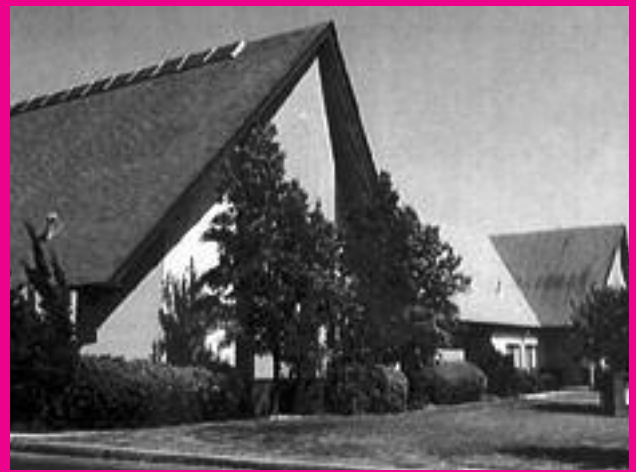


# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

VOLUME 50, NO. 15      JULY 20, 2001

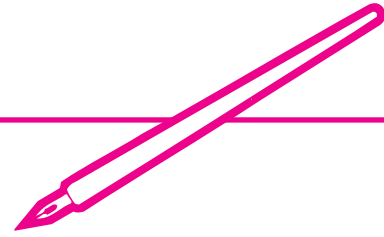


*Escondido  
United Reformed Church -  
URCNA Synod*

*Numbers*

*10:1-10*

By N.H. Gootjes



## Doctrinal stumbling blocks?

By the time this article appears, the decisions of Synod Neerlandia of the Canadian Reformed Churches, and of Synod Escondido of the United Reformed Churches, are before the churches. The Canadian Reformed churches will receive the Acts of Synod. They have to read and consider these decisions, and work out what they mean for them in their local situation. The United Reformed churches will have to ratify the decisions before January so that they can be implemented.

*I find it offensive that K. Schilder's name is included in one breath with K. Barth.*

This does not mean the end of the discussions between us. We have entered phase two which requires of local churches to discuss the issues with their counterparts. One of the issues that comes up for discussion is the covenant. It may even become the focal point for discussion, for there are different approaches to the doctrine of the covenant.

### Different approaches

This has become evident in a special supplement of *Christian Renewal*. Nine authors from different ecclesiastical backgrounds have presented their views on the covenant. The editor noted that time, circumstance and tradition have a habit of resulting in subtle changes. He hopes that this issue will contribute to understand the differences and subtle nuances. (3)

The question must now be considered whether we have a view on the covenant which differs from that of the United Reformed people. And if we discover differences, how important are they? The lengthiest article, written by Dr. Michael S. Horton, professor at Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California, concentrates on this question. He gives his article the appropriate title: "What's Really at Stake." It is a substantial article, quoting theologians from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. The purpose of his article is, "to briefly illumine the relationship of the Law-Gospel motif to the covenant of works – [covenant of] grace scheme." (11)

These are two important issues taken together: the relation between the law and the gospel, and the doctrine of the covenant. The question is whether we take a different position on these important issues. We should understand one another's position clearly when we enter into further discussions. And I would like to contribute to that discussion in this article. The main purpose is to clarify the issues. Much could be said about the lengthy article of Dr. Horton. Personally, I do not appreciate it when I read somewhere:

Whatever light from God's word they have brought forth, Barth, Schilder, Hoeksema, Torrance, Fuller and Shepherd

depart significantly on these matters from the broad consensus of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. (18)

To mention only one thing about this, I find it offensive that K. Schilder's name is included in one breath with K. Barth, a theologian with whom Schilder often disagreed on important issues such as revelation, Scripture, and creation. The article does not contain any quote from Barth, or from Schilder. Nor is a comparison between the two presented anywhere. We should not scare the readers by association, but discuss the issues.

The two main issues discussed in Dr. Horton's article are the doctrine of justification and the doctrine of the covenant. We will consider these one by one, beginning with the covenant.

### The covenant

Dr. Horton briefly surveys the development of the doctrine of the covenant. During the sixteenth century, Reformed theologians such as Ursinus used the categories of the law and the gospel as the summary of the doctrine. (11) In the seventeenth century, this was generally accepted and organized under the covenant. They spoke of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. (12) Actually, the whole scheme contained one more covenant: the covenant of redemption, or counsel of peace. This covenant was a covenant made between the three Persons of the Trinity who together made a pact to save the elect. (12)

*Actually, our confessions present a more limited doctrine of the covenant.*

As a result, Reformed theologians ended up distinguishing between three connected covenants. To place them in the proper order, the first and basic covenant is that between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit concerning our salvation. The second, the covenant of works, is a covenant made between God and Adam. In this covenant, God required Adam to obey Him fully, and He promised Adam eternal life. The third is the covenant of grace. Here, God promised to the believers and their offspring the grace of forgiveness of sins and sanctification, on the basis of the salvation brought about by Jesus Christ.

This is an elaborate outworking of the doctrine of the covenant. Actually, we can hardly speak of "the covenant" here. These are different covenants. The first covenant was made between the three divine Persons, as a covenant concerning people who would be created afterwards. The second covenant, the covenant of works, was a covenant between God and created people, before they became sinners. As

such, it is no longer directly applicable to us. The third covenant is a later covenant. It was made after the fall. And it was not made with the created people in general, instead, it was established with the believers and their children. This covenant is based on God's grace, and can only be realized because of the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

How much of all this is part of our confession of faith? In the Reformed churches we have agreed to maintain the doctrine of Scripture, as summarized in the confessions. Are we, as Reformed churches, obligated to preach from the pulpit, to teach in catechism class, and to personally believe this threefold covenant scheme? If we look at our confessions, the answer is "no." In our confessions, we do refer to decisions concerning our salvation which God made before the world was made. These decisions can be found in the article on predestination, Article 16 of the Belgic Confession. It is further worked out in the first chapter of the Canons of Dort. But not one of our confessions speaks of the covenant of redemption.

Actually, our confessions present a more limited doctrine of the covenant. The covenant is particularly mentioned in connection with the sacraments (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 25, Q/A 68; Lord's Day 27, Q/A 74; Belgic Confession, art 35) and with the salvation of children of believing parents dying in infancy (Canons of Dort, ch 1, 17). Dr. Horton gives a comprehensive view of the covenant based

### What's inside?

The larger part of this issue contains articles that are directly or indirectly connected to Synod Escondido of the United Reformed Churches. The editorial of Dr. N.H. Gootjes deals with an article written by Dr. Michael Horton which was published in *Christian Renewal*. The issue is whether the CanRC and the URC have a different approach to the doctrine of the covenant, and whether that divides. Dr. Gootjes clears up some issues and offers encouraging conclusions.

We have a report by Dr. J. DeJong and Rev. W. den Hollander on Synod Escondido. Dr. DeJong has also provided us with the text of his speech at this Synod. It is noteworthy that the recommendation to enter into Phase 2 of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CanRC was carried with near unanimity! May the Lord bless the fellowship between our respective churches.

Dr. J. DeJong continues his two-part article on the topic of homiletics. While there are major objections to "new homiletics," it is made clear that a minister must be an effective communicator who feeds the congregation. This is a thought-provoking article.

Some time back, Tony Vanderven translated meditations by L.E. Leefink in connection with celebrating the Lord's Supper. On request, he is continuing these meditations in this issue.

This issue contains a press release of Classis Ontario South, a meditation by Rev. P. Aasman, as well as the second part of an article by Otto Bouwman in the column *Education Matters*. Brother Bouwman draws clear conclusions about the unity of church, home and school.

RA



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Visscher

Managing Editor: R. Aasman

Coeditors: J. De Jong, N.H. Gootjes, Cl. Stam

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION

26 Inverness Crescent, St. Albert, AB T8N 5J3

Fax: (780) 418-1506 E-Mail: raasman@canrc.org

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

(subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.

One Beghin Avenue

Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

Email: clarion@premier.mb.ca

World Wide Web address: <premier.mb.ca/clarion.html>

SUBSCRIPTION RATES  
FOR 2001

	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada*	\$38.00*	\$62.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$40.00	\$54.00
International	\$62.00	\$93.00



\* Including 7% GST – No. 890967359RT

Advertisements: \$12.25 per column inch

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Publication Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

Cancellation Agreement

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.

Agreement No. 1377531

Publications Mail Registration No. 09907

ISSN 0383-0438

Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

### IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – Doctrinal stumbling blocks? — N.H. Gootjes .....	350
Treasures New and Old – Marriage is more than it appears — P. Aasman .....	353
The preacher as listener – the role of the hearer in the preaching of the Gospel (2) — J. DeJong .....	354
Fourth Synod of the URC in North America — J. DeJong and W. den Hollander .....	357
A word of greeting to the URCNA Synod — J. DeJong .....	361
Undeserved Mercy – Preparing for the Lord's Supper — L.E. Leefink .....	363
Press Release – Classis Ontario South .....	365
Education Matters .....	366
Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty.....	368



on a later, seventeenth century development of the doctrine of the covenant.

The question now before us is, what to do with the different perspectives on the covenant? Does this mean that we are separated from Dr. Horton and the people who share his opinion, because of a different view on the covenant? Is it impossible to meet on the basis of the doctrine of the covenant, as briefly explained in the Three Forms of Unity, without this later, elaborate doctrine of the covenant?

