churches.

6. The chairman thankfully noted that censure ad Article 44 C.O. was not needed. The acts were adopted and the press release approved.

7. After asking those present to sing Hymn 40:1 and 2, Rev. W.B. Slomp led in prayer and closed classis.

For classis,
D. Moes, vice-chairman e.t.



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

How did you spend New Year's Eve? I went to church, and I went to a party. And I think lots of you Busy Beavers did too!

Right?

Maybe the party was at your house! I really enjoyed ending the year with the people I love. We had fun. We had special food.

We talked about the best things in the year gone by. And how the Lord cared for each of us last year.

We wished each other the Lord's Blessing in the New Year.

That makes me think of a sign in front of the church where some of you Busy Beavers go.

The sign says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever."

To me that means the Lord Jesus looked after us in 1993 and He will do it again in 1994. His goodness never changes!

Happy New Year, Busy Beavers!

Oh yes, that sign is at the front of the church in . . . Smithers, BC!

Quiz Time!

NAME WORDSEARCH

by Busy Beaver Harold Sikkema

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

Find:

Aaron
Brandon
Corrine
Dirk
Evelyn
Harold
Jonathan
Jasmine
Melissa
Jessica
Nadine
Randy
Tim
Victoria
William

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

I have a hard time keeping my dresser neat. I can give you lots of excuses . . . , no, reasons why!

Do you have a chore you don't like?

What job of yours REALLY bugs you?

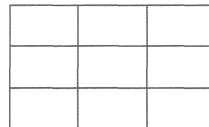
We would like to hear how you feel about your LEAST FAVOURITE CHORE!

Please write to: MY OPINION

c/o Busy Beaver Club
Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, MB

??PROBLEMS??

from Busy Beaver Deanna Wierenga



Take away 5 lines to make 3 equal squares.

(Solution next time)

MAGIC SQUARES

1	2	3
2		
3		

from Busy Beaver *Michelle Hordyk*

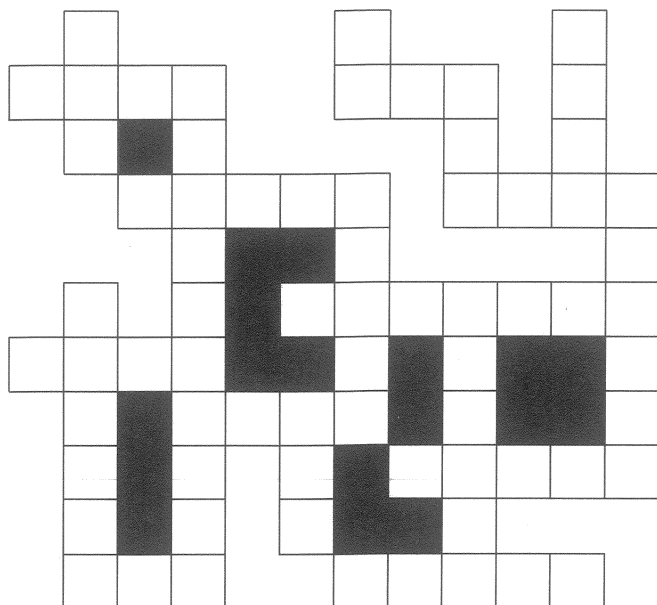
1. a type of monkey
2. something to write with
3. "The _____"

1. a hot drink
2. water animal shaped like a snake
3. kind of beer

1	2	3
2		
3		

THE RACE IS ON!

from Busy Beaver *Jody Lodder*



Go pass finish hot pits
 struts lap team racecar oil
 green motorsport red start rev
 tires fans track park engine

TONGUE TWISTERS

by Busy Beaver *Tim Sikkema*

Can you say each of these tongue twisters 5 times?

1. Naughty Mr. Knotty McNoughtin's knot was not nought.
2. Seven sick, sad, sheared sheep slept silently in the setting sun.
3. Fishing fish for his father, Frank fought four flat flounders fearlessly.
4. Willy wondered when Winnipeg would win a wondrous whirlpool.
5. Timothy told twelve tricky tongue twisters in 2222.
6. An alive animal is absolutely amazing at an American, Asian and African safaris.
7. The quiet queen counted quick quails from her quilt during the earthquake.



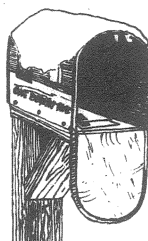
BIRTHDAY WISHES



To all our Busy Beavers who celebrate a February birthday we wish a very happy birthday and the Lord's blessing in the year ahead. We hope you have a super time celebrating with your family and friends!

Sarah Nobel	February 1	Francine	
Jaclyn Dehaas	2	Van Woudenberg	16
Michael Breukelman	3	Carolyn Vis	19
Crystal DeJong	3	Corinne Vis	19
Charla Meyer	3	Tanya Dehaas	20
Miranda Krabbendam	4	Jason VandeBurgt	21
Melissa Hovius	5	Nelena Bergsma	23
Sophie-Ann Ravensbergen		Cara Faber	24
	6	Tim Linde	25
Tony Bikker	7	Heather Leyenhorst	27
Dennis Van Oene	14	Anya Malda	27

FROM THE MAILBOX



Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Tracy Breukelman*. We are happy to have you join us. I hope you have an excellent birthday this month, Tracy. Thank you for the puzzle.

Thank you for the neat letter, *Harold Sikkema*, and for the puzzle. Who did the asking when you sold school chocolate bars, Harold? Bye for now.

Has your class gone skating yet, *Tim Sikkema*? Too bad about your "stick" fort. But maybe you got to make a snow fort during the holidays, Tim? Write again soon!

Thank you for your letter and puzzles *Michelle Hordyk*. Yes, I remember subjects I took in high school. They weren't that different from what you take, except I never had "Bible," and keyboarding we called "typing." Bye for now, Michelle.

I see you really enjoyed your trip to Ontario, *Tamara DeJong*. I'm glad you had such a good time at your cousins. Bet your Dad was happy to see you back! Thanks for "the saying," Tamara.

Hello, *Jodie Lodder*. It was good to hear from you again. I see school is a little different for you! Thanks for the puzzle, Jodie. Keep up the good work!

Sounds as if you had great assembly last fall, *Sarah Nobel*. Did you get your dog the harness to pull sleds? I really am curious! How is your pet? Bye for now, Sarah.

Which part of the I.P.E. did you enjoy most, *Melissa Deboersap*? I see you have been very busy making up puzzles to share with the Busy Beavers. Thank you, Melissa. I hope you had fun, too.

Sounds to me as if you enjoyed your outing to the city, *Deanna Wierenga*. And how did you enjoy your holidays? Thanks for sharing the puzzles, Deanna.

Busy Beavers, we have a request for pen pals. Who would like to exchange letters with:

Tracy Breukelman (age 10)
 Box 83, Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0

Time to say "Good-bye."
 Hope to "see" you next time!

With love to you all,
Aunt Betty