*It appears that the doctrine of justification, rather than that of the covenant, is at the centre of Horton's concern.*

I was grateful to read in Dr. Horton's article that this is not the case. Although he gives a lengthy defence of a more comprehensive covenant view, he does not make that mandatory for everyone. He states this clearly in his article: "A denial of the covenant of works need not lead to a denial of the evangelical doctrine of justification." (19) Somewhat later he mentions that the covenant of works is explicitly affirmed by the Reformed tradition and confessed by the Presbyterian brothers and sisters.

Nevertheless, I will defend the freedom of anyone in our federation to reject this formulation. While we must be careful to confess the spirit and not just the letter of our faith (which requires some understanding of what the authors meant in their Catechism's expressions), we must allow latitude even where we think that differences logically imply departures that have not actually been made. (19)

In the spirit of this statement, we can work further on the doctrine of the covenant and develop it. Within the bounds of Scripture, we can consider whether the covenant we live under is the covenant God made with Abraham, or whether it can be taken in a more comprehensive sense, as a covenant made with Adam in paradise. And we can consider whether there is a solid scriptural basis to call the Counsel of Peace a covenant.

### **Doctrine of justification**

If this difference on the doctrine of the covenant is not the issue that makes or breaks the unity of the Reformed faith, what, then, is really at stake for Dr. Horton? From the beginning of his article, two issues are discussed simultaneously, the doctrine of the covenant and the doctrine of justification. This second doctrine deals with the fundamental question how we can become righteous before God. This issue was discussed right from the beginning of the Reformation. Luther was asking the question how a righteous God could save him. He knew he had committed sins. How would it be possible for him to be saved from God's judgment and condemnation? The biblical answer he found was justification. Although we are sinners, and sin continues to influence us, God declares us righteous. Paul spoke about this when he said that God justifies the wicked (Rom 4:5). How is this possible?

Horton begins by discussing two wrong answers. The first is that we will be justified by God because we are in ourselves righteous. (14) In other words, we would go to God in prayer and ask Him: Please declare us sinless and righteous on the basis of our good deeds. We fully agree with Horton, and with the quotation from John Murray, when he rejects this. It is stated in our own Catechism that this would be impossible for: "Even our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin" (answer 62). In short, we cannot be declared

righteous on the basis of our works for we cannot do anything perfectly. Even the good we do is incomplete and sinful.

Horton next discusses the view of the Remonstrants on justification. Following Murray, he says that the Remonstrants saw a combination of faith and obedience as the ground for justification. Although our obedience is imperfect, God counts it as righteousness. He rejects this view and calls it a weak works-righteousness. Again, we can agree with Horton, and again we can refer to answer 62 of the Heidelberg Catechism: "The righteousness which can stand before God's judgment must be absolutely perfect and in complete agreement with the law of God."

It appears that the doctrine of justification, rather than that of the covenant, is at the centre of Horton's concern. He states the following:

Whatever latitude may be honored in our formulation of the covenant of works, our Confession is clear on this matter of being justified by the imputation of Christ's meritorious law-keeping. (15)

If that is the case, we are in fundamental agreement with one another.

It is not that we would undervalue the necessity of sanctification. All preachers of the Word must continue to emphasize that God requires his people to live holy lives. That is the reason why we find so many laws in the Old Testament. It is also the reason for the complaint of the prophets (see, for example, Mal 1 and 2). Jesus Christ did not abolish God's laws (see the Sermon on the Mount). Also, Paul's epistles are full of directions for a holy and honest life. God's law must be maintained in the church, and this law is still used in the Reformed churches as a rule for holy living (see Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 34-44).

*We are in full agreement with Dr. Horton when he wants to emphasize that Christ's righteousness is the basis on which we are justified by God.*

Our justification, however, does not depend on this. Before Paul maintained the obedience to God's law in his epistle to the Romans, he had already stated that our righteousness does not depend on our keeping the law. He has no difficulty proving from the Old Testament that the believers are not sinless people: they are sinners, just like the gentiles (Rom 3:9-20). We maintain that we are justified by faith apart from obeying the law (Rom 3:28). Our justification rests on Christ's complete obedience to God's will. He came to do the will of God who sent Him (John 4:34, 6:38). The temptations in the desert show his obedience under stress. We are made righteous by Christ's obedience, as this can be seen in his life (Rom 5:19, see also Phil 2:7,8; Heb 5:8,9). We are in full agreement with Dr. Horton when he wants to emphasize that Christ's righteousness is the basis on which we are justified by God.

It will be good to get to know one another better in the coming years. Coming into these discussions from different background with different ecclesiastical "dialects," we may experience some difficulty understanding each other properly. May the Lord grant wisdom to all of us to recognize how to maintain the doctrine of Scripture as summarized in the confessions. And may He grant us the insight to recognize when, in all the different ecclesiastical "dialects," we speak the same language of faith.



By P. Aasman

## Marriage is more than it appears

*“But this is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church.”*  
(Ephesians 5:32)

In Ephesians 5, Paul lifts marriage to an exalted level when he aligns the duties of a husband and a wife with those of Christ and his church. A man must love his wife as Christ loved his church. A woman must submit to the authority of her husband as the church submits to that of the Lord Jesus Christ. This makes marriage an extraordinarily exalted thing.

However, in verse 32, Paul shows that this alignment was no mere coincidence. Marriage is a *profound mystery*. That means that marriage has always contained deeper meaning within it known only to God, but which have now been revealed by Jesus Christ. The intimate relationship of a man and woman in marriage is more than it seems to be. Jesus Christ unfolds yet another mystery long hidden and invisible to the church.

When Paul says, “but I am talking about Christ and the church,” he has moved on to something more elevated than marriage. It seemed that he was instructing the church about marriage, but he was in fact instructing the church about what marriage pointed to. The union between man and woman in marriage is not an ultimate institution, holy in itself; the union between Christ and his church is. As beautiful as marriage might be, it is comparatively meaningless and shallow apart from Jesus Christ.

This passage indicates that when God created the world, He set as a first goal to gather a church together and unite it to himself in perfect fellowship. This is the ultimate purpose for mankind’s existence. However, that fellowship would be accomplished through his Son. God’s Son would be-

come Lord over the church through an act of saving love.

God designed marriage to encourage, train and exemplify the servant-lordship of Jesus Christ over the church, and the dignity of submission by the church toward her Lord. In the verses prior to Ephesians 5:23, it seemed that Paul was talking about marriage but it turns out that he was talking about what it illustrated: the relationship between Christ and His church.

We cannot, therefore, esteem marriage too highly. God joins his sons and daughters together in marriage and urgently calls them to live in the light of the profound mystery. For husbands, this means that they must take an example from Christ servant-lordship; for wives it means that they must strive for the dignity of submission as the church demonstrates it. Husbands and wives

must together exemplify these qualities for the benefit of the community – because their marriage is not just about themselves. As the union of marriage is the foundation for society, union with God is the foundation for life. Marriage must demonstrate this foundational relationship with God.

What a calamity it is, then, for a husband to tyrannically enforce his authority over his wife. God calls a man to give himself sacrificially to his wife as her most devoted servant. Then she will be able to find dignity in submitting to his authority. What a calamity it is when a woman rejects the authority of her husband. God calls her to honour his office as her husband. He depends on her submission to fulfill that office effectively.

How else can marriage be the profound mystery? C



---

# The preacher as listener — the role of the hearer in the preaching of the Gospel (Part 2)

By J. De Jong

## Other authors

Many more authors writing about the new approach to preaching could be mentioned.<sup>1</sup> However, I think that the basic idea is clear. Sermons of the new type may no longer have themes or points. They are no longer deductive, logical treatises. Rather, they must have “moves,” and they should, as Plantinga describes it, “sound less like essays and more like odysseys.” They are to sound like “stories, poems, ‘plotted narratives’ or even conversations, and thus follow the shape of the non-discursive genres of Scripture.” Sermons must not set out to defend a thesis but “zig and zag as human consciousness does when reacting to a significant event.” Sermons “need to tell what happened, what made things happen, and what it felt like to experience the things that happened.” We then get a “dynamic sequence of linked pictures or scenes,” like a film, that invites the hearer to toggle his own consciousness into the flow of events.<sup>2</sup>

One writer, Thomas Long, uses an interesting example to describe the process.<sup>3</sup> He refers to the art style known as impressionism. When these painters such as Monet and Renoir began to show their work in Paris in the 1870s, people were very upset. These painters were not painting real pictures, but making up their own pictures with all kinds of shifts in colour, exaggerated colours, and fine details entirely blurred. People said it was terrible and ought to be banned! Why? Long says it was because the painter was inviting the viewer to enter into the inner sanctuary of creativity, to participate in one way or another in the painting of the picture. Indeed, that is what hap-

pened! The impressionist painters would leave their studios, go outside into fields and streams of natural beauty, start the painting, and then they would go home and finish the painting from memory. But was it really memory? Not quite! They decided to put into their pictures a few things they liked, adding colours here, brightening up images there, and so on. They did not make a whole new picture, and did not discount the important role of the first impression. But they did embellish the real picture as they saw fit. Rather than depict God’s creation, they made their own on its basis.

*When these painters such as Monet and Renoir began to show their work in Paris in the 1870s, people were very upset.*

Nowadays in the world of advertising you have television ads that work the same way: you see a road, marvelous vistas, beautiful scenery. Then you are inside a vehicle for a moment, but then again all the attention falls on the outdoors, the amazing world of natural beauty around you. You hardly see the vehicle at all. Then at the end of the commercial, there is a phrase: *the heartbeat of America*. So you are left to fill in the picture of the vehicle yourself. And in fact, you can choose your own, whether a “four by four” or a pickup or a sports utility or a sleek sports car: it doesn’t matter, as long as you get the impression that you are involved, and that in this way you can

make your world, and enjoy experiences that you have never had before.

So it is with the new approach called the new homiletic. Essentially the hearer is involved with the minister in the production of the sermon. The hearers have a very important role here. After all, all the attention falls on them. They are the persons the preacher is trying to reach! But the minister acquires quite an important role here as well. He is a facilitator, and it’s through the mixing that goes on in his life that new faith experiences can be transmitted to his congregation.

## A brief response

Now the question arises in all this whether in some way as Reformed churches we need to consider changing our approach to preaching. Recall what I said about the older approach. All the stress was placed on the exegesis, the explaining and expounding of the Word as it was given in the Scriptures. The sermon was to be a deductive treatise, setting forth a proposition, and arguing it from out of the text. The style required a theme with two, three or four points, all contributing to the setting forth of a lucid, logical and rigorous development. Do we now need to modify our stand as a result of the newer approach?

For a global point of view, we must say: we cannot modify our stand and we cannot adopt the approach of the new homiletic. To begin with, first and foremost, it has a faulty view of the Scriptures. Even though some authority is attributed to them by these authors, in the view of these people they do not have the authority that we confess in the doctrine of inspiration of the Word (2 Tim 3:16). We believe that



the testimony given there does not just represent the various (personal) experiences of people affected by the Word in the days of God's living actions, but that these are the sacred texts which are normative for all times, the very words of God himself (2 Peter 1:20,21).

*It means that indeed the minister must be very busy with the Word of God and that he must endeavour in every way to let the Word of God speak from the text.*

That premise conditions our approach. It means that indeed the minister must be very busy with the Word of God and that he must endeavour in every way to let the Word of God speak from the text. We can agree that he may not be prejudiced in his approach, and colour the text with his own opinions or ideas. He must let go of his opinions or ideas, and let the text speak for itself. Of course, he would be wise to do this within the tradition of the church, and on the basis of the church's confession. He can never let go of his confession, and he does not need to reinvent the wheel with every sermon, ignoring what past authors have done with a text. But even here, he will need to take proper distance so that strictly the language of the confession or the "standard exegesis" does not predetermine his view of the text. For it was the text that gave birth to the confession, not the other way around!

There is and remains the need for the minister to be thoroughly trained in the original languages so he can become immersed in the world of the text. Scripture and its unity forms for him the abiding premise of his work, and this premise is a prerequisite for all faithful study of the Scripture. Furthermore, as far as the formal elements are concerned, the sermon must not be set up from the perspective of human consciousness reliving an event, in "moves" and "structures" that emulate a film, but from the perspective of a systematic and logically ordered exposition of the text. Besides all this, the preacher must continue to follow what can best be termed the *historical* approach. He needs to approach his text as sacred history and locate it in the context of the unfolding pattern of

God's salvation work. The historical dimension may never be discounted from a text; in fact, it is through the historical dimension that the text is properly applied to the church in its contemporary situation. For the church today is the contemporary extension of the *magnalia Dei*, the salvation deeds of God in past generations.

#### **Where is the hearer?**

However, what about the hearer in the pew? Many Reformed homileticians have tried to give some more detailed expression concerning the role of the hearer in the production of the sermon. Of course he has a role! For as the minister sits in his study he must think of the congregation and the needs of the congregation for whom he preaches. So he must indeed hear the text and its message, but then also be aware of what the congregation needs. To be sure, he cannot turn around and say: well, the needs of my congregation are not quite properly addressed

*Still, the text must address the needs of the congregation.*

in this text, and therefore I am going to change its message to suit the needs of the congregation. The minister may never ignore aspects of the text, or change the message of the text. He needs to study the text in an unprejudiced way and so come to the formulation of the message of the text for the congregation.

Still, the text must address the needs of the congregation. And he must always begin by taking the congregation as a whole, and as a unity rather than a conglomerate of various categories of people. Therefore, although he may not change the message of his text, we can say that he may do some filtering. He may not deliberately ignore aspects of the text. But he may for the sake of the circumstances *emphasize* some aspects of the text, placing more stress on them, and correspondingly less stress on other aspects, as long as in the total picture he presents, he is not distorting the text. A text is like a prism through which light shines. You can hold it up, and you can turn it many ways. No one sermon can exhaust all the aspects that are found in a text. Doing justice to some texts would require sermons of three to four hours, if

not more. So there is a certain freedom for the minister: the freedom to select and highlight important aspects, while keeping other aspects at bay – all in the light of his own existing situation, and that of his flock.

This is a not an easy position, as you can well imagine. The minister may not *twist* the text; yet he may *tilt* the text. He cannot bend the text to suit his own wishes, but he may highlight aspects of the text to answer to the need of the moment. It's a very fine line! And ultimately, no one rule can be given to adequately safeguard the minister from error, either the error of personal prejudice, or the error of catering to the whole congregation, or even one or other part of the congregation. No one can always be totally objective, especially in stressful situations. Therefore the minister must always prepare his sermons prayerfully and carefully!

The one rule that we in Hamilton teach is this: the minister must always make it his aim to truly listen to the message of the text. The emphasis does not fall on the hearer first of all, but on the text. Only when he has grasped an initial statement or concrete idea concerning the message of the text, only then can he factor in the needs of the congregation, and begin to determine in what way this particular text with its message should be passed on to the congregation in its current needs. He must ask himself what the intention of the Holy Spirit is with his text, but also,

*It will be clear that we have principal objections to the method of preaching called the "new homiletics."*

what that intention is *here and now*. He must ask: What does the Holy Spirit wish to say to the congregation today with the text before me?

The minister seeks to do two things while remaining in the line of the church and its confessions. In order of importance, the first thing the minister must seek is that he wants the text to speak. Let the text speak, and not his word or his ideas! Secondly, he truly wants the text to speak to the congregation here and now. For the character of Scripture is that it is meant to evoke sermons that help congregations in their concrete situations. In all this he is

bound by the confessions as every preacher should be. But he does not always need to follow a conventional or traditional exegesis. He may come up with his own view, based on his study of the text, and geared to the needs of his congregation. In this very process, new vistas may appear which may not only challenge people's traditional understanding of a text, but even lead one to review the Scriptural backing for one's confessional statements, and cause a re-examination of the way the statements were formulated in the first place.

Through this process the idea is not that the minister stands in the centre and highlights his own abilities. Quite the contrary! The minister should make himself transparent and let the text be seen in a such way that it sends forth a manifold projection of rays right down into the hearts of everyone in the congregation. Therefore the primary goal in all this work remains that which best serves the glory of God and the building of his church in the concrete moment of the minister's service to God.

### Conclusion

It will be clear that we have principal objections to the method of preaching called the "new homiletics." It represents another version of an older weakness: subjectivism, and man-centred religion. Here we need to hold to the Reformed heritage, and promote and practice God-centred preaching.

At the same time, the preacher must not lose sight of the needs of the flock.

He needs to work in the circumstances of his congregation, in prayer, meditation, and in the cultivation of an active pastoral ministry. Without those components, sermons that may be delivered with the greatest skills will still fall on ears that can hardly hear. If the minister is only seen on Sundays, over time he will not be heard any day.

On the other hand, where the minister seeks to integrate the needs of the flock into his preaching, he will meet with a congregation that becomes more and more involved in his preaching! The congregation will feed the minister with hints, questions, ideas, and above all, will accompany the efforts of the minister with prayer and a listening ear. Then the minister will experience effective communication, that is, a link between pulpit and pew that is forged by the Holy Spirit, and which works for the up building of all. Then even though the minister writes and delivers the sermon, he remains only an instrument. The Holy Spirit "makes the sermon happen" and accomplishes his purposes with it that through the ministry of the Spirit, every person may be presented as a mature member of Christ's body, Colossians 1:28.

<sup>1</sup>Plantinga mentions the works of Eugene Lowry, Richard Elsinger and Lucy Atkinson Rose. In the continental tradition, we can mention the work of G. Dingemans, and as an earlier precursor, Prof. Ernst Lange of Berlin (1927-1974).

<sup>2</sup>Quotations from Plantinga, 18



Declined the call to Grand Rapids, Michigan:

**Rev. D.G.J. Agema**

of Attercliffe, Ontario.

\*\*\*

Called by the church of Elora, Ontario:

**Candidate Carl Vermeulen**

\*\*\*

Called by the church of Armadale, Western Australia, to work as missionary in North East Papua New Guinea (especially in and around Lae):

**Candidate Carl Vermeulen**

<sup>3</sup>See his article "And How Shall They Hear? The Listener in Contemporary Preaching" in Gail R. O'Day and Thomas G. Long, *Listening to the Word. Studies in Honour of Fred B. Craddock* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1993) 167-188. See also Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Westminster/John Knox, Louisville KY, 1989).



## Morning Hymn

Eternal glory of the heavens!  
Blest hope of all on earth!  
God, of eternal Godhead born!  
Man, by a virgin birth!

Jesu! be near us when we wake;  
And, at the break of day,  
With thy blest touch awake the soul,  
Her meed of praise to pay.

The star that heralds in the morn  
Is fading in the skies;  
The darkness melts; – O thou true light!  
Upon our souls arise.

Steep all our senses in thy beam;  
The world's false night expel;  
Purge each defilement from the soul,  
And in our bosoms dwell.

Come, early Faith! fix in our hearts  
Thy root immovably;  
Come, smiling Hope! and, last not least,  
Immortal Charity!

To God the Father glory be,  
And to his only Son;  
The same, O Holy Ghost! to thee,  
While ceaseless ages run.

*Translated from the Latin by Edward Caswall*



---

# Fourth Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America

Escondido, California, June 5-7, 2001

By J. DeJong and W. den Hollander

## Opening

On June 5, 2001, at 1:45 p.m., the Rev. Phil Vos, pastor of the calling church, the Escondido URC, called the meeting to order. He opened with the reading of 1 Corinthians 13 and led in prayer. He then led the assembly in singing praises to God. As part of the roll call he informed the meeting about churches that were unable to attend. This was followed by a report on the credentials. The delegates rose to assent to the Form of Subscription, after which Synod was constituted.

The chairman of the calling church welcomed all delegates, fraternal delegates, observers, visitors, and guests. Since the previous Synod, four churches had been received into the federation through their respective Classes. Another two congregations from the federation of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, affiliated with the URCNA, accepting the invitation extended to this federation by Synod 1999 at Hudsonville, Michigan. Synod also received information regarding two more congregations, which have been organized as URC congregations. Synod ratified the reception of these congregations, and their delegates rose to assent to the Form of Subscription. As a result of an election of officers, the Rev. Ralph Pontier became chairman of Synod, the Rev. Dennis Royall became vice-chairman, while the Rev. Jerome Julien complemented the executive as clerk. The calling church had prepared a list of advisory committees and a division of the

Agenda over these committees. Synod adopted this proposal.

## Agenda

The stated clerk, the Rev. Jerome Julien, informed Synod of his activities since the previous Synod. He gave an update on the examinations and admissions to the office of minister in the URCNA. He introduced the Report of the General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches (appended to the Agenda) and its decision to move into "Phase 2" in ecumenical relations with the URCNA. He also read Neerlandia's cover letter to Synod. The churches appointed to take care of the finances (Trinity at St. Catharines in Canada and Pompton Plains in the U.S.) presented their Treasurer's Report.

*The delegates rose to assent to the Form of Subscription, after which Synod was constituted.*

During the remainder of the afternoon, the advisory committees worked on their respective assignments. Your observers joined the committee dealing with the Overtures and Reports pertaining to Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity. One of the Reports submitted to Synod was the OPC Study Report. In it the results of a comparative study was presented to Synod, described the similarities and differences between the Confessional Standards, Form of Government, Book of Disci-

pline, and Directory of Worship of the OPC and the Confessional Standards and Church Order of the URCNA. Upon the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, Synod later on referred this report to the churches for further study, while it recommended that the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity [CERCU] use this report in fulfilling its mandate for the work toward ecclesiastical unity with the OPC.

In the evening of this first day the Synodical Delegates were invited to a special evening of fellowship and inspiration at Westminster Theological Seminary *in California*. The evening was held under the direction of Dr. W. Robert Godfrey, President of this seminary. Dr. Michael S. Horton spoke on 1 Timothy 1:14 and Dr. Hywel Jones delivered a sermon on 2 Corinthians 3: 17, 18. Following the addresses the visitors had an opportunity to become acquainted with the premises of this seminary.

## Fraternal delegates

On Wednesday morning Synod invited the fraternal delegates present to address the assembly. Dr. J. DeJong spoke on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches (for the text of his speech, see elsewhere in this issue). The Rev. Richard Stienstra, secretary of the CERCU (who had recently visited the General Synod Neerlandia 2001), responded to this address. He expressed the hope that our joint journey would not be too long, but was confident that it would be a pleasant one as

brothers in the faith and relatives by historical origins. He encouraged both federations to pursue the outworking of Pentecost in this new century with its great challenges. He exhorted the brotherhood that we should deal with our differences by the measure of the Holy Spirit of God!

Further, the Rev. E. Rodriguez spoke on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church of Puerto Rico (an independent denomination of five congregations and a seminary). On behalf of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, the Rev. Donald Van Dijken addressed the meeting; the Rev. J. Sawtelle spoke for the Reformed Churches in the U.S., the Rev. M.J. DuPlessis for the Reformed Churches in South Africa, and the Rev. Dr. J.D. Carson for the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America. The chairman had selected a number of URCNA delegates to respond to these greetings in kind.

During the lunch break on Wednesday afternoon the CERCU invited all the fraternal delegates to a meeting with this Committee. In it the observers shared with the other fraternal delegates the most recent developments in their respective federations. Since a similar meeting at Synod 1999 in Hudsonville, much progress could be observed in the ecumenical contacts and relationships. Especially the developments in the relationship between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches in the U.S., as well as with the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches, were noted. Attention was also paid to the developments in the relationship between the URCNA and the OCRC.

### **Ecumenical relations and church unity**

One of the more prominent matters, which had been discussed and considered in the public press and cyberspace, was the Report of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity. In an extensive report, this committee submitted to General Synod the results of the contacts with the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Free Reformed Churches, the Protestant Reformed Churches, and the Reformed Church in the U.S., as their main contacts through meetings, and of their correspondence with a number of Presbyterian federations. With regard to the latter, the committee held

back until Synod's study committee on Presbyterian standards and church polity reported on their work to the churches. For the purpose of their contacts with the former, the committee had produced a number of position papers, which they had sent to the churches in July 2000 together with a report on their findings.

In response to these submissions of the CERCU, Classis Michigan and Classis Southwest U.S. sent Overtures to General Synod Escondido 2001 regarding the status of these position papers. Classis Michigan requested Synod to advise the CERCU not to produce these "position papers" without special instructions from General Synod. Classis

*One of the more prominent matters, which had been discussed and considered in the public press and cyberspace, was the Report of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity.*

Southwest U.S. asked for a pastoral instruction for the CERCU not to misrepresent the doctrinal positions of the URCNA and/or not to formulate such positions, officially or unofficially, without prior approval of Synod. Upon the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, Synod decided to "remind CERCU to remain faithful to the mandate of the committee 'to correspond and dialogue on significant factors in the two federations' history, theology, and ecclesiology,'" and to "note that the *Statements of Agreement* published in the 2001 Agenda for Synod by the CERCU [pages 27-31] do not exhaustively reflect the full spectrum of theological (doctrinal) positions of the URC congregations in some of its formulations, and that these *Statements of Agreement* have no official status in the URCNA."

Your observers had the privilege of being present in the meetings of the Advisory Committee, as well as during the discussions in the plenary session of Synod. These discussions were frank and brotherly. It was a learning experience for the CERCU representatives as well as for us, who had

worked with the position papers of CERCU, and who together with them had composed the *Statements of Agreement*. It appeared necessary for all of us to get a better grip on the overall situation within the URCNA federation. The outcome of the discussions, however, was a "recommendation to enter into Phase 2 – Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches," which the Advisory Committee (approximately twenty-six members) adopted without dissent.

On Wednesday evening this recommendation carried on the floor of Synod with near unanimity! It was a moving and momentous occasion, which the chairman of Synod, together with the brothers of General Synod, noted in a wonderful way by expressing thanksgiving in word, song (Ps 133!) and prayer. Following the evening session many of the delegates used the opportunity to shake the hand of brotherly fellowship, expressing words of joy, congratulation, and eager anticipation regarding this decision to enter into Phase 2. According to the "Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity" of the URCNA, "entering this phase requires ratification by a majority of the consistories as required in Church Order Art. 36." General Synod set January 1, 2002, as the deadline for the churches to inform the Stated Clerk. Implementation of the guidelines for this second phase should wait till this ratification has taken place.

### **Phase 2 – Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches**

Pending this ratification, Synod appointed the three committees recommended in the *Statements of Agreement* and provided mandates for them. For the Church Order Committee, Synod gave the mandate: a) that the current Church Orders of the two federations be evaluated in the light of the Scriptural and confessional principles and patterns of church government of the Dort CO; b) that the CO committee work together with the Canadian Reformed CO committee to develop suitable and agreeable adaptations of the Church Order of Dort, retaining and maintaining its principles, structure, and essential provisions. Appointed to this

committee were Dr. Nelson Kloosterman (convenor), Rev. William Pols, Rev. Ronald Scheuers, Rev. Raymond Sikkema, and elder Harry Van Gorp.

With respect to the Song Book, Synod Escondido did the same as Synod Neerlandia had done, namely appoint the “*Psalter Hymnal Committee*,” to work together with the Canadian Reformed “*Book of Praise Committee*.”

***On Wednesday evening  
this recommendation carried  
on the floor of Synod with  
near unanimity!***

Synod added to this committee’s mandate that they “consider for inclusion in this song book 1) the 150 Psalms in metrical settings (one note for each syllable) from an English translation of the Genevan Psalter, 2) as well as other non-Genevan settings of the Psalms, and 3) also hymns that meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scripture and to the Reformed Confessions. The two song books primarily in use need not be included in their totality.” Members of this Committee are: Rev. Edward Knott (chairman), Rev. Derrick Vandermeulen (Reporter), Mr. Glen De Jong, Dr. Michael Horton, Rev. Randall Lankeet, Mr. Harry Nuiver, Rev. Dennis Royall, Dr. Rob Watson, Rev. Richard Wynia.

The Committee for Theological Education for Ministers received as mandate “that this committee work together with the Canadian Reformed Committee to draft proposals for theological education to our respective synods in preparation for an eventual plan of union.” As members of this committee, Synod appointed the Rev. John Barach (convenor), Dr. Robert Godfrey, Elder Jonathan Gross, Rev. Bradd Nymeyer, Rev. Calvin Tuininga, and Rev. Mark Vander Hart.

In regard to the work of these committees, your observers express the hope that these committees will start out their work observing the *Statements of Agreement*. Especially in regard to these aspects in our unity discussions, the two unity committees have considered carefully the differences between the present situations among the two federations, setting out the course that could lead to the right ingredients for a

Plan of Union. There will also be close cooperation between our respective unity committees and the activities of these special committees, seeing that Synod Escondido decided, that “the three committees should report annually to the CERCU, which will in turn make full annual reports to the churches concerning this work. The CERCU shall produce a single comprehensive report jointly with the Canadian Reformed Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity. This report will be presented to the next synods of the two federations by public distribution.”

Synod reelected as members of CERCU the Rev. J. Bouwers, Rev. Harry Zekveld, and Elder Chuck Dykstra, whose terms had expired, while upon special recommendation “the Rev. Ralph Pontier and Rev. Richard Stienstra have their terms extended until the next Synod by way of exception during this significant time of initiating Phase Two of Ecumenical Relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches.” For the work of the CERCU in the U.S., Synod added the Rev. Dale Piers (Loveland, CO) to this committee.

For the convenience of the readers we include here the URCNA Guideline for Phase Two – Ecclesiastical Fellowship:

The second phase of ecumenicity is one of recognition and is entered into only when the broadest assemblies of both federations agree this is desirable. The intent of this phase is to recognize and accept each other as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus, and in preparation for and commitment to eventual integrated federative church unity, by establishing ecclesiastical fellowship entailing the following:

- a) the churches shall assist each other as much as possible in the maintenance, defense, and promotion of Reformed doctrine, liturgy, church polity, and discipline;
- b) the churches shall consult each other when entering into ecumenical relations with other federations;
- c) the churches shall accept each other’s certificates of membership, admitting such members to the Lord’s Table;
- d) the churches shall open the pulpits to each other’s ministers,

observing the rules of the respective churches;

- e) the churches shall consult each other before major changes to the confessions, church government, or liturgy are adopted;
- f) the churches shall invite and receive each other’s ecclesiastical delegates who shall participate in the broader assemblies with an advisory voice.

In regards to other matters contained in the CERCU Report, the CERCU had recommended that Synod, should it decide to enter into Phase Two with the Canadian Reformed Churches, “suspend the last sentence of Art. 34 of the Church Order, and urge the churches to maintain the suspension.” Synod, however, considered this recommendation to be in conflict with Church Order Article 66 and that the Church Order makes no provision for suspending its provisions. Also in personal discussions of this point in the *Statements of Agreements* it became clear to us how adverse delegates are to such a notion of suspension of an article of the Church

***In a number of  
affirmations Synod  
articulated the doctrine of  
the authority, perspicuity,  
and sufficiency of Holy  
Scripture, as well as the  
doctrine of Creation as  
contained in the Scriptures  
and as summarized in the  
Creeds and the Three Forms  
of Unity.***

Order, seeing how this practice has been notorious in their former denomination (e.g., re the matter of Women in Office). Finally, Synod adopted the CERCU recommendation “that Synod establish Corresponding Relations with the Reformed Church in the U.S.” As well, Synod approved the work of the CERCU without adopting every formulation in its dialogue.

### **Other matters before Synod**

At Synod Hudsonville 1999, the URCNA invited the federation of OCRC to unite with the URCNA in federative union on the basis of the



URCNA Church Order. In response to this invitation, the Synod 1999 of the OCRC, however, requested that the local and broader assemblies of the URCNA respond to their deep concern regarding the issue of the Doctrine of Creation. "We are concerned," they wrote, "that some of your office bearers hold to a framework hypothesis as compared with a literal six-day reading of Genesis 1 as expressed in our Position Paper on Creation." At the OCRC Synod 1999 in Cambridge, the representative of the URCNA already addressed the dangers of binding the churches with declarations which more narrowly circumscribe the interpretation of Scripture than the Reformed confessions do.

Now Synod 2001 at Escondido had to deal with the OCRC reply, as well as with a number of overtures from its own midst regarding the matter of the "days of Creation." In a number of affirmations Synod articulated the doctrine of the authority, perspicuity, and sufficiency of Holy Scripture, as well as the doctrine of Creation as contained in the Scriptures and as summarized in the Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity. In this way Synod affirmed, that "God created all things good in six days defined as evenings and mornings (Genesis 1 and 2, Exodus 20:11, and HC LD IX)." Synod added the affirmation of "our commitment as churches to discipline those who teach anything that stands in conflict with the Bible, as summarized in the Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity." In its "grounds" Synod expressed (among other grounds) the conviction that "the Three Forms of Unity adequately contain the parameters within which the interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 can responsibly take place."

Pursuant to Synod Hudsonville's mandate to formulate a vision for missions, Synod also recommended the report re "A Biblical and Confessional View of Missions" for study and implementation in the churches. Concretely, this report recommends the so-called "Joint Venture Model" for the purpose of sending out missionaries (a model of sending and supporting churches already functioning among the Canadian Reformed Churches). It also recommends the introduction of a *Mission Magazine* for the publication of news about the various mission projects. In

regard to a report on "Missions in Mexico," Synod encouraged the churches to nurture an interest in missions in Mexico, and to urge their youth to consider this as a calling from the Lord. Synod also urged individuals and churches to utilize experienced URC missionaries for advice concerning opportunities for missions in Mexico (e.g., Rev. Bill Green, World Fellowship of Reformed Churches; Abe Marcus, retired Mexico missionary; Rev. Neal Hegeman).

Other matters on which reports and plans were received and discussed subsequent to Synod 1999 pertained to a "Voluntary Health Care Plan for ministers" as well as a "Voluntary Retirement Pension Plan" (from a Canadian and a United States perspective). Due to the fact that the church appointed by Synod 1999 to provide a "Plan for Health Care" had not completed its mandate, two churches were appointed as yet to fulfill this mandate. With respect to a Retirement Plan, Synod received a report from a Canadian as well

*Synod accepted the recommendation that all churches should provide contributions to the minister's personal retirement plan or equivalent.*

as an American perspective, which agreed "that a denominational plan is not feasible, but that the churches do have a joint responsibility to provide adequately for the retirement of their ministers in accordance with article 10 of the CO." In view of this observation, Synod accepted the recommendation that all churches should provide contributions to the minister's personal retirement plan or equivalent. Also, that the churches establish a Co-operative Savings Fund to assist the churches in supporting retiring ministers in need. Synod appointed two churches in close proximity (Abbotsford and Lynden) to administer this fund and establish guidelines to assist the churches.

Synod also dealt with a Report on "Ecumenical Relations with Churches Abroad." It organized the terms for the members of this committee. Synod ad-

vised the members of this committee to pursue contact with the churches mentioned in their report, which have expressed a desire to explore further relations (some fourteen federations, with which contacts have been developed through the ICRC). Synod decided to enter into Phase 1 of ecumenical relations with the Reformed Churches in South Africa. Members of this committee are the Revs. J. Gangar, Dr. M. Vander Hart, R. Sikkema, and D. Royall.

In other business, Synod addressed such Synodical and Federational matters as the URCNA Incorporation, Canadian Charitable Gifts, the remuneration of the Stated Clerk (and the procedure for the election and term of the Stated Clerk), and the administration and maintenance of a URCNA web site. Synod decided to mandate the Stated Clerk to arrange for publication in bound volumes the minutes and all historical information dealing with earlier Synods. Finally, the Bethel URC of Calgary, Alberta, was appointed as convening church for the next General Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America, from June 15-18, 2004.

In his closing address, the Rev. Ralph Pontier expressed the thankfulness and praise of the assembly for the brotherly and spiritual manner in which Synod conducted its business and completed its agenda. He reminded the delegates of his introductory words when he encouraged the assembly to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." At that time he had suggested that this effort be made in the spirit of Philippians 2, that each one "in humility consider others better than yourselves," seeking to pursue the interest of the entire federation and the brotherhood among which we may serve the Lord. Your observers could join with gratitude in the concluding song of praise to "God from whom all blessings flow." The chairman led in closing prayer of thanksgiving for a fruitful and edifying Synod, which could do its work in the unity of faith, for the unity of the church of Christ, reflecting the unity in the truth of our Triune God (John 17:21).

Respectfully submitted,  
Dr. J. DeJong (speaker)  
Rev. W. den Hollander (reporter) 

---

# A word of greeting to the URCNA Synod

By J. De Jong

## Esteemed brothers!

It's a pleasure for me to be able to address you on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches and to extend the fraternal greetings of these churches to you. We've been visitors at your synods ever since you formed a federation, and we have made no secret of our keen interest in your progress and development as Reformed churches on the continent that have gone through the struggle of unwanted separation for the sake of holding to biblical principles. We've also been open with you about our aims, and the reason for our keen interest in pursuing discussions and fraternal relations with you. We have mentioned several times that we share a common heritage, and also by virtue of the common gifts and blessings received in that heritage, we have a duty and mandate to seek and implement the unity of the church as Christ demands it in his high priestly prayer – that they may all be one, (John 17:21).

## A bearer of good news

At this synod I may by the grace of God be a bearer of good news, at least in the perspective of the committees that have laboured on these issues in the last number of years. Our most recent General Synod, which met in Neerlandia, Alberta last month, has in essence accepted all the points of the "Statement of Agreement" as drafted by the combined unity committees of our two federations, and has approved the advance of our federation into the second phase of our growing ecumenical relations. Although there was a change with respect to the target date of 2004, that date was still maintained as one at which we shall have moved forward in developing a more detailed plan of union with regard to the issues of the church order, the liturgy, (songbook) and the requirements regarding the

training for the ministry. These are all issues that fall within the parameters of the common commitment that we have arrived at in this statement, namely that we want to hold to the principles of the church order of Dort. If I may paraphrase the thought of the agreement, it would read: as close to Dort as possible, as adapted as necessary in the light of our circumstances.

*Although here in Escondido we are rather far from home, we are not strangers to the issues facing your federation at this stage of your development.*

Although here in Escondido we are rather far from home, we are not strangers to the issues facing your federation at this stage of your development. We're not here to unduly influence your decision-making process on ecumenicity, except insofar as it deals with further questions or concerns regarding our federation. However, in the light of what we have read here and there, and in the interests of promoting a proper understanding, perhaps some things may be said.

## Words of clarification

First of all, contrary to some rumours that may have been spread around through whatever means of communication you may think of, we are not a strange fringe group with our own idiosyncrasies, with our own specialized view of the covenant, or our own specialized view of the church. The Statement of Agreement which is set before your assembly for your approval is not designed to turn you into

Canadian Reformed Churches. The agreements are designed to highlight exactly those things that we have in common. As Canadian Reformed Churches we have our own history and a unique identity. But we believe that identity is nothing else than the maintenance of the strongest and most reformational elements of the essential biblical and confessional principles on which the secessionist churches were based when they first came to this country over 150 years ago. Do we have a specialized, fringe-minded view of the covenant? You will find our view in the writings of such men as Rev. H. Beuker, Rev. L.J. Hulst, Rev. G. Hemkes, Rev. F.M. Ten Hoor – just to mention a few of the nineteenth century American secessionist fathers. Do we have our own specialities in church government or ecclesiology? You will find the same perspectives we defend in the writings of that staunch antithetical Calvinist of the twenties, the well known minister of Chicago first, Rev. John Van Lonkhuisen.

So let's avoid all misunderstandings. This is not a matter of us becoming United Reformed or you becoming Canadian or American Reformed. It a matter of continued reformation, and reformation is always marked by a return to the landmarks of the fathers. We want to engage in a journey with you by which the original principles of the secessionist movement of 1834 and 1857 are preserved for future generations by faithful believers today. Are we just being "tradition conscious?" Quite the opposite! We see this as a singular duty, a common mutual recognition of the blessings of a faithful covenant God who has taken this special road with this branch of his church and as such calls us to honour his way with us through the heritage He has granted.

### Developing your own identity?

In the second place, I have also heard voices that suggest that you need to develop your own identity. That is precisely the type of statement that we as your fraternal delegates have quite frankly strongly discouraged at every meeting that we have been at since your federation began. The very prayer of Christ for the unity of the church led us, at the inception of our history on this continent to ask the question: is Christ, who calls us to unity, pleased with the proliferation of federations with the name Reformed in them? Does this continent really need yet another denomination with the name Reformed? We felt that this was not acting in a proper ecumenical spirit. So we sought unity with the CRC and PRC in our early years. And only when those avenues proved to be unworkable because of imposed binding beyond Scripture from the side of both groups, only then did we – with some reluctance, I might add – proceed with the formation of our own federation. Initially it was not desired or sought, but we did so as those called by God.

Still today our view is: faithful Reformed believers need to work diligently to reduce, rather than uncritically increase the number of Reformed church bodies for the sake of anyone's personal or collective "identity." We don't have that sort of an identity problem and that why we're promoting merger. Our only requirement is: merger cannot come at the cost of losing precious gains received in our own reformational history. Therefore, our

aim is: continued reformation for us as well as you through the process of a return to our common roots!

*Does this continent really need yet another denomination with the name Reformed?*


### We are ready to embark with you

Finally – and at the risk of repetition – let me reiterate our will to ecumenism in the most concrete terms possible for you. The committees have agreed to it, and our synod has endorsed it. We are looking at the concretizing of a plan of union that will result in one continental federation, or two cooperating federations in two countries that have full sister church relations, with all the rights, privileges and obligations of full ecclesiastical fellowship. However that will be made concrete, you have our commitment that we are ready to embark with you on this road so that within five or six years the process can be completed. By the time we reach our next synod, the detailed plan of union should be able to be adopted and implemented. Further arrangements for merger can be worked out in the following period.

### It will not be easy

I don't mean to suggest that it will be an easy road. But in the context of our time, it is the road to which Christ points us. The challenge before us is

clear: to stand united in recovering, upholding and maintaining the principles of the continental reformation as they were passed on in the secessionist tradition on this continent. From that position of strength and unity on the basis of Scripture and our common confessions, we can develop our contacts and relationships with churches of different traditions. But if we are finding our way with other traditions, and are exploring avenues of fellowship with them, should that not impel us all the more to seek greater ties of fellowship and cooperation closer to home? If we recognize the spirit of unity and fellowship among our Presbyterian neighbours, should we not first solidify that brotherhood as brothers and sisters of one house, children of common parents?

I hope the call of the hour is clear to you all! I know it will not be easy for any one of us, or both of us together. But is not that the way to which Christ calls? The way of self-denial, and self-sacrifice? If that willingness is found here in Escondido, as it was found in Neerlandia last month, then there may be times of pain and tears, tensions, uncertainties, even some internal strife – but there is laid up a crown of righteousness for those who here act in response to the call of a heavenly Master. He has shown us the way and He promises: I am with you always to the close of the age. May that promise drive us forward in service and self-denial from this day forward. May God bless all your deliberations! 



*Escondido  
United Reformed  
Church*



# UNDESERVED MERCY

By L.E. Leefink



## Preparing for the Lord's Supper Invitation

### From the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Self-examination is an important aspect of the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper tells us that true self-examination consists of three parts. This meditation focuses on the third part:

Third, let everyone examine his conscience whether it is his sincere desire to show true thankfulness to God with his entire life, and laying aside all enmity, hatred, and envy, to live with his neighbour in true love and unity.

### Planning for the future

God's wrath is deserved! And yet, there is forgiveness with You, Lord!

Of course, something else must follow. I understand quite well that during these next days I must consider the future. Celebrating the Lord's Supper has consequences. Faith is never noncommittal. Faith has far-reaching consequences.

So, what about my plans and intentions? What are they? If I were to invent them myself, then the saying that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions" could well prove true. That is not the way to go about it.

If I want to sit down at the table of the Lord to celebrate his meal, I can't go on the strength of good intentions. Then I would sit there quite depressed because sin has again been successful too often. I want to sit down in the firm faith that the cross of Christ offers me – yes, also me – forgiveness.

That cross ought to be the birthplace for my intentions. It is there that my plans will take on concrete form as an answer to my prayer, "Guide me in your truth, and teach me!" Sure, there must be good intentions; they show the attitude of a thankful heart. The path of each believer is paved with such good intentions. It cannot be any different, because my path through life and through the world always leads me past the cross of Christ.

That road past the cross of Christ is the road I ought to see before me as I eat the bread and drink from the cup. Right now I ought to be convinced: that is the road I want to travel.

I want to travel it in thankfulness and full honesty, honest before God's face, because the LORD considers the heart.

But I am not alone at the cross.

My wife – my husband stands next to me. And between us, things are not always right. Anger, irritation, misunderstanding, jealousy . . .

My father and mother are standing there as well. They still do not understand that I am no longer a child. They are full of prejudice and critique. If I am honest I'll admit there is always tension between us.

My son, my daughter are there as well. Do they really mean it? They hardly ever speak about these things, and if they do, it sounds rather strange, almost flippant and irreverent.

My neighbour is also present . . .

My client – my supplier . . .

My relatives – my colleagues . . .

I am not alone at the cross.

I am not the only sinner.

\* \* \*

I am going to celebrate the Lord's Supper once again. Therefore I have to consider the future. God will always be there. God – and my neighbour. Right now I do know what I will receive at the table of the Lord.

An ancient command: love the Lord above everything else, and your neighbour as yourself.

Can I do that? Can I pull that off?

Not in my own power.

That's exactly why I so badly need the sign and seal of the bread and wine.

In this way the Holy Spirit will strengthen my faith.

In this way faith in Jesus Christ gives me more and more strength to serve God, my LORD, with my whole life, and to live from now on in love and peace with my neighbour.

Leefink, L.E. (1998). *Tot versterking van ons geloof: ter voorbereiding op de viering van het Heilig Avondmaal*. Woord & Wereld #39. Translated by T.M.P. Vandervan. Rev. Leefink is minister of the Reformed Church at Zaamslag, the Netherlands.

This meditation is comprised of four parts: suggested Bible readings for each day in the week of preparation; a passage from the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper that serves as the focus of the meditation; a Bible passage (NIV) to draw attention to God's Word, since sacrament and Word should never be separated; and an appropriate Psalm or hymn from the *Book of Praise*.

When thinking about the Bible passages, consider key questions such as:

1. How does this passage speak of God the Father, and/or God the Son, and/or God the Holy Spirit?
2. What warning is given in this passage, also for me?
3. What promise is given in this passage, also for me?
4. What phrase / sentence speaks most directly to me?
5. What part of this passage can I use in my prayer?

## READINGS FOR THE WEEK OF PREPARATION

Sunday:	Romans 12:1-8
Monday:	Romans 12:9-21
Tuesday:	Romans 13:8-14
Wednesday:	Galatians 6:1-10
Thursday:	Hebrews 12:1-7
Friday:	Hebrews 12:18-29
Saturday:	1 Peter 3:8-18
Sunday:	Morning: 1 John 1:5-2:6 Evening: 1 John 2:7-11

## SINGING

### Psalm 25: 2, 7

2. Show Thou unto me, Thy servant,  
All Thy ways and teach Thou me,  
So that by Thy Spirit guided,  
Clearly I Thy paths may see.  
In Thy truth wilt Thou me guide,  
Teach me, God of my salvation;  
All the day for Thee I bide,  
LORD, with eager expectation.
7. To His people, who revere Him,  
Has the LORD His friendship shown,  
And He will to all who fear Him  
Make His steadfast covenant known.  
With a confidence complete,  
Toward the LORD my eyes are turning.  
From the net He'll pluck my feet;  
He will not despise my yearning.

## FROM THE SCRIPTURES

### Psalm 31:21-25

21. Praise be to the LORD, for he showed his wonderful love to me when I was in a besieged city.
22. In my alarm I said, "I am cut off from your sight!" Yet you heard my cry for mercy when I called to you for help.
23. Love the LORD, all you saints! The LORD preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full.
24. Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the LORD.

### Ephesians 4:1-6

1. As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.
2. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.
3. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.
4. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called –
5. one Lord, one faith, one baptism;
6. one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

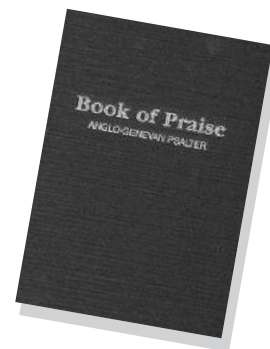


## Book of Praise

### The New and Complete *Book of Praise* Anglo-Genevan Psalter (Revised Edition) of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches

- Complete English-language version of the Sixteenth Century Genevan Psalter, long treasured for the strength and beauty of its melodies
- A collection of 65 Hymns
- The Three Forms of Unity  
(The Belgic Confession, The Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort)
- Liturgical Forms
- Church Order, etc.

Printed on high-quality paper, features a sewn binding and a strong hard cover.  
Special discount for churches and schools.



Hard cover, 680 pages    Can. \$19.00  
U.S. \$15.00

ISBN 0-88756-029-6

### PREMIER PUBLISHING

One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R2J 3X5  
email: premier@premier.mb.ca



## Press Release – Classis Ontario South of June 13, 2001

### Opening

On behalf of the convening Church of Grand Rapids, br. G. Vellenga called the meeting to order and requested that we sing Hymn 40:1, 2. He then read Ephesians 4:1-16 and lead in prayer.

The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. All the churches were duly represented. The Church at Lincoln had an instruction.

### Credentials and constitution

The chairman thanked the convening church for preparing classis. He extended congratulations to Rev. H. Versteeg and his wife on the occasion of their twenty-fifth anniversary. He noted that Rev. W. Slomp had declined the call to Smithville, that Rev. R. Eikelboom had declined the call to Grand Rapids, and that Rev. D. Agema had just been called by the Church at Grand Rapids. He welcomed Rev. J. Slaa, br. Carl Vermeulen, a student who has completed his study at the Theological College, br. Vermeulen's wife, Rev. Joel Dykstra, a fraternal delegate from the United Reformed Church (URC) at Wellandport, and other guests.

Classis was constituted and the officers suggested by the previous classis were seated: Chairman – Rev. G. Van Popta; Vice-chairman – Rev. J. Ludwig; Clerk – Rev. C. Stam. After a few revisions and additions the agenda was adopted.

### Examination

Br. Carl Vermeulen attended classis to be examined for the purpose of being declared eligible for call. He presented the necessary documents. He then delivered a sermon proposal on Judges 12:1-7. In closed session the sermon proposal was deemed sufficient to continue with the examination. The brother was examined in Old and New Testament exegesis, and doctrine and creeds. Again in closed session, the examination was discussed and there was no objection to declaring br. Vermeulen eligible for call within the churches. Br. Vermeulen was informed of this in open session. After he promised not to teach anything contrary

to the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, classis sang Psalm 119:17, and Rev. J. Ludwig led in a prayer of thanksgiving. Opportunity was given to extend congratulations to br. Vermeulen and his wife.

After lunch Rev. J. Dykstra spoke some words of encouragement to us, and reflected with thankfulness to the Lord upon the recent decision of the synod of the URC to proceed to phase two of Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Rev. Agema responded expressing appreciation for Rev. Dykstra's address and reaffirmed the need to continue on the path of unity in dependence on the Lord and his Word.

### Correspondence

After a discussion of the requests by the institution committees of Grassie and Glanbrook, classis gave approbation for the institution of new churches in those areas. The chairman remarked on the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ in gathering his church and spoke congratulatory words in view of these joyful developments.

After receiving and examining the pertinent documents classis proceeded to the approbation of the call to Rev. J. Slaa by the Church at Kerwood.

A letter was received from the Theological College stating that Julius VanSpronsen, who had been examined for preaching consent by the previous classis, had successfully completed his third year.

### Question period Article 44 CO

The chairman asked the customary questions. The Church at Lincoln requested pulpit supply for the Church at Grassie beginning in September one Sunday per month.

### Appeals

In closed session classis dealt with an appeal.

### Reports

The following reports were received and dealt with:

- A financial overview from the classical treasurer over the past year classis concurred with the recommendation of the treasurer to assess the churches for \$4.00 per

communicant member for classical expenses and \$1.00 for Regional Synod's expenses for the year June 1, 2001 to May 31, 2002.

- An audit from the Church at Lincoln of the books of the classical treasurer.
- Inspection of the classical archives by the Church at Kerwood.
- Fund for Needy Students from the Church at Chatham.
- Church visitations to the Churches at Chatham, Attercliffe, and Hamilton.

### Appointments:

- convening church for next classis: Hamilton
- suggested officers: chairman: J. Van Vliet; vice-chairman: C. Stam; clerk: G. VanPopta
- place: London
- date: September 12, 2001
- the Church at Hamilton to represent Classis at the institution of the Church at Glanbrook
- the Church at Smithville to represent Classis at the institution of the Church at Grassie
- Church at London was appointed to send a representative to the installation of Rev. J. Slaa in Kerwood on June 17, 2001 in the morning service
- All the appointees of the last year were reappointed with one change: Examiner in Knowledge of Holy Scripture and alternate for NT exegesis: Rev. J. Slaa
- Rev. G. VanPopta (alternate Rev. C. Stam) as fraternal delegate to the September classis of URC in Southern Ontario.

### Closing

Personal question period was used. Rev. Ludwig informed classis that he had attended as a fraternal delegate the classis of the United Reformed Churches in Southern Ontario held on May 9, 2001 in Sheffield. Censure ad article 34 CO was not necessary. The acts were read and adopted; the press release read and approved. The chairman requested the brothers to sing Hymn 46 and led in closing prayer.

For Classis Ontario South  
of June 13, 2001  
Rev. J. Ludwig, vice-chairman e.t.





## Christian Education: For Whom? Why? How? (Part 2)

By Otto Bouwman

*In the first installment, we saw that the children in our schools are children of the King, who need to be challenged to live as princes in Father's kingdom. The reader is reminded that originally this article was prepared for a joint consistory meeting of Canadian Reformed and United Reformed churches in Calgary.*

### Why?

Why teach these youth, these covenant children, in a Canadian Reformed setting? Why not send them to public schools, as many "older generation Christians" probably were? Why not send them to interdenominational schools, as is common in some communities?

Reformed confessors believe that life is a unity. There are many people "out there" who believe that they can be Christians but live an ungodly life because they separate their life with the Lord from their life in the world, or who separate their doctrine from their life; however, we accept that being a Christian not only colours, but determines who we are. Remember that "*duim-breed*" from Abraham Kuyper – there is not a single inch of our lives of which God does not say: "That is mine."

We have our confessions in our church. But they never were intended to be solely for the church! As a matter of fact, the Belgic Confession was written for an unbelieving ruler. The confessions give expression to what we believe about all areas in life. Then to establish schools with a confessional basis is such a natural thing to do, but to set up schools without a confessional basis is making them much weaker than they need be. As a matter of fact, the quote from Krommenga above makes reference to that as well – the schools had to be positively Reformed in character. How can one be Re-

formed in character if one does not want to use the confessions to define what it is to be Reformed?

### Baptism

The Church Order of Dort has not left the matter of education alone either. Right after the article about baptism of infants – at least, in the version we use – comes Article 58:

*Schools.* The consistory shall ensure that parents, to the best of their ability, have their children attend a school where the instruction given is in harmony with the Word of God as the church as summarized it in her confessions.

*The confessions give expression to what we believe about all areas in life.*

The connection between the baptismal vows of the parents and the education of the children is implicitly made in our church order. During the days of the Secession of 1834, the connection was also clearly made. It is indeed appropriate to see that parents are in part fulfilling their baptismal vows by sending their children to a school where the instruction is in line with the confessions. To me it is a riddle how a parent in normal circumstances can in good conscience promise to have his child "instructed in this doctrine to the utmost of his power" and then bypass the possibility of sending this child to a school where "this doctrine" permeates the entire institution. Indeed, generation after generation of parents have used, as part of their motivation to establish Christian schools, their baptismal vows. In other words, the motivation for the establishment of Christian education has been the covenant status of the child and the consequent covenant obligations of the parents.

Our URC brothers have a corresponding article: Article 14, outlining

the duties of the elder. It reminds us that the elders "are to maintain the purity of the Word and Sacraments, assist in catechizing the youth, promote God-centred schooling." The role of the consistory is thus clearly spelled out: ensure that parents send children to a particular type of school. The role of the consistory is thus to encourage or give direction to the parent regarding their responsibilities as parents. Though there is virtually no official direct connection between our churches and our schools, nonetheless, there is a tremendously close link between our pews and our desks, because the parents and children in the church are also in the school. So no formal connections, but lots of informal linkages.

### Unity

Much has been made in our circles of the unity between home, church, and school. And not only in Canadian Reformed circles: historically many in the CRC held that view. Some there still do today, and so does an influential Free Reformed professor, Dr. Selderhuis, in the Netherlands. And really, it makes so much sense. What the church teaches, the home should not undo. When the church teaches one thing and the home wishes to teach something else, then tension develops. Our URC brothers experienced the difficulties of that tension and conflict, and realized that it could not continue. They established unity between home and church again by leaving the Christian Reformed Church. But how can we tolerate conflict and tension between home and school or between church and school? The preferred route, wherever possible, is to give expression to the unity of home, church, and school, and if that means establishing a Christian school, then we should do that. Establishing and making use of the services of a Christian school is an act of obedience to God's commands and a recognition of the status of our children.

So why not send our children to the public school? If in the 1870s Classis Holland recognized the "progressing

dechristenizing of the public school system," then surely at the beginning of the twenty-first century we should be recognizing the same thing. The public system scoffs at the norms of God's Word and tries to normalize what God has condemned. Can we send our children there, be content with that, and maintain that we are doing everything in our power to educate our children in the doctrine of Holy Scriptures as summarized in the confessions?

*In other words, the motivation for the establishment of Christian education has been the covenant status of the child and the consequent covenant obligations of the parents.*

What about interdenominational schools – they include everybody! In 1835 in Holland there was a letter published by an elder Hoksbergen, in which he rhetorically asked: "The schools are just as depraved as the churches, and should we stay out of the churches, but send our children to the schools?" If we as parents do not wish to join others in weekly worship, how can we be content to send our children to worship daily with those same people? "Worship daily?" you ask. Well, activities like Bible reading, singing, praying, are acts of worship. We do them in our homes on a daily basis. We do them in church on a weekly basis. And at school we do them every day as well.

The most preferred situation is one where there is visible unity between home, church, and school, and where each of these institutions has an implicit or explicit confessional basis. Parenthetically, it is also helpful to distinguish here between homes, churches, and schools: homes are divinely instituted. God created the family and gave clear roles and responsibilities to the different parties in the home. The church too is divinely instituted. God created specific offices in the church and gave specific tasks to each office. The school is not divinely mandated. It is a human institution that assists parents in fulfilling their obligations. But then it is also logical that the church – as in the office bearers – supports the work of the school.

## How?

I've finally come to the "how" question. What is Reformed education? What makes education Reformed? This question is indeed a difficult one to answer. Nonetheless, it will have at least the following characteristics: Christian parents setting up a Christian school will try to create a school with a particular culture. First of all, they will recognize whom it is that they are teaching: royal children. That means that the children will be treated with respect, with dignity. But also, a lot will be expected from them. They will have to be honest – that's what God wants of his children. They will have to work diligently – obedient but lazy children in his kingdom aren't the norm. They will have to work in God's service. They will have to be reminded that they aren't working for their own benefit, but for God's glory. The ideal school will have a culture of godliness evident – the children will be accountable for their behaviour.

Parents will establish a school that has a curriculum that fits together with the confessions of the church. That's a monumental task, and one that the school must not take lightly. The school will work in tandem with the church – it will point the children to the work of the Lord as evidenced in the local church. At school we can pray for a blessing on the proclamation of the Word on Sunday, and on Sunday the minister often prays for the blessing of the Lord on the work in the classroom.

In Holland many schools were called "*De School Met Den Bijbel*" – The School with the Bible. That means an open Bible. That's what good Christian schools do – they leave the Bible open. Scriptures permeate all subjects – teachers with their students look for and see God's hand in history, they marvel in math at the order He put in creation, they stand in awe in science at the intricacies of his handiwork. In language arts, they learn that the Word and language is so important, because God has revealed Himself primarily through the Word. And those opportunities present themselves often in the classroom. In Deuteronomy 6 God commanded that parents speak of his Word all the time, every chance they had. At school teachers are given countless opportunities to do that.

Another tremendously important factor in the "how" of Reformed edu-

cation is the role of the teacher. A good Christian teacher will be a good model for the children to follow. The teacher will model Christian behaviour and will show the fruits of the Spirit in his or her life. The Christian teacher will show by example that he wishes to serve the Lord in all areas of life and that he loves the work that God has given him.

## The future

I said I had three points. I've tried to explain for whom Reformed education is, why we need to have it, and have made some suggestions about how it should be done. I hope that I've convinced you that the education of the youth of the covenant is indeed a matter for the consistory table. But now that I am this far, I cannot resist passing on a few thoughts about the future.

We appear to be on a path of increased communication, a road on which we recognize each other more and more as brothers, because we are united in the Lord. One thing we will encourage is that we give visible expression to that unity. The latest correspondence from the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity also encourages us to find ways of cooperating together.

*Parents will establish a school that has a curriculum that fits together with the confessions of the church.*

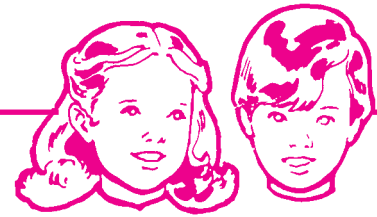
I believe that the educational efforts which our churches support should also be part of that overall visible unity. I'm sure there will be bridges to cross and hurdles to clear, but educational cooperation should be our goal. In history there have been many bridges, potholes, and impossible obstacles for God's people to overcome. God simply requires of us that we act in obedience to his revealed will and do one step at a time. Then we can pray that God bless the work we do, and we can even count on His blessing.

*Education Matters is a column supported the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association of Ontario. Send reader responses or articles to-be-printed to Arthur Kingma at [acres@kwic.com](mailto:acres@kwic.com) or to Clarion.*



# OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



## Dear Busy Beavers,

Vacation time! When I was young, there was always the question "What am I going to do with all that time?" I hope you all have big plans and are having loads of fun, doing all the good things that holidays can bring. I don't think Mom would enjoy it if you always go to her and say, "Mom, I'm bored." So I have started up my fun things to do again. Bye for now.

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

## Puzzles

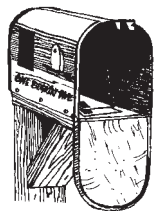
### People in my class (Grade 4)

by Busy Beaver Adrienne Teitsma

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

#### Find:

Adrienne	Ardis	Victoria	Michelle
Heather	Elissa	Stacey	Janessa
Christine	Mark	David	Robert
Peter G	Kenneth	Dustin	



### FROM THE MAILBOX

Thank you to *Adrienne Teitsma* for your letter and puzzles. It was great to hear from you again. Of course, I'll put in a request for a penpal. It is fun having someone to write to and learn about, isn't it. And to have friends in other places is also lots of fun. Write and tell me about it, won't you? Bye, Adrienne.

Thank you to *Fenna Otten*, for your letter. Unfortunately, as you are not a member of the Busy Beaver Club, we cannot advertise for you. You see, this corner is specifically for those children who are members of the Club. Sorry.



### Aunt Betty

c/o Premier Printing Ltd.  
 One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5  
 Email: clarion@premier.mb.ca

## Fancy Footwork

The first step in making this paper puzzle is to make seven small paper balls. Just tear a sheet of scrap paper into seven small pieces. Wad each piece tightly into a little ball. Try to make the paper balls about 1cm or so across, but don't worry if they are a bit smaller or larger.

Put five of the paper balls into a group. Hold one in each hand. Now it is time to get ready to puzzle the people watching your paper puzzle act.

Show them the two paper balls in your hand. Then say, "These two children can smell the brownies being baked in the home-economics class next door." Now that you have everyone's attention, get on with the act.

"The two children slipped out of their classroom and stole the five batches of brownies." Pick up the five balls one at a time. Pick up one with your right hand, then one with your left, the next one with your right, one more with your left and the last one with your right hand. To make this puzzle work, you must pick up the balls of paper in this order.

"Now the two children were ready to eat the brownies." Open both hands to show your audience the seven paper balls. You should have four in one hand and three in the other.

"But suddenly they heard their teacher coming back to the room. They knew if they got caught with the brownies, they would be in big trouble. Quickly they returned the brownies."

Do this by replacing one paper ball at a time. This time, begin with your left hand. Replace the brownies left, right, left, right and left. There should now be five paper balls on the table.

"The teacher checked the room and left. Instantly the two children again stole the five batches of brownies."

Again pick up the paper balls one at a time. Begin with your right hand this time. Pick up the five brownies right, left, right, left and right.

"But the teacher had tried to fool the children. She came back with the principal. Quickly, they hurried into the home-economics room. However, the two hungry children had realized the teacher suspected them." Turn your hand over and show what's in your palms.

"The two children were back in their own room and the five batches of brownies were still in the home-economics room. "Sure enough, you should have only two paper balls in one hand and five in the other.

The great thing about this puzzle is that it works every time. It's so simple that very few people ever realize how you tricked them. The secret is in the fact that you pick up the brownies starting with your right hand. When you return them, you begin with your left hand.

Work this one through slowly to be certain how to do it. Then find someone to amaze with this great paper trick.

HAVE FUN trying to work this one out and then trying it on your friends.